

THE GUILD OF ST RAPHAEL

Christ's Ministry of Healing



Starting and Running a Branch of The Guild

The Guild of St Raphael exists primarily to promote and extend the expression of Christ's Ministry of Healing in the Churches of the Anglican Communion. It encourages fuller understanding and acceptance of this Ministry as an integral part of the everyday life and witness of the Church. Membership of the Guild maybe Individual, in Branches, or in the case of Churches of other Communion, by Affiliation.

The most characteristic expression of the Guild is a Branch. This will consist of a number of people in a Parish whose Special vocation is to encourage within their Christian community the principles of Christian Healing espoused by the Guild, and which the Church of England also teaches.

A Branch will not be a special interest group, but rather a focus in the Church's Life. How branches actually function will depend on many factors, such as the tradition of the parish. Most of all the effectiveness of the Guild locally will rest chiefly on the enthusiasm of the members and the full support of the Chaplain, who will normally be the Parish Priest.

If a branch is well run, enthusiastic and making an impact on the Church life then even in the appointment of a new Vicar the Ministry of Healing will feature prominently in the Parish profile.

The Council of the Guild functions so that members may feel themselves to be a part of a larger support group, to encourage local and national meetings for fellowship and teaching, to provide Regional Representatives who will speak to the work of the Guild, and also to ensure the production of the main Publications: *Christ* and *Guild News*

Members of the Council play their part in other ways in the life of the Church, and are given the opportunity to hold before the wider Church the teachings and principles of the Guild which are entirely consonant with the Gospel and the Tradition of the Church

The Council offers the following broad guidelines for your assistance in running a Branch.

A TWELVE STEP GUIDE TO STARTING A BRANCH

1. The P.C.C. should approve the formation of a branch by a formal motion. The parish Priest must be in agreement, even if he/she does not want to be the Chaplain. Ideally both Priest and P.C.C. should approve the choice of Branch Secretary. A part of this process might be to be an invitation to a member of the Council to come and give a talk to the people.
2. The Guild Secretary can, as well as suggesting a speaker, provide necessary literature and information.
3. While the whole Church body will be in some sense related to the Guild, having owned it via the P.C.C. there will be some who have special vocation in healing. These should be identified and encouraged to be committed to the liturgical and practical aspects of the life of the Branch.
4. Part of such commitment involves supporting the Guild at all levels by taking up membership (for which there is an annual fee). This will entitle such members to receive *Guild News* and other literature that from time to time the Council may direct. It also gives voting rights at the A.G.M, and the right to

propose names for the Council. The Branch Secretary will usually organise such matters as collection of subscriptions and distribution of literature.

5. *Chrism*, published twice yearly on a subscription basis, is an excellent publication. The Council encourages all members of the Guild to be subscribers and readers.

6. The Branch should establish a pattern of meetings at least monthly. Usually co-incident with the meeting, the Chaplain will conduct a Healing Service. The style of this will depend on the Parish tradition, but most often this takes place in the context of the Eucharist. It will normally include the ministry of the laying on of hands. The ministry of anointing may also be offered.

7. Under the guidance of the Branch Secretary members commit themselves to regular, faithful prayer for the sick. It is usual to make monthly lists for each member. It is also usual to send out prayer cards to those who are prayed for.

8. Guild members will be faithful members of the church, and a part of its general ministry. Appropriate ways of expressing their ministry often emerge as confidence in the Ministry grows. A simple example would be in accompanying the minister to local homes for the elderly when celebrating the Eucharist; also assisting with some of the many practical matters, as well as the spiritual, in caring for the sick.

9. It is suggested that an annual local gathering with other branches is organised. This may well be through the Council or one of its members.

10. The Secretary should encourage fellowship meetings with other local branches when possibilities arise, as well as attempt to arrange for attendance at the Annual Festival and General Meeting. This moves around the country.

11. It is common in Guild Parishes for the Sunday nearest the 24th October (St Raphael's Day) to be given over to the theme of Healing. Often a special Preacher is invited, and if all are agreed the main Sunday Service is a Healing Service. Such a Sunday is an opportunity for the re-dedication of members.

12. It is useful to let the Diocesan Advisor know of the existence of a Branch. S/he may want to refer parishes to you for advice and guidance in the Ministry of healing. Remember that a Branch of the Guild is **never** separate from the life of the local or wider Church. A part of the vocation of a branch will be promotion, teaching and encouragement of the Healing Ministry. Diocesan guidelines on the Ministry of Healing should be known by branches and adhered to.

With these simple guidelines, it is clear that many variations of life and ministry will develop within Branches, as indeed in the Church at large. Members will not be the only Christians who have a vocation in healing, but they will be those who do their best to keep the public ministry of Christ's Healing before their Church. From such simple involvement we know that members are greatly blessed by God, and at the same time become a blessing to others.

Members of the Council of the Guild of St Raphael are drawn from all regions of the United Kingdom. Council members also act as Regional Representatives, and are happy to visit and advise parishes and churches seeking membership of The Guild.

For further information please contact:

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