

## What is meant by spiritual healing?

There is considerable confusion among Christians about the terms commonly used to describe the Ministry of Healing. The phrase 'faith healing' is best avoided because it can give rise to dangerous misconceptions. Some who use this phrase mean that healing is achieved either through belief in the healer's personal powers or by some ambiguous 'energy source'. Another danger is that, if healing does not come, the sick person may be made to feel that this is because they did not have enough 'faith'. The faith need not necessarily be the patient's.

Spiritual healing is a term which, when used carefully within the Christian community, is intended to emphasise the belief that restoration to health is the work of the Holy Spirit, but some feel that the phrase is too imprecise. It is also easily confused in the public mind with 'spiritualist' connotations.

The National Federation of Spiritual Healers sets standards for healers it admits to membership and these healer members have to train for at least two years. Although it is not a religious organisation, the Federation's members come from many backgrounds. Helen Beck, currently chair of the NFSH and a regular churchgoer, emphasises that it is definitely not a 'spiritualist' organisation.

The NFSH defines the purpose of healing as being "to bring balance to a person's body, mind and spirit." Healers see themselves as only a link to the source of the healing, which is acknowledged to be 'something greater than us.'

"The 'something greater than us' is at the heart of the ministry of healing as it is practised in the mainstream Christian churches," says Bishop George Hacker of the Guild of St Raphael, an Anglican organisation dedicated to the promotion of the ministry of healing. "The best definition I know of this ministry is that given by Bishop Morris Maddocks in an off-the-cuff answer just before a broadcast: 'The ministry of healing is Christ meeting people at their point of need. For Christians, Christ is the only 'healer'. We are simply channels through which he works.'

As the Common Worship form for the laying on of hands says: "Receive Christ's healing touch to make you whole".

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