



L'ARCHE LETHBRIDGE

240 - 12th Street 'C' North • Lethbridge, AB T1H 2M7
403-328-3735 • Fax 403-320-6737 • Email: larche@telusplanet.net
www.larchelethbridge.org

Reflection from the Community Leader

The first few months of 2020 have been challenging ones. First was the news of the result of the inquiry about Jean Vanier and then the ever increasing restrictions imposed by Provincial and Federal Governments to contain the spread of Covid-19.

The response to covid-19 has meant major disruption to our community life. Some of our Assistants have entered self-isolation as a precaution, all the day programs for Core Members have been closed and new Assistants who had received their work permits but have not yet arrived in Canada are unable to cross the border.

The week after the results of the inquiry about Jean Vanier were released I met with different groups in our community to share the news and to spend time sharing with each other how this news affected us. At the end of these times of reflection I read the poem, "In Blackwater Woods" by Mary Oliver as a way to close our times. I chose this because I felt that it captured where we are as a community in the face of the shocking news about our founder.

I was struck by these lines of the poem, "Every year everything I have learned in my lifetime leads back to this: the fires and the black river of loss whose other side is salvation". We all stand at

the shore of the black river of loss at some point in our lives, for L'Arche this seems to be one of those times. I feel we are trying to find our way across this river toward the far shore but the way is hard to see. I cannot know the meaning, but need to trust that all happens for a reason. I love the last two stanzas; "to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go." This is the call for me during this challenging time.

I am thankful for everyone who has given us words of encouragement and compassion during this time. This year I am called to live the Easter story in a real way. The revelations about Jean and the upheaval in our daily lives, due to Covid 19, have been a kind of death.

In front of these challenges I need to trust that L'Arche can live the Easter story and find life springing warm and new from the cold stillness of death. I don't know what this new life will look like but I trust in my relationships, my community and all our supporters that we will be led across the black river of loss and that we will find what we need to sustain us on the way.

In gratitude,
Tim Wiebe, *Community Leader*

Message from the Board

Once again, I must report that there has been a significant change in our Board. Francis Rankin who has served on the Board as the Building and Maintenance Chair has retired after five years of service. Also, our Chair of the Finance Committee Lew Denis will be retiring at the end of June. Before coming to the Board as Finance Chair, Lew was employed by L'Arche Lethbridge as our Bookkeeper. All together Lew has served for many years. Our heartfelt thanks to them both for all their work, their wisdom, and their friendship. We will miss them. Hopefully, we will continue to see Lew and Francis at L'Arche Events.

So, my cry is for HELP! We need Board members with different interests and skills but especially we need people with accounting and marketing skills. Is it YOU? OR if not you, could you spread the word to someone you think would be suited to the job. The Board meets the second Wednesday evening of every month except for July and August. As well we work on either the Finance Committee or the PR Committee or the Fundraising Committee. My second cry for help is in finding a new Core Member. We have had a vacancy at Ruah House for over a year. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could fill that space and complete our L'Arche family with full houses!

Another change of note is the appointment of Christine Monier as the new Regional Leader for Western Canada. Christine has

been working as the community leader for Comox Valley for the past 10 years, and has over 30 years of L'Arche experience both in Canada and in France. Christine is passionate about the vision and mission of L'Arche as well as developing resilient and sustainable models of living L'Arche in a changing environment. She will begin her new role early this Spring, and we are looking forward to her leadership.

I will also mention that the Board gathered in early October for a Workshop/Retreat led by Bob Campbell. This event gave us an opportunity to reflect upon who we are and what kind of Board we want to be in context of L'Arche philosophy and spirituality. We spent time thinking about our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and as a bonus, we got to know each other a little better.

With the downturn in the Alberta economy due to government restraints and the Covid-19 pandemic, we are definitely facing some big challenges as a L'Arche community. But let us remember that even in the dark times and the chaos of uncertainty we are not alone. God is with us, within us, and all around. We pray for our community and the life of the world.

Submitted by
Sandra Riddell, *Vice-Chair*



L'Arche Lethbridge Fundraiser

February 29, 2020 ▪ Multicultural Centre

Our second annual Dinner and Auction was a tremendous L'Arche evening.



- An accommodating and accessible venue – the new Multicultural Centre officially known as the Southern Alberta Ethnic Association.
- A room filled to the brim with enthusiastic L'Arche supporters.
- An impressive variety of silent and live auction items on which to bid.
- An outstanding chicken mango dinner served by Karoll's Catering to 180 guests.
- A fantastic MC – Terry Vogt.
- Flowing and enjoyable guitar melodies rendered by Dale Ketcheson.
- A budding and talented Auctioneer – Cheryl Meheden.
- An engaging Guest Speaker – Michael McDonald.



L'Arche Lethbridge Fundraiser

Continued

As guests entered the building they were warmly greeted by our welcoming team of Joy, Donette, and Sharon, and invited to view the auction items.

The room, decorated in L'Arche blue and white was inviting and alive with a friendly hum. The tables were beautifully enhanced by fresh flowers, lights and pebble centerpieces created by Olya Sorochynska. The Recruitment Table, with a display of L'Arche pictures, brochures and swag very much added to the L'Arche ambience.

Special guests included MP Rachel Harder, MLA Nathan Neudorf, and Head of Communications for L'Arche Canada Michael McDonald. Besides having fun and getting to know each other better we raised \$32,434 thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, cash donations, auction donors, and guests.

Submitted by Sandra Riddell



Coping with self-isolation: a traveler's story

My husband and I recently returned to Canada after two months in New Zealand visiting with family. Getting back to Canada as the pandemic worsened was a bit stressful, however, we were fortunate with our flights and are glad to be home. As a retired academic and nurse, I thought I was pretty well informed about the spread of infectious diseases. However, the Covid19 pandemic has been quite different from my previous experience.

What is self-isolation? International travelers are asked to stay home for two weeks after returning home from abroad.



In New Zealand, voluntary self-isolation of all international travelers was started early after the identification of the corona virus outbreak (Covid19) in China. This strategy has helped to protect people from coming in contact with the virus and reduced the number of positive cases. Self-isolation is an important way to reduce the spread of viruses, especially those spread by coughing and sneezing.

Wondering what self-isolation is like? Now that I'm back in Canada, my husband and I are staying home for two weeks. We have relied on many people to help us. First, a family member dropped off some groceries at our house before we arrived home (e.g., milk, bread, eggs, fresh vegetables and fruit). Second, our neighbours and friends have offered to help us with shopping and we can order groceries online. Third, we are staying connected while staying home. We chat with family and friends everyday using Face-time or phone calls. As a L'Arche board member, I attend Zoom meetings from home in place of face-to-face meetings. I also connect with colleagues and students through email and Zoom. I miss getting out for walks and giving hugs, but this too will pass. Finally, I'm taking time to pray for all those affected by the pandemic. Regards, to all who are isolated but not alone in L'Arche.

Sharon Yanicki
Board Member



Inquiry Results

In February we learned the shocking news that our founder, Jean Vanier, had initiated sexual behaviour with 6 women without disabilities between 1970 and 2005. These were results of the inquiry initiated by L'Arche International and carried out by a consulting firm in the United Kingdom.

This news has been a blow for L'Arche. Jean was someone who seemed to live his values with such integrity, a man who walked the talk. Now we find that there was a secret in the basement of his life where he lived something contrary to the values he talked about, wrote about and purported to live.

What do we as a L'Arche community do now? We have depended on Jean to speak for us, to inspire us and to connect our lived reality with the vision of what we want L'Arche and our world to be.

At Jean's funeral in May 2019 our International Leader, Stephan Posner, said that now L'Arche belongs to us. After the revelations of the results of the inquiry that is even more true now. We need

to trust our own stories of relationship and transformation. We need to learn how to tell these stories and to inspire each other to continue to bring the Mission of L'Arche to life.

It will take time for us to grapple with the news and understand what it means for us as an organization and as a community of people who still do our best to live out the values instilled in us by Jean as our founder. We trust that together we will find a way forward into our new reality.

Because Jean chose to sexually abuse women does not mean that all of the L'Arche communities are tainted by the behaviours and the choices of this one man. We strive to create an atmosphere of trust and safety where everyone can contribute and grow into their gifts. It is not a one-time thing but an ongoing dance between all the members of the community. In all our actions we have a choice; will we choose to behave in a way that builds the others up, or in a way that breaks them?

Submitted by Tim Wiebe

Planned Giving

The generous gifts left to us as bequests have been a huge support for L'Arche Lethbridge. These gifts have helped us to continue to live our Mission of building a more human society through our diverse community life with people with and without disabilities.

These gifts were left to us in wills. Did you know that only 26.2% of Canadians report having a will that is up to date? Another 11.7% have a will but it is not up-to-date, leaving 62.1% of Canadians with no will at all. Having a current will is essential for many reasons. With a will you can:

- Identify who will oversee the distribution of your estate.
- Provide for your other loved ones at your death. If you pass away without a will, the distribution of assets is left to provincial laws and courts. This can be a very challenging process of work for your surviving loved ones to navigate.
- Provide a charitable gift to L'Arche Lethbridge that demonstrates your faith and the passion you have for the Mission of L'Arche.

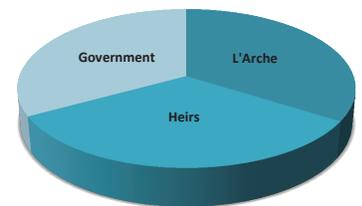
We would be honoured to work with you to help you plan your gift. We also encourage you to speak with your accountant,

lawyer, or financial planner. When appropriate, we would be happy to be part of those conversations so we can help with the following:

- Match your interests with opportunities.
- Answer your questions about programs, services, and priorities at L'Arche
- Ensure that L'Arche can use your gift according to your wishes.
- Provide sample will wording and the proper legal name and charitable registration number of L'Arche

Submitted by
Tim Wiebe, *Community Leader*

In the end your wealth could go to any of these. Choose two of your favorites.



**A Bequest to L'Arche can reduce taxes owed on your passing, leaving the rest of your estate for your loved ones.*

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.

Please charge my credit card.

Visa

MasterCard

American Express

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

Card Number: _____

Expiry Date: _____

CSV Number: _____

Signature: _____

Name on Card: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

L'Arche Lethbridge Office | 403.328.3735 | larche@telusplanet.net

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