

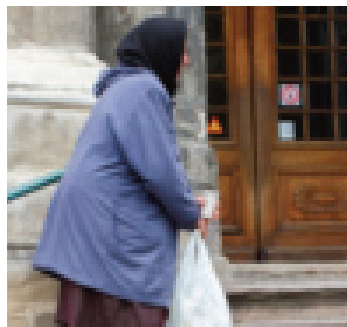
Helping where we can

I know many of us have been aware of increasing numbers of homeless people on our streets. Alongside the deep and abiding issues of justice and social inequality that surround us are some more immediate and starker ones; what do we do when asked for help?

Recently at Westminster we've had to wrestle with different sides to that more immediate question. We've discovered with one individual that we can't meet the needs and that there's behaviour we can't accept. Instead, we've needed to increase evening security and involve the police in helping us to persuade this person that

Westminster cannot offer them what they demand. Nor can we cope with the impact this has on others trying to use our building. It's a bitter lesson, because it runs counter to so much that feels right, good and true.

It reminds me of all the times, in every ministry I've had, Jenny and I have had to work out how we handle people coming to our door at all hours seeking help. It's one thing for me to be the one opening the door and recognising people I've worked with, it's quite another for Jenny to open the door after dark to a stranger when I'm out of the house at a meeting. We need wisdom here, and



strategies for being faithful and helpful without ignoring risk.

But we've also had a wonderful college moment just before Christmas when we teamed up with Winter Comfort to welcome a group of homeless people into the dining hall for a hot lunch. The food was fabulous. But, above all, people wanted to talk. Taking time to listen seemed to be the greatest gift we could offer them. Wisdom and listening; we need both.

*Holy Jesus,
before your infant form
sages bowed the knee
and acknowledged your
lordship
over all power and
wisdom.
Grant us also clear
vision and courage,
that in the light of your
light,
we may devote our
power and potential
to your service,
even when that requires
us
to go home by another
way.*

*Epiphany prayer
from the Church of Scotland*

Remembering Venci



Westminster has plenty of people who make it tick. Some get to be fairly high profile in roles that demand a public face. Others, every bit as important, work tirelessly behind the scenes. One such was our dear friend Venci, who started washing dishes in our kitchen in 2014. He got on with everyone, worked hard and brought his winning

smile into every encounter. Then came illness, which he carried with courage and grace up until his recent death.

It was so right, and such a privilege, that we could gather as a college community in our chapel to remember him and celebrate his life with family and friends. We miss him greatly. For all who mourn I pray there can be support and love and care. **We have been blessed in knowing you, Venci. You are not forgotten. Rest in peace, and rise in glory.**

