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Stewardship
Solutions

Carried to Jesus the Healer

Celebrating Health Sunday

This resource was originally designed for MCUSA Health Sunday on Feb. 18, 2007. Due to the positive response it received, we are reprinting it for use in the wider MMA Anabaptist circle. Worship resource books referred to are *Hymnal a Worship Book* (HWB) and *Sing the Journey* (STJ). We hope your church will be inspired to find ways to carry your neighbors, families, and each other to healing in Jesus and the comfort of regular health care.



Photographer: D. Michael Hostetter
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A full color, electronic copy of the cover photo can be obtained for use in your worship service by e-mailing carol.miller@mma-online.org. Pictures of what first century homes and roofs would have looked like are available at www.nazarethvillage.com. Search under “Enter Archaeology” and “The Houses.” You will also find photos in the book, *The Nazareth Jesus Knew* (copyright 2005 by Nazareth Village).

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Carried to Jesus the Healer

Focus Statement God desires health and wholeness at every stage of our life journeys. God hears our cries in response to the suffering and barriers we face – those imposed upon us and of our own making. In the church we have been given the ministry of carrying each other in humility to Jesus, who is the one who heals. Let our tongues and lips glorify God our Healer.

Texts Psalm 34:1-15 and Mark 2:1-12

Visual The dramatic retelling of the gospel story is the central visual focus of this service. Arrange the pulpit area so the drama can easily take place.

Call to Worship

Leader Come, people of God; come, magnify the Lord
and let us exalt God's name together.

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous;
God's ears are open to our cries.

Opening song *Here, O Lord, your servants gather*

HWB 7 (st. 1-3)

Opening prayer

Leader Healing God, source of life and hope,
we join to worship you with our whole selves:
our bodies, our hearts, our minds, our souls.
Your eyes are forever on the righteous;
your ears are always open to our cry.

People Turn our eyes to see your face,
and open our ears to listen to your healing words.

All In our worship, in our life together,
and in our life in the world,
touch us – bodies, hearts, minds, souls –
with your healing presence and bring us peace.
We pray in the name of Jesus, who walked among us. AMEN

Praising God our Healer

Scripture reading Psalm 34:1-3 (The psalm reading will be offered in
several segments, interspersed with songs and prayer.)

Songs of praise *Praise, my soul, the God of heaven*
O bless the Lord, my soul

HWB 63

HWB 80

Scripture reading Psalm 34:4-10

Songs of praise *I will call upon the Lord*
I sought the Lord

STJ 19

HWB 506

Scripture reading Psalm 34:11-15

Prayer of confession with sung response, Healing balm, forgiving Lord

STJ 55

Leader Merciful God, though you always listen to us,
we confess that sometimes we ignore your voice;
cleanse us by your healing grace.
(followed by sung response)

Merciful God, though you invite us to join you
in answering the cries of the poor and weak,
we confess that too often we turn away from people in need;
cleanse us by your healing grace.
(followed by sung response)

Merciful God, you call us to depart from evil and do good;
you call us to seek peace and pursue it.
Grant us strength to follow you in paths of healing and peace.
(followed by sung response)

Our faithful God always hears our prayers;
Taste and see that the Lord is good!

Hearing God's Word Scripture drama: Mark 2:1-12

The dramatic gospel story of four people carrying a paralyzed man to Jesus can be enacted in a variety of ways. Seeing the story unfold can help worshipers connect with the importance of carrying others to Jesus for healing. You may want to invite children forward so they can see and experience the story. Consider the following as you prepare the drama:

- 1) **Access to health care is difficult for many people today.** The house where Jesus lived was so crowded that the people who carried the paralytic had to come through the roof to get to Jesus. Ask people to pack into the front benches of the sanctuary or move their chairs close together near the front to recreate a sense of crowding.
- 2) **It is important to have an awareness of those in need around us.** Before worship begins, ask a willing person to sit on a mat near the entrance of the sanctuary. Or just before the drama begins, invite the person to take a place where he or she can be visible as a reminder of all who need the healing touch of Jesus and the community of faith.
- 3) **It was necessary for others to help the paralytic get to Jesus for healing.** As the gospel story is read, the figure of Jesus appears. Several people crowd in very close to him. The person on the mat calls for help to be brought to Jesus. Several of the children (and perhaps adults) carry or drag the person forward, making their way with difficulty through the crowd. Jesus and the paralytic mime the continuing interaction as the story is read. As the man leaves with his mat, the congregation repeats after the reader, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Sermon message: This Sunday provides an opportunity to explore the church's role in healing and health. As seen in the gospel story, the followers of Jesus become partners with Jesus in healing ministry. How is such partnership enacted today – in spiritual terms (such as prayer) as well as tangible physical actions (like breaking through the roof)?

Sermon purpose: To encourage us to carry each other to Jesus for healing.

Preaching notes: Even though the gospel story happened a long time ago in a faraway place, this story suggests possibilities for how we can think about healing today. The healing process is a participatory one, especially for those who interact within the body of Christ. Even as the paralytic

Follow-up Idea

Plan a Sunday school or sermon series focusing on Jesus the Healer. Select a series of gospel stories on healing. Glean or learn from them how our communities of faith can be more fully formed as communities of health and healing.

would not have been able to get to Jesus without assistance, so also we in the church ask for help when we are in need and offer aid, comfort, and support to others in their need.

Such “helping” is often messy. Those who helped the paralytic undoubtedly caused a disruption, not to mention the mess of tearing through someone’s roof to get the one in need before Jesus. Though we would rather believe that services in our society are orderly, neat, and accessible to all, many have found in our health care system that sometimes a mess must be created in order to see any result.

Though the church is not a hospital and seldom actually provides the healing, perhaps it is like a waiting room where support, friendship, and presence are offered to those suffering and in need.

Some questions to consider:

- 1) How do we partner with Jesus, with others, or with the health care system to bring about healing?
- 2) What part does humility play in the healing process? We often assume those who helped the paralytic were his friends, but maybe the paralytic needed to be willing to risk asking for help from others in the first place.
- 3) What does it mean for us, as the church, to carry others to Jesus for healing? Physically? In prayer? Through other means?
- 4) How might we explore the breadth of the healing process? Consider relational, emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions. What about when physical healing doesn’t happen?
- 5) What stories can we tell each other about our healing experiences/trials within the church and society?

Responding to the Word

Some options to consider:

- 1) Provide paper when people enter the sanctuary. After the sermon, invite each person to write the names of four people (as in the story) they could ask to help carry them to Jesus for healing. Encourage them to talk with these people during the week, asking for prayer for healing, or thanking them for carrying them when needed. This may encourage prayer and a spirit of gratitude in the congregation.
- 2) Invite persons to come forward for anointing on behalf of a friend, as a symbolic way of carrying a friend for healing. Invite a quartet or the congregation to sing, “Who has known the mind of Jesus?” (STJ 58) during the anointing.
- 3) When needs are great, being a healing community can become tiring for congregations. Create a ritual of healing for the congregation by “passing a prayer of healing.” Similar to passing of the peace, the pastor begins by putting his or her hands on the outside of another’s cupped hands and says words such as, “The healing encouragement of Christ be with you.” Those who have received the prayer pass it to the person next to them until all have received it.
- 4) Invite storytelling from the congregation of times when they were carried by others to Jesus for healing. Respond to each story with the spoken response, “Our tongues and lips glorify you, O God,” or by singing, “Alleluia” (HWB 101).

Benediction/Sending

Christ has no body now on earth but yours;
yours are the only hands with which Christ can do his work,
yours are the only feet with which Christ can go about the world,
yours are the only eyes through which Christ’s compassion
can shine forth upon a troubled world.
Christ has no body on earth now but yours!
Go out to love and serve the world in Jesus’ name. (STJ 164, adapted)