

The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the Context of UEM Closing Document of a Workshop held in Kibuye/Rwanda, 5-9 March 2020

From 5-9 March 2020, seventeen participants representing eight African and three Asian UEM member churches met with the UEM Executive Secretary Evangelism to evaluate the work on the ministry of healing and deliverance that was done in and through UEM since 2012. After reporting about developments in their respective churches, the participants decided to discuss three issues in more depth and developed the following document.

1. Protestant Identity and the Ministry of Healing and Deliverance

We believe that there is a specific Protestant way of engaging in healing and deliverance ministry. This is expressed in the following aspects:

1. The churches' practices must be based on Scripture. The preaching and teaching of the Word is central, even if we take people's need for prayer very seriously.

2. Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone: The healing and deliverance ministry of Protestant churches is rooted in the example, the calling and authority of Jesus Christ which we have received, and not in our own spiritual power. We have a responsibility to maintain our spiritual lives, to pray, to fast, to be connected to God, and to live according to God's will, but at the end of the day, whatever happens in terms of healing and deliverance is the grace of God.

3. The priesthood of all believers is central to our understanding and practice of the healing and deliverance ministry. All members have been called into and empowered by the Holy Spirit for this ministry, even if gifts are different. This ministry does not only belong to pastors, lay leaders, special groups or especially gifted individuals. It is a ministry of and for the whole congregation.

4. When we pray to God for healing and deliverance, we know that God is sovereign and can answer in different ways. When healing and deliverance happen, we give room to celebration, thanksgiving and testimony, and encourage people to a sustained relationship with God. When we do not see healing and deliverance, we give room for lament and we console and encourage those who are still suffering.

5. The main aim of evangelism is to call people to become faithful followers of Christ. The ministry of healing and deliverance is part and parcel of this mission, but the ultimate aim is discipleship, not only healing and deliverance. Discipleship includes, among others, renunciation of other gods, covenants and practices.

6. While we pray for people's healing and deliverance, we also maintain and teach that each one is responsible to work for one's living, to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and to seek medical care when ill. In situations where medical care is not easily accessible or inadequate, we also advocate and work for improved and inclusive public health infrastructure and services. This is not only an individual, but also a collective task.

7. We strive for high professional standards in the healing and deliverance ministry: This encompasses the aspects of confidentiality, safeguards against abuse, creating a safe environment for the practice of the ministry, proper organization, training and supervision of prayer groups and all practitioners, and an avoidance of 'strong man/woman theology'.

2.

8. In Sunday sermons and congregational groups we teach about the power of faith and prayer, answers to prayer, gifts of the Spirit, and the practice of healing and deliverance. We stress that our Sunday sermons must take up people's concrete questions and needs.

9. When we practice the ministry of healing and deliverance, it usually includes the Word of God, prayers, praise, worship and hymns. It may also be helpful to make use of Holy Communion, baptism, and anointing with oil, or the use of other symbols if adequate in the respective context.

2. A Basic Theology of Prayer

What makes prayer powerful? What prayers are answered?

There are three different words in the New Testament with regards with the word power:

- *Exousia* (Mark 6:7, Mat 28:18), meaning privilege, capacity, competency, delegated influence.
- *Dynamis* (Acts 1:8; 10:38), the power of the Holy Spirit.
- *Energeia* (James 5:16), energy = to be active or more efficient on physical illness.

What is needed for our prayer?

1. Faith ...related to devotion or discipline in prayer, meditating the word of God in discipline (*Lectio Divina*), even fasting when it is needed. Faith is also related to obedience, living righteously, humility and to avoiding sin (Dan 6:11; Mark 1:35; Mark 6:46; Joh 15:1-5; James 1:6-8; James 5:15&16; Mat 17:14-21, Mat 21:22).

2. Our sincerity, patience, perseverance and endurance in prayer and in waiting for God's answer (Luke 18:1-8; James 5:11)

3. We must ask ourselves: Do we pray for our need or our want? Are we praying for the common good or for selfish advantage? (James 4:3)

Regardless of how we pray, God has the authority to answer our prayer according to his will. Our duty is to ask (pray) in faith (Is 55:8).

We pray for healing and deliverance, because we believe that

1. God is love, the healer and deliverer (1 John 4: 8; John 3:16; Mark 5:1-43). God is the owner of the ministry with power (Mat 28:18). God will answer our requests based on his will and not based on our style of prayer and personality (Mat 26: 39; Is 55:8).

2. God still intervenes at present to bring healing and deliverance.

3. God has commissioned us as his disciples to do ministry or mission with power (*exousia*) (Mark 6:7, Mat 28:18).

3.

3. The Relationship Between the Ministry of Healing and Deliverance And Unjust Political Systems

We affirm,

- that unjust political systems are a historical and universal problem that impacted and still impacts countries, communities and individuals today, especially previously and currently oppressed, impoverished and exploited communities.
- that these unjust political systems are evil politics that feed on division, often on ethnic and racist grounds, and lead to suffering, destruction and trauma.
- and that suffering, destruction and trauma are being manifested in various social ills, physical and psychological illnesses and conditions, and in a culture of violence facing communities and individuals over generations (inter-generationally) up until today.

We affirm,

- that prayer is vital in countering these evil systems and for the healing of affected communities and individuals but is not enough.
- that we, the church of our triune God, should also speak out and act against these evil systems.
- and that our speaking out and acts should not only be constructive critique but also contain a plan of action with concrete proposals how to correct and replace these evil systems with just systems that will enact healing and deliverance.

We confess,

- that the historical role of the church was not always in the interest of affected individuals and communities but in many ways to the benefit the interest of political parties.
- that we did not always understand and when we did understand chose to forget the impact unjust political systems have on the lives of our congregants and communities.
- that we in many instances we are afraid and choose to be silent and do not speak out, and only pray for the symptoms of these unjust systems our congregants and communities suffer from.
- and that we did not always advocate against these systems and for our members and communities in need.

We commit ourselves

- to include in our teaching and practice of the healing and deliverance ministry the historical and current impact of unjust political systems on the lives of our congregants and communities.
- to encourage our member churches to develop and support multi-disciplinary teams (including medical and mental health professionals as well as pastors and pastoral counselors) within the healing and deliverance ministry on congregational level to work on a continual process of healing and deliverance.
- to teach and practice the imperative that the change we want starts with ourselves and hard work.
- to encourage member churches to utilize group counseling where members can tell their stories and can become channels of healing for each other.

4.

- to preach and teach on a regular basis about the relationship between and the impact of past unjust systems on our daily lives and the importance for understanding this relationship and impact in the healing process.
- to include the healing of and deliverance from these unjust political systems in our different prayers and services for healing and deliverance.
- to encourage testimonies of congregants who have been healed and delivered from past traumas after receiving Christ through the redemptive power of the Holy Spirit.
- to preach and teach a theology of forgiveness and reconciliation as part of our ministry of healing and deliverance.
- to teach and train our church members to engage politically and from their positions of influence, commit, advocate and act from their Christian ethic for social justice and equity.
- to proclaim that Jesus Christ is our Lord, Saviour and the only hope and that we must be prepared to carry the cost of obedient discipleship.
- and to working together with other church denominations for the adjustment and/or replacement of unjust laws.

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