

WELCOME FROM SAM

In February 1969, a small number of volunteers made up of students from University College Dublin and Trinity College, packed up their flasks of soup and sandwiches and set out on the streets of Dublin to provide food and support to people experiencing homelessness.

Within a few short months the volunteers had set up a base on Winetavern Street, in a house owned by the Franciscans. They later moved onto Sarsfield Quay by the Liffey. This marked the beginning of Dublin Simon Community and this year we are commemorating 50 years of helping people to rebuild their lives.

Simon offered a different kind of service for those experiencing homelessness which demonstrated a more caring side to society. Simon was a community, offering a radical alternative to institutional care. The Simon Community was named after Simon of Cyrene, a figure from the New Testament who helped Jesus carry his cross.

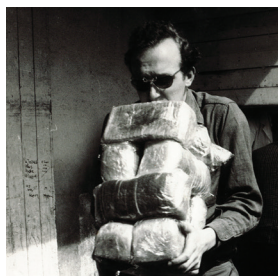
The "Simon" ethos was to be non-judgemental, to accept people as we found them and offer unconditional help - a community in it for each other. Over the past 50 years, Simon has served people fighting for survival, robbed of humanity and dignity. They were homeless, roofless and isolated and needed nourishment, shelter, acceptance and respect.

Because of the commitment of supporters like you, in the months, years and decades that passed, thousands of shattered lives have been rebuilt and saved. People are depending on us and we in turn are depending on you. It is with your generosity and kindness that we can encourage people to get back on their feet, with Simon by their side.

Many thanks, your help is appreciated.

Sam McGuinness
Dublin Simon Community CEO

THE EARLY DAYS



"SIMON IS ALL ABOUT GREAT PEOPLE..."

"When days were dark, chaos was everywhere, the pressure was intense, the work was never done and the urge to quit was mighty, it was the people who kept me going, great people at all levels in Simon - all people of generosity and commitment.

"Many of these people are gone without a trace; some are dead. Other greats who must not be forgotten are the people who silently and generously provide the money to keep us on the road.

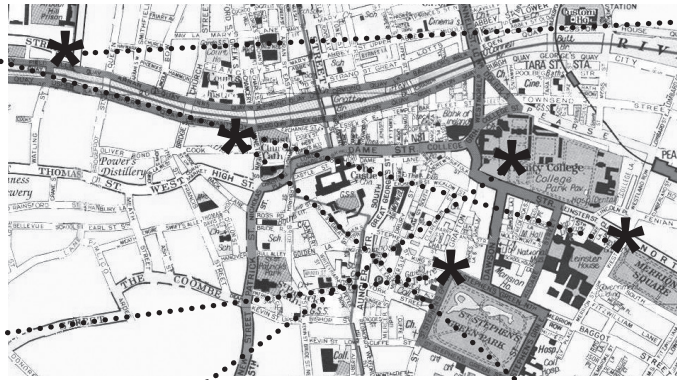
"All of us probably have (or should have!) got our inspiration from the modest, patient people who lived in old cars, doorways and skippers and who had the canny gift of seeing the bright side of things. Simon is about the sharing of that spirit; the sharing of human goodness."

The late Frank O'Leary,
Soup Runner, Committee Member
and Chairperson, writing in 1989.

SIMON MOVES ACROSS DUBLIN

FEBRUARY 1969

Merrion Square
The first Soup Run, made up of Trinity and UCD students, sets out on the streets of Dublin. This followed a talk at Earlsfort Terrace by the founder of the Simon Community in England, Anton Wallich-Clifford.



JANUARY 1971

Sarsfield Quay
Volunteers acquire No. 9 & No. 10 Sarsfield Quay for the Soup Run, a Wet House and a Dry House.



MAY 1969

St Stephen's Green Park
Volunteers hold a 24 Hour Fast and Sleep Out to raise funds for supplies and a residential house.

JUNE 1969

Arts Block, Trinity College
The volunteers are given permission to use the Arts Society Rooms during the summer.



OCTOBER 1969

Winetavern Street
Frank O'Leary, a Franciscan Priest, organises the next base at a disused house, soon becoming a shelter and base for the Soup Run.

"They said, 'We're Simon'. They told me they had a house in Winetavern Street. I'd get a mattress on the floor, a cup of tea and whatever else was going. So I took the chance. They put me into a car and brought me down."

Tommy, Winetavern Street Resident*

"It was really good living in that house - something I couldn't explain. You had a roof over your head, you had a home, although you were only sleeping on a mattress on the floor. It was great luxury."

John Joe, Winetavern Street Resident*

*Quotes from 'It's Simon - The Story of the Dublin Simon Community' by Ursula Coleman.

SIMON IN THE NEWS

IN THE UNIVERSITIES

Nourishment for Vagrants

By Our T.C.D. Correspondent.

Irish Times
14th March
1969

THREE NIGHTS a week a group of Trinity and U.C.D. students take bread and soup to areas frequented by Dublin's down and outs. Though there is an estimated 200 people sleeping out in the city this winter, the organisers of this soup run have only located 43 and not all of these will avail themselves of the free soup for fear of the motives of the "dogooders." Undaunted the volunteers make their regular stops and by doing so hope to win the "dossers" around to accepting warmth, nourishment and, perhaps, eventually their friendship.

THE DARK SIDE OF DUBLIN

We cater for people who are not able to avail of the services offered. We must go out to them and accept them as they are, on their own conditions."

The aim is to have a three tier community. The first plan is a rough all night cafe. This, it is hoped, will attract outcasts of the night and develop into a shelter where 12 down and outs and three Simon workers will live together, all decisions being taken by the community.

Irish Times
16th May
1969

AN IRISHWOMAN'S DIARY

Night Watch

Irish Times
6th October
1969

While the worthy burghers of Dublin sleep snug in their beds, some 40 young people of whom about half are students spend the small hours with the down and outs and derelicts of the city's skid row. Since February the young people, who belong to the Simon Community, have brought hot soup and consolation to the men who sleep rough, in an abandoned car or truck, perhaps, or in any shivering shelter they can find.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Dublin Simon Community would like to establish contact with anyone who has volunteered with us over the past 50 years to share your stories and experiences. Anyone who is interested can contact the Fundraising Team at simon50@dubsimon.ie. Thank you.



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