

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION AND WHOLENESS

We believe in the healing power of faith for the whole person.

The Bible's concept of healing is achieving wholeness-spiritual, emotional, physical, mental, and social.

Christ's mission in the world was to bring this wholeness. Through his life, death, and resurrection, he fulfilled God's plan to restore vitality and mend humanity's brokenness. Through faith in Christ, we may experience healing which repairs the broken heart, making us free to share life, to forgive the past, and to spread faith's healing to others. This healing of the inner person often brings healing to the physical body.

God desires us to be whole in body, mind, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Although God is not the source of our afflictions, he permits them, and may use them in different ways: for his glory, (John 11:1-4); or to demonstrate his power, (2 Corinthians 12:7-10); or to enable us to understand the sufferings of others so that we may comfort and encourage them (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). In the Old Testament, we see God as the one who wants to heal (Exodus 23:25 -26). Healing was linked to confession of sin and a desire to obey God's precepts.

The New Testament contains at least 26 accounts of Christ's healing power. He was concerned about people's physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs. He commissioned his disciples to go, heal, and preach (Luke 10:9). Physical health was related to spiritual health (John 5:14). Modern medical understanding affirms the inter-relatedness of physical and spiritual health.

We believe that all suffering became a part of human experience at the fall of humankind into sin.

Through Satan, sin entered the World, and with it sickness and death. The origin of sin was not with God but with Satan and man. Satan continually endeavors to use suffering to accomplish his goals (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul describes the resulting condition as "the whole creation groans" (Romans 8:22 NASB). We are part of that creation.

We believe that sickness and suffering are not necessarily the result of the sin of the sufferer.

The disciples posed this question in John 9:1-2. Jesus replied that this man's blindness was not caused by his sin, or that of his parents. Disease and suffering can be caused by sexual transmission, by using drugs, by poor hygiene, and by improper nutrition. These may be the fault of the victim, or his parents. Even with some of these causes, as well as in genetic disorders from viral diseases or chemical agents, both the transmitter and the sufferer may be innocent parties.

Although sickness and suffering can be the result of specific sin (John 5:10 -15; 1 Corinthians 11:29 -30), sin is not to be considered the usual cause (John 9:3-4; Acts 3:1-9).

We believe that God has the power to heal all diseases and to reconcile all circumstances to his ultimate will.

God's power is displayed in the knowledge and skills given to medical personnel. Sometimes healing is unexplained except as God's miraculous intervention. There are also situations where the power of God's Spirit assists us in dealing with our circumstances.

Healing involves more than physical well being. Death, itself, may be an avenue of perfect healing for those who consider their earthly existence as temporary in view of the heavenly inheritance (Romans 14:8; Philippians 3:10-11).

While God does hear and answer prayer (John 15:7), it is not always within God's purpose to bring about complete physical healing. God's ability to heal and his desire to heal are not one and the same (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Physical healing is not necessarily a measure of faith. We may not assume that faith is lacking when healing is not given.

We believe that the Church is a means of God's grace in healing.

God has charged the Church with the task of changing people's lives through the ministry of the word and through the care and concern of its people. A loving church first loves its Lord, then shares that love with the world, becoming a body through which Christ can heal.

Becoming a Christian and a part of God's Church brings emotional health that has its roots in the freedom to be and to become that which salvation provides. As an important step in the emotional healing process, the Church offers acceptance to those who are struggling against themselves. It offers acceptance of persons as they are. The Church offers love, its skills in relationship, and its time to listen. Emotional healing is also encouraged through the counsel and care of the body of Christ for one another, and for those outside the body who are hurting.

The gift of a listening ear with an understanding heart is sometimes the greatest gift God's people can give.

Intercessory prayer is an important aspect of the Church's ministry. As the Church joins together in prayer for the needs of each other, the power of God is experienced. The unity of the body creates a bond that gives hope, encouragement, and sharing of burdens.

The prayer of faith can bring healing. Paul, "after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him," (Acts 28:8 NIV). Prayer for the sick involves Christians being right with the Lord and others, a desire to use the requested healing for God's glory, and a willing peaceful submission in faith to God who is all-wise, all-powerful, and all-compassionate.

Anointing with oil is a Biblical method of offering prayer on behalf of those who desire healing. According to James 5:14, anointing is to be requested by the one who desires healing. The elders and pastor of the church are to participate in this "anointing service," recognizing that we are asking for God's will to be accomplished and for our acceptance of that will. We understand the oil to be symbolic of the Holy Spirit. It does not contain power in itself to bring healing, nor do

the hands of those who pray or administer the anointing. Rather, it is the prayer which is offered in faith that brings us to God in submission for his will to be accomplished in our lives.

Prayer prepares the sick to accept the healing of the whole person. Guidance is received for those who will be God's instruments in the healing. Prayer opens lives to the healing power of God to work in the spirit, mind, and body of those who are sick.

The faith accompanying prayer brings assurance that wholeness has been granted (Matthew 21:22), though there may be no immediate outward evidence. Faith also recognizes that ultimate healing comes when Christians are released from corruptible bodies to join God for eternity (Revelation 21:4).