

Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church

Information about Services of Wholeness and Healing

The following extracts come from the *Directory for Worship* (Book of Order).

W-3.5400 d. Services for Wholeness

Healing Services – Healing was an integral part of the ministry of Jesus which the church has been called to continue as one dimension of its concern for the wholeness of people. Through services for wholeness, the church enacts in worship its ministry as a healing community.

W-3.5402 Authorization – Services for wholeness are to be authorized by the session, and shall be under the direction of the pastor. Such services may be observed as regularly scheduled services of worship, as occasional services, or as part of the Service for the Lord's Day. (W-3.3506) These services should be open to all and not restricted to those desiring healing for themselves or for others of special concern to them. The services should be held in a place readily accessible to those who may be seeking healing.

W-3.5403 Forms of Prayer – The vital element of worship in the service for wholeness is prayer since this is essentially a time of waiting in faith upon God. Thanksgiving for God's promise of wholeness, intercessions, and supplications should be offered. Adequate time for silent prayer should be provided, as well as occasions for prayers spoken and sung. Enacted prayer in the form of the laying on of hands and anointing with oil is appropriate (James 5:14). The enactment of prayers involves the presiding minister of the Word and Sacrament together with representatives of the believing community.

W-3.5404 Word and Sacrament – These prayers are a response to the Word read and proclaimed. Particular focus should be on announcing the gospel's promise of wholeness through Christ. The sealing of this promise in the Lord's Supper may be celebrated, and should follow the prayers and the laying on of hands. Occasion for offering one's life and gifts for ministry may be provided, as well as opportunities for reconciliation and renewed commitment to the service of Jesus Christ in the world.

W-3.5405 Source of Healing – When a service for wholeness includes anointing and the laying on of hands, these enacted prayers should be introduced carefully in order to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Healing is to be understood not as the result of the holiness, earnestness, or skill of those enacting the prayers, or of the faith of the ones seeking healing, but as the gift of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Implications of the contents of the *Directory for Worship* and how we share in Services of Wholeness here at Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church.

1. *All Services of Worship* are and ought to be thought of as Services for Wholeness.

All are invited and called to worship, we offer prayers to God for ourselves and for others, we offer a prayer of confession and look to receive an Assurance of God's Pardon, we seek God's presence in Word and Sacrament, we greet one another/offer a sign of peace and we are sent forth to live as Christ's disciples with God's blessing.

2. *Specific Services of Wholeness* highlight this overall thinking and provide a specific time/place for:

- a. the focus of the prayers of the community with and for those who are seeking wholeness and healing in their life, and
- b. those individuals seeking wholeness and healing to receive the prayers of others, including, if they desire it, prayer with the laying on of hands. The Pastors along with representatives of the church community, Elders, Deacons and others recognized for this purpose, share in these offering prayers with the “laying on of hands”.

3. *Services of Wholeness* grow out of and be a response to the needs of the congregation, are a ministry of outreach into the community for those who have needs and are looking for a place of prayer and are not in opposition to nor a replacement for proper medical care. After each Service of Wholeness, places and opportunities for counseling will be announced to and for all worshippers in attendance at the Service.

What can be healed? God's will for us is wholeness, but because we live in a broken and sinful world we are all, in one way or another, sick people. Some of us are physically ill, some suffer from depression, some are burdened by guilt and seek forgiveness; some are under stress and long for peace; some come full of bitterness and resentment and need to let go of it; some come with deep fears about which they need reassurance; some come scarred by their past; some seek to know God in a new and real way, even to know God for the first time. And some come simply to feel the refreshing touch of God again. For whatever reason you may feel the need of God's help, be quite sure that His will for you is wholeness.

Have I enough faith? What counts here is not the amount of our faith but the direction of it. Jesus said that even faith like a tiny seed is enough, so come with as open an attitude as you possibly can, to what God might do in your life.

Who heals? Not those who pray, we minister in the name of Christ and of his Church. It is God who heals, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Jesus.

Are all healed? If you mean 'cured', then the answer is no, they are not. In fact some come with tremendous faith and are not cured, others come doubting and are. There is a deep mystery here which is beyond us. What you can be absolutely sure of however, is that you will be made more whole; more whole in your relationship with God, more whole in your attitude to others, and more whole in your acceptance of yourself as a person of worth. All of us are brought closer to wholeness when we seek and accept God's presence in our lives.

How will I feel? Some know instantly that they have been healed; others feel a great sense of warmth; others a sense of well-being, or of peace and refreshment; others, perhaps the majority, feel nothing at all. We need to remember that we have come in faith to meet with God; God is always faithful and he has met with us and heard us, however we feel. Keep thanking God for his goodness, and look for an on-going wholeness which is an ever deepening experience.

But I'm still puzzled! Then it would be good to talk further. Please feel free to contact the Rev. Mary Katherine Robinson at 803-327-2006 ext. 235 or by email to mkrobinson@oapc.net .