

Healing Prayer

*A "How To" Guide For
Prayer Ministry Teams*

Anglican
Fellowship of
Prayer (Canada)



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"If you are having trouble, you should pray. And if you are feeling good, you should sing praises. If you are sick, ask the church leaders to come and pray for you. Ask them to put olive oil on you in the name of the Lord. If you have faith when you pray for sick people, they will get well. The Lord will heal them and if they have sinned, they will be forgiven."
James 5:13-15

*In the name of God and trusting in His might alone,
Receive Christ's healing touch to make you whole.
May Christ bring wholeness of body, mind and spirit,
Deliver you from every evil, and give you His peace.
Amen*

*O Lord and heavenly Father, who dost relieve those
who suffer in soul and body; Stretch forth thine
hand, we beseech thee, to heal thy servant [Name]
and to ease his/her pain; that by thy mercy he/she
may be restored to health of body and mind, and
show forth his/her thankfulness in love to thee and
service to his/her fellow man; through Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen
[Book of Common Prayer, Pg. 578]*

HEALING PRAYER

This booklet is intended as a source of information and ideas for those who are interested and those who might already be involved in Healing Prayer.



In these brief guidelines, the focus is on the members of a prayer team praying with people who come to a healing service and present themselves for healing prayer. This is often done in the context of a Eucharist. Most of what is written here may be applied as well to a team visiting and praying with the home-bound, the hospitalized, or those in nursing homes, or in any situation or place when a person has asked for healing prayer.

The suggestions in this booklet should be adapted to the circumstances of the time and place, and all the stages or steps outlined herein do not necessarily have to be included. They are included here for completeness and attempt to represent an ideal situation. For example, it may be that if the healing prayer is carried out within the context of a regular Eucharist by one or more designated prayer teams, time considerations may dictate shorter times spent.

Healing prayer is perhaps best summarized in the phrase: “Christian healing is Jesus Christ meeting a person at his/her point of greatest need.” Jesus does the healing, not us. Those praying are channels of God’s healing power and love. The “Gift of Healing” is given to those for whom we pray, not to those who do the praying.

Christian healing involves the well being of the whole person: body; mind; and spirit. Often spiritual and emotional healing is needed before physical healing can take place. In praying for healing we are praying for wholeness.

Jesus said: “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” (Matt. 10:7-8).

A few precautions:

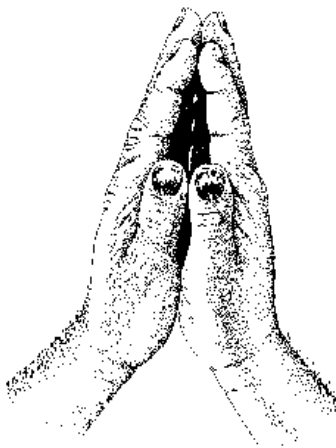
1. A lack of wholeness or a dis-ease is not a punishment, and it is not a “cross we have to bear”. The Cross is something we take up willingly to further God’s Kingdom, not a burden thrust upon us.
2. A question all of us ask ourselves at one time or another is why aren’t all those for whom we pray healed? The truth is that we do not know the answer to this question. We do know that God’s desire is that all of us be whole, but we don’t know how or when He will accomplish this.
3. It is important to remember that prayer for healing is *not* a time for counseling. People come for prayer, not for advice. If the team discerns that counseling is necessary, the person should be referred to an appropriate professional.
4. Confidentiality is important. Nothing shared with the person being prayed for should be communicated outside of the team without permission.

SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER MINISTRY TEAMS

Individual Preparation

Before praying with a team, each individual team member should prepare. We need to be "in touch" with *The Healer* before we presume to pray in His name for the Spirit's gift of healing. So, be sure your own slate is clean:

- † Do some brief self-examination;
- † Confess your sins and shortcomings;
- † Accept God's forgiveness;
- † Add some thanksgiving and praise; and,
- † Finally, re-commit yourself to the Christian walk generally and to the ministry of healing in particular, ending with a simple prayer like, "Use me, Lord, as you will for the healing of your people."



Pray in Teams

It is highly desirable that you pray as a part of a team. Why a team? Jesus sent his followers out in twos. He promised His presence where two or three are gathered in His name. So, it would seem that two is the normal minimum, three may be better. If both males and females are to be prayed for, it is best to have a team made up of a male and female. In any case it is unwise to have a team of two males praying over a female or two females praying over a male.

Prayer teams must be authorized by a deacon, priest or bishop, to whom they are accountable. They should not operate on their own.

Experience has shown that if the team is to be effective, its members need to know and trust each other, with some feeling for each other's strengths and weaknesses. Trust among team members is essential. Remember, the team is *a team*. It is best if no one member dominate or decide how the team is to function, nor should one member do all the audible praying.

Team Preparation

Then, in prayer, get in touch with our Lord, the Head even of this small part of His Body. In addition to some praise together, the team needs to be aware of some possible (probable!) vulnerability. So, ask for the protection of the presence of Jesus, and bind any power of evil from interfering in a prayer such as: *“With the authority given to me as a follower of Jesus, I bind all enemies of Christ in the name of Jesus.”*

Seek guidance from Jesus for your team's approach to its task and make a re-commitment to His ministry of healing with a prayer such as: *“We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and for the gift of healing to be released. In Jesus name. Amen.”*

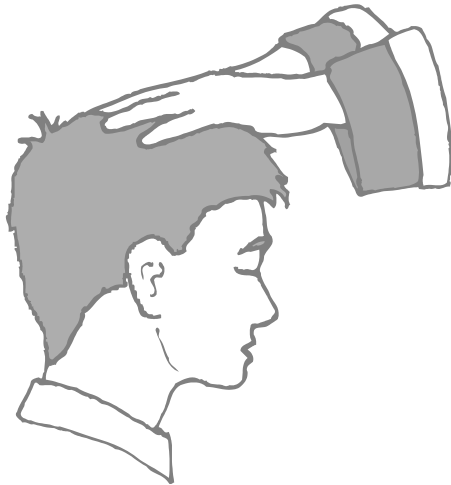
Sometimes we get so focused on the challenge of a particular prayer request and so preoccupied with trying to figure out *how to pray* that we forget the most basic elements of our ministry task: simply to bring ourselves and the person for whom we are praying into the Presence of Jesus, and then to keep that person *and ourselves* in His Presence. In story after story in the gospels, it is clear that when we are into the Presence, *healing will happen*.

How to Start

With preparations made, both individually and as a team, and having placed the team securely in the Presence, the team is ready to invite another person to join them in the Presence; ready, that is, to receive the first "prayee." The person being prayed for may stand or sit (if a chair or seat is available), and asked which is their preference. It is most often more comfortable if the pray-ers and prayee both stand so that the need to bend over is minimized and the exchange of information about what is to be prayed for is more easily accomplished.

After greetings and making sure that everyone knows the names of *all* involved (never take this for granted), ask the prayee to name the reason for prayer. If the person presents more than one request, gently try to identify a single focus. You might ask, "Which of those concerns is *the* most important *right now*?" When everyone has decided what to pray about, it is time to ask God for guidance about *how to pray*. Take some time to listen to God and decide how the prayers should proceed.

Care must be taken in the laying on of hands and touching the prayee during the time of prayer. The sensitivity, privacy and safety of the one being prayed for are paramount. The use of “Laying on of Hands” is an ancient and well used practice, but it should not be used by pray-ers without permission being given by the prayee. It is suggested that at the beginning of the time of prayer, the pray-er ask specifically for permission to lay hands on the person, or otherwise touch him/her.



The team needs to be aware of the healing power that may be available through people who are especially close to the prayee. If a parent, spouse, child, very close friend, or someone who has received healing for a malady similar to that of the prayee is present, that person may be invited to join the team in its praying. There may be a reticence to join in audible prayer, but that person's simply joining in the laying-on of hands may be very important.

Guidance

As you pray, stay open to further guidance (and/or correction) from our Lord. Be especially alert to passages or images of Scripture or favorite hymns or songs that may come to mind. Incorporate them into your praying. A simple example: Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World." Those few words have vast implications when praying for a person with eye problems, loss of sight, or with depression. When we ask for guidance and we are given an idea, don't dismiss it as a distraction. Ask for more guidance about how to understand and use what you have received. Don't hesitate to stop the praying temporarily to tell the others what you seem to be "hearing." Ask them to help. When things are really *working* you may be surprised by the unexpected confirmation of another team member who says, "I was just thinking the same thing" or, the *prayer* may, in fact; understand the "message" better than any of the team members. Brief consultations in the midst of praying can be most helpful.

It is all right to change the course of your praying when the Head of the Body, through the guidance of Holy Spirit, says "*Change*". The Spirit's task, after all, is to lead us into all truth.

Pray Positively

God's desire is that each person be healed. Visualize the person being prayed for as being made whole. Do not dwell on the dis-ease, but rather on the positive picture of God's love and His desire that the person be healed. Avoid the temptation to tell God what to do. Let the Holy Spirit come into the situation.

Keep it Simple and Specific

In the midst of our praying, we also need to be aware of the benefit of simplicity and specificity. If you start with "In the beginning....," the first prayer for healing that you will find in Holy Scripture is said by Moses when he prays, at the request of Aaron, for Miriam: "O Lord, heal her, I pray." In English translation that is only six single syllables, but that prayer was powerfully and immediately effective. Long praying and many words may be edifying for the pray-er, and may function as a "cover" for the pray-er's lack of faith and trust. If so, such praying proves! a hindrance. When we have spent time being certain we are in the Presence; getting in touch with each other (both spiritually and physically); and seeking the guidance of our Head, the *time* spent in actual *prayer* need only be quite brief. We have, in fact, been praying all along. And, the former things may be far more important than the latter.

And also, be specific, both in word and in action. Pray, very specifically, for the healing of the named dis-ease or problem. Don't beat around the bush or try to find polite euphemisms. A breast is a breast; the prostate is the prostate. Generally, the same applies to the laying-on of hands. When possible, and with permission, at least one person on the team should touch the affected part. When that may not appear to be appropriate, ask the prayee to put a hand on the affected part of the body while a member or two of the team put a hand on the prayee's arm. This is a time when a close family member may be helpfully involved with the team. The same principle applies to anointing (normally done by a priest). If the problem is arthritis in the joints of the hands, anoint the knuckles (all of them). If the problem is in the ankles or knees, anoint the affected place(s). The same goes for the laying-on of hands. However, there are times and situations when it is obvious that specificity may not be acceptable. At such times, laying hands on the head and shoulders must (and will) suffice, and anointing on the forehead is sufficient. The Lord can (and will) do what we cannot.



Silence and Singing

During the prayer time, silence is OK, even encouraged. But, keep the focus on the Presence. A period of silence may allow an opportunity to re-focus, to seek additional guidance, and for quiet individual prayer. Don't hesitate to break the silence when you are *given* something that needs to be shared, either in conversation or in prayer. (They are both the same actually, because Jesus is, obviously, the most important member of the team, so our conversation at such times is automatically turned into prayer.)

It quite often happens that words and phrases of popular "praise songs" come to mind. Know that it is all right to sing. Wonderful things often happen when we are silent, allowing our imaginations to focus simply on the Presence of the Healer. The same is true when we are led to sing God's praise while we are laying-on hands. Through tears of joy (and healing) the prayee may ask, "How did you *know* that that is my favorite song?" When you are given a pearl, polish it; don't throw it away.

By now, one thing should be obvious: if you start to use a "formula" of prayer, stop. One of the important things we learn as we read the gospel stories of healing is that Jesus met the needs of each hurting person in a unique way. As the living, risen Jesus lives in us today, our role is to allow him to meet the needs of each hurting person in *His* unique way through us.

As a team lays hands on and begins to pray, a prayee may seem to collapse physically. This response to our Lord's overwhelming Presence is just that: overwhelming. Some speak of being slain in the Spirit; others speak of resting in the Spirit. This response ought not to be feared, nor should it necessarily be sought. After having such an experience, many describe how Jesus Himself led them through an amazing process of healing and restoration. Think about surgery. Usually surgery is accompanied by an anesthetic. Otherwise, the pain might be too great. It may be that our loving Lord knows that some healings require "spiritual surgery," and so He, always merciful, "puts us to sleep." If a prayee should respond in this way, simply make certain that he or she is comfortable (without disturbance), and Discernment is required as to what point the team closes the prayer for the one "resting in the Spirit" and prepares to receive the next prayee. A good way for the team to make this transition is quietly to sing a well-known praise song. Then, receive the next prayee. The time of "resting" should be allowed to run its course without disturbance. It is enough to know that Jesus Himself has chosen to minister this healing himself.

Eyes Open

It is recommended that while the natural tendency might be for the pray-ers to close their eyes while praying, it is best in most circumstances for them to keep their eyes open. In this way, if God is acting in a way that is visible, the pray-ers can see what He is doing and can cooperate with Him.

Winding Down

As the prayer time winds down, do not just stop. Move into a brief time of *thanksgiving*. There may be no *evidence* that anything has happened, but pray with gratitude for what God is doing and will continue to do in the life of the prayee. Pray for the Spirit to stir greater and greater *expectation*. Encourage the prayee to expect healing to be confirmed on the way home, or during the night's sleep, or on waking. Expect prayer to be answered. Also, ask for the Spirit's guidance in showing how to *share* the gifts of healing that are received.

Finish

One way to end the prayer time is to pray: “*We offer these prayers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.*” Then, let the end be the end. While hugs and “thank yous” may take place, the focus should not stray from God to the team. Further conversation at this point should not be necessary.

When the praying time is completed, and there are no more with whom you are to pray, take a few moments to pray together as a team. Give thanksgiving for each other and for what has transpired among you and through you during the prayer session.

Finish with thanksgivings for the cleansing and forgiveness and the healing gifts granted. If possible, take time to share insights gained at this prayer session (for example: “*I think I learned something important as we prayed for . . .*”). End always on a note of thanksgiving, heightened expectation, and a re-commitment to share the healing ministry of Jesus. Then, go on your way rejoicing.

Additional Resources

The International Order of St. Luke is a Christian organization which concentrates on Christian Healing. It has Chapters throughout North America and is a rich resource for conferences, resources and training on healing prayer. Website: www.orderofstluke.org.

Reference Books

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Acknowledgement:

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