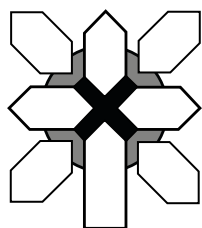


The Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland) worked from the early 1950's to support and spread the healing ministry within churches and to encourage engagement with the medical profession. To further these aims a centre was run in Edinburgh where people could come for prayer, listening and healing. 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.

In 2010/11 the Christian Fellowship of Healing produced two newsletters which were designed to stimulate discussion and debate on the relationship between prayer and healing – their place in churches and their role in current society. The Spring 2011 issue is produced in full in the following pages (followed by the former Credo used by CFH). The Spring 2010 issue is available separately.

Former CFH Resources can be found at:

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



Prayer and Healing Forum

Promoting discussion about healing

Issue 2 Spring 2011

Why Does Healing Not Sell?

Is there a role for healing in the church today in Scotland? Jenny Williams, Chaplain of the Christian Fellowship of Healing, explores reasons for the neglect of the healing tradition in the church. She suggests that the discovery of a new theological language for healing could both bring new life to the church and help it to build links with people who are currently outside the church by meeting them in their place of need.

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I believe that at the present time healing is marginalised and at times is even invisible in many churches, despite its central presence in our Gospel texts.

In my view there are several contributory factors to this neglect of healing within the church. There are two particular factors that I would like to explore. One is our lack of language about the experience and practice of prayer; and the other is the rise of science and the consequent difficulty of the measurement of prayer in scientific terms. These two are intertwined in many ways.

Science has become the dominant way to address health issues in our Western culture. Scientific enquiry has brought huge advances in understanding how our bodies work, in the control of infectious diseases and in the development of drugs that prolong life. Even a few generations ago issues of life and death faced most people regularly. Women died in childbirth, children often did not survive childhood, accidents or illnesses often resulted in death. Within such a context 'salvation' and what happened after death were given high priority. Theology, the church, the practice of prayer, all made sense when so much of life was mysterious and outwith human control.

The methods of science are now highly successful in terms of keeping people alive. It is possible for large numbers of people to avoid early death, through better understanding of their condition, through drug therapy and through amazing techniques created by a combination of scientific experiment and new technologies. People have done this through God-given creativity and many of us are deeply grateful to God for such advances.

This has brought consequential shifts of human consciousness and in our society people now expect to live long lives. People hope that doctors – the experts – will have solutions to health issues. The advances have been primarily focused on physical health and usually have come from measuring specific physical improvements. A consequence of this is that other aspects of our humanity, our emotions and the relationships in our lives, have not been included. Until very recently these aspects of our being defied physical measurement. Science divided mind and body into separate domains (as explored in our last issue of *Prayer and Healing Forum*).

This begins to explain why prayer has not been taken seriously in Western healthcare. There has been no way to bring the practice of prayer into scientific enquiry. In addition I suggest that the theological world has coluded in this. The attempt to find language to explain God's presence working in and through our physical bodies to bring healing

"... healing is often assumed to be equivalent to miracles and not to include slow changes that happen over time. This is not a Biblical position. In the Old Testament the word used for healing is the same as the word used for salvation. The focus here is on the relationship with God as the source of healing."

has been avoided. Western theology has tended to follow the Greek philosophical framework and has generally interpreted this as placing a higher valuation on reason to bring human freedom than on devotional practices of prayer and worship. I suggest that the result is that Christian faith is often expressed by adherence to thoughts and not to the practice and experience of prayer and worship.

To be fair it must be said that both the scientific and theological worlds are part of a larger cultural framework. For several centuries Western society has operated with experts working within strictly defined boundaries that did not allow for much reflection across disciplines. In our churches there are health-care professionals, many with deep devotional practices of prayer. Yet I suspect that many, like myself, have found that in some way their inner world has mirrored the outer world of science and prayer – in two separate compartments. I studied

“Jesus healed in a way now practiced and understood in our society, helping people face their past, healing emotional wounds, giving people purpose and meaning in their lives when that had been lost, through illness or crisis.”

biology before I studied theology and in-between I worked for several years in social work. Thus, I have lived externally and internally the tension of different understandings of what brings life for human beings. My time as chaplain of the Christian Fellowship of Healing has given me the opportunity to seek to allow these separate worlds to intermingle and fertilize one another.

One of the complicating issues in the science/theology dialogue is the modern understanding of the word miracle. Before the Enlightenment the word could mean anything that human beings did not understand, like the turning of the seasons, or a friend unexpectedly arriving just at the right moment to help. David Hume is the person who defined a miracle as something that was ‘outside’ the natural order and thus supernatural. A difficulty that flows from this is that healing is often assumed to be equivalent to miracles and not to include slow changes that happen over time. This is not a Biblical position. In the Old Testament the word used for healing is the same as the word used for salvation. The focus here is on the relationship with God as the source of healing.

I no longer see Jesus’ healing ministry as restricted to the dramatic and instantaneous cure of illness. Rather, I have come to see his daily reflections with the disciples as part of his healing ministry. Through encouraging them to face the challenges of their daily experiences he facilitated their transformation into people who, over time, had the capacity to embody and continue his ministry, which included healing. From this perspective healing is the on-going process of sanctification. From this angle it is possible to see more clearly that Jesus healed

in a way now practiced and understood in our society, helping people face their past, healing emotional wounds, giving people purpose and meaning in their lives when that had been lost through illness or crisis.

There is now an increasing interest and articulation of these latter forms of gradual healing in our society. The hospice movement, with its strong Christian inspiration, has pioneered the understanding of healing as facilitating people to die well and for family and friends to be supported through this process of accompanying death. The rise of alternative and complementary health is enormous and widely used. Hence we are now in a situation where a large section of the population, through contact with hospices and complementary medicine, are open to the understanding of gradual healing which pays attention and gives time to individual suffering and offers a combination of good listening and sharing of compassionate care, often with some form of safe touch. Sometimes such engagement between persons brings dramatic change. And sometimes the change is much more gradual. Both can equally validly be described as healing.

In this environment I suggest that there is a real opportunity for churches to rekindle the health and healing aspect of Jesus’ ministry as a means to grow themselves (individually and corporately), and to reach out to others with a message of the fuller life that Jesus can lead them into, healing past hurts and re-forming their own understanding of their identity and value. This begins to give language about healing in the here and now. It also assists in developing ways of speaking about prayer and worship as resources that nurture our capacity to be consistently compassionate and caring both towards ourselves and out to others.

It seems to me that this vocabulary is important in order to help ourselves as Christians to reconnect with the healing thread of ministry that is so obviously present in the Gospels. Not only that, it is also a means for us to communicate the essence of the gospel to people who have lost touch with the church. The language of healing and personal growth is accessible to many in our culture now in a way that the language of salvation is not.

I am suggesting that this broad understanding of healing, encouraging every human being to fulfil their potential, is a means whereby we can sell church. In other words I am arguing that currently healing is an evangelical tool for us. This is not a message of telling people the answers to life’s problems, nor a requirement to behave in a certain way or believe

“... it is about encouraging people into practices of prayer, worship and community, where the atmosphere of praise, of wonder, of inner reassurance and peace, facilitates people to relate to God in a way that brings new life, creativity and healing.”

“Current neuroscience is informing us that significant change in people does not come from thinking alone... This indicates that a significant aspect of prayer and worship is atmosphere, the feelings that are evoked within us. So science is telling us that the sensation aspect of our being is the birth place of human transformation and healing.”

certain things. Rather it is about encouraging people into practices of prayer, worship and community, where the atmosphere of praise, of wonder, of inner reassurance and peace, facilitates people to relate to God in a way that brings new life, creativity and healing.

Interestingly, science is beginning to provide some better frameworks for understanding how people change and how prayer can facilitate this. Current neuroscience is informing us that significant change in people does not come from thinking alone. Thinking is actually based upon the part of the brain that regulates feeling, the limbic system. Put very simply, this means that feeling comes first and thought second. This indicates that a significant aspect of prayer and worship is atmosphere, the feelings that are evoked within us. So science

is telling us that the sensation aspect of our being is the birth place of human transformation and healing.

I hope this opens the door for much more creative dialogue between science and theology. In particular I hope that this deepens interest in the practice of prayer in a way that brings healing and makes that much more accessible to all people. It is not just about making Jesus’ presence alive and transformative here and now. It is also about us taking seriously his call for us to follow and learn how more of us can allow healing to flow in and through us. Perhaps radically, I am suggesting that this might happen more effectively if scientists and people committed to Christian healing prayer are prepared to do much more talking and interacting.

For the last thirteen years Jenny Williams has been Chaplain of the Christian Fellowship of Healing. Following a training in biological sciences, Jenny lived for a year in the ecumenical Christian community of Taizé. She later trained and worked as a social worker, before taking a theology degree and then living in a Christian Ashram in India. She is an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland. Jenny’s interest is in finding ways to pray and meditate that bring balance to body, mind, emotion and spirit, allowing healing and a greater sense of potential and purpose to enter our lives.

Letters

Thank you for the copy of the Spring 2010 issue of *Prayer and Healing Forum*. I was struck by the question, ‘why aren’t more people supportive of the healing ministry?’ My response is rather cynical. Being a member of *Contemplative Outreach* has opened my eyes to the living Gospel, something I have not received in Church. Why? Perhaps in part due to all the energy required to make ends meet financially, in part to the importance given to ritual and tradition.

To make sense of it all, I have gone back to the Bible to hear the message Jesus gave us. He doesn’t talk of fundraising or ritual. Observing the law – yes. Even that He whittled down to one commandment – that we love God and each other. The teaching of Thomas Keating has helped me to understand what gets in the way of us hearing the Word and loving each other. The words are so easy, the process so challenging. I have recently changed to a different church, same denomination, where the priest is so open to the healing ministry.

Jan Nowak, August 2010

We launched the *Prayer and Healing Forum* last year to stimulate discussion on prayer and healing and the effectiveness and purpose of prayer generally. We see this as vital to the understanding and practice of the Christian faith. As an organisation with an intercessory prayer system, CFH receives hundreds of requests for prayer each year and most of these seek healing in one form or another. Prayer is also integral to our work with groups and with individuals seeking assistance. This newsletter helps us to reflect on the purpose and value of prayer and on how prayer can be therapeutic and healing. We are looking to help share the wisdom within the Christian community as well as develop new understandings to help us and the wider church.

This edition looks at why the healing ministry is so hard to establish as part of the mainstream despite an understanding of its importance. Why it continues to be marginalised and why, in some cases, it is divisive. It is important to note that articles do not necessarily reflect the position of CFH. We offer this newsletter in the hope that it will encourage debate and that it will help us all to be more open to the vital role of healing and prayer in the church today. Responses, articles or suggested themes are very welcome. Please see the back page for details on how to contact us.

John Weir Cook, Chair, Christian Fellowship of Healing

The Challenge of Healing Prayer

Healing brings to the fore some of the most challenging parts of the Christian faith – forgiveness, love, intimacy and the abandoning of power. Stephen Parsons draws on his experiences of healing to suggest some of the issues which need to be recognised and addressed if a healing ministry is to take root. The transformation of relationships that result from the sharing of prayer is itself a form of healing.

Christian Healing within the local congregation

The task of setting up a healing ministry within a congregation is not something that happens overnight. It does not happen simply because a clergyman or minister decides that it would be a good idea to hold healing services. A local healing ministry will indeed normally include healing services but there are foundations that we need to lay before we can say that Christian healing has begun to take root within the life of a particular congregation.

“Within Christian healing there has to be an awareness that all of us, ministers and people, have a need for God’s wholeness.

Creating a space for healing

Before we are able to begin speaking of healing in the context of a church congregation one particular issue needs to be addressed. This is the matter of power. When power is dealt with in an inappropriate way in a congregation it is difficult to create a shared space in which healing can begin to be practised in an effective way.

What do I mean by creating ‘a shared space’ for healing to begin? Within Christian healing there has to be an awareness that all of us, ministers and people, have a need for God’s wholeness. The prayer for healing that is offered, whether privately or in the context of a special service, will articulate this central common need of all for God. The wholeness or shalom that we all seek from God is not something that a special individual or group offers to others. Prayer for healing is a praying with, rather than a praying for, an individual. Healing prayer, in short, is not about boosting the fragile egos of those called to minister, but about discovering within it the mutuality and interdependence of all of us under God.

Dealing with human power

Why do I start this article with a mention of power issues? It is because the mismanagement of this single area of Church life can do more to devalue and derail an effective healing ministry than almost any other. The healing ministry is often a powerful reality but the power that is experienced is not to be an opportunity for an individual to be inflated with a sense of their own importance because he or she has in some way mediated that power. Where this aggrandisement happens there is normally a corresponding devaluation of those who receive this ministry. Instead of finding a new self-confidence in this encounter with God, the person receiving healing prayer may find themselves unhealthily psychologically dependent on those offering ministry. Along with this dependence there may also be an inability to take responsibility for their own Christian pilgrimage following whatever healing may have taken place.

Transformation of relationships

For a congregation to become a place where healing can naturally be offered, there needs to be a quiet revolution in the quality of relationships that is encountered. The words of Jesus about the way that authority is to be exercised through servanthood come to mind. Authority and leadership remain valuable and essential aspects of a congregation but they become so much more effective when their sole purpose is to build up the common life of mutuality and love. There are many practical obstacles to achieving such a quality of relationships within a congregation and it may in fact be only a

“I have always believed that when prayer is able to be offered for another person we are beginning to discover the true meaning of human intimacy.”

"Although we are often focused on our physical ailments, the God we believe in is leading us towards wholeness or shalom."

proportion of a particular congregation that is prepared to travel along this path.

What is the best way that relationships can be changed to make healing prayer a natural and ordinary part of church life? The most obvious way is for leaders and ordinary members of the church to begin a prayer group. The prayer that is offered will not initially be focussed on the sick but on a desire to be open both to one another and to God. I would want to describe it as a prayer of transparency. When such transparency begins to exist, there will be no room for any of the power games mentioned above and each individual will be accorded the privilege of serving others as their gifts allow but also allowing others to serve them. Even here there will clearly be dangers to be avoided, such as the creation of a clique or a cult-like sense of superiority towards non-members of the group. Leadership of the right kind within this group will obviously be of great importance to avoid such dangers.

From prayer group to healing ministry

Having established a prayer group which has qualities of spiritual transparency within it, it is a relatively small step to move to the point where individuals feel it appropriate to pray and be prayed for by others. Although it is hard for many people to even imagine praying for another person out loud, the ambience of a prayer group, where boundaries of embarrassment have begun to dissolve because of an atmosphere of trust, makes this possible.

I have always believed that when prayer is able to be offered for another person we are beginning to discover the true meaning of human intimacy. This is something which is

" in opening ourselves up to God's purposes for our lives we may begin to glimpse a still more important pattern for our lives that God is providing for us."

greater and distinct from what we call human friendship. Friendship is of course something special in human relationships. It is based on attraction and common interest and a likeness between people. The closeness that we find in mutual prayer is rooted in our common humanity under God and has no necessary connection with human friendship. Within this prayer, the individuals concerned will begin to learn that

prayer, human love and divine power are all inextricably linked and are the source of a transforming power. When an individual is touched by this power, he or she encounters shalom, the mysterious wholeness which is the forgiveness, the newness and healing of God.

Towards healing services

A healing ministry can begin to emerge within a congregation when people within it have come to discover that there is a naturalness and appropriateness that Christian people should pray for one another and allow themselves to be prayed for as members of the body of Christ. A healing service is a natural outworking of this reality to a public stage. It is saying in effect to both the wider congregation and the world outside that people gather together and open themselves to a reality that can bring change from the inside out.

Although we are often focused on our physical ailments, the God we believe in is leading us towards wholeness or shalom. That wholeness is the totality of what we need from him, a reality that is so much greater than having particular pain removed. It embraces all that the hymn implies when it speaks of being 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven'. When we come to a healing service we are to come, not with a shopping list of complaints that we want sorting out, but rather a desire to be changed by God and remade in accordance with his will. Of course we want to be rid of our illnesses and pain and we believe that God's will is indeed for those things to go. But in opening ourselves up to God's purposes for our lives we may begin to glimpse a still more important pattern for our lives that God is providing for us. So the prayer for healing will always be, not 'take away my pain', but 'thy will be done in me and through me'. In that accomplishment of God's will in us there is glory, a glory that can shine in and through our lives and perhaps draw others to the reality of the living God.

Stephen Parsons, now retired and living in Hexham, Northumberland, was formerly Episcopal Rector of Colinton on the outskirts of Edinburgh until 2010. Before moving to Scotland in 2003 he was the Adviser on Christian Healing for the Anglican Diocese of Gloucester alongside a post as a Vicar. He was also Editor of the magazine Health and Healing for the former Churches' Council for Health and Healing which closed in 1999. In the mid 80s he wrote his first book, The Challenge of Christian Healing, which contains an account of his own personal discoveries in this area.

A Tricky Conversation

Why is Healing so Difficult to Talk About in Churches?

Carmel Byrne invites us as readers to explore what our own bodies have to tell us about healing and about God. This is, for many of us, like learning a new language. Yet through that can come a new understanding about our faith.

I have been asked to write an article which addresses the following questions:

Why is healing difficult to talk about in churches?

Why does healing not sell?

Why do we have a resistance to speaking about our bodies?

What are the effects of this on our understanding of healing?

I would like to approach these questions from my own experience, and I will be encouraging you to reflect on your own personal experience, in dialogue with both Jesus and Jung.

Before reading any further, I invite you to take a pause and give three minutes to do the following exercise:

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Place your hands lightly on your stomach..... Feel the rise and fall of your stomach with each breath..... Enjoy the rhythm of this rise and fall of your stomach..... Let this become a whole body experience and become one with it..... Welcome the gift of air with each inbreath..... Enjoy the release with each outbreath..... Feel the warm comfort of touch flowing between the soft palms of your hands and the warm flesh of your stomach.....

~

Now take a few moments to reflect on this experience.

If you did the exercise:

What was good about the experience? Savour this goodness.....

What was difficult? Sit with the difficulty and accept the discomfort.....

What is my body saying to me through this experience?.....

If you did not do this exercise:

What was happening in your body and your feelings when you read the invitation and decided not to do the exercise?.....

As you sit with your body and feelings regarding this exercise, what is your body saying to you?.....

Both the doing of the exercise and the not-doing of the exercise can be a useful learning experience, provided we are aware of the experience, we reflect on it and we accept ourselves as we are.

It seems to me that the answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this article lie within each of us, within our own body-self awareness. Taking time with this body-self awareness, befriending it, brings us to a place of embodied spirituality, allowing to surface within us the deep resistances to allowing the Word to become flesh within us.

For instance, we may have felt one or more of the following niggles or resistances when confronted with the invitation to do the body exercise:

It's not important.

It's too simple.

I couldn't be bothered with the breath, sensation, touch.

I want to move on to read the conceptual part of the article.

The body is suspect, carnal, sexual, tempting to sin, less than human, animal.

I'm in a hurry.

Is it alright to enjoy my own body?

Is it alright to enjoy anything?

Is it alright to take time out for myself?

What will happen if I let go and empty my mind?

I'm afraid of what might happen.

Personally I struggle with the above resistances in myself. I am torn. On the one hand the body and sexuality were suspect from the time of my childhood; my earliest world view was dualistic; my education and culture valued and rewarded the cerebral; the traditional attitude to the body within Christian spirituality has tended to be negative; my inner compulsions prevent me from being present to my body-self; I have repressed much that is instinctual.

On the other hand I am convinced that healing and wholeness come through the body. Seventeen years ago I studied Creation Spirituality and trained as a massage therapist. I believe that Christianity is an incarnate, embodied religion, and I mean this literally. God is present in every cell of my body. It seems very acceptable to say with Teresa of Avila, "Christ has no body now but yours". But can I say without feeling blasphemous, "This is my body", God is enfleshed in

"Taking time with this body-self awareness, befriending it, brings us to a place of embodied spirituality, allowing to surface within us the deep resistances to allowing the Word to become flesh within us."

my very flesh. When I am relaxed, aware, in tune with my body-self, I am filled with wonder and a sense of presence. For me this is both the experience of God's healing presence in my body-self, and the awareness of that experience. This mystical experience is within my own clay, needing discernment and dialogue.

The body is good. God created man and woman from the dust of the earth and God saw that we are very good. God became flesh, literally. Jesus touched women and men and children and was touched by children and men and women. Jesus was earthy. He wanted to vomit out people who were luke-warm, he used spittle to heal, he washed people's dirty feet, he touched leprosy skin. He was kissed and massaged by a woman of ill repute and was deeply moved by the experience, recognising her real love. He was not sexually repressed, squeamish or fastidious.

"A negative attitude to the body will usually lead to a negative, or at best an ambivalent, attitude to healing. Jesus' attitude to the body and healing was very different. He positively states that his healings of the body were signs of the Kingdom of God."

A negative attitude to the body will usually lead to a negative, or at best an ambivalent, attitude to healing. Jesus' attitude to the body and healing was very different. He positively states that his healings of the body were signs of the Kingdom of God. "The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are made clean..." (Lk 7:22) It is significant that Jesus' final words in Mark's Gospel are: "Go to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation.....These are the signs that will be associated with believers:.....they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover." (Mk 16:16 – 18) Do I welcome and discern the natural God-given life-force in my body that can be life-giving and healing for others, as Jesus did?

A rather extreme quotation from Jung may help to bring to the surface our underlying attitudes to the body. Before proceeding I would like to invite you again to pause.

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Stop for a moment. Become aware of your own earthiness..... of your feet on the floor, the weight of your body on the chair..... Relax your shoulders..... Allow your face, your whole body to smile.....

~

As you read the following quotation from Carl Jung try amidst the thoughts and feelings which come up to pay attention to how your body-self feels, to your gut reaction.

As a 12 year old schoolboy in Basel, Switzerland, Carl Jung had the courage, after days of agonising and torment, to allow the following scatological image to surface:

"I gathered all my courage as though I were about to leap forthwith into hell-fire, and let the thought come. I saw before me the cathedral, the blue sky, God sits on His golden throne, high above the world – and from under the throne an enormous turd falls upon the sparkling new roof, shatters it, and breaks the walls of the cathedral asunder." (Memories, Dreams, Reflections)

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Take a few moments to sit with your body feelings at the image of God on his throne evacuating onto the top of the cathedral and destroying it.....

Now imagine Jesus reading the quotation with you and ask him how he feels in his gut.....

Spend some time with this.....

Even as a boy, Jung found this scatological image redemptive. "I felt an enormous, indescribable relief. Instead of the expected damnation, grace had come upon me... I wept for happiness and gratitude." (Memories, Dreams, Reflections)

This experience of Jung's links with Jesus' teaching on ritual purity, "Can you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot make him unclean, because it does not go into his heart but through his stomach and passes out into the sewer? (Thus he pronounced all foods clean.)" (Mk 7:18 – 19)

Now imagine Jesus and the adult Jung talking as body-persons, in their full humanity, not just from the head up, but as embodied, sexual, instinctual and wounded people.

Spend some time with this.....

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Jung felt that Christianity, as it had been presented to him by his father, a Protestant minister, was too one-sided, too light, too good, too spiritual, and excluded instinct and matter, which were viewed as evil and diabolical. He believed Christianity needed to be balanced by evil, darkness, the feminine, instinct and matter. Wholeness involves the reconciliation of opposites. He wanted the churches to reconnect with the deep symbolism in their traditions, to the deep unconscious. As a reaction to the licentiousness of the Roman Empire, Christianity had become too spiritual.

Jung held that the Christian Trinity represents perfection but demonises the feminine, the body, the material and the irrational; it is too masculine and logically tidy. On the other hand Quaternity represents wholeness, including evil, the feminine, the irrational, matter, the body. Is our God big enough to embrace and integrate all that God has made? Am I open to embrace, learn from and integrate all that God has made?

"Perhaps we need to have compassion on ourselves and on our churches, to accept ourselves as we are in our embodied woundedness."

"Reflecting both on my own personal journey and on my accompaniment of others on theirs, it seems to me that many of us need encouragement and support to trust the body, to listen at a deep level to what the body wants and needs, to allow the Spirit to speak to us through the body."

Most of us like to feel in control, and we compulsively plan, worry, think. "But we learn not only through our heads, but also through our feet, hands, eyes and ears, through touch, through our entrails, through our hearts... through weariness, searching, movement, smell... Awareness of our own bodily-ness becomes the great teacher of life because at the same time that it thrusts us towards creativity and future, it makes us touch the limits of our vulnerability, our link with everyone and everything. Connected to the earth that our feet touch, we become clay with clay, water with water, wind with wind, fire with fire, human man and woman with the smell and the daily struggles of humanity, and so we can truly make our own what belongs to the other. You come to know and feel that you are a creature with the same chemical make-up and texture as the earth and the cosmos. You rejoice at the beauty of the palm trees and mourn over the poisonous vapour emanating from copper or carbon dioxide... Could it be true that we are body, or do we still doubt it?" (Quote by Carmen Margarita Fagot, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – www.rscjinternational.org)

Reflecting both on my own personal journey and on my accompaniment of others on theirs, it seems to me that many of us need encouragement and support to trust the body, to listen at a deep level to what the body wants and needs, to allow the Spirit to speak to us through the body. It is hard to let go of control, to go into the darkness of the body, to become vulnerable as a little child, so that the healing awareness of God's presence in every cell of our bodies can come to consciousness. This brings inner freedom, knowing in our bodies that we are loved by God.

Our churches are made up of women and men like you and me. If you and I have difficulty letting go of our compulsion to be in control, often repressing the bodily, the feminine, the instinctual, perhaps fearing these; if you and I have difficulty talking about this in our own lives, is it any wonder that our churches also experience the same difficulty and are ill at ease with what they cannot control or talk about?

Perhaps we need to have compassion on ourselves and on our churches, to accept ourselves as we are in our embodied woundedness. When we know in our entrails that God's compassion embraces the turd and the destruction, the darkness and the body, we can learn to open our body-

selves to healing, to rejoice that we are loved and lovely in our embodied woundedness, to know that we are one with our wounded brothers and sisters, with our wounded earth and cosmos. We form a single body that we long to see transformed, so that we become the Risen Body of Christ, glorious in our woundedness.

To conclude, I feel it is important to point out that there has always been a tradition in our churches which recognises the goodness of the body (1 Jn 1:1) and which integrates the body and healing into an incarnational Christian spirituality. I leave you with the thoughts of Symeon the New Theologian, Abbot of St. Maman in Constantinople (949 – 1022). who expressed this very beautifully in his poem reproduced here.

Carmel Byrne is a member of the retreat team at Garden Cottage Spirituality Centre, Kilgraston, in Bridge of Earn. Find out more at their website: www.gardencottagespirituality.org.uk

Her background is in education. She has specialised in contemporary spirituality that is attentive to the goodness of the body. She trained as a massage therapist and uses bio-spiritual focussing in conjunction with Ignatian spirituality. She is a Roman Catholic nun in an international congregation, the Society of the Sacred Heart.

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We awaken to Christ's body
As Christ awakens our bodies,
And my poor hand is Christ, he enters
My foot, and is infinitely me....
For if we genuinely love Him,
We wake up inside Christ's body
Where all our body, all over,
every most hidden part of it,
Is realized in joy as Him,
And he makes us, utterly, real,
And everything that is hurt, everything
That seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,
Maimed, ugly, irreparably
Damaged, is in him transformed
And recognised as whole, as lovely,
And radiant in His light.
We awaken as the Beloved
In every last part of our body.

Symeon the New Theologian,
Abbot of St. Maman, Constantinople

~

A Challenge to the Church of Scotland

Hilary Bridge gives her personal view on the need for the church to reconnect with a wider view of healing which challenges us all to release old patterns of thinking and relating. Moving to live in the centre of God's will in all areas of our personal and church life can release God's healing power to transform the life of our congregations.

Background

I was born in Scotland, baptised in the Church of Scotland and later became a member. I was also married there. After seven years my husband and I moved to the south of England but thirty years later, in response to a clear call, we returned to the north. We have now been back in Scotland for seven years and attend a rural parish church where I am an elder.

During our time in England, we became members and leaders in a United Reformed Church, a Baptist Church, and in the Church of England. In each of these churches we were warmly welcomed and our gifts and abilities were appreciated and used. We received sound, mainstream teaching, kindly pastoral care, encouragement, and many challenges. We were encouraged to pray, taught and pastored within Bible Study and Home Groups and wisely disciplined by kind and mature Christians. As a result we grew in our faith and Christian witness. And following on from this I became very involved in the ministry of healing and discipleship, both in these vibrant churches and far beyond.

Having experienced the fulfilment of being part of the living Body of Christ, I expected that the Church of Scotland would also have moved on, changed and developed from that which I knew as a teenager. Not a bit of it! So I have tried to understand why so many Church of Scotland congregations I have encountered appear to me to be dead in Christ and little more than Sunday social clubs for the 'respectable', middle-aged and elderly.

In contrast many churches outwith our tradition, and a few within it, are fruitful, alive, growing, and full of joy. Healing and prayer in all its forms is the norm. Why is that? And why is it different in so many Church of Scotland congregations? I offer these personal observations in the hope that, far from generating anger, they will stimulate an open debate that we may all grow through.

"... members may enjoy a 'private' faith and indeed reflect much of the nature of Jesus, but they lack the confidence and climate to speak of it."

A Wrong Focus

Over the last forty years the preaching and teaching in the Church of Scotland has emphasised 'social concern and responsibility' at the expense of helping people to develop a close and satisfying relationship with Jesus. Many churches have become activity-centred rather than Christ-centred. Unintentionally this has led to a wrong but unspoken belief in 'salvation by works' with all its consequences. From my experience the following examples spring to mind:

- Members enjoy a certain status in church through roles and responsibilities which they are then loathe to relinquish. This frustrates creativity, change and new growth, freedom and new life. It quenches the Spirit. It leads to stagnation.
- A small number of the 'in people' work frantically, apparently to please a distant and demanding God, with no time for quiet devotions; to knowing, loving and obediently following Jesus, which in itself brings healing. These power groups breed resentment all round, especially when biblical principals concerning the choice of church leaders is ignored.
- There is a culture where spiritual gifts such as teaching, evangelism, prayer and healing are under-valued and at times mocked. Anyone brave enough to refer to the Bible is likely to be labelled 'a holy Willie'! The need for all the gifts and talents within the Body of Christ to be in operation, remains unrecognised.
- Worship of the institution and traditions of the Church of Scotland, together with the cult of personality worship – often the minister – appears to be replacing the worship of Christ. Clearly, no minister has every gift, talent or ability, yet too often their congregations expect them to do everything. As a result the gifts of lay people remain unused. And if the minister's gifts lie in other directions, the needs of those who would benefit from a ministry of prayer and healing are neglected.
- If a minister is in fear for his/her job through challenging the opinions, wishes, and traditions of the Kirk Session, then they are unlikely to take the risks and time to develop a healing ministry. They may well cave in to the Session's wants rather than trying to meet their spiritual needs.
- There appears to be a lack of understanding as to what constitutes a 'successful' church. It seems to me that num-

“Many expect a single, miraculous physical event, not realising that healing concerns the whole person, can be painful and is a lifetime’s journey.”

bers on the role are seen as being important, rather than the maturity and quality of its Christian witness or the numbers of people actually attending worship. Activities and events are mostly concerned with raising money rather than drawing others into the family of God.

In recent years there has been a real shift and the training of new ministers now appears to give greater emphasis to developing the spiritual life of their congregations. But most elders have served their Kirk Sessions for thirty years or more. They are unaware of this change and of many other developments, and so often they find it difficult to adapt and are fearful of change. It seems that they are gripped by tradition, yet they serve in a church which should be forever Reforming.

Shallow Teaching and Little Discipling

- There has been a right emphasis on God’s love but without sufficient appreciation of the need to reverence Him.
- The importance of scripture, contemplation and prayer is undervalued.
- Many congregations have little knowledge about the different areas of Christian healing and the common aim of becoming more like Jesus.
- Many expect a single, miraculous physical event, not realising that healing concerns the whole person, can be painful and is a lifetime’s journey.
- There have been times when some practices within the Church have brought the healing ministry into disrepute.
- Our universal need for healing can be impeded by a lack of understanding of basic concepts of our faith, such as the need for dependence on God, sin and its consequences, forgiveness, repentance, obedience, holiness, Christian disciplines, listening to God, dying to self, and a respect for others and for the holy things of God.
- Pride and the fear of revealing their ignorance, and sometimes apathy, prevents members from correcting, deepening and refining their understanding of the Gospel through discussion and the many Bible Studies now readily available.

The result is that church members maintain their childish faith but never become mature disciples. They accept Jesus as Saviour but not as Lord. They lack the power and peace of the Holy Spirit and so fall away, disillusioned and disappointed. And so the church has become increasingly secular and less spiritual in its life and witness. It fails to provide that for which it was ordained. It is small wonder that congrega-

tions are dwindling as people turn to other sources in order to meet their spiritual needs.

Poor Christian Witness

Despite these poor foundations, members may enjoy a ‘private’ faith and indeed reflect much of the nature of Jesus, but they lack the confidence and climate to speak of it. The Scottish culture, its mores and attitudes, deter many from celebrating what Christ has done for them. In turn others are not encouraged to seek Him for themselves through prayer and healing.

Christians are taught that they should submit to the authority of those God has placed over them. At ordination elders promise to uphold the unity of the church. However, when the more powerful on a Kirk Session lack patience and compassion and refuse to support the minister, whom God has called, there can be deep divisions. They withdraw their co-operation, and may marginalize and bully their minister. But their witness and the atmosphere it engenders also drives people from the church. Sadly our Presbyteries can fail to act with Godly authority. Unscriptural and unacceptable behaviour by elders and members remains unchallenged and sin is swept under the carpet. The consequences of these sins, such as resentment, bitterness, maliciousness and rebellion, are buried alive and sadly may remain unhealed for generations.

Back to Basics

In my opinion the Church of Scotland would do well to take a long, hard look at society and at itself, get down on its knees and repent of following the ways of the world, rather than obeying the Great Commission.

‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them everything I have commanded you. And surely (if you do this) I am with you always to the end of the age.’

I pray that God will lead and guide each of us, as individuals and as Churches, to obey and fulfil that command,

Hilary Bridge was born and brought up in Scotland. She was educated at Morgan Academy in Dundee and at Southampton University. Her husband’s career led to her taking teaching posts and headships throughout the United Kingdom, finally becoming one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors for Schools in England. In her early forties she experienced a life changing encounter with Christ. As a result in 1993 she retired early to follow a call to the Ministry of Prayer and Healing. She enjoys teaching, leading healing courses, and retreats. She simply seeks to help people grow closer to Christ. She lives in Perthshire with her husband where they have a large garden, cook, read and enjoy music together.

The Deepest Mystery

Jim Pym draws on his many years of involvement in the healing ministry to explore what is meant by spiritual healing.

In a recent conversation about spiritual healing, reiki and other healing therapies, I was asked; “Well, what is the difference between spiritual healing and other ‘complementary therapies’? What is it that makes spiritual healing unique?” I was somewhat taken by surprise, and answered as best as I could, but having given the matter much thought and meditation, I realise that there is much more that I could have said.

Firstly, I would have to say that the question is wrongly worded. I do not regard spiritual healing as a complementary therapy. For me, it is a gift, a vocation, to which we are called. It is one of the Fruits of the Spirit. It is an essential part of our spiritual lives, and our journey of transformation. There are of course many Spiritual Gifts, and I do not say that healing is any greater – or lesser – than any of the others. All are needed to bring the ‘Commonwealth of Heaven’ to earth, and to complete the picture of creation. However, what I would call Spiritual Healing (note the capitals) is actually the fulfilment of all these gifts and the realisation of the Presence of the Divine as our very Life.

There are types of therapy which are called ‘spiritual’ – and I would not dare to say they are not – but this is not what I mean. To consider Spiritual Healing as a complementary therapy, it would have to be complementary to something. The only thing to which it might be said to be complementary is the conscious Presence of God, both in the life of the healer, and that of the patient. But that begs the question; it is not really what the questioner asked.

Elsewhere, I have stated that Spiritual Healing is not something we DO. It is something we BE! It is nothing less than an experience of total spiritual transformation. It affects body, mind, and spirit and reveals the Essential Oneness of these three. It then takes us even beyond this Oneness. The Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, talks about ‘The Godhead’ as being the Infinite which is really beyond all concepts. This is, for me, as good a description as we can get in words. True Spiritual Healing is a mystical experience, which affects the life pattern of those who receive it, and those who share it.

“True Spiritual Healing is a mystical experience, which affects the life pattern of those who receive it, and those who share it.”

A more recent Christian mystic, Henry Thomas Hamblin, founder of the *Science of Thought Review* (now known as New Vision) called it a ‘Divine Adjustment’.

Actually, HTH (as he is known) is really a good example to quote. There were many examples of his bringing healing to others through the depth of his awareness of the Divine, and there is a wonderful chapter on healing in his Spiritual Course, yet he would not have called himself a healer. Brother Mandus, founder of the *World Healing Crusade*, tells in his book *The Divine Awakening* of a time when he went to visit HTH, feeling absolutely exhausted after a very hectic week of services. Let him tell the story:

‘Mr Hamblin was in his office sitting in the Silence. He looked up as I entered. “Come and join me”, he said. So we went into the Stillness. And wave after wave of wondrous energy flooded into me. An hour later I resumed my journey, completely renewed in every way’.

“As human beings we do not know how to heal anything. It is the realised Presence of God that is the healing agency.”

Joel Goldsmith, another Christian mystic who had a world-wide healing ministry, tells in one of his books of a comparable occurrence while visiting HTH in Bosham. Joel’s whole work (known as *The Infinite Way*) grew out of a similar experience when his whole life was transformed by a spiritual healing from a Christian Science practitioner. This one incident led him from the life of a businessman to becoming a world-renowned spiritual healer and teacher. In all his writings, Joel also emphasised that we do not do the healing. Indeed, we cannot do the healing. As human beings we do not know how to heal anything. It is the realised Presence of God that is the healing agency. “When the Inner Voice speaks” he tells us, “then the earth itself can melt.”

Many other people tell of similar incidents when in the company of those who really know the Divine Presence, whatever tradition they may come from. People have reported healings in meditation with mystics of all traditions. Another good example is Ramana Maharshi, the sage of South India. It is said that healing miracles repeatedly took place around him, yet he never made any claims to be able to heal, and actually discouraged his disciples from developing specific healing gifts, instead constantly advising them to know

"... it is this 'Not Knowing' which leads me into the deep silence, and reveals that here is a mystery which is really beyond understanding."

themselves, through which they would experience the Divine. It did not matter to him what religion a person followed; his message was that the Self (God) is One and beyond all man-made divisions.

None of this is meant to disparage those who work within the complementary therapy field, or indeed, orthodox medicine. There are many wonderful and gifted people working to relieve human suffering through these areas of understanding. I do not have their knowledge, and cannot know their motives, so I cannot claim to speak about what they are or what they are not. And, in one sense, I know even less about Spiritual Healing. But it is this 'Not Knowing' which leads me into the deep silence, and reveals that here is a mystery which is really beyond understanding.

It is this mystery, this deep mystery, this incomprehensible mystery that is true Spiritual Healing. As such, I have no control over it. It is total surrender to what Quakers call 'That of God Within', and the awareness that it is only That of God in me that can perceive That of God in others. The eyes cannot see It, the ears cannot hear It, the senses cannot apprehend It.

In the words of Walter Lanyon, "When you see God in a patient, you bring about what is called a healing. But in fact, you do nothing but recognise a fact of existence".

What a mystery! Above all, trust in the slow work of God

Jim Pym has been involved with the spiritual healing ministry for over 40 years, both as a member of the Friends Fellowship of Healing/Quaker Spiritual Healers and the National Federation of Spiritual Healers. He is the author of *Listening to the Light; how to bring Quaker simplicity and integrity into our lives* (Rider books) and *What Kind of God, What Kind of Healing* (4th edition; Friends Fellowship of Healing). He regularly leads healing retreats and workshops, both in Scotland and in the South of England. Jim serves on the Executive Committee of the Christian Fellowship of Healing.

Patient Trust

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you,
your ideas mature gradually – let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit,
gradually unfolding within you will be.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing
that His hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The Healing Ministry

A Sign of Our Difference

David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, celebrates the Healing Ministry as a way of engaging with the painful and unwanted difficulties we face in life. The development of healing also provides a distinctive point for contact between churches and wider society.

‘So does your faith make a difference?’

That is one of the key challenges which secular society puts to us – we need to have an answer. Otherwise our faith risks becoming a pietistic and privatised part of our lives. It’s part of the way in which tolerance and indifference meet in today’s society. Faith becomes, ‘If that’s what you want, that’s fine. But don’t bother me with it.’ Without meaning to, we find ourselves colluding with the view that faith is a private thing and that we should not expect it to make any measurable difference to anything.

I’ve stated the issue rather starkly. That’s because I want to show how I think that a recovery and development of Healing Ministry is one of the most important ways in which faith challenges the secular society.

I spent nearly 30 years in congregational ministry and nearly 20 as a Hospital Chaplain. It surprised me to find that healing ministry gradually moved ‘centre stage’. In my parish, we had a fortnightly Healing Prayer Group and regular Healing Services. I loved my ministry as a Hospital Chaplain because of the contact which it gave me with all kinds of people at critical moments in their lives.

You will have heard the phrase “stuff happens”. Stuff happens in peoples lives. People become ill. People are bereaved. They become unemployed. Their relationships become difficult. Often there is no reason that they can see. Stuff happens – it shakes their confidence and trust in the reliability and

“... a recovery and development of Healing Ministry is one of the most important ways in which faith challenges the secular society.”

goodness of life. People search for meaning and want to know why. And then there is the generalised feeling of disappointment and sadness which some people carry around. I can hear Frank Sinatra singing, ‘Regrets, I’ve had a few ...’

For me, the ministry of prayer and healing became one of the ways in which faith could ‘make a difference.’ Sometimes I would sit with distressed families in hospital – until the

moment arrived when I would say, ‘Maybe we should pray together...’ With my parishioners whom I came to know deeply over many years, prayer and healing ministry was the way we engaged with the sadnesses and the losses of life.

“With my parishioners whom I came to know deeply over many years, prayer and healing ministry was the way we engaged with the sadnesses and the losses of life.”

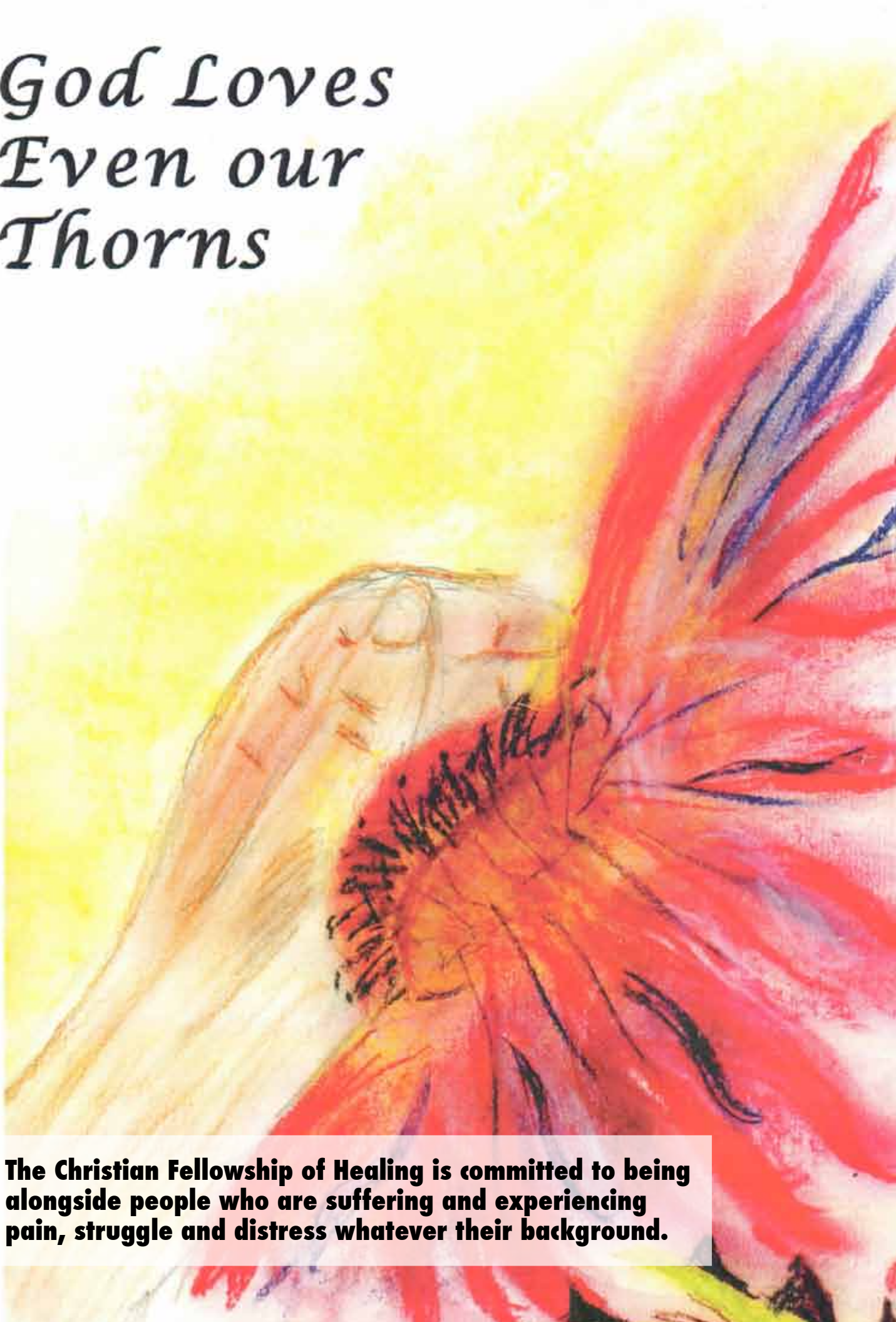
Those years of congregational ministry were spent in Northern Ireland – which was itself a sick society. It needed healing in its relationship with its history and in the internal relationships of people and communities with one another. To live and work there was to feel powerless to deal with the forces of division and violence – but Healing Ministry offered a way of engaging creatively and spiritually with those sometimes dark forces.

So I celebrate Healing Ministry. I celebrate it as a way of engaging with stuff that happens; as a way of engaging with things which are a source of regret in our lives. I hope that it will develop as an important part of the ministry of our congregations and of what we offer to our society.

The Most Reverend David Chillingworth was ordained as Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane in 2005. Bishop David grew up in Northern Ireland and after studying the classics in Dublin and Oxford he trained for the ministry at Ripon College, Cuddesdon.

Ordained in Belfast in 1976, much of his working life has been spent at the heart of the Northern Ireland conflict. His work in parish ministry was consistently focused on the challenge of reconciliation and the problems of sectarianism. Since moving to Scotland he has become a regular broadcaster on BBC Radio Scotland’s ‘Thought for the Day’. He was elected the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church in 2009.

God Loves Even our Thorns

A watercolor illustration of a hand holding a thorny branch. The hand is rendered in soft, blended tones of pink, orange, and yellow, with visible brushstrokes. The branch is dark brown with several sharp, black thorns. The background is a bright, textured yellow. The overall style is soft and expressive, with visible watercolor textures and colors.

The Christian Fellowship of Healing is committed to being alongside people who are suffering and experiencing pain, struggle and distress whatever their background.

The Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland) is an interdenominational Christian Fellowship, bound together by a commitment to offer a ministry of listening and healing prayer. The Fellowship:

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

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

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

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

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

What we offer

We are ordinary people and we believe that it is ordinary people Christ calls to be His instruments. We welcome people from all faiths or none to join us in our regular programme of:

- **Small Groups Ministry.** We offer a welcome to all individuals and somewhere to come which has an atmosphere of healing.
- **Ministry to Individuals.** We offer quiet, confidential, unhurried listening, and where appropriate the ministry of scriptural prayer, laying-on of hands and the sacraments of anointing and Holy Communion.
- **Outreach.** We support and encourage churches in developing and maintaining healing ministry by visits, workshops, our leaflets and the events we run.
- **Prayer Research.** We seek to make links between healing within churches and healing within the medical profession.

We would be delighted if you could join us – further details of our meetings can be found on the CFH website, or we would be glad to discuss things with you over the phone or by email.

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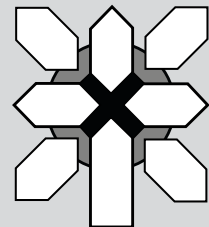
Contributions Please!

This is the second edition of a new publication designed to stimulate discussion and debate on the relationship between prayer and healing – their place in churches and their role in current society. We seek to network interest both in the theological implications and the practical outworkings of prayer and healing.

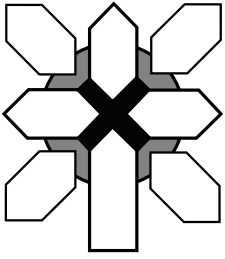
And so we welcome any comments, insights, reflections and stories you have to contribute on this theme or in response to the articles in this edition.

Our next planned publication date is November 2011.

Please send any submissions (or if you would like to discuss a possible article for a future edition) to the office at the Christian Fellowship of Healing, email: office@cfhscotland.co.uk tel: 0131 225 2401.



Please note that some changes may be necessary to letters and articles submitted for publication. Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Christian Fellowship of Healing.



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.
