

it are legitimate and valuable, because the Bible teaches us to come to the defense of the poor. Such engagement with the suffering of others may bring us into situations that lead to our own suffering in the struggle to overcome the suffering of others. This can be understood as an experience of bearing the cross of Jesus Christ, conscious that Jesus Christ suffered for us so that we may receive the fullness of life.

60. Although we reject a theology of prosperity which offers false promises and runs the risk of turning God into an object of our desires, we do affirm an understanding of prosperity as a blessing of God freely given and affirm Jesus' promise to bring abundant life for all people. Those who are so blessed are called to be a blessing to others and to work for the betterment of all society, to overcome injustices, and to care for all of God's creation.

PART IV: HEALING AND DELIVERANCE
“. . . to proclaim release to the captives,
and recovery of sight to the blind,
and let the oppressed go free . . .”

Biblical Foundations

61. As already seen in previous sections of this statement, together we look to the Scriptures to inform and guide our teaching and practice regarding healing and deliverance from evil.
62. As Scripture testifies, God's intention for his good creation has always been its wholeness and flourishing. Even after the broken trust that is human sin, God has cared for the earth and the people created in his image. God has blessed the sick, the suffering, and those afflicted by evil spirits with physical healing, spiritual healing, and communal reconciliation. Healing and deliverance have not been restricted to the people of God but have been extended to those on the “outside,” such as Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs. 5:1–27) and the Syrophenician woman (Mk. 7:24–30).
63. The ministry of Jesus Christ was especially distinctive for its emphasis on healing and deliverance alongside feeding, teaching, and proclaiming the kingdom of God. He commissioned his disciples to do the same. The apostles healed in Jesus' name throughout the book of Acts (e.g. 3:1–10, 9:32–34, 14:8–10). Paul identifies healing as a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:9). James 5:13–15 commends prayer for and anointing of the sick.

64. While healing and deliverance testify to God's good and saving intention for people already now in this life, these things at the same time always point toward the eschatological horizon of the final healing that will take place in the resurrection of the dead (Rev. 22:1–3). Healing in this life does not spare anyone from death. The absence of healing does not indicate inadequate faith or that God does not care.

Healing from Illness

65. Though we pray for the end of the physical illness and the patient's full recovery, we recognize healing as a broader concept. Healing encompasses also spiritual and relational dimensions. Sometimes a person dies of an illness or endures a chronic condition, yet in the process comes to a deeper trust in God, and loves and receives love from others in a profound new way. It is important for the church and its leaders to guide people in their spiritual reckoning with their illness, while always keeping the good news of Jesus Christ at the forefront.
66. Nevertheless, there is a danger in interpreting healing only in a spiritual sense, and even more so in assigning a spiritual causality to all illnesses. Jesus warns sharply against those who simplistically equate illness or other bodily harm with punishment for sin (Jn. 9, Lk. 13:4). It is equally disastrous to reject all forms of medical intervention as the only proper expression of faith in God.
67. Because sickness is not part of the envisioned kingdom of God, Christ has given the church several means by which healing is conveyed to hurting people. Baptism first of all grants us a share in Christ's own death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–4) and washes us in the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Prayer is both commanded and commended for the sake of healing of both self and others; fasting is encouraged. The faithful may lay hands on the sick and anoint them with oil.
68. Among our churches we see further development of healing ministries with various kinds of structures, including informal prayer groups and prayer chains, church-run clinics and hospitals, and trained ministers of healing and pastoral care, both lay and ordained.
69. No illness or injury is too mild or too severe to ask for God's intervention. We give thanks to God for all kinds of healing, just

as we grieve when healing is not granted. We trust that God can effect healing when all human means have been exhausted, and we recognize that God in his sovereignty finally takes all the sick, suffering, and dying into his care. We caution against extremes: on the one hand, denying any but scientific means of healing, and, on the other side, denying any but miraculous means of healing.

70. All prayers and interventions for healing are premised on faith in the goodness of God our Creator who desires his creatures to live with him eternally. But faith itself is not the cause of healing and should never be treated as a weapon against God or a guarantee for believers. We have seen people being disappointed and losing faith after being falsely promised a healing that did not come. God desires the healing and wholeness of his people. Yet we are still subject to sin, evil, corruption, illness, vulnerability, and mortality while we await the arrival of the kingdom of God in its fullness. When relief is not granted, we are to turn toward the suffering of Christ on his cross and his call to his followers to take up their own cross. We also take the example of Paul, whose thorn in the flesh was not removed even after earnest prayer (2 Cor. 12:7–9). Suffering remains in this life, and sometimes instead of being spared it we are asked to endure it. We do so in faith and hope for the final restoration.

Pentecostal Commentary

71. On the whole, Pentecostals believe that all of the spiritual gifts, including the so-called miraculous or supernatural gifts, are bestowed by the Holy Spirit as a powerful means of evangelism, and that they continue to operate within the church in the present age. Among these gifts is included the gift of healing, which correlates to Pentecostal Christology acclaiming Jesus as Healer. Divine healing is included in the atoning work of Christ; healing is part of salvation itself. Pentecostals believe that miraculous healing by God, which is carried out through servants of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, can bring many people to faith in the Lord.
72. Some Pentecostals have deduced that if a Christian could only generate enough faith, healing would always occur. However, Classical Pentecostals rightly balance this with other themes pervading the New Testament. For example, sometimes a miracle occurs where there is little or no faith, precisely in order to instill belief in Jesus as the Son of God (Mt. 8:26). In addition, faith was

frequently spoken of as the result rather than the precondition of the healing power of Jesus (Mt. 9:18–22, 15:31). Although the Gospels point out that Jesus “did not do many mighty works” (Mt. 13:58, Mk. 6:5) in his hometown because of unbelief, nowhere is anyone’s failure to be healed attributed to the lack of faith on the part of the sick person. This means that while it is essential for us to have faith in God and his ability to heal, healing is solely the sovereign will of God.

Lutheran Commentary

73. Healing as such was not by any means the center of the Lutheran Reformation. However, we do find examples of prayer for healing and thanksgiving when it has been granted. Luther advised believers to “pray to [God] for everything that attacks even our bodily welfare.”¹⁵ He prayed for the restoration of the health of his close friends, and allowed that holy communion offers healing to body as well as soul. At the same time, he endured the grief of the death of two of his children, whose lives were not spared despite his and Katharina’s prayers.
74. Lutherans bring a Law-Gospel framework to the matter of healing. As Luther writes in the Large Catechism, prayer is “as strictly and solemnly commanded as all the other commandments,” and therefore we should pray faithfully and ardently for healing.¹⁶ At the same time, the promise of the Gospel to have fellowship with God now and eternal life with him hereafter is *not* the same as a promise of perfect healing in this life. To believe in the promise of the Gospel means to reject all false promises, including those that guarantee healing to the “truly” faithful, thereby suggesting that those who are not healed did not adequately believe.

* * *

Case Studies in Healing and Deliverance

Lutherans remember the example of Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880), a German pastor and advocate of world mission and spiritual revival. Blumhardt was confronted with a deeply disturbed and suffering young woman named Gottliebin Dittus in his rural Swabian

¹⁵Martin Luther, “The Lord’s Prayer,” Large Catechism, in *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 456.

¹⁶Martin Luther, “The Lord’s Prayer,” Large Catechism, in *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 441.

congregation. After a year and a half of patient prayer and exhortation by Blumhardt and other congregational leaders, Gottlieb was delivered from her affliction. The news spread throughout the congregation, leading to a spiritual revival, and soon Blumhardt's church became a spontaneous center of healing ministry. In time he moved with his family to an abandoned estate, so as to accommodate the seven hundred or so seekers who arrived every year. Blumhardt's central tenet was: "Jesus is victor." He recognized and commended the power of prayer, the necessity of repentance, and the acceptance of death when healing is not granted. He understood miracles to be ordinary, not extraordinary, events, the regular intervention of God in the lives of his people. But all healings and miracles were ultimately signs of the coming kingdom of God and invitations to place all trust in life and death in God alone.

Pentecostals remember two women who influenced Pentecostal healing practice in the early twentieth century, Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson, both in North America. A wide swath of Pentecostal churches endorsed their healing ministries. Both held mass meetings and preached the Gospel in the power of the Spirit by laying hands on people and praying for them. The accompanying signs and wonders appealed across denominational lines, and both evangelists ministered ecumenically. Woodworth-Etter's evangelistic and healing ministry was a direct continuation of the Holiness revival of the nineteenth century. She held mass meetings before the onset of the Pentecostal movement, but joined it in 1912 and became a major force in spreading the Pentecostal message. Posters advertising her meetings read: "Jesus heals!" and "Salvation for soul, healing for body." As for McPherson, she proclaimed in her vivid sermons that Jesus is Savior, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit, and the Soon-Coming King. She was a prolific writer and newscaster who helped consolidate the Pentecostal emphasis on salvation and healing.

Deliverance from Evil

75. In the Lord's Prayer we ask our heavenly Father to deliver us from evil. By evil we mean the "principalities and powers" (Rom. 8:38–39, Eph. 6:12) that grind down and extinguish humanity, break trust in God, and render love among people impossible. Evil is not something with which we should negotiate; we can only be rescued from it. Sin and oppression serve the evil one but are not identical to it.
76. One of the tasks of the church and faithful Christians is to discern the spirits, identifying those that are evil or unclean (1 Cor. 12:10,

- 1 Jn. 4:1–6). Because the faithful are and remain sinners, liable to the seduction of evil, this is a difficult and dangerous task. Discernment of evil spirits must be undertaken communally, carefully, and with constant prayer for the Holy Spirit’s guidance. As part of the discernment process, and the same as in the case of physical healing, we urge the responsible use of such tools as psychology, psychiatry, and medicine to diagnose the suffering person’s condition and select appropriate means of restoration. It is also entirely possible that medical intervention and deliverance ministry will work best in concert with one another.
77. Not all experience of evil is possession by evil spirits. People, both believers and non-believers, may be afflicted by the evil one without consenting to evil. One of the tasks of the apostolic ministry is to intercede for deliverance from this kind of affliction. In many parts of the world, such intercession has been an important aspect of evangelical outreach.
78. It is also essential for the church to believe and act in the conviction that the battle is not finally theirs, but God’s alone. The victory of Christ is not an excuse for self-indulgent living but the very present action of the crucified and risen Christ now, in our world, for our salvation. The Christian tradition has testified to this power in a variety of ways, from the “Christus Victor” motif of atonement to hymns singing of “Power in the Blood.”
79. The church, therefore, seeks to serve God in delivering the afflicted from evil. This happens through proclamation and preaching, through baptism and the Lord’s Supper, through prayer and the laying on of hands, and through ministries specifically aiming at deliverance.
80. Scripture exhorts believers to be on their guard against evil, resist the devil, repent of sin, obey God, pray, and bear witness to the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).
81. However, evil must never be used as an excuse for human sinfulness. There is no place in the church for a “devil made me do it” defense. Believers are always to take responsibility for their sins, confess and repent, and undo whatever damage they can.
82. Likewise, leaders of the church may not exploit the notion of “spiritual warfare” for their own personal, financial, or ideological purposes. We encourage strong practices of communal discernment and mutual accountability before any deliverance practice is undertaken.

Pentecostal Commentary

83. From their earliest days, because of their holistic approach to salvation in Christ, Pentecostals paid attention to the reality of Satan's influence, demonic oppression, and the powers of evil. Consequently, they included practices of dealing with these powers through deliverance, breaking curses, exorcism and spiritual warfare, whereas most Protestant churches at the time were less likely to do so. Pentecostals understood this to be a necessary corrective to the omission of such ministries in these churches, though it brought its own problems, such as associating every sort of evil with a corresponding demon, irresponsible interpretations of Bible passages giving rise to wild speculation, and taking away human responsibility for evil. It is not a theology of fear that should dominate Christian views on the reality of evil, but rather the assurance that Christ overcame all evil at the cross and that the children of God can confidently call upon the Holy Spirit to bring them peace and the power to challenge evil in Jesus' name.
84. With regard to the presence of evil in the world, Pentecostals proclaim a theology of victory in Jesus (1 Cor. 15:17, 2 Cor. 2:14). At the same time, however, there is also a biblical emphasis on suffering for Christ's sake (Phil. 1:29, 3:10; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 4:19). They often refer to the exhortation that Christians are called to put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10–18) in order to withstand evil.

Lutheran Commentary

85. Luther's sense of the predatory presence of the devil is well known and given voice by Lutherans throughout the world as they sing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" to join themselves in battle against the evil one. Though the battle in the hymn is dramatic, Luther also experienced the chronic, demoralizing sense of *Anfechtung* or anguish of being under spiritual attack. In this as in all other matters, he constantly referred believers to the promises of Christ: "for God himself fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit."
86. Lutherans also recognize, however, the dark side of detecting the presence of evil, namely the temptation to demonize one's enemies. Luther culpably did so, which must be continually rejected. Failure of faith and demonization of other people go hand in hand. The antidote to demonizing others is to trust more fully in God and learn to love our enemies, just as Jesus taught us and God has done (Mt.

5:44, Rom. 5:6).

87. Lutheran approaches to the ministry of deliverance vary widely across the world. Some have well-developed exorcism ministries (see the case study below); some question or doubt the existence of supernatural evil or the devil altogether and regard all such efforts with suspicion. Here again we encourage mutual, communal discernment and the willingness to learn from one another's practices and critiques, both within the Lutheran fold and between Lutherans and other Christian traditions.

* * *

Case Studies in Deliverance Ministry

As one session of our dialogue took place in Madagascar, the Lutherans would particularly like to commend the example of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC). Since its founding in the late nineteenth century, the MLC has experienced four major revival movements, all of which have focused on preaching, repentance, and deliverance from evil. The MLC has developed an office of ministry called *mpiandry* or “shepherds,” laypeople who train under a pastor for two years to undertake deliverance ministry. Many of them wear distinctive vestments during their ministry work. Embedded in a traditional Lutheran liturgical order is a time for the *mpiandry* to cite Scripture that exhorts Christ's followers to release the afflicted from their bondage. They then move through the worship space casting out demons and praying specifically over those who ask for it. Often the seekers are given an opportunity to testify to God's healing and liberating work in their lives. Among the best-known of the MLC's shepherds was the prophetess Nenilava (1918–1998). She spent her entire life preaching throughout Madagascar, calling people to repentance, healing them, and delivering them from the grip of evil spirits. All of the revival movements and their *mpiandry* have led to the dramatic growth of the MLC. Other Christian churches have also turned to them to learn the ministry of deliverance, which has done much to foster positive ecumenical relationships.

Pentecostals pray for the sick and afflicted during regular worship services if there is a need or request to do so. In such cases, the sick are oftentimes invited to come forward. Pastors and elders anoint them with oil, lay hands on them, and pray with them. Some Pentecostal churches have established prayer centers where the sick or spiritually oppressed come to stay for an extended period of time. Special services for deliverance and healing are held with the support of deliverance teams and prayer warriors. The Church of Pentecost, with its headquarters in

Ghana, although not actively promoting such prayer centers on its own, has accepted some that have been initiated by individuals. The Executive Council of the Church of Pentecost annually organizes special training sessions for the leaders of such prayer centers.

Conclusion

88. We encourage one another and our churches to continue to pray for the sick, suffering, and afflicted. We encourage one another to seek all holy avenues for healing and wholeness, from the bodily and personal to the communal and institutional. When healing is granted, let us give thanks and recognize the sign of the Kingdom of God in our midst. When healing is withheld or a life is lost, let us commend the person to God and entrust ourselves afresh to his sovereign wisdom and goodness. When we encounter the oppression of evil, let us turn to God in earnest prayer for deliverance. For we are “sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38–39).

PART V: LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Mutual Learning

89. Together we have been on a journey of mutual learning. Over the years of our dialogue, we spent time with students and professors at theological seminaries, such as Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines, and with pastors and parishioners in churches and other religious institutions. We cleared away misunderstandings and discovered a closeness in theology, prayer, and mission. This discovery has been continually broadened and deepened as we have engaged the sources of our faith in Scripture and in the cross and resurrection of Christ. We bear one another’s burdens and turn outward to the world in service as disciples of Jesus.
90. Throughout the process, we have been brought together by worship which we have experienced in a diversity of ways but all of them giving glory to God, celebrating the redemption found in Christ, beseeching the Holy Spirit to be with us, guide us, lead us, and empower us as we go out into the world in service and mission.