

Christian Healing Today

An Invitation to Healing Ministry in God's Kingdom

An 8-Week Study Series on Christian Healing
for Youth and Adults

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A REFLECTION FOR THE TEACHER

What is Healing Prayer?

Any time we pray, we are accessing and utilizing the channel of communication/ communion that already exists between God and people. This channel is always open on God's side, but we must open and utilize the channel on our side. While God's Spirit is always ready to communicate/commune with our spirit, our spirits are not always prepared (or even willing!) to communicate/commune with God.

We need to understand that some prayers are "uni-directional" and some are "bi-directional." We can communicate our thoughts and desires TO God and be in a "sending" mode, but still not be in a "receiving" mode, unprepared (or unwilling) to receive FROM God.

Sometimes when we pray "prayers of praise" TO God, WE are in control, WE are the senders: the prayer is uni-directional. Sometimes when we pray "prayers of thanks" TO God it is uni-directional. Sometimes when we pray "prayers of supplication" TO God, we tell him or ask him for what we want or need. These prayers all can be US speaking TO God, telling him what is on our hearts. We then are using the communications channel of prayer in a uni-directional manner.

But healing prayer is different than a prayer of supplication, gratitude, or praise. Healing prayer is not merely us talking TO God. It is being so open to God, so willing and prepared, that the healing power of God can flow right through our open communication/ communion channel INTO us and THROUGH us and AROUND us. We open our spirits to God's Spirit and serve as conduits of the healing power that can only flow FROM God. In Healing Prayer, therefore, the channel of communication becomes a two-way flow. The kingdom of God (or the kingdom of Heaven as Matthew called it) is when through our openness, God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven, which is exactly what Jesus taught his disciples to pray for. Jesus talked about how the Holy Spirit is SENT to us as a counselor to lead and guide us in all truth. This happens as we open our spirit to God's Spirit. When we prophesy, our spirits are open to God and are receiving messages directly from God that we then share with others. Again, this can only happen when there is a bi-directional flow in our communication/communion with God.

During healing prayer, we know we are not the source of healing, God is. But we intentionally open ourselves to God so God's healing power and presence can flow through us to others.

When we lay hands on people for their healing, we know the healing doesn't come from us, but that we are making ourselves available for God to flow through us. When

we anoint others with oil, as the early church did, we know the oil itself doesn't heal, but that God's power can flow through the act of anointing in obedience to the teaching of Christ and God's word. When we give a holy word of command, we know that if we are speaking God's rhema word, it is as good as done.

Sometimes when people ask God to do a healing, their prayer is actually a prayer of supplication rather than a healing prayer. A supplication is a request from us TO God and is uni-directional. There is nothing wrong with prayers of supplication, the Bible teaches us to pray such prayers. God often answers prayers of supplication. But Healing Prayer is different than a prayer of supplication. Healing prayer is when the people doing the prayer intentionally open the channel of communication on our side with the confidence that the channel IS open on God's side and with the expectation that God's healing power can or will flow from God TO the person who needs healing. With healing prayer, we are not in control of the prayer, God is.

The Bible teaches us to pray without ceasing, which means we are to keep the channel of communication open constantly on our side and we are to keep our spirits in constant communion with God's Spirit, always ready to hear from God and always ready to speak to him. "Lord, here is a person with a need for healing. Is this someone you have brought into my path for me to minister to?" These people get so used to hearing God's whispers that they often already "know" when God wants them to witness or to minister healing to someone.

When God's power—his presence—his Spirit—is flowing into us and through us, it sometimes becomes manifest in us physically. This should not surprise or frighten us. Some people begin to have anatomical responses such as their hands or whole bodies shake or tremble, or their eyelids begin to flutter, or they may cry, or laugh, or begin praying in tongues (praying in the Spirit). Some have their hands get unnaturally hot or feel electric currents in their bodies at the place of healing. Others might begin to prophesy or speak words of knowledge as they minister healing. Others may have no physical manifestations but have an extraordinary sense of peace that fills them, an overwhelming sense of love, or their faith increases exponentially, or, perhaps best of all, they simply have a strong inner sense of the divine presence.

Whether the manifestations of the Spirit are physical or emotional, one kind of manifestation is not "better" than another. And some people will experience one type of manifestation one time as they pray for healing, and another manifestation the next time, and no manifestation at all on yet another occasion. Some people seem to think the manifestations are what is important, but this is not so. What is important is that we are opening the channel on our side and asking God to flow into us and through us.

This reflection is an attempt to describe what I believe takes place, or may take place, as Christians pray healing prayers.

Week 1: What Are You Praying For?

Theme: God is seeking for people who want to have more of him.

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Key verses: Luke 11:9-10 *And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*

Testimony from Chuck: While on a mission trip to Russia, our group visited a beautiful church. There were no pews, no chairs, everyone stood. In the middle of the sanctuary was a table with dozens of candles burning, each representing a prayer request. Beyond the table was an ornate altar unlike anything I had ever seen. The altar covered the entire front wall, floor to ceiling, left to right, with intricate carvings, gold, and beautiful hand-painted Russian icons. On the other walls of the sanctuary were paintings of Bible scenes and the ceiling was painted to look like the blue sky with white clouds. In the middle of the nave, the intersection where the main sanctuary and the two transepts came together, was a place where the ceiling disappeared up into something like a very tall steeple that was several feet across and it held an ornate dome on its pinnacle. From the outside of the church you could see this steeple and its dome soaring high over the church building, but from inside the sanctuary you could stand directly beneath it and look up inside, craning your neck to see to the top. One or two of the college students on our mission team laid down on the floor so they could look up at the angelic scenes that lined the inside walls of the narrow steeple. And if you looked to the very top of the steeple, in the ceiling of the dome high above you, was a painting unlike any other in the church. There was a triangle, representing, the Trinity, and inside the triangle was a single Eye. The Eye was looking down from heaven, down through the painted angels, down through the painted sky, down past the scenes of the Bible, down past the icons of Russian saints and the altar, down to where you stood looking up at it. Your eye was looking up searching for God and God's Eye was looking down at the earth searching to see if you were searching for him.

Lesson: Psalm 14:2 says, "The LORD looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if anyone is truly wise, if anyone seeks God" (NLT). God seeks for those who seek him! This verse declares that the truly wise person is the one who desires God. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show his

might in behalf of those whose heart is blameless toward him." God desires to show his might to the person whose heart is blameless toward God. A person with a blameless heart is one who seeks for nothing but God. Hebrews 11:6c says "for God rewards those who diligently seek him." Or as other translations put it, God rewards those who "earnestly seek him." To seek God earnestly means you are seeking him with "a sincere and intense conviction." This is not a half-hearted curiosity. It is a full-on desire for God and God alone. The kind of person God is seeking for, is the person who is fully devoted to seeking more of God in his or her life. They are not content with what little they have of God, but are earnestly seeking to have the fullness of God's Spirit in their lives. Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Seeking first means to seek it foremost. If we seek God's kingdom, God's reign in us and through us, first and above all else, then anything we desire that supplements or adds to this, will be given as well. If we want God's kingdom first and foremost, we will never desire anything that is contrary to his perfect will. This is why one who seeks for God will never also seek for anything that is evil, sinful, selfish, or idolatrous.

On Epiphany the Wise Men came searching for the Christ-child that they might worship him. Are we looking for the Christ more than anything else? The eye of the Lord is looking throughout the earth for the truly wise ones who are searching for him.

In the Gospels, we find that people wanting ministry from Jesus sought him out and begged him for help. Some ran and knelt in front of him pleading for his help. Are you running to him for all you are worth? In the Gospels so many "pressed in to touch him" for healing, that he thought he might get crushed. Are you "pressing in" for all you are worth? We read that one person who was blind yelled to him as Jesus passed by. When people told him to be quiet, he yelled even louder. We read that people lined up by the road, and one even climbed a tree to see him. Are you lining up? Are you willing to climb a tree? We read that a woman reached in and touched his garment through the crowd, that some men tore a hole in a roof of the house where he was so they could lower a paralyzed man to him, that parents brought their children to him to bless them, people saw where he was going and ran to the place ahead of him. Are you pressing in? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to get to Jesus? God seeks those who are earnestly seeking him.

Do you see that the seeking for God's blessing, the going after the blessing, the asking for the blessing, the pressing in for the blessing, is all a part of an earnest prayer for the blessing? The determination, the persistence, the effort to live a righteous life, is the evidence of the person's sincere conviction that they want God's rule and God's righteousness more than they want anything else in all of life.

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied!” (Matt 5:6). Are you hungering and thirsting after God so much that nothing will keep you away from your search for his kingdom? In the Temple, on a holy day, Jesus stood up and shouted to the crowd, “Anyone among you who is thirsty, come to me and drink! He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ Now he said this about the Holy Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37-39). Are you THIRSTY for all that God offers to those who seek him? Do you not only want to receive the Holy Spirit but desire for the Holy Spirit to flow into you and through you like rivers of living water? Are you seeking for the God who is seeking for you?

The beginning of all healing prayer is the seeking for God, who wants to heal and fill the human heart, soul, body, and mind. If you only want him to heal your body without wanting him to make you fully his, what good is that to you, really? It may extend your life, making it last a while longer, but it will just be more of the same. But if our souls are healed, if our hearts are healed, if our minds are healed, as well as body, life isn’t just longer, it is qualitatively and fundamentally better for we become new creations.

God promised through the prophet Jeremiah, “Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:12-13). Are we seeking God with all our heart? If not, then our whole heart needs healed.

Have you devoted yourself to seeking God? “Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God. (I Chronicles 22:19).

King David told his son, “As for you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve Him wholeheartedly and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands the intention of every thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you” (I Chron 28:19).

Our key verses for this lesson is a teaching by Jesus in Luke 11:9-10 *And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.* Here Jesus used words that indicate a continuing action: ask and keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and it will be opened to you. The New Living Translation reflects this: “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.”

This is a far different understanding than just praying for something one time only.

Jesus' teaching is saying that the repeated and continuing seeking is part of the prayer itself! Francis MacNutt, in The Power to Heal, tells about a child with birth defects whose parents were told to institutionalize the boy. Instead they took him every single week for soaking prayer, and the boy gradually improved and ended up going to public school. They were willing to keep on seeking, asking, knocking for as long as it took.

Churches should teach their people about the "keeping on" part of Jesus' teaching. Keep on seeking, asking, knocking! Some people have been told by preachers that if they ask for something even twice it means they have no faith. Just the opposite! The willingness to pray without ceasing may be the evidence that they have great faith. Many people of weak faith will give up after one or two prayers. How much more faith it take to keep coming to God after twenty times, after two hundred times. Seek and keep on seeking, and you shall find! Ask and keep on asking. Knock and keep on knocking and it will be opened to you.

Class Discussion: In today's scripture reading, Jesus taught about persistence and continuing to come before him with our requests. When have there been times in your life that you have felt like giving up in praying for something? In one church where there is an anointing upon the congregation for healing, they see healings for certain diseases but not for others. So, they begin to pray for God to give their church a breakthrough in new areas of healing, after a while that breakthrough comes upon them. A growing group of us at our church are praying for a kingdom breakthrough in our church, for God's healing power and miracles to become common in the lives and ministries of our church members. Will you join with us in this prayer and keep on praying and seeking God's anointing for us until the answer comes?

Lesson Summary: God seeks to find people who are seeking him and his kingdom. Jesus taught people to be persistent in their prayer lives, so that they keep on going to him, knocking, asking until they have the answer. We should not give up on praying for the things we need.

Closing Prayer: Living God, your Son Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Therefore, we pray for you to fully reign in us and through us. Release your healing power in our church so that it flows among us as it did in the early church and as it flows in some other anointed churches of today. We ask, and we keep on asking, for healing breakthroughs in our congregation so that we will see more powerful and more regular healings of the sick, the infirm, and the injured. Strengthen our faith so that we will not give up or turn aside from seeking your blessing for every need we encounter. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Week 2: Why Some People Get Nervous When We Talk About Healing Prayer

Theme: This study looks at five reasons why healing prayer is controversial to some people.

Scripture Reading: John 9:13-34

Key verse: John 9:16 ***Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them.***

Testimony from Chuck: Some years ago, Nancy and I hosted some relatives in our home for a weekend. But on Sunday morning the woman couldn't get out of bed due to severe back pain. When we came home from church after worship, she was still in bed, flat on her back. She told us this was what her life was like. At least once a week she had to go to her chiropractor to stay functional. The cause of it all, she said, was that one leg was shorter than the other. This caused her spine to go out of alignment which resulted in excruciating pain due to pinched nerves.

Nancy asked if we could pray with for her. We laid hands on her and after about thirty minutes of prayer, her pain subsided enough that she was able to sit up. Her back muscles were tight as ropes, and we began praying for God to relax them. In just a few minutes their tautness disappeared. Then we prayed for God to realign her vertebrae, so her nerves would stop being pinched. There was a "crack. . . crack. . . crack" sound as her back bones came into proper alignment. Eyes wide, she asked, "Did you hear that?" Immediately after the sounds, her remaining discomfort was completely gone.

That would be the point when a lot of people stop praying. Once they see God act, they thank God and stop. However, when God is noticeably answering a prayer is the time to further press in and build on what God is doing! Because the Lord had so wonderfully answered the prayers for her pain to go away, her muscles to relax, and for her back to be realigned, I began praying with confidence for God to heal the root cause of the problem: for God to have her shorter leg grow and become equal in length to the other. She was surprised at this request. "You aren't afraid to ask for things that really can be proved, are you?"

Many years have passed since that weekend. A couple of years afterwards, when I first was writing notes for a possible book on healing, I called their home to ask how she was doing. Though she was away, her husband reported that she had not had further back trouble. Additionally, he told me that at her next appointment, the doctor discovered that her shorter

had grown to the point where she only needed a small insert inside her shoe to balance her legs. Later, at a family gathering, I inquired again how she was doing and she joyfully responded that her back problem had never returned. And then, a few weeks ago, just before I began writing this Sunday School curriculum, they were laughing that after we prayed for her leg to grow, the doctor kept remeasuring her leg and double-checking his notes, thinking he was surely reading the numbers wrong!

We thank God for providing us the opportunity to pray for this and many other healings. When we see this family now, they often ask us to pray for other needs, and we have seen other healings with them. Even more importantly, they have joined with us in praying with faith for other family members to be healed.

We might think that hearing about such healings would cause everyone to break forth in praise to God; however, that is not the case. Some people get nervous about the subject. As long as Christians talk about prayer in a general sense, no one blinks too hard. But when we start teaching that you and I can, and should, pray for God to intervene in specific ways such as releasing pain, realigning backs, causing legs to grow, then it becomes another matter altogether. People get nervous and specific prayers for healing become controversial.

After I began to engage in a ministry of healing prayer, doing healing revivals around the conference, leading workshops and teaching others to pray for healings, I was told by a district superintendent that I would not get “a good appointment” because I was into “that healing thing.” I decided that it didn’t matter how I was perceived, I would seek to be faithful to what I believed God was calling me to do. In the midst of a world where many do not believe in God, and many do not believe God answers healing prayers, it is important for Christians to believe and to be faithful as people of prayer and healing.

Lesson:

As today’s key scripture verse tells us, when Jesus healed the blind man on a sabbath day (in John 9), there was a division (a strong disagreement) that arose. By healing on the sabbath, Jesus was defying the expectations of his fellow Jews. Jesus considered the healing of hurting people so important that he allowed nothing to stand in the way of it. He would not compromise or acquiesce to the religious leaders’ admonitions to the contrary, even though they began to plot his death because of it (Mark 3:1-6). Since healing was this important to Jesus, it needs to be just as important to us as well. Further, we should not be shocked or frightened when people, even some religious leaders, rebuke or disagree with us about it.

Some people refuse to do anything that is controversial. They do anything and compromise

about anything to keep peace at all costs. But since Jesus absolutely refused to compromise about the essential ministries of God's kingdom, then we must not compromise about them either.

Let us look at five reasons why healing prayer can be controversial in today's churches.

- One reason healing prayer can be controversial is that different people have different understandings, expectations, and practices of healing prayer. Some people think if your healing prayer is not like my healing prayer, then you are doing it wrong. This can cause controversy and division among God's people.
- A second reason people get uncomfortable about healing prayer is that it challenges the theologies of several denominations who believe God no longer heals today. These people are called cessationists or dispensationalists. They believe the age of miracles and healings, is over.
- A third reason some people get nervous when we talk about praying for specific things is they think that when we pray we are turning God into our personal genie—you know, just rub the magic lamp and out comes a genie who grants three wishes. Certainly, we are not to think of God as our personal genie, but at the same time, it is even more disrespectful of God to not pray for healing as Jesus commanded his disciples to do.
- A fourth reason people get nervous when we talk about praying for healing is: “What happens if it doesn't work?” They say we might damage people's faith and hurt their relationship with God if what we are praying for doesn't take place. However, if we do not pray because we might hurt someone's faith, we will hurt people's faith because we fail to give them the opportunity to see faithful obedience. We will hurt people by not offering prayers that might have led to their healing. We will hurt people by not modeling a prayer ministry to them, and they therefore will never enjoy the blessing of learning to pray for others, who in turn, will go without the healings they could have known through them. It is more dangerous for Christians not to pray for healing.
- Finally, some say, “If God wants a healing to happen, he wouldn't need someone to pray for it. He could just do it.” They wonder why the all-powerful God would make a healing dependent on whether a human prays or not. If God really wanted our relative's back to be healed, why didn't he just go ahead and heal her, without waiting

until someone was willing to not only pray for it, but to keep praying until it happened? We may have some guesses, but we just don't know for sure why in many situations God makes healing dependent upon our praying or healing ministry.

We also do not know why God makes the spreading of the Gospel dependent upon whether his people will answer the call to witness, evangelize, invite, preach, and do missionary work. Why does God arrange his kingdom so that some are saved or not saved based upon the faithfulness of God's people to share the Gospel? For that matter, why has God so arranged the kingdom that discipleship is often dependent upon whether some of his people will answer the call to be teachers? It would seem far more efficient if God would just mass-produce fully mature Christians! And since God wants the whole world to become a place of justice and radical equality and peace, why doesn't God just do it? Why has God made the survival of planet earth dependent upon whether enough of us are willing to heal, rather than damage, the environment? And why has God made the ministries of every local church dependent upon people joining it, praying for it, serving it, sacrificially giving their resources to support its work?

Yet, for some reason, God chooses to make himself vulnerable to us. God has called us to live as partners with him in the work of reconciling the world to his will, and if we each don't do our part, then important pieces of the work will go undone. In the same way, God calls us to pray for healing, and there are countless people who go through life suffering and unhealed, because the right person did not take the risk of praying for healing on that person's behalf.

Class Discussion: To what extent have we allowed disapproval from others to limit our willingness to pray for healings?

Lesson Summary: Jesus' healing ministry caused division. It should not surprise us if it becomes controversial when we do it today. Controversies arise because there are different definitions of prayer; different denominational teachings about it; different understandings about what it means to respect God; fears that it might hurt people's faith if the healings we pray for do not occur; and different understandings of our human role in God's kingdom work.

Closing Prayer: Lord God, we pray in Jesus' name for healing for any in our class who are in need of it this day. And, Lord, because the healings of Jesus often caused division and controversy, help us not be dismayed or run away when these things come against us as we learn and practice healing prayer. Give us wisdom and courage to do the things Jesus his followers to do, for it is in his name that we pray. Amen.

Week 3: United Methodists Believe in Prayer and Healing Prayer!

Theme: United Methodists believe in prayer and healing.

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

Key Verse: Philippians 4:6 “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God.”

Testimony from Chuck: I once prayed for a woman to be healed of a severe case of the hives. She had been tormented by them for six months. Even though she went to another church, I asked her if she would like me to pray with her for them to go away. Three days after we prayed, the hives cleared up. She reported to me that she was better and thanked me for the prayer. Then she said that she had been surprised when I told her I would pray with her. She said she had never prayed with any pastor before, and, what’s more, she said she had heard that Methodists don’t believe in prayer.

I assured her, “Yes, United Methodists believe in prayer.”

Lesson: Imagine what we would hear if it were possible to listen in on all the prayers being offered in all the United Methodist Churches on any given Sunday! Many churches have prayer groups who pray before the Sunday morning services begin. Our church is one of them. Many services start with an Opening Prayer and include some form of Prayer for Illumination before God’s Word is proclaimed. We pray as we offer our tithes to God, and many churches end with a prayer as the people go forth to live for Christ. You would also regularly hear prayers of Confession and Pardon, the Great Thanksgiving over the bread and cup during communion, and The Lord’s Prayer. Most congregations also set aside time in their worship services to pray for specific needs: this time is often referred to as the Pastoral Prayer, Congregational Prayer, or Prayers of the People.

I once visited a United Methodist Church where the congregation spent about fifteen minutes of the worship service sharing concerns and praying for each request individually. I was fascinated by this. Most churches make the sermon or anthem or Eucharist the central focus of the worship service, but for that church it was their prayer time. An usher made several passes through the congregation picking up prayer request cards, which he kept handing to the pastor even as she led the congregation in praying for each request. After the

service, the people did not rush out. Instead many of them crowded around tables in the back of the sanctuary where they signed prayer notes for each person who was prayed for during the service. No one seemed to mind that the service and the note signing process lasted ninety minutes. I'm guessing one of the reasons that church was thriving is because you could feel God's presence in the worship and in the people.

Another United Methodist Church that comes to mind is in Kentucky. A mission team I was on just randomly picked out a church to stop in for worship. I was really impressed during their Congregational Prayer time. So many people went forward to pray that there was no more room at the prayer rail. But that didn't stop others from going forward and still more just got down on their knees in the open area between the prayer rail and the front pews. Led by the pastor, they prayed for the needs of the world and the needs of people in their community and congregation. That congregation believed in prayer.

My prayer for Tulsa's FUMC is that we will have overflowing prayer rails during worship as our pastor leads us in prayer for the world and the church. Churches whose people go forward to prayer and get on their knees are declaring that they are dependent upon God. "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

In the largest United Methodist Church in the country, a prayer team gathers early each Sunday morning to pray over each of the thousands of seats in their worship center—asking God to bless each person who will occupy that chair during the worship services. I have attended several workshops at that church, and each time I received a hand-written note from someone telling me that he or she had been praying for me in advance and would do so during the workshop and as I went home and applied my learnings. Those personal prayer notes written by hand for each participant reminded us that our presence was not just to help us fulfill our continuing ed requirements, but that we are to help bring Christ's kingdom. I pray that someday we will have such prayer warriors in this and in every UM church!

Here at Tulsa's FUMC, a group of us gathers every Sunday morning at 8:15 a.m. in Parker Hall before the first worship service begins. We pray for God to pour out his Spirit upon our services, the preachers, musicians, and congregation. I hope the day will come when Parker Hall is filled by those willing to come early and pray for the church. True worship is not just something "nice" we offer to people, it is God's people gathering in God's presence to be refilled with God's power for doing God's work for the coming week. This requires prayer, prayer, prayer.

United Methodists believe in prayer. We pray as we baptize, as we confirm, as we marry, and as we commend our beloved dead into God's eternal care. In any given week, you'll find members of our churches praying with the broken-hearted, bruised, battered, and betrayed. Some will pray with addicts seeking recovery. Others will pray for soldiers deployed to dangerous and distant duties. Every day United Methodist Christians can be found praying in visitation rooms of jails, hospitals, and in thousands of homes across the land. Church after church has prayer groups, prayer chains, prayer vigils, and prayer services. Hardly a day goes by, in any of our churches, without prayers being offered for those who are ill, injured, or nearing the life beyond this one.

Philippians 4:6 says, "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God." If Christians did a better job of letting our requests be made known to God, our anxiety would diminish and disappear. To bring all things to God with "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" will teach us to trust and have faith in every circumstance, and unleash God's kingdom upon earth.

United Methodists *expect* that all our church members are or will become people of prayer. Whenever someone becomes a professing member of a United Methodist congregation, he or she promises to support the church in several specific ways and the promise to pray is the first on the list.

We United Methodists may pray in different ways, but we believe in prayer. Some of us use formal liturgical prayers while others prefer prayers that are unrehearsed. Our prayers may be public or private, silent, spoken, shouted, or signed with sign language. Some use prayers written by others; some write their own like John Wesley did. Others put them to music like Charles Wesley did or chant them like the psalmists of long ago. Some pray in human languages, some pray in tongues. But, regardless of these differences—praying is found throughout the length and breadth of our denominational life. Prayers for all sorts of situations are found in the official worship books of our church. The United Methodist Book of Worship contains some four hundred prayers, and The United Methodist Hymnal has another hundred, and both of them include prayers for the healing of the sick. The Book of Worship contains examples of healing services we can adapt or use as they are.

Four Invitations For You to Help Our Church Become a Stronger Church of Prayer:

- Take part in our church's Sunday Evening Healing Prayer Class. Our spring study is a video/book/workbook series called "The Essential Guide to Healing: Equipping All Christians to Pray for the Sick," by Bill Johnson and Randy Clark. The class will be Feb 3 through May 5 at 5:30 p.m. Register by emailing or calling the Congregational Care Department. The cost is for your text book and the workbook.

- Take part in our weekly Sunday morning prayer time (at 8:15 a.m. in Parker Hall on the first floor) when we pray for God to pour out his blessing upon our worship, and our church people, missions and ministries. Just show up and take part.
- Attend the Thursday night healing prayer group at Bob and Teri Pennison's house at 7:00 p.m. Just show up and take part. You may come to receive prayer, to join us in praying with others, or you may bring a friend or loved one who needs healing prayer.
- Come to the prayer rail at the front of the church on Sunday mornings to ask the Holy Spirit's presence and power to fill our church. By doing so, you will help establish a stronger culture of prayer within our congregation. We want our church to be known as a church that believes in the power of prayer.

Class Discussion: How have we personally been blessed by the prayer life of this church?
What can we do individually to strengthen the prayer life of the church?

Lesson Summary: United Methodists believe in prayer, that it has power, and that God can and does heal through our healing prayers. Some churches have congregations that are very faithful in their congregational prayer life. We live in an era when the church of Jesus Christ needs to strengthen its prayer ministries.

Closing Prayer: Living God, your word calls us to pray. It teaches us to raise our prayers of request and supplications to God with thanksgiving.

Week 4: How the Greatest Teacher Taught His Followers to Heal

Theme: Jesus' pedagogical model for teaching disciples should be used in churches today.

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:1-23

Key Scripture Verses: Luke 10:8-9 *Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near you.'*

Testimony from Chuck: At a conference training for church leaders, Nancy and I led a workshop about healing prayer. The organizers had mailed out brochures with a description of all the classes being offered. So many people signed up for the class on healing prayer, that it needed to be held in the church sanctuary. After we presented the first part of the lesson, I asked for a volunteer from the class to come forward so we could demonstrate the principles about healing prayer that we had just been teaching to them. But, at first, no one moved to come forward for healing. It was a little awkward for a moment there, nevertheless, I had a strong feeling that we were supposed to do this demonstration, and that God would heal the person who came forward. So, during the silence, I walked across the sanctuary, picked up a chair and carried it to the front and center. I patted the back of the chair and said, "Ok now, who will come up? Who needs a healing and will allow us to demonstrate what we have been talking about?"

This time a woman in the third of fourth row of pews stood up and said that she had read about the workshop in the brochure. She said that she had come many miles today hoping she might have the opportunity to receive healing prayer. Then she told us what her problem was: that she was suffering with excruciating pain in her abdomen.

Nancy and I asked about her pain level: "On a scale of one to ten, with one being a small amount of pain and ten being the most severe pain imaginable, how much pain are you in right now?" She answered, "Seven." Then, for ten minutes or so, Nancy and I prayed out with a microphone so the class could hear what we were saying and watch what we were doing. After a few minutes we asked her for feedback: was she feeling anything?

"Yes," she said, in a most matter-of-fact way. Pointing to her upper abdomen, she continued, "While you prayed, I felt things moving around inside of me right here. That's where my pain has been. Now my pain is much less, maybe a four."

As she spoke, the entire room became very quiet. Everyone knew we had just seen a work of God. Then Nancy and I broke the class into small groups of three so everyone could take turns praying for each other, to practice and experience for themselves what they had just

seen us do. Once the groups were praying together, the two of us resumed praying for the dear woman who had allowed us to demonstrate by praying for her.

At the end of the experiential prayer period, probably fifteen minutes, we asked the small groups to share with the whole class what they had experienced in their group prayers. Several groups shared how God had touched them as well.

Then the woman that Nancy and I had been praying for, stood and shared this amazing testimony: "When I first got the brochure, I read the description of this class and had a feeling that I was to come here to get prayed for. So I planned to come and hoped I could get personally prayed for. But last night, I was in so much pain that I couldn't stand it. I told the Lord I wanted to die, to just take me home. Then, this morning I was feeling very dizzy, which was a new symptom, I felt so bad that I decided I couldn't come. But then I felt like God was telling me to come anyway, so I got myself into my car and somehow made it here, over an hour's drive. Even after driving all this way, when you asked for a volunteer, I was hesitant about coming forward. I thought, 'Maybe someone needs this worse than me.' But when no one else came up, I decided it must be for me. When you two first prayed for me, I felt something moving inside of me, like my organs were shifting around. And now, after this last session of prayer, my pain is completely gone. I feel fine."

That class on prayer was a modern-day application of the teaching method Jesus used to teach about the kingdom of God and our role of healing in it: proclamation, explanation, demonstration, sending his disciples forth for experimentation, feedback, and finally, authority and empowerment.

After that class on healing prayer concluded, several of the small groups got up and left the room, but the other groups reconvened because they were not finished praying for each other. They had seen a powerful work of God's healing.

Later that day the Spirit reminded me how much I had changed. At the workshop I was not worried that God might not answer the prayer. Instead, I was concerned that no volunteer would step forward to allow us to demonstrate. I should have known better than to worry about such a tiny detail as that! God's Spirit had already taken care of that need, leading a person of his own choosing to come so she would be healed and so the class could learn.

Lesson:

Jesus of Nazareth was the most successful teacher in the history of the world. His teaching continues to bear fruit. He declared that God's kingdom was at hand (within reach) and said

God's kingdom starts as the tiniest of all seeds, but eventually will grow to be quite large. (Mark 4:30-32). Jesus said that spreading the news of God's kingdom was his life's mission: "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43).

As we read the gospels, we discover that Jesus' methods of teaching about God's kingdom varied. His teaching included discourses to large multitudes, small group teachings to his disciples, and private conversations with individuals. In his teaching, he often described the spread and the importance of the kingdom of God by using parables. However, speaking, explaining, and raising questions were not his only methods of teaching. Jesus also demonstrated the reality of the kingdom of God through his actions by healing and casting out demons and performing miracles. Yet, these demonstrations were not sufficient, either.

He took his teaching an important step further by sending his disciples out to experience for themselves the presence and power of God's kingdom working through them. He sent out the twelve, and later the seventy, saying, "cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10:9). Upon the disciples' return from their mission, Luke tells us that Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" for God had "revealed" the things concerning the kingdom to the disciples (Luke 10:21).

Jesus understood that disciples need much more than explanations or even demonstrations of the kingdom of God. They also need to experience God's Spirit reigning in and through them first hand in order to truly realize the extent to which the kingdom of God was within them. Like two sides of the same coin, the explanations Jesus gave and the experiences he sent them out to have were equally important for the development of his disciples. If the Kingdom of God is merely a concept and is not lived out in our lives, then God is not reigning in us because God is not reigning through us. The Kingdom of God is both. If God isn't reigning through us, he is not yet reigning in us fully.

This teaching process that Jesus used in his day, is the same needed today disciples. 1.) We need to hear the proclamation that the kingdom is now *at hand* and can *powerfully restore human lives and our broken world*. 2.) We need to see demonstrations of the kingdom. 3.) We need to experiment and experience the kingdom's power at work in us and through us.

Too many classes on healing prayer and Bible studies and Sunday School classes mistakenly assume that if people simply hear about the kingdom they will begin to live kingdom lives. Instead, we may create people who learn to enjoy going to healing prayer classes and Bible studies and Sunday School. When they are done with the subject of the kingdom, they say, "Well, that was interesting, what can we study next?" The point of learning about the Kingdom of God, isn't learning to enjoy going to classes. The point is learning to let God flow through us to transform the world.

This is why Jesus not only taught them the concepts, he sent them out to experiment with putting the theory into practice. It is time to get out there and take a risk praying for God to heal others through you. And as we saw earlier, don't give up, pray and keep on praying!

Class Discussion:

In groups of three, let us experiment praying for each other.

Lesson Summary: Jesus did not teach his disciples by words alone, but by demonstrating and then by sending the disciples out to minister. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of going. It is a partnership of letting God reign in you and through you. It is a Kingdom of going to where people are, and letting God's power and presence flow through you.

Closing Prayer: Living God, Give us courage to try and try again, and to continue to trust that you want to work through us as disciples. If we do our part by praying, we trust you will do your part by answering our prayers and bringing healing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Week 5: The Stolen Birthright of Christian Healing

Theme: The ministry of healing was nearly stolen from the Christ's Church, it is now being restored in some places.

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:46-50

Key Verse: Luke 9:50

But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he that is not against you is for you."

Testimony from Chuck: During my childhood and youth, I really didn't think much about God's power to heal. My mind was occupied with going to school, having fun with my friends, and things such as that. As a pastor's son, Sunday School and weekly worship were a part of the main rhythm of our family's life. I gave my life to Jesus as a youth. In high school, I went to a weekly Bible study. I just took it for granted that God is a healing God, even though I had never actually seen a healing happen. One day, while talking with my dad about God's power to heal, he told me about a miraculous healing of a tumor that took place in a hospital after he prayed for someone scheduled to have surgery the next day.

At age 19, when I became the student-pastor of two small churches, I believed in the power of God to heal, but it wasn't something I had spent much time thinking about. My first summer as a pastor, we prayed about sick people during worship each week, and for five weeks in a row someone we prayed for got better. I thought, "Wow! This prayer stuff works!"

But then, that fall, after I began my first semester as a religion major at college, I discovered that not everyone believed in a healing God! Not only were we taught that God doesn't do miracles today, we were also taught that God didn't really do them in the Bible either. I was taught that the healings and supernatural acts of God that were spoken of in the Bible were actually myths and legends. Our task today was to purify the church from these falsehoods by "demythologizing" Christianity. We needed to help return Christianity to the true teaching of Jesus which were about peace and justice and liberation of the oppressed.

That first year I tried to buck against what we were being taught. I wrote one paper in which I argued that God could use scripture to speak to us in supernatural ways. The professor returned it to me with disparaging comments about the poor quality of my writing and theology.

Eventually, I became increasingly conformed to what I was being taught. I became convinced that God doesn't heal or do miracles and never did such things in the first place. My healing birthright as a Christian had been stolen as thoroughly as Jacob stole Esau's birthright. As a young pastor I was in love with God and in love with people, but I was convinced that God worked only through natural and human means, not supernatural ones.

Several years after I was done with school, I had a medical doctor in my congregation take me for a ride in his new pickup. He pulled under a shade tree, and asked me point-blank, "Do you believe in healing prayer? I've noticed that you never preach about it." I said "No," and carefully told him why we should no longer believe in such things. I then finished by telling about a shyster faith healer who claimed he specialized in healing teeth, filling cavities, etc. "Can you imagine anyone being taken in by the idea that God heals *teeth* of all things?" After I finished, he told me how his family was very poor, and he went home from school with a note that he needed to go to a dentist. His dad, an Assembly of God pastor, said, "Son, I can't afford to take you to a dentist, but I can pray for your teeth to be healed." He said his dad prayed and he was healed of his cavities. The very healing miracle I was making fun of, was the healing he had received.

Over a period of several years, God began to soften my heart and reestablish in me the truth which I had allowed to be stolen from me. One day, after I had prayed for a hospitalized patient, a member of the patient's family who was a Spirit-filled Christian, came to my office and said, "Pastor, I believe the Holy Spirit has given you a gift of healing." Then I began seeing a few more healings, and eventually began to pray for healings with faith. Now, after 20 plus years of making healing prayer my way of life, I have seen God do many miraculous healings.

Today I see that my own journey of healing ministry has mirrored the story of the church itself. Not only was my birthright of healing prayer stolen from me for a time, so also the birthright of healing prayer had been stolen from the historical church for a time.

Dr. Randy Clark, who has a powerful ministry of healing prayer, and holds a doctorate in ministry from a United Methodist seminary, has written from his Pentecostal perspective about how the ministry of healing in the church was nearly killed off by those who tried to stamp it out. The Roman Catholic professor of theology, Dr. Francis MacNutt, wrote a book called, The Nearly Perfect Crime: How the Church Almost Killed the Ministry of Healing.

A United Methodist historian and theologian and seminary professor, Dr. Frank Billman, says that in the early days of Methodism in America, it was said that if you were sick you needed to go to a Methodist to pray for you to be healed. Because healings regularly happened when Methodists prayed. He says, however, that after the Civil War there was an organized effort to help Methodists become seen as a respectable and refined denomination and they began to discourage healings from being talked about, reported upon, taught to our seminarians, or practiced in our churches. The healing birthright of Methodism was stolen for a while from Methodism. Thanks be to God, one of our United Methodist seminaries, is now offering doctoral studies about the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and about the ministry of healing. That which was stolen is being reestablished.

Lesson:

In our key verse for today, a couple disciples found a person casting out demons in the name of Jesus and they forbade him, because he was not a part of Jesus' group. He didn't have the proper credentials! He wasn't qualified! He did not have the proper education! He wasn't "an insider!" But instead of agreeing with his disciples, Jesus told them they must not forbid anyone from doing ministry in his name.

In Numbers 11:16-30, God told Moses to summon 70 respected men of Israel to the tent of meeting. God says to Moses that he will take some of the spirit that is on Moses and impart it to the 70. When the Spirit came upon the 70, they began to prophesy for a brief time as a sign that God's Spirit was on them.

However, at the same time, there were two other men, Eldad and Medad, still back in the camp. They were not a part of the respected 70 elders. They had not been officially recognized by Moses, but back in the camp, they also began to prophesy. Joshua was upset about this and said, "My lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses would not forbid them. Instead he told Joshua not to be jealous for him, and said he wished that all the Lord's people were prophets and that God would put his Spirit upon everyone.

As Joshua long before them had been jealous when God used people outside of the proper chain of command, so the disciples of Jesus became upset when someone without credentials or invitation began to minister in Jesus' name.

Throughout the history of the church, the question of whether people have the proper credentials and authority for ministry has been an on-going matter of debate. In the church it is important to have obedience to proper structure, yet we also must leave room for the Holy Spirit to call those whom he desires into ministry.

1 Cor 12:4-31 tells us that ALL Christians are given spiritual gifts to empower them for Spirit-filled ministry for the good of the whole church. It seems these gifts are selected for them by God. However, 1 Cor 14:1 says, "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy." This is interesting! We are told to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. To earnestly desire spiritual gifts is to want them, seek them, pray for them, work to develop them, and seek an impartation of them. So we see that while spiritual gifts are given to us by God, they are also given to those who earnestly desire them as way to love and serve Christ's church.

By the same token, just as we can earnestly desire to have a gift, we can also despise it. Instead of seeking to use it and develop it we can also do the opposite. We can "quench the Spirit," (I Thess 5:19); we can "grieve the Spirit" (Eph 4:30), we can ignore and not use the gifts. This is why Paul told Timothy that the young man must "rekindle the gift" that was imparted to him through the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Tim 1:6).

For instance if we desire the gift of healing, we can pray for it, we can learn as much about it as possible, we can surround ourselves with those who have healing ministries empowered by the Spirit, we can seek their impartation, etc. We can be in churches, Sunday School classes, and small groups that encourage us to be strong in the might of God.

Years ago, when I was a young pastor, I saw a sign on the outside of Tulsa's First United Methodist Church. It said something like "5,000 members and 5,000 ministers." I may have the exact numbers wrong, but I will never forget the point the sign was making.

This past year our church developed a strategic plan that includes refocusing on our legacy of healing ministries, and engaging our entire congregation in ministries, and becoming parts of small groups that will help us grow as Christ's Kingdom people.

The people around us can steal our birthright by forbidding us from using our ministry, or can build us up, teach us, correct us, encourage us, mentor us.

As a church we can seek to help others develop their ministries by allowing them to minister to us, just like the people surrounding me helped a young pastor on his journey, helped identify my gifts of the Spirit, gave me opportunities to use them and grow in them.

Class Discussion: Who is someone that encouraged you to experiment and grow in your gifts of the Spirit?

What gifts of the Spirit do you earnestly desire God to give you?

Lesson Summary: Christians are called to a ministry of healing, because we are to do what Jesus did. However, the ministry of healing was almost stolen from us. We have seen people forbid Spirit-empowered ministries, and discourage those who are young in the faith. We are to rekindle the gifts that we have been given, including the gifts of healing. Thanks be to God that today we are seeing a resurgence of kingdom ministries, including healing.

Closing Prayer: Living God, we desire to be servants in your kingdom, not merely relying upon our natural strengths and wisdom, but also upon the supernatural gifts from the Spirit that are to work in us for the good of the church. Restore the gifts of the Spirit that the thief has stolen from us, and help us rekindle them for the benefit of others and for your glory. Help us not quench or grieve your Spirit, but give us an earnest desire for your spiritual gifts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Week 6: Healing on the Sabbath: Creation Continues

Theme: Jesus went out of his way to repeatedly heal on Sabbath days. He did this to show that God's creation is still underway.

Scripture Reading: John 5:1-18

Key Verse: John 5:16-17

And this is why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working."

Testimony from Chuck: I received a call from a doctor asking me to go visit one of the retired men in my church to let him know that his adult son would not survive his most recent heart attack. The man's son had a genetic heart defect that had already caused other deaths in the family. The man's wife, who carried it, had died. Then a sister. Then a grandchild. Now it was the son's turn. The doctor told me the man was in heart failure and had been transferred to a hospital in a neighboring state. Would I, as pastor, go help the father get prepared for the fact that his son was about to die?

I knew the dad well. He was a member of my church, a lovely man, gentle in spirit. On the other hand, I barely knew the fellow who was dying. I had met him twice, at funerals of a couple of the above-mentioned family members. He had a reputation as a hard-living guy, involved in the drug scene.

After I hung up the call from the doctor, I planned to head over to the father's house. But another feeling began to come strongly into my spirit. I began to sense that this story didn't have to end this way. I began to believe that I was supposed drive to Arkansas and lay hands on the man and pray for his healing. So, I drove a couple of hours to the hospital where the son had been sent. In the Coronary Intensive Care Unit, I entered the patient's room. There were several machines making various kinds of sounds.

In the middle of it all he was lying there unconscious, no pajama top on, heart monitor wires attached to his chest, IVs dripping fluids into his arm, a ventilator machine was forcing oxygen through a breathing mask. His breathing was slow and laborious. I stood there a few minutes and then I laid my hand on his bear-sized chest, right over his heart. I began to pray for God to heal his heart and let him live. When I finished my prayer and opened my eyes, his eyes were open and he was watching me. He didn't die.

That visit and that bedside prayer began a special relationship between us. We became friends and he became active in the church. During the next couple of years, I and others often prayed for him. It was like being in a tug-of-war with death. He came close to dying several more times. In the midst of all that, however, he became a new man, a devoted Christian, and

our church became his extended family. He became a part of our prayer team. He went with a small group from our church to the Christian Healing Ministries center in Florida for a time of intensive prayer ministry where a powerful deliverance from some unclean spirits took place for him. He came home from there free and operating in spiritual gifts. At home, those in the drug world started calling him "Preacher," and he would pray with them and talk to them about Jesus. The children in the church loved him because he took time to get to know each of them and tease them. He visited with our church youth about the dangers of the world and the power of faith to overcome it. He joked with, prayed with, and hugged the older members, who responded to him with amazing love and acceptance. He started hanging around the church so much that I would sometimes invite him to go with me to make hospital calls and eventually started sending him to make certain hospital visits by himself. One Sunday morning he shared his testimony at church, which impacted several lives with the message of the Gospel. He "adopted" one of the men in town who also had experienced addiction problems and had no family. Soon the two of them would show up together at all the church activities. He developed a love for those in the community that no one else seemed to care about.

He liked to come to the pastor's study and ask questions about passages he was reading in the Bible. Several times he stayed so long that I had to chase him out, telling him I needed to get some "real ministry" done.

But again and again, middle of the day or middle of the night, I would get called to the hospital as he suffered yet another heart attack, and each time his heart grew weaker. Time after time, I would lay my hand on his chest and pray for God to create a new heart in him. Through each crisis he grew stronger in the faith though weaker in the flesh. And then the day arrived when he didn't survive. Before his funeral service, some of his closest friends and family gathered at his dad's house to help me put together his service. They told me of lives he had touched, of his witnessing to people in the bars and praying with them. They told me of how God had changed their lives through him. They spoke of how there was the former person they had once known, and then there was the new person God raised up.

Lesson:

The Bible says that "the Jews" were furious that Jesus was healing on the Sabbath. They believed God created the world in six days and then stopped working on the seventh day. But Jesus said that God was still working, still creating. Jesus said, "My Father is working still and so I am working" (John 5:16). Other translations of that Bible verse say God has never ceased working. Here are just a few translations of the verse, which I pulled off the internet.

ASV But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.

AMP But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now [He has never ceased working], and I too am working."

CEB Jesus replied, "My Father is still working, and I am working too."

CEV But Jesus said, "My Father has never stopped working, and that is why I keep on working."

ERV But he said to them, "My Father never stops working, and so I work too."

We could go on and examine this teaching in every English version, but this is enough. We discover that this verse holds the key to understanding the thinking of Jesus about the Sabbath. It shows us why Jesus was at odds with the typical Jewish thinking of his day. Jesus believed God continues to work today. In other words, creation, as Jesus understood it, is an ongoing process. This helps us understand why Jesus repeatedly healed on the Sabbath for a very important reason.

If we believe that God is finished with creation, that everything is the way God wants it to be, then we are left in some cases wondering if God is not loving or compassionate to some people. If something is physically, emotionally, or spiritually wrong with someone, if they have a disease or disability, then that is the way God intended it to be. The disciples made this mistake as well. They once asked Jesus about a man blind from birth, "Lord, who is it that God is punishing? Is it the man himself who was born blind or is it his parent who sinned?" Clearly, one of them had sinned, or so the disciples thought. But Jesus is saying that God is not done with creation, is still working, so when Jesus heals someone, it is because Jesus is partnering himself with what God the Father is doing. Jesus said, "I only do what I see the Father doing" (John 5:19). "I only say what the Father commands me to say" (John 12:49, John 14:10). When he heals it is because he sees that the Father is still healing people. When he speaks words of healing, it is because this is what he hears the Father saying. God was still at work in Jesus' day still making the world become the way he intends it to be. It is God's will that disease and illness and disability will all eventually be healed. "My Father is still at work, and so I am working also," said Jesus. Further, he sent his followers out to heal as well (Luke 9:1,6; 10:9). In other words, God is still creating and we are to be taking part in his work as well.

There is a heresy that says whatever happens is God's will. One town I lived in had a terrible traffic accident that killed several youth. Some people in our church, began saying, "We don't understand it, but it must be God's will or it wouldn't have happened." The truth is the complete opposite. All kinds of things happen that are not God's will. God doesn't will war or injustice or pestilence or disease. Jesus was very clear about that and Jesus worked against such things.

For Jesus, healing the sick, the lame, the broken-hearted, the sinful, the lost, is all a part of God's on-going work of creating the world. The early Christian church believed that "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Creation becomes new through Christ. When someone becomes a follower of Christ, that person becomes a new creation, and as he or she lives for Christ the world around them becomes new. There is a new creation.

Class Discussion: Have you heard people blame God for the evil, the pain, and the suffering in the world, saying that if God wanted things to be different he would not allow it? How did Jesus rejected this attitude by intervening in the way things were to bring healing and wholeness?

Lesson Summary: Since Jesus did only what he saw the Father doing, and since he said the Father is still working, and since he sends his disciples out to heal, and since he commanded them to pass on to future Christians what he had commanded the disciples to do (Matt 28:20) we must believe that we in Christ's church are called to heal because there are many things that are not yet the way God wants it to be. This is why God is still working in us and through us to heal us and to bring healing to the world.

Closing Prayer: Living God, help us, like Jesus, to do what we see you doing, to say what we hear you saying, to be people of the good news, people of the new creation, not only new creations ourselves, but dedicating ourselves to live according to you will, for you have said, "Behold, I make all things new!" In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Week 7: Signposts and Trail-heads

Theme: We all have opportunities to grow in our understanding and our kingdom ministries, but we may too easily lose these moments, by not paying attention to them.

Scripture Reading: John 3: 1-15

Key Verse: John 3:2

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him."

Testimony from Chuck: There is a rustic campground high in the Rocky Mountains where we enjoy camping. A few hundred yards before the campground entrance is a nicely painted forest service sign that marks a trail-head. Most cars go past the sign not paying attention to it. However, if you enter the woods behind the trail-head sign, you will immediately be on a steep trail that leads high into the back-country. If you have the time and proper gear, and the needed "want-to," several hours of hiking will bring you at last to a T junction where the trail you're on connects with another. At that junction stands another wooden sign, but this one has been so harshly abused by mountain weather you must study it to make out what it says. That sign lets you know that after all your climbing you have now reached the main network of trails that interlace their way through some of the most remote wilderness in the nation. In fact, the trail-head where you parked your car several miles below is merely one among many possible entry-points that can get hikers onto the trail system.

As I look back over the first years of my ministry, I realize now there were many "sign-posts and trail-heads" that could have led me into the high-country of healing prayer. However, I was in too big of a hurry doing ministry and did not pull aside to discover where the trails led. I drove right past sign after sign, barely noticing them. Lack of curiosity, lack of interest, being too busy with lesser matters, will keep us from the high-country of healing prayer.

Think about Moses. In the wilderness, he saw a blazing bush that never burned up. It made him curious enough to check it out. He said to himself, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up" (Exodus 3:3, NIV). He turned aside to investigate and as a result he encountered the living God and the history of the world was changed forever.

I could have turned aside for a closer look shortly after I graduated from high school. One night I attended a worship service where a Chinese missionary evangelist was the guest preacher. Some healings took place as she ministered and prayed that night. She had a word of knowledge that a woman somewhere in the congregation was being healed of breast cancer right then. She asked that unknown woman to please go out and check to see that her lump

was gone. In a few minutes there was a woman, full of joy, who had just found that she was healed. I saw this take place and I was fascinated by the Holy Spirit's power at work through this evangelist, *but I didn't bother to investigate*. I didn't talk with the preacher or ask her to pray for God to use me in the same way he was using her. Nor did I otherwise pursue a greater understanding of what I had seen. That worship service, and that preacher were just an anomaly to me, a curiosity. I went home that night as usual; got up and went to work the next day as usual; went to college night classes the next night as usual; and the events of that worship service simply faded into my past.

I could have turned aside for a closer look while I was in seminary. I took a course on the healing ministry of Jesus. Every scripture we looked at beckoned us to explore the issue of healing in more depth. I read Morton Kelsey's, Healing and Christianity. I loved the course, but when the semester was over, I simply shifted my focus to the next semester's classes.

During the first ten years of my ministry, church members would occasionally tell me amazing stories of how they had been healed through prayer; but their stories, though wonderful, didn't get me to pull off the road and venture up the trailhead to see where it led.

Eventually, I even had some unexpected personal experiences where people seemed to be healed through my prayers. I could have, and should have, taken those events more seriously and run to the burning bush to see what God was up to. I should have done some exploring sooner.

Lesson:

One night a religious leader by the name of Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish high council, went to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher from God for no one can do these signs you do if God was not with him."

Nicodemus couldn't sleep. He was thinking about everything that Jesus had done. He said "we know" you are a teacher from God based on the signs you are doing. "We know" is plural. It meant that it wasn't only Nicodemus who had been discussing Jesus. But it was only Nicodemus who turned aside to find Jesus and ask him how it was that God was working through him the way he was.

Notice Jesus' wording here. "No one can see the kingdom of God" unless that person is born anew. Then Jesus said, "No one can enter the kingdom of God" unless born of water and the Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit stirs us to new life, we can see the kingdom and we can enter the kingdom.

On a Friday night in autumn of 2018, I responded to a leading to attend a Randy Clark healing service at another church here in Tulsa. I was hoping I could get him to pray a prayer of impartation over me. I got to the church long before anyone else did and sat in the sanctuary as the praise team was warming up. As I listened to their music all by myself, I felt God's presence and power being released through the band. The next thing I knew my hands were lifted high in praise to the living God. Eventually others began to arrive, and chairs started filling in. Then Nancy arrived. We moved to seats in the second row, close enough for me to try to catch Randy at some point to ask him for the prayer of impartation. Soon the place was packed, parents and kids, youth, older people, singles, couples, families, groups. I was glad we had good seats. Then a very kind and apologetic man asked everyone on the front rows if we would mind moving to make space for the ministry team. He said they had forgotten to put up signs to reserve those seats. But by now, the remaining vacant seats were on the left side of far aisle several rows back. A friend of ours from FUMC, Carol, came and sat with us. The service started and the praise music was again wonderful, God was showing up! The pastor gave the welcome, then Randy Clark got up to give away some of his books. I raised my hand to ask for one and he called me to the front to get it. He said, "Which book do you want?" I said I didn't know, just pick out one for me. Then he said, "You are wanting an impartation, aren't you? Take this book. It is about receiving an impartation, and come to the service tomorrow, it will be an impartation service." He knew what I was seeking.

When it was time for people to go forward for healing, there was a large ministry team. I was carefully observing and making mental notes. I knew I was seeing the kingdom of God in our midst. Suddenly a woman walked up the aisle and tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to pray for her. She said, "I was in line at the front of the church to receive ministry and God told me to come to you to pray for my back." I was taken aback. "God told you to come to me?" "Yes. You are a healer." It wasn't a question but a statement.

So, Nancy and Carol joined with me in ministering to the woman. Standing in the aisle, Nancy and Carol laid their hands on her back and prayed as I anointed her forehead with oil in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I called upon her back to become straight "from front to back" and "from side to side." I didn't know what was wrong with her back, but felt led to pray those words. Nancy and Carol felt her spinal column suddenly move across her back as it became straight. I still had my hand on her forehead and she immediately got taller.

God knows when we pay attention to the sign posts and when we actually are on the trail. Because of going forward for the book, I got invited to attend lunch the next day with Randy and some area pastors. At the lunch, Randy prayed a prayer of impartation over me that was so powerful, I was filled and FILLED and **FILLED** until I began to beg him to stop. I couldn't handle any more of the shekinah glory of God. Then Randy told me to come to the impartation service that night and I would really experience the power of God. I wondered how there could be more.

That night one of Randy's Associates prayed for me by touching my hand and I never had such a blast of energy hit me in my whole life. Then later, he came and said, "You can't have too much of God's Spirit, and he touch me again and I got hit again.

A month or two later at one of our church's healing prayer classes, we prayed for God to give our church a breakthrough in praying for people with cancer. Within twenty-four hours, someone who didn't know about that prayer offered to pray for me and one of our younger ministers for an impartation of her gift for the healing of cancer. As she prayed for me to receive that gift, she said, "Quit taking sips! Drink it in!"

Two nights later there was a knock at our front door. We live out in the country and get very few unexpected visitors. It turned out that a woman's car had run out of gas right in front of our house on her way home from church. As I was pouring gas into her car, she asked me what I did. I said I was a pastor, and she immediately began begging me to pray for her to be healed of cancer. I don't think her running out of gas in front of our house that week was a coincidence!

There are divine sign-posts that point us to kingdom trails that few people travel on. Some of us, I believe are paying attention to the signs and are hiking in the kingdom.

I wonder where my trail will lead next. By the same token, I wonder where your trail will lead if you dare get on it and head up into the high country of God's Kingdom.

Class Discussion: What are some of the "trail-head signs" you have seen that are inviting you to take prayer more seriously?

What will it take for you to turn aside and get "on the trail?"

Closing Prayer: Living God, you open before us new paths into your Kingdom. Help us to notice sign posts that show us where we can begin the journey into the back country of your kingdom. Anoint us with your presence and power, give to us greater boldness than we have ever yet had, help us pay attention to the signs that are easy to read so that we will heed the signs that are harder to notice and follow. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Week 8: Next Steps in Becoming People of Healing Prayer

Theme: Prayer is something that we can learn to do.

Scripture Reading: 11:1-13

Key Verse: Luke 11:1 *He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."*

Testimony from Chuck: When I finally decided to dive into living a life of healing prayer, I realized how little I knew about it. Although, by that point, I had seen a number of prayers answered. I realized that what I did "know" was probably wrong—for through the years I had developed a hefty load of prejudices and preconceptions that had kept my mind closed to exploring it. Now I needed to get serious and make up for lost time. So, I set out to intentionally learn about healing prayer.

The "course of study" I began to follow included seven components. I share them with you as an example of how you can learn about healing for your next steps in this important ministry.

- Praying for the Lord to lead and teach me.
- Reexamining the scripture's teachings about healing; and studying a variety of Bible commentaries' treatments of healing stories in the gospels.
- Digging out my seminary texts and other books I already owned to see what they said upon the subject. Many of these dealt with the topic in helpful ways. Particularly helpful was Morton Kelsey's classic, Healing and Christianity.
- Asking clergy and lay-persons to share their personal stories of prayer and healing with me. By doing this, I found there were many United Methodists who had seen prayers answered in dramatic ways. Several pastors shared stories that were so awesome that I began wondering why our UM denominational culture makes us reluctant to talk about and celebrate the supernatural works God is doing in our midst. I learned that God is certainly active among us! However, at the same time, we give each other the impression that healing prayer is peculiar and outside the norm. Based upon my random interviews, I now believe it probably more peculiar if we are not praying and seeing prayers answered.
- Reading recent books written by persons who have had healing ministries in the past few decades.

- Attending workshops and seminars about healing prayer ministry led by persons involved in the ministry.
- Experimenting with healing prayer individually and within prayer groups. I asked permission from numerous people if I could pray with them for healing. Then I asked them to interpret for me what they experienced during and following the prayer sessions.

In these ways I intentionally expanded my base of experiences, which previously had been far too limited to arrive at any kind of reasonable judgements and understandings about healing prayer. As I talked with people outside of my prior circles, read new books, saw prayed-for healings happen or not happen, my “eyeglasses of experience” were reground. My paradigm of truth started shifting. I began to notice nuances in the Holy Scriptures that I had been missing. My theology went through some reconstruction.

Though it came as no great surprise to me, it was readily apparent that each of the writers and speakers I was learning from was operating from within his or her own particular experiential framework. For instance, Francis MacNutt will often say, “According to our experience. . .” or, “We have found that. . .” or, “Something no one ever told me is . . .” An example of his reliance upon experience to inform his ministry is found in an article that Francis wrote in his newsletter:

Years of praying for healing has taught us so much, and our experience has taught us many things we never learned from books. For example, most of you know about “soaking prayer,” the amount of time that is usually needed to bring healing to the sick. Experience taught us about soaking prayer, and now most healing ministers accept that particular teaching, since it agrees both with Scripture and experience.

Lesson:

The fascinating paradox about faith is that the way to learn to *walk* in faith is by *stepping out* in faith. Only as we live by faith can our faith increase. And conversely, if we fail to do so, we will lose what faith we have. Use it or lose it. This kingdom reality seems to be exactly Jesus’ point when he said, “For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him” (Mark 4:25). The Epistle of James says, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you”(James 4:8). There is a cause and effect. As we step nearer to God, God will also step nearer to us. Thank God, though, that it doesn’t

require much faith at all for us to begin making our first responses to God. Jesus said that faith as tiny as a mustard seed can move a mountain! (Matt 17:20). God can grow the most minuscule amount of faith into something that can change the landscape of the world as we know it, if we will trust God as far as we can and dare not to always walk by sight.

All one has to do is surf around the internet, looking at web-sites about Christian healing prayer, and it will astound you how many people are involved in this ministry in its various shapes and forms. Nancy and I have been privileged to meet people of many denominations and religious perspectives who are actively engaged in ministries of healing prayer. God is doing something greater than any one denomination, what he has in mind is something global for his whole church. It is interesting that the interdenominational “Alpha Course” which is being offered in thousands of churches around the world has a lesson devoted to the question, “Does God Heal Today?” That session concludes with a time of prayer ministry. When I attended an internship for pastors at the Christian Healing Ministries center, the other pastors in attendance were all United Methodists, with the exception of one Lutheran. A wonderful aspect of this changing attitude is that not only are many people now feeling free to pray *for* family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers, but many are now learning the power of praying *with* them.

However, many people tend to start their healing prayer ministries by jumping right into prayer situations that are beyond the scope of their abilities and faith. This can cause confusion, disappointment, and doubt. If you are new in your journey of praying with people for their healing, it will be helpful to be aware of the principle of *progression*.

Richard Foster, the highly respected speaker and author of several books on the Christian spiritual life, has written a splendid resource on prayer, entitled, Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home. In it, he gives examples and teachings of twenty-one different kinds of prayer. In the chapter about healing prayer, he speaks to the principle of progression.

(M)y early experiences of praying for the sick were dismal failures. First I prayed for a cancer patient—he died. Next I prayed for a lady severely crippled with arthritis—she continued to be crippled.

I guessed I had a few things to learn! ‘Teach me,’ I prayed. Within a few days the answer came through an elderly lady who did not know me or my question. She said to a group of us, “When you are first learning to pray for healing, do not start with the most difficult cases . . . like *cancer* or *arthritis*. Instead begin more simply.”

I nearly fell out of my seat. It was utterly fundamental—this principle of progression—I used it in every other field of endeavor, but somehow I failed to apply it to the spiritual life. That elementary teaching opened up a whole new world to me. I began to pray for small things like earaches, headaches, and colds—whatever needs arose among my family and friends. And slowly, one step at a time, I began discovering the ways of Healing Prayer.

Since those days, I have learned many things. While some I pray for today are still not healed, many others are, especially when I am praying with a team or in a loving community.

In Christianity with Power, Charles Kraft reflects upon his journey of learning the ways of healing prayer. He attended a course on Signs and Wonders taught by John Wimber at Fuller Seminary. At first, Charles was troubled by the notion that praying for healing is something people learn how to do – and that it requires practice.

He (John Wimber) pointed out from his own experience that it is only by “hands on” practice in spite of fear and discouragement that we ever will become good at this kind of ministry. This teaching also proved to be a problem for me. I assumed that God simply “zapped” certain people with the gift. When that happened they would immediately become successful. I began to reflect on how I came to have my gift of teaching. It came with a lot of hard work. But somewhere along the line, I believe God had confirmed it as a spiritual gift. We were learning that people become “gifted” at praying for healing in the same way—by claiming God’s help and working hard at it.

Class Discussion: Practice praying for each other in small groups.

Lesson Summary: An often overlooked biblical truth is that prayer is something we can *learn* how to do. The disciples observed Jesus’ powerful prayer life and asked him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Learning to pray takes persistence! Jesus taught them a parable, “to show that they should keep on praying and never lose heart.” So, if you are learning to pray, don’t give up, keep learning, keep praying, keep knocking at God’s door.

Closing Prayer: Living God, teach us to pray, bless us that we may bless others through our healing prayers. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

BONUS MATERIAL: The Legacy of Christian Healing at Tulsa's First United Methodist Church

Theme: Our church has a strong gift of healing that we are to rekindle.

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:16-24

Key Verse: Luke 10:21 *In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father such was thy gracious will."*

Testimony from Chuck: First United Methodist Church of Tulsa has a strong legacy and long history of healing prayer ministry.

I listened to an old cassette tape recording of a Kathryn Kuhlman radio program. She spent an entire episode of her program talking about Tulsa's First United Methodist and the impact the church was having through its healing ministry at the time. She said that in a time when many churches were dying, if you wanted to get a seat at First United Methodist Church in Tulsa, you had better come early. She said the church here was alive in the Spirit of God. She would have known, for Miss Kuhlman had come to our church and preached and led healing services here. There are some wonderful stories of how God showed up and healings happened.

On that radio program, Miss Kuhlman interviewed Dr. L.D. Thomas, our Sr. Pastor at the time. She asked him to recount some of the strategic steps the church had been taking to become a church where God was pouring out his healing power upon the ill and the hurting and the broken.

Dr. Thomas intentionally set us on the path to become a church anointed by God for healing. He began by preaching a year-long sermon series that covered every healing story in the Bible.

He also invited Oral Roberts to come and teach in every adult class about the filling and ministry of the Holy Spirit, and for 18 months Oral taught at our church.

Dr. Thomas and his wife, Harriet, wrote a curriculum for training Prayer Counselors and they recruited people to serve in the new Prayer Counseling ministry of the church.

Under the leadership of the Senior Pastors we brought in some of the most highly regarded ministers of Christian healing. These persons did evangelistic and healing ministry at our church to large crowds and they also often led workshops to teach our congregation how to do healing prayer. Among them have been the following: Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, Francis MacNutt, John and Paula Sandford, The Linn Brothers, Mike Evans, Bill Vaswig, Tommy Tyson.

These people were not all United Methodists, although Kathryn Kuhlman accepted Christ in a Methodist Church in Missouri as a young person, and Oral Roberts became a Methodist. Francis MacNutt is a Roman Catholic, Bill Vaswig was a Lutheran. Tommy Tyson was a United Methodist. The Linns are Roman Catholics. I am unsure about the others.

In other words, our church was not locked into a narrow denominational perspective, but sought to bring in people who demonstrated that they had the power of God's Holy Spirit working in them and through them. I would call this a Kingdom of God perspective, seeking those whom God was using.

As a result of this, our church has a broad understanding of how God heals. We have had various forms of healing ministries: Counseling Prayer Ministry, Stephens Ministry, professional counselors, Celebrate Recovery are some of the healing ministries we have offered. We had for a period of time, a Healing Ministries Department in our church.

Currently our Celebrate Recovery which is a Christ-centered 12 step program allows people to receive loving support and experience God's help over their hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Regardless of whether a person is addicted to something, has family or other struggles, Celebrate Recovery brings God's healing touch to many people. Gary Pond, on our church's ministry team, leads this ministry with skill and compassion.

Before I inquired about this staff position that I am in here at our church, I was attracted by an internet notice that a clergy friend brought to my attention. The notice said the church was looking for someone who would work on revitalizing the church's healing ministry. I sent Pastor Jessica an email of interest and we got together and visited about what she had in mind for the church's healing ministry and what I understood to be my calling for the next part of my ministry.

Two weeks after I was appointed to this position, Nancy and I went to an internship at the Christian Healing Ministries Center in Jacksonville. This is the ministry that Dr. Francis MacNutt founded, and his wife Judith leads. While we were there, the ministry steward at the center spoke a word of prophecy over our church's healing ministry and over my calling to lead it. He said God was sending me "to resurrect the healing ministry of the church," then he backed up and said, "no, resurrect isn't really the right word that fits, because a resurrection means that the old will be started again, that's not the case, in the future, the healing ministry will be different than it used to be, it will be revitalized, restarted." I was deeply impacted by that word of prophecy and went back to him for clarification a few days later. He said, "I remember talking to you, but I have no idea what I said. It was from God to you."

In the months since the bishop appointed me, I have begun teaching a Sunday evening class on Healing Prayer Ministry. Some of it is based on a book I have been working on and some of it will utilize video teachings on Christian healing ministries. Each session will be 8 to 12 weeks in length. So far, it has been attended by about two dozen people, some from our congregation and some from other churches. Two class members have been driving in from Oklahoma City for the class. One of these said, "You figure out where the Holy Spirit is working and you get yourself there to be a part of it!" I hope that we will begin to have many more of our church members and people in the community begin to start coming.

This current spring semester we are studying Bill Johnson and Randy Clark's *The Essential Guide to Healing: Equipping All Christians to Pray for the Sick.* It is on Sunday evenings at 5:30 p.m. in the Commons Area on the 4th Floor. Please park on the Main Street side and enter the building there.

Last fall (2018) at our Holy Spirit Weekend, we had a Saturday night healing service and several healings took place. According to the evaluations, this service was a very powerful event for many people.

In March of 2019 we will have a spring Holy Spirit Weekend called "Life in the Spirit." We believe God will again grow and empower our healing ministries. It will be led by the Aldersgate Renewal Ministries (ARM). ARM is a network of Spirit-filled United Methodists from across the nation who lead ministries of renewal, revival, healing, and Lay Witness Missions.

I am uncertain what our healing ministries will look like, but I have several "holy hunches" and "holy hopes" for what God might bring about here.

- 1.) I would like to see us have a Healing Rooms approach to ministry, where we will have a trained team of people who do healing prayer for the congregation and community. I would like to see this happen a couple times per week so that people can make appointments to come to our church to be prayed with, for healing of their diseases, infirmities, and emotional hurts. We will need more people to be trained so we can get enough for teams every week.
- 2.) I would like to see us once more bring to our church the most effective and well-known ministers of healing to hold trainings and do healing ministry for the people of our congregation and the surrounding region. This will not only help us shape God's kingdom in our own church but throughout the area.
- 3.) I would love to see us form specialized healing teams that can be used by our missionaries around the world to do healing crusades to win people to Jesus Christ, and can be available to other churches in this region who are seeking to experience the presence of the living God for their churches to have revival and renewal.
- 4.) I would like to see some of our members become a part of Aldersgate Renewal Ministries (ARM) teams.
- 5.) I would love to see healing ministries integrated into every aspect of our church life, so that we will be a church God uses for healing, just as I have read in our new strategic plan.

6.) We must be a church that is comfortable learning from our healing successes and our failures. Randy Clark, the healing minister from Pennsylvania who travels the world leading evangelistic events and huge healing services, does a training called “The Thrill of Victory—The Agony of Defeat.” He talks about the incredible joy Christians experience when they pray for healing and see marvelous miracles happen. He also talks about the agony of when we pray for people to be healed but do not see the answer.

I attended a training in Houston by Bill Vaswig, a Lutheran minister of healing prayer, who came to TFUMC and led a training here. Bill said that about 15% of the people he prayed for were healed. Then he said, that doesn’t sound like much does it? But he pointed out, “For those 15%, however, it is huge!”

Francis MacNutt said that about 20% of the people his ministry prays report they were healed outright, about 60% say they feel better or have improvement, and about 20% report that they experienced nothing as a result of the prayers.

We read in the Gospel that Jesus had a disheartening experience in his hometown because of their lack of faith. Mark 6:5-6 says “And he could do no mighty work there except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.” We also read how he had a thrill of victory in Luke 10:21 when the seventy he had sent out came back in joy over the healings they had done by the power of God. “In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will.” Jesus celebrated, not the healings he had done, but that the people he had been teaching went out and did healings with success!

Our legacy of healing at TFUMC, will not be that a few key people will do all the prayers for healing, but that our rank and file membership, our Sunday School classes, our Sunday worshippers, our youth group members, our children, will be used by God to bring healing to the people around them.