

A Spirituality of Healing and Hope

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A Trajectory Toward Healing and Hope

In the face of death, live humanly.

In the middle of chaos, celebrate the Word.

Amidst Babel, speak the truth.

-Wm. Stringfellow

Death in an Incarnational Reality

- Haelen: Celtic, “healing, health, wholeness”
- Salvus: Latin, “healing, wholeness”
- Patient: Latin, “to suffer”
 - Compassion: “to suffer with”
- “Cure” is a biological process
- Healing is “ontological”



THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE IS IMPRECISE



- Our work is to get to the roots of meaning
- theological “virtues” because they help us orient to God (ground of meaning).
- Beyond euphemisms (e.g., I love ice cream, I hope it’s sunny today)

HEALING...





IF I SAY “HEALTH
CARE,” WHAT DOES
THAT CONJURE FOR
YOU?

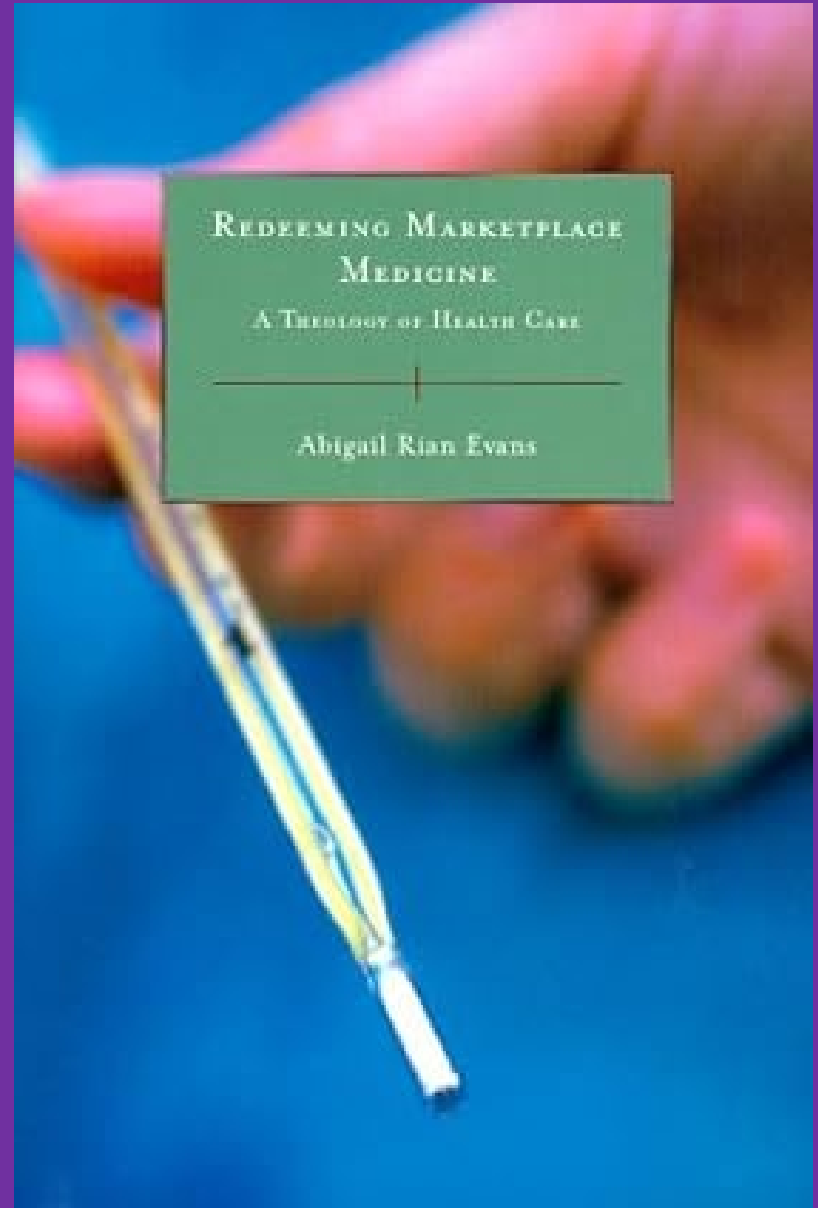
The Medical Model of today

- Focuses on the body as a machine
- Pathology=breakdown of biology, chemistry, or physics of the machine
- Illness equated with organic disease
 - External agent “infects” or “afflicts” machine
 - “health” consists of removing that external agent
 - Reductionistic—loses social dimension of illness
- Gray areas—pt culpability?, sick role, cure vs. healing, physicians are “experts”



“Market Place Medicine” (Abigail Rian Evans)

- group of crisis responders
- a system that is fragmented with no secure connections to other resources
- as a system of allopathic providers and hospitals which cannot adequately address all the problems of our current condition.
- disease-orientation, based on volume-driven practices, with bureaucratic machinations, and the patient is no longer the central figure in the system, but has become the “throughput,” the commodity to services are applied for a fee
- access problems for those “patients” who do not provide the system with optimal throughput efficiency



Journey to Wholeness

*A biblical pilgrimage to
health and healing*

MORRIS MADDOCKS

“THE CURE OF A PART SHOULD NOT BE ATTEMPTED WITHOUT TREATMENT OF THE WHOLE. NO ATTEMPT SHOULD BE MADE TO CURE THE BODY WITHOUT THE SOUL...THE GREAT ERROR OF OUR DAY IN THE TREATMENT OF THE HUMAN BODY IS THAT PHYSICIANS FIRST SEPARATED THE SOUL FROM THE BODY.”

-PLATO, 380 BCE



Neal Krause,
University of
Michigan
School of
Public
Health:

More than 3,000 studies indicate that religion has a potentially beneficial effect on health

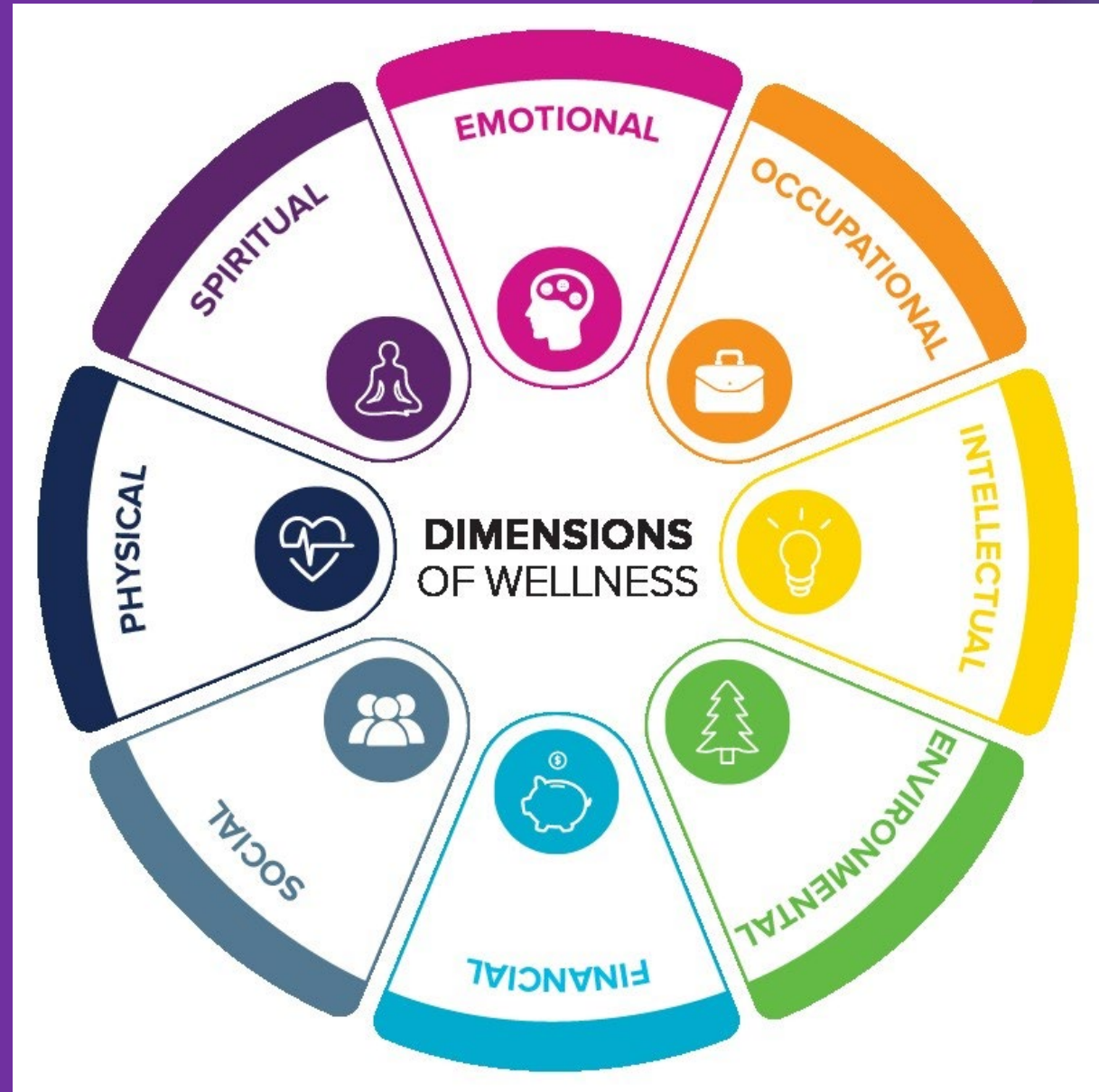
Belief in a deity engenders hope, which has been linked to positive physiological changes

Those who regularly attend religious services benefit from a community that is there to help members cope in difficult times

- <https://hms.harvard.edu/news/spirituality-healing>

Health defined as...

- “a dynamic state of well-being of individual and society; of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being, of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment, and with God.”
- biblical connection—the ideal of shalom (individual, communal, creation, cosmic)



Healing as natural process...

- Healing, then, is the process that leads to experiencing something of the essence of shalom and wholeness; it is a naturally occurring resource in creation such that reconciliation can occur—even if “cure” (defined medically as absence of organic disease) does not happen.
- Lots of hospice patients with terminal illness experience “healing”
- It is existential, holy, and liberating...
- Etymologies: patient (one who suffers) but compassion (to suffer with)
- Compassion involves activity replacement (i.e., to do for another what they cannot do for themselves), assurance that one’s care is consistent, preserving one’s dignity, journeying with/alongside
- Equating health with medicine is a thoroughly modern phenomenon



A Prayer for Healing

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, O God; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen.*



from *Compline*, Book of Common Prayer

Breakout Groups



- What are your thoughts about the modern model of medicine and its challenges to foster healing?
- What does our religious faith have to say about that and the wholistic approach to healing?
- Have you known of someone (or had an experience yourself) in which healing happened even if cure did not?

The Alpha and the Omega...

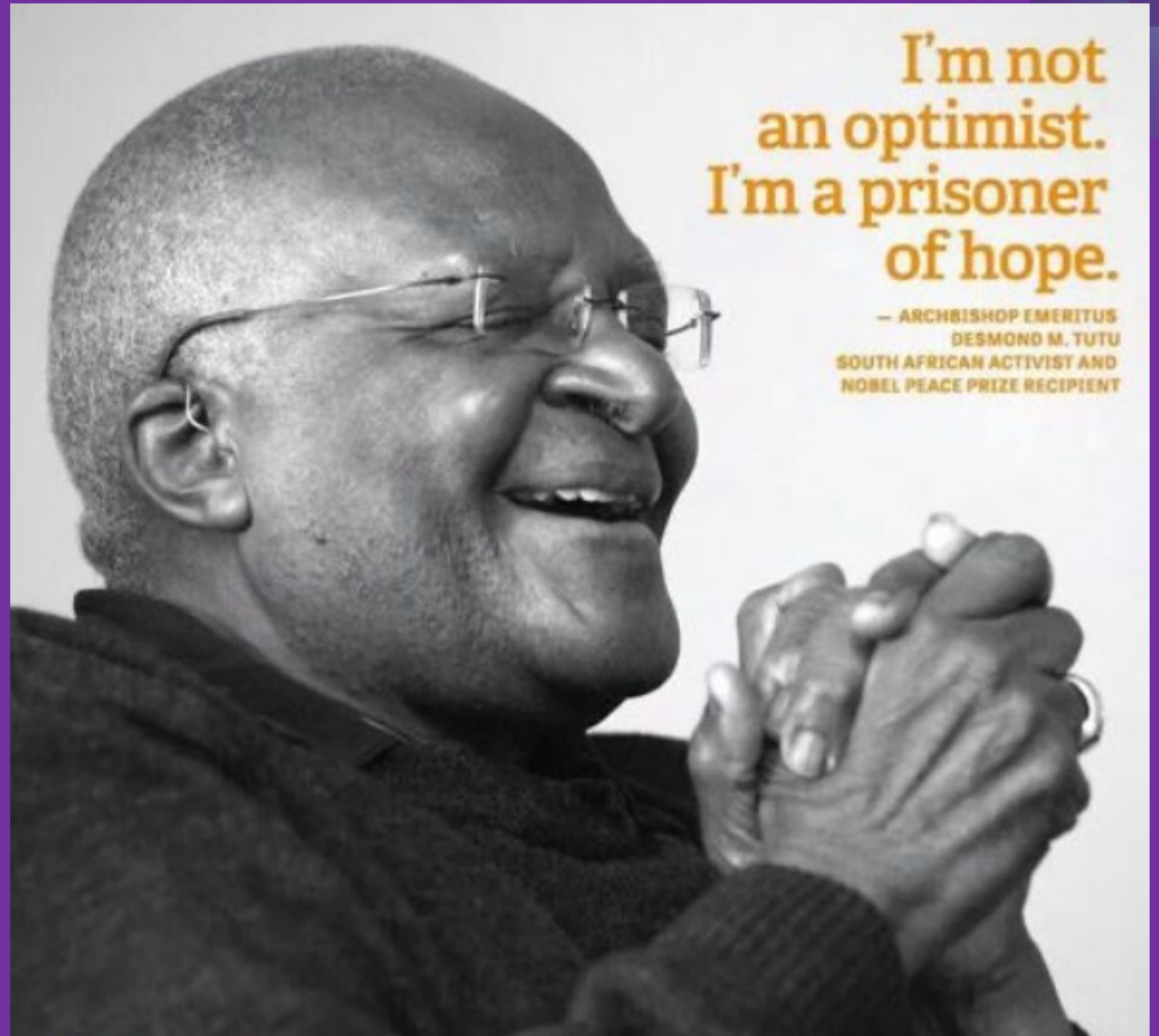


With the drawing of this Love
and the voice of this Calling
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

-T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding

Desmond Tutu

- “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” For hope to exist, there has to be darkness. For hope to be real, there has to be a prison. And we, in the prison.”
- Hope is not optimism. Hope is different. Hope has a cosmic quality. Hope is rooted in faith, with feet mired in suffering. Hope is a heart in agony that yearns for liberation.



Nelson Mandela on Hope

- “Our human compassion binds us one to the other—not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.”



Womanist Theology of Hope—A. Elaine Brown



- For more than 300 years, Black women have embodied a theology of hope which has enabled them to overcome a history of abuse and violence.
- Born in experience of slavery
- Hope is the theological construct that moves black women beyond endurance and survival to transformation of their personal and communal realities.
- Narratives of enslaved, emancipated, and contemporary black women and brings that vision into discussion with contemporary womanist theologies.

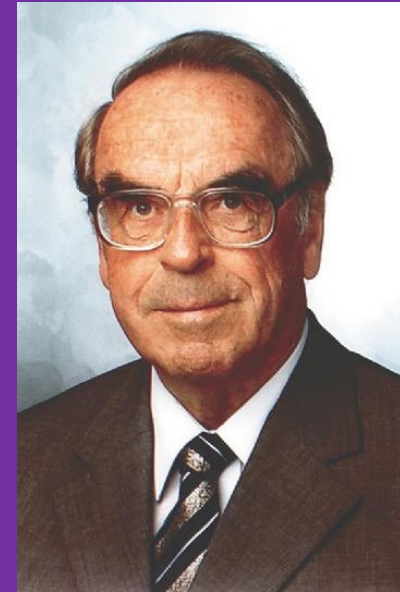
Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me
~ from *Meditations of the Heart* by
Howard Thurman



Open unto me—light for my darkness.
Open unto me—courage for my fear.
Open unto me—hope for my despair.
Open unto me—peace for my turmoil.
Open unto me—joy for my sorrow.
Open unto me—strength for my weakness.
Open unto me—wisdom for my confusion.
Open unto me—forgiveness for my sins.
Open unto me—tenderness for my toughness.
Open unto me—love for my hates.
Open unto me—Thy Self for my self.
Lord, Lord, open unto me!

Jurgen Moltmann (1926-2024)

- German theologian
- Drafted into German Army in 1944
- Surrendered to first Allied soldier he saw
- Met Christian pastors in POW camps
- Professor at Tubingen University
- Theology of Hope (1964)
- Eschatology:
 - Not dualism of Rapture Theology
 - “life power of hope”—implies a present reality forming the future



Moltmann's Eschatological Hope

- If we expect catastrophic destruction at end, why care about the world now?
- Our expectation of future informs our present reality
- Expectation of ultimate reign of Christ
- Time is different (so don't get caught up in numbers)
- Look forward to final judgment—brings God's righteousness to all...victim and perpetrator are judged/healed/reconciled together.

What does Revelation actually say

■ “Ge”—used six times, never is earth destroyed.

- Rev. 11:18 ...the time has come...for destroying those who destroy the *earth*.’

■ Kosmos—used three times, never destroyed

- Rev. 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the *world* has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’

■ Oikumene—used three times, never attributed to God’s creation

- Rev. 3:10 Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole *world* ...

- Rev. 16:14 the kings of the whole *world* assembled for battle



Theology of Hope

If God acted in the past, is it reasonable to expect God can/will act in future?

The Eschaton is not the end point, but the point from which all else flows...born in hope for a better way. (fullness of time)

Alternative to the imperial way.

The Resurrection of Christ is not so much an historical event as it is THE event which finds its full meaning in the *future*.

Future fulfillment is for all creation, not just humans (Behold, I make all things new)

Good tidings to
the afflicted
Isaiah 61:1-3





Forgiveness as Key Aspect of Healing

- Forgiveness is hard work
- It may not be linear, or predictable in its timeline, but it is the path to healing and peace
- It is our spiritual work!
- Be gentle with yourself, find compassion for the other, acknowledge your shared humanity
- Renew relationships whenever possible (and safe); release the relationship when not







Conversation

Q&A

Healing Prayers and Anointing

