

PROVIDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT AND LOVE: A CONGREGATIONAL PROGRAM

The Church's Role in Ministering to Human Needs

There are so many needs in the issues of life which are a part of our living that it could hardly be imagined that some pointed questions to friends and associates would not turn up recognition of such needs. Needs are not just involved with physical conditions and disease, but with the struggles of human development and meaningful coping with life. How do we become who we can become? How do we deal with the divergent, and sometimes disruptive, forces which all of us experience within and without? How do we become competent human beings whose internal organization, awareness, and identity support our lives and projects? Often the greatest needs are not for physical healing but for inner healing and inner restructuring. And then there is the frequent need for relational healing and the hunger for some supportive relationships that could facilitate life.

To raise the question of the church's role in all this is not to try to lay claim to areas which are really the responsibility of medical and therapeutic professionals. But it is to affirm that the church's primary responsibility is people and their issues. It is to affirm that Christianity is the inheritor of a wise tradition which has wisdom to share about life, a wisdom which in the best sense can correlate with the practices of the medical professionals. It is a wisdom which might be similar to that of some of the professionals, but by its very nature it has its own credentials. It deals with the meaning of life and the impact of living from a transcendent reality which supports life. And it has an understanding which has grown from the Jesus tradition in its various forms and the apostolic literature with its varied perspectives and has been refined in the living of life and the direction of the Spirit of God during the history of the church. Of course, differences in approach to life and issues remain within the New Testament materials as they still live in the churchly traditions, but this variety can be cherished rather than feared and one is then presented with options analogous to the varied contemporary psychological models. One could argue that the Matthean tradition and that of the late first century additions to Paul (particularly I Timothy) operate with a behavioristic model while Paul's model is much closer to that of Carl Jung. Whatever the variety in the traditions, at its heart there is unity because its unity is found in the person of God, not the forms of the traditions.

In simplest terms, yet most profound, most of the Christian tradition affirms that life depends upon grace while most experience of life would lead us to believe that the essence of life was struggle. Grace is where the heart of reality opens to the human heart, grounds it in pure gift and love, and creates the rhythm which supports the varied heartbeat of life. In simplest terms, it affirms that life is rooted in a transcendent but immanent spiritual reality. Life does not grow alone out of our limited resources even when shared. Within the Christian tradition such foundational questions are answered as: who am I, how did I get here, do I have a me in me, is there someone in me whom life's struggles cannot destroy, do I matter, am I loved, am I alone, will I last, where do I come from and where am I going, is there meaning, is there God, and why O why do we suffer?

Moravians in the 18th century understood that Christ was the Creator of each person and because he made each he knew the unique nature and intended development of each. Christ the Creator came into the world to complete the process for each person that would lead them to life's fulfillment and God, i.e.

“salvation.” The Spirit as the Mother who would care for all souls was a part of this process. This meant that you should not force persons into a process whose rate and nature was not theirs. By doing this you could spoil the intentions of the Creator/Savior. Thus to work with people involved sensitivity: sensitivity to their process and sensitivity to what Christ was doing with them. You make people aware of the spiritual resources, you plant congregations so that in them persons can see how the Savior's intent is lived out, but then you listen carefully and take persons at their own and the Savior's rate.

This means that while there is a world of need out there the church can never force the world to come to terms with this. Basically the church must go on being the church, embodying the character of life with God, and have the resources ready for people when awareness arises. This means we don't have to develop an aggressive program. We do have to be there when people need us. In recent years I have had a desire to help the church come to terms with its healing ministry but also have felt that if I pushed this aggressively I might only spoil things. There are natural processes with communities as well as individuals and we want to make sure that what happens is what God wants, not just what we, with the best of our understanding, would like to develop. And so we work, witness and live this out and see where God will take it. Ultimately, healing is God's program, the implications and consequences of the Gospel, the consequence of being drawn into the realm of God's life, and God will take it where God wants it if we are open and obedient.

How might one start a healing program in a congregation?

There are many resources provided in this chapter which should assist in developing a healing program. I recommend starting with what is said in the "Possible Letter to the Pastor or Board." Here the argument is that healing in the Christian Church is an application of the Gospel, not the development of something unusual or spectacular or new. It is the church doing what God intended the church to do. It also flows from the ministry of Christ and the daily ministry of the pastors. It is a natural part of caring for persons. It is making sure that no one faces life and its issues alone. It is an expression of a community of love. It is doing something very simple and natural for Christians. It is almost impossible to think of a church without some concern for healing. There is no indication in the New Testament that God intended the concern for healing to stop with the end of the apostolic age.

As the Savior has his own process with individuals, so does he with congregations. Thus it would be helpful if those who would like to see a ministry of healing develop would acquaint themselves with the possibilities, read this book and some of the books suggested in the Bibliography, with special attention to Larry Dossey's *Healing Words* (Dossey specializes in accumulating research done on spirituality, faith and healing). Perhaps they could visit a local chapter of the Order of St. Luke and some church that is holding healing services, and then prayerfully seek what God might wish them to develop in their congregation. Of course the appropriate church board should be aware of the interests of the group advocating healing and all plans should be processed through them or an appropriate committee. The easiest and least objectionable place to start is to establish a prayer group for the needs of persons and of the congregation. Some process would be needed up for people to turn in requests and for members of the prayer group to be notified. A possible procedure is suggested, including a request form and suggestions about a newsletter.

In a previous chapter there were suggestions about how to approach prayer for healing and it would be helpful to discuss this with members of the prayer group so that they might develop a sense of how to pray that could be more than just asking for something for someone. This could be a part of a prayer course made available to all interested during the church school hour or as a Sunday or Saturday seminar. Teaching on healing and prayer is also a good place to help persons deal with the nature of God's presence in life and to help them interpret their own experience. There is nothing more than illness and suffering which raises the question of where God is and what kind of God God is. One is immediately thrust back into Jesus' debate with his contemporaries about the nature of the presence of God in life. Jesus' theme of the suffering of God's servant and the seed and growth metaphors of the parables in Mark 4, which deal with the nature and growth of the kingdom, are important resources. Paul's balance in II Cor. 11-12, keeping profound spiritual experiences next to profound suffering, is a striking model. It is important to note that God is somehow there, even in suffering, but one has to discover how and one has to work out what seems to be contradiction.

A service of healing might be started. It is suggested that this be kept simple and structured much as a regular service, but with a focus on healing. Laying on of hands or anointing might be included, but it would be important that people not expect the spectacular displays one often sees on TV. For churches where Communion is customary, it would be well to include it. There are liturgies which you could use in the book on *Healing*, or you could develop your own. *It is always important to portray all that is being done as part of the regular and ordinary ministry of the church.* It would be my suggestion that a healing service be held once a month on a Sunday evening or as part of a service on Sunday morning. Doing this regularly indicates that this is a normal part of the church's ministry. Several congregations could be paired together to hold healing services in the evening, but it is my feeling that a healing or prayer program is really needed as an expression of the ministry and mission of each congregation and therefore a partnership with another church should not make this any less the program of both..

It is important not to tie practices to particular results. We pray and heal because that is part of the church's mission. There will be results, but we cannot guarantee physical changes though there are always profound spiritual benefits. We pray and heal because it should be done. What we can guarantee is listed under the Great Healing to be found in the chapter on The Spiritual Resources of the Christian Tradition.. This is the Great Healing which leads to human "well-being," the alignment of the person with life's spiritual resources and with God.

If nothing ever happened, we would wonder if we were dealing with anything real. Healings will occur, but they will occur with the help of God midst the complexity of life. The understanding of life as including complexity is advocated in the models of human life discussed in the book on *Healing*. We cannot let ourselves be driven by the need to prove ourselves through results. And yet there will be results. And it is also true that there is a power in belief itself which tends towards realization and *we cannot so qualify faith that faith loses its power.* We need to inspire persons with the creative and healing power of faith. And we also need the power of our own faith. In my own practice I have periods for critical analysis which I view as necessary and responsible. Then when I need to work and live with my faith I lay aside all analysis and qualification, and simply and purely believe.

Though we cannot always promise physical change, we ought always to be exploring *what produces results*, in terms of the methods which make sense to us, with which we have experience, and what we discern to be the wishes of God. Perhaps we have found that visualization of the person within God's love, light and power is helpful, perhaps we visualize or think of God channeling God's power through us to the person and visualize the disease and location to which God's power is directed. Perhaps we dialogue with God about the person's needs and thereby arrive at insight about how we might cooperate with God. *Gradually each person develops a growing wisdom about how to pray.* There is no substitute for a life of experimentation with the spiritual world and the building of a growing wisdom.

The church's ministry of healing can be a wonderful way to win persons to our Savior and to God. Thus it is really a part of or an expression of evangelism. Yet we have to be sure that we don't use the possibility of healing as a way of manipulating persons. In the proclamation of the Gospel the reality of God in life is proclaimed and persons can find in God what they have been long seeking. But the process by which they come to God must be God's and theirs, not ours.

At some point, if congregational resources are available, a congregation may wish to consider a parish nurse as part of its staff. A parish nurse, properly trained, can bring to parishioners knowledge of medical and therapeutic resources and the significant role of the spiritual in life. Consult the web site of the International Parish Nurse Resource Center: <http://www.advocatehealth.com/about/faith/parishn/services> . Often within the congregation there will be medical professionals who have a deep interest in religion and spirituality in healing. These persons have accumulated previous experience and can provide significant insights and programs. At times a pastor will have strong interests in healing and the congregation could encourage her/him to take advantage of some of the modern programming on faith and health. Another

approach might be the use of lay pastoral care teams who would visit and minister to the sick. It is important for each congregation and congregational staff to explore and develop needed resources.
A Possible Letter to the Board Exploring Establishing a Healing Ministry

Dear _____ :

We thought that it might be helpful if we wrote a brief description of what might be developed at _____ Church concerning a healing ministry.

Rationale

Healing in the Christian Church is an application of the Gospel. It is not doing something unusual, but doing as a church what the pastors are always doing and following Christ in his own ministry of healing. It represents the way the church cares for people, providing them with perspectives on their life and resources for their needs. Primarily, it provides care so that no one faces life and its problems alone. To recognize that this is an application of the Gospel is important. The Gospel provides a perspective on life which makes persons aware of the presence and love of God and the way the reality of life's spiritual realm provides necessary resources for human well-being. To speak of healing does not mean that everything can be fixed and all illness healed, but it does mean that life can be transformed whatever the circumstances and that often physical improvement can be experienced. We would understand that a concern for healing also involves caring for persons in the dying process which comes to us all. A concern for the role of the spiritual in healing is much in harmony with the present developments which understand various approaches to healing as complementary (not alternative) to traditional Western medicine.

Components of a Program

1. Provision in preaching and teaching for informing people regarding the nature of life and God so that they would have a model by which to approach issues of life before they arrive. The church would share with persons the wisdom of the Christian community about life.
2. A regular monthly healing service which would make a concern for healing a regular part of church life and would bear to the community a witness. This could be a simple liturgical service, with a message, and opportunity for laying on of hands and perhaps also communion.
3. Means of communicating the needs of members and friends through a mailing and/or phone contact, and announcement (perhaps printed) in the Sunday morning service.
4. A group committed to praying for persons and needs, instructed in their role and willing to explore the spiritual disciplines and dimensions of life and are willing to develop a theology of healing.
5. Provision of pastoral care through trained laity as well as the pastors. In modern research it is clear that the concern of persons and a community means much to those recovering from and handling illness.
6. As we gain experience this should become part of the advertised ministry of _____ Church. We understand healing to be part of evangelization. and outreach. However, we would need to develop ways of caring for persons who come to us from outside of the congregation when this is developed as a community ministry.
7. At some point we may wish to consider the hiring of a parish nurse, part or full time, who can assist our people with their needs and supplement the ministry of the pastors and laity.

We view the above as a starting point in our conversations and would appreciate reactions and insights from others.

Grace and Peace,

Prayer: The Community Opens Itself to God on Behalf of its Members and Others

Prayer brings before God the concerns of persons. This is not because God has to be informed, but rather, the community joins together before God around these issues of need so that God may work through this willing and open community. The New Testament understanding of the Spirit is that God is present within

history and life through those who are open to receive God's Spirit. Thus God's kingdom comes where persons are open. This does not mean that all of life changes and all problems go away, but it means that God is present in circumstances, however difficult, and especially through people. The Gospel of Luke strongly affirms the presence of God's Spirit even though it was written at a time when life was difficult for Christians. The presence of God in humans is also affirmed in Genesis 1. Humans are made in the image of God. The image metaphor is often understood to mean that in some way humans are *like* God. It makes better sense to understand it to mean that humans *reflect the image of God*, as a mirror reflects an image. This brings to mind Paul's comment that in the present we see "as in a mirror dimly (I Cor. 13:12)." This is our human task: to reflect God into all of life's circumstances and to be the place where God can be present.

It is good to inform God of our concerns and needs and even at times to argue with God, as the Old Testament Psalmist, or to wrestle with God as did Jacob (Genesis 32). This is natural when our concerns are very important to us and we may be in great pain. In the book of Job, Job struggles with God for justice in his suffering and is ultimately satisfied not so much by answers as by his experience of God and realization that God is there in spite of his questions (42:5). God allows us to live out before God, with passion, whatever the issues are for us. However, there is also a more passive approach to prayer. Here we open ourselves to God and allow God to work through us according to God's own wisdom. We are open to God's spiritual world and allow ourselves to become channels of God's Spirit to others. We leave all up to God and do not need to figure out what to ask. In a circumstance where it is not clear what to ask, to be able to leave things to God is helpful.

A Prayer Group: Structuring Prayer into the Life of the Congregation

Each congregation needs a group which meets regularly for prayer. The presence of such a group bears a significant witness through its prayers for the needs and celebration of the joys of members and friends of the congregation. Such a group can also make exploration of prayer and spiritual life their special concern. Included in this could be helping the members of the group to develop a personally designed and chosen spiritual discipline. At least the group needs to help persons know how to engage in the daily prayer which would include the requests. Someone would need to be in charge of the group who could provide relevant leadership.

A Prayer Newsletter

It is helpful to have a simple Newsletter to keep members of the prayer group informed about requests, progress or changes in peoples' circumstances. The prayer group leader, or someone designated, should have the responsibility of constructing and distributing the prayer list at meetings, mailing it to those not present, and seeing that members are informed of emergency requests by phone. The burden of phone contacts could be shared by several persons with regular assignments to call particular persons. The letter and phoned information could also be provided for persons outside the prayer group who cannot regularly attend but are willing to commit themselves to regular prayer for those requesting it. Those requesting prayer should keep the leader informed and give permission for sharing personal information. The request would be retained on the list as the person or the family of the one being prayed for so requests. It should be understood that the request for prayer also means that the person requesting be responsible for keeping the leader informed.

The value of providing the list is that it is not left to the member of the group to construct and when there is a new request there is always a place to mark down this request. Thus it provides a form of organization and guarantee that the names are always available. With the list before one, the individuals and their needs could be looked at and prayed for. A very simple way to pray, for those who do not have much time, is just to look at the names on the list, understanding *looking at* the person as prayer (perhaps imaged as joining God in God's concern for these persons), and then to only pray in detail about those whom you feel need this when you look at the names. The list could be kept at the breakfast table and read through

for members of the family along with morning devotions. It could also be tacked on a bulletin board or taped to a door where people could see it and be reminded of the persons for whom they are praying. A prayer might be located at the top of the list so that an almost complete structure is provided for those who wish it. The Newsletter might look like this:

MARCH NEWSLETTER FOR PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

The following requests have been received. Please add to this list any received by phone. You may also wish to add your personal or family prayer concerns. The name(s) of the persons prayed for, their needs in prayer, and the times when prayer is needed are listed for you.

Possible Beginning Prayer:

God, we thank you that you have called us to share in the joys and sorrows of others. In confidence we know that you are our Creator and Savior, and thus you have given us life and given yourself in love. We know that your spiritual world gives us strength, enables us to love, and always provides hope. We therefore do pray for:

Name	Need	Term of Prayer
Susan Jones	possible cancer	testing on March 12, prayer leading up to this needed and we will be informed as to results
Jim Johansen	developing Alzheimer's prayer needed not only for him, but also his wife as primary care giver and the family's development of a plan	long term prayer need

A Sample Folder or Card Inviting Requests:

This church *is your family, the community in which you find understanding of life and support and companionship for living.* This is expressed in our concern for your well-being and prayers for your needs. We have a *group of persons who pray daily* for those who have made requests for prayer. Requests should be phoned to: _____, or turned in on the space provided on this card. If you want the prayer request to be kept private and disclosed only to the prayer group, please be sure to indicate this. If you are dealing with a very private matter, please bring this directly to the pastor who will then not share your request with others. Your needs will be prayed about for a week and then will be renewed *at your request*. Please keep us informed of any changes or developments. No one need deal with life alone.

We also have a *Healing Service* once a month on _____ when we as a church will publicly pray for needs of persons, with their permission. Worship and preaching will be directed particularly towards healing. There will also be opportunity for laying on of hands and/or anointing with oil, profound symbols of God's desire to bless and heal. There will be prayers for the life and mission of the congregation. This service is held as a symbol of the congregation's concern for its members and friends and its conviction that healing is part of its mission.

When we look upon the suffering of Jesus, our Savior, we recognize both that suffering is a normal part of life and that God joins us in our suffering to increase our peace and joy and to restore our well-being in the midst of the realities of life.

Please hand the following to the pastor or an usher:

<p>I wish to request prayer for _____</p> <p>I am free to share the following information:</p>
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<hr/> <hr/> Name: _____ Phone _____

The Sunday Morning Worship

Since Sunday morning worship is the time when a large number of the congregation are together and may be the only time that some have contact with their Christian community, prayer for the members and friends of the congregation should be included in some way here. Names and needs could be included in the "prayers of the people" in the service. Cards could be made available for prayer requests which would be given to an usher and handed to the pastor, or oral requests could be given in the service. This need not take much time in the service, but should be structured so that people are aware of the church as a caring, loving, and praying community. Much is symbolized in the visible ways that the church cares for its members.

Laying on of Hands and Anointing

Laying on of hands is a traditional way of setting someone apart for an office or transmitting a blessing. The physical contact often becomes significant as a spiritual and personal bonding and channel for God's blessing.

Anointing has behind it a biblical tradition often related to healing and expressive of a wish to share God's presence and blessing in a way that is concrete and lasting -- as the oil upon the forehead is lasting. One must be careful about traditional associations with Extreme Unction which before Vatican II was seen as preparing for death. Like many other actions of grace and blessing, it does not need much formal structure though liturgies prepared for this purpose are very helpful. But whether done privately or in a service, it is done in a context of the faith and life of the Christian community which do provide a *network of meaning* for the act.

1. *The reality and power of God* whose presence is involved in our lives and whose presence we share by our act.
2. *The grace and love of God* which come as gift. God's gift comes, contrary to what some might think, without prerequisite except a willingness to receive. This is where life starts. Love and grace are not the end of a long process of struggle but the gift which enables the process of life.
3. Prayer usually accompanies anointing, *prayer which not only expresses what is needed but allows us to be channels of God's reality* and purposes to others.
4. *The "strong life" of the Christian community is expressed* with its *shared commitments* rooted in a common experience of God and in its rites and sacraments (e.g. Communion and Baptism).
5. *Faith in God and the Christian realities are expressed* in a way which transcends the doubts and struggles of individuals. The community binds itself to lay aside questions and uncertainties which have their place, but not now. The power of faith in the community allows the emergence of the reality that is believed, the presence of God and its possibilities. The power of faith in the community for a time relieves the one who asks blessing from having to produce faith in the midst of suffering and confusion. The community believes for the person being blessed and the person can relax into the support and faith of the community.
6. *Anointing is a "memorable act."* This means it may assume a concrete and remembered place within the person's life and faith story, and so continue its effect.
7. *Anointing facilitates a bond* between the person anointing and the person anointed and between the person anointed and the community in which the anointing takes place. We have touched each other at deep levels of being.
8. In a sense *anointing is a mystery*, as Communion is a mystery, and what happens is not dependent on our control but on the wishes and interpersonal actions of God who knows best what is needed.

Anointing and Discernment: Anointing is not just a human act. Though we may speak about it in a way that gives it definition and describes what we expect, it is our understanding that it is an occasion when God participates, works with and guides the person being anointed *in personal ways*. Thus it cannot just be described in a general way, but its meaning has to be given time and space for God to work out what God would in particular. *In the context of anointing or afterwards it would be helpful for the person to dialogue with God about the meaning of the event.* Interestingly enough, in I John anointing is a metaphor for the receiving of knowledge.

Anointing and Counseling: Usually when a person comes for anointing there should be a brief conversation before the anointing asking the person's needs, if she/he is willing to share them. Often in this brief conversation it becomes apparent that there are needs which should have more extended conversation. The person leading the service or competent persons should be available after the service.

A Healing Service

An occasional Healing Service should be provided as a way of caring for peoples' needs and also keeping before the congregation the importance of this concern. It would be best to do it monthly so that persons would count on it occurring at a particular time. There are some excellent liturgies contained in the Episcopal Book of Occasional Services and the Book of Common Prayer. The laying on of hands and anointing with oil are often part of a healing service since this provides persons with concrete symbols of God's loving care, the power of physical touch, and a symbol which the person can carry from the service (the anointing). For this practice in the New Testament, see James 5:14-15.

A possible Liturgy

[It would be helpful to have some meaningful symbols present. There might be the symbols of Communion present on the table and the baptismal fount symbolizing the promises of the sacraments. There could be a crucifix or a cross. There might be a statue or symbol with Christ carrying the lamb, with arms reaching out, or praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. A cruise of oil could be present if oil is to be used. The service which follows was developed by the author. Feel free to copy, modify, and utilize this service as you wish.]



A PUBLIC SERVICE OF HEALING

A congregation is a supportive community which cares for its members and their needs and sees that no one has to face the challenges of life alone. Moreover, it is a spiritual, as well as physical, community, which shares the spiritual life and presence of God in persons and thus provides a network of spiritual reality and empowerment.

Anointing and laying on of hands are ancient practices of the Christian church. Both are symbols of God's entering a person's life with power and presence. Laying on of hands especially uses the gift of human touch which symbolizes both God's presence and the touch of the Christian community. Anointing with oil is an ancient practice used in early Christian baptism indicating the presence of the Spirit and long associated with healing. Oil is rubbed on the person's forehead in the shape of a cross and is a symbol of God's blessing, a mark of God, which one can carry from the service.

God in Christ promises to be a part of our lives and is the primary resource out of which we live and deal with our needs. Prayer recognizes this, not only by carrying our concerns to God, but by opening our lives to God's presence and activity so that our spiritual and physical lives are fully influenced and blessed by God.

You will have received a slip of paper on which you may submit a request for prayer for yourself or someone. These will be picked up by the ushers and given to the pastor at a point designated in the liturgy. Each person for whom prayer is requested will during the next week be prayed for by the pastor conducting the service.

Prelude

Hymn 405 Crown him with many crowns

[Hymn numbers listed are those in the Moravian Book of Worship, 1995.]

Invocation:

Gracious God, Father, Son and Spirit, we thank you for your love and presence with us, for your sharing of our lives, our joys and sorrows, for your calling us into a community in which we find support and vision. Guide us as we pray for persons with various needs, that they may feel your presence and touch. We offer ourselves as instruments of your peace and love. Change what can and needs to be changed. Help us to learn how to live with what cannot. But above all, we welcome your blessing.

St. Patrick's Hymn, Book of Worship p. 237 [May be sung or said.]

*I bind this day to | me for | ever
by power of faith, | Christ's | incar | nation,
his baptism in | Jordan | river;
His death on | cross for | my sal | vation;
his bursting from the | spiced | tomb;
his riding | up the | heavenly way;
his coming at the | day of | doom;
I bind un | to my | self to | day.
I bind unto my | self to | day
the power of | God to | hold and | lead,
his eye to watch, his | might to | stay,
his ear to | hearken| to my | need,
the wisdom of my | God to | teach
his hand to | guide, his | shield to | ward,
the word of God to | give me | speech,
his heavenly | host to | be my | guard.
Christ be with me, | Christ with | in me,
Christ be | hind me, | Christ be | fore me,
Christ beside me, | Christ to | win me,
Christ to | comfort| and re | store me,
Christ beneath me, | Christ a | bove me,
Christ in | quiet, | Christ in | danger,
Christ in hearts of | all that | love me,
Christ in | mouth of | friend and | stranger.*

Attributed to St. Patrick, Tr. and paraphrased Cecil F. Alexander; Tune Herbert Stanley Oakeley.

Confession of Sin and Absolution

With knowledge of your love and grace we bring before you our faults and limits, all that keeps us from becoming the person you call us to be and keeps us from realizing the blessings of your love and presence. In your forgiveness remove all that keeps us from your blessing.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

his sacrifice and his resurrection to new life, embodied in your baptism;

and because of the unquestionable love of God and the presence of God's fullness in the ministry of the Spirit,

I do pronounce you both forgiven and empowered for life.

Scripture:

Psalm 91

James 5:13-18

Luke 4:16-21

The Apostles' Creed [The Creed which establishes the framework for our faith]

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer [The first three petitions remind us of our need to focus on God and God's purpose while the last three remind us of God's desire to free us from concern for our basic needs.]

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;

for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Liturgy of Thanks and Celebration

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you have made us God's children in baptism, invited us into your experience of death and life, sealed us as your own.

We thank you and celebrate your love.

We thank you that in Holy Communion you have provided us with symbols of your body and blood, that you nourish us with the gift of your self, and that we may celebrate our covenant with you through the cup.

We thank you and celebrate your love.

We thank you that you have made this building a place of your blessing, a secure and safe place free from destructive spiritual powers, a place filled with your presence, love and power.

We thank you and celebrate your love.

We thank you that daily you do come to us, touch our lives, grant us strength, and call us to the greater horizons of life.

We thank you and celebrate your love.

We confess to you whatever ways we have fallen short of your expectation and know that you do receive our failures unto yourself that we may be free to walk in newness of life and hope.

We thank you and celebrate your love.

We pray your blessing upon all those who come this day seeking your help.

We thank you and celebrate your love. Amen.

Meditation:

During the following hymn the names and needs of those for whom there is to be intercession are to be presented.

Hymn 736 Your hands, O Lord, in days of old

Prayer for those who have expressed needs.

[Communion]

[Here Communion may be offered using the biblical words of consecration or a liturgical form, such as follows. Communion can be a means of giving to each person concrete symbols of God's love and blessing.]

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said: Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

The words *This is my body which is given for you* may be said as each person is served and partakes or where the bread is served to all communicants before partaking they may stand and partake together, the pastor saying: Our Lord Jesus Christ said: Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you.

Silent Prayer

By your divine presence,

By the holy sacraments,

By all the merits of your life, sufferings, death and resurrection,

Bless and comfort us gracious Lord and God. Amen.

In the same way, after supper our Lord Jesus Christ took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.

The words *Drink this in remembrance of me* may be said as each person is served and partakes or where the cup is served to all communicants before partaking they may stand and partake together, the pastor saying: Our Lord Jesus Christ said: Drink from this, all of you. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Silent Prayer

Christ, the Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;

Grant to us your peace. Amen.]

Laying on of Hands and Anointing for those who wish.

I now invite all those who wish to come forward for laying on of hands and anointing.

[Brief personal conversation about needs should occur with each person, including an invitation to meet with counselors after the service. The following words can be personalized according to needs.]

N., I lay my hands upon you and anoint you with oil in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, beseeching our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain you with his presence, to drive away all sickness of body and spirit, and to give you that victory of life and peace which will enable you to serve him both now and evermore. *Amen.*

Hymn

460 (vs. 1)

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.
Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all that I have needed thy hand hath provided;
great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

Dismissal:

May God go with us as we return to our homes and places of work as servants of healing. May those for whom we have prayed experience God's presence and healing touch. Wherever we go, create for us and through us a place of your love and an opportunity for ministry. By your power protect us and our loved ones from evil and the Evil One. May we accept, without uncertainty, your vision of our possibility.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you always.

Hymn 447

With your presence, Lord, our Head and Savior,

bless us all, we humbly pray;

our dear heavenly Father's love and favor

be our comfort every day.

May God's Spirit now in each proceeding

favor us with his most gracious leading;

thus shall we be truly blessed

both in labor and in rest.

Postlude

During the following week keep in prayer those whom you may remember from this service who expressed a need for prayer. If you are uncertain as to how to pray for them, just bring them before God and let God do the rest.

Life must be lived by faith and vision which express its possibilities.

Health begins in the love of God who would bless your life.

James 5:14-15 Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

Psalms 91:1-4 You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

A Possible Meditation for the Scriptures Listed in the Liturgy

I AM GOD'S

Our Gospel lesson from Luke (4:16-21) marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry as he announces his mission in the Nazareth Synagogue. He had been baptized, an experience in which he knew he belonged to God as God's son, as the heavenly voice indicated. Then he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he met the devil who in the thought of his contemporaries represented all of the problems of the world. There Jesus faced all that life could bring, and in the wilderness God's Spirit took care of him. Thus Jesus' ministry started with a knowledge that he was God's and a knowledge that whatever wilderness he experienced, God would be there with him. Then he began his ministry by announcing that the Spirit of God was in his life and was now leading him to care for the needs of people, using the words of Isaiah which spoke of how the servant of God would care for the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed. Jesus would have to face many hard things throughout his ministry, including his own suffering, but he could face and receive what life had to bring for he knew he was God's son and he knew that he could survive the difficulties of life, the wildernesses of life. In each moment of life he could say, "I am God's --- and I will survive any wilderness." There is no wilderness of life where God will not be -- for us.

The Gospels are not written just to tell us about Jesus. They are also written to tell us about us. Their writers knew that so many events in Jesus' life parallel our own struggles and experience of life. Thus it is not just interest in the history of Jesus that caused the Gospel writers to tell their stories the way that they do. They knew that where Jesus began in his adult life is where we must begin. We too hear God's words, "You are my beloved son or daughter" and we know that the Spirit of God has come upon our lives, and then we face the future and say, "I am God's and I will survive any wilderness and I know that God will be with me in any wilderness."

This we must confidently and absolutely know. If we doubt this, we deprive it of its power to transform our lives. There are times for doubts and questions, but not when one is in the wilderness. We are God's children and as with Jesus, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." What is this year of the Lord's favor which is here spoken of? It was the biblical year of Jubilee: the year when all things got set right – when *all things got set right*.

Psalm 91 is a beautiful expression of what it means to have the Spirit of God in one's life and to be a child of God. It describes God as the shelter within which one lives. The world is not to be understood from its troubles and struggles, but from the fact that we live in the shelter of the most High: The Psalm is divided into two parts. Vs. 1-13 are the words of someone, call him a preacher, who speaks about the care of God, while the last brief stanza contains the words and promise of God. The preacher begins:

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,

or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

And then God answers,

Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

We need to carry with us into daily life these great images of the Psalm:

we live in the
shelter of the Most High
shadow of the Almighty
God is
my refuge
my fortress
I live
under *his wings*
behind *his shield*

Everyone who faces the wilderness of life asks why, as did Jesus himself in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest. Any one who faces suffering asks why? And each person asks, "What or who is there for me who might not only make it easier to bear, but who could change what I have to face. The world does not go away, but God is there. He promises, "I will be with them in trouble and will rescue and honor them. With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation." For he is our shelter, refuge, fortress, and we live under his wings and shadow." God promises and we are the community of that promise.

A Public Service of Healing

[Modification of A Public Service of Healing from the *Book of Occasional Services*, Church Hymnal Corporation, 445 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10016, 1979. Permission for use was requested, but I was informed that this service is in public domain and permission is only needed for using the formatting in *the Book of Occasional Services*, that is, if it were photocopied. See also the Episcopal "Ministration to the Sick" in the *Book of Common Prayer*.]

A PUBLIC SERVICE OF HEALING

Hymn(s)

Grace and peace be with you, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

O God of peace, you have taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Confession of Sins

Most holy and almighty God, our Savior, we confess our disobedience. We, like sheep, have gone astray, all of us turning to our own way. The good that we knew to do we have not done. We know that we have

been unworthy servants and have fallen short of your glory. Help us, deliver us, and forgive our sins, O God of our salvation, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, who loves us and gave himself for us.

Thus says the Lord: I, even I am He Who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins. Go and sin no more.

The Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Scripture

Sermon or Meditation

Let us name before God those for whom we offer our prayers.

[Here present the names and needs of those for whom there is to be intercession. If prayer cards are used, they may be brought forward during the singing of the following Hymn]

Hymn

Litany of Healing

God the Father, your will for all people is health and salvation;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

God the Son, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

Lord, grant your healing grace to all who are sick, injured, or disabled, that they may be made whole;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Grant to all who seek your guidance, and to all who are lonely, anxious, or despondent, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Mend broken relationships, and restore those in emotional distress to soundness of mind and serenity of spirit;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Bless physicians, nurses, and all others who minister to the suffering, granting them wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Grant to the dying peace and a holy death, and uphold by the grace and consolation of your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

You are the Lord who does wonders, who overcomes all that is evil or destructive:

You have declared your power among the peoples.

With you, O Lord, is the well of life:

And in your light we see light.

Let us pray. A period of silence [during which persons may open their hearts to God and pray their concerns in silence.]

Almighty God, giver of life and health: Send your blessing on all who are sick, and upon those who minister to them, that all weakness may be vanquished by the triumph of the risen Christ; who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Savior of the world, by your cross and precious blood you have redeemed us; *Save us, and help us, we humbly beseech you, O Lord.*

Laying on of Hands (and Anointing). [Those who wish to receive the laying on of hands (and anointing) should come forward. Persons with a gift of healing may join in the laying on of hands. During this time the congregation may sing designated hymns.]

When each person comes forward, say:

The Almighty Lord, who is a strong tower to all who put their trust in him, to whom all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth bow and obey: Be now and evermore your defense, and make you know and feel that the Name under heaven given for health and salvation is the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

N., I lay my hands upon you [and anoint you with oil] in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, beseeching our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain you with his presence, to drive away all sickness of body and spirit, and to give you that victory of life and peace which will enable you to serve him both now and evermore. *Amen.*

The service continues with the exchange of the Peace.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

May God the Father bless you, God the Son heal you, God the Holy Spirit give you strength. May God the holy and undivided Trinity guard your body, save your soul, and bring you safely to his heavenly country; where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Hymn

[Adapted with permission from *the Book of Occasional Services*, Church Hymnal Corporation, Episcopal Church.]

A Table of Suggested Lessons and Psalms

[From A Public Service of Healing in the Book of Occasional Services, Church Hymnal Corporation, Episcopal Church.]

Old Testament

Exodus 16:13-15 (Manna in the wilderness)

I Kings 17:17-24 (Elijah restores the widow's son to life)

2 Kings 5:9-14 (Healing of Naaman)

2 Kings 20:1-5 (I have heard your prayer . . . I will heal you)

Isaiah 11:1-3a (The gifts of the Spirit)

Isaiah 42:1-7 (The suffering servant)

Isaiah 53:3-5 (With his stripes are we healed)

Isaiah 61:1-3 (Good tidings to the afflicted)

Psalms

Psalms 113 (My heart is joyful because of your saving help)

Psalms 20:1-6 (May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble)

Psalms 23 (You have anointed my head with oil)

Psalms 27 or 27:1-7, 9, 18 (The Lord is the strength of my life)

Psalms 91 (He will give his angels charge over you)

Psalms 103 (He forgives all your sins)

Psalms 121 (My help comes from the Lord)

Psalms 130 (My soul waits for the Lord)

Psalms 139:1-17 (Where can I go from your Spirit?)

Psalms 145:14-22 (The eyes of all wait on you, O Lord)

Psalms 146 (Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help)

New Testament

Acts 3:1-10 (Peter and John heal the lame man)

Acts 5:12-16 (Healings in Jerusalem; Peter's Shadow)

Acts 10:36-43 (Apostolic preaching: He went about . . . healing)

Acts 16:16-18 (The slave girl with the spirit of divination)

Romans 8:18-23 (We await the redemption of our bodies)

Romans 8:31-39 (Nothing can separate us from the love of God)

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (God comforts us in affliction)

Colossians 1:11-20 (May you be strengthened with all power)

Hebrews 12:1-2 (Looking to Jesus, the perfecter of our faith)

James 5:13-16 (Is any among you sick?)

I John 5:13-15 (That you may know that you have eternal life)

The Gospel

Matthew 9:2-8 (Your sins are forgiven)

Matthew 26:26-30, 36-39 (The Last Supper: Not as I will)

Mark 1:21-28 (Jesus heals the man with the unclean spirit)

Mark 1:29-34a (Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and others)

Mark 5:1-20 (Healing of Gerasene demoniac)

Mark 5:22-24 (Healing of Jairus' daughter)

Mark 6:7, 12-13 (They anointed with oil many that were sick)

Luke 17:11-19 (Your faith has made you well)

John 5:1b-9 (Do you want to be healed?)

John 6:47-51 (I am the bread of life)

John 9:1-11 (Healing of the man born blind)

An Outline for a One Day Workshop Using the Book

9:30 AM Opening Worship – The Great Healing p. 51 (This can be done as a liturgy, with some modification)

9:45 AM Lecture: What's Happening - in perspectives on well-being and healing? What is the role of the religious community? An Overview Discussion

10:45 AM Break

11:00 AM Lecture: Brief overview of the book

Especially -- A Comprehensive Model of Life, its Complexity and the Nature of the Spiritual pp. 25-37

Discussion

12:00 Noon Lunch

12:45 PM Lecture: Providing A Community of Support and Love in a Congregation

This would deal not only with a design but the use of the materials in the book and some discussion of the Liturgy to be used in the closing session.

p. 71 ff Discussion

2:00 PM Healing Service using the Liturgy on pp. 109ff

This would include the laying on of hands and anointing for those who wish and the sharing of concerns for prayer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOME SIGNIFICANT RECENT BOOKS

Herbert Benson, MD, with Marg Stark, *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief*, Scribner, 1996. Benson is famous for his work on the "relaxation response." He is on staff at the Mind/Body Medical Institute and Harvard Medical School, and directs conferences initiated in 1995 on Spirituality and Healing in Medicine.

Howard Brody, *The Placebo Response: How You Can Release the Body's Inner Pharmacy for Better Health*, NT: HarperCollins, 2000. A comprehensive survey of recent medical research on the placebo response, exploring the role of expectancy, conditioning and meaning on the biochemical pathways or the body's "inner pharmacy". The last several chapters deal with how one may enhance one's health in the light of this and the nature of the partnership with physicians and other healers.

Barbara B. Brown, *New Mind, New Body: Bio-Feedback: New Directions for the Mind*, NY: Harper and Row, 1974. A discussion of the use of bio-feedback to control biological and mental functions.

Larry Dossey, MD, *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1993. Argues the role of spirituality and prayer in healing, provides a summation of research.

Mark Epstein, *Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart: A Buddhist Perspective on Wholeness*, N.Y.: Broadway Books, 1998. Epstein presents a Zen Buddhist contemplative approach to life including awareness of inner life and encouragement to embrace emptiness, to live comfortably with unintegration, and to release the heart with less need to control.

Jerome Groopman's *The Measure of Our Days: New Beginnings at Life's End*, NY: Viking Penguin, 1997, describes his sensitive interactions with patients facing life's end in a series of nine case studies.

Bernard Lown, MD, *The Lost Art of Healing*, Houghton Mifflin, 1996. Professor emeritus of cardiology at Harvard, argues for recovery of the lost art of healing which is rooted in the doctor-patient relationship, told through stories from his own experience.

Margaret E. Mohrmann, M.D., *Medicine as Ministry: Reflections on Suffering, Ethics, and Hope*, Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1995. Theological reflection on illness, healing, and the doctor-patient relationship.

Bernie S. Siegel, M.D., *Love, Medicine and Miracles: Lessons Learned About Self-Healing from a Surgeon's Experience with Exceptional Patients*, NY: Harper and Row, 1986. Argues for healing partnership with patients and the relationship of mind and body by exploring the character of patients who survive beyond expectations.

Andrew Weil, M.D., *Health and Healing*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995. Presents the full spectrum of alternative healing practices and argues the power of the mind.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1990. Use of meditative techniques to reduce stress and deal with illness.

WWW SITES

Interfaith Health Program,

Rollins School of Public Health, Emory Univ., Decatur, GA <http://www.ihpnet.org/4syllabi.htm> There is a page dedicated to significant LINKS to medical resources and information.

National Institutes of Health <http://www.nih.gov/>

Complementary Medicine

The National Institutes of Health in the U.S., The National Center for Complementary & Alternative Medicine <http://nccam.nih.gov/>

The United Kingdom Research Council for Complementary Medicine <http://www.rccm.org.uk>

Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine with a journal by this title <http://alternative-therapies.com>

Mind-Body

Mind/Body Medical Institute, connected with Herbert Benson, Harvard, Boston

<http://www.mindbody.harvard.edu>.

Spirituality and Health

Spirituality and Health, developed with the assistance of Trinity Episcopal Church, Wall Street, NY, which also markets a magazine *Spirituality and Health*: <http://www.spiritualityhealth.com>

National Institute for Healthcare Research – Bridging the Gap Between Spirituality and Health

<http://www.nih.gov>

Jewish Spirituality and Healing

Azamra Institute, Jerusalem <http://www.azamra.org>

Drawing From Jewish Traditions – For Practical Spiritual Healing <http://www.all-natural.com/jewish-1.html>

Professional Associations

Association of Professional Chaplains <http://www.professionalchaplains.org>

Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. <http://www.acpe.edu>

International Order of St. Luke the Physician <http://www.orderofstluke.org/> An ecumenical order originally started in the Episcopal Church, magazine *Sharing*.

The National Federation of Spiritual Healers (for the United Kingdom), magazine *Healing Today*
<http://www.nfsh.org.uk>

International Parish Nurse Resource Center <http://www.advocatehealth.com/about/faith/parishn/services>

Other helpful sites

www.americasdoctor.com AmericasDoctor is a pharmaceutical services company which brings together medical experts and researchers.

www.drweil.com Ask Dr. Weil As with Weil's books the focus is on natural remedies.

www.drkoop.com drkoop.com seeks to empower consumers to better manage their health. Led by former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD.

www.healthanswers.com healthcare information technology strategies, including a database of prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

www.healthcentral.com provides searchable health encyclopedias.

www.healthy.net HealthWorld Online provides information on natural and alternative approaches to wellness

www.intelihealth.com IntelliHealth, a subsidiary of Aetna.

www.jama.ama-assn.org Journal of American Medical Association Full articles can be viewed by subscribers while other need to view abstracts of pay for access. Includes a "doctor finder".

www.mayoclinic.com Mayo Clinic

www.medlineplus.gov A service of the National Library of medicine for healthcare consumers.

www.medscape.com is designed for physicians and www.cbshealthwatch.com is designed for the consumer.

www.nejm.org New England Journal of Medicine, new articles only available after six months.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query National library of Medicine's database of citations and abstracts

www.pubmed.gov National Library of Medicine – all published medical articles in summary form

www.my.webmd.com WebMD Health provides news articles and medical sources from various educational institutions and agencies.

<http://www.pnpco.com/> Prime National Publishing Corporation – Health Care Journals

Search Engines

There are many search engines available to find sites, publications, and programs. Each on-line service usually has its own engine. If you ask your on-line service for “search engines” it will usually present you with a list and you can try out the different engines. Find the ones that do the best job for you. They will not all give you the same results. Remember that any search will usually find thousands of items from which you will need to choose, realizing that some items and sites represent people’s hobbies and special interests and do not represent your standards. Some search engines are: Google, Yahoo, Infoseek, Lycos, Netscape. These search engines do not usually incur fees, but always look at the notices when you use an engine. Some on-line services have access to databases which you can search. For some, such as the

IQuest databases, there are charges for searches and for copies of materials found. For the area of our interest you may wish to search on “spirituality medicine”, “spirituality health”, and “spirituality healing”.

Search of Medical Journal Databases

National Library of Medicine Search tools: PubMed and Internet Grateful Med

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/databases/freemedl.html> A search of journals will provide a bibliography on your subject but to secure articles you must go to an Interlibrary Loan or perhaps pay a fee to the journal publisher.



SOME SYMBOLS FOR OUR LIFE AND FAITH



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SOME SYMBOLS FOR YOUR LIFE AND FAITH

This may be used when you enter the hospital as part of your preparation or may be helpful in exploring how to face illness. Please use it and then talk with your pastor, priest or the hospital chaplain about your concerns and hopes.

These materials begin with the "Great Healing," what God has already done to provide us with the resources for life. This is supplemented with "Gaining Perspective on Life. If we accept what is described, it has a powerful influence on how we deal with life, how we understand ourselves, and the expectations which are operative for us in times of illness or hospitalization.

*There are included here several passages of **Scripture**, **poetry**, and various **images**. There are also two "**mandalas**" (circles in which you can draw or write). You may use any of these to explore your concerns and hopes, what you are feeling about your present experience, and what God is saying to you in this experience. Find something here that you seem to respond to and explore it, live with it. Jot down any insights which may come to you. Also jot down any questions which you want to discuss with someone.*

Hopefully this material will put you in touch with your own spirituality and its role in your well-being (the quality of your life) and in your being well (maintaining the health of your body and mind). Your spirituality and faith are recognized as important resources for health and healing, along with various surgical, medical and therapeutic modes of treatment.

Reflection on life, symbols, and poetry take time. If you are using this in connection with a hospital stay, remember that today many hospital stays are relatively short and it would be good to start using this material the week before you enter the hospital. It may also be of value to your family.

THE GREAT HEALING

While physical healing needs to take into consideration all of the factors and complications of life, there is the GREAT HEALING of our human needs and condition which God accomplishes for us all. It is upon this that all other healings are based, and it is with awareness of this that we offer all our prayers for physical or emotional healing. All of these elements of the Great Healing are implications of the proclamation of the Gospel.

- 1. God offers you a relationship as your heavenly Father. God is the source of life and the origin of our world. When you have God, you have everything.*
- 2. In this relationship God receives you as sons and daughters. This is not something you can earn or produce by your own efforts. It is a gift of God's love. On this then you can build your life.*
- 3. God offers forgiveness of the sins and mistakes which affect the quality of your life and keep you from moving on to new possibilities. God also asks that you forgive others their sins against you as a gift to them but also so that you can get free of the bondage of your anger and move on.*
- 4. God participated in your creation and birth and gave you a soul. This spiritual part of you cannot be destroyed or affected by disease or death. Whatever your physical illnesses or sufferings, you cannot be destroyed. On death you will be born into a new life in God's world*
- 5. Because God participated in your creation, God has a place for you in life and a mission for you to perform. If you cannot find what God calls you to, God will go with you where you go. Trust the way God will work out your life.*
- 6. God gave you his Spirit as a resource for your development and life journey. God's strength is working for you, which is much more than your own strength. Some have called the Spirit "Mother" because it cared for persons as a mother. You may want to use this image.*
- 7. When you are God's child you are in community or fellowship with all of God's children. This means that you never face life alone and that others will share your burdens. You are also called to help others in their life journey.*
- 8. The negative and evil powers of life cannot overcome you when you belong to God. When life seems too much, remind yourself of Whose you are.*
- 9. Always, always, always know that nothing can separate you from God's love.*
- 10. Jesus brought all of this to you. If you cannot understand it, he will help you. If you have difficulty living it out, he will help you. Let him help you as your Lord and Teacher.*

GAINING PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE

There are a number of important considerations when you have concerns about improving health. These have to do with your understanding of all the resources which are available to you.

Your World

First, you live in a world which has been provided for our living. It is a wonderful yet sometimes difficult world. It has the resources which enable us to live, and yet it also has powers and diseases which affect us.

We have been given a marvelous body in which to live which allows us to do so many things. It contains many systems which enable it to function and to cope and deal with things that we meet in the world which may be destructive, such as the way our body is equipped to deal with emergencies and disease. We have a process of growing up – but also of growing old. The process of growing old can be difficult, but also offers many wonderful opportunities. Even dying is a part of life, but whether that is a frightening part of life depends on how we view life. Dying is the door to the world beyond death and all of life may be seen as opportunity, its perspective determined by what we make of it.

The Spiritual Dimensions of Life

Life is truly limited and frightening if we do not believe in the spiritual dimensions of life. If we do not believe in the spiritual dimensions of life, then what happens to us in life determines everything. If we do believe, then what is *beyond* what happens to us in life determines everything. There are several aspects to the spiritual.

1) There is YOU. What are you? Are you only a body or is there something more in you which cannot be affected by what life does? We believe that when you were born you were given a soul. This soul develops as you develop, taking into itself what you learn, what you remember, who you are. Most of the time you can't distinguish your soul from the rest of you, your body, mind and psyche, until you face difficulties or feel sick and then you find that there is something in you which is beyond difficulties and illness, which is still there and strong. Many of the stories of persons with "near death experiences" describe how they left the body during temporary death, observe what goes on, and retain memories and identity, all that makes us us. This means that while there are uncertainties in life, **there is no thing which can destroy YOU**. After death YOU will still be alive and go into God's world. To always remember this gives you a perspective on life and takes away all fear of life.

2) There is a SPIRITUAL WORLD or DIMENSION to life. One of the major functions of religion is to call your attention to this so that it may become a resource from which you live. This spiritual world includes friends and relatives who have died, spiritual beings who can function as "messengers" of God (which is what "angel" means) to help carry out God's purposes. Above all it includes God. In this spiritual world all goes as God would want -- which we have to admit is not always true of the world in which we live. But we have to remember that this spiritual world is also present in this world in which we live. It is particularly present in all the persons who recognize it and allow it to become a part of their lives. This is what Jesus meant by proclaiming the "Kingdom of God". He wanted people to know that God wishes to be invited into their lives, to become part of their lives, and to carry out God's work through them. Thus I like the description of this as a SPIRITUAL DIMENSION in life – it becomes a dimension of life in any person who wishes to receive it.

3) In this spiritual dimension there is God. The importance of God does not just have to do with whether God can fix or heal something, but God is a primary need in human life. God is not just a power. God is a person. This means that at the heart of the universe there is SOMEONE who can understand and relate to us as a person, with awareness of our unique needs and problems.

Moreover, God as person offers RELATIONSHIP, which is a foundational human need. In this world WE ARE NEVER ALONE. One may see the whole of life as a coming from God (birth), as a living with God (life) and as a going to God (death). God can often help and heal, though we do have the conditions of human life to deal with. Whatever God can heal and whatever God can't, life looks completely different with God in it. BELIEVING in God may be described as having a vision of life which includes God at its center, a vision filled with the power of possibilities. This includes knowing that at the heart of the universe there is someone who made you and loves you.

HEALING is what can happen to you by taking full advantage of the systems God has placed within the human body and of the spiritual world. Modern science is very clear that what you believe, hope for, envision, and trust affects your mind which affects the systems of your body. HEALING is trusting that the conditions of life cannot determine you. Healing is trusting that God and your soul transcend all the conditions of life. To trust is to go beyond doubt. There is a place for doubt and question, but not when you need to use hope, vision and trust to change the conditions of life.

Life needs COMMUNITY. In the womb of our mother we are not alone, in the midst of our family we are not alone, but then gradually loneness develops as part of our life process. We cling to our significant relationships. God knows that it is hard to be alone, and God creates in the midst of life communities which exist for us because of God. This means that within the Christian community life is never lived alone and the problems of life are never faced alone.

The church has a tradition of concern for healing and the well-being of its people. This has been true from the very beginning – the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus both healed and suffered. He wanted people to know the possibilities of their lives, but he also wanted them to know he joined them in their pain. Thus for him the cross remains the great symbol of the reality of suffering and the overcoming of suffering..

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd,
 I shall not want
 he makes me lie down in green pastures. He
 leads me beside still waters;
 he restores my soul.
 He leads me in paths of righteousness
 for his name's sake.
 Even though I walk through
 the valley of the shadow of death,
 I fear no evil;
 for thou art with me;
 thy rod and thy staff,
 they comfort me.
 Thou preparest a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
 thou anointest my head with oil,
 my cup overflows.
 Surely goodness and mercy
 shall follow me
 all the days of my life;
 and I shall dwell
 in the house of the LORD for ever.
 The Lord's Prayer
 Our Father who art in heaven,
 Hallowed be thy name.
 Thy kingdom come.
 Thy will be done,
 On earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread;
 And forgive us our debts,
 As we also have forgiven our debtors;
 And lead us not into temptation,
 But deliver us from evil.
 [For thine is the kingdom and the power and the
 glory, forever and ever.]
 Amen.

POEMS

*[These poems present the discovery of faith,
 God, and life's meaning in the midst of the
 struggles and realities of life.]*

O Dearest Friend
 O dearest Friend,
 God of the long years
 and old times
 and now.
 I forgot you.
 Do you suffer - my neglect?
 When I'm gone,
 Absorbed in my struggle,
 Do you remember me?
 Time splashes on its way,
 bounding o'er rocks,
 round curved banks,
 pooling in eddies,
 dancing hard in the rapids -
 it will not wait.
 We remember and promise
 to each other
 a time together
 of talk and silence,
 of being - together.
 We promise a time
 of walking - together
 into the future,
 hand in hand.
 And promise not again
 to forget - so soon.
 'Tis wonder-full to know
 each time we're lost
 we find each other,
 and you do come
 where we do seek,
 - wherever.
 Perhaps
 we never
 really lose each other
 after
 all.
 Perhaps
 we're
 bound - together
 by that strange
 force

called love.

Life Is
 Life is
 an experiment
 to discover
 what is there
 and how
 it might be lived,
 with passion.
 It's hardly worth
 the effort
 to merely endure,
 to live without some love
 for living.
 Once others told us
 what was there,
 and we believed
 until
 it did not all come true.
 Then we began
 to learn, unlearn,
 unname what for us
 they named, perhaps with love.
 Much less we knew,
 but more we know:
 life's mystery,
 and You.
 You were there,
 and heart could know
 what mind
 could not name.
 How quickly
 we make into **it**
 what really is **Thou**
 and seek to own,
 control, what cannot,
 must not, mastered
 be, and like we
 pleads for freedom.
 How good
 to live, to see and hear,
 to feel life's passions,
 and to somehow touch
 an other. How good
 to live and enter the mystery

both of world,
 and other.
 I would not
 have missed it
 for the world,
 for the world, ever.
 Just to have been
 with pain and passion,
 to drink deep the lives
 of those I've loved,
 to bear within
 their stories,
 to be recalled
 in dream and hope
 again.
 O what a gift.
 And you, O God,
 You're worth
 whatever is endured.

Come to the edge
 I heard a voice:
 Come to the edge!
 And I was afraid.
 The voice demanded:
 Come to the edge!
 But I will fall!
 Come to the edge,
 the voice gently pled.
 And trembling I came.
 And a wind thrust me
 into space.
 And reaching
 to grasp the edge
 I found - I could fly.
 What if he
 had loved me too much
 to force me from the edge?

Whisper
 Whisper that you are near
 gentle mystery
 of my days and years.
 Let me know the smell of roses
 and the gentle touch
 of a breeze

upon my cheek
and a rising within
in response.
Once I hardly overheard
your thoughts
and overlooked
the gentle weight
of your hand
upon my heart
and your meaning
and intent
in the course of things.
Yet come to think,
you were there,
of another dimension
of hope and light
and gentle persuasion.
How strange!
I'd always hoped
for power
and overcoming.
And yet you shine
like setting sun
o'er forms and shapes,
in the gathering dark,
mysterious, but
transformed in gold
by which you
paint the background
of my existence, as an icon.

IMAGES, MANDALA, SOME THOUGHTS





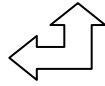
MY FAITH AND HOPES



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SOME THOUGHTS AND A PRAYER

*God created you.
 God knows your worth.
 God thinks of you in ways that
 you have not yet learned
 to think
 of yourself.
 God loves you in ways that
 you have not yet learned
 to love yourself.
 Wherever you go,
 God is already there, waiting for
 you.
 Peace comes from knowing that God
 is there for you.*

*O God, I trust to you
 my fears and hopes
 and give myself
 into your loving,
 healing hands. Amen.*

*O love, how deep, how broad, how high, how passing thought and fantasy, that
 God the Son of God, should take our mortal form for mortals' sake.
 For us baptized, for us he bore his holy fast, and hunger'd sore; for us
 temptations sharp he knew, for us the tempter over threw.
 For us he prayed, for us he taught, for us his daily works he wrought, by words
 and signs and actions, thus still seeking not himself, but us. (Latin, 15th century)*

*As you breathe
 take in all that life has to offer.
 As you breathe,
 take God into your life.
 As you breathe,
 take Christ into your life.
 All that life needs is not far
 away,
 all is here, God is here,
 Christ is here, and you are here.
 All is here and you are here
 and all possibilities are here --
 as you breathe them into your life.
 This is the meaning of incarnation,
 this is the meaning of Pentecost.
 For what you need
 there does not have to be more.
 For what you need
 you do not have to go somewhere else.
 All has come to you
 and is with you.
 Be quiet and thankful.
 And gently breathe.*