

# Around & About with ASLAN (1)

## THE JOYS OF SANDWICH-MAKING

by Rosemary Wright

I have been asked to write an article with the above title. Of all the uninspiring, uncatchy, ungrabbing titles, this one must take the biscuit. Would you be enthused to keep reading, if that gob-smacking little title caught your eye, "The joys of sandwich making"? I think not.

So I'm assuming that by now everyone has stopped reading. So I will carry on writing as though I'm writing for myself only. Which most of my writing is, funnily enough. I write comments on students' homework which I know the little rotters will never look at. I write reviews of courses which vanish unread into deep, dusty filing drawers, to be thrown away after the statutory seven years. Or is it seventy years? Well, maybe I've just unearthed one of the joys of sandwich making: once every four weeks I spend a couple of hours doing something that a few people really, really appreciate, stuff they can

really, really get their teeth into – their few remaining teeth. We have to be careful what we give them, as dental care isn't too terrific if you're living on the streets.

Any other joys spring to mind? Well, I think having your arms up to the elbows in margarine and peanut butter is therapeutic in some ways, and it certainly encourages relaxed social chat, and shared confidences. I think it's an undiscovered source of group therapy that the psychoanalytic world is yet to discover. We get to know our fellow spreaders really well, and they become great friends. We share stories that you would only tell to a captive audience. Anyone not tied to the table by sticky hands and jars of marmalade would shuffle off in boredom at some of the stories I've inflicted on them. And if they're still friends at the end of the



evening, there's a great little Italian restaurant just over the road from the Clubhouse, which you can drift into after finishing the clearing up. In fact, whenever the manager sees some of our group shuffling along Warren Street towards the Clubhouse, he puts a reserved sign on one of his tables! I hate to be a boring creature of habit, but there you are.

Now I suppose I should spend some time on the joys of the artistry of sandwich making, the skill in the wielding of the knife, the sensuous texture of the jam and the soothing rhythm of the grating of the cheese. These little pleasures add so much to the regular routines of life. Rembrandt, in all his glory, could not apply a palette knife like one of these!

But there are a few serious things to remember about the sandwich makers, which maybe you could pray for. We are the only

ASLAN volunteers who don't have any direct contact with the homeless, the people we work for. This can lead to a slight feeling of isolation, of being on the fringes of the work. We really appreciate the training days and prayer meetings, to get to hear what is going on at the points of contact: the tea runs, the entertainment evenings, and The Passage. I had been making sandwiches for about six months when I decided I really should go on a tea run, to see where the fruits of our labours went. It was tremendously inspiring, and if you're keen on joining us, do think about doing a run at some stage.

So there you have it. Five hundred words on the joys of sandwich making. But the work just couldn't go on without us. Every cog in this wheel is essential. Some plant, others water, and still others gather in the harvest. Whilst the rest of us make sandwiches!



*ASLAN's mission is to manifest God's love to homeless people through our actions*