

DEVELOPING A HEALING CLIMATE IN YOUR CONGREGATION

1. Expectancy.

More healing happens in when we live in an environment of expectancy. Even Jesus, Himself, was unable to perform many healings in his home town of Nazareth, because of their unbelief (Mark 6:1-6).

Is prayer for healing seen only as a last resort? How can we foster an atmosphere in our congregation that expects God to answer prayer concerning healing of spiritual, relational, emotional or physical difficulties?

2. Multi-Discipline Approach.

More healing happens when people are encouraged to take a complimentary approach to spiritual, medical and counseling resources. Are prayer and regular worship, lifestyle, proper diet, counseling, healthy relationships, and medical science seen as synergistic for health?

Negative health effects can be found in either extreme of (a) ignoring the spiritual and psychological side of humans, and just considering the physical side of an illness or (b) depending solely on spiritual care and neglecting standard medical care.

3. Accessibility.

More people will ask for prayer - If it is available and not perceived as a bother. How available is healing prayer in your congregation? How does one access healing prayer in your church? Can a person get prayer for healing at any the weekly services? How often does your church offer a healing service?

4. Equipping Classes.

More people will pray for others when they have had some training and become comfortable with it. How equipped is your parish to provide healing prayer? How wide is the circle of people trained to pray with others? Some churches develop a "Prayer Team" of both men and women gifted in praying for the different categories of healing.

Key qualities needed are compassion, a regular devotional prayer life, and sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

For a sample Prayer Team training manual see Appendix.

5. Fostering Loving Relationships

People that live in loving, supporting relationships are healthier. Love is emphasized as the "main thing" about Christian living again and again in the Bible. Mark 12:30-31; John 13:34-35, 17:21; Galatians 5:6, 14; 1Corinthians 13:1-3, 14:1, 16:14.

How connected are people to each other? Is the relational tone in your congregation one of unity, love, openness, joy - or is it one of aloofness, loneliness, or discord? Does each person have 3 to 5 friends within the parish? Are there small fellowship groups, service groups, or Bible study groups available where connectedness and support can happen?

6. Use Wisdom

A. Respect your pastor or priest. If he/she is not in favor of healing prayer, you will gain little by directly opposing him/her. It is better to educate by occasionally passing on some books, tapes, videos that have helped you and praying God's blessings on him/her.

B. When introducing anything major and new to your congregation's culture, it may be wise to take a 2-3 year approach. Fast change without lots of explanation is upsetting to people.

ATTITUDES IN A CHURCH CULTURE THAT FOSTER HEALING

Lack of Healing Resources	Health Promoting	Unhealthy
1. No Expectation that God answers healing prayers.	High Expectation When you pray, then God blesses in some way.	Blame the sick person if nothing seems to happen.
2. Rely on Medical treatment only. Unconnected to spiritual resources.	Integrated Approach Faith Community. Prayer. Lifestyle. Proper diet. Counseling. Healthy Relationships. Medical Treatment.	Prayer alone. Lack of Medical Resources.
3. Prayer for Healing is unavailable or hard to access	Prayer Easily Accessible Every week a person could receive prayer if they desire.	Privacy Invaded.
4. No Training offered on how to pray for people.	Regular Training Classes each year.	Health and Healing talked about so often that people are tired of it.
5. Aloof relationships. Unconnected with each other. Discord within the congregation.	Supportive Relationships Well connected with 3 to 5 friends in the church. Making contact with each other throughout the week.	So "tight" together that it is hard for newcomers to fit in.