

Chaplaincy Update, June 2019

Jesus prayed to God "I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23

If we take Jesus seriously, and take this equation (God is in me and I am in you therefore God is in us) to its conclusion then we discover that Jesus is teaching us that God will be found in our neighbor - in us...

As a chaplain at LAC+USC, when I go into the hospital room - its not only that I am bringing God to the



patient...I am walking into their room to discover, to recognize, to bear witness to the love of God that is already there. LAC+USC is a crazy place - its a safety net hospital/level one trauma center - a place where the whole human family shows up. When I walk into the room, I never know exactly who I will find...recently I visited...

- A young man alone in ICU, suffering from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, actively dying - I prayed with him, asking God to ease his journey into his eternal rest.
- A man in his 30's whose hands had suddenly swollen up so much that he couldn't move his fingers - I listened as he shared his fears that he would never be able to work as a cook again and his terror that he wouldn't be able to provide for his family
- A mother continuing her 11 year battle with cancer, her leg gone, a stroke has paralyzed one whole side of her body, pain tearing at her bones. I joined her in prayer that God will allow her to live long enough to see her daughter one more time.
- A woman experiencing homelessness whose mental illness was blurring the difference between dreams and reality. I affirmed her declaration that she belonged to God, no matter what was else was real.
- Another mother who has been fighting cancer for 12 years. Now the cancer has filled her body with painful tumors that are taking her sight and strength and voice. She told me that she gives thanks for how God is working through her illness to bring her and her daughter together again.

In the chaplaincy ministry, I never know who exactly I will find, but I have learned that every time I cross the threshold into the hospital room, I will encounter God. Because, it turns out - God answered Jesus' prayer. We are one. God in Jesus, Jesus in us, God in us. In our sickness, in our health, in our seeking in our finding, in our wounding and in our healing - we are one.

– Rev. Elizabeth Gibbs Zehnder serves as Presbyterian staff chaplain at LAC+USC Medical Center. The Presbyterian Chaplaincy is made possible through the Consortium funded by the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii, the Presbyteries of the Los Ranchos, Pacific, San Fernando and San Gabriel (thanks to San Marino Community Church). To find out more about this ministry and how you can be involved, please contact her at Elizabeth.GibbsZehnder@gmail.com.