

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.

We are healing all the time

How can healing be seen as a more normal part of the individual Christian life and the life of our churches?

By Jenny Williams (Chaplain 1997-2012)

We are healing all the time. Healing is a natural process that is a component part of our creation. When we cut ourselves we heal; when we face emotional loss there is a growing process we enter into which then naturally unfolds and over time brings resolution. Healing is built into our physical and emotional being. Our physical survival depends upon normal healing processes that happen all the time. The work of doctors and nurses clearly relies on these processes which sustain and continue in the body after procedures like surgery.

If God has created us so that healing is going on all the time, in our physical body and in our emotional being, then all the time God is calling us to greater wholeness, more abundant living, greater freedom and all of this is embraced in the biblical concept of healing. One of the words translated as healing is often also translated as salvation.

The healing ministry seen in this way is thus an invitation to all of us to realise the potential that God has planted within us.

Here are two texts which support and guide this way of looking at healing. The first is from Jeremiah 31:31-34. In verse 33 God says "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts". Apparently this can also be translated as "I will plant my law in their hearts and place it in their guts". The sense is clearly that the law of God is within us, and in all parts of our minds, hearts and guts. So the potential to know God's call that "I will be their God and they will be my people" (v33) is within us and so accessible to each one of us. Many people would say that experiencing this truth is the essence of the healing ministry.

This deep inner connection to God that we see in the Old Testament is echoed in the New Testament where we see that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit can and do bring transformation to peoples' lives. This is seen most

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intensely in the miracle stories yet also has a gradual quality which can be seen in Jesus' daily encounters with the disciples. Both intense and gradual healing is expressed in Paul's descriptions of the Risen Christ bringing new life, for example in 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come".

In a similar way to a cut healing, or grief resolving, God is placing words in our hearts and events in our lives which have the potential to heal us of our wounds, to help us live the reality that we are "new creations" and that we can have abundant life and freedom. Healing need not be restricted to when we are obviously physically or emotionally ill; healing is a choice to respond to God's inner call to each of us to discover more abundant life. The question is "Are we listening to God?" or perhaps more accurately "How can we listen to God and create healing times and spaces in our individual and church lives?"

How easily healing happens depends to a large extent on our reactions. If we have a wound we need to wash and protect it so that it will heal easily. If we face a trauma or grief we need to give time and space to accepting our reactions and coming to terms with what has happened. In a similar way I suggest that we need to make time to listen to the healing words of God and to discover a Presence within us, the Holy Spirit working within us, leading us into fuller life, into the healing we need in order to grow into all that we can be.

Some of these times and spaces will be on our own, some will be formal acts of worship, some will be informal, some will be part of a regular discipline and some will occur spontaneously. Explore for yourself what you already do in the way of taking time and finding space to allow God's healing to work in you. For, if we take seriously the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, guiding us, showing us more clearly God's law within us, then all of us already know or have the beginnings of knowing what is healing for us. We are all different. The Holy Spirit knows what each of us needs. The law planted in our hearts is tailor-made for each of us.

How can the healing spaces we have be places of transformation for us? One of the New Testament words translated as healing is "sozo", a verb which originally means "to make safe". I suggest this is crucial - if we are to heal we must feel safe and loved so that we can bear to look at the wounds and pains of our lives or those we have carried for other people. We need contexts and people whom we trust and who trust us and who trust God in us to give birth to new life.

If healing is natural and normal and part of every Christian's life, why on earth is it not more obvious to us? What gets in the way of our being aware that healing is being offered to us all the time?

I offer a few suggestions as starting points. One is that for many of us it is hard for us to accept that we are restricted, it is hard to admit the unresolved and painful parts of our lives; it is scary to open up to face personal hurts or family struggles.

We have become used, this century, to being aware of the possibility of people being brainwashed either by political regimes or by cults - we are less aware that all of us are brainwashed by our society, culture and even the church. We are conditioned by our education, or lack of it, we are limited by what other people have expected of us, and at one level of our being we have accepted all these constraints.

We have the possibility of freedom by learning to accept the fact that we are less than we can be and also that we have the potential to be 'more' than we are now.

It is hard for us to understand that for most of us the vast majority of our identity is still firmly attached to family and our role in society. In the early stages of our lives this is both normal and healthy but if we are to be "born again" we will need to lessen our attachment to family, letting go of caring about how other people see us in order that we experience ourselves truly as children of God. As we do this we are freed of the negative patterns we have inherited from our growing up and we reabsorb the good aspects of our upbringing into our new identity in Christ.

In addition many of us have experienced habitual fear and rejection from unresolved childhood incidents which still hurt us. These habits of thought and emotions can be described as addictive in nature and therefore are by definition difficult to acknowledge and even harder to break. One way of understanding the "cost of discipleship" is to let go of defining ourselves by our family, by our work and by our achievements.

We need to take seriously the presence of the Holy Spirit helping us. A German mystic Mechtild of Magdeburg says, "God has given me the power to change my ways, heal the broken, loose the bound, live welcoming to all". God gives us the power to change. If you want to begin or to deepen this healing process within you, here is a way to get started:

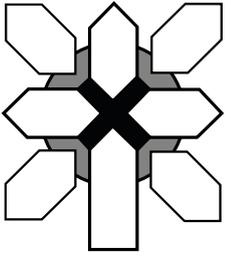
First, consider an area of your own life which holds you back, a physical pain, an emotional wound, a difficult recurring thought, or self-image that restricts your potential. Place this into Christ's hands.

Ask His help to connect this with one or two of the miracle stories; if that is not clear simply choose a favourite one of yours. Over the next few days and weeks whenever the area of your life in need of healing comes to your awareness, let Christ make connections for you through the miracle story allowing God's miraculous healing love to flow across the centuries to bring you the transformation you seek.

In this way we are being made into a new creation. It is important to notice the differences between our "old" way and the "new" way, not just with our heads, but in the whole of us, our thoughts, feelings and physical being, so that we experience God's love right through us and know we are children of God. If we experience ourselves as loved children of God, we find freedom and joy and we discover that we are healing all the time...

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Credo

used by the

Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland)

The Christian Fellowship of Healing:

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

Prayer is the means through which we believe the Holy Spirit can use us, here and now, to continue the practice of healing incarnated by Jesus.

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

We accept that health and healing can and does come through medicine, counselling, complementary therapies and other means. This does not negate the real contribution of prayer, rather it upholds the role of prayer to support individuals to listen to the Holy Spirit within them, guiding them, facilitating health and healing.

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

We acknowledge that suffering faces us all and challenges our understanding and belief. Yet we can, with integrity, offer reassurance of God's loving presence accompanying every human being as seen in Christ who has shown us the capacity of God to be vulnerable even to the point of death. Living in and from this truth of the ever present loving God we respond as authentically as possible from our hearts, and we can offer an understanding of the range of meaning of healing which includes miracles.

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

This includes an intense personal encounter with Jesus; affirmation of the individual as a person of value, physical healing, restoration of meaning and purpose, social inclusion; as well as challenge to those in power; confronting rigid thinking and lack of compassion. We believe all these components are aspects of the transforming love of God and reflect the wholeness Jesus calls us into. We see healing as deeply linked with the Christian tradition of vocation through which the living God calls each of us to discover and fulfil our potential.

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

This links the transforming love that effects miracles with the transforming love that brings the disciples through their fear and resistances into their ministry of apostleship. Our experience is that the practice of prayer in small groups, with a commitment to sharing and listening, enables those of us offering healing prayer to grow in ourselves and in our capacity to experience and share God's love. This includes the reality that some people have a gift of healing and a greater capacity than average to bring about healing.
