



Message from the Board Chair of L'Arche Lethbridge

2016 has been another successful year for L'Arche Lethbridge as we continue to live out our Community Mandate and fulfill the Mission of L'Arche. One of the highlights of the year was the wonderful celebration held on November 1st honouring 25 years of L'Arche in Lethbridge; it was a celebratory evening of good food, fellowship, reminiscing and entertaining square dancing. It was also noteworthy in that we were able to recognize our founding members: Don Flaig, and Adele Caron, Clair and Elaine Forestell, Tedda Kaminski and Jayne Snider. We were also able to acknowledge past and present Community Leaders: Don Flaig, Pat Lenon, Doug Wiebe and Tim Wiebe.

It is good to celebrate our past and acknowledge those who have contributed so much over the past twenty five years to our community, but now we must move forward and discern where and how God wants us to grow and develop. Jean Vanier tells us that "A community is only a community when most of the people in it have made the passage from " the community for me" to "me for the community," I feel our L'Arche Lethbridge Community is well along that path.

Fundraising is always a challenge for non-profit organizations like L'Arche. If it's not a new van it's a new boiler for one of the houses or new windows and on it goes. These costs are not covered from our government grants and require a lot of time and effort from staff and volunteers to ensure we have funds to meet these ongoing needs. That's why we need your generosity to help us meet the financial needs of our community.

Henri Nouwen, in his wonderful essay A Spirituality of Fundraising, stated that "Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission." That is what we are doing at this time of year: we are offering you a chance to participate in helping us to fulfill our Mandate.

I would at this time like to recognize Jen Culler for her nine years of outstanding service on our board and in the Community. She will be missed and we wish her well .

On behalf of our Board I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and all the best in 2017!

Bob Campbell

Board Chair



Bob Campbell, Board Chair of L'Arche Lethbridge



L'Arche Lethbridge 25th Anniversary Message

What a great celebration on November 1, 2016 for our 25th Anniversary! There was 183 of us from as far away as Montreal, Quebec; Comox, B.C.; Edmonton, AB; Calgary, AB; and then of course all the people from Lethbridge and area. Many people made a great effort to be present. The organizing sub-committee and L'Arche Lethbridge Board really appreciated your enthusiasm and presence – you honoured our community by your presence!

We gathered, visited, ate – a great meal prepared by Adam Essex, the chef & manager of the Italian Canadian Cultural Centre – and listened to greetings from various political people and our vice-leader Gabrielle Beaulieu from Montreal. Our own Community Leader, Tim Wiebe, sincerely shared his thoughts about where we are at now and where as a community we might grow towards. The 1991 Founding group present were acknowledged as well as past community leaders plus past and present board members. Of course the important people, our Core members and Assistants, were also acknowledged. Doug and Jean, core members who died recently, were named and remembered.



We had the opportunity to share in the 3 Anniversary cakes as the evening progressed. Then we shoved the tables to one side and began to square dance with Betty Ann Fieldberg calling and teaching with the help of her husband, along with two experienced square dance couples. There was a lot of laughter, sharing “mis-steps & directions” and generally being an inclusive community/family.

As a special project, we asked attendees to donate to Solidarity for Central and South America. Many people did so very generously so we raised \$1,970.00 to send to our International L'Arche for the needs of our homes in Central & South America (they get little or no government support.)



It was so great to see again many old friends, to swap stories and experiences. As well many new friends were made. The three Lethbridge families who got to have the Edmonton group as billets were especially gifted with their company.

Thanks to everyone who made this celebration possible and special!

*Mary Shillington, Sub-Committee Chair
with members: Virginia Fawcett, Irena Olas,
Lynne Dennis, Marian Biggins,
and Doug Wiebe.*



Reflection after the February 2016 Retreat

20 years ago in 1996, I went to India. It was a trip inspired after living in L'Arche Calgary for 9 months. A question I had at that time was "How do I want to live my life?" So the quest continued. India seemed to be a perfect place to explore! At the beginning of my trip, I visited L'Arche Chennai (Madras) for 3 days. I wanted to see L'Arche in the context of India. I was struck when I saw how the community came together for Morning Prayer. In the room, we formed a circle. Beautiful fresh flowers were picked from around the neighbourhood and they were offered on the floor. There were also oil lamps and incense. We gathered and sat on the floor. There were three texts in the room:- the Koran, the Bible and the Hindu text. Mosquitos were flying around and we chanted "Shaanti"(peace in Hindi). We all seemed to be very different from each other with different religions and yet we were able to sit together in the one room to come to the source of ourselves. I was astonished by this moment! "What is this sense of calmness?" I wondered and more questions also arose. I graduated from university in 1997 and I decided to go back to L'Arche, this time in L'Arche Lethbridge where I grew my roots as a member of L'Arche.

This year in February 2016, one of my dreams came true! I was able to visit L'Arche Trosly in France and attend 10 days of silent retreat called "Desert Retreat". The word was given by Joe Egan, Eileen Glass, Fr. Bill Clark, Ruth Patterson and Jean Vanier and organized by Michele Dormal and Kathy Foulds. The words shared by each person were special based on their truth, spirituality and experiences in L'Arche and I was touched deeply by their authenticity. But at the same time, my soul shouted "this is difficult!" I was expecting total stillness, gratitude and peace throughout the retreat so I was surprised by my reaction!!!! Maybe the reason it was difficult was because I felt I was different. There were 41 participants and only two including myself were non-Christian. I felt insecure about this reality in the group at the beginning. I tried hard not to build a wall (me VS them). I tried hard to work on my attitude/ego and find the common ground based on our experiences in L'Arche:- relationship, encounter, self-discovery, brokenness and gifts, vulnerability and how people with developmental disability teach me of inner freedom and make "heart memories" which are often accompanied with laughter, tenderness, tears or without words.

Fruit of the retreat? I am not even sure if I am aware. The only thing I can say is that I felt affirmed to be who I am. Despite differences and challenges in our lives, we have the chance to love and be loved and we belong to the common humanity. And L'Arche is a place I can consistently practice vulnerability and being challenged to grow and be mindful (not easy!).

"Never underestimate your questions and experiences in your life" was one of the things Joe said. And I am so very grateful for my journey in L'Arche because I receive the gifts of "ordinary sacred-ness" in everyday life. L'Arche Trosly being so poetic as a founding place, I became so aware that ordinary sacred-ness lies in my daily life and people around me, here and today. I believe that is one way the Spirit whispers and gives gifts to nurture lives with relationships. I am gently befriending my ego and giving my best shot to live each day to the fullest.



Tamaki Saga, Amani House Leader

Message from the Community Leader

I was excited to hear one of the stories on CBC Radio's weekly science program, Quirks and Quarks on September 24th(see the link below if you would like to listen). Dr Suzanne Simard's research has shown that trees can communicate with each other through an underground fungal network. This communication takes place between tree species and includes the movement of nutrients. A forest isn't just trees, but a complex interdependent system with many individuals working together for the good of the whole. I thought this is great! It reminds me of the reality of our shared life together in community.

Our community has about 30 members and we come from 13 different countries. We come from many different cultures, faith backgrounds, generations, abilities and levels of schooling. Our community is like a forest, it isn't just people, it is a complex interdependent system of many individuals. We strive to be united in our Mission, to recognize each other's gifts and call each other to grow.

As a community of people we are called to engage with culture and society, to share our collective gift with the larger body of humanity. This is complex! We are being called to discern the gaps we see in the world around us. When Jean Vanier invited two men to live with him in a small house in Trosly France he was moved into action to respond to the gap he saw between the gifts of people with a disability and how they were shut away by society. What is the call for L'Arche Lethbridge today? How are we being called to respond to the gaps we see in the world around us?

Our community is not just made up of the members of the community who are involved in the day-today life. Again, we are like the forest, we depend on many individuals including our Board, employees, volunteers, friends and donors to make it possible for us to live our Mission in Lethbridge.

I invite you to join us in bringing our Mission to life in Lethbridge by making a financial donation this Christmas season.

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/quirks-quarks-for-september-24-2016-1.3774759/trees-have-theirown-fungal-internet-1.3774946>

November/December 2016



Tim Wiebe, Community Leader

L'Arche Lethbridge needs to raise \$50,000 externally annually. The value of salaries and materials devoted to this fundraising is about \$5,000. All funds are used to provide homes and support for adults with developmental disabilities. Thank you to The Warwick Printing Co. Ltd., and Haul-All, for excellent service and prices.

