

Summer 2021

ISSUE 140



THE  
*Simon*  
STAR



[www.simoncommunity.org.uk](http://www.simoncommunity.org.uk)





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THANK YOU

St Martins Church, Gospel Oak  
 Zero Degrees  
 Wenzel's Bakery  
 Everyone who donated clothes  
 The lady who brought us the  
 food donations and all the tins

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**A soggy 'surprise' picnic for Rachel's 50th birthday**

Thank you for reading this summer edition of Simon Star and for supporting the Community. We use this newsletter to let you know what is going on and invite you to share your stories.

If you would like to update, edit or remove your contact details then please get in touch.

You can email us on [rota@simoncommunity.org.uk](mailto:rota@simoncommunity.org.uk) or call the office on 0207 485 6639

# WELCOME TO THE SIMON STAR

The theme for this summer seems to be rain, with the weather keeping us on our toes. One minute we are taking out ice poles and frozen water bottles and the next ponchos and brollys! Always with a smile and a friendly chat too of course.

We have had a lot of birthdays in the community recently. In particular, Alan turned 75 and Rachel turned 50 so we celebrated in style with cakes, balloons and surprise picnics. It's a good opportunity to have some fun and get everyone smiling.

On 7 August we managed to have our AGM at St Martin's Church, we could not have one in 2020 due to the pandemic. It was brilliant to see everyone and to see the support from all corners of the Community,

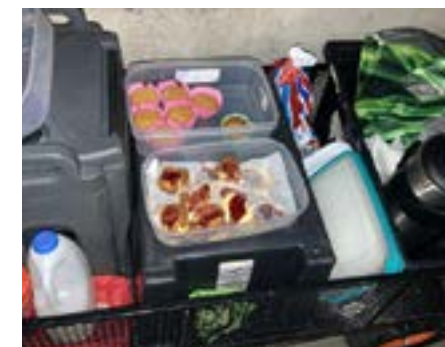


**On a recent group walk we saw flags by Bethany Williams in conjunction with the Magpie Project, beautiful**

old members and new. For some it was the first time they were in a group of people since lockdown. More about our new Board members on page 4.

We have seen numbers on street work rise dramatically over the summer (more about this on p6). We are seeing new faces, but also people returning to the streets.

We want to take a special moment to appreciate all our donors. Thank you for your support particularly during these challenging and difficult times. Your loyalty and commitment to our cause has meant that we can adapt quickly to the changing needs of our guests and continue to provide consistent support.



**Homemade cakes by Chelsea - going out on the street every Tuesday**

## Focus on... Trustees

We have had quite a few new Trustees join this year, and some changes in roles at the AGM. Thank you to them and our outgoing Trustees for all of your support. Here is some information on each of our current Trustees:

**Alan Cole** - My name is Alan Cole and I have been involved with the Community since I came into Simon House in Edinburgh in 1965. I am also a PTV and have been since 1999. I have helped with many services over the years. I particularly like helping with things like the School Talks and the Christmas Dinner. I hope that I can continue to give back some of the help and support that the Simon Community has given me.

**Alex Pickering** (Treasurer) - I have been part of the The Simon Community since January 2019 as Treasurer, looking after the finances and funding requirements as well as providing advice on best practice to the Board. I am extremely grateful to our loyal donor base who provide us with the funds to deliver our services. Outside of the Community I am a Chartered Accountant and work within the leisure sector, based just north of London.

**Chris Hunton** (Chair) - Growing up in North London, I was a near neighbour of the Simon Community in Malden Road at the end of the 1980s when I was a teacher. Since then I have built a career in marketing and advertising, having been both CEO and Managing Director of a couple of agencies in London. For the last 15 years, I have been part of the senior team at WPP, the world's largest marketing services company, as well as the longest serving member on the industry council, the IPA. During my career, I have tried to find time outside work for positive causes and have both provided consultancy to the Guide Dogs for the Blind and been a volunteer for the Royal British Legion for over 10 years. I am hopeful that I can now be helpful in supporting further the brilliant work that the Simon Community does.

If you have skills to share with us and would like to volunteer a few hours a week... please get in touch with us at [rcullen@simoncommunity.org.uk](mailto:rcullen@simoncommunity.org.uk) or on 0207 485 6639  
Thanks



**New Chair Chris out on streetwork**

**Charlotte Spence-Jones** - Hello, I'm Charlotte and I grew up, studied and now work in London. I went to UCL, where I studied the History & Philosophy of Science. After university I joined the Civil Service Fast Stream and spent 6 years working for a number of different Government Departments. I currently work part-time as a strategic policy adviser at the Ministry of Justice, whilst studying therapeutic counselling at the Metanoia Institute and completing my MSc Psychology at the University of Westminster. I champion empathy and positive regard for all those we inhabit this planet with; we all need to be met and listened to as we are, whilst feeling empowered to make decisions about our own life design. I bring my empathetic nature and natural tendency for active listening, as well as my leadership and analytic skills to The Simon Community.

**Gesa Bukowski** - As a solicitor, I bring a keen eye for detail which will help me to ensure that the Simon Community stays on top of any legal requirements applicable to it. Building on several years of experience of volunteering with different homelessness organisations, I am excited to get involved in the running of the Simon Community. As a European citizen I also hope to bring a different perspective to the Board. Outside of work and volunteering, I enjoy reading, cycling and cooking new dishes.

**Mark Pritchard** - As a senior manager overseeing NHS community mental health services in a North London borough, I'm responsible for both day to day oversight and strategic planning. As part of my work, I see the impacts of homelessness on a daily basis, including on people's mental health. I previously worked in the Simon Community as a live-in volunteer in the 1990's, and value the unique approach taken by the Community. After moving on from the Simon Community, I trained as a Registered Mental Health Nurse and have worked in a variety of mental health settings. Outside of work, I often play tennis and am trying to improve my game, particularly now my son has started to regularly win our matches.

## WHAT'S GOING ON...

We have maintained a steady presence throughout the year with our street work outreach. During the pandemic when our capacity diminished so suddenly, we had to change what we were doing, and quickly. Whatever we were going to commit to, we had to be sure we could sustain it for as long as the pandemic affected us and be able to keep going with far fewer people. We made contingency plans for when we got ill, or had to isolate. We can confirm that this has been successful, and even with a positive covid case in the house, we moved the street work prep out and we haven't missed a service on the street. It is vital at a time of such uncertainty that our guests know that we will be there.

While most of us enjoyed the football this summer (well, up until the final anyway)... we had to plan our street work around it to make sure that guests weren't gathered together in places that would put them at risk of harm. During the quarter finals we had to move a service quickly because of large crowd stand offs with the police. We drove the van to a quiet spot behind the Strand and went to get the guests from their various locations and while everyone else was shouting at the TV (or the police, as was the case in the West

End), we were having low key coffee and sandwiches round the back of the Strand! We planned the future match day services carefully after that.

Sadly, numbers at the moment are at an all time high. Before the pandemic on a street work walk we would see between 30 and 40 people per night. This August we have regularly seen between 70 and 80 people and our highest number yet of 85 people in a night. We still have enough for everyone we see and will continue to take whatever we can carry.

We were sad to say goodbye to our Jeremias who had joined us in October and has been our only live-in resident since then. He returns to Germany to continue his studies, we wish him well for the future and thank him massively for all the incredible work he has done.



## Streetwork in Berlin

I was a Live-In-Volunteer at the Simon Community in 2019 and it has had a lasting impact on me! During the Covid lockdowns I missed encounters with guests on our services, talking to those different people every day. So I asked myself: why not try to do something similar in my home town of Berlin? I asked a couple of friends whether they would join me for a little street work-inspired stroll, giving out sandwiches and getting to know the people that live right there on the street and who we pass daily. They were up for it and so we prepared 200 sandwiches and bought a load of water bottles for the homeless people of Berliner districts Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg. It was a Sunday in the middle of July and we

## THANK YOU

Rob for helping us in the garden and with other handyman tasks.  
St Martin's Church Gospel Oak for letting us use their hall for the AGM.  
Wenzel's bakery for your donations of bread, pastries and sandwiches.  
Zero Degrees for the donations of wonderful sleeping bags.  
Our outgoing Trustees, Tom and Amanda for your service to the Community.  
All our members who came out to the AGM. It was so good to see everyone after we have been separated for the last 18 months.

were experiencing a heatwave with nearly 30C. Unsurprisingly, the water was going out fast and people were very appreciative. But most of all we enjoyed talking and mainly listening to those we visited. We were getting to know another part of the city most of us had lived in for many years. It was a bitter-sweet experience. I definitely enjoyed bringing some of the memories I made in London over to Berlin and reliving those moments of interaction and connection with guests simply through some friendly words and a sandwich. At the same time, it is hard to see all those people struggling day to day with basic needs while living in such a wealthy society.

**Bruno Reccius**



Berlin street work prep

