

witness

stories of  
**hope**  
for...

## salvation in the linen room

**Mary Hopper** recounts her first encounter with God in a most unexpected setting

In the 1970's, Sundays were respected and honoured in UK hospitals. Every Sunday, in the afternoon, the chaplains came round and would go to each bed, introduce themselves and ask whether people wanted prayer. Whatever the beliefs of patients, the chaplains were happy to contact leaders of other faiths. If a patient had no faith that was fine; the Chaplains would still offer to pray for them.

The interesting thing was that you couldn't help but hear what was happening all around the ward. Back then, we had very long, open-plan wards with twelve beds each side. Nothing was secret. People used to think that when you drew the curtains it was confidential! But you could hear everything – just like today! God was present on the wards, and no-one thought any more about it. There was also a beautiful chapel.

At any time during the week, as well as on a Sunday afternoon, those who were mobile enough and wanted to, could attend services.

In my fourth year of training, in 1972, on one particular Sunday afternoon, a Salvation Army group came to the ward. One of the ladies, who I'd seen previously and said hello to, asked me, 'Are you ready?'. I remember joking back, 'Ready? I'm ready for anything'. 'Good', she said, 'I think we should pray'.

The only place to pray privately and not leave the ward was the walk-in linen cupboard, full of sheets, blankets, and towels. So we went in there. And on that day, in the linen cupboard we prayed together, and I committed my life to the Lord and knew his salvation in a real way. 🌸

**Mary Hopper** is a retired nurse, midwife, lecturer, and missionary who went on to live and work in Zimbabwe for 15 years. She currently works in the UK as a Counsellor.