

The Ministry to the Sick

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Diocesan Times Article – September 2016

While The Ministry to the Sick is prominent in the 1959 Book of Common Prayer (Pp. 576-90), that part of the book is rarely cracked! The Ministry to the Sick is less prominent in the Book of Alternative Services (1985) – Pp. 554-58. To be fair, some of the components in the BCP's Ministry to the Sick are found elsewhere in the BAS! However, the new liturgies commonly demonstrate a further removal of the Church from the ancient practice of Healing the Sick.



I served three parishes in this diocese before moving to the West Coast. Early on in each of my parishes, I taught through the BCP Ministry to the Sick and had active healing ministries available through the Church – including prayer stations for the laying-on-of-hands at each of our liturgies, opportunities for the sacrament of anointing (unction), etc.

One of my favourite stories happened in my second parish. After hearing teaching about the Laying-On-Of-Hands, an older parishioner, living with her son & daughter-in-law, put this into practice! Her daughter-in-law had a chronic back issue. She was awaiting surgery. The elderly parishioner lived in an in-law suite but the family always had supper together. After supper, prayers were offered each day, strictly using BCP prayers only! The Laying-On-Of-Hands was always used (Pp. 584-85) and after five weeks, the back was suddenly and completely healed! It was a testimony to the goodness of God and the importance of persisting in prayer!

As in the ancient Church, today's Church in the 2/3's world is growing through the impact of healing, deliverance, raising the dead, etc. It seems where healing the sick is taught and practiced, people get healed!

Tuesday October 18th is the Feast Day of St. Luke the Physician. I encourage my clergy peers throughout the diocese to translate the Feast Day to the previous Sunday and walk through the BCP (or BAS) section on Ministry to the Sick – perhaps even offering to have a prayer station following at the end of the service!

Some time ago, I stood at the altar rail after celebrating the Eucharist at a friend's parish and offered to pray for any and all who wanted/needed prayer for themselves or others. Three of the five people I prayed for reported that they felt heat as they received prayer. Sensations of heat, tingling, etc. are physiological signs of the Holy Spirit at work. However, many times the Holy Spirit is at work and there are no tangible expressions!

Afterwards, I encouraged one of these dear saints to share this experience with her rector, thinking that he might follow the pattern and offer prayer following the service from time to time. She responded, "Oh, I couldn't do that!" I inquired, "Why not?" She stated, "I'm an Anglican!"

Yes, our Church culture needs to change to be more accommodating... and expectant! It was Fr. Terry Fullam who stated, "If we became who we said we are, we'd be sensational!!!"

For those wanting to learn more about Healing in the Church, go to the International Order of St. Luke the Physician website at <https://orderofstluke.org>. This International Ministry of Healing was started by an Episcopal Priest in 1932. The prayers and teaching of this ministry are a great fit for Anglicans!

