

D15 THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY OF HEALING.

The publication in 2000 of the report *A Time to Heal* (Church House Publishing) prompted a presentation to the Diocesan Synod and subsequently the formation of an **Advisory Group on the Church's Ministry of Healing and Wholeness** chaired by the Bishop of Dunwich. The group members are a resource for the churches of the diocese in support of the ministry of healing. In many parishes this ministry already finds its expression in our prayer, public worship and pastoral ministry. Some churches are rediscovering this ministry as part of their outreach and care for the community. Common Worship Pastoral Services (pp. 8ff) is prefaced by a very good theological paper on this ministry. Common Worship also provides appropriate and rich liturgical material both for public worship and for individual ministry. *A Time to Heal Handbook* (Church House Publishing) is also a good resource. There are various training courses available. For further information contact the Lay Education and Training Adviser.

Healing and deliverance and paranormal phenomena

The Introductory note to Common Worship: Wholeness and Healing Services states; *"If a need for a more particular ministry of exorcism or deliverance is perceived, then the bishop's instructions should be followed and his authorised adviser consulted."*

The bishops have appointed a team of advisers. They form a network across the diocese and all are experienced and sensitive pastoral practitioners in this area. The Bishop of Dunwich meets regularly with the team, some of whom are also members of the Advisory Group. For advice and help contact the Bishop of Dunwich, and if it is appropriate, refer to members of the team in your area.

The following guidelines may be helpful

- The need for the utmost sensitivity in dealing with requests for help with paranormal phenomena whether person or place related. Take the problem seriously even if the story seems exaggerated or misinterpreted and respond as quickly as possible.
- Listen first and listen carefully. Sometimes indicating a clear intention to pray with the person in the situation is a perfectly sufficient response.
- If the problem appears more serious, or is related to a place in a disturbing way, do not hesitate to consult one of the diocesan convenors via the Bishop of Dunwich.
- The advisers will work with you to determine the nature of the problem and to decide on any appropriate action – stay involved - do not leave it to them!
- It is good practice that pastoral work of this nature is done in teams of two or three people for prayer support, at least one of whom should be of the same gender as the person asking for this ministry.
- Avoid and discourage any publicity.
- It is good practice to keep a confidential and brief note of particular cases and any action taken (subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act).

In addition, it is important that this ministry is exercised in accordance with the Diocesan Guidelines on Child Protection and the policy on the Abuse of Adults by Adults. If you feel out of your depth, please ask for help.

Terms of reference for the Advisory group on the church's ministry of healing and wholeness

The group, in its advice to the Bishops on the Healing Ministry, shall relate to, and be a resource for, clergy, ministers and people of the diocese.

1) Membership

The Group shall consist of lay people and clergy involved in the Church's ministry of healing, and represent the diversity of traditions and approaches to this ministry, both within the Church of England, and within other Christian churches. It may include, by the invitation of the bishops, parochial clergy and lay ministers, representatives of chaplaincies (including hospices, hospitals, prisons, colleges and military establishments) and representatives of the medical profession.

2) Members are appointed by the bishops for a period of three years (renewable).

3) The group will meet at least two times a year.

4) Terms of Reference

1. To facilitate the sharing of views, opinions and practices with regard to the ministry of healing in the Church of England and other Christian churches.
2. To support and encourage the ministry of healing in the churches through promoting understanding, encouraging prayer, conferences, workshops and other educational opportunities.
3. To ensure that the Church's healing ministry is part of the mainstream of our Churches ministry to all people.
4. To work with training officers and other advisers in the diocese to provide opportunities for the provision of this ministry.
5. To discover and monitor what is happening in the diocese.
6. To keep informed of what is already happening in other dioceses and the wider church.
7. To include, in its support and prayer, our Bishops' Advisers on the ministry of healing and deliverance.