

A Framework for Practice of the Ministry of Healing in the Methodist Church in Ireland

Introduction

Healing was central to the earthly ministry of Jesus. It was a sign of God's kingdom, bringing renewal and wholeness of life to those who turned to God in their need. Jesus sent out his disciples with the commission to "proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9.2).

Jesus' commission to heal was not just for His immediate followers but for succeeding generations of Christians. The apostle Paul writes of "gifts of healings" being available to Christians (1 Corinthians 12: 28). James says that those who are sick should call for the elders of the church to pray over them for healing (James 5.14).

A ministry of healing should be an integral part of the mission of every Methodist circuit in Ireland. This ministry will often take place within the wider context of a prayer ministry.

The Ministry of Healing Committee has developed this framework in consultation with the Ministries Team, to support and guide ministers and circuit executives in the development of a healing ministry to their members and community.

Developing a Healing Ministry - Who should be involved?

Those who are likely to offer or respond to a request to lead a healing ministry should:

- already be actively engaged in the prayer life of the church.
- feel a passion for this aspect of Jesus' ministry.
- have a gifting or feel called in this area.
- their ministry should be fully supported by the church council and circuit executive.
- be appropriately prepared, trained and supported.

This is Jesus' ministry:

- those involved in the ministry of healing are not "super Christians".
- it is through His power that healing takes place.
- the one who exercises the ministry is simply a conduit of Jesus' healing love.

The development of any ministry on a Circuit requires local leadership.

The circuit minister with their Circuit Executive should always have oversight of the ministry of healing, in order to fulfil their duty of care to those engaged in the ministry and those receiving it.

Models of Healing Ministry

Healing Ministry can be offered in many differing ways, at different levels of engagement and in different settings.

MCI does not espouse any one particular model for the ministry of healing. The way the ministry is exercised will be influenced by:

- The leading of the Holy Spirit.
- The gifting/experience of those involved.
- The church/ community context.

Indirect Ministry

Indirect Ministry is exercised on occasions where corporate prayer is made in response to requests for healing, but where there is no face-to-face ministry with the person e.g.:

- intercessory prayer meetings.
- prayer groups.
- prayer cells.
- prayer chains.
- church services.

Everyone participating in Indirect Healing Ministry should read the MCI guidelines on the ministry of healing. No specific training is required.

Personal Ministry

- involves face-to-face contact with the individual seeking prayer for healing.
- may involve the laying on of hands and/or anointing with oil.
- most often takes place in a worship service when people are invited to come forward for healing ministry.

In some of the Methodist mission churches a regular service for healing and wholeness is open to the whole community and people of all faiths and none.

Special Gifting

Special gifting may include a calling to deliverance ministry. This ministry, however, is not necessarily a part of a special gifting in healing. Deliverance Ministry is a particular calling and ministry, and not all can claim this. Such spiritual gifting requires experience, training, and evidence of the gifting. Still, when the people providing the ministry realise that they are out of their depth, they should refer the individual to an appropriate source of exorcism ministry. We recommend the MCI Ministry of Healing Committee as the first point of contact (see Appendix 1 for further information).

Points to note

Prayer cover and leadership oversight are particularly important for all aspects of healing ministry, but especially for those exercising a deliverance ministry.

Those receiving healing ministry often need inner healing. People may be deeply wounded in ways that are not obvious. In such situations the Evil one can distort the individual's perception of themselves or of God. Ministry here is often to speak Truth into the situation; Jesus says, "you will know the truth and truth will set you free".

In any healing ministry involving face to face contact, it is important to listen carefully to the recipient as well as the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Training

MCI expects that everyone involved in the ministry of healing should have training and practice appropriate to the level at which they are ministering.

All those involved in Personal Ministry should have training:

- During ministerial formation; all students in training should be prepared for the ministry of healing or its oversight.
- It is the responsibility of the Ministries Team to provide appropriate training.
- The Ministries Team provides a one-day training programme for lay persons within a rolling programme of learning and development.
- The Ministry of Healing Committee can signpost those interested to other training courses and online training programmes.

Partnerships to deliver the framework

The Ministry of Healing Committee will be a resource for developing healing ministries within the Connexion. However, the committee recognises that it will need to expand its membership and address training needs within the committee.

The Ministries Team is central to ensuring that foundational training in the ministry of healing is included in the formation for ordination so that an appropriate level of oversight can be provided at circuit level and that training is available for everyone called to this ministry.

External training providers are currently being used, mostly by lay members, to develop their competence in the ministry of healing.

District Superintendents have a role in promoting mission in their Districts; their support and encouragement will help to make the ministry of healing more widely available.

Circuits are, of course, key to making the ministry of healing available to all; it is at circuit level that Christ is proclaimed to a needy world. There is need for an effective communication exercise with circuit ministers and leaders.

Action Plan

1. Create a web-site page listing circuits which offer healing ministry within a regular worship service or holds a regular healing service.
2. Liaise with Ministries Team re the formation for ordination, and other learning and development training.
3. Review the capacity and capability of the MOH Committee.
4. Identify development needs of Committee members.
5. Liaise with potential partners for training input and practice experience.
6. Seek approval of Framework at Conference.
7. Offer district-based information seminar(s) for lay and ministerial colleagues who wish to develop their healing ministry.
8. Refresh “The Christian Healing Ministry” document.

Appendix 1

Special Gifting

A small number of people across the broad spectrum of healing ministries have a specific, God-given, spiritual gift of healing (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:8). Like any spiritual gifting, it is not to be used for personal gain or aggrandisement but rather for the 'common good' (1 Cor. 12:7). The need for deliverance ministry, however, can be present at any time in any personal healing ministry. Anyone with special gifting in this area should exercise it with humility and openness to the prompting of the Holy Spirit on the recipient's needs. Engaging in deliverance ministry where it is not appropriate can greatly distress the recipient.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognise that some people presenting for healing ministry with medical or emotional symptoms may have underlying spiritual issues that can cause or exacerbate the physical and mental. For instance, people engaging in some aspect of demonic practice, perhaps out of curiosity or in earnest, are at risk of demonic influence. Examples of such influence include séance, Ouija boards, consulting mediums, tarot cards, practising body/table lifting, using cocaine, LSD, hallucinogenic drugs etc.