

This statement on Divine Healing was approved by the 2002 Canadian General Conference of The Free Methodist Church in Canada and is the official position of the FMCIC.

¶630.1.4 Divine Healing

All healing, whether of body, mind, or spirit has its ultimate source in God who is "above all and through all and in all." God may heal by the mediation of surgery, medication, change of environment, counselling, corrected attitudes, or through the restorative processes of nature itself. God may heal through one or more of the above in combination with prayer, or by direct intervention in response to prayer. The Scriptures report many cases of the latter kind of healing in connection with the life and ministry of Jesus, the apostles and the early church.

A truly Christian perspective on healing reflects the New Testament view of salvation, which holds together God's sovereignty, God's loving goodness, and God's ultimate wisdom. These divine realities reach beyond what humans can fully grasp. We hold together our confidence that salvation is something that has already happened (e.g. Ephesians 2:5-8) and that it is something that is happening right now (e.g. II Corinthians 2:15), and also that it is something that we still await at the final coming of Christ (e.g. Romans 5:9-10). Thus there are two erroneous approaches to healing: One is to stress only healing now (because in Jesus, and through the gift of the Spirit, salvation has indeed fully and powerfully come). The other is to expect healing only in the resurrection (because the final redemption will come only when Jesus returns). Both perspectives alone are distortions which miss the creative "already/not yet" tension of New Testament thought.

Consistent with the Scriptures, therefore, we urge our pastors and group leaders to help people to seek healing of every sort. We make opportunity for the sick, afflicted, and broken to come before God in the fellowship of the body of Christ in confidence that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is both able and willing to heal (James 5:13). We recognize that although God's sovereign purposes are good and we are sure that He is working toward a final redemption that assures wholeness to all believers, He may not grant physical healing for all or full healing in this life. We believe that in such cases God still receives glory both now and then through the resurrection to life everlasting.

The ministry of healing is not to be ignored in the church. We do not expect that the emphasis on, or means employed in, the varied ministries of healing will be the same in different churches (or in different small groups, or in individual Christians) or in the same church or group or individual believer at different times. We call the church to both examine and prize our differences in this regard, always aware of the 'already/not yet' scriptural tension outlined above.

- The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada

Some Resources on Healing

In listing the following resources, we are not claiming that Canadian Free Methodism as a whole agrees with every statement or nuance in these good materials. When specific guidance is needed, there are accountability and support structures in place.

Gary Walsh offers wise counsel to the Christian community regarding healing (*March /April 2000 Faith Today*):

Healing – ministry and mystery

Christians understand each other on most essential matters of biblical faith. When there is disagreement on doctrines, a competent teacher can usually unpack the contrary but parallel positions with a balanced understanding of the way each party in a debate treats the biblical texts.

The ministry of healing is different. Christians have not found a Bible-based consensus on the details of the ministry of healing. Twenty centuries of Christian life and study have not produced deep streams of Christian thought that tell the story of healing for the church. Single voices can be heard from left and right but this ministry seems to defy calibration.

Maybe God's Holy Spirit has guided the church away from a comprehensive position on healing. No one has yet proposed the formula that blends God's sovereignty, God's loving goodness, and God's ultimate wisdom. These realities surely defy human understanding.

We do have some common ground. When pain becomes unbearable, we all tend to reach upward for a healing touch. Most of us have a Christian friend whose story includes a healing not easily understood in clinical terms. We all have a Christian friend who waits, even today, both encouraged and confused by the promises and disappointments surrounding the ministry of healing.

The ministry of healing drives us to God. Yet some note that the God who chose to bring Lazarus back from the dead also chose not to take away Paul's thorn in the flesh – and both Lazarus and Paul eventually died. At the same time, some proponents of healing for all still wear spectacles, and their brilliant smiles are supported by root canals. Meanwhile, healing is more than physical. One of the most whole persons I know is physically blind. And who among us does not read these words, "I am the Lord who heals you," with renewed hope of ultimate healing.

We are called to extend the grace of God. Parish nurses, enlightened physicians, pastoral counselors, persuasive preachers and anointing elders will not let us forget that healing is one expression of God's grace. Although few agree fully on the ministry of healing, together we are challenged, in sickness and in health, to care deeply about God as healer and to pursue the ultimate good – mysterious as it may be.

Gary Walsh is a Free Methodist ordained minister serving as the president of Interdev and is the former president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

Fintel, William A. and McDermott, Gerald R. "Dare I Hope for Healing? A Balanced Approach to the Possibility of Getting Well," Dear God, It's Cancer: A Medical and Spiritual Guide For Patients and Their Families (Word, 1997), pp. 233-256.

Fintel (an oncologist) and McDermott (a theologian) provide a careful and faith-filled perspective on healing that avoids the extremes at both ends of the spectrum.

Foster, Richard "Healing Prayer," Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home (Harper, 1992), pp. 203-216.

Foster's approach is thorough. Sections include: "Infinite Variety," "Small Beginnings," "The Perplexing Question," "The Laying on of Hands," "Straightforward Steps," Healthy Skepticism and Wholesome Faith."

Galli, M. and Bell, James S. Jr. "Healing Prayer," The Complete Idiot's Guide to Prayer (Macmillan, 1999), pp. 113-119.

Galli and Bell write to clear up misconceptions about healing prayer. Sections include: "Healing Happens," "Physical Healing," "Psychological Healing," "Two Misconceptions: You Have to Have Enough Faith, & You Have to Pray in the Right Way."

Hiebert, P. G. "Healing and the Kingdom," Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues (Baker, 1994), pp. 217-253.

Informed by global trends and data from many cultures around the world, a Christian anthropologist distinguishes the Biblical worldview from the modern worldview, and then develops a trinitarian theology of God's work in everyday lives. Sections also include "A Theology of the Kingdom of God," "A Theology of Power," "A Theology of Discernment," "Dangers," and "Healing Ministries in the Church."

Hui, Edwin "Healing," The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity, ed. Banks & Stevens (I.V.P., 1997), pp. 478-481.

A balanced introduction by a professor of medical ethics and spiritual theology. Sections include: "Healing as Curing and Caring," "Biblical Perspectives on Healing," "Healing Through Medicine," "Faith and Healing," "Miraculous Healing," "Healing and Redemption."

Kinghorn, Kenneth "Gifts of Healing," Gifts of the Spirit (Abingdon, 1976), pp. 67-72.

Kinghorn (a professor of church history), lists many ways God heals: "God heals instantly and directly," "God heals gradually through the processes of nature," "God heals through medical science," "God gives grace to suffer redemptively by healing our attitudes," "God heals in the resurrection."

Leadership Forum "The Church: Healing's Natural Home?" Leadership 6.2 (1985), pp. 116-127.

Four pastors from four different Christian traditions who are practitioners in healing ministries (Alliance, Baptist, Presbyterian and Vineyard) discuss their healing ministries.

Norberg, Tilda and Webber, Robert D. Stretch Out Your Hand: Exploring Healing Prayer (Upper Room, 1998).

Norberg (a pastor and psychotherapist) and Webber (a professor of New Testament) discuss the many questions involved, and explain a variety of models for a range of different kinds of healing ministries in local churches.

Pinnock, Clark and Brow, Robert "Healing: Transforming Love," Unbounded Love (I.V.P., 1994), pp. 151-159.

Pinnock (professor of theology) and Brow (pastor) provide a balanced theological introduction to healing which begins with the sentence: "Salvation is the healing of persons."

Putter, A. M. The Memorial Rituals Book for Healing and Hope (Baywood Publishing, 1997).

Putter (a music therapist and grief counselor) provides many brief rituals which can be used for helping people heal after a loss.

Ramshaw, E. "Rites of Healing," Ritual and Pastoral Care (Fortress, 1987), pp. 64-67.

Ramshaw (professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling) explains and gives guidance for the use of liturgical forms in the healing ministry of the church.

Rediger, E. L. "Healing for Fitness," Fit to Be a Pastor (Westminster John Knox, 2000), pp. 45-63.

Rediger (a pastor, pastoral counselor, and consultant on spiritual leadership) identifies models of healing (the medical model, the alternative medicine model, the psychological model, the American Dream model, and the Theological-Spiritual model), and talks about levels and stages of healing (healing as recovery, healing as learning, healing as shared condition, healing as stewardship), and explains what he calls “the forgiveness formula” (Step 1: Hearing the Gospel; Step 2: Confessing Our Sin; Step 3: Accepting Forgiveness from God, Each Other, and Creation; Step 4: Doing Penance; Step 5: Pronouncing Absolution).

Wagner, C. Peter “Healing Without Hassle,” Leadership 6.2 (1985), pp. 114-115.

Wagner’s 1985 brief explanation of how his Sunday School class, where a healing ministry was practiced, functioned harmoniously within a church where such a ministry was not highlighted throughout the congregation, functioned in ways aimed at avoiding division of God’s people into “first-class” vs. “second class” Christians – based on how “charismatic” their experience was (“charismatic” was a word Wagner refused to use in that church). More recently Wagner has written many books on healing and spiritual warfare.

Webber, Robert E. “Anointing of the Sick,” The Complete Library of Christian Worship 6: The Sacred Actions of Christian Worship (Star Song / Hendrickson, 1994), pp. 331-340.

Webber (professor of theology and leader in worship renewal) includes materials on history, theology and a variety of liturgical materials for use in anointing sick people for healing.

Webber, Robert E. “A Christian View of Healing,” The Complete Library of Christian Worship 7: The Ministries of Christian Worship (Star Song / Hendrickson, 1994), pp. 239-242.

An introduction to a contemporary Christian theology of healing.

Webber, Robert E. “Worship and Pastoral Care: A Charismatic Approach,” The Complete Library of Christian Worship 7: The Ministries of Christian Worship (Star Song / Hendrickson, 1994), pp. 305-316.

An introduction to healing in the contemporary charismatic tradition. Sections (by charismatic authors) include: “Pastoral Care and Direct Divine Healing,” “Four Basic Types of Healing,” “Healing of Sin,” “Inner Healing of Emotions,” “Physical Healing,” “Deliverance and Exorcism.”