

The Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland) worked from the early 1950's to support and spread the healing ministry within churches and to encourage engagement with the medical profession. To further these aims a centre was run in Edinburgh where people could come for prayer, listening and healing. A loving and supportive prayer community formed, which came to an end in 2011. This document is part of a legacy of resources which we hope will support others in their engagement with the healing ministry. More archived material is available to the public at the National Library of Scotland.

Guidance for setting up or developing A Healing Ministry

By Ian Davidson (Chaplain 1988-1997)

The Christian Fellowship of Healing is a group of Christians from many denominations and backgrounds. We know from our prayer, study and fellowship together, and from those who come to us seeking help, that there is real need for a healing ministry.

This page sets out some tried and tested principles and ideas which you may wish to consider within any interested group in your church.

When a congregation asks itself sincerely, "How can we serve our parish, and minister effectively to those who are suffering physically or mentally?" and looks to the New Testament for guidelines, there can be no doubt that "healing" is found to be an activity high on God's agenda. In Matthew's gospel chapters 9 & 10 we see that Jesus called together the first Twelve out of his compassion for the "sheep without a shepherd".

If we look around us with compassion we will find that he is giving us the same call that he gave those first disciples. We are reminded that in the Christian ministry healing is not an optional extra but part of our mission statement (Luke Chapters 9 & 10). If we regard the Scriptures as our title deeds we are impelled to interpret their meaning and impact for people today. We are challenged to attempt great things for God, and to expect great things from him.

Healing is for the whole person. We find that all illness has an underlying spiritual component (a dis-ease) which has to be addressed. Physical or mental illness can be the stimulus to a new stage in our inner journey towards wholeness and union with God.

How do these things get started?

To begin with there is faith-building work to be done with a committed nucleus. A ministry does not take off because of "good ideas" but in

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www.st-cuthberts.net | www.mindandsoul.info
www.emmaushouse-edinburgh.co.uk

response to faithful prayer and study, sometimes over long periods. There is also a sense of calling and conviction in many hearts that this is a work of God in which he wants me enlisted and ready to train. The Alpha course is often an acceptable starting point.

Who, What, Where and When?

The practicalities will vary enormously from place to place as each congregation is unique.

Who? People gifted and called to this work may not always be found among the eldership or deacons, Session or Vestry. Time commitments may need to be monitored very carefully if this is the case. If the work is to be in the Name of Christ and within the context of his Church then it must be done properly. Duly ordained people or their delegates will usually head up the team and a proper sense of accountability will be in place.

What do we ask them to do? Perhaps to visit the sick in pairs. They need to be able to move easily, naturally, from conversation into prayer and back again. They will feel comfortable with touch and the many variations of the laying on of hands. They will be part of a team; a body of people who offer support and encouragement.

Where? Perhaps they will use the church room, hall or vestibule on certain afternoons per week: it will be open, warm and prayed-in and will offer a quiet oasis of ministry or meditation, Bible-study or informal worship. Four or five people can form a team, creating a welcoming atmosphere, making tea, relaxing, keeping an eye on the door, keeping the records. They might be prepared to have an appointment system or prefer a casual drop-in basis. They should be trained together in the simple skills of Christian Listening. Two or three local churches might cooperate in such a venture.

When will healing be offered? Prayer can be offered "without ceasing" (ie, at any time) but in practice two or three opening times of 2-3 hours per week will be the first target. This might involve teams of up to two dozen volunteers to ensure the work is spread and no-one is over-stretched and stressed.

The Gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

The Gifts of the Spirit are essential for any healing work. We must not forget that the Lord will baptise and use many human skills including medical and counselling techniques. Our main remit is, however, so to deepen in fellowship with God and with each other that the Holy Spirit can operate in all and through all ... "mingling all things for the benefit of those who love him" (Romans 8).

This fellowship building may be a testing, trying, searching time for all concerned as they learn to accommodate to each other's weaknesses and to celebrate each other's gifts. A real depth of mutual understanding will be forthcoming and a firm grounding in the study of the Gospels. God

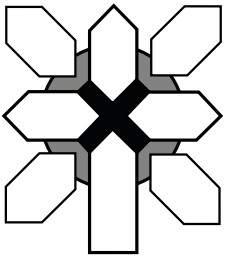
knows when his people are ready and will bring people to them to show them what to do.

Benefit of clergy?

The minister's place is pivotal although his or her gifting does not have to be in the healing work. There should be a loving rapport and accountability between the clergy-person and the healing group. He or she carries the final responsibility for what takes place, and will exercise a sacramental/pastoral function and oversight of the team, its training and activity. The "Ministry of Word and Sacrament" is most meaningful in a healing setting.

Healing Services?

These are not necessarily appropriate for every situation, but if you are led to offer them on a regular basis you are saying something about the gospel and your understanding of it. Ian Cowie's book *Ideas for Healing Services* contains much useful advice and material. Another approach is 'every service a service of healing' – in which case a slot for particular ministry time by the duty team is allowed for, usually towards the end of the service and often in a side-chapel of the main church. At these times the preaching, the confession prayers, intercessions and blessings have a strong healing impact. Behind all these practical arrangements lies the conviction that the Lord is present, the same today as yesterday. We come to church not to be entertained, taught or pressurised, but to heal and be healed in the Name of Jesus.



Credo

used by the

Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland)

The Christian Fellowship of Healing:

is united in its commitment to the practice of prayer as the foundation of all our ministry.

Prayer is the means through which we believe the Holy Spirit can use us, here and now, to continue the practice of healing incarnated by Jesus.

is an ecumenical group of Christians who openly embraces a range of theological understanding and language to describe 'how' God heals.

We accept that health and healing can and does come through medicine, counselling, complementary therapies and other means. This does not negate the real contribution of prayer, rather it upholds the role of prayer to support individuals to listen to the Holy Spirit within them, guiding them, facilitating health and healing.

is committed to being alongside people who are suffering and experiencing pain, struggle and distress whatever their background.

We acknowledge that suffering faces us all and challenges our understanding and belief. Yet we can, with integrity, offer reassurance of God's loving presence accompanying every human being as seen in Christ who has shown us the capacity of God to be vulnerable even to the point of death. Living in and from this truth of the ever present loving God we respond as authentically as possible from our hearts, and we can offer an understanding of the range of meaning of healing which includes miracles.

is convinced of the importance of the varied aspects of healing displayed by Jesus in the miracle stories.

This includes an intense personal encounter with Jesus; affirmation of the individual as a person of value, physical healing, restoration of meaning and purpose, social inclusion; as well as challenge to those in power; confronting rigid thinking and lack of compassion. We believe all these components are aspects of the transforming love of God and reflect the wholeness Jesus calls us into. We see healing as deeply linked with the Christian tradition of vocation through which the living God calls each of us to discover and fulfil our potential.

is united in our understanding that healing in the New Testament includes wholeness.

This links the transforming love that effects miracles with the transforming love that brings the disciples through their fear and resistances into their ministry of apostleship. Our experience is that the practice of prayer in small groups, with a commitment to sharing and listening, enables those of us offering healing prayer to grow in ourselves and in our capacity to experience and share God's love. This includes the reality that some people have a gift of healing and a greater capacity than average to bring about healing.
