

in a Chaplaincy Context

PRAYER

a mission perspective

It's 9.15am on Monday and the Methodist Superintendent Minister, WLM's CEO and other staff at our Central Office who choose to, are meeting for our shared weekly prayers. At the start of the working week, irrespective of our various responsibilities, praying together we are acknowledging our dependence upon God, in Christ, as by the Spirit we seek to fulfil our mission 'to empower people affected by homelessness, poverty and trauma to live more fulfilling lives'.

Later on Monday, and I am on the tube, heading towards Finsbury Park, going to eat lunch and spend some time in the day area with the residents at WLM The Haven, our work with people living with chronic alcohol dependency. As I travel, I turn my mind to the people I will be meeting: remembering conversations from last week, aware of what's been happening there in-between my visits, and alert to one of the residents having a birthday this week. I hold the staff team and residents before God, praying my way into the couple of hours I will be with them, trusting that God always goes ahead of me. I try to make this my practice whichever of the WLM services I am going to in my chaplain's role.

On alternate Wednesday's at WLM Katherine Price Hughes Hostel, working with men just out of prison you will find me leading a meditation group. After some initial breathing exercises, we might have a poem, the table will have a visual focal point, and we hold ten minutes of

together as we remember loved ones in the season of All Saints and All Souls, as we celebrate Christmas sharing a carol service, or as I respond to someone's request to 'say a prayer'. There is also my personal prayer: that often wrestles with God at the injustices in the housing



silent contemplation before coming back together as a group and sharing any reflections if people want. People of all faiths and none may come to this group so what is led is not specifically Christian prayer, but I say that for people of faith they may want to use the time of silence for prayer to God. Beyond the group itself I have all sorts of interesting conversations about the nature of prayer, and rich sharing across faith traditions about our understandings of prayer. Many of the men tell me its easier to pray when in prison, fewer distractions! This shared half hour that is respectful of the Other, human and divine, provides both a holding place and is a springboard to more.

These, then, are some of the ways that prayer weaves into my chaplaincy week. At other times I create space for prayer

market and the benefits system drawing on the Psalms; that weeps at many of the stories of brokenness and hurt I hear. But also prayer that delights and rejoices at people's resilience, their insights, their creativity, and their faith. As I pray into, through and about my work, I am changed, in my reading of scripture, my vision of God, my following of Christ.

By Ruth Bottoms:
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For the last seven years Ruth Bottoms has been WLM Chaplain, working across the WLM Services that variously work with people facing such issues as homelessness, chronic alcohol addiction, or being just out of prison.

