

Safeguarding and the ministry of Healing.

Safeguarding is central to the ministry of the Church.

Background.

In 2000 Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor invited Lord Nolan to set a framework for best practice in preventing abuse and responding to it, in whatever form, in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The final recommendations were published in 2001 as "A Programme for Action" with a recommendation that it be reviewed again in 5 years time. In Jan 2002 COPCA (the Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults) was established. The Cumberlege Commission carried out this review and reported on 16th July 2007. From the recommendations of the Cumberlege Report, on the 1st July 2008 the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC) and the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) were established. The NCSC agree policy and ensure standards are met and policies implemented, and CSAS is responsible for driving and supporting the safeguarding practice in our Parishes and Dioceses, and Religious Orders, in all work which supports, cares for and protects the vulnerable, both children and adults.

Terminology – Catholic Charismatic Renewal

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal as one of the new ecclesial movements is widely present in the Catholic Church since 1967. Among many other things, it encourages the use of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, the charisms which are acknowledged in Scripture (I Cor 12 & 14). Among the diverse gifts are those simply called "gifts of healing". There is also reference to gifts for working miracles and for speaking words of knowledge and wisdom given directly by God.

Catholic Charismatic Renewal is not a single organised movement, but a shared understanding and expectation among some Catholics that God will act in the church today, in ways consistent with I Cor 12 & 14 including through works of healing. Many Catholics involved in Charismatic Renewal seek to pray with other people, in the hope that a healing will be given, or that God's power will touch that person's life in some way.

The term “Prayer ministry” is often used rather than “Healing ministry”. This is for two reasons: first, that prayer might be offered for a reason other than seeking healing (e.g. praying that a person might receive a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit); second, to avoid any impression of appearing to guarantee “healing” in response to any prayer offered. Prayer ministry is typically offered by people praying in pairs, but could be offered by a team of three or four. In addition to those leading the ministry, there *may* be ‘catchers’ standing behind in the expectation that some of those receiving prayer may fall to the floor under the actual or anticipated influence of the Holy Spirit.

Some people receiving prayer ministry may fall to the floor and experience a prolonged period of conscious relaxation. This phenomenon is variously referred to as “resting in the Holy Spirit” or “being slain in the Spirit”. In some cases a person may fall not as a genuine response to an inner spiritual experience, but as a deliberate act in imitation or anticipation of what they see going on around them. Good leadership should minimise the significance of whether a person falls or not, and avoid raising expectations. In some circumstances it may be seen as more appropriate to pray with people who are seated. This would be best if the person was especially frail, or if the physical environment was judged to be too dangerous (see below). It may also be adopted to avoid confusion or possible panic in situations where the majority of people present may be unfamiliar with resting in the Spirit.

Prayer ministry includes prayer for healing, both of physical and of emotional ailments – the latter is often referred to as “inner healing”. The prayer may be focussed on a medical need stated by the person asking for prayer, but it may also happen that one or more members of the prayer ministry team believes that God has given an indication of a different focus (this may be referred to as “receiving a word of knowledge” – or a “picture” if it comes through the visual imagination). In this case, team members must share what they believe God has given them in a way which makes no unwarranted promises, and leaves the person receiving prayer free to accept or reject what is offered by the prayer team.

A particular kind of prayer ministry is a laying-on-of-hands with the intention that the recipients should receive what is commonly called “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” or a “release of the Holy Spirit” in their lives. This may be experienced by the recipient as a more conscious awareness of God’s presence, or a deeper sense of God’s love for them. It may be accompanied by the manifestation of one or more charismatic gifts, typically the ability to pray in tongues.

From time to time charismatic prayer groups or diocesan teams may hold “Life in the Spirit Seminars”. This is normally a seven-session course in which the participants are led to a deeper knowledge and relationship with God. As an integral part of the fifth session, participants are prayed with for the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit”. Similar activity takes place during the “Holy Spirit weekend” which is an integral part of the well-known *Alpha* Course.

A closely related kind of prayer ministry is prayer with individuals for a “new outpouring or release of the Holy Spirit” specifically to empower them for some Christian activity. The Prayer ministry team prays in this case for a new release of the gifts, charisms and power of the Holy Spirit in the recipient’s life; such prayers are typically referred to as “prayer for Empowerment by the Holy Spirit” or as “Commissioning for service”; this form of ministry may include the laying on-of hands.

General Guidelines for Prayer Ministry

- Treat all with respect and care.
- Be wise and prudent in all decisions and choices.
- All involved should be CRB checked by Parish or Diocese.
- Avoid being drawn into attention seeking practices.
- All physical contact should be age appropriate.
- All touch should be appropriate to the persons need.
- Minimum of two persons taking into account gender balance.
- Work in public view, never alone.
- Do not pray with under aged children alone, pray along with family members- always within view of others.

General Risk Assessment

Before planning any activity a risk assessment is required. This involves assessing potential risks for an event or activity and taking steps to reduce them. Designated roles should be clear in case of emergency in order that care and action is quickly taken.

Here is a useful checklist:

- What hazards are involved?
- Who could be affected by them?
- What measures need to be put in place to avoid them?
- Who will be in overall charge to organise this and cover in emergency?

Typical risks for consideration during the exercise of Prayer ministry

- Risks associated with falling under the actual or anticipated influence of the Holy Spirit:
 - consequences of the person receiving prayer, falling heavily
 - consequences of any kind of fall for anyone frail, pregnant, or with a babe-in-arms etc
 - nature of the material covering the floor
 - risk of injury from sharp objects being worn by the recipient, prayer team or catcher (e.g. jewellery, rings, bracelets, bangles, brooches etc.)
 - fixed objects nearby which can obstruct a graceful fall
 - risk of strain to those acting as 'catchers'
 - risk of collision with those exercising prayer ministry or persons already on the floor.
- Unfulfilled emotional needs on the part of the recipient or prayer team member, especially for affection or touch (see also note on touch, below).
- Mental or emotional instability on the part of the recipient.
- The medical needs of those attending a service, especially if advertised explicitly as a service of prayer for healing (NB: access to toilet facilities and First Aid; issues of disabled access).
- The communication needs of those whose sight, speech or hearing is impaired.
- Over-confidence on the part of the prayer team members perhaps on the grounds that 'the Holy Spirit will protect me' etc. Team members should remember that the Holy Spirit also grants us wisdom and expects us to use it.
- If the offer of a chair is refused then consideration should be made with regards to the "Catchers". Are they physically up for the job? This should be done prior to every event that they are participating in and not just when they are initially appointed. This will ensure that they don't feel pressured in carrying out their duty if they are physically not up to the job due to injury or sickness.
- Touching someone in order to help or give first aid.
- Restraint if needed and the area of bruising. (deliverance etc)

Touch.

There are many ways of touching and many reasons to touch, even by accident as we brush past someone. Touch is sacred and involves trust, when it is abused it is the cause of

great hurt. To enter another's world is a privilege and should be done with care and clear signals of respect.

- Always ask permission to touch—"Is it ok if I pray with you? Can I put my hand on your head? Have you been prayed with before? This is what will happen is that ok? etc.
- Never touch intimate areas.
- If praying for physical pain, heart, arm leg knee etc, it may be appropriate for a team member to touch the recipient's body outside their clothing but only if they are of the same gender. Always ask the persons permission before touching them. An alternative is to ask the recipient to place their own hand on the body part and to rest your own hand on the back of theirs. Team members of the opposite gender to the recipient should be wary of offering any touch beyond a hand on the head or shoulder.
- Remember the opposite, gender code of practice is not foolproof; a person receiving prayer ministry may not be heterosexual.
- Never rub or massage the body of anyone receiving ministry.
- Awareness of our impact on others is essential, unacceptable approaches and expecting to give help, can be threatening.
- There is always an obligation of choice.
- The key question in all ministry is: "whose needs are being met here? As a prayer team member, is my ego involved in wanting to be seen to heal, in wanting this person to fall, or is the person and the Holy Spirit central to what I am doing?"

Overview.

- We can abuse people's rights by adding pressure on them to claim healing or by pushing them to indicate a need to fall.
- We cannot guarantee confidentiality in the case of a disclosure of abuse. This must be passed on to the relevant body. This is done with an assurance of getting them help.
- We have a duty of care even in confessional situations today where the person must be strongly advised to report this outside the confessional forum.
- People should receive training in safeguarding so that they understand the dangers and needs of the healing ministry.

- Careful discernment is needed before accepting people into the healing ministry. Prayer team members should be emotionally stable and vetted for any involvement in the esoteric or occult.
- The importance of touch needs to be highlighted as we all have different comfort zones for how near we like people to get.
- Great care is needed with the use of restraint which may be necessary for a person's safety and also to protect those present.

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On behalf of the National Service Committee for Catholic Charismatic Renewal and in liaison with Cardiff Arch-Diocese and with Hexham & Newcastle Safeguarding Office.

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Further general safeguarding information can also be found on

www.csasprocedures.uk.net