

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.

Koinonia (“Christian Fellowship”)

“The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit” and “Communion”

By Ian Cowie (Chaplain 1976-88)

All these words go back to a Greek word KOINONIA which appears first in the New Testament when St. Luke tells us that Peter and his brother Andrew were in KOINONIA with James and John in the fishing business. It is a word which appears on many business documents of that day, meaning “& Co.”.

“Acts” tells us that the early Christians had “all things in KOINONIA” and that same word came to be used to describe the central act of worship for the Christian Church. We translate it as “COMMUNION”.

I AM THE VINE AND YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. That is how Jesus described our Christian Fellowship at the Last Supper (John 15.5)

Look at the vine... it is not like a fir tree with each branch linked to the central trunk, the branches of the vine spread, upholding each other, intertwine, forming one mass of branches.

HE IS THE VINE, the total intertwining of branches, and we abide in Him (John 15:4) by remaining in the network. His life-flow enters into each branch, making it fruitful. It flows into us from others, it flows from us into others, and so we bear fruit. No wonder His command “LOVE ONE ANOTHER” is part and parcel of His teaching on The Vine (John 15:9-12), and his teaching on answered prayer is that it is the fruit of the vine, not the result of individual holiness.

OUR TOGETHERNESS IN CHRIST
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
IS THE KEY TO THE HEALING WORK.
THE BODY OF CHRIST

As we grow together in love we become the BODY, the flesh and blood, through which the work of Christ can be done. Then the Gifts of the Spirit”

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can be manifest. We find various lists of these, in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, and verses 27-31. Also in Romans 12:5-8 and in Ephesians 4:11-13. They are not identical, but the overall pattern is discernible.

Within the "Body" there will be somebody who has the gift of "prophecy", which means "being a spokesperson", and through this person the Lord can speak directly to the group. There will be somebody with the gift of discernment, able to detect hidden possibilities for good and for bad in people. Various gifts of healing will be seen, and it is interesting that it is in the plural, perhaps because some people are good at healing people with nervous trouble, others with more physical ailments. So there are various gifts of healing, and "mighty works" or "miracles" are seen as something else. Then, of course, there are tongues. There is much discussion about this, some suggest that "tongues" are the sign that one has received the Spirit, while others feel that Paul did not expect all to have each gift, for he asks: "Do all speak in tongues?" (1 Cor 12:30)

Any group of Christians should be aiming at growing in the Spirit until the "Gifts" appear. They will only be truly effective in healing when this happens. The Spirit came first on that group which had been through the shattering experience of the Cross and Resurrection. They had been grounded in "The Law" by their upbringing as Jews, they had walked with Jesus, getting to know Him for about three years, and then the Holy Spirit came on them. Usually any group must also be "disciplined" over quite a long period, learning to share everyday life with each other and with the Lord. They must come to face the Cross together, and know that He is risen. Then in due course, "the Gifts of the Spirit" will begin to appear, and their real work can begin.

The life of a "Fellowship of the Holy Spirit" has many similarities to a marriage, in that it goes through many different stages.

We know we are getting somewhere when we can trust each other with the not-so-nice side of ourselves.

We have to face what it is in ourselves which annoys others, and we have to be able to tell others what it is in them which annoys us.

When there is some really tough mutual forgiveness to be done, in true New Testament fashion, we know that we are really progressing. It always comes as a shock at first when something happens which makes us ask: "How could this happen in a Christian group?" But after it has been faced and worked through, we find it was a very important step.

There are times when nothing much seems to happen, and it is a matter of being faithful, plodding on in obedience to the Gospel. These dull periods very often turn out to be very fruitful and if one gives up, then it is a great shame.

Each "Fellowship of the Holy Spirit" will develop its own way of prayer, times when all present are truly open to each other and to God. Some may tend to a more "charismatic" approach. A liturgical structure helps some,

but each fellowship will develop its own pattern, and that pattern will develop over the years. But certainly they must learn to be silent together, waiting on God, and they must be able to speak freely to God together, as a family. It takes time to get over the fear of being thought "pious", and to be able to express love for God and for each other. It takes time to build up trust so that if you feel that the Spirit is trying to say something through you, you can let it come, and accept it with good grace if the others say "We do not think that this is of the Spirit ... sorry".

You have only to look around you at faces, trees and nature as a whole, to see that God never does the same thing twice. So we cannot give a blueprint which will guarantee success for each Christian fellowship which forms. There are, however some basic guidelines.

Study the Gospels and share bread and wine

These two strands will be the basis of any gathering of Christians. We do not study the Gospels academically, or discuss as a "discussion group". We are concerned to get a clearer picture of Our Lord, to know one another in the light of His Word, and to relate what we read to the everyday problems and situations. The minister may have specialist knowledge of what the text actually means, but it may not be his job to see the relevance ... each person has specialist knowledge in some sphere of life.

Such Bible Study is different from the discussion group in that it is aimed at leading into prayer, and eventually into the sharing of bread and wine in the Name of Jesus. This "sharing" will take different forms according to the tradition of those taking part. But apart from this, there should be the usual cup of tea, and occasionally a real meal together.

Outlet and outreach

The group will become a clique and die out unless it has a focus outside itself. If it becomes an inward-looking spiritual hothouse, it will become very unhealthy. The life of the Christian fellowship must touch the real life of the world at very definite places. It may begin by praying for the sick, but it may be led to express God's concern by driving somebody to the hospital or by helping with the washing. It may be led into a much wider concern for human suffering.

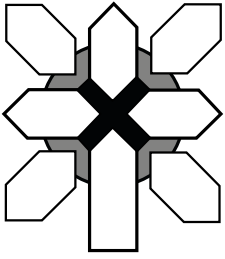
We also have to learn to speak out, to bear witness to what we are finding in Jesus. We may know of some who have done this in ways that have done more harm than good, but we must find ways of bearing witness effectively. We must be people with a mission, and it is this mission which holds the fellowship together.

The Fellowship/Communion of the Holy Spirit develops as we deepen our prayerful sharing of the Gospel, reaching out in widening circles to the world. We experience the Love of God through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Communion of the Holy Spirit.

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE LOVE OF GOD
AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BE WITH YOU ALL
(2 Cor 13:14)

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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.
