



L'ARCHE®
saskatoon

www.larchesaskatoon.org

Peacemaking: The gift of L'Arche

by: Wyndham Thiessen
Community Leader

One year ago, I was in Trosly, France—the place where the first L'Arche community was born—taking part in a retreat led by Jean Vanier. On July 8, 2011 (I kept a diary!), Jean told us that “the gift of L'Arche is that of peacemaking.” This idea really struck me; I hadn't thought of L'Arche in this way before. I find the idea encouraging, as it has prompted me to notice the many small ways in which peace is built through the daily interactions of community life. I also find it challenging, as I believe that peacemaking is a vocation that our community needs to continue to grow into. There is work to be done.

I'd like to highlight three of the ways that peacemaking happens in L'Arche. One way is through our welcoming of others. Jean says, in Finding Peace, that as “community members are open to those who are different, inside and outside the community, they become a sign and source of peace.” L'Arche

Bridges

Summer 2012



Making mosaics at our Queen's House retreat day

communities bring together very different people—people with different abilities, from different countries, from different religious traditions—and peacemaking happens in the space of welcome that is created.

Peacemaking also happens as we celebrate the importance and the giftedness of each person. In Living Gently in a Violent World Jean says that “There can be no peacemaking or social work or anything else to improve our world unless we are convinced that the other is important. You are precious. You—not just ‘people,’ but you.” In L'Arche, we want to live out our belief that everyone has an important place in this world. Each person matters.

Finally, peacemaking happens as we allow our hearts to be opened and transformed by our relationships with others, especially those who have disabilities. One of Jean Vanier's most important messages,

I believe, is that there can be no lasting and meaningful peace in our world until we become people of peace. It is important to work for peace “out there”—fighting injustice and promoting equality—but it is equally important to let peace take root “in here,” allowing gentleness, forgiveness, and the other virtues of peacemaking to create a home in our hearts.

At the L'Arche International Assembly in Atlanta held this past June we celebrated the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the world's foremost prophets of peace. Dr. King said that “True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.” In the spirit of what Jean Vanier has taught us, I would add that peace is the presence of people with peaceable hearts: people whose hearts have been changed into hearts that welcome and celebrate all people.

Are you inspired by Jean Vanier's vision of a world in which all people can find a place of belonging? Are you interested in using your gifts to support the mission of L'Arche? L'Arche Saskatoon is currently seeking new people to serve on our board and committees. For more information please contact Myron Rogal, Board Chair, at mprogal@yahoo.ca or 258-4505.

MEET PAT HAWES

Pat Hawes has been a member of the Friends of L'Arche from the very beginning. He seldom misses a monthly Gathering and is always a great friend to all those who attend. Pat is 62 years old and has for many years worked at Cosmopolitan Industries. He does lawn care and yard clearance in the summer and snow removal in the winter. He really likes his work and all the friends he has at Cosmo!

Pat lives in an Elmwood residence with Harvey Wack and five other men. He especially likes eating porridge for breakfast, watching hockey, soccer and football on television with his friends and following the new TV series of Dallas. He misses his mom, Marcelle, who died three years ago. Pat has one older sister, Marg, and two nieces and two nephews who live in Montreal. It is very special for him when he can fly to Montreal to visit his sister and her family.



L'ARCHE SASKATOON COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS JUNE 2012

L'Arche Lethbridge, L'Arche Edmonton, and L'Arche Winnipeg all sent holiday groups here during the last half of July 2011. We did a number of things together, including trips to Boomtown, Wanuskewin, and the zoo. We also endured a hailstorm during our final BBQ!

Our second annual L'Arche community retreat day was held on July 27, 2011, at Saint Peter's Abbey in Muenster. Twenty-five people attended, and Amy Bunce led our day together. There were crafts, songs, prayers, reflections, good food, and the feeding of chickadees—a lovely day.

Many L'Arche Saskatoon community members participated in the L'Arche Western Canada Regional Pilgrimage in September. Four took part in the first leg of the pilgrimage in Calgary, from September 12 to 14, and then nine people flew the following week to join L'Arche Winnipeg for the final leg of the pilgrimage, from September 22 to 24.

We began a book group in January, meeting once a month, to discuss *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology and Ethics* by Hans Reinders.

We held a fundraising event on December 9, 2011 at Saint Stephen's Church called "Harp to Heart," with Martha Cowie playing the harp in support of L'Arche.

In February, two core members and four assistants participated in the L'Arche Winter Games in Sylvan Lake, AB, joining the three L'Arche communities from Alberta.

On April 18 we held a retreat day at Queen's House, led by Pam Wilkinson, a member of the L'Arche Comox Valley community. Thirty-one people came for the whole day, and another seventeen joined us for supper. The theme of the day was "Shaped and Shaping: The Potter and the Clay." We designed mosaic tiles and worked with clay to help us enter into the theme. Many thanks to the James P. Mahoney Institute for the Family for a grant that made the day possible!

Wyndham Thiessen (community leader) and Margaret Sanche (board member) joined 500 other delegates at the L'Arche International General Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia, from June 1 to 10, 2012.

In June 2012, nine people from L'Arche Saskatoon and four from L'Arche Winnipeg gathered for the L'Arche Summer Games at the Mother Theresa Centre in Kenosee, SK. This was the first time this event had been held, and it is hoped that this will become an annual event.

L'ARCHE INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATLANTA JUNE 1-10, 2012

Margaret Sanche, L'Arche Saskatoon board member

I was delighted and honoured to represent L'Arche Saskatoon at the International General Assembly, in which 500 representatives from L'Arche communities around the world gathered for ten days in Atlanta, Georgia. Our community leader Wyndham Thiessen was present also—he was one of an international group of musicians who formed the Holy Smoke Band and provided much wonderful music during our days together.

The L'Arche assembly included community leaders, assistants, core members, board members, people with special leadership roles within the various regions, countries and the federation. During the first weekend, we were hosted by the people of Atlanta in their homes and then, for the assembly week, we moved to the student facilities of Agnes Scott Women's College in Decatur just outside Atlanta.

Over the ten days, I experienced the joy and energy of L'Arche, the gentleness of L'Arche, the faithfulness and "faith-filled-ness" of L'Arche. I encountered first-hand the reality of the international dimension of L'Arche and the commitment of so many people around the world to live the mission inspired by the gospel and by the life, work and vision of Jean Vanier to affirm the dignity and giftedness of all people, in a spirit of friendship and belonging.

I had many conversations with L'Arche folks from hither and yon. It was easy to smile and talk to people, ask their names, where they were from, what their L'Arche community was like, and what their struggles and challenges were. During such conversations, I told others about our L'Arche Saskatoon community as well. There were many languages spoken—mainly French, English and Spanish—but also languages from the Middle East, India, Africa and Asian countries. Somehow, we managed to communicate with one another, whether one-on-one while sharing meals, or in our assemblies, when together we sang, prayed, danced and clapped our hands to the music, or when we worked in small groups or workshops to learn more about the mission and vision of L'Arche and express our ideas through drawings and drama and simple phrases.

One of the underlying themes of the assembly was the extraordinary life and early death by assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., whose home had been in Atlanta. I was reminded once again about his difficult struggles to bring an end to racial discrimination and to forge a just and peaceful world. At Ebenezer Baptist Church, where he had been a pastor, we listened to a recording of his prophetic "I have a dream" speech, in which he called for equal rights and respect for all people, whatever the colour of their skin. I found many parallels between the dream of Martin Luther King and that of Jean Vanier and L'Arche.

On the final day, we gathered outside on the lawn and five hundred people, sitting in circles of eight or nine, washed one another's feet and blessed one another in silence. It was a prayerful and Spirit-filled experience.

I returned to Saskatoon after those ten days in Atlanta filled with gratitude to God for the gift that is L'Arche in our world. I am glad to have been called to be part of this dream.



Boating at the L'Arche Summer Games

L'ARCHE IDENTITY STATEMENT

We are people with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in communities belonging to an international federation.

Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together.

We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognise our need of one another.



L'Arche Winter Games participants

WAYS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN L'ARCHE SASKATOON

- Attend a Friends of L'Arche Gathering (once a month).
- Come to a Prayer Night (Wednesday evenings).
- Become a prayer partner for L'Arche Saskatoon.
- Volunteer to work on a L'Arche Committee: Gatherings, Communications, Newsletter, House and Garden, Development and Fundraising, Finance, Special Events Planning (coffeehouse, garage sale).
- Assist with ongoing financial support for the special programs of L'Arche. Many thanks, if you have already donated -- and please continue to keep L'Arche Saskatoon on your list of worthy charities to support.
- Donate goods or services.
- Learn more about Jean Vanier and L'Arche around the world by reading books by and about Jean Vanier, Henri Nouwen, Sue Mosteller and others.
- Check out: L'Arche Canada: www.larche.ca; L'Arche International: www.larche.org; L'Arche Saskatoon: www.larchesaskatoon.org.
- Add your e-mail address to our Friends of L'Arche e-mail list to receive notices of events and copies of the newsletter by e-mail. (Your e-mail information is only for the use of L'Arche Saskatoon and will not be shared with anyone else.) Send your request to: wthiessen@larchesaskatoon.org.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE FINANCIALLY

By cheque to:

L'Arche Saskatoon
c/o Wyndham Thiessen
P.O. Box 23006
Saskatoon, SK S7J 5H3

- You will receive a charitable receipt for income tax purposes. Be sure to include your full name and mailing address so we can prepare the receipt.

For more information or to be removed from our newsletter mailing list, please send a message to Wyndham Thiessen, Community Leader, at: wthiessen@larchesaskatoon or by phone at (306) 262-7243.

ABOUT L'ARCHE SASKATOON COMMUNITY

L'Arche Saskatoon is one of 29 L'Arche communities across Canada. At the present time we have one home, Christopher House, and an extended community called Friends of L'Arche, which has a monthly Gathering. Ecumenical prayer nights are held weekly at Christopher House, and our Collective Kitchen members meet one Sunday a month. In these and other settings, we are working to build community and strengthen friendships as we live, work, play and pray together.

ABOUT L'ARCHE SASKATOON INC.

- We are a non-profit organization and a registered charity (#86345-4872 RR0001), able to provide charitable receipts for tax purposes.
- We have an Executive Director/Community Leader (Wyndham Thiessen) and a volunteer board of directors.
- We receive core funding support from the Government of Saskatchewan for the operation of Christopher House and we rely on donations from individuals and groups to cover additional expenses and special programs.
- Financial contributions are received with gratitude and used with great care to support our mission and our work.