

Diocese of Bristol

Parish Development Pack for

The Church's Ministry of Healing

**(written and produced by the Bishop's Advisory Group on
the Church's Ministry of Healing, March 2001)**

Gifts of Healing Services

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1 Purpose

The purposes of this section are:

First, to review the issues that will need to be addressed in considering the use of a Healing Service.

Second, to provide a step by step guide to planning, preparing and holding a Healing Service.

There are many things prayerfully to consider before advertising a Healing Service in the church notices for the first time. This section offers suggestions on things to consider and decisions to make.

The suggestions here come out of many years of experience on the part of the Bishop's Advisory Group on the Church's Ministry of Healing and are, we believe, practical and relevant for people seeking to share God's love with others.

We make no claim to have carried out exhaustive surveys, but we have tried to offer enough information to broaden understanding and indicate choices to those wishing to go further in the healing ministry they seek to offer.

Inevitably such a purpose will touch on the Common Worship: Pastoral Services. While some reference is made to these provisions, our purpose here is to look at the general

approach a church might take in developing healing services, and the practical issues that need to be addressed in getting started.

Detailed liturgical questions are not covered in this section of the Development Pack, although the article included in 6. For Further Consideration: "Into the Mainstream" by Revd. Michael Ainsworth, who served on the Revision Committee which looked at the new services of 'Wholeness and Healing', will address some points of interest. Following on from that, the article "What Happens in Your Church?" by Revd. Jill Caldwell, Assistant Priest at St. Marylebone Parish Church, London, looks at questions raised by both the 2000 Report and Common Worship: Pastoral Services in the context of local, church centred ministry. Both articles were first published in "Chrism" the journal of the Guild of St. Raphael. They are reproduced here by permission. We wish to record our thanks to the Guild and to the authors.

Healing Services are a valued part of the healing ministry of many churches. Each is a special act of worship set aside for the express purpose of sharing in worship, prayer and God's spiritual gifts of healing. Many churches already offer this kind of ministry, some regularly, some occasionally. It is hoped that this section will help such churches review their current practice and develop their worship and ministry further when and where they see appropriate opportunities.

Some may argue that the Parish Eucharist is already the Healing Service of the Church, but experience has led many of us to conclude that sometimes it helps people if they can share in worship and prayer that has a specific intention of prayer for healing and wholeness at other times as well. Sunday morning services are not always an easy first step for new attendees, and usually need to have a broader purpose.

2 Principles

A Healing Service is a time when prayer will be made for individuals present, anointing and/or the laying on of hands will be available to those who wish to receive it, and prayer will be made for the needs of others not present.

A Healing Service is a time for church members who regularly pray healing for others to meet and worship with some of those for whom they pray.

A Healing Service is a time and place to bring the people we visit and pray for. There may be more time to organise lifts and personal attention for people with chronic conditions or disabilities than on Sundays, so that they can be more comfortable and at ease.

A Healing Service is not normally the main Sunday service so it can be less daunting to people not used to church worship.

A Healing Service is a specific point of contact for people who's needs are on-going. Some churches can draw on resources and expertise to have authorised Christian Listeners, and/or Christian Counsellors, and/or other authorised people on hand.

A Healing Service is a time when those who normally offer Christian ministry to others can themselves be prayed for and ministered to by their own church community.

3 Why have a Healing Service?

The Church's ministry of healing seeks to introduce people to the healing love of God, available through Jesus Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit. It is a ministry that all need since it addresses spiritual and psychological needs as well as physical ills. It is a ministry that needs to be an integral part of the pastoral and sacramental life of every congregation. However, since Development Pack section: Gifts of the Sacraments deals with the relevance and use of sacramental worship in the context of healing ministry, it may be wondered why there is any need for separate healing services.

Experience suggests that healing ministry developed in the life of a congregation through such things as pastoral care, pastoral visiting, prayer, the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, bereavement visiting, etc. will sometimes benefit from particular opportunities to invite some of those people together to worship, pray and share a time of ministry together.

The 2000 Report 'A Time to Heal' seeks to develop as rich a variety of responses to the needs of those we serve as possible. It recognises the healing value of the pastoral care, prayer, regular worship and sacramental ministry in each congregation, but also notes:

'A further variant comprises those parishes where there is a service in which healing ministry is very much the main focus, probably once a month (either on a Sunday evening, or during the week). These are the circumstances for which the liturgies authorized by the Church of England are provided.

The benefit of them is threefold:

there can be some specific teaching on Christian healing;

more adequate preparation is possible;

pastoral follow-up can also be more easily dealt with.' (Page 241)

The writers of the Report might also have added that variation and innovation are not always understood or gladly received by congregations. Special healing services create opportunities for such ministry to be available from time to time but at times that do not 'intrude' upon the regular services. This may be more acceptable to some congregations!

There may be a benefit to many congregations in providing occasional services of healing outside the normal worship times if any of the following are relevant:

- Potential opportunities:
 - A church wants to hold a twice yearly 'memorial service' to which bereaved families are invited. Clergy and bereavement visitors will be present to worship, remember loved ones, pray and talk afterwards with families who have attended funerals.
 - From time to time an invitation (with offers of help and transport?) can be offered to people who are being visited and/or prayed for regularly but who are not easily able to get to church.
 - Some people with needs arising directly out of their family background and context who may benefit from some form of 'family tree' ministry. (The Advisory Group can recommend an order of service.)

Clergy will see pastoral needs which may benefit from ministry that has a specific intention of prayer for all who have that need, e.g. chronic pain, depression, cancer, broken relationships, etc. (see page 14 below).

Ministry team members will be aware of groups of people with particular needs arising out of their community background who may benefit from some form of 'healing of community' ministry. (The Advisory Group can recommend an order of service.)

If the norm is eucharistic worship, it may help some to have occasional opportunities for a non-eucharistic service of healing, and vice versa.

A different atmosphere in worship may be valued by some, but not by all. For example, some church members might be glad of a quiet and reflective healing eucharist while others might be glad of a praise evening which includes a time of prayer and the laying on of hands for those present. Healing services can be provided in a range of styles.

There may be people who would come to a special healing service, but who are unable or unwilling to attend the regular services.

If there is no ministry team in a congregation clergy may feel there is insufficient time on a Sunday

morning to respond to those who seek ministry.

Where there is no history of healing ministry in a church, a healing service can give a clear start to the Church's ministry of healing. It can help a congregation to see the value of this kind of ministry. In such circumstances occasional special services of healing can give a clear focus to healing ministry, as well as giving more scope for teaching, anointing and laying on of hands.

Such services of healing would be in addition to any other opportunities for healing ministry already available in a church's ministry (see Development Pack sections: *Gifts of Prayer, Gifts of the Sacraments, and Gifts of Ministry Teams*).

Frequency, timing, preparation and content would need careful consideration and should not be left to a few enthusiasts. The Church's ministry of healing is at the heart of much of our church life, it deserves the best that we can be and do.

4 Preparatory Work

4.1 When and How Often?

The normal expectation would be that a healing service would be one facet of a church's ministry of healing. Prayer would be on-going, pastoral care would be on-going, so the frequency of a healing service would need to be considered in the context of the other facets of the Church's ministry of healing already available.

One church might decide that occasional healing services, properly advertised, are right for their situation. Such an arrangement would give an opportunity for people to gather, say three or four times a year, and pray with and for one another. Careful planning and preparation, and a committed nucleus of helpers to bring, welcome and assist people can make such a service a time of deep blessing for many and an occasion that is greatly valued and looked forward to.

Another church might decide that a regular monthly healing service best meets their needs. This can then be a part of the regular pattern of services each month. People will get to know when to expect it, and will be sure to be present (others might be sure to be absent!). Regularity has the advantage of being part of the 'norm', rather than relying on advertising and people hearing the date and time. Regularity has the disadvantage that after the first 'flush of enthusiasm' attendance may drop so that only the committed few are left to support it.

If the number of people attending is an issue, the frequency of a healing service will need careful consideration in the long term. However, it should be noted that numbers are not everything. Jesus said: *'Where two or three are gathered together, I am there in their midst'*. This can be a reality for the Church's ministry of healing. Anointing a disabled person during or after extended communion at home can be a time of deep blessing even though only two people are present. A regular mid-week Holy Communion with healing ministry at a village church with just a handful of people may meet those people's needs more deeply than a specially organised healing service. Numbers do not matter, provided we know they don't matter.

Whether occasional or regular, the healing service can be held on a Sunday or on a week day, but the time of day and the duration of the service will need to take account of the commitments of the people whose needs it is aiming to meet. Weekdays will make it harder for working people to be present, evenings will mean that elderly people will be reluctant to come out in winter, etc.. Similarly, a long service in a cold and draughty church at the end of November may not attract all the people we are hoping to see!

We need to be thoughtful of others and not let our own enthusiasms (or misgivings) about healing services mislead us. We can pray, listen to the needs of others, and discuss the alternatives with others who are interested. There is no rush, the will of the Spirit takes time to emerge.

When the time is right to begin planning a healing service it will be necessary to decide on the type of service and the content that will suit local needs best.

Orders of service authorised for our use can be found in: *Common Worship Pastoral Services*, and *Patterns for Worship*. The choice needs to be discussed and agreed by clergy, ministry team members and the PCC.

4.2 Which Form of Service?

- **Non-eucharistic Services**

Non-eucharistic services provide worship, the word, prayer and anointing and/or the laying on of hands. Because such services are non-sacramental there are fewer obligatory elements, but, if they are to retain a broadly liturgical approach and content, they will need to have certain component parts on every occasion.

A non-eucharistic healing service would normally include (ref. the 2000 Report, page 243): *an element of preparation or gathering of the people of God with joy; the hearing and sharing of the Word of God; a time for confession of sin and absolution; prayer for the needs of others; a time for the laying on of hands and/or anointing for all those present who wish to receive it; thanksgiving for God's grace.*

An outline for such a service is given in Patterns for Worship, page 325f: A Service of Healing.

Some advantages:

Liturgical elements (confession and absolution, ministry of the word, formal prayer, etc.) can be used very flexibly by discerning leaders.

There is scope for sharing of one-another's burdens within an informal atmosphere.

Flexibility of content and style of presentation should mean it is as 'user-friendly' and ecumenical as possible. This type of service is usually thought to be more accessible to non-church people.

- **Eucharistic Service**

The eucharist provides a liturgical focus for healing ministry that is familiar to many. If the 2000 Report has indicated the task, then *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* has provided the means. In the very first section of the new pastoral services book we have *Laying on of Hands with Prayer and Anointing at a Celebration of Holy Communion* (page 26f), *The Celebration of Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital* (page 52f), and *The Distribution of Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital* (page 74f). These, together with the Supplementary Texts (page 42f) and Notes (page 40, 48, and 73), provide a firm liturgical foundation to work from. The sharing of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ draws people into holy communion with the Lord and with each other. This, in itself can be a healing encounter with God.

Some advantages:

The eucharist is a central act of worship, thanksgiving and fellowship in the life of the Church, so it is a firm foundation to build on.

Church members, particularly those in churches which have a weekly Eucharist as their main Sunday

Service will be very familiar with the liturgy.

- **Authorised Orders of Service:** Common Worship: Pastoral Services, Wholeness and Healing, pages 9 - 99.
Patterns for Worship, A Service of Healing, pages 325 - 327.

4.3 Points for Discussion and Prayer

The Church's ministry of healing, in all its expressions, is above all a ministry of love and prayer. We will do well to pray for the guidance of Christ and His Spirit in all that we do. We need to give time to being still in the Lord's presence, to remember the Christian traditions of meditation and contemplation, and so wait on the Lord. Test and pray about whatever word or lead the Lord seems to give. Be patient in prayer. It may help to consider the following issues in this process of discernment.

Any act of worship which provides an opportunity for the Church's ministry of healing to be expressed could be termed a Service of Healing. We do not have to introduce radical change in the worship life of a congregation to make healing ministry available to church members. It may well be that familiar forms of worship (whether eucharistic or non-eucharistic) will be the best vehicle through which to offer the healing ministry of the church, at least to start with.

There is anecdotal evidence in a range of parishes which suggests that attendance, either by church people or non-church people, will not be determined solely by the non-eucharistic/eucharistic question. In deciding the type of healing services that is best for each situation, it is important to consider which will best meet the needs of the people

we seek to serve. People in need will find their way through most types of worship in order to receive the help and support they seek. Much more important is the warmth of the invitation, the help offered to them to get there, the welcome they receive when they enter the place of worship, and whether or not they are able to feel at ease during the service (whatever its content).

A possible way to develop a programme of Healing Services is to specify a clear intention for teaching, prayer and ministry to be shared at each one. If the intention is clearly advertised each time and informed insights are shared (by guest speakers?), people will be able to see some relevance to their own particular needs. Many lives are touched by the sorts of themes listed below, but intentions can be chosen that respond to widely felt needs within a particular congregation, as well as these broad 'generic' themes:

January:	Damaged Relationships	
February:	Depression	(Holy Communion)
March:	Bereavement	(based on CW Memorial Service)
April:	Healing of Community	(Order available from Adv. Group)
May:	General Service of Healing	(Holy Communion)
June:	Lives Touched by Cancer	
July:	Healing of Families	(HC Order from Adv. Group)
August:	Lives Touched by Pain	(Holy Communion)
September:	Bereavement	(CW Memorial Service material or Order available from Adv. Group)
October:	All Health Care Workers	(Holy Communion: St. Luke?)
November:	General Service of Healing	
December:	Lives Touched by Disability	(Holy Communion)

So we need to pray, think, discuss, listen to others, ask people for their views, and weigh up the options carefully. In so doing we aim to discern the Lord's will.

5 Getting started

5.1 Planning and preparation

Planning, preparing and presenting a first service of healing can be a daunting prospect, so here are a few tips on the things to consider and the steps to take.

- It will help if there are already people meeting together to pray for others in need and for one another (see Development Pack section: *Gifts of Prayer*).
- Be clear about the ordained and/or lay people you expect to be involved in the planning and presentation of the service of healing (see Development Pack section: *Gifts of Ministry Teams*). Pray together and co-operate closely in planning.
- Be sure you have the good will of the PCC, church leaders, and the broad spread of the congregation - a service of healing needs to work wholeness in the Body of Christ and not discord.

- Agree the date, time and place for the service. If this is the first service of healing to be held in your church it will be important to allow time for some teaching on the subject of the Church's ministry of healing. You might refer to healing and wholeness in a sermon series, you might use a study programme such as those in the Development Pack section: Resources for Learning.
- Be clear and agreed on the general type (eucharistic/non-eucharistic?) and style of the service. It should be of a kind that will be accessible to the people you aim to help. It might therefore be anything from 'joyful and expectant' for a more charismatic Christian community, to 'quiet and meditative' for those who are definitely not charismatic. A service of healing should not be handed over to anyone who simply wants to 'do their thing'. In a very real sense, those of us who lead such times of worship and prayer do so for the benefit of people other than ourselves. We should not be seen to be getting in the way with our own preferences.
- Choose the order of service you will use. It may be best to use a tried and tested order for your first few services of healing. Guidance from others with experience may be helpful.
- Will you produce an order of service that everyone

will have in their hand? If so, who will produce it and how many copies will be printed?

- Decide on the particular aspect of wholeness that will be the theme. Choose Bible readings, hymns, prayers, etc. that remind people of the wholeness that is God's will for each of us, and that wholeness is to be found in Jesus Christ.

- Decide on the location and space to be used. Since you will probably be in church, will you seat people in the nave, in the Lady chapel, in the chancel, in another part of the church? You will probably not want people to be too spread out in a large building.

- If your church building is cold and draughty in winter you may opt to hold the service somewhere else. If so, choose the location carefully. Aim for a friendly and welcoming atmosphere that people will be glad to share. (A circle of chairs in the middle of the church hall, however warm it is, will not be very appealing to anyone!)

- In church, if you do not have fixed pews you may want to seat people other than in rows. Check whether this is possible and permissible. Decide on the layout that will meet your needs best.

- Where will you offer people anointing and/or laying on

of hands? Are there steps? How good is the lighting? Will people feel at ease moving to and from that point? Remember to consider the needs of disabled people who may be present.

- You will need to decide whether it is to be a straightforward act of worship after which everyone goes home, or whether you will be able to offer prayer and/or a compassionate listening ear for anyone who wants to stay, talk and pray. Do you have people available with those skills? Are there people who would be accepted in such a role by the majority of your church members, and would they be willing to receive training? (See Development Pack section: Gifts of Ministry Teams)
- Decide on the publicity you are going to use (posters, leaflets, church notices, etc.) and prepare it.
- Encourage church members to invite and bring people. Especially encourage any people to be there who are being prayed for regularly. If possible arrange for people to be available to give lifts and offer help to anyone who would like to be there, but who may have difficulty getting there.

5.2 Immediately before the Service

Give the service and its outcomes into God's care. Be ready to offer the best that you can be and do, but remember that wholeness and healing are the Lord's gifts not ours.

Try to ensure a warm, friendly welcome as people come through the door.

Aim to provide an atmosphere that makes it easy for people to relax and feel 'safe' within themselves and with each other. You might have taped music playing quietly, you might have the organ, piano, or other instruments playing, you may have someone ready to lead a selection of worship songs or hymns. But be careful not to expect too much of people if they are unfamiliar with such things.

Pray that God will be your light and guide in all things, and that God's Spirit will be present to bless everyone.

5.3 During the Service

Pray that you yourself will be open to God. Be true to yourself and your own relationship with God. It is hard to make people 'enter' spiritually where we have not been ourselves. Rather lead them from within your own walk with the Lord, no matter how inadequate to the task you may feel. God always blesses such honesty and humility in our shared journey into wholeness.

Begin by welcoming everyone. Explain the purpose and content of the service. Try to do this in the most relaxed and reassuring way you can! If people see that you are confident of what will happen it will help put them at their ease.

The content of the service needs to be presented and shared in a way that points people to Jesus at every point. Nothing should happen as an end in itself. Readings, prayers, address, singing, all are to be aids to people meeting with God and knowing the loving presence of His Spirit at work within them. Try to make sure that Christ is at the centre of all that happens.

Try not to inflate people's expectations. Talk of God performing miracles 'here and now' may well prove to be counter-productive in the long run, and such language should be avoided.

There is no rush to get to the end of the service. Give people space to encounter the Lord within the liturgy and pray throughout that this will happen.

At the time of anointing with oil and/or laying on of hands you may prefer to use a set prayer or an extempore prayer, but be clear which it will be. Also encourage people to make their own prayer to the Lord as you minister to them and pray with them (see Development Pack sections: Gifts of Prayer and Gifts of the Sacraments).

Before the end, give people a moment to recognise, fix in their thoughts, and give thanks for whatever sign of grace the Lord has given them during the service.

5.4 After the Service

If you have qualified people (see Development Pack section: Gifts of Ministry Teams), and have planned to provide additional ministry after the service, you should make sure that people know about it and can unobtrusively stay behind to receive it.

You may want to offer pastoral visits to people who have attended the service. A list for people to sign with their name and address may help provided confidentiality is respected where it needs to be.

Before and after services of healing people often want to add names to the church prayer board/prayer list, so make sure it is readily available.

In the next week or so, follow up anyone who has indicated a desire for on-going pastoral care.

Take time to reflect and review with the people who shared the planning, preparation and presentation of the service of healing with you. Think through the things you would do different next time, in order to meet people's need better.

Begin to pray and plan for your next service of healing.

5.5 Review

Things to consider:

Always try to keep in mind the people you are seeking to serve. Pray that their needs will be met in the choices and plans that are made. If there are some who will not or cannot come to church, can you or other ministry team members go to them?

Be willing to be flexible in the type, style, and content of the healing service you choose, so that the Holy Spirit will have more room to 'be present' to people. If it is appropriate, offer alternative types of healing service e.g. eucharistic/non-eucharistic, Taize, or Iona, or Mission Praise, or A&M(R) on different occasions. From time to time use candles, icons, banners, etc. to create different atmospheres.

Review the use of silence, and/or guided meditations. Seek feedback and constructive comment from those who come.

Be ready to adapt to people's needs. The day of the week, the time of day, and the location make no difference in terms of spiritual outcomes, but they will affect type of people able to attend. People caught up in the pressures and pace of our modern society may need to see that their needs are recognised too.

Seek the right people to share in this ministry with you. They will need to be people who are known to, and in good standing with, the congregation, and whose faith and Christian maturity are recognised and valued in the on-going life of your church community. See the Development Pack, Section 6: Gifts of Ministry Teams for suggestions on selection, training, and authorisation of people to work with you.

Be careful not to follow personal agendas - yours or anyone else's.

Beware of assuming that a liturgical form of service will 'run itself' in the context of a healing service: familiarity can be misleading and give rise to disappointment (in you and/or in others present). Prayer and discernment on the part of all those sharing in ministry WILL make a difference to the outcomes for all present.

Beware of closed minds: yours and other people's! You may well be led into areas of prayer and practice that are not in your tradition or experience - be willing to learn from others.

Beware of trying to go it alone. The Church's ministry of healing is a shared ministry, none of us can 'do it' alone. If you do not have the support of others in your congregation pray and be open to change yourself. If

there are not enough of you to provide the type of healing service you think is right then pray for others to share your vision, but be open to change within yourself also.

Don't assume you can do all this in a fortnight - pray, seek to discern the will of the Spirit, and allow God to work with you and through you.

6 For Further Consideration

The Development Pack sections: *Gifts of Prayer, Gifts of the Sacraments, Gifts of Ministry Teams* should be considered as directions for development of the ministry offered at healing services, and also in the wider healing ministry of the local church.

The 2000 Report should be read and relevant sections considered in order to give a broad understanding of the Church's ministry of healing in the Church of England today.

The Handbook that accompanies the 2000 Report should be made available to, and its guidelines adopted by, all who share in the planning, preparation and presentation of healing services.

The 2000 Report emphasises the value of ecumenical co-operation in healing ministry. If there are other congregations seeking to express God's love in prayer for healing and wholeness there may well be potential for developing an ecumenical ministry.

Two articles follow, one by Revd. Michael Ainsworth who served on the revision committee for *Common Worship Pastoral Services*, and a second by Revd. Jill Caldwell who is assistant priest at St. Marylebone Parish Church in London. Both were published originally in "Christm" the journal of the Guild of St. Raphael, and are reproduced with permission:

Into the Mainstream

by Revd. Michael Ainsworth

At a conference in September at York University, arranged by the Liturgical Commission to introduce *Common Worship* to 'trainers' from the dioceses, one of the major set-piece liturgies was a Celebration of Wholeness and Healing, using the first of the new rites. This was probably the service that made most impact on participants. After the Liturgy of the Word and a powerful sermon on healing, there was an extended time of prayer and penitence. Oil was then blessed by the president, and the congregation invited to move around the hall to share as they wished in healing ministry. Priests, male and female, were available in quiet corners for those who wished to make their confession. Pairs of ministers, clergy and lay, around the hall prayed with those who came to them for themselves or for others, and offered anointing if requested. Others came forward to offer prayer, with the invitation to offer it by putting a grain of incense onto a burner, or to sign themselves with baptismal water. A choir sang gently throughout. It was unhurried, outwardly unspectacular (though carefully staged) and felt entirely natural. The service ended with prayers of thanksgiving and the dismissal rite (including the reading of Luke 17.20-21 'the kingdom of God is among you').

This could not have happened twenty years ago when the *Alternative Service Book* was introduced. First, because that book contained no comparable provision, either 'alternative' to the *Book of Common Prayer* or new: *Ministry to the Sick* ('ASB 70') was not authorised until 1983, and as its title indicates had in view individual ministry more than public liturgy. Second, and more significant, 'healing services' were not part of the mainstream culture of the Church of England at that time, despite the patient work of the Guild and other enthusiasts in providing liturgical resources and theological underpinning. *A Time for Healing* documents how this has changed. *Common Worship* now affirms this by providing for the first time authorised texts and guidance for the whole range of situations from the large-scale public event to the individual encounter in church or sickroom. In introducing these texts, I'm assuming that by now you have seen them, either in the *Pastoral Services* volume or downloaded (free of charge!) from the Church of England website.

Baptism and the kingdom

The first thing to note about *Wholeness and Healing* is that, although it now appears in *Pastoral Services*, the material was conceived, and brought to Synod, as part of the Initiation Services 'package'. The reasons for this are spelt out in the closely-argued Theological Introduction to *Wholeness and Healing* [page 9], first drafted by the late Michael Vasey. It asserts that individual and corporate healing restore us to our baptismal integrity, and are stages on our 'accompanied journey' within the wider context of the promises of the kingdom and the hope of new creation to which baptism bears witness. This introduction repays careful reading. The same emphases are struck in the brief liturgical introductions [page 42] which may be used at various points in the rites.

Incidentally, this coupling meant that the Initiation Services Revision Committee, on which I

served, broke all synodical records for the number and complexity of its meetings. Having seen the controversial baptism and confirmation rites to completion, we then began the whole process again with *Wholeness and Healing*. The Bishop in Europe, our ever-patient chairman, presented us all at our last meeting with cryptic badges 'ISRC Members Do It Longest'.

By this stage the Bishop of Chelmsford's group was meeting, and some of its members came to discuss with us the style and tone of the services. This helped us clarify our task: to offer clear structures and formal texts for public worship and other sacramental ministry (for instance, home communions), and some guidance on good practice, but in no way to supplant the creative work of others still less the work of the Spirit! for less formal situations. This is in fact in line with all the *Common Worship* provision, which offers introductory notes, service outlines or structures and worked-out orders of service in which at various points there is freedom to use 'these or other suitable words'. Another *Common Worship* feature is the deliberate inclusion of some *BCP* resonances, for instance in the prayer after the laying on of hands and anointing:

The almighty Lord, who is a strong tower for all who put their trust in him,
whom all things in heaven, on earth and under the earth obey,
be now and evermore your defence.....

What is provided?

The introductory note [page 12] lists five elements:

- ¶ **A Celebration of Wholeness and Healing**, intended as a special 'big' event in a diocese or deanery, maybe as an annual focusing of the healing ministry, or perhaps in a situation where some corporate reconciliation is being celebrated (for example, in a team ministry). Note 3 at the end of the service suggests that it might well be 'extended' over the course of a day conference, interspersed with periods of silence, bible study, opportunities for counselling and confession, or other activities. It is a fully-scripted service apart from The Liturgy of the Sacrament, which is an optional element.
- ¶ A service with the precise but uninspiring title **Laying on of Hands with Prayer and Anointing at a Celebration of Holy Communion**, intended for 'occasional but regular' use in a parish or other local context (such as a hospital, school, college or prison chaplaincy) as part of its normal liturgical life. There are similar imaginative possibilities for using this order. It prints the material to be slotted into an authorised order for Holy Communion.

[For both these services a table of seasonal and other readings is provided alongside those of the day.]

- ¶ Provision for **Prayer for Individuals in Public Worship** where this is a regular feature of Sunday worship no texts here, but two pages of detailed notes.
- ¶ **Ministry to the Sick** the provisions of ASB 70 updated (and available as separate cards), providing all the various patterns both of celebrating and distributing holy communion in hospital or at home, including the laying on of hands and anointing.
- ¶ **Prayers for Protection and Peace** some prayers for 'where it would be pastorally helpful to pray with those suffering from a sense of disturbance or unrest' but firmly distinguished from exorcism and deliverance, for which the normal reference to the bishop is enjoined.

Some Theological and Practical Issues

The treatment of **anointing** raises a number of issues. Those who would anoint sparingly, to prevent the devaluation of unction *in extremis*, will note that its use is always bracketed in the outline rites, and the texts themselves say 'anointing may be administered'. It is treated as a priestly and sacramental act: hence the mandatory formula (unlike the laying on of hands, where 'these or other similar words' are to be used), and no permission for proxy anointing (see below). However, an extended prayer for the blessing of oil is at the heart of the 'diocesan' rite (which assumes, though does not require, an episcopal president hence its alternative opening dialogues, and note 6 [page 25]). Note 5 [page 25] explains why this is so, rather than using oil previously blessed on Maundy Thursday or some other time (though it allows for this possibility). Such a blessing assumes it will be used. It would thus be odd if no-one received anointing at this service! The blessing of oil at the 'parish' rite is also in extended form, but here it is an optional element.

Both these prayers are in 'berakah' form a blessing of God for his gifts of healing, coupled with the petition 'by the power of your Spirit may your blessing rest on those who are anointed with this oil in your name' (compare the blessing of rings at marriage). This is not so much squeamishness about 'blessing things' as the recovery of ancient patterns of euchology. By contrast, the alternative short prayer [supplementary texts, page 47] retains the form 'sanctify this oil, that those who are anointed with it may be freed from suffering and distress...'

Similarly, no great theological shift is intended in the texts for the laying on of hands and anointing 'in the name of God' (rather than of Christ, as in many other forms), for both immediately couple this with Christ's healing touch and forgiveness. A strong performative utterance in this style closely mirrors Christ's own ministry.

Another much-debated issue was the **position for individual prayer with the laying on of hands (and anointing)**. The Liturgical Commission's strong preference was that, against common practice, it should neither be linked to the distribution of communion nor set at the end of the service but within, or as response to, the Prayers of Intercession, so that it might be 'integrated with the corporate prayer of the whole people' and also so that it should not 'overshadow the gift and promise of communion' [note 6 on page 49]. A number of submissions challenged this, some on practical grounds (where many people seek potentially lengthy ministry at the end of a service), some on the basis that linking this ministry with the giving of communion affirms the priority of the eucharist as the sign of healing. The upshot was that the Commission's positioning is presupposed in the 'diocesan' rite, and is the preferred position in the 'parish' rite (but with permission to offer ministry during communion page 26), but in the notes on parish practice all three positions are allowed (within the intercessions, at communion or at the end of the service), with the caveats mentioned above. The further suggestion is made that 'it may sometimes be helpful to focus such prayer by including prayer for [individuals] earlier in the service and on occasion to change the pattern to include this ministry earlier in the service'.

The Revision Committee was pressed to make explicit reference to **'proxy' handlaying**, on behalf of a third person who is not present. Accordingly, note 2 on page 49 includes this among the

various forms of ministry that may be requested, with or without a brief explanation of need or concern, either to the whole congregation or to individual ministers. Some would view this practice with suspicion, but the introductory note on page 12 offers a rationale: 'when prayer is offered for those who will minister to others, this should be seen as prayer for the grace and discernment of the Holy Spirit, as well as prayer for healing' (and couples it with a stress on careful devotional preparation). One could go further and say that all handling including confirmation and ordination is a particularisation of God's commission to the baptized, originating in the eucharistic dismissal for service. Proxy anointing, however, is not envisaged, for the reasons given above.

The provisions of **Ministry to the Sick** call for less comment. For Order 1 celebrations of Holy Communion, Prayer E (the shortest prayer) is provided for Contemporary Language and Prayer C (the 'Series 1'-type prayer) for Traditional Language, both with special prefaces; for Order 2, there is simply a cross-reference to the normal provision. The Distribution rites (Orders 1 and 2) are conformed to the main provision, with a slightly amended form of the text 'The Church of God of which we are members...' at the start, rather than midway through the service. Note 1 [page 78] attempts to cover all the ways in which holy communion may be taken from a celebration to the sick and housebound.

How many cheers should we give?

Whether or not you respond to the flavour of the texts and there is surely something to please most practitioners here it must surely be a cause of celebration that the Church of England now has thorough provision for the ministry of healing, together with detailed but not over-prescriptive notes, theologically rooted in its liturgy. *Wholeness and Healing* does not purport to provide everything that might ever be needed nor could it or should it; there will still be an important role for the Guild and others in providing resources for prayer. But a gap has been filled!

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A View of Healing Ministry at St. Marylebone, London.

by Revd. Jill Caldwell

'The healing ministry is one of the greatest opportunities the Church has today for sharing the gospel' (1)

'We hope that this report will encourage all Anglicans to embrace what is sometimes called 'the full gospel' that is, the gospel preached with the hope of healing so that it may become central to our mission, preached and exercised in ways that are both faithful to Jesus Christ and appropriate for the culture of our time...' (2)

These are the opening and closing sentences of the introduction of *A Time to Heal* a book which everyone who has anything to do with the healing ministry has hopefully dipped into. It is a lengthy report and has caused much discussion about the healing ministry which has to be a good thing.

What does all this mean, though, at parish level to those of us who are involved in the healing ministry in our local church particularly through the provision of healing services?

I have been involved in the healing ministry in two very different settings. The first was a suburban parish with a large congregation of all ages from the very young to the very old which had a very flourishing branch of the Guild of St. Raphael, through which the healing ministry was introduced into the church.

My present situation is at St. Marylebone Parish Church, in London, a church in the centre of the medical community, having Harley Street and seven private hospitals within the parish. The crypt of St. Marylebone church houses a Healing and Counselling Centre which has its own director, a priest/psychotherapist and an NHS General Practice with six doctors, 7000 patients and all attendant services.

Two very different situations but both with a common thread: centres where people are searching for wholeness in their lives through their relationship with God. Here is the church's opportunity for sharing the gospel, 'the gospel that is preached with the hope of healing.' (2)

Many churches preach this gospel with hope of healing in the context of healing services, but so often these are seen as part of the 'fringe' activities of the church's life. Their function and value have not been appreciated or understood by everyone. *A Time to Heal* recommends that the healing ministry needs to be seen to be part of normal parish life and not hidden away or strictly private. (3)

In some churches the healing ministry is central to their life. With the publication of *A Time to*

Heal together with the new Common Worship resources for healing in the Pastoral Services liturgies, it is time for all parishes to review what place healing services have in their worshipping lives.

We are all on a spiritual journey and these resources help us to see how the church, through its members surrounds and supports us with the personal love and care of Jesus. It is, therefore, very important that we can all recognize and receive, in formal worship, the ways in which God's love meets us in our own need, whatever that may be.

Theologically it makes sense to link healing with the Eucharist, for in each celebration of the Eucharist Christ is reaching out to heal us (4). Teaching is a vital part of the healing ministry so people understand that healing is not something 'extra' or 'separate' in our relationship with God, but healing / wholeness - is central to our relationship with God. The main Sunday service is an opportunity to teach about healing and if this is a Eucharist, which is after all the healing service par excellence, then it would seem very appropriate to teach that all sacraments and acts of worship have the potential to heal.

At St. Marylebone we have had a sermon series, triggered by the publication of *A Time to Heal*. These sermons were given at the main Sunday Eucharist and began with 'A Time to Heal' a brief outline of some of the recommendations of the report. Other titles were Healing and mental health, (given by the Director of the St. Marylebone Healing and Counselling centre), Healing and music, (St. Marylebone has a very strong musical tradition), Healing and the whole person. Healing and prayer, Healing of the nations (for Remembrance Sunday) and Healing and modern medicine (reflecting our situation within the medical community of Harley Street and also the importance of medicine in healing) The aim of the series was to help people see that healing is something that is multifaceted.

The frequency of offering the healing ministry varies from parish to parish. In some churches prayer and the laying on of hands is offered after every act of worship, others offer it weekly or monthly at main service. There are times however when the whole focus of the liturgy needs to be on healing, when the ministry of prayer with the laying on of hands will be its main focus. The format of healing services has to take account of the people of the parish in which it is to be used. The Guild of St. Raphael recommends the authorized services of the Church of England, which have just been revised in a booklet called Pastoral Services. There are liturgies for both Eucharistic and non-eucharistic healing services and opportunities for variation within both of these to suit the needs of the people concerned.

If a parish has the celebration of the Eucharist as its main form of worship then there is a practical advantage in placing healing within the context of the Eucharist. People would be familiar with this form of worship, so what may be an unfamiliar ministry is placed within a well-known context. (One obvious difficulty of this setting would be that of ecumenical co-operation when the sharing of the Eucharist may not always be possible) The familiarity of the Eucharist may also provide the formality that is needed for those people who may feel a sense of insecurity when they come to a healing service those who are afraid that things might 'get out of hand'.

As well as the choice of liturgy it is important to consider the choice of 'place' where the service is going to happen. This does, of course, depend on facilities available and the number of people attending.

The experience at St. Marylebone is of both Eucharistic and non-eucharistic services. The Eucharistic healing service takes place at lunchtime, once a month on a Wednesday, in the chancel of the church. This is a said service with a short homily and the opportunity to receive the laying on of hands with or without private prayer, after communion. The non-eucharistic healing service takes place once a month on a Sunday evening in the main body of the church and usually has an invited preacher with a view to broadening the teaching on healing. Music is a large ingredient in this service with a number of anthems and hymns. This is a much less intimate setting but our experience is that people like the feeling of 'having space'. The laying on of hands takes place at the high altar rail, towards the end of the service, with the same short prayer used for everyone. Again opportunity for private prayer is available at a side altar and continues after the end of the service, if need be. Both of these services have structure something with which the people of St. Marylebone are familiar, but are not so rigid that there is no room for variation and both offer the opportunity for those who wish to maintain a degree of anonymity to receive prayer. St. Marylebone has a prayer network a group of people who pray for the sick and who meet for prayer before the healing service on a Sunday evening. These are just two examples of how healing services may work. The underlying assumption however is that during a healing service the ministry of prayer for healing with the laying on of hands will be prominent. Where and how it is included depends on the place, the number of people present and the tradition of the church.

A Time to Heal places great emphasis on the need for 'good practice' within the healing ministry.

(5) Only in this way can we retain the integrity of the healing ministry and engender the confidence of the parishioners to whom we minister. Those involved in ministry need to be acceptable to the church as a whole and under a clear authority. **(6)**

This emphasizes the need for adequate training of lay ministers, along with commissioning so that they are seen to have the authority of the Church.

It is interesting to note that though the 1958 report *the Church's Ministry of Healing* was very cautious about healing services, *a Time to Heal* now recognizes the benefits of them because **(7)**...

- There can be some specific teaching on Christian healing;
- More adequate preparation is possible
- Pastoral follow-up can also be more easily dealt with.

As disciples of Christ we are called to preach the gospel and heal the sick. The healing ministry needs then to be seen as part of normal parish life. We are to respond to those who are suffering in any way, be it physical, emotional or spiritual, by bringing the love of God to them. In a healing service, people should be able to bring their needs to God. They should be enabled to meet with God in a place where they feel comfortable, through a liturgy with which, to some extent at least, they are familiar and they should feel no fear about the expectations which are placed upon them. Teaching should be given in this setting to give a better understanding of the

healing ministry and its place in everyday life. 'The ministry of healing gives us a glimpse of the kingdom, hope for the future- creation renewed and in perfect health' (8).

References:

- (1) A Time to Heal p xiii
- (2) A Time to Heal p xviii
- (3) A Time to Heal p 270
- (4) Chrism vol 37 no 3 p8
- (5) A Time to Heal App 1 p 293
- (6) A Time to Heal p 252
- (7) A Time to Heal p 241
- (8) A Time to Heal p 260

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