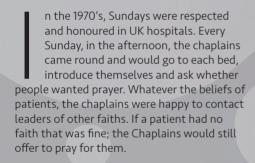


Mary Hopper recounts her first encounter with God in a most unexpected setting



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.