BIBLE STUDIES

Theme:
“Let us Consider…”
Hebrews 10: 24-25

Healing Ministry Week
9 - 16 February 2020

Healing Ministry Sunday
9 February 2020

CMAI Day of Prayer
12 February 2020

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Theme for Healing Ministry 2020:
“Let us consider?”
(Hebrews 10:24-25)

To all respected Bishops, Pastors, CEOs of Institutions and all members of CMAI!

Greetings in the name of the Greatest Healer,

The month of February is synonymous with the healing ministry celebration. While we may feel that this one Sunday or one week is enough to feel good about ourselves as we serve in various capacities and contribute to the Healing Ministry, it is a reminder of the sovereignty of the God we serve.

The Church and its affiliated institutions began the work in health, healing and wholeness over ten decades ago. The work is His, we are His labourers His work will continue as long as there is a heart that is willing and a faith that is unshakeable. The commitment and hard work of the legends that have built the Christian foundation in healthcare in our country has been acknowledged by leading health policy and decision makers in the world. They were recognized as having pioneered many interventions among the vulnerable and marginalized sections of society and bringing about palpable changes with compassionate care. The trust that they have garnered has provided the strong foundation on which our healing ministry continues to grow.

As we remind ourselves of the service to our sovereign God, let us take time to consider: Consider Him. Consider our neighbor. Consider ourselves. Consider our calling. Consider every blessing. Consider every experience. Consider today.

Normally, we observe the Healing Ministry Week in February second week every year. A few churches have requested flexibility to reschedule it in any other week of the year since they have other traditional commitments. We fully go with this arrangement and please inform us your convenient dates in advance so that we can be of assistance you.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to each contributor to the healing ministry Bible studies. Dr. Joyce Ponnaiah, Dr. Sara Bhattacharji, Rev. Jared James, Mr. Samson Varghese, Rev. Giftus Joshua, Rev. Rainard Pearson, Rev. Dr. Arul Dhas, Ms. Imtimenla Aier. CMAI is very grateful for your time and effort.

May every word bless those who read and hear it and may this celebration open our eyes and heart to His calling for each one of us.

With all good wishes and prayers

Dr Priya John
General Secretary, CMAI
Coming Together

Acts 2: 42-47

Coming together for worship and fellowship is an important theme running throughout the Scriptures. The author of the Book of Hebrews exhorts the Jewish Christians, who were thinking of abandoning their faith and of lapsing back into Judaism, not to forsake their faith in Jesus. Rather, he encourages them to consider meeting together regularly for fellowship, so that they can edify one another.

The word 'fellowship' means that we share something in common with someone else. Our faith in Jesus is a common thing which binds us together in spite of our differences.

Christian fellowship is a great resource that God has given us. We were never meant to experience Christian life on our own, but rather in a community with each other. When we gather together and fellowship with others, we fulfil the command in the Scriptures. In the above Bible passage, we read that the Early Church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer (v.42). As a result, they were mutually strengthened.

The Body of Christ is mutually encouraged, edified and healed as they assemble. Through fellowship, we can run alongside each other and realise that we are not alone in this life's journey. A sense of belonging and togetherness is nurtured. We learn to accept one another as they are. Grief, calamities, and failures become easier to handle as we are strengthened by the presence of God and by one another. We also need fellowship to put into practice many of the commands in the Scripture.

The advancement of technology and faster means of communication have made human beings more individualistic. Neglecting to come together hinders Christian fellowship and it is harmful to our faith. It makes us forget that we are disciples of Christ and makes us prone to shame and guilt. It can make a person fall into the sin of worldliness.

May God give us the grace to 'come together' for worship and fellowship so that we are mutually encouraged, refreshed, comforted and motivated in the Christian faith.

**Prayer:** Lord as brothers and sisters help us to meet together regularly. Help us to keep it as a priority, and may our meeting be a source of encouragement to one another. Make us the community that you desire us to be. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

**For reflection:**

1. What steps can we take to see that we don't neglect to come together for worship and fellowship?

2. When we come together, do we have boundaries in our fellowship? Discuss.
Consider Good Works

Matthew 5:16

In Hebrews 10: 24, the writer urges us to consider how we could provoke or spur one another to do ‘good works’ or do that which is for the good or welfare of others. What does this mean for us today as we (individuals, institutions and churches) gather to celebrate 'Healing Ministry'?

We are called to do good works, not for honour or salvation, but because our faith in Jesus constrains us to do as he did. James tells us that faith without action is dead. (James 2:24). John in his epistle (1 John 2:6), says that if we walk the way of Jesus, we have to act as he did. Our Bible reading explains that our lights shine so that all may see our good works and glorify God.

Historically, in India, Christians have excelled in 'good works' in the fields of education and health, prioritising the marginalised and remotely situated places. This is no longer our situation. For us in 21st century India with its plural, secular society, increasing violence, hate, corruption in all walks of life and environmental degradation, what does this passage mean? What 'good works' are we are called to excite each other about in our places of work and worship?

If everything we do is done with integrity and accountability, justice and mercy, our doing will be truly a witness to Christ’s new way. Sometimes we may be called to take risks and be a witness in public life like Joseph or to work with others who are also doing good works, though they may not share our faith convictions.

Each of us and our institutions are placed within particular contexts, geographically and culturally. What is appropriate for one may not be the best for the other. But each should consider seriously this exhortation within their local context.

Finally, a word of caution: motivating others should be done with great sensitivity and gentleness. And don't forget that others have been exhorted to motivate you!

**Prayer:** Creator God, stir us up so that we become like Jesus. Give us grace, courage and love to continue in your will.

**For reflection:**

1. What concrete steps could we take (as individuals and institutions) to tackle the hatred, violence, corruption and degraded environment we see around us?

2. Share some examples of good works that you may have seen or heard about.

3. Are we prepared to work with others who are doing good works, even though they may be different from us?
Love one Another

John 13:31-35

We live in times where we witness the world being driven by intolerance, hatred and differences. The words of Jesus 'Love one another' is more relevant today than ever before. There is so much of casualness with which the word 'love' is used that it has lost its essence; for example 'I love my phone', 'I love my laptop', 'I love my car', etc. What then does 'loving' really mean?

1 Peter 1:22 clearly states that loving one another is an indication that we have known and obeyed the truth, “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart”. We have to admit that we struggle to love. When author of Hebrews invited his audience to love one another, they were actually persevering severe and undue suffering. They were persecuted and plundered. It becomes all the more difficult to make a deliberate choice to love when we suffer and go through times adversities. Can we still consider to love?

We live in times when we are driven by prejudices and discrimination. Hatred is inculcated and encouraged. Only the love of Jesus can bring about the healing to this broken world. Jesus loved us; and he loved us first, 1 John 4:19. He set an example as to how to love. He loved us sacrificially. We may not have to literally sacrifice our lives, rather we are to leave our prejudices and differences and love and accept everyone as they are, just as Christ accepted and loved us. In John 13:34, 'love one another’ is not merely a suggestion or recommendation rather it is a command; we have no excuse but to obey. Love is a free gift; one has to make a deliberate choice to love.

1 John 4:8 explains the intense necessity to love for it says whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:16 says, “God is love; Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him”. These verses demand us to answer the questions, 'Do I know God?', 'Do I live in God?'

Let us consider loving one another, by this everyone will know that we are his disciples. “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13.

For reflection:

1. How do we, as children of God, love one another indiscriminately?

2. How often do we show love to people with whom we constantly disagree?
Encourage One Another

1 Thessalonians 5: 12 -15

The writer of Hebrews calls us to encourage one another as we wait for the day. In some versions of the Bible the words ‘exhort, admonish, edify, build up’ are used instead of the word ‘encourage’. The concept of encouragement becomes real only in the setting of a life lived in a community. The starting point of our life of faith may be in coming into a relationship with God. But the next dimension is possible only when we move out into relationship with others, who are also important to God.

St. Paul endured great hardship in his endeavour to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout the then known world. Many companions helped him, but to one originally called Joseph, Paul gave the name Barnabas, which means “son of encouragement”. Although we encounter Barnabas a few times in the Bible, his role seems to be in supporting and enabling Paul, rather than being a preacher. This tells us that the ministry of encouragement is important in spreading the Kingdom of God.

Often we think encouragement just involves saying a few kind words to someone to show that we value and appreciate their work. However, when used in the Biblical context of witnessing for Christ, it has a deeper meaning. The Greek root word, parakaleo means bringing someone to one’s side in order to teach, guide, admonish and build up. This concept is best seen in the context of mentorship.

Many of us live and work in teaching institutions with the responsibility for training young people for professions as well as for life. They also learn watching our lifestyles and behaviour. Values and ethics must be taught, but must also be shown in practice. The encouragement we provide has to be articulated, but more to be taught by being role models.

The test of how effective we are as mentors or role models becomes evident when our students and trainees move out of the institution. The greatest satisfaction for a teacher is to see his or her student go above and beyond one’s own achievements. Our work of encouragement must also work in our patients and our colleagues in times of pain and suffering, not only in upholding them in prayer but also in practice. We need to ask God for increasing our sensitivity, grace and stamina to meet many competing needs.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make me an instrument of your compassion and love. Help me to build up and encourage others. And help me to accept the admonition and advice of others with humility and gratitude. Amen.

For reflection:

1. How can we practice the ministry of encouragement in our own workplace?

2. Can you recall any Biblical examples of people who encouraged others or who were encouraged by others?
Consider with Hope and Confidence

Hebrews 10: 35, 36

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (Hebrews 10: 35, 36)

The author of Hebrew exhorts the believers “to spur” (to provoke, stimulate, stir up – Hebrews 10: 24). The main focus does not appear to be on stirring each other on to good deeds, but rather on taking careful heed of each other’s needs and difficulties so that love and good works might abound from this atmosphere of selfless, careful consideration. We are called to live and work together with sincere heart and with confidence, having established in the faith in Christ (Hebrews 10: 19, 22; I Corinthians 15: 58).

As individuals, being part of various units and departments of Christian institutions, or as mission hospitals, or as established Churches, we may be wondering whether it is possible to be united together to love, to do good work, to have fellowship, and encourage one another to do God’s ordained work today. Christian institutions do have interpersonal problems and difficult people. Some of the institutions are on the verge of closure.

In the midst of all these difficulties, we are called to have the assurance that God is calling us to experience his grace and to persevere with hope and confidence. We are called to pray and depend on God, and trust in his wisdom (Romans 11: 33 – 36).

The Christians are asked to do the good work “so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (v. 25). The first century Christians experienced Christ and his reign. Christ inaugurated the new way of victorious living through the Cross and Resurrection. We too take confidence in the in-breaking of God’s eternal kingdom purposes in the life and work of the Church today. Christ’s presence and his power are promised for us (Matthew 28: 18 -20). This hope is impetus for the mutual encouragement of the people of God unto love and good works (Philippians 1: 6).

Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Ida Scudder and many in our mission hospitals, institutions and churches have experienced God’s enabling grace and power to overcome the difficulties and found confidence and hope. Philip Yancey speaks about Joanna, who worked in the prisons of apartheid South Africa, who prayed, “Lord, show me a place where Your will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven, because we’re supposed to be, as followers of You, part of the solution.” May this be our prayer too.

For reflection:

1. Recall the situations you encounter in your institutions or departments, where ‘God’s Will is not being done.’ Plan to pray in small group for the situations.

2. What should be considered to experience hope and confidence in our Churches and institutions?
New Community in Christ

Hebrews 10:24-25

The book of Hebrews was written for the Greek speaking Jews in Rome. It was written in the context of persecution. There was uncertainty among the faithful whether to continue in Christian faith or to abandon and go back to Judaism. In this context the author to the Hebrews highlights the beauty and characteristics of the new emerging community in Christ.

Community in Christ was radical in nature where the centre of the community was the loving sacrifice of Christ. This was voluntarily done for the sake of the members of the community. The Christian community held the holy Eucharist as the centre of the community in the beginning and even now. In this welcoming community, defining the centre is more important than defining the borders. Where there is pain or brokenness, the experience is accepted and transformed as thanksgiving. This emerging community holds the experience of healing at the centre of its existence.

Sadly, we see in today's world so much of hatred, divisions, insensitivity and selfishness. Not only in the society in general, but also in Christian organizations, churches and non-governmental organizations, this situation prevails. As health promoters and healing ministers how do we address this situation?

Christian Fellowship Hospital at Oddanchatram, Tamil Nadu, is one place that exemplifies some natures of this new community in Christ in practical ways. The way they meet together, love one another, do good works and encourage one another is an inspiration to those who witness them. The sensitivity with which the issues of people are handled is a powerful example of Christ's nature.

As people involved in healing ministry we are called to consider stirring up one another to come together, to love one another, to do good works and to encourage one another. We should do this because we belong to this Christ community which is a healing community.

**Prayer:** Loving dear God, thank you for calling us to be part of this new community in Christ. Thank you for the willing sacrifice of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. Help us to stir one another to be faithful to this calling. May we as individuals and as groups bring healing to the nation. We pray in Christ's precious name. Amen.

**For reflection:**

1. Name any two major qualities of a community in Christ?
2. How do we bring healing in our nation being part of this community in Christ?
   - Share some practical suggestions.