



L'ARCHE[®]
saskatoon

www.larchesaskatoon.org

L'ARCHE AND FREEDOM

Wyndham Thiessen
Community Leader

Bridges

Summer 2014



Jacqueline and Robert light candles at our Christmas Gathering

This year we celebrate the Jubilee anniversary of L'Arche: 50 years of L'Arche around the world! On August 4th, 1964, Jean Vanier invited two men, Raphaël Simi and Philippe Seux, to leave the crowded and oppressive institution in which they were living and to start a new life with him in a small ramshackle house in the village of Trosly, France. And so the journey began.

In the fifty years since that small beginning, Jean has spent a lot of time reflecting on the meaning of L'Arche. What is the message that L'Arche communities carry for our world? Jean has given countless talks and written dozens of books about L'Arche—so, needless to say, there is much that has been and could be said! But, in light of this being our Jubilee year, I have been thinking about L'Arche and freedom. When the year of Jubilee arrived in ancient Israel, slaves were set free, debts were cancelled, and land was returned to its original owners. It was a time of liberation.

The theme of freedom runs throughout Jean's writings on L'Arche. When I heard Jean speak in Calgary in 2008, he told us that "L'Arche is about setting people free." In 1964, Raphaël and Philippe were freed from the confining walls of the institution, and since then, many other people with disabilities have escaped dark situations and found a home in L'Arche. The journey to freedom also happens at the level of the heart. People who are trapped by anger, or fear, or feelings of rejection, are able to move—sometimes very slowly—into a clearing where the warmth of love and trust can be felt and accepted. Before joining L'Arche Saskatoon I was involved with L'Arche in Lethbridge and Vancouver, and in each of these communities—and in L'Arche communities around the world—stories abound of people who are finding, and who have found, freedom. Sometimes the stories of liberation are dramatic. (I think of one gentle soul who used to break windows and TVs when he first

moved into L'Arche, several decades ago.) Sometimes the stories unfold on a smaller scale. (A woman I know, who has endured much suffering, has grown to be able to recognize and describe some of her feelings, saying things like "I feel jealous!" This, too, is a liberation.)

But it is not only people with disabilities who are able to find freedom in L'Arche: the paths to freedom in L'Arche are for all of us. Jean, the eminently efficient ex-naval officer, the highly intelligent former university professor, discovered that he needed to be set free from his desire to control, his desire to be right. He needed to learn to slow down, to listen, and to be vulnerable. In my ten years in L'Arche, I have observed myself moving slowly towards gentleness, turning away from judgmentalism and hard-heartedness, accepting ongoing invitations from those around me to grow in my openness to others.

(Continued on page 3)

MEET GISELA HURTADO

Gisela arrived in Saskatoon three and a half years ago and is a happy live-in assistant at Christopher House. She came from Lima, Peru. Her parents are both retired in Peru, and two years ago, her mother visited Gisela here in Saskatoon. Last year Gisela traveled back to Peru for her annual holidays. She is looking forward to the time when she can travel to Australia to visit her sister.

Coming to L'Arche Saskatoon as an assistant has been a new and different experience for Gisela. She enjoys living with her new family at Christopher House, and she has learned a great deal from the day-to-day experience of sharing life and work with core members and assistants from different parts of the world. Living in the large household at Christopher House brings its challenges, but Gisela has developed the emotional and leadership skills she needs to be a loving, life-giving member of the Christopher House family.

Before coming to Saskatoon, Gisela completed a law degree in Peru and also studied in Switzerland, where she did a course in a care home community for adults with special needs. She has traveled to England, the United States and France. In her three and a half years at Christopher House, Gisela has been able to visit L'Arche communities in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Calgary, Lethbridge, Vancouver and Montreal. She especially enjoys meeting core members and assistants from other L'Arche communities at regional workshops and gatherings.



L'Arche is 50 years old! To be able to celebrate our Jubilee year is an amazing gift. When I welcomed Raphael and Philippe from a violent institution, little did I know that L'Arche would grow into the worldwide network it is today. So many people over these years have come to L'Arche and discovered the deep value of people with intellectual disabilities, who if accepted, loved and honored have much to give our world. Let us all go forward into the next 50 years with much hope and intentionality, growing but also deepening our vision and letting ourselves be continually transformed by the relationships we share in our communities so that we may become an ever more inspiring presence for our world.

- Jean Vanier

Donations in memory of a deceased family member or friend, or to mark a special birthday or anniversary, are most welcome. A charitable receipt will be sent to the donor and a thank you card acknowledging the donation to L'Arche Saskatoon will be sent to the person or family indicated (please include mailing address).



Laura gets a birthday "mugging" from C95 and Tim Horton's

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of L'Arche, and we want to celebrate! We have booked the Prairie Lily riverboat—the whole boat!—for a special lunch on Saturday, September 20th, from 12 to 1 pm (boarding at 11:30 at the dock). Tickets for the lunch and cruise are \$20 per person. After the cruise we will be heading just down the road to Saint John's Anglican Cathedral (816 Spadina Crescent E) for a service of prayer and thanksgiving at 1:30 pm. All are welcome to attend either or both events. If you would like tickets for lunch on the Prairie Lily, please let Wyndham Thiessen know at 306-262-7243 or wthiessen@larchesaskatoon.org.

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.



Panadream Theatre shares puppetry magic at our February Gathering

L'Arche Saskatoon relies on the financial support of many individual and organizational donors. We would like to thank the sponsors of our Cakes in the City event for their support: the Marcoux family, Willms Engineering, The Village at Crossmount, Saskatoon Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Associates, Ecol Electric, and Affinity Credit Union. Many thanks also to Lissa Klassen at Investors Group and the Investors Group Matching Gift Program for their generous donations.

Freedom and L'Arche *(continued from page 1)*

I have seen assistants, wounded by life's violence, gain new confidence in their gifts, encouraged by the welcome and affirmation they discover in L'Arche as core members let them know that "it is good that you are here."

When Jesus began his public ministry, as Luke tells it, he went to the synagogue in his hometown and read out a passage from Isaiah 61: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." "The year of the Lord's favour": Jesus is announcing the year of Jubilee! Jesus comes to emancipate all those in bondage, and he invites us to join him in his mission of liberation. I pray that, as we move forward into our next 50 years in L'Arche, we may continue to work with Jesus to let the oppressed go free, giving thanks for the freedom that we have found.



Laine and Renee weaving together



John and Wesley play a cello duet at our May Gathering

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, 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.org 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.