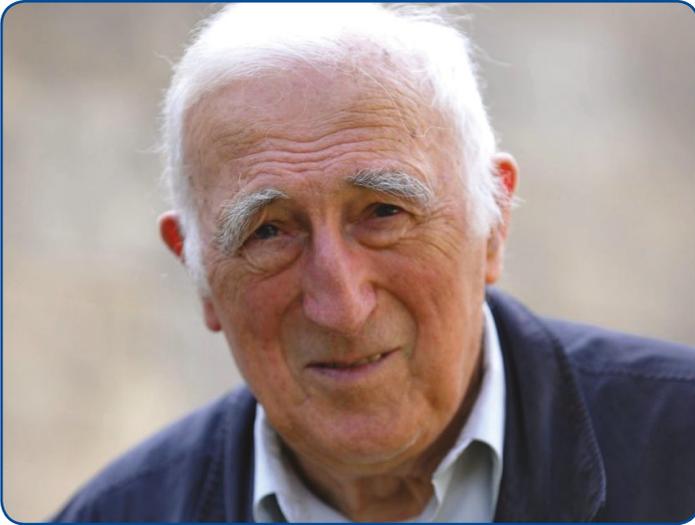




L'ARCHE LETHBRIDGE

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Jean Vanier



I was deeply saddened by the death of Jean Vanier on May 7, 2019. His death marks a huge transition for L'Arche around the world. Even though Jean was not in an active leadership role for many years his life was a link to the founding of L'Arche that kept us connected to why we exist. With Jean's death it is now up to each of us to claim that founding energy for ourselves and to carry the essential insight of L'Arche into the future.

"L'Arche is rooted in love. We live in community with those with intellectual disabilities because as human beings we seek naturally to love and be loved: each of us wants relationships where our value as a person – with our frailties and poverty – is recognized, affirmed and celebrated. Each person, whatever his or her abilities or disabilities, strengths or weaknesses, is important and sacred. This idea is not unique to L'Arche, and it's not new or revolutionary! It is the Gospel message. It is the essence or what it means to be human and to be Christian. We discover how we can be healed by those who are the most vulnerable. It's not a question of going out and doing good to them; rather, receiving the gift of their presence transforms us." (Vanier, 2007) *Our life Together* page 1

We continue to try to live the spirit of Jean's simple, practical response to his Gospel call in our community in L'Arche Lethbridge. It is so simple, yet it can be very challenging. One of the on-going gifts of community life is that we do not get to choose who comes to community rather we are given the people we need to help us to grow. Usually these are not the people with whom we are comfortable; they are the ones who touch into our vulnerability and give rise to our doubt, anger and fear. If we can find the courage and support to walk toward the person rather than reject them and push them away, we can discover the gift of L'Arche. That we are all, as Jean says, important and sacred.

"Practically everything I did with L'Arche was intuitive, based on the sense that this is what should be done. There was a beauty in these disabled men that was being crushed at the large, dismal, violent institution in which they had been put. These men were persons and precious to God, and so it seemed right, even evident, for me to do something about their unjust situation. Though I could not do anything on a large scale, at least I could live with a few of them and help them to find a decent life and the freedom to be themselves. This search for justice flowed naturally from my faith in Jesus: my faith in the Gospel message revealed the value and beauty of men and women with severe disabilities. People often ask me the reasons for starting L'Arche, but I didn't have reasons, I just trusted and loved." (Vanier, 2007) *Our Life Together* page 6

I am thankful for my life in this L'Arche community which was made possible by Jean's initial inspiration. I hope that we can continue to trust and love as Jean did.

Submitted by:
Tim Wiebe, Community Leader



Retreat Reflection



The Annual Retreat was May 10 – 12 this year at the Southern Alberta Bible Camp. We had the good fortune of Robert Larouche's presence as the animator. Pat and I have known Robert since 1975, meeting him prior to his going to Haiti to found the L'Arche Community in Carrefour, Port aux Prince in Haiti.



The theme of the retreat was "We Are Invited to the Banquet of Life" (John 2:1-12). This passage is the first miracle, the wedding feast at Cana, that is recorded in John's Gospel.

Friday evening Robert presented to us the environs of Cana, a small town inhabited by ordinary people. So, he posed a question - who had invited Jesus? Maybe the couple being married were friends of one of Jesus's disciples, maybe they were relatives of Jesus? Regardless, Jesus and his disciples decide to attend and we too are invited to the wedding feast in Cana, our daily life in community.

Saturday morning the theme was "They Ran Out of Wine" (John 2:3). Yes, they ran out of wine never expecting the liters of the best wine would come near the end of the feast. We too are called to trust when seemingly all else fails.



This reality was highlighted by a sharing from Mary and Terry Shillington about a dark time in their life.

In-between the morning and afternoon reflections with Robert we painted mugs and for those that wanted to enjoyed a wagon ride around the property.

Saturday afternoon's reflection was on the theme, "You have kept the Best Wine till Now" (John 2:10). The Spirit knows the needs of our hearts; as before trust is required of us.



As is our tradition we had the Foot washing Service Saturday evening. This is always a touching moment as we say yes to be of service to one another.

This was then followed by a campfire where the makings for "s'mores" were available...roasted marshmallows between graham wafers with chocolate.

Sunday morning our last reflection with Robert was "And His Disciples Believed in Him." (John 2:11). Robert reminded us that we too are invited to believe that Jesus can change things in our life in abundance.

The retreat was an experience of being deeply nourished through the words of this scripture passage and returning to our community life with renewed Hope and Gratitude.

Submitted by: Jo Lenon, Confirmed Member



Message from the Board

September 2019

On behalf of the Board, it is my pleasure to update you on life and developments within our L'Arche community. There has been a significant change in our Board with the loss of two dedicated and hardworking colleagues. We will miss Carole Perry's steady wisdom and discerning perspective, and Michaela Prozniak's youthful and vibrant energy at our meetings. With thankful hearts, we wish them the very best in whatever the future holds for them.

Consequently, we have been in Board Recruitment mode and look forward to welcoming new members this Fall. It's interesting to note that our Board meetings begin with a reflection. This year we have read and discussed a chapter at each meeting from Jean Vanier's *Encountering the Other*. These readings help to centre and ground us in our Mission which is, in part, "to foster an environment in community that responds to the changing needs of our members while being faithful to the core values of our founding story." We have a Board Retreat planned in early October and look forward to Bob Campbell's leadership at this event.

In April, the CET team (Creating Excellence Together) visited L'Arche Lethbridge and conducted extensive interviews with community members: Leadership Team, Board of Directors, Assistants, Core Members, Guardians. The CET team operates under the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) and we must meet their standards to receive funding from PDD (Persons with Developmental Disabilities). It is a pleasure to report that we received 100% in all 3 categories: quality of life, quality of service, and organizational framework.

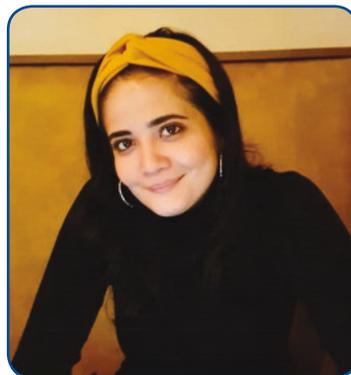
Finances and fundraising continue to be a challenge. In January, under the direction of Fred Norwicki, we organized our first annual silent auction and fundraising dinner. In March, a second dinner was hosted by a local chapter of the Knights of Columbus. We are grateful to all those involved who worked to make these events successful. Our second annual auction and dinner is scheduled for February 29, 2020 at the Multi-Cultural Centre, and we are hoping that, once again, we can count on your support. The funds raised at these events are directed to costs and activities not funded by the government of Alberta. One of our urgent needs at this particular time is a van large enough to accommodate three wheelchairs.

Jean Vanier passed away in May of this year, at the age of 91. His life was celebrated in a simple service in his L'Arche community at Trosly-Breuil (near Paris). Jo Lennon from our community attended the service and was invited to read one of the scriptures. As the founder of Faith and Light and L'Arche communities around the world, Jean left an amazing legacy. He devoted his life to creating a space of love, joy, and acceptance. In his last message, he said, "I am deeply peaceful and trustful. I'm not sure what the future will be but God is good and whatever happens it will be the best. I am happy and give thanks for everything. My deepest love to each one of you." We go forward without him, but confident that the

infrastructure is in place to carry on with his vision. I close with another Jean quote, "Love doesn't mean doing extraordinary or heroic things. It means knowing how to do ordinary things with tenderness."

Submitted by:
Sandra Riddell, Vice-Chair L'Arche Board

Assistant Profile



Queren Hapuque joined Amani House as a new assistant in January of 2019. I spoke with Queren and asked her to share her story of joining L'Arche and to talk about her experiences as an assistant. Queren (pronounced 'Karen' in English) is from São Luis in Brazil. She has a degree in film making and media studies. She is fluent in

English, but her first language was Portuguese. She had an interest in working with people with disability and in travel, so she combined these interests through volunteering. Queren volunteered at Camphill Village Trust, a charity and not-for-profit organization in England, where she shared life with people with disabilities in a rural community setting. After one year in England, she volunteered in Ireland for two years. She also worked in Dublin with a group supporting the homeless and people with addictions.

The life sharing model of assistants living with core members in L'Arche interested her, as it was similar to her experiences with Camphill. She applied when she saw a posting for an assistant with L'Arche Canada. She said, she "wanted to come to the community most in need". After chatting with Marie Moyer about the shortage of assistants at L'Arche Lethbridge, she agreed to join Amani House as an assistant.

Queren described Amani House as a nice environment to live in; she enjoys living with the core members and a good team of assistants. She has been able to share her interest in physical activity (i.e., cross fit) and has engaged others in joining her. She is interested in the arts and community events and has attended some arts events and concerts with core members and assistants. She has made new friends in Lethbridge and enjoys time for walking, dancing and hiking on her time off.

I'd like to thank Queren for sharing her story.

Submitted by:
Sharon Yanicki, Board Member



Time with Time



This July we had the pleasure of hosting Time Baluwa, Community Leader of L'Arche Zimbabwe, in Lethbridge. Time was in Alberta to participate in L'Arche International's Faith and Culture program that took place in Calgary. He spent a few days with us in Lethbridge before attending the program to adjust to the time change and to visit our community.

I showed Time around Lethbridge and we shared together our experience of living the role of Community Leader. Time also shared about his community one evening. L'Arche Zimbabwe has two homes with 13 core members and about 8 Assistants. They do not receive much government support and have to find other ways to support themselves.

Our communities are very different but there were also a lot of similarities. In our roles, we both spend a lot of time and energy finding resources to support our communities. In Canada we receive much more support from the Government than in Zimbabwe but we also have a lot more government regulations to comply with. Time seemed surprised when I showed him the two large binders that contain the standards that we are required to follow. There is a similar spirit of sharing life together, recognizing the gifts of each person. It brings to mind a quote from Jean Vanier:

"...L'Arche doesn't do anything spectacular; its work is to bring life, to help people grow a little more each day in love and peace. In a world where there is so much harshness and individualism, strife and war, we are simply there as a sign that love is possible on this earth, that people can live together and love each other, a sign that God is present, hidden in the hearts of each person..." Jean Vanier, *Our Life Together*, p 126

This still rings true for me today. As Time and I shared our experiences, it reminded me that L'Arche communities around the world are united in trying to live this out as best we can. I am grateful to be able to live in this community, together with my brothers and sisters around the world.

Submitted by:
Tim Wiebe, Community Leader

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 _____

Please find my cheque enclosed.

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

Card No. _____ Expiry Date _____ Name on Card _____

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L'Arche Lethbridge Office at 403.328.3735 or Email larche@telusplanet.net

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 Warwick Printing Co. Ltd., and Haul-All, for excellent service and prices.

