

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.

Healing times and spaces

By Jenny Williams (Chaplain 1997 – 2012)

This explains ways of praying together in small groups which we, at the Christian Fellowship of Healing, used regularly and experienced as healing for ourselves and others. Please use them and adapt them to your local situation and may the Holy Spirit guide you to find ways relevant to your context to allow the healing love of God to flow.

Praying in small groups through silence – with the Bible

Format

1. Opening song.
2. Short prayer.
3. Silence to gather and prepare ourselves (5 mins). A Psalm can be read as a focus.
4. Gospel reading.
5. Silence (15-20 mins).
6. Sharing (10-20 mins).
Here people are invited to offer, from their hearts, what God has spoken to them in this time of silence. (Please note THIS IS NOT A DISCUSSION – any response to each other should be in the form of brief comments.) This will last between ten and twenty minutes.
7. Intercessions (5-10 mins).
A time of five or ten minutes for prayers for other people. This is done in silence or in BRIEF spoken prayer.
8. Close
We close by standing together in a circle, holding hands, with our eyes open, saying the words of the Grace to each other.

This is the format we used regularly on a Tuesday morning 9.45 am.

Former CFH Resources can be found at:

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

Praying in small groups through silence – with the imagination

'Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm'

The purpose of any time set aside to be silent with, or for, God is to allow ourselves to hear the voice of God within ourselves. Any object, or word we use, is simply a tool to help us to be attentive to the 'still, small voice'.

In our normal Thursday morning group, we came together and settled down after a simple prayer to God to reveal Himself to us, and without further introduction a short reflection on a text or verse of a hymn was offered.

What we did was to repeat it – or add to it – every ten or fifteen minutes. All this lasted about half an hour. Often we had a piece of paper with one or two lines of the reflection on it so that people had it in their hands to help their concentration. People could sit with their eyes open or closed whichever was more helpful for them.

Examples of some are:

1. 'I love you – I call you by your name'
2. 'O Lord my heart is ready, my heart is ready'
3. 'In You we live and move – in You we have our being'
4. I am from love, of love, for love'
5. 'Thou creating, redeeming and sustaining God'

Sometimes we contemplated a gift of the creation – a stone, a spring flower or autumn leaves. We used readings and prayers from Eddie Askew and David Adam, verses from hymns and poems, ideas from the Iona Community and the Celtic tradition. Occasionally we ended by sharing what we experience during the time of silence.

Normally we finished with a time of intercession and finally we closed by standing together in a circle, holding hands, with our eyes open, saying the words of the Grace to each other.

This is the format we use regularly on a Thursday morning 9.45 am.

Praying in small groups through silence – breathing, moving, prayer

Sit comfortably, check you are relaxed, and begin by offering this time to God.

Usually one person guided the group enabling the others to become more

attentive to their breath and/or heartbeat and then leading people in a simple gesture of prayer with hands allowing a different way of listening to what is within us, a different beginning place for prayer. They will say something like:

Bring your awareness to your breath. It is often helpful to take a couple of deep breaths to start with. After that simply breathe normally and observe how your breath travels up and down the trunk of your body. Some people find it helpful to have one or both hands on their belly or on their chest so that they connect strongly with the physical movement. Others prefer to focus on their breath going in and out of their nostrils.

And now:

1. TAKE a breath
2. ALLOW a breath
3. Allow a SILENT breath
4. Allow a LOVING breath

Continue with the 'loving breath' feeding you, nurturing you, offering you the gift of life every moment. If it is helpful to you, you may want to say a prayer to yourself every time you breathe in, and every time you breathe out. You might, for example, on the in-breath say: 'Thank you for the gift of life', and on the out-breath: 'Thank you that I can relax into your loving Presence all around me'.

Hand movements

There are several very simple hand movements using traditional gestures of prayer. For example, place your palms together somewhere around your chest area and simply open and close your hands in a spirit of prayer, asking that God open your heart. Again, if it is helpful to you, you can use words to accompany these movements. You are encouraged to experiment with this and to discover how powerful it is to keep on repeating these movements especially when you feel like stopping. Speak to God and see if you can find words to express why you are resisting continuing with this prayer of openness. This may lead to your being able to voice some of the inner resistances you feel and share them with our God of love.

Another example of praying with your hands is to start with your hands in an open receptive position on your knees and then either raise them up in a gesture of praise or bring them into your heart again. As above, form your own prayers to accompany the movement and explore what thoughts, feelings or sensations arise, if any.

Normally we finished with about ten minutes for any sharing or reflection which emerges. Then we had a time of intercession.

This is the format we use regularly on a Thursday afternoon 2 pm.

Praying For Each Other

This section offers simple formats as guidelines for small groups of people praying together for one another.

Praying for each other through silence

(for three to five people normally)

Some people will be familiar with this way of praying for each other and, listening to God for each other. For some of you this will probably be new. Please be sensitive to one another and support one another in your small group.

What we do is pray for one another in turn. Each person will have a few minutes when the others pray for them, hold them in God's love . . . God's embrace . . . God's light. . . If this is new for you, it can sometimes be helpful to imagine the person prayed for being held in God's light and to say a brief prayer for them. Then simply wait. Don't try to DO anything. Just wait and see if the words of a hymn, or a picture or a text of Scripture, or a feeling or any words come to you. Then at the appropriate moment, share simply what came to you – NOT what you think it means – and offer this to the person being prayed for as a gift. If you have heard something important for them, God will help them understand what it means.

Here, step by step, is what we ask you to do in your small groups:

1. Someone takes responsibility for keeping time.
2. You will allow between three and five minutes silent prayer for each person in your group.
3. Three to five minutes when you share together what you sense God has given you as a gift for the person being prayed for. (please note that this sharing IS NOT A DISCUSSION, but simply offering to each other what you receive from God)
4. One or two minutes for each person being prayed for to make any brief comments in response.
5. You do this for each person in your group and then close together with some form of communal prayer. You may choose to do this in silence together or to say brief prayers about the sort of things that have been shared already and maybe it would be good if one of you finishes by asking God to continue with the work that He has begun in each of you and ask Him to reveal more of His will in the coming days.

This normally takes thirty to forty minutes for three or four people.

PLEASE NOTE THAT WHAT IS SHARED IS CONFIDENTIAL

Praying for each other – with just one other person

Find someone with whom you are glad to share in prayer. Sit in silence together for an agreed length of time, each holding the other up before God in an imaginative way. Then, in turn, share whatever may have come in the silence. It seems best not to discuss what each has received for the other, from God; rather, sit together in silence for a further short period of time allowing what has been said to be received and giving thanks. A variation on the above is for nothing to be said at all, allowing all the praying and sharing with each other to take place in silence. Again, give thanks.

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Praying for each other – for groups of three or four

Each person takes it in turn to express a need, physical or other, of some kind. Then, after a short or longer period of silence, the others will one by one pray for the person in need out loud. The process is repeated until everyone has been prayed for.

PLEASE NOTE THAT WHAT IS SHARED IS CONFIDENTIAL

Two forms of prayer for larger groups

The group sit in a circle close enough to comfortably hold hands. People then either hold hands or place the right hand on the left shoulder of their neighbour. Then everyone prays silently for the person on their right. After three or four minutes the group leader may say 'Lord, hear our prayers'.

The silent time of prayer is then repeated, but with each person laying their left hand on their neighbour's right shoulder, and praying for that person.

This time of group prayer may be ended with everyone stretching open hands into the centre of the group, the group leader saying: 'Let all give thanks: let us say the grace together . . . 'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ...'

Alternatively people sit close together in a circle, with or without holding hands. Agree together how long you will pray, we suggest somewhere between five and twenty minutes. Pray in silence; everyone has the opportunity to ask for prayer by simply saying their name out loud; if desired with a brief sentence of specific need. The ending can be as above.

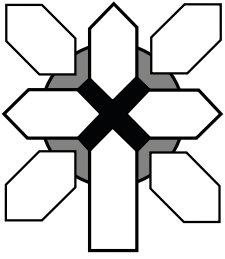
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Opening prayer

Father God,
We ask Your blessing upon this healing time.
Open our eyes that we may see new things.
Open our ears to hear what You have to say to us.
Open our hearts to Your wisdom and understanding.
Give us the courage to look at difficult things.
Give us the grace to face what holds us back.
Bring us sensitivity to listen to You and each other.
Bring us the wisdom to know
when to speak and when to be silent - surrounded by Jesus' love.
Amen.

Closing prayer

We give You thanks, Giver of Life,
and ask that whatever has been planted in our hearts will grow. We trust
You, Holy Spirit, to speak into our memories
anything we have lived today that will continue to bring us life.
Living God, enfold us.
Light of Christ, guide us and open our hearts to listen.
Your Wind and flame, Holy Spirit, enliven us.
Amen.



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.
