

# POSITION STATEMENT: HEALING MINISTRY

The following recommendations come from the elders of the church regarding the important ministry of healing. There are many different understandings of this ministry within the body of Christ and even within our local expression of that body. We therefore want to state our position as clearly as possible and give guidelines as to how this ministry is to function in the church.

Responding to illness and especially serious illness is a difficult and highly sensitive issue. When a person and a family are confronted with such a situation there is always shock, uncertainty, even at times fear and of course many questions. The church needs to respond to all of these with care and compassion. It is a difficult road for those who find themselves in this situation, their families and for their church family. We are a community of faith in a loving and personal God. And we want to face life's tough issues together with faith and trust in this God.

The elders therefore state the following:

1] The elders acknowledge and affirm the ministry of prayer for healing as Biblical and an area of ministry that needs to be practiced, developed and grown in. We will pray for the sick, asking and trusting God to bring healing.

2] According to the scriptures this ministry is to be an integral part of the ministry of the pastors and elders [James 5: 14 –15] and we also find that the scriptures teach that God gives to some a special spiritual 'gift of healing' [I Corinthians 12: 7 – 11].

3] It is God's prerogative to heal or not to heal. There are times when God heals and there are times when from our perspective, He does not heal. [His ways are not our ways nor are His thoughts our thoughts: [1 Corinthians 2: 11f].

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4] It is fundamentally wrong to tell sick people they are healed or will be healed unless: A] There has been a clear and specific word from the Lord that healing will take place and the church has prayed, in faith, as a response to that clear word. B] That all symptoms have cleared up and been medically verified. To instruct people that they are healed when they are obviously still ill and to encourage people to deny or ignore symptoms is cruel and dangerous. [The Lord Jesus Himself sent the lepers He had healed to the priests to confirm that healing had taken place. [Matthew 8:1f]

5] While faith plays a fundamental part in this ministry, faith itself is a gift from God. The power of faith is not in the 'amount or level' of faith but in the object of faith. There is nothing magical about faith. God, as the object of faith makes faith meaningful. No matter how strong faith may be if it is placed in the wrong object it is meaningless. So, healing is not about 'how much faith' but about whom we have faith in. [If you have faith as a mustard seed will say to the mountain move and it will move'.]

6] Ministry to the sick and especially to the terminally sick must be more than simply focusing on healing. The sick person has other issues and needs that need to be addressed. The person needs to be given the opportunity to speak about their fears and their concerns. They need to be able to deal with any 'unfinished business'. They may need to 'make confession' and heal relationships. They need to know that 'even when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death we fear no evil' [Psalm 23]. The church needs to minister to the sick and their family in a holistic manner.

7] Caring for and ministering to the sick and their loved ones is a serious responsibility. We need to grow in our understanding of that responsibility both to be bold in faith and wise in ministry and we 'carry one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' [Galatians 6:2.]

As a Church we will pray boldly for the sick and we will trust God for healing, as He enables us. Should someone not be healed this is not necessarily the result of a lack of faith or of not praying correctly but part of the mystery and the tension of living in a fallen world where we know in part. When Christ returns He will usher in the Kingdom fully and in that Kingdom there will be no more sickness, weakness, death or any of the other issues we so struggle with. So, our ultimate prayer is 'even so, Lord Jesus, come'.