



## Gwenda—This Little Light of Ours

By Denise Haskett

My first memories of Gwenda were at Community prayer where she was part our musical group, the Messengers. I marveled at how she played her drum with such focused attention, her head gently swaying, in perfect rhythm and a look of peace on her face.

Gwenda loved to sing and knew the words to many songs. People would be chatting and she'd pick out a little snippet in the conversation and suddenly pipe up and exclaim softly "that's a song!" When you'd ask "what song?" she'd use the phrase she'd just heard and break into the song with gusto and everyone would join in.

A gift Gwenda gave to the world was the way she smiled at people. She would fix her gaze on someone, when their eyes met, her face would light up and crease into the most radiant smile I have ever seen. It could be with someone she knew very well or with a complete stranger. She would beam at them with such delight and you could see the person on the receiving end of that smile being warmed through. Often it was followed by her lifting up her arms to give and receive a big hug. I believe that gaze and those hugs were a kind of deep and tender healing for many people. I know it is true for me.

She had an amazing sensitivity and deep intuition about people and how they were doing. She seemed to know when they were sad or troubled and she'd pray for them without them necessarily ever knowing. She carried so many people in her heart.



Gwenda taught me something important. She was quite shy and often found it difficult to express herself in words. And yet she was also very determined to say what she wanted to say. She'd start a sentence and get stuck. Her brow would furrow, her shoulders would slump and she'd sigh and then she'd pluck up her courage and say to herself "try again". She would keep doing that until she got it. This was and continues to be a real source of inspiration and strength for me. I hear her coaching me when I get discouraged, I take a deep breath and say, "Okay Denise, try again!"



Gwenda was full of mischief and playfulness. I had the privilege of accompanying her on her dream trip to England to visit Judie Leckie the community's founding director. Judie welcomed Gwenda as one of our founding members in the early 1970's. On the plane we settled in for the long flight and both chose our movies. The next thing I knew my channel had changed or the volume had gone down. I wondered what was going on and looked over at Gwenda. She'd look at me with a huge grin as she fiddled with the buttons on my arm rest.

In recent years Gwenda was diagnosed with dementia. It is so painful to see someone we love slowly taken by this disease. I am sure she suffered too, both physically and mentally; yet somehow her essence remained through it all, that gentle, peaceful presence.

When I think of Gwenda, I think of the Beatitude "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." I believe she had a direct line to God and, by her gentle presence, her playful spirit, her love of people, her gaze of light, and those enfolding hugs she helped us to experience the mystery of the love of God.

Her favourite song was "This Little Light of Mine" and now she is a little beam of light in heaven shining on us.

### Our Mission is to:

*Make known the gifts of people with developmental disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships.*

*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.*

*Engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.*

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## From Denise's Desk

### A New Mandate for L'Arche Greater Vancouver



*Every four years we go through a mandate process where we consider the needs of our community and how we can more fully live our mission. Here are some of my thoughts as I accepted the challenge of leading our community through our 2017-2021 Mandate:*

I love that our new mandate has the same three themes as the L'Arche international mandate. It reminds us that we are part of something much bigger as we live our mission with 149 other L'Arche communities globally. L'Arche matters, it makes a difference in our neighborhood and in our world.

I appreciate that our mandate is simple and points us very clearly in three key directions:

**Go Deeper: Trust each other.** In this part I hear people's concern and love for the community. People want to contribute to the community and use their gifts. They want to learn new skills and be trusted with responsibilities.

I also hear the cry for relationship and the desire to know one another better. This is the heart of the mandate and it speaks to my own heart. We commit to care for each other because we belong to each other. This inspires and gives me hope.

**Go In: Make our lives better and easier.** We will look at how we do things in the community, including the jobs people do and see how we can help each other to make things simpler, as well as looking for more ways for everyone to use their gifts to make our community life better.

**Go Out: Try new things and welcome new people.** Part of "going out" will be to move forward with the new building so everyone can easily get around and we can welcome new people into our community.

We are heading into a very important moment in our history – a time of rebirth and transformation. We are dreaming a big dream. Every single one of us has a place in this dream and we need each other. There are lots of questions and many unknowns about the road ahead. How will we get there? Who will help us? Who will we welcome? Who is knocking on our door? Who are we being called to listen to in our community, in our neighbourhood, and beyond?



A pathway is opening up before us and we must choose each step carefully. We will listen to where God is calling us, listen to our own hearts, and listen to one another. We need to remember where we come from and share our stories and memories as we go forward and leave the familiar.

Our new international leader, Stephen Posner, was asked how he relates to the new international mandate. His response encourages me as we move forward with our mandate locally:

*I remember Jean Vanier saying to us one day, "Don't say that it was better before. Keep searching!" We are heirs to fifty years of history, and at the same time we must understand that the greatest tribute we can pay to our founders is to be founders in our own time."*

In accepting this mandate I don't pretend to be anyone but who I am and offer you myself, with both my gifts and my limitations.

Thank you for your trust in me.

*Denise Hockett*

### Memorials and Tributes

L'Arche Greater Vancouver gratefully acknowledges gifts received in memory or in honour of loved ones and friends.

IN HONOUR		IN MEMORY	
Philip Beeby	Hitomi Imamura	Beeby Family	Ruby Leinemann
Diane Bruce	Joan Isac	Gwenda Dunlop	Maureen O'Loane
Scott and Debbie	Joel and Sarah Macht-Woods	Fred Dunston	Cecile Smith
MaryLou Harrigan	Noah Ryan-Schmidt	Janet Faulds	Teresa Spurr
		Joan Guthrie	Sherrill Weeks
		Teresa Hynes	S.C Wong
		Josh Kuntz	Great Aunt Win



## Art Together 2017

On April 21 we were proud to invite friends and family to our 2017 Art Together show at the Amelia Douglas Gallery at the New Westminster Campus of Douglas College. This year's "Here We Go" theme is based on our 2017 Community theme which is taken from Jeremiah 6:16:

Stand at the crossroads and look;  
Ask for the ancient paths,  
Ask where the good way is and walk in it,  
And you will find rest for your souls.

L'Arche Greater Vancouver is on an exciting journey as we consider how we will grow and expand our mission. *Here we Go!* is an encouragement for us to get going and an invitation for others to join us as we walk the path before us.

Each work was created by groups of two or three people with varying and unique abilities from the L'Arche Greater Vancouver community who were inspired by our theme. Where should we go? How will we get there? Where would you like to go? What's the best route? Who will we meet along the way?

The paintings will be on display at Douglas College until June 23 and we are investigating other display venues for the show. In the meantime you can see the photos of the paintings on our blog.

We are grateful to the Art Exhibit Committee at Douglas College for giving us this opportunity to show our work in such a beautiful space. All works are for sale and can be purchased directly from L'Arche. Prints and art cards of the paintings are also available. The paintings will be featured in our 2018 Art Calendar which will be available for sale this fall.



*Cristel (left) with Mary with their painting "Picnic Party"*



*Paul and Megan with their painting "Here We Go for Coffee"*



*Jenn and Patrick with their painting "Disneyland Airport"*



*Petyo (standing) with Arthur and their painting "Aloha"*



**2017 Business Lunch and Open House**

Each year we welcome the local business community to L'Arche to introduce them to our community and to recognize businesses who have made a significant contribution to L'Arche. This year we were pleased to recognize the following businesses for their support as L'Arche Greater Vancouver's Corporate Ark Builders.

**Arts Nursery**— In the summer of 2016 Arts Nursery approached us to see if we'd like to be part of their Scarecrow Festival. Besides contributing our own scarecrows for display Arts Nursery gave us a way to introduce ourselves to their customers and raise funds for L'Arche.

**Vancity**—Both the South Burnaby and the Royal Oak Community Branches have been wonderful supporters of L'Arche. They continually look for ways to help us share our mission with the wider community, help us with our funding needs and provide volunteers for special events.

**Canada Life**—We were privileged to be invited back for Canada Life's 2016 Charity Softball Tournament. Through the money raised and Canada Life's matching funds we were able to raise enough money for a new L'Arche vehicle.

**GWL Realty Advisors Inc.**— Thanks to GWL Realty we were able to set up our 2016 Art Together Show downtown at their Park Place location. Through the event we sold a number of paintings and introduced ourselves to many more people.

**Rexall**—Rexall has helped us in sponsoring events, contributing to the Canada Life event and offered training to people who assist in our homes.

**Digitally Hip**—Not only does Digitally Hip provide us with high quality IT support they return our payments with an equal donation. Their generosity makes it possible for L'Arche to continue to grow and live our mission



STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER™

**GWL Realty Advisors Inc.**

**Rexall Health Solutions**



**Thank you for supporting the work of L'Arche locally**

If you prefer to donate online go to: [www.larchevancouver.org](http://www.larchevancouver.org) and click **"Donate Now"**

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