

# Board President's Report ~ Spring, 2021

It has been an interesting year, to say the least, for the L'Arche Association of Lethbridge Board. Almost exactly one year ago, immediately following our successful Fundraising Dinner, we were scrambling to understand and to adjust to the rapidly changing and mostly unknown (and in many ways, unprecedented) realities of the latest strain of the coronavirus. The actual and potential medical, social, psychological, and financial implications of the pandemic for L'Arche Lethbridge, for us, were terrifying. One year later, however, the community has not only survived but, in many ways, thrived, I think, due to its excellent leadership team, due the hard work of all members of the community, and due to countless acts of vigilance and discipline, courage and strength, and especially generosity and kindness—in the L'Arche homes, in the relevant levels of Federal and Provincial government, and in the homes and workplaces of our donors and supporters.



There is still, to be sure, some distance yet to travel on this road: despite uncertainty about vaccinations, variant strains, and economic conditions here in Alberta, some optimism seems to be warranted. As vulnerable groups become vaccinated and as research and modified individual and social behaviour address epidemiological aspects of the virus, we still have a lot to learn about how it will shape our community in the future. Yet despite—and perhaps even in some ways because of—the limitations of the

pandemic, L'Arche Lethbridge has found all sorts of creative ways of dealing with the complex and, at times, discouraging, realities of social distancing and quarantine. Our latest Fundraiser, for instance, was "virtual": a cooking lesson and dinner that was as well-attended as it was enjoyable (and delicious!). Not only did we surpass our Fundraising goal for the year in a time of significant economic uncertainty, but we also forged an interesting new relationship with the community-minded folks at Umami Shop.

We remain, as a Board, grateful for the hard work, the vigilance, the creativity, and the kindness of countless people who have supported our community this past year: the pandemic, in some ways, has made the gifts of each member of L'Arche Lethbridge and those who support us not only more important than ever, but also more visible. Thanks especially to the volunteers on the Fundraising Committee and to Lew Dennis, who recently completed his term serving on the Board Executive. We look forward to

seeing everyone—face-to-face, we hope—at our next Fundraiser and, before that, at the various celebrations the 30th Anniversary Committee has planned for us this year! Until then, one hates to have to resort to cliché, of course, but I do think it is worth repeating: tough times, we are told, don't last, but tough—and let's add hard-working, talented, compassionate and creative—people and communities like L'Arche Lethbridge do.

## 30th Anniversary Committee

by Aiden Sander and Van Clarke

Since the opening of Chinook House in 1991, L'Arche Lethbridge has come a long way. We have grown from three Core Members and two Assistants in one home to 12 Core Members and 16 Assistants in three homes. Alongside this growth, our community has touched the lives of many internationally over the last 30 years. We have a great deal to be thankful for and celebrate on our 30th Anniversary!

### How are we celebrating?!

This past March, we completed our 30th Anniversary Challenge called #30yearsarchelethbridgechallenge, where members of our community shared their 30th Anniversary-themed media posts. Their creativity, energy, and originality were amazing! Thank you, friends, for sharing your love and appreciation for L'Arche with us all! Whether it be a picture with 30 of your Power Ranger DVDs or a tasty snack, the posts were a great way to reflect on our community!



#30yearschallengecupcakes

# 30th Anniversary Committee (continued)



#30yearschallengePowerRangers



#30yearschallengesushi

## Online Benefit Dinner and Cooking Class

by Sandra Riddell, Mary Shillington, Fundraising Committee

The old saying, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" is running through my mind as I begin this report, because the online dinner (February 27th, 2021) was a completely new venture for the fundraising committee, and it was a wonderful success. Not only did we raise about \$20,000 for the new wheelchair van, we collaborated with a downtown business, the Umami Shop, learned some new computer skills, made some new contacts, and had a lot of fun! Patricia and Sven from the Umami Shop hosted a most enjoyable and entertaining cooking class, teaching over 100 of us just how to make delicious Butter Chicken. What's even more amazing during these Covid times of separation and isolation, we were able, via Zoom, to gather, to learn and to have fun together as a community, one of our core values. We are deeply thankful for the many people who contributed to the success of the evening: Tim Wiebe who operated the technical stuff, Erin Phillips for being our Zoom host, Patricia and Sven for their enthusiasm and cooking expertise, John Paul Ksiazek and Gabe Kastelic for providing dinner music, Dayna and Min for leading us in Grace, as well as our generous sponsors, individuals, and groups who made donations or bought dinner kits for our homes or themselves. We heard many good comments about the food, the fun people had, and the dinner music. We also heard some ways we can improve this event especially from those who want it to happen again next year. As a committee, we have recorded these suggestions and will look seriously at doing this again. If you have comments or suggestions, please contact Donette at the office (403-328-3735 ext. #4) so we can include your ideas.



# Our Interconnected World

by Tim Wiebe, *Community Leader*

This past year has been one of newness, change, disruption, and invitation. It changed our daily life and challenged us to find new ways to connect and to bring our Mission to life. The pandemic continues to invite us to learn about how to build community, not just in the local sense of L'Arche members but a more just society between Albertans, Canadians, humans, and the biosphere that sustains us.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres said in May 2020 that "In our interconnected world none of us is safe until we all are." This has always been true, but the pandemic has forced this reality into our collective consciousness. For me, an example of this is the high number of COVID infections and deaths of seniors in for-profit long-term care homes. This happened because of years of underfunding, lack of training for increasingly complex needs of seniors in long-term care, and an overall lack of compassion in our systems for people who are vulnerable and marginalized and those who care for them.

Nobel Laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz of Columbia University said that we should use this moment to "create a new world that, when we emerge from the pandemic, is a world that is more in accord with our views of what our society should be like .... [with] a greener economy, an economy marked by greater equality, social justice, racial justice, a

more knowledge-based economy."

In L'Arche, one of our founding principles is that each person is precious. We do our best to invite people who come to our community to open their hearts to those who are different and grow in the realization that we need each other. That the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

As we continue to live the challenges of this pandemic, I leave you with these words from Thomas Merton...

"It seems that we all have to face one sad thing after another. But let us not forget the home our faith gives us. God is our strength, and no amount of trouble should make us fail to realize it. On the contrary, trouble should help us deepen and confirm our trust. This is an old story, but as far as I am concerned, it is the one we always get back to. There is no other."

Thomas Merton,  
*A Year with Thomas Merton*, p. 380

I hope and pray that each of us will have our trust deepened and confirmed by these troubles and that each of us will have the courage to do our part to create a more just, equitable and safe world.

## Two perspectives on the meaning of L'Arche Lethbridge

by Declan Sander, *PR Committee Member*

Friendship and support. These are the two words Brad Flaig used to describe the L'Arche community and its importance. Brad lives in the spirit of these words and he tries to manifest them in his life, and relationships with the L'Arche community. Brad's love for L'Arche and its community comes from the relationships that he has formed with both Core Members and Assistants, such as his friendship with Vanessa 'Van' Clarke. It is a fun, lighthearted environment where jokes are freely traded with laughter. Both Brad and Van have experienced the same community in different ways.

A founding member and icon at L'Arche Lethbridge, Brad lives at Chinook House. Most days he can either be found in the role of a train conductor in the basement or playing board games with friends. With his outgoing, joyous attitude, Brad inspires others to be resilient, even during the most difficult times. Brad, like many of us, has been affected by the pandemic and has been unable to visit his friends, family, and continue his volunteer work at the library. Fortunately, Brad's positive attitude allows him to view this from another angle, and the message he would like to spread to those who are in a similar situation is, "even if it is hard, make



new friends... they will show you what community means". New friends and community—both parts of the L'Arche experience.

Greeted with a warm welcoming hug from a core-member, Van began as a volunteer with the L'Arche community. Van's love for the community has only grown as she became more involved within the organization. She became an assistant, and is now the community life coordinator. The playful nature of many of the core-members, which include unanticipated humorous pranks, is well-loved by Van. These games always end in the same way they started—with jokes and laughter. Van also emphasized that it is the friendships and relationships that make L'Arche unique: "we're not just about paperwork, meetings, payroll and hiring—we know how to have fun and celebrate."

As much as L'Arche likes to have fun and celebrate, they are also a community that supports their members in grief and sorrow, such as now during COVID. Even for me as a high school student writing this article, and a relatively new volunteer with the L'Arche community, I too feel this bond to L'Arche. It is truly a beautiful community and I'm privileged to be part of it.



# Board Members Needed

L'Arche Lethbridge is currently seeking volunteers to join the Board.

## Am I the right person to join the Board?

Are you passionate about supporting people with intellectual disabilities? Do you want to open people's hearts to those who are different and create a more caring and human society? If so, read about our identity and mission (<https://larchelethbridge.org/identity-mission-statement>).

## What do Board members do?

The Board ensures that L'Arche Lethbridge remains a vibrant community, faithful to its identity and mission by providing support and resources. It does this through effective governance, strategic planning, public relations and fundraising.

## What does this involve?

Board members attend monthly board meetings (the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm), participate on committees,

and are encouraged to attend community events (currently meetings are on Zoom). The time commitment is 10 hours/month.

## What's in it for me?

By serving on a board, you will meet people with shared interests. You will share in a community of people, with and without developmental disabilities, committed to trusting in God, building mutual relationships, and respecting the unique value of each person and our need for each other.

## Join us and make a difference!

Applicants (≥18 years of age) are invited; L'Arche Lethbridge welcomes people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Currently, we are seeking individuals with financial, and building maintenance skills. *This posting will remain open until suitable candidates are found.*

Contact the Executive Director by email [office@larchelethbridge.org](mailto:office@larchelethbridge.org) or phone 403-328-3735 extension 1.



L'Arche Lethbridge Board at March 2021 Board Meeting



## Your Way to Help L'Arche Lethbridge Transform Lives

I'd like to provide a special gift to support L'Arche Lethbridge's work:

\$500       \$250       \$100       \$50       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Find my cheque enclosed / Charge my credit card:  Visa    MasterCard    American Express

My gift is to go to:  Area of greatest need    A specific need

I heard about L'Arche from:  Newsletter    Social Media    Friends/Family    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CSV Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**L'Arche Lethbridge Office | 403.328.3735 | [office@larchelethbridge.org](mailto:office@larchelethbridge.org)**

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