

My Time at L'Arche

Submitted by Allison Baptista



I joined the L'Arche Lethbridge Public Relations Committee in the Spring of 2021, while the world was still semi-shutdown and while I, alongside the majority of people, was feeling a lack of connection with those around me. I logged onto the first PR meeting to test it out, with practically no intention of actually joining the committee. Somehow, though, after meeting Tim, Sharon, Jen, Mary, and Ron, I got hooked, and I'm happy to say that this community did not disappoint.

Among everything I came to appreciate at L'Arche, my fellow members on the PR Committee are at the top of the list. Each and every one of them extended a sincere welcome and always made me feel valued. I will miss all of the laughs at our meetings and I appreciate all the kindness I was shown. I will also miss Mary's cookies.

L'Arche is a place of great love and it changed how I see the world in so many ways. I learned to be gracious and compassionate for others because that's what I was shown every time I stepped into a meeting, every time I stepped into a home. It taught me to embrace people with hospitality,

regardless of the circumstances. I learned that a smile goes a long way because there were days when a smile from someone else made all the difference for me. It's not like L'Arche gave me a rulebook on "How To Be A Good Human", because it wasn't necessary; everyone I met showed me by example how to treat people with love and respect. L'Arche focuses on building two-way friendships because of a shared understanding that every person has gifts, every person has something to offer. I think most valuable of all, I witnessed how to look at a person as Christ would see them. All people have goodness within them and all people have struggles, yet when you work to see the good in others, the world automatically becomes a much more beautiful place. In the L'Arche community I saw proof of the joy of humanity through connections. Our connectedness, regardless of our differences, is what fuels us as humans. I remember one day when I mentioned to a friend that I volunteer with L'Arche, and his eyes lit up, followed by a big smile. He then recounted that he had worked as a respite worker for a few months, which he had loved. I realized then the shared appreciation between anyone who has been a part of L'Arche. He cherished the very same things that I did. The L'Arche experience is universal and I'm so grateful that I got to be a part of it for the last two years. I'm sure that the time I spent at L'Arche will continue to grace my life for years to come. Thank you for embracing me into the community. I hope to be back soon!

Our Mission

The Mission of L'Arche is to:

Make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships.
Foster an environment in community that responds to the changing dreams and needs of our members, while being faithful to the vision and core values of our founding story.
Engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.

The L'Arche Vision:

The Vision of L'Arche is rooted in relationship and belonging:

- Mutual care, respect, and compassion between people with and without intellectual disabilities
- Sharing ordinary, daily life with all its joys and sorrows

- Living, working, learning, and celebrating together in communities of belonging
- Transforming our lives as we embrace our gifts and imperfections
- Recognizing that we need each other and are better together
- A model of inclusion, a way of peace, and a sign of hope for our world.

The L'Arche relational model breaks down barriers between those who give and those who receive support. It replaces society's emphasis on independence that leaves so many people lonely, with interdependence where each person flourishes as they contribute their gifts for the good of others.



L'Arche Association of Lethbridge is planning to raise an estimate amount of \$30,000 this year on Fundraising Campaigns. It will cost our organization an estimated \$5100 to raise this. The money raised will fund costs such as vehicle fleet replacement, capital costs such as house maintenance, and community outreach. For further information please contact Tim Wiebe at 403-328-3735 ext. 1 Our Address is 240 12 C Street N. Lethbridge, AB T1H 2M7 and we are incorporated in Lethbridge, AB.



240 12 C Street North Lethbridge AB T1H 2M7
Phone: 403-328-3735 Fax: 403-320-6737
www.larchelethbridge.org | office@larchelethbridge.org

Message from the Board Chair

by Sharon Yanicki



As I reflected on the last year, what came to mind first was gratitude for the community events, celebrations, fundraisers, prayer nights, and meetings I have attended. The threads running through my encounters in L'Arche are consistent with L'Arche's shared values: "journey together with respect", be "open to mutual relationships", "celebrate the value of each person", and "foster a vibrant community". It is certainly a

privilege to be part of an organization that brings these values to life everyday. I'd like to express my thanks to the leadership team, house leaders, assistants, relief staff (respite), core members, board members and volunteers for sharing your gifts with L'Arche.

It was wonderful to have the opportunity to return to face-to-face board meetings with the option of joining by Zoom this year. Unfortunately, COVID-19 is still with us, and our recent Annual General Meeting (September 13) was once again held as a virtual meeting on Zoom. Thanks to all who attended and participated in discussions. If you missed it, please feel free to request the AGM report from Donette at Riacho (in print or digital format).

L'Arche Lethbridge is facing a few challenges this year. We

posted a small deficit in 2022-2023 and another funding shortfall is projected for this year. The finance committee and board have created a plan to reduce expenses and increase revenue; and advocacy has been undertaken to address government funding levels. Our main source of revenue is provincial government funding. Unfortunately, government funding no longer covers our operating costs. PDD funding was frozen in 2014 and this is now equivalent to a 23% reduction. While the Government of Alberta provided a 10% wage adjustment for frontline staff for 2023-2024, only a small adjustment has been made to address increased operating costs due to inflation as well as administration. This ongoing underfunding of the disability sector is unfair and unsustainable.

Here are a few ways you can support L'Arche this year. First, contact your MLA regarding the urgent need for a cost-of-living adjustment for L'Arche Lethbridge and all PDD funded programs in the disability sector in Alberta. Second, consider increasing your donations or making a monthly donation. Third, help us recruit new board members and volunteers. At the AGM, a recruitment committee was struck. Contact Tim if you would like to join the board or volunteer for a L'Arche committee. Please talk to people you know about L'Arche and encourage them to join our board. Volunteering is a great way to share your gifts and a great experience.

Community Leader Reflections

Submitted by Tim Wiebe, Community Leader

This past June L'Arche communities from all over the world met for our International Assembly. This Assembly was different from others because we met online rather than electing delegates who travel to in person meetings. The online format allowed many more people to participate and have an experience of a L'Arche International meeting.

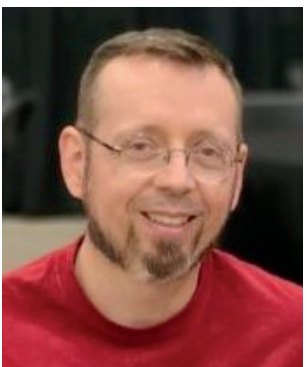
One of the things we did at the Assembly was to approve our new Charter of the Communities of L'Arche. We began the process of creating a new Charter in 2019. After 3 years of work, discovering new ways of connecting and working together through the years of the COVID pandemic, we were able to approve our new Charter at the Assembly.

Our new Charter was written after listening to the lives and experiences of people in L'Arche communities around the world. The first part of the Charter is "Our Guiding Insight". It says, "Mutual relationships among people with and without disabilities transform us by revealing the unique value of every person. This experience is a sign in the world that all belong." I am glad that this is how our Charter begins, it names what I have experienced about the transformative power of our life together in L'Arche and

the inherent value of every person.

The final section of the Charter is "Toward a more sustainable world." As important as transformative relationships are, they do not happen in isolation. We are dependent on society to provide resources, we are dependent on a stable ecosystem to provide us with food and water that sustain all life. L'Arche, as with all human people and organizations, exists in and is dependent upon a vast web of interconnected relationships. I am grateful that our Charter acknowledges this complexity and our responsibility to act with care and respect in all that we do.

I hope that our new Charter will serve as our guide and inspiration so that our homes and communities can remain places that are filled with light and meaning.



Fundraising Committee Report

Submitted by Marion Biggins

This summer the Fundraising committee arranged two events.

The first was a Pig Roast which was held in Legacy Ridge Park. It was a wonderful event attended by many people who were new to hearing about L'Arche as well as lots of old friends.

The meal was catered by a local Hutterite Colony and we all

enjoyed pulled pork, two kinds of salad and delicious Hutterite buns.

Just as we were about to eat, the skies opened up and the rain came down so quickly that we could barely see each other! But that didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm for the event. In true Lethbridge fashion we were all pleased to get the moisture!

Fundraising Committee Report (continued)

Submitted by Marion Biggins

Some people picked up their meals and took them home, which was an option, and others stayed to enjoy the evening together.

This was such a success that we plan to repeat the fun next June.

Our second event this year was taking an information table at the Farmers' Market in the Exhibition Centre. We had many old friends drop by to say hello and we made some new

friends!

There was a free draw for a summer fun gift basket and people had the opportunity to sign up for our mailing list and/or to volunteer for L'Arche.

We passed out lots of brochures and we look forward to being involved in this again, so more people in Lethbridge and the surrounding community can get to know about us.

