



"Jesus is alive! He remains with us and in us. With him we love one another, We create community, We learn to forgive and to celebrate, We welcome the poor. We give our lives for our brothers and sisters and we work towards creating a more friendly world. We are the face and the hands and the heart of Jesus." (Jean Vanier)

At Christmas time we celebrate the fact that God became completely present to us in the face, the hands and the heart of Jesus Christ. The fact that Jesus was born and walked on this earth is the best answer to all those of us who have asked the question, what does it mean that we have been created in the image and likeness of God?

At L'Arche Lethbridge we make a commitment to live the truth that each and every person carries an equal share of the image and likeness of God. It doesn't matter where we come from, what our faith background is, or whether we live with or without a developmental disability, the fact that we live and breath means that we are all equal in our ability and our capacity to bear witness to the character of the One who has created us all.

We usually aren't very aware of what it actually means to have been created in the image and likeness of God. But every once in a while we have an experience that shines a spotlight on the truth of who we are created to be. In this Christmas newsletter, we'd like to share one of these experiences with you.

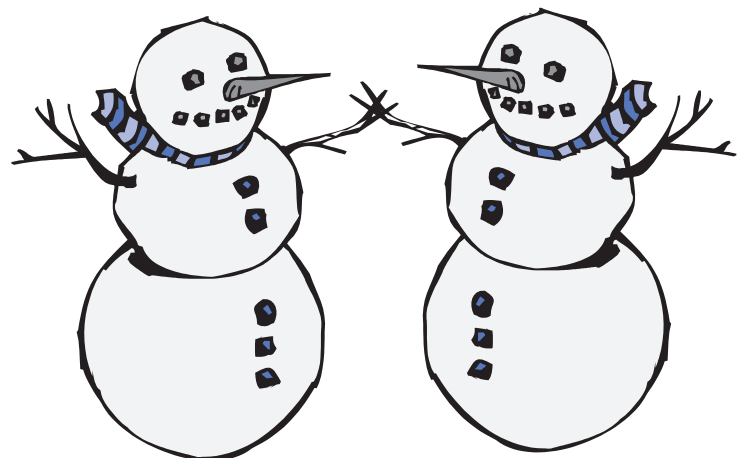
Doug (a member with a developmental disability at L'Arche Lethbridge) and Katharina (one of the L'Arche Lethbridge assistants) were on their way to do some shopping. As they were walking to the mall, they needed to pass by a bench on which three homeless men were sitting. Most people were either choosing to walk to the mall on a path that didn't involve passing this bench, or walking on the opposite edge of the path avoiding all eye contact with the three homeless men. If it had been up to the Katharina, they would have probably done the same thing. But that wasn't what Doug wanted to do! He walked right up to the three homeless men, said hello to each one of them and gave them all a high-five as he walked past.

No money was exchanged. No "help" was given or offered. All that happened was simple human contact freely and joyfully given. "All" that happened was that five people – Doug, Katharina, and the three homeless men – felt better and more alive after the high-fives were given than they did before.

Doug's high-fives reveal more about who God is and who we are created to be than a shelf of theology books. Perhaps it's not too much of a stretch to consider the birth of Jesus as God's "high-five" to the world inviting us into a new relationship with God and with each other.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, let's listen to Doug's invitation to consider the stranger our friend. Let's reach out to those who are unlike us and, in doing so, witness to the character of the One who has created us all. Let's learn a little bit more about what it means to be the face, the hands, and the heart of Jesus in our beautiful and broken world.

We wish each of you a merry and meaningful Christmas!



“The important thing is to remain open to the signs of Providence while growing, to go on listening to the cry and the needs of handicapped people who are at different stages of their lives, to continue to be welcoming, to be ready to found communities if there seems to be a need for them, and to accept new kinds of poverty each day – for material poverty is not the only one. The danger is that we close in on ourselves and our achievements. We have to pray that we keep going further along the road of insecurity.” (Jean Vanier)

L’Arche Lethbridge’s 2010-2014 Community Mandate

by L’Arche Lethbridge Board President, Bob Campbell

When, as Board President, I was asked to participate in L’Arche Lethbridge’s 2010-2014 Community Mandate process, I gladly accepted not realizing what I was getting myself into! I had worked extensively as a strategic planning consultant in my professional life, so I thought I knew a thing or two about organizational planning. I was wrong. The L’Arche Lethbridge Mandate process turned all my previous assumptions on their head!

The mandate process is truly a “bottom up” approach in which each and every community member contributed heartfelt ideas that were valued and helped shape the new mandate. For this reason, the mandate is not a set of goals that have been imposed from “on high” by those who may think they know what the community needs. Instead, the new mandate clearly outlines what the community members believe is necessary for L’Arche Lethbridge to move forward and to grow over the next four years.

This new mandate calls L’Arche Lethbridge to grow in three specific areas:

1. To be more fully engaged in fulfilling the mission and vision of L’Arche in the ways we live our intentional community life, and in the ways we share the gifts of L’Arche with those around us;
2. To recognize and address the changing needs of members;
3. To welcome more people with Intellectual Disabilities to L’Arche Lethbridge.

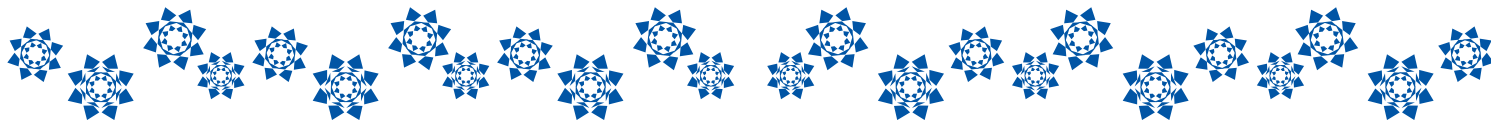
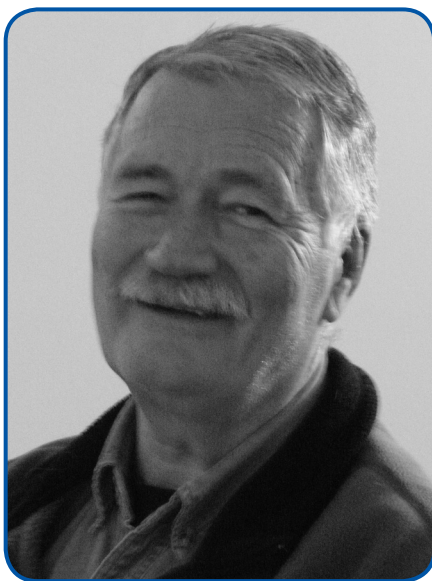
I am truly grateful to have had the experience of helping to create L’Arche Lethbridge’s new mandate. I have gained a much deeper understanding of L’Arche, its philosophy and values as well as the vision that Jean Vanier has infused into the organization. I am very appreciative of the L’Arche Lethbridge community: the members with and without disabilities, the staff, the volunteers, and others. I was deeply impressed by their commitment to the community, and with their vision for a more peaceful

world in which each person is valued for their uniqueness and the gifts they bring to our world.

I am looking forward to working together with the board and the L’Arche Lethbridge Community to develop the strategic plan that will help us implement the new mandate in a way that promotes creativity and spiritual growth for all community members.

Finally, just a little bit about myself. I am a retired adult educator. My last job was as Director of Population Health for the Chinook Health Region.

Most of my work over the years involved working with communities, non-profits and corporations to develop plans for implementing positive change within communities. I have volunteered on numerous boards, and am past president of the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Alberta Public Health Association. My wife Nadia and I have been married for 48 years and have seven children and six grandchildren.



New L'Arche Lethbridge Offices & Community Meeting Space

You might remember that in our 2009 Christmas newsletter we shared with you that we were in the process of transforming an empty warehouse at 240-12C Street North into the new offices and community meeting space for L'Arche Lethbridge. The picture to the right shows you what the space that would become our "community room" looked like in late November, 2009 as the renovations began.

It doesn't look like that anymore! Below is a picture showing what the space looks like now. This is where we gather as a community for celebrations and various other kinds of meetings important to the community life of L'Arche Lethbridge. A kitchenette and a fully accessible washroom (located just off the left hand edge of the picture) are also part of this room.



On the other side of the glass doors are 5 offices, an archives room, a small meeting room and another washroom. This new office and community meeting space not only meets our current needs, but it positions us well for the growth that we committed to in our new mandate. And best of all, the entire building is completely wheelchair accessible!

We are making small steps to be as environmentally friendly as possible in our new space. Not only do we want to treat each person with dignity and respect, we also want to treat our earth with dignity and respect.

We have pledged that 60% of our trips to the office between Clean Air Day 2010 and Clean Air day 2011 (June 2, 2010 – June 8, 2011) will not involve the use of a petro-chemical fuel. We have issued an "Easy on the Earth" challenge on our new website inviting individuals and organizations to pledge to walk or bike 60% of their commutes this year.



We were honoured to welcome Mayor Bob Tarleck to the "official" opening of our new offices on June 2, 2010 to cut the ribbon on our new bike rack.



Sharing the Gifts of L'Arche Lethbridge...

The new L'Arche Lethbridge Mandate is calling us to share the gifts of L'Arche Lethbridge with those around us in new ways. As the story on the first page of this newsletter illustrates, the relationships between people with and without disabilities at L'Arche Lethbridge often invite us into a deep and meaningful reflection on what it really means to be human. We believe that these kinds of reflections are important for the world today, and we want to get better at sharing them. We'd welcome any suggestions you might have about how we can make the vision and mission of L'Arche more visible and relevant in your world!

We are making two small steps in this direction. The first is to update our website. We'd like to invite you to visit our new website at www.larchelethbridge.org. Tell us what you think of it, and if there's anything that we can do to make it better. We'd love to hear your feedback!

We are also working with the Martha Retreat Centre to develop a 5 week retreat session series called "There are no Weeds in God's Garden."

This retreat series will run every Wednesday evening from March 16 – April 13, 2011 and will explore the vision and spirituality of Jean Vanier and what it means for our lives today. You can find out more about this program at: www.themarthas.com. Click on "Retreat Centres" and then click on "Martha Centre."

The L'Arche Lethbridge Community is a dynamic example of how people of different intellectual capacity, social origin, religion, and culture can live together in peace. This is a lofty goal which is often demanding and seldom easy. We know that we cannot do it along. And so we never forget about the gift that you are to us! Your continued prayers, friendship, and financial support are very important to us, and we thank you.

A blessed Christmas to each of you from all of us at L'Arche Lethbridge!



L'Arche Lethbridge is able to be faithful to its Mission of revealing the unique value and vocation of persons with a developmental disability because of your ongoing support and encouragement. We invite you to continue to help build the community of L'Arche Lethbridge in any of the following ways

- As a financial contributor, I/we pledge a donation of \$ _____ ;
- As a benefactor by exploring how I/we can make a bequest to L'Arche Lethbridge in my/our will;
- As a member of the Volunteer Board of Directors
- As a volunteer developing friendships with individuals in the community;
- As an assistant who shares life with persons with developmental disabilities in one of our homes;
- As a respite worker.
- Please remove my name from the L'Arche Lethbridge mailing list.

Name* _____

Telephone No. _____ Fax No. _____

Address* _____

E-mail _____

** required information to allow us to issue you a tax receipt for your donation*

L'Arche Lethbridge needs to fundraise about \$50,000.00 each year. Thanks to generous contributions of time and resources, the dollar value of salaries and materials devoted to this fundraising is about \$5,000.00. All funds are used to provide homes and support for adults with a developmental disability. Thanks especially to Warwick Printing for their good service and very reasonable printing costs!

