

Pray for healing only God provides



Former healing adviser **David Pearson** reflects on what he has learnt about Christian healing

HAVING just stepped down from the role of diocesan healing adviser, I wanted to share some thoughts on my experience of Christian healing and to encourage us to continue in this ministry of prayer for one another.

Firstly, what a great privilege it has been to get to know so many of you across the diocese in a variety of ways, such as training, healing days, and discussions with parishes. I'd like to highlight the valuable ministry carried out by those in church healing ministry teams, who faithfully pray with those in need week-by-week – and members of the diocesan healing team.

Today we live in a culture which offers healing in many different ways. While I thank God for the blessings of modern medicine and the rediscovery of the way in which engagement with creation can bring healing to our souls, I think it's vital that we hold onto the distinctive nature of Christian healing.

In our prayers for healing and wholeness, we express the nature of who God actually is – including his heart of compassion, which seeks to save the lost and restore what is broken, pointing to our eternal destiny and the fulfilment of his kingdom, when all things will be made new in Christ.

I believe in a God of miracles – not least in that I believe in the resurrection of Jesus. The God we believe in, as revealed through the Bible and especially in Jesus and witnessed down the ages, is a God who is not indifferent to our needs.

'The yearning of the human heart and the healing that lasts forever'

He longs to hear our prayers and acts to transform, to heal, and to make possible the things that seem impossible!

But I remain convinced that our greatest healing is to be found in a restored relationship with God brought about by Jesus' death on the cross. He took the punishment for our sin, and brought us forgiveness, assurance of peace with God, freedom from the burdens of guilt and failure, and a hope of eternal life.

This is the yearning of the human heart and the healing that is not transitory but lasts forever. We see this in many examples of lives transformed by encounter with Jesus. Let us not lose sight of the transforming power of the gospel!

And this is the testimony from our prayer ministry – that those who

come for prayer encounter afresh the love of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. In many cases we see impossible, difficult and painful situations change. Some experience physical healing, some emotional and some a new peace and assurance. Sometimes it is apparent that some other help is also needed.

We may not see the outcome of our prayers immediately (and that's true of all prayer isn't it?). Healing takes many forms and we often have to leave it with God to answer our needs in his sovereignty, his way and his time.

A reading of Romans 8 helps to reassure us of God's ultimate purposes and the deep love that God has for us in all our circumstances. There is much written on this theme, and good places to start are Pete Grieg's book *God on Mute*, C S Lewis's *The Problem of Pain* and Tim Keller's *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*.

The final thing is that we should take to heart Jesus' parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18 which was told to his disciples "to show them that they should always pray and not give up". Let us then not lose heart but continue to pray for healing of mind, body and soul with expectation and trust in our amazing God and Saviour.