

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.

Prayer research

by Anne Douglas (Chair 2004 – 2009)

The Royal College of Psychiatrists set-up a [Special Interest Group in Spirituality & Psychiatry](#) in 1999, to provide a forum for psychiatrists to explore the influence of major religions. They now have a website www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college on which they post a number of papers (see under publications section).

One such paper is 'Scientific Evidence for the Efficacy of Prayer' by retired consultant neuropsychiatrist, Peter Fenwick. This provides a good summary of current research into the effectiveness of intercessory prayer. Fenwick looks at the first good quality trial that was conducted in 1988 in a US coronary care unit. Patients were divided into two groups: one group that would receive the usual medical care (the control group) and the other that would receive the usual medical care plus prayers (the active group). Names of patients in the active group were given to a prayer group who were asked to pray for their quick recovery, without complications. When the two groups were compared, the active group showed a five-fold reduction in the use of antibiotics and a three-fold reduction in the occurrence of a common lung disorder.

Other studies cited by Fenwick are in a similar vein – with prayers being said for those with a specific medical condition (including infertility and alcoholism). He concludes from all these studies that "...there are sufficient studies now to show that prayer can work and the evidence suggests that the presence of prayer groups in a hospital setting should be considered" (p3).

What also becomes clear from this overview is that all the research is being carried out by US universities and hospitals; the UK has contributed little to this field. A useful direction for any UK research could be to explore prayer issues which have relevance to churches and others who provide intercessory prayer. This might, for example, include comparing the effectiveness of prayers offered alone with those offered in groups or specific prayer request compared to a 'thy will be done' style of prayer.

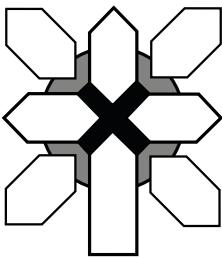
Former CFH Resources can be found at:

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

Before such studies are considered it would probably be beneficial for some basic information to be gathered. I am putting together a questionnaire to be sent to local churches to find out what sort of intercessory prayer their members offer (out with Sunday services). This will provide me with some of the information I need to hopefully carry out a small piece of research looking at what intercessors do, think and feel whilst praying on behalf of others. Results from such a study could, in turn, be used to inform larger pieces of work so that the 'type' or 'style' of prayers offered in a research project, are ones regularly offered by intercessors.

Thoughts or comments

If you have any thoughts or comments on prayer research please [contact Anne Douglas c/o 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.
