

# Suggested Ministry Guidelines for Prayer Ministry

## Fundamental Issues

- There is a difference between prayer ministry and counselling. In prayer ministry our central focus is to bring the person coming for ministry (referred to throughout as ‘the visitor’) into an awareness of the presence of God, and to seek the healing that flows from that.
- This ministry involves offering loving acceptance, non-judgemental listening, sensitive responses, discernment and patience, as well as an openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and whilst we are all on our own journeys of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus, those who undertake this ministry should demonstrate these abilities prior to being allowed to minister. Ministry should be under the authority of church leadership. Because there is the possibility of praying with children, Prayer Ministers should be subject to the usual CRB checks that are commonplace in other areas of the church’s ministry.

## Differences in style

Ministry can take place in a wide variety of formats and places, as a drop-in, after church services, in a setting where appointments are made, or a combination of these. It may take place in one large room, with ministry happening in various parts of the room, or in a setting where smaller, more private places of ministry are available. It is hoped that these guidelines can be applied to all the various options available.

## General Principles

- Some of these may sound unduly heavy-handed at the beginning of such a document, but without regard to these important principles, much damage can be done!
- If ministering in a private setting, there should always be two Prayer ministers with each visitor, at least one of them of the same sex as the visitor.
- It is impossible to promise total confidentiality to those seeking ministry, as this will need to be broken if required by law, or if there is a risk of danger to themselves or others.
- We do believe in the practice of the laying on of hands, but permission should always be sought first, and touch should generally be limited to the head and shoulders. If it is felt right to lay hands on a specific part of the visitor’s body (as in the case of physical healing), then such laying on of hands should only be done by a member of the same sex as the visitor, and regard must always be paid to what is seen to be appropriate.
- It can help if Prayer Ministers keep their eyes open while praying to watch what may be happening.
- It is important that we do not overstep our authority as far as the medical world is concerned (for whom we have a high regard). People should be encouraged not to make any changes to their medication without seeing their doctors.
- We believe that it is God’s will to heal, and prayers for healing should be offered accordingly and not apologetically. However, whilst we are seeking to pray in faith, we must avoid making any promises as to exactly how or when healing will come. Much disappointment and anger can arise when we promise things on God’s behalf.

## The Content of a Prayer Ministry Session

- Sometimes ministry can take place effectively without the visitor sharing their story, but when the visitor is invited to share, it is useful to clarify the healing issue.
- Whatever format ministry takes, it is always useful to spend time seeking to engage with the presence of God. We have found it helpful to begin any time of prayer by focusing on the presence of God rather than an immediate focus on the issues raised.
- Our experience is that prayer ministry need not be a wordy matter, but much is accomplished by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in times of quiet.

- If the Prayer Ministers sense that they are being given words or pictures, discernment is required whether to share these with the visitor. If appropriate, attention should be given to:
  - the timing – is it better to give them now (they may be experiencing God in a different way and such words might be a distraction), or at the end?.
  - how such words or pictures might be received if we fail to speak them with sufficient gentleness.
  - whether it might be good to write them down, so that the person can remember them more clearly after.
- Healing is often a process of transformation, and it is good to encourage visitors to return for more prayer if that seems appropriate. Part of the transformation process may be that God brings healing to another part of the visitor's life other than the original healing issue raised.

### **Good Practice in Ministry**

It is good if some form of supervision can be offered on a regular basis to all Prayer Ministers (where they can raise any difficulties that they may have faced), and to ensure that they have a team leader to speak to if necessary so that no-one goes home feeling burdened by their experience of ministry.

All of us find ourselves going through hard times, and Prayer Ministers themselves may need support from time to time. We know that God can use imperfect people, but it is important for those ministering to be responsible for their own lives and to seek help when it is needed.

Prayer Ministers are not there to offer advice.

### **Ministry Records**

At times it may be helpful to keep records for the following reasons:-

1. To mark important facts or life events e.g. bereavements.
2. To record, as an aide-memoir for the Prayer Ministers, words or pictures which come to mind during ministry, which may be of importance at a later date.
3. To list agreed points for prayer.
4. To describe any difficulties encountered.

It is worth remembering that under the data protection act, a visitor may ask to see the notes that have been taken and we may be asked to produce them in the event of a complaint or legal investigation. Therefore note-taking should be focused, factual, brief, and opinions must be avoided.

Confidentiality must be maintained, therefore the visitor's name must not be put in the notes – a suitable coding system needs to be worked out, so that should someone pick up the file, no-one (except the Co-ordinator) would know who it is. Files should be kept somewhere secure.

### **Praying for Children**

- Before a child comes in the context of private prayer ministry, permission must be sought from their parents – we would expect a parent or designated adult to be present during sessions.
- Keep language simple and short when praying and generally keep prayer times short. This will help with a child's understanding.
- If a child / young person becomes distressed, cease to pray and reassess the situation..

**If you need advice about difficult prayer ministry situations, please contact the Christian Healing Mission.**