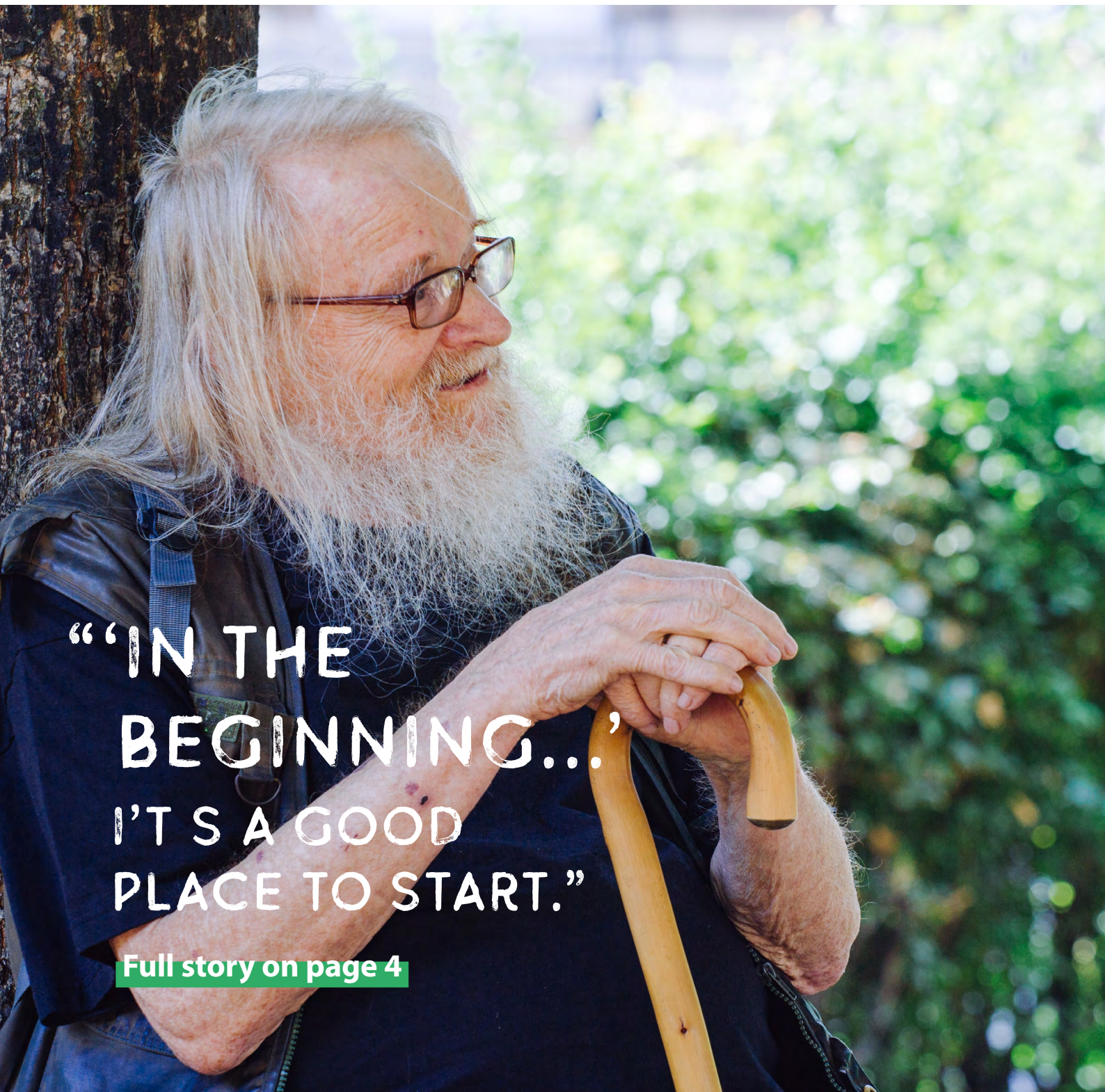


# A.S.L.A.N

ALL SOULS LOCAL ACTION NETWORK



““IN THE  
BEGINNING...”  
IT'S A GOOD  
PLACE TO START.”

Full story on page 4







**ALL SOULS LOCAL ACTION NETWORK**



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## A word from the editor

It's probably the best known of all the commands of God recorded in the Bible: "Love your neighbour". It's certainly one of the least controversial – don't we all aspire to some sort of generosity? And so, numerous and diverse churches across Britain have united around it, seeking ways to obey it, and to demonstrate this love.

The awareness that 'any person is a person just like me' pervades Christian scripture, from the creation of humankind "in God's image" (Genesis), to the redemption of "a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation). And care for a person in need is as much Old Testament as New – for instance: "whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God".

**ASLAN started from an understanding that while Christians are saved by Christ, "not by works, so that no one can boast", we are saved "to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do".** And, says Jesus, people will "see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven".

So we return to the well-known command that we started with. "Love your neighbour." It is, Jesus says, the second most important command. What is the first? "Love God." With everything. And, Jesus says: "The second is like it."

In these pages we hope to tell you a little about All Souls Local Action Network, to highlight the shared humanity of our guests and volunteers, and to glorify God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(The quotes above are all from the Bible in the NIV translation).



*Liz Middleton*

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# Dad and Daughter on the run! tea

**On Homeless Sunday 2017, ASLAN featured on BBC Songs of Praise. Songs of Praise presenter **Sean Fletcher** is a past member of ASLAN and we asked him about his experience:**

"When my daughter, Lili, was going through the 'typical teenager' phase I thought it'd be a good idea to sign her up to something that would make her see the value in helping others, and give her an idea of how lucky we are. I guess you could say I was a dad who wanted to teach his daughter a lesson. We attend All Souls Church and I'd heard about the work of ASLAN. I made some enquiries and one of the breakfast teams was short of volunteers. Lili was 17 so I had to be with her, but the 3am start was a price worth paying if it helped her mature.

"Lili wasn't the only one to mature. I ended up learning just as much as her. We were both struck by how every one of us is just a divorce, a redundancy, a bankruptcy, or a breakdown away from finding ourselves homeless. Many of the people and conversations have stayed with us years later - stories of sadness, humour and hope from the broad range of guests we met during our trips with a van full of tea, coffee and porridge. Some were clearly struggling without their home anchor, others were hardened urban nomads after years on the streets, one or two looked smart, like they were on their way to work. Lili and I had an overwhelming feeling of 'there but by the grace of God go I'."





# *Les and George*

*in conversation*



**Les** is a founder member of the ASLAN Webber Street Bible Study group which started in 2014. ASLAN Administrator **George** set out to interview Les, and found himself answering a few questions too...

**George** Who would you want as a dinner guest?

**Les** My mum, cos she was a fantastic cook. My father always complained about his food. I enjoyed the lousy ration food at school more than fine dining with my father's screams and shouts of complaint.

**Les** What were you brought up as?

**George** I was brought up without religion. Friends of my parents introduced us to Christianity. My own personal journey began then, but the real journey with Jesus, with God, only started 2 years ago when I really started to question Christianity, to think about what exactly it is I believe in.

**Les** What language was spoken at home?

**George** For me it was Mandarin. That's my parents' native language. But I grew up with both English and Mandarin - in Singapore the working language is English.

**Les** What were your parents? Were they doctors, or what?

**George** No, engineers. My dad is a professor and my mum is an engineer. They are from China.

**George** What would constitute a perfect day for you?

**Les** Twenty four hours of sleep because at the moment, I am active, on tenterhooks all the time.

**George** When did you last sing to yourself or someone else?

**Les** The time of the Lockerbie plane disaster [Dec 1988]. I was flying via Heathrow and got drunk (I was on lithium and not supposed to drink) - they were clearing the terminal and I was arrested 'for my own safety'. I sang German songs in the cell. And spent Christmas in the Priory.

**Les** My native language is German. I went to university at 17, dropped out at Christmas - the only qualification I got was German for Science. I went to work in Imperial Chemical Industries in Manchester.

In 1969 my partner and I built Global Village under Charing Cross Station; it became [the club] Heaven. I walked out of my business when I couldn't go along with my dad. I found myself in California after that, and eventually in Switzerland.

My father was an Austrian Jew. He had no respect for authority after what happened in Vienna in the 1st World War: the collapse of the banks, his father losing everything, dying; Hitler in Germany, him being interned here in the second war. He was a very secretive man, terrified, but a brilliant man. My mother was a Lutheran, I was christened in the Church of England, but nothing else until school. So the Bible study is filling in the whole background.

We're studying Genesis at the moment, Joseph: every week we do a chapter, and suddenly it just clicks - the family thing. I'm fitting the pieces together. It's a good place to start - John's gospel too: 'In the beginning'. There's a continuity to the way we do it. At school it was just a ritual; now I'm exploring the Bible, studying the history of it. I used to struggle with any version other than the KJV, but less so now. 'In the beginning was the Word.' The small Bible study is so valuable and rich, keeping God's word alive. Sometimes churches don't.

London City Mission, ASLAN - their mission is serving the people around here, and you can bring the Bible into that and it works.



**Sarah Schroder is a Bible study leader. She says:**

We learn together - the best studies are when everyone can contribute. It's always good to see how events and people in Old Testament foreshadow God's plan of salvation through Christ; Jesus fulfilling the promises and anticipation of the Old Testament in the New. The whole Bible tells the story of God's redemption of a broken world and broken lives. It's honest about human failure in the men and women God used to bring about his purposes, and that's a great encouragement to us all. The Bible studies are so much more than gaining knowledge: they've spoken into our lives, steadily bringing transformation, understanding and hope.



Hello, I'm  
**Petra**

### What is your role?

I am a London City Missionary. London City Mission has seconded me to All Souls Church to support ASLAN's work among the homeless and vulnerably housed and I am also part of the 'Free' Recovery Ministry.

### Why?

As a young woman I was looking for direction and found that Jesus is the way. His love and forgiveness have changed my life radically.

He has freed me to love others. Filled with God's love, I can do and see and understand things that I could not otherwise do, see or understand. Filled with his love, I can bless and help others.

I long for men and women to experience God's goodness and enjoy the freedom that Jesus offers us in the Gospel.

### What are the challenges?

Every person I work with is unique, every situation is different and each situation requires dependence on and wisdom from God.

### What do you enjoy?

I love people. All people are different with very different personalities and life experiences. I love listening to people's stories. From my early childhood stories had the power to capture my heart.

*Petra passes on some good news from **Ian**, who featured on the cover of last year's magazine:*

He's had a difficult year, but in summer 2018 was finally able to move into a new flat, with a little help from ASLAN friends!





# In Memory

Last year's magazine featured ASLAN guest, friend and brother *Mukesh* (also known as Salim). He died of cancer in June 2018. His funeral brought together people he'd known and befriended over many years, several of whom were surprised and comforted to see him being celebrated and remembered so lovingly.

In ASLAN we believe God made him, loved him, and saved him. Here are some other dear friends we thank God for, who we said goodbye to - and in some cases "see you later" to - this year.

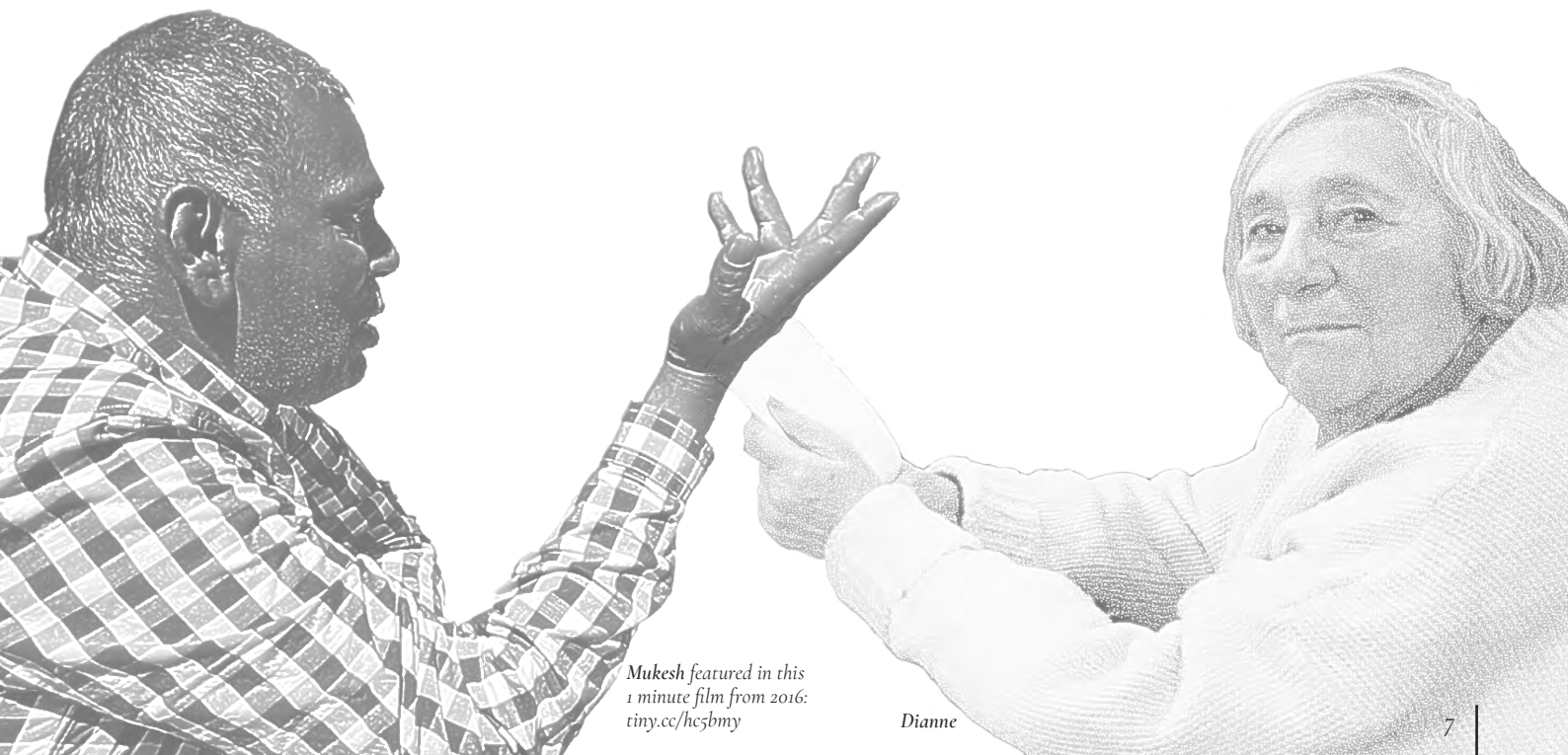
*Dr Anita Davies served in ASLAN for many years. It was partly due to her loving diligence and expertise that Mukesh had medical care - she energetically explored and pursued all help available for guests.*

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*Dianne also featured in last year's magazine. She had been visited by ASLAN friends for 8 years, and had shared times of struggle, of joy and many meals with them. She died in November of 2017, and was remembered in a service in East London.*

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*Ron was a draughtsman by trade, and helped to establish Fitzrovia Art Club. He loved birds and would feed the herons at Regents Park and sit watching water birds in Richmond; he made detailed sketches of birds, and his drawings were shown in several exhibitions.*



*Mukesh featured in this 1 minute film from 2016: [tiny.cc/he5bmy](https://tiny.cc/he5bmy)*

*Dianne*



*"As long as  
I'm able"*  
John Williams

**The ASLAN Tea Run started in 1988, and soon decided to expand services to The Passage day centre at Victoria. John Williams was a founder member of the Day Centre team.**

"My whole Fellowship Group signed up. My first memory is of guests seated at tables the length of a long passage, with just room for one person to walk past. Chris Peacock and the team leaders had prepared an induction and guidelines — they were very prayerful and diligent, and spent more than six months planning. But nothing could prepare me for getting down there and meeting the guests.

"At first I didn't find it easy to connect. It was a year before I felt the guests even noticed me, and two years before I remember having a normal light conversation — the weather, I was feeling a bit tired — I thought, 'there's something in this'. It was hard, but I kept going, because I'd promised to be there. Each team served once every five weeks back then, and when I got married in 1996, I timed it between sessions so I didn't miss one. The Day Centre has always been a part of life in my family."

"When we started there were no mobile phones or email. One Saturday, the team leader found himself alone without a team! After that we instituted reminders — phoning round the landlines a couple of weeks in advance."

We often get suggestions for what else ASLAN might do.

Here are a few from guests and leaders...





*The ASLAN teams moved from The Passage in 2007, and now serve at London City Mission's Webber Street Day Centre. John went with them.*

"The big change has been in where people come from - the shift towards Eastern Europe. Practically that means preparing a lot of coffee! In the early days we only served tea, though sugar has always been popular. Of course English language lessons have become very important.

**Favourite request: "Two teas - or not two teas, that is the question. Whether tis nobler..." and so on, for several lines of Shakespeare.**

"When I think of the conditions people are facing, those haven't changed. The need for employment and shelter. And what causes the need - the common denominator is isolation, often through family breakdown. Loss of job, bereavement, injury or a health issue - those knocks plus family breakdown, and someone is on the streets. Someone coming from abroad, far from family, shares that isolation.

"The longer I do this, the more important I realise our role is. Week after week, we are there. A fixed point in very uncertain and insecure lives. Breakfast. Talk. A shave. Overarching everything we do is just being there at the set times. It is a pole in the quicksand.

"Familiar faces really count. People who a guest recognises - "Oh yes, I know you, it's OK here." One volunteer isn't comfortable talking with people, but he's been serving practically on several teams for many years - guests recognise him, they trust the team with him. Guests view commitment to them as a valuable thing. In their world nobody bothers with them."

*John has been with ASLAN for 29 of its 30 years. What might the future hold?*

"I'll be 60 soon, and I've been thinking, what do I do? A number of volunteers join us in their 60s when they stop work. So I'll probably increase my regular commitment. I hope to be fit enough to continue to serve - I'm a member of a gym! Increasingly the guests value long service. So I think it's really important for long service team members to keep serving as long as they're able."

**"It's been a gradual process for me - starting to have conversations, becoming a familiar face - being remembered and trusted, reminiscing, engaging in that world."**

**"We've got volunteers who weren't born when I started with ASLAN!"**



# Meet Tom



**Tom** has had a long and eventful career in the legal profession. We wanted to know about his relationship with ASLAN...

I had two toes amputated recently. Every other patient had family visiting them and I stood out like a sore thumb, but Petra and Richard visited me, even on the day of the operation. Petra works for ASLAN, and Richard takes time off work to help out.

I live by myself in a flat, filled up with stuff I've hoarded which isn't even worth looking at. They visit me there too. ASLAN is very important to me - Webber Street, the Entertainment Evenings. The Tea Run - my goodness, they have to get up at about 3am. The volunteers - if I had a hat I'd take it off to them.

**"You do a little bit of work, and actually you have a roof over your head. Yet something draws you back to ASLAN."**

If you ask me it's friendship and fellowship. I sit at a table where there's a lady who looks about 70, I sort of help her, get her drinks or cutlery. I know it's nothing but... It's not just her, it's other people. Maybe they have very few friends. It's interesting to me but maybe it's interesting to them that there's somebody who's chatting to them.

Sometimes I help people who don't have anyone to turn to, I'm not saying I'm wonderful, I'm not, but it's something I can do in return maybe for somebody who's desperate.

I hate to say it but I'm 69 this month. If my legs don't get better and I'm housebound, I won't be able to work anymore. I'll go to Webber Street several times a week, and maybe if somebody is in dire straits I can try to help. I'm not saying I'm wonderful, I'm not, but I'm not going to just lock myself away.



Tom with Petra



Richard

**Want to get involved? Signing up is simple!**

Visit [www.allsouls.org/ASLANvolunteering](http://www.allsouls.org/ASLANvolunteering) or come to our Open Day to learn more. Details on the back page.

**Read more about Petra's work on page 6.**



# First Impressions

We asked long term guests to tell us the first thing they remember about ASLAN.

First night of the night shelter

Terrible, like a prison

ASLAN - Who is that?

Surprised at the number of people I knew

Tea on a cold morning

Anxious about what was going to happen

That's a reminder that while some may quickly feel confident, for others the new environment takes time to adjust to. As many of our team members know...

I helped with the showers. Everyone is an individual and has their preferences. I had to change my attitude from 'just be grateful for what you're given'.

Intimidating the first time - you don't know what to expect.

I stuck to the tea and coffee table: something practical whilst taking stock of things. I didn't know how to begin to talk to the guests. Turns out we've talked about everything from politics to celebrity gossip to train timetables - it's not boring!

"Don't tell me I've got to clean those toilets"  
"We have to clean the loos?!"  
"That's going to make me gag"

I started in the kitchen, buttering toast, glad to have a simple task. I ended up doing Food Standards training and becoming the kitchen lead for our team.

A guest told me it was when he realised volunteers were even cleaning the toilets that his whole attitude changed. His life did too. Now I always offer to clean the loos - it feels like a special privilege.



London City Mission are setting up a new shelter and need volunteers

Ah this sounds soo awesome!!!  
Exciting development for LCM

ASLAN is recruiting Nightshelter teams for winter 2018-19

Would commit to a Friday or Saturday night if ya need someone...

Year-round ASLAN teams welcome new volunteers of all faiths and none

I do find this interesting

Would love to find out more...

Then come to ASLAN's Open Evening on 8th Oct!

# ASLAN Open Evening

Monday 8th October 2018

7 to 9pm

Upper Room

All Souls Clubhouse

141 Cleveland Street

W1T 6QG

7pm Sandwiches (kindly donated by Pret a Manger)

7:30 - 8pm Formal part of evening\*

8 - 9pm Chat, find out more, sign up

\*At 7.30pm we'll hear from a panel including recovery workers, a person with experience of homelessness, and a shelter team leader; Dr Rev Chris Wright will speak briefly from the Bible.

