



## Diocesan advice and guidance for prayer and healing ministries in our worshipping communities.

### Who is this guidance for?

- This guidance applies to all PCCs where there are clergy, readers and those who undertake pastoral prayer ministry in people's homes, in churches, benefices, at activities and events.
- PCCs must ensure that such ministries are only to be undertaken by those authorised to do so, at parish and/or diocesan levels as appropriate. People need to have undertaken appropriate training and who know what to do should someone disclose something to them, how to listen, and how to respond.

The current recommended training is "Growing a Healing Ministry" published by the Acorn Christian Foundation.

- It is very important that everyone involved follows the House of Bishops' Guidelines for Good Practice in the Healing Ministry. <https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/your-ministry/healing/house-of-bishops-guidelines-for-healing-ministry/>
- Some people might talk or ask about The Ministry of Deliverance sometimes referred to as exorcisms. This is quite distinct from the ministries of Prayer, or Healing. No unauthorised person should be undertaking this ministry. This is a complex issue and any ministry of this kind is specifically restricted to those to whom the Bishop has specifically authorised to give advice and guidance. If you have any questions about this please talk to your parish clergy who will seek further advice from The Revd Howard Gilbert, [rector@minchchurch.org.uk](mailto:rector@minchchurch.org.uk)
- The parish clergy should always be the senior leadership for any prayer and healing ministry in a worshipping community, even if some others locally are delegated to coordinate events e Tutors requested that the following recommendation be added in:
- A commissioning service for a new prayer ministry team is recommended tc.

### What does prayer and healing ministries mean?

- Prayer and healing ministries are exercised in a wide variety of ways across the Diocese. In this ministry, vulnerable people are supported and served at difficult times in their lives which can range from bereavement, serious illness, family or other personal crisis.
- Ministries can take place in a church during or after a service, at a specific church/within a benefice, at an event, or in people's own homes.

- We are all a blend of the spiritual, the mental and the physical in all our ministries so it is important to have a holistic approach towards an individual's overall health and wellbeing.
- In any situation thought and care should be given as to how such ministries are undertaken as safely, responsibly, and prayerfully as possible.

### **How do PCCs safely recruit and support people for these prayer ministries?**

- Every PCC will need to ensure that it has appropriate mechanisms for recruiting people to these ministries. This includes safer recruitment processes, safeguarding checks where appropriate, adequate supervision, training and support. These should be led by the parish clergy and the parish safeguarding officer and/or other clearly delegated people.
- When planning such ministries PCCs can develop a local policy on where and when such ministry is undertaken in the name of the church, who is involved and the support that is needed, and review how risks are managed, any legal issues, GDPR record keeping as appropriate, and so on.

### **What is good practice guidance for those exercising these ministries?**

- Being mindful of appropriate language to use.
- Keep spoken prayer short and allow times of listening silence.
- Being mindful of your own personal hygiene, general appearance, and body language.
- Being mindful of when touch is appropriate and when it is inappropriate checking with the individual e.g. laying on of hands on head or shoulders, hand holding in prayer but only if that is what they want. (No other touch is appropriate).
- Being able to know how to ensure a high level of confidentiality and how to explain its limits.
- Being mindful that anyone asking for ministry may be in a very vulnerable position or have vulnerabilities with personal crises etc.
- Be mindful of cultural differences – be respectful of these and do not fall into the trap of sharing your own world view with others.
- Learning how to ask open questions, and recognising where someone may be suffering from mental health problems and know what to do if you are concerned for them, especially if you are concerned for their immediate safety.
- For prayer ministry in a worship setting, ideally always work in pairs and within sight and audible reach of other adults.
- In a street setting, always ensure that there are witnesses or other people around.
- We should not be looking to “come to the rescue”, or promise a quick fix, but rather that we offer to walk with an individual on their road to becoming whole.
- Never suggest or force anyone to be reconciled with, or to forgive anyone else.
- Never tell anyone they are healed.
- Never use language that could be implied by a person that they may not have enough faith.
- Never advise anyone to give up taking any prescribed medication.
- Always refer anyone who talks about evil spirits or possession immediately to a member of clergy

- Whatever your own views and beliefs you must endeavor not to influence or challenge someone’s sexuality, gender orientation or gender reassignment by conversion prayer, or in any other way.
- Leave space for prayerful reflection, taking advice and discerning the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

**How do you look after yourself in exercising prayer and healing ministries?**

- Look after your own spiritual welfare and prayer life and be aware of your own issues.
- In times of personal difficulty or illness, it may be wise for you to step back from this ministry temporarily.
- De briefing can be helpful and should be appropriate to the situation, anonymised and confidential if applicable, to help support you/process what you might have heard or emotions you may have had to support or to deal with in yourself.
- If you feel out of your depth or out of control, you must stop ministering to the individual and seek advice from your clergy or event team leader.
- Do not let people become dependent on you – be mindful of how this can happen and watch for anything that might signal this.
- Ensure you maintain appropriate boundaries at all times.

**What to do if you have concerns about anyone.**

- If you have a safeguarding concern at any time regarding a child or vulnerable adult report this immediately to your Parish Safeguarding Officer or member of clergy.
- If you need to make notes of anything that was said to you because of a concern you have, remember that Safeguarding takes priority over GDPR but be very mindful of what you are writing and to whom you are giving this. Don’t leave any notes lying around keep them secure.
- “Deep Uncovering” Prayer Ministry (for example in childhood abuse,) is a specialized ministry only undertaken by those authorized to do so – but if issues come up in prayer ensure that you have the competence and confidence to pray with this individual in appropriate ways and refer on to a member of clergy as soon as possible.
- If you have any concerns at any stage or things become too difficult or complex for you report this immediately to your parish clergy (or named delegated other person).

**Issued by the PCC of .....**

**On (date) ..... Signed .....**

**(print name and role) .....**

There are a number of great resources, websites, and organisations that can offer support, that people might find it helpful to be signposted to – so please do direct people to the diocesan or other websites!