

## Healing Service

A service of thanksgiving and prayers for healing takes place on the first Wednesday of each month in our Chapel of St George, and reflects our belief that God's purpose for us all is a life of wholeness, as expressed in the life and teaching of Jesus.

We each stand in need of healing, but in this ministry we also recognize the social dimension – the earth, divided communities and nations – as well as the healing of uneasy bodies, minds and spirits. Our prayers are complementary to the work of medicine, which is also a channel of God's loving and transforming purpose.

Every person, place and situation that we name in this service is already known to God. It is not a problem to be solved, but rather a focus of God's love and acceptance. We trust that God will answer our prayers but we do not know when and how healing will happen.

With the incarnation of Jesus, God begins the renewal of our alienated, weakened and fragmented human condition. In St Matthew's Gospel Jesus' baptism expresses his solidarity with us in our weakness and his healing ministry is seen as the outworking of the suffering servant who 'took our infirmities and bore our diseases'.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ promise both the judgment of all that is flawed in human life and the recreation of our humanity. It is apparent in Scripture that the physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of human beings are closely interconnected.

Christ's work of reconciliation extends beyond the purely personal and relational to the social

order and the whole creation. The Gospels use the term 'healing' both for physical healing and for the broader salvation that Jesus brings.

A common New Testament term for sickness is 'weakness' (*asthenia*); it carries broad associations of powerlessness and vulnerability, including human vulnerability in the face of the dominion of sin and death.

As Christians face weakness, they receive God's grace, expressed sometimes in an experience of healing and sometimes through the strength that comes in the bearing of weakness.

Acts of healing in the Gospels are intimately related to the restoring of individuals to a place of worth within the social order. 'By his wounds you have been healed' (*1 Peter 2.24*) makes powerful links between human pain and vulnerability and the saving impact of Jesus' own suffering.

The same interconnectedness is present where Scripture speaks of God's image in us to point to the way human life is marred and threatened by the impact of evil and is restored by the new creation in Christ.

Healing, reconciliation and restoration are integral to the good news of Jesus Christ. For this reason prayer for individuals, focused through laying-on of hands and anointing with oil, has a proper place within the public prayer of the Church.

God's gracious activity of healing is to be seen both as part of the proclaiming of the good news and as an outworking of the presence of the Spirit in the life of the Church.

Jesus himself warned against the direct association of disability, sickness and sin (*John*

9.3). The receiving of forgiveness and the act of forgiving others may open the way to healing and wholeness.

Prayer for healing and strengthening should not involve the rejection of the skills and activity of medicine which are also part of God's faithfulness to creation.

Prayer for healing needs to take seriously the way in which individual sickness and vulnerability are often the result of injustice and social oppression. Equally importantly, such prayer should not imply that the restoration of physical wholeness is the only way in which Christ meets human need.

Healing has always to be seen against the background of the continuing anguish of an alienated world and the hidden work of the Holy Spirit bringing God's new order to birth. It is a way of partaking in God's new life that will not be complete until it includes the whole creation and the destruction of death itself.

## Anointing

The Anointing of the Sick has its roots in the healing mission of Jesus Christ, whose word and very touch brought healing and life to the sick and afflicted.

From its very beginnings, the Church has continued Christ's ministry of healing. "Is anyone among you sick?" the apostle James asked in the first century. "He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven" (*James 5: 14-15*).

The rite of anointing the very sick in mind or body, those about to undergo surgery, those nearing death, with the oil of the sick is now readily available in the Church.

This kind of anointing is itself a Sacrament (**Holy Unction**) and so whether physical or spiritual strength is sought, the sufferer can be confident that God will provide it in response to the prayer of faith. Anointing is available at any time; just ask one of our clergy.

But even if there is not physical healing, the primary effect of the Sacrament is a spiritual healing by which the sick person receives the Holy Spirit's gift of peace and courage to deal with the difficulties that accompany serious illness or the frailty of old age. The express purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Unction is healing and forgiveness. Since it is not always the will of God that there should be physical healing, the prayer of Christ that God's will be done always remains as the proper context of prayer & anointing. In addition, it is the clear intention of the Sacrament that through the anointing of the sick body the sufferings of the person should be sanctified and united to the sufferings of Christ. In this way, the wounds of the flesh are consecrated, and strength is given that the suffering of the diseased person may not lead to the death of their soul, but to eternal salvation in the resurrection and life of the Kingdom of God.

### Last rites

Generally we no longer use the terms "last rites" or "extreme unction" in speaking of the Church's prayer with the dying. But even though the terms are no longer used, the Church retains her ancient custom of preparing

people for death and praying with and over them in their last moments.

In addition to the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, the dying may wish to receive communion bread & wine (*Viaticum*) if they are able. Literally "food for the journey," Viaticum is the last Holy Communion of the dying person. While only a priest or bishop may confer the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, one of our pastoral care team may give Viaticum and pray the Church's prayers for the dying if no priest is available. Usually our clergy are available at any hour in an emergency.

### Healing services in 2016

Our midweek Eucharist on the first Wednesday of each month is dedicated to healing. We offer the sacraments of both Holy Eucharist and Holy Unction, anointing.

This year the services will be held at **10am** on:

**6 January**

**3 February**

**2 March**

**6 April**

**4 May**

**1 June**

**6 July**

**3 August**

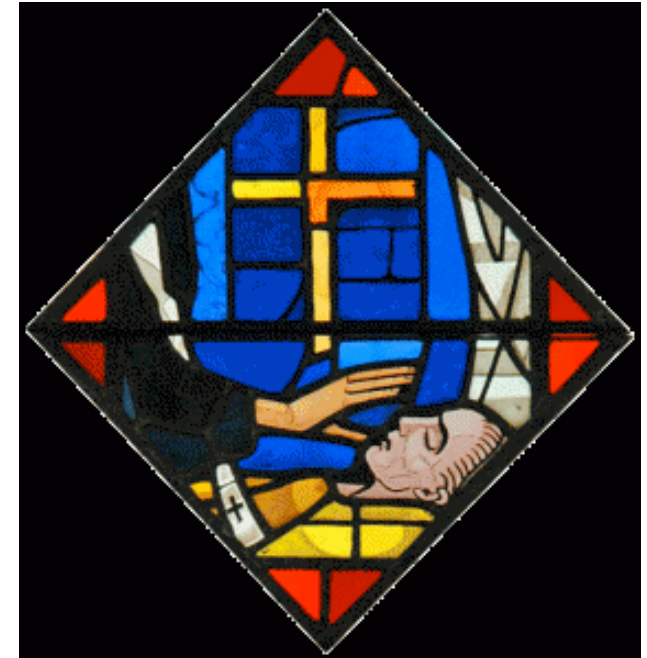
**7 September**

**5 October**

**2 November**

**7 December**

## Healing prayer & anointing at Holy Trinity



..... they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. *James 5.14-15*

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