

Growing in Wholeness – LEADERS' INTRODUCTION

Growing in Wholeness is designed as a taught course on the Christian Ministry of Healing.

It is aimed at people who have already done some thinking about healing or are, at least, fairly mature Christians. If neither of these applies to your prospective audience, I would suggest you start with one of the introductory group courses, such as Acorn Christian Foundation's *Growing a Healing Ministry*. There are details of this and other courses and books in the Resource Section of the Participant's Notes.

To teach this course you will need both a theoretical understanding of Christian healing and some practical experience. Before teaching the course, I would suggest you put yourself on the receiving end of someone else's teaching and ministry and read some books such as: *Healing, A Time to Heal* and *In Search of Wholeness*. You will also need to be thoroughly familiar with the course material.

Earlier versions of the course were field-tested in parish, deanery, diocesan and ecumenical settings with between 10 and 70 participants. They were taught regularly as part of a diocesan lay training programme. This new version was presented to Chelmsford Diocese curates at their residential weekend in January 2019. Although the material has been written from an Anglican perspective, it has been used with ecumenical groups with hardly any modification. Participants have come from all church traditions.

With larger groups it helps to have some assistance both with the practical aspects of setting up the room and serving refreshments and also with prayer support and group facilitation.

The course works best being taught as six two-hour sessions. Session Six is taught in the context of a healing service (normally of Holy Communion). The material for that session can easily be condensed into a sermon-length slot. I have taught the course in a retreat setting and over a weekend for a church's ministry team. This reduces the amount of time for the material to sink in and for the linkwork. This style of delivery is best suited to quite an advanced audience. For other groups meeting over a couple of days, restrict the amount of teaching but do not skimp on time for discussion, quiet reflection, prayer and worship.

There are two ways to run the course.

1. The classic style entails the leader speaking, with powerpoint slides and frequent discussion with participants. Start each session begins with a Bible text. It is best to leave a time of silence before leading in a brief prayer for the session. The PowerPoint slides have brief leader's notes to draw out the key points.

As with any course, it is important to make it your own. It is perfectly possible to make more or less of my headings and bullet points. There is a lot of material in each session, so try to keep moving and don't be afraid of shortening some sections. However, I would suggest you use the material largely unchanged for the first time and then make modifications in the light of your experience and the feedback you get from course members. I will be pleased to receive suggestions for improvement.

2. Andy Griffiths has taken the material and reworked it in a more "adult education" way. You will still need the powerpoint slides and participant notes, but can find his suggestions on how to lead a group by following the links to "an alternative approach" on the website. Of course, you may wish to adapt these notes in turn for your own context.

Do make sure you have good prayer support while running the course.

No one course can ever be fully comprehensive. This *Growing in Wholeness* course could helpfully be complemented with training in Christian Listening, Bereavement and visiting the sick. The final session on good practice is designed for a follow-up session for members of your Prayer/Ministry/Healing team.

It has been a great privilege to have been teaching about God's healing for more than 25 years. I am still learning! I hope that this course will help introduce many more to the wonderful truth of God's love and healing that is revealed to us in Jesus and continues to be made available to us today by the power of his Holy Spirit.

Roger Matthews

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