

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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## Hand prayers

By Jenny Williams (Chaplain 1997-2012)

*Praying through the week using the body not words.*

One way of praying without words is by movement or gesture. We all know some prayer movements yet rarely think of the movement itself as prayer. Simply to put your palms together is already a prayer without words. The movement expresses intention, direction of life, hope and trust in God. You can create your own prayers by using your hands.

### **Sunday: Maker of Heaven And Earth – Creation**

Sit and do nothing except be aware of all that is going on in your body. You breathe without thinking about it, your heart beats without you controlling it. Use your hands to help you be aware of your breath and your heartbeat. Feel the movement of your breathing by placing a hand or hands on the area of your diaphragm or abdomen. Feel the rhythm of your heart in many places - such as over or near your heart, the wrist pulse, the neck pulse. These natural rhythms can be very comforting. This is an experience that can lead to praise, wonder and worship, and can be a comfort when life around you is difficult, distressing or agitated.

### **Monday: Birth – Incarnation**

Start with the traditional prayer position of palms together at roughly the level of your heart. Begin with an awareness that your heart is where love is understood to reside, the place from which love is born. Open your palms to God with or without words. Realise that God is loving and accepting you just as you are and is awakening new birth, new possibilities within you. Experiment with this gesture, repeating it in your own time.

### **Tuesday: Suffering**

Gestures can be used to get in touch with problems in our lives and then we can release them to God. The gesture of clenching and releasing your hands can be used in the following way. Think of a situation which causes

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[www.emmaushouse-edinburgh.co.uk](http://www.emmaushouse-edinburgh.co.uk)

you suffering, such as one that makes you anxious and tense, one that causes you pain and distress, or something that makes you angry. Hold this situation prayerfully and clench your fists. Gradually open your hands to release the tension, the pain, the emotions into God's hands, God's love, God's care.

## **Wednesday: Resurrection**

God takes us from where we are now into newness of life. Make this a prayer by moving your hands forwards as if they were feet going one step after another. Hold your hands at whatever level in the body is comfortable or meaningful, from your heart, from the area of your diaphragm or from your abdomen. Experience the sense of being moved forward - pulled, encouraged, called into new things. Allow a prayer to come from within and/or hold in your mind a situation where you want God's help to enter into the unknown. If you have difficulty moving on in any situation, ask yourself "How can Christ help me to keep going?" and imagine Him there; for you.

## **Thursday: Forgiveness**

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow". Psalm 51 v 7. Use a gentle face-washing gesture as a way to help the reality of forgiveness suffuse your being. Even when we have said words of forgiveness in our heads sometimes it is difficult to let the experience of forgiveness seep into our bodies and hearts. Find for yourself further movements that speak to your body and let you begin to digest the reality that God does forgive you, loves you and offers you the gift of being cleansed and of beginning again.

## **Friday: Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit brings release, freedom, and energy for life. The following movements can help you discover the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit offering you freedom and lightness of spirit.

Hold your hands together, closed but not clenched, and then open them as if you were letting a little bird go free.

Allow your hands (and your arms too, if you want) to make a gesture as if you were flying.

Open your hands and arms in a gesture of receiving.

## **Saturday: The Church**

The Church is a place where we both receive from Christ and are drawn together with the family of God locally and internationally. Here we receive in communion. Try holding your hands in the form of a cup, and let yourself receive God's love. If it is meaningful for you bring your hands to your mouth to imagine receiving the wine. Then let your hands move as they want to, giving praise and reaching out to others. Your hands

may move to cover your heart, they may want to move upwards and outwards, they may want to open. Experiment with different possibilities and consider how much we use our hands to convey love and to build community and caring.

## **Some further comments**

With these movements some people find it helpful to sing at the same time or play music which creates an atmosphere of prayfulness.

Try using the movements for several minutes at a time, say five to ten minutes. Notice and reflect on any effects on your body, emotions, or thinking. Speak to God, most especially if you encounter resistance in yourself or difficulty in continuing with any of the movements. God accepts you with your inner resistances and any difficulties you find in receiving all the love that is being offered to you. Do not condemn yourself but rather explore with God what you are learning about yourself. Ask and trust that the next step is being prepared for you to help you open up more deeply to the wonder of unconditional love - God's gift to each one of us. Remember, the movement itself IS a prayer. There is no need for words although they may arise spontaneously. What is important is that you get used to the experience that the feelings in the body can be themselves a prayer without words.

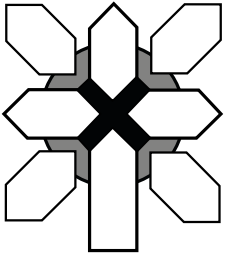
These gestures can be as meaningful through your imagination as actually doing them. So they can go with you wherever you are, even if you are in a context where it is not appropriate to express them physically.

It is often helpful to have someone you know to discuss and reflect with you the experience of this way of prayer. This provides an opportunity to say what you are learning and so deepen awareness of your own growth.

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# 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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