

THE MINISTRY OF HEALING

We need to recover the true perspective of the Gospel, for it is precisely the Good News of health and salvation through Christ that we are called to communicate and share in every facet of ministry. All Christians are called to be ministers of the Lord of Life for wholeness in mind, body and spirit. This ministry is exercised in a variety of ways, according to the gifts of God's spirit. But underlying all ministry is the fundamental truth of the Gospel, that it is through God in Christ that health and salvation are ultimately available to humanity. This is the foundation and model of all Christian belief and practice concerning the Church's pastoral ministry. In every situation we are called to care and to pray; always it is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer who alone truly heals.

1. Every minister of God's Word and Sacraments should be sympathetically aware of the manifold ways in which God's healing power may be communicated. Specifically, all parish clergy should avail themselves of the means of ministry to the sick provided by the Book of Common Prayer (laying-on of hands, unction, confession and absolution as and when requested), and should undertake the proper preparation and counselling within which context the healing ministry belongs. There should be regular teaching about the healing ministry, rooted securely in the proclamation of the atonement wrought by God in Christ. The people of God should be encouraged to bring their need to the attention of those best equipped to minister to them as an integral and normal part of the Christian life and growth. Parish study groups and committees may be established to this end.
2. Every effort should be made to use the prayer book services as the Church's appointed means of ministering to the sick, with the Holy Eucharist as the occasion of the fullest sacramental communication of God's grace bringing wholeness to humanity.
3. The regular practice of intercession, praying for the sick by name, not only in private but during public worship of the believing community, should become a familiar part of parish life, with special use of the prayers and thanksgiving set forth on pages 55 and 61 in the Book of Common Prayer, or pages 681-682 in the Book of Alternative Services. The mutual support of the clergy and laity in such prayer fellowship should develop from this base.
4. In the event that lay persons enquire about exercising a ministry of laying-on of hands, anointing, etc., they should refer the matter through their parish priest to the Bishop.
5. Parish clergy should seek supportive fellowship and sharing of concerns among themselves, and the Deanery might provide the most appropriate grouping within which to foster such mutuality.

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