

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.

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## Healing Threads

By Jenny Williams (Chaplain 1997- 2012)

One of the striking aspects of Jesus' healing work is that there is not a standard pattern to the way He brings healing to people. There are some features that recur, for example His initial engagement with people is usually very direct and personal in a way that meets the particular needs of the individual or individuals involved. There is normally a strong sense of encounter and meeting.

What happens next is more characterised by diversity than similarity. Jesus clearly was not advocating or teaching a set of external practices for use in all circumstances. Yet there is such solidarity and consistency to this aspect of Jesus ministry that it suggests some underlying principles and practices were being used by Him which He was able to pass on to His disciples so that they enabled healing too. This would tend to suggest that what was guiding Him and what He was teaching His disciples were inner disciplines of prayer and belief that were able to connect them and the people who came for healing to the overwhelming power and gentleness of God's love in a way that changed their lives physically and mentally.

This was our experience within the Christian Fellowship of Healing. We were a diverse group of Christians. What bound us together was prayer and a commitment to continue to learn more about how prayer can bring change and new life within ourselves and the people who came our way for support and healing. That was also the experience of Cameron Peddie whose inspiration gave birth to our organisation. He was a Church of Scotland minister who became convicted that healing was not meant to be just confined to the early period of Christianity as his ministerial training had taught him. He devoted an hour each evening to waiting upon God, reviewing his day, and offering himself to be a vehicle of God's healing. This, essentially contemplative prayer practice, bore fruit and not only was he able to allow healing to flow to many people; he also inspired others to give the ministry of healing more attention.

The healing thread of contemplative prayer was and remained strong among us. Two of our regular groups had silence as a crucial component

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**Former CFH Resources can be found at:**

[www.st-cuthberts.net](http://www.st-cuthberts.net) | [www.mindandsoul.info](http://www.mindandsoul.info)  
[www.emmaushouse-edinburgh.co.uk](http://www.emmaushouse-edinburgh.co.uk)

of their time of prayer together. We found that many people coming for help are interested in contemplative prayer and found that praying this way in a group helped their own personal devotions. In addition people often specifically asked for help to develop their own prayer life. Some folk trained to offer spiritual accompaniment in this way. We are also found interest in parishes to find ways to offer quiet forms of prayer in homes and in churches.

Another request was often for help to look at the roots of personal problems. Many people struggle with painful or depressing episodes which recur throughout their lives and they cannot find a reason for their distress. One way of approaching this has grown out of the charismatic movement and is often called inner healing. It involves praying in a way that asks for God's guidance to "see" the crucial situation or events that have restricted that person's growth. The prayer can then focus on helping the person recall and then inviting Jesus' presence into that memory to bring healing and love where negative emotions prevented the individual being able to claim or experience love at that time.

A different way of approaching this area of early distressing circumstances in life is through counselling and a number of our volunteers trained to counsel in either secular or Christian training. This was conducted with prayer and had the intention of bringing the experience of love to the memories of woundedness, helping the individual to integrate this into a new sense of identity with greater fulfilment of their potential.

Yet another possibility available to Christians is a form of listening developed by Acorn Christian Healing Foundation in England called Acorn Listening. This allows people to learn the skills to listen well, and to feel confident in offering a prayerful healing space where those being listened to can explore their feelings and work out the next steps they might want to take in their healing journey. Listening in this way was designed to have the possibility to be used within doctor's surgeries, with or without prayer. It is structured so that both doctors and ministers might have confidence to allow those without years of professional training to offer careful listening without proselytising or giving advice in an unhelpful way.

Another relatively new way of working is called generational healing. This looks at the family tree of an individual looking for repeated patterns of difficulty in the family or traumatic events, which are often at times of birth or death. This can be done by straightforward questioning and also by intuitive prayer. Frequently this sort of Christian healing concludes with a service of communion, asking Christ to stand between the individual and their past, dealing with any negativity that has been affecting them. There is normally also affirmation of the gifts of heritage within the family and a treasuring of them.

Our experience is that a common commitment to prayer as the source of our work and the belief that prayer can and does change people, unites all these different external approaches to Christian healing. This seems consistent with the biblical picture we have of the variety of Jesus' healing

approach. This diversity is also reflected in the people coming to us for help. They ask for different approaches. They often have some sense of what they are looking for though they may not be able to articulate that easily. We offer them healing ministry, using any of the healing threads mentioned, contemplative prayer, inner healing, counselling, Acorn Listening, and generational healing. We invite them to be aware that we trust in the Holy Spirit to guide them as to which healing thread will open them to God's healing love. We need their help to discern what is healing for them, and we value their participation as we seek to work out with them how to deepen their experience of God's healing.

One of the other options we can offer, which reflects Jesus' ministry, is that we highly valued participation in small groups. Our normal working day was based around small groups and we found this way of working helped many people experience and learn about God's healing love. We opened with devotions and then we reflected together around a passage. We encourage people to notice which verses touch them, which are "living" for them today. We invited questions that wrestled with how to put Gospel truths into practice. We offered people the possibility to "do" their own theology, to find their own healing, to integrate conceptual truths into the felt experience of faith. In the midst of this we are often also being "family" for people whose early life has left many emotional wounds.

We sought to help people to participate, to feel at home and to experience being valued. This work could spill out beyond the time of the groups and befriending situations can develop. This sort of support, helping people to participate in normal social situations, is a hugely valuable healing ministry. One of the significant aspects of Jesus' physical healing work which goes unrecognised is that those healed could participate in normal social activities because they were no longer maimed or outcast. Social inclusion is our modern term for this.

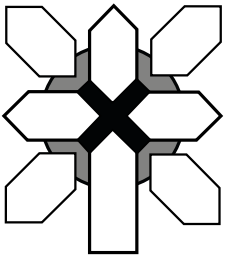
Our groups finished with times of intercessory prayer praying for people who have requested individual prayer. At any one time we pray for around 200 people daily. People were prayed for over an initial eight-week period which could then be renewed. After this we took a short break for a healing bletther over tea and coffee in our kitchen.

Creative arts have often been recognised as the meeting place between the human and the divine. We occasionally had creative writing work, art classes, and drama, acting out miracle stories. There was a period when we had moving prayer once a week, using simple movements, gesture and song as a way of experiencing God's healing presence.

We hope people will use the image of healing threads creatively, in an appropriate way for individuals and for church congregations. Hopefully people will see the possibility of recognising many of God's healing threads already in their midst and will be able to offer a diversity of styles of healing prayer.

We hope it will help people weave together threads of healing love flowing through doctors, nurses, family, friends and any other individual whom they experience as bringing God's healing love into their lives.

We hope all of us will learn to understand more deeply the ways Jesus was offering the disciples healing every day, gradually bringing healing to them. We hope that this will open up for more of us, more often, the thread of the miraculous.



# Credo

*used by the*

***Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland)***

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## 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.

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