

**Hinde Street Methodist Church**  
Sunday 10th February 2019 10am  
Rev Peter Cornick

Friday was inspiring. I attended the opening of Pret House at WLM St Luke's – which you may have seen on BBC London News. WLM needed to renovate its residential accommodation at St Luke's which was – to say the least – tired. The Pret Foundation is the charitable arm of the coffee shop chain – who had the big money to provide the renovation. But the inspiration is not in a corporation giving a cash donation.

Pret have a policy of employing a certain number of people who are homeless or have anxieties in their life. To be able to house employees, for a reasonable rent, provides both job and home and so security. WLM's policy for over 130 years, has been to transform people's lives – working especially to alleviate homelessness. Pret and WLM may not seem likely partners, coming from radically different places, but the partnership has a common purpose – transforming lives.

And so, one resident who was homeless and rough sleeping until last year, proposed a toast to Pret House at WLM St Luke's. The idea is to allow people to get on their feet for a year, before moving onto more permanent accommodation.

To tour round the 26 rooms, was moving. They are bright, spacious, individual, each one decorated with an image of London – my favourite is the room with the London Eye. Imagine now, having been homeless until recently. You are offered a beautiful room which says to you, you are worth it, you deserve this. I think I'd cry if it was me.

So, Friday was inspirational.

Why has this got anything to do with the story of Jesus inviting fishermen to join him on a journey which leads to the cross and to resurrection?

Two reasons:

First; the partnership Jesus forges with fishermen is an unlikely one. A relationship with an industry which sought profit; where men worked hard in challenging conditions to feed others. The small details in this story, the boats,

the washing of nets, are important. As Jesus teaches, sitting in one of these borrowed boats, we see the beginnings of the partnership with fishermen.

The Son of God, once feted by wise Kings, baptised by John, who now commands a large crowd eager to hear, the word of God, chooses to be in partnership with fishermen.

Why?

To put out into the deep water – for a catch. The deep water of human life – with its many complicated lives – from now on you will be catching people. This partnership will be entering the deep waters of people’s lives, their broken relationships, their ill health, and transforming them.

The second reason my visit to St Luke’s is connected to this passage is this: grace.

A bright and beautiful room – for me? Do I deserve it? Simon Peter has a similar reaction.

Having been told to fish in the deep water; having caught a large catch, he is suddenly aware of the presence of God – in this man Jesus. His life catches up with him in a flash. What if Jesus discovers who Simon Peter really is? How can I possibly deserve God’s blessing? His reaction: ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’

He cannot comprehend; can barely accept; that Jesus – God – is inviting him to be part of this partnership. ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.’

A partnership between Pret and WLM which is inspiring, because it will transform people’s lives; by grace. The first disciples called; fishermen, in partnership with Jesus, offering grace, to transform the human lives.