

# Friends Fellowship of Healing

## Starting a Healing Group

When prayer is important in our lives, it is natural that we should want to share the experience and to join with others in its practice, remembering that the spiritual power of a group far exceeds the sum of its individual members.

Sometimes Friends are disappointed by the lack of support for starting a group in their meeting. Reasons for such response may sometimes be based on misconceptions, such as the possibility that much vocal prayer would take place or that it would involve beseeching God to interfere with natural laws. It should be possible to allay these fears and misconceptions.

Prayer may be described as 'communion with God' — the ever-present source of light and love, and when praying for individuals we are simply and lovingly holding them in that light. Quiet waiting, preparation and listening while we 'become still' are all vital elements in a healing or prayer group, so in many ways it can be likened to the holding of a meeting for worship with a special purpose — healing. People who are ill or in need are upheld, and often remembrance is extended to the healing of conflict, both national and international; mentioning too, for example, the hungry, the persecuted and their persecutors. A healing group can deepen the life of a meeting by drawing members closer together and supporting the work of overseers, both in prayer and in practical ways. During a meeting answers may come in the form of promptings that lead to deeper understanding and wise action.

The most appropriate step after informal soundings of individuals is to speak to the Clerk of your Meeting or an Elder about your wish to start a group, so that the proposal can go forward with the knowledge and support of the Meeting.

There is no set way of running a Friends' Healing Group, but it may be helpful to deal with some of the practical points which will need to be considered.

**How many Friends are needed to form a group?** While only two or three can be enough, a minimum of six is really desirable as it is usually impossible for everyone to attend every meeting. Quite a number of groups include people from other denominations, and this can be a good way of introducing people to the main Society of Friends. There are many Christians who seek more silence in their worship and prayer, who appreciate Friends' Healing groups and who bring with them enriching experience.

**How often should you meet?** Some groups meet weekly, others fortnightly and others monthly. Frequency will of course depend on the availability and commitments of individuals, and it is usually wise to keep to a regular date and time to avoid confusion, e.g. the first and third Wednesday in the month. Time will again depend on members' circumstances, such as where they live and transport arrangements. If

Friends have work commitments then an evening time is usually adopted; if retired, unemployed or free in the daytime, then of course a morning or afternoon would be possible. A few groups meet before the Sunday morning Meeting for Worship.

**How long should a meeting last?** Again, this is for individual choice, but most groups choose a time a little shorter than the hour of meeting for worship. The length of time may well evolve and change with the developing 'sense' of the meeting.

**Where should you meet?** The important point in the selection of a venue is to be able to have quietness and to be as free as possible from disturbance. Often the homes of members are used and this can be very rewarding. Choice could be influenced by the wish to meet at the home of a Friend who is not mobile and who could not otherwise participate.

**Records.** Some groups find it helpful to have a 'secretary' who keeps lists of the people prayed for, with dates and records of their progress; also of course names, addresses and telephone numbers of the group members. Some meetings encourage members to make a note of the names of several of the people prayed for and to remember them during their quiet times each day.

It might be helpful to give an example of how one group operates. It meets monthly in the home of a Friend where people arrive at 7.45 p.m. or as soon afterwards as possible ready to start at 8 p.m. without interruption. The list of people being upheld is reviewed and latest news of them exchanged, with names being added or deleted as appropriate. It is always important to remember to be positive and to dwell on the power than can help those in need; otherwise concentration on the details of illness and problems could be very depressing. The leader shares two or three devotional readings before the group begins to centre down into about twenty minutes or so of silent worship. Names of Friends to be upheld are then taken. Sometimes prayers are extended to wider issues. Then the group continues in silent worship, sometimes with ministry. The meeting ends with thanksgiving. Afterwards cups of tea are served and a short social time enjoyed.

There are many variations. Some may choose to have silence throughout apart from reading the list of names. Others intersperse with readings or there may be a guided theme by way of preparation.

Some groups include contact healing which may be done by one individual or several who have this gift. The essential point, whatever methods are used, is always to remember that God is the healer and we are only channels.

~~Important~~ work we are seeking healing of body, mind and spirit, but this may not always mean a physical cure. Many who have experienced the work of hospices know that prayer can help a peaceful passing. We should not allow ourselves to become burdened — the work is God's. Our part is to be attentive and responsive, so that the connection is made between the person in need of healing and the giver of Life who heals. We do not understand how healing is mediated but many people have expressed the reality of it in their lives. It is our privilege to be part of this service.