



Message from the Board Chair: May, 2017

It is always a pleasure, as board chair, to share a few thoughts with you and to update you on developments within our L'Arche Lethbridge community.

Our L'Arche Lethbridge community continues to flourish as we move through the third year of our four year mandate under our Community Leader Tim Wiebe's leadership. We are still faced with the usual challenge increasing our fundraising abilities, finding who will be here for the long term and dealing with unexpected emergencies such as vehicle breakdowns; but those are manageable and we continue to thrive. It is a rewarding experience to work and associate with so many dedicated people: house leaders, assistants, the leadership team, board members, volunteers and, most importantly, core members who teach us so much about life and what is really important in our life journey.

I am very fortunate in my daily activities to be able to share the L'Arche story with friends and associates in the larger Lethbridge community. When asked what is

different about L'Arche from other agencies working with folks with intellectual disabilities, I try to summarize the words of Jean Vanier who when asked this question years ago responded by saying: "Sometimes it is difficult to explain what L'Arche is. In more formal language, we are people with and without intellectual disabilities living mutually transforming relationships that become signs of peace in the world. We discover that, although some of us may have come to assist or help the core members, we too are changed. We become more patient, more kind, more accepting more forgiving, more joyful. In short, we learn to love." To me, the last sentence of his quote is the best summary I can give when explaining what L'Arche is all about. I also believe our L'Arche Lethbridge community and L'Arche communities throughout the world are a model of what our world needs in these uncertain times.

Have a wonderful summer!

Bob Campbell
L'Arche Lethbridge Board Chair

Foundation Grant

On May 4th L'Arche Lethbridge was awarded \$10,000.00 from the Lethbridge Community Foundation's Community Priorities grant.

This grant will help cover the cost of installing air conditioning on the second floor of Amani House and make the home more comfortable and livable for all the Amani house members



into the future. The Foundation said that the grant application was very well done!

Many thanks to the Lethbridge Community Foundation for their support of our community, to Cliff and Mary from our Board, and Thomas, Pavla and Tim from Amani House for attending the award ceremony and representing L'Arche!

L'Arche Lethbridge Retreat: April 28th-30th, 2017 – Southern Alberta Bible Camp

Our Spiritual Life Committee (Brad, Carol, Eric, Marie & Ricky) did a great job of planning this retreat entitled “You Can Shine! Living in the Light of God” with Bryan Moyer Suderman as our resource facilitator.

Carole Perry, another Board Member, said, “When is the last time you allowed yourself to just be? You let God speak to you instead of giving Him your shopping list of requests. The L'Arche Retreat lead by Bryan Moyer Suderman was such a time. Bryan realized that you lose anyone's attention after 10 minutes or less, so he spoke little but meaningfully in between very short simple song keeping the attention of the gathering.”



Bryan Moyer Suderman, Retreat Resource Leader

Bryan brought his guitar, voice, musical ability, great smile and deep spiritual presence to this retreat and connected with everyone in a very special way. We couldn't sit back and not connect with the music, prayer, thoughts, Bible readings and general JOY that oozed out of Bryan's leadership. He engaged us all and many kids, core members and others played a variety of rhythm instruments adding to the enthusiasm of the singing.

Of course the Wagon Ride was great fun and appreciated by all who went on that. Others enjoyed the weather, taking a walk while some played with a friendly dog tied to a nearby tree. There were very creative candles made that will bring a special light to many different situations. As usual, the food was tasty and plentiful and the accommodations very comfortable. Kids were seen playing games and running busily around the gym.

Worship was a key part of the weekend with each house taking responsibility for a worship time. For many, the foot-washing worship time was very significant and brought a



The wagon-ride

closeness to the washer and receiver as I'm sure it did to the disciples as Jesus washed their feet on that important time in their lives together.

Being in God's beautiful world was dramatized by the roaring campfire and the tasty German bread on a stick (made by Ricky). All in all, it was a very spiritual time, relaxing, deepening our connection to God and each other. May God continue to bless our community as we work, eat, sing and worship together in the model encouraged by our leader Jean Vanier.

Submitted by Mary Shillington, Board Member



Foot-washing: Marie and HaSun



The Opposite Sides of America

by Thomas Clarret, *former Amani House Assistant*

My experience in L'Arche Lethbridge is just over, and I'm still very touched and mixed.

Mixed between sadness of leaving people I love, excitement and trust about the future, and gratitude for everything I've lived. Transition moments are often times of deep reflection. An opportunity to take some distance and make the point:—"What was I looking for when I decided to make a second commitment? How did this second experience make me grow? What did I learn?"

I was sure that each community would be different and therefore challenging somehow. In different situations, we develop various ways to adapt. Each community pushes you out of your comfort zone in a specific and unique way. I wanted to continue growing, continue on my own spiritual path:— finding the sense of my life in ordinary things, putting aside frustrations, developing communication skills, becoming each day closer to my essential. Because in each relationship, each person's story, you can discover yourself. You get to know the other one, you try to understand him, you learn to accept him, and to finally be able to love him and find the light and love of God in him. Living in L'Arche is like living in a bubble. You're invited to live with people with so diverse backgrounds. Most of them would probably never have been your friends in another context. Usually you choose your friends, but in L'Arche you don't choose who you live with. Life brought you here because you have to be here. Usually we pick the easiest way by being close to people who think like us but L'Arche challenges us and bring out that "dark side" we didn't earlier acknowledge.

My first motivation was confirmed by my belonging in L'Arche and I felt I had a family in Argentina. There in the one house with four core members and a workshop (with around ten core members), almost no money from government, and so very few resources, I saw a different reality. Food came from donations, with no car & no money to make plans, etc. Somehow this helped to keep a deep spirit of community. "Weakness brings people together" says Jean Vanier. Local and young people volunteered, with almost no salaries for assistants, core members with no family or money – everything was shared like a family. It truly helped me to live with more humility, gratitude, and appreciate each life giving sharing. Shared meals, music and dance brought joy and daily life celebrations.

Arrival in Lethbridge forced me to let go of the past as I remembered it so positively and to grow into the present. I

recognized no community is perfect and with that I began to enjoy and appreciate this community's gifts: welcoming, humility, organization, accompaniment, good resources and conditions that allows respect for core members' liberty and choices. Paperwork was heavy but helpful to be professional in the support to core members. I found a community where everybody had a voice, a place to be informed and express themselves. As most Lethbridge core members have family, the mission seems quite different, but the identity remains the same.

Finally, and the most important, it is the people who build a community, who are the community. It's in each relationship that we can find the essential, the sense of what we're doing here. In each person, there is Love. The rest (culture, language, etc.) doesn't matter. Love is universal & we're all dependent on Love. So, I'm grateful for each person I met in the community. Departures are not easy, but it's an opportunity for people to share their feelings, their gratitude or their love. I'm still very touched for each word, each opened heart and love demonstrations I received. Thank you for expressing the beauty of the world.

With love, Thomas



Message from the Community Leader: Community vs Robots

I have been noticing the increasing presence of robots in my life. When I get gas I can do everything right at the pump. When I get groceries I can take my items to the self-check and scan and pay for my purchases myself. I have a reminder app on my phone that tells me when an important date is coming up.

These things can be a great convenience and can be more efficient; they don't get sick, don't need benefits, RRSP's, or vacation time, they don't have interpersonal conflicts or threaten legal action. But the automation of these tasks can take away employment from people who need it; it increases profits for companies at the expense of people's jobs.

Our small, simple community of L'Arche still seems prophetic. A place where people of different abilities, cultures, ages, religions choose to share life together and to recognize that we need each other in order to grow. Society often holds up independence as the ideal to achieve but our community wants to recognize our interdependence, our need of one another and the gift each person has to offer to the community and to the world. To live in community is to enter into the messiness of what it means to be human, to be in relationship and to be challenged to grow more fully into the people that

we were created to be.

A world where every interaction is mediated by apps and robots may have its advantages but seems cold, and is built to maximize profits for the few at the expense of the many. It is squeezing more and more people out of meaningful participation in society.

Jean Vanier says in *Community and Growth*, "Machines help us do things more quickly and efficiently, but they can also destroy some community activities. Machines can throw the weakest people out of work and this would be sad, because their small contribution to the housework or cooking is their way of giving something to the community. People who are capable of doing things very quickly with the help of machines become tremendously busy, always active, in charge of everyone – a bit like machines themselves."

I am grateful for everyone who shares L'Arche's vision of building a more human society, of making space for each person to share their gift, no matter how small; who supports us and makes our community life possible, for entering into the beauty and messiness that is to be human.

Tim Wiebe

A Message from a Board Member

Thanks to the committed recruitment practice of Serena Visser, I was asked to join the L'Arche Lethbridge Board in the fall of 2009. This has been a very rewarding experience and I have made many friends on the Board in these 8 years as well as many friends in the L'Arche Community. Thanks to all of you, my own spiritual growth has blossomed and I value the special gifts I have received from many people especially our core members.

I have helped with a number of celebrations over these almost 8 years – the 20th Anniversary of the community held at McKillop United Church and then the 25th Anniversary most recently held at the Canadian Italian Club. What a great committee worked on that event and what a celebration we had! In between I was part of a small committee who worked on Doug Wiebe's Community Leader end of his mandate celebration. All of these were significant events in our L'Arche Lethbridge Community life.

I have been on the Public Relations and Fund Raising Committee for a number of years and we have worked on various ways to reach out to our larger community to inform them of the great things happening at L'Arche Lethbridge and our financial needs. One way has been through our by-yearly

newsletter and we have had good support from this group.

It's been rewarding to work with others to lead prayer night – especially Jen Culler. I heard about L'Arche Lethbridge through my husband Terry Shillington, but only through my involvement have I truly come to appreciate the common sharing and recognition of each others' gifts and our own vulnerabilities.

It's hard to realize that this is my last year on the Board, but I intend to remain connected to the community as it has become an important part of my life. So you will see me at prayer nights and hopefully at some pot lucks as well as well as special celebration. Thanks for always making me welcome and to challenge me to grow to serve God in this unique way.

Mary Shillington, Board Member



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.

