

Healing Rooms Movement Spreading Worldwide

A network of healing rooms is spreading internationally, with several hundred being commissioned in India this week.

Launched in 1999, the International Association of Healing Rooms (IAHR) now oversees some 1,300 rooms in 52 nations. Roughly 400 are in India, and IAHR founder Cal Pierce is commissioning 600 more healing rooms there this week.

"In India that will be nearly 1 million people each year receiving healing ministry," Pierce said.

Based in Spokane, Wash., the IAHR follows in the footsteps of healing evangelist John G. Lake. The ministry is even headquartered in a building where Lake prayed for the sick in the early 1900s.

The facility houses its own healing room, which functions much like a doctor's office and has a team of 15 to 20 people regularly on hand to pray for the sick. It is also a base where Pierce trains others to operate healing rooms from local churches or as community outreaches.

"What is so powerful is this work is done by ordinary people doing an extraordinary work through the power of the Holy Spirit," Pierce said.

In healing rooms across the U.S., Europe, Asia and Africa, Pierce said people have been healed of blindness, brain tumors and even HIV. Many claim healing from emotional issues or deliverance from demonic oppression, he added.

In India, the healing rooms have been fueling church growth, said Abraham Sekhar, a longtime church planter and IAHR's national director. "In three months, a church that was 70

people almost doubled,” Sekhar said.

He wants to see a healing room established in every village in India. He says 1,000 healing rooms that reach a million people each year isn't enough in a nation with more than 1 billion people. “That is nothing compared to the number of people in India and the number of sick people,” Sekhar said. “We are hoping every year we will be able to establish more healing rooms.”

Although healing ministry is nothing new, the healing rooms' “democratization” of that area of ministry is likely contributing its spread, said Candy Gunther Brown, Ph.D., a religious studies professor at Indiana University who has researched IAHR and other healing ministries, including Heidi Baker's Iris Ministries in Mozambique.

“There's a turn away from the sense that there needs to be a particularly gifted healing evangelist, people like Oral Roberts and Kathryn Kuhlman ... and this growing emphasis that healing can come through the prayer of any lay person,” said Brown, author of *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, which releases in January.

She noted that the healing rooms may also be benefiting from a growing disillusionment with modern medicine, which has led to trend toward alternative healing methods.

Whether the IAHR will stay predominant in the healing rooms movement remains to be seen. But Brown said Pentecostalism has “exploded” in the last century partly because of reports of divine healing, and she believes interest in divine healing will only increase in the U.S. and abroad.

Despite claims that the U.S. is becoming secular, she said there is a deep interest in spirituality. Reports about the growing number of unchurched Americans point to a disillusionment with organized religion, not faith, she argues.

“People are interested in spiritual power,” said Brown, who is writing a book on the topic titled *Miracles Cures? Divine Healing and Deliverance in America*. “If they think they can find it in Pentecostalism, they’re going to go there. If they think they can find it in yoga and therapeutic touch, they’re going to go there.

“There’s this longing for spiritual power, and the more globalization and pluralism and interaction of cultures, the more there is a drive to compare and look for where that experience, where the spiritual, where the powerful can be found.”

A former real estate developer, Pierce embraced healing ministry after experiencing renewal at Bethel Church in Redding, Calif. He said he was dramatically changed in a meeting Bill Johnson called after he became pastor of the former Assemblies of God congregation.

“Bill raised his hands to heaven and said, ‘Come, Holy Spirit.’ And that was the last thing I could remember as the fire of God began to course through my being,” Pierce said. “I wanted to run, laugh, shout, but I couldn’t do anything but stand there and take it. After that encounter, I realized that my life was over so His life could take over.”

Today Pierce teaches that it’s God’s will that all be healed, a view that some critics say dismisses God’s sovereignty. Pierce likens healing to salvation. Both, he says, were accomplished through Christ’s work on the cross and must be received by faith.

“God’s done everything He’s going to do about salvation; He’s done everything He’s going to do about healing,” Pierce said. “When Jesus took it to the cross, He finished it there. Now it’s our responsibility to finish it here. That’s why we have to lay hands on the sick and see them recover. So we see an army beginning to do that and destroying the work of the

enemy.”

Yet Pierce said those who aren't healed don't necessarily lack faith. “When you have an army and you have an enemy coming against the army, you lose some warriors until you come into the fullness of the authority to overcome your enemy,” he said. “We never say you could have gotten healed if you had more faith because that puts responsibility on us. If they need more faith, we have responsibility to give it to them.

“The fact that a warrior gets taken out doesn't measure the truth,” he added. “The truth is the same before any of us ever get sick. We're seeing more and more of a demonstration of power as we progress through this truth of the fact that Jesus bore our sickness on the cross for one reason: so that we wouldn't have to bear it.”