



NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2009-2010

L'Arche welcomes Judie Leckie, Community Founder

Each year L'Arche Greater Vancouver spends a weekend together in retreat. Since this was our 35th anniversary we were delighted to be able to welcome Judie Leckie, our founding Community Leader, to lead us. Here is her introduction to the community and a few highlights of her talks on the theme "Act Justly and Love Tenderly".

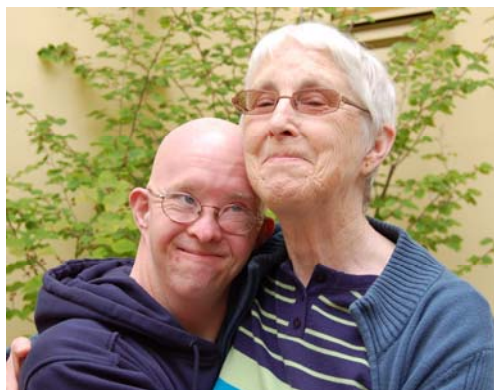
Peggy McDowell and I came from Daybreak in Toronto (the first L'Arche community in Canada) to start the community in 1974. I remained there until 1979 when I entered the Carmelite Monastery at Quidenham in Norfolk, England. Over the next thirty years of my life in the monastery I kept the L'Arche community deeply in my heart and prayer. I also continued to keep in touch by mail. When my monastery at Langham (The Carmel of Our Lady of Walsingham) closed last November I returned to Canada to rest and to discern my future.

To Act Justly

Justice is a word to use for important things; for things that really matter - we think of it often in terms of such major issues as provision (or not) of food, education, healthcare, human rights.

Justice is not simply an idea or an ideal - it is something that is an action. It is something we must do and live. There is little point in talking about it if we aren't willing to live it and the place we start living justly is here in community. We have a responsibility to act justly.

What happens when we do not act justly or we ourselves are treated unjustly? We know that acts of injustice create deep feelings of vulnerability, fear, anger and then we have to think about how to



Patrick and Judie.

deal with that. In community we have the opportunity to try to speak to the one who has hurt us or whom we have hurt. We have to have the grace to seek or give forgiveness and these, worked at and lived, in community will bring healing to our world.

Loving Tenderly

Here Judie shared some of her journey since leaving L'Arche to be in a cloistered monastery.

Life in the monastery gives plenty of opportunity to learn to try to live and to love tenderly. Lots of people think that living in a cloistered monastery is a waste - we could be out doing something useful. But we believe that life lived consciously trying to love and care for one another is healing for our world.

A life of prayer isn't just an esoteric living in some other world but a real living with real (and therefore imperfect) people. Similarly, living in a L'Arche community has the same power for healing the world if the community and each member struggles to grow in the love the Gospel calls us to.

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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Judie and Ken.



Judie with some members from the early years.



From Denise's Desk:

Each year we choose a theme that will guide us in expressing our mission. The theme is posted in the Big Living Room and we refer to it in our community prayers, and meetings. Throughout the year, it is the common thread used in planning for the seasons of Advent and Lent and for our annual Community retreat.

As I reflected on what our theme might be, the word *abundance* kept echoing in me. Looking back on the year I am filled with gratitude for all that we have been given and am reminded yet again, to trust that what we need will be provided for. This year we have been celebrating 35 years of sharing life together and building community. We are so rich because we have each other. We have a wonderful extended L'Arche family, a network of people who share in our community life through their friendship, prayers, belief in the mission, and the commitment of their time, talent and resources.

The awareness of this abundance led me to the scripture passage

that has been announced as our theme this year, "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full". It is God's desire that each person become all that he or she can be.

As we approach the new year, it is my hope that L'Arche might be a small sign that peace is possible in our world. Although it is not without its struggles, it continues to be a great source of inspiration to me to be part of a community where such a diversity of people can share life and care for each other in a spirit of unity. When each person contributes their gifts beautiful things happen and we find we have enough.

We continue to rely on God's provision and are grateful for the many hands and hearts that make community happen. We count the multitude of blessings that surround us.

With much gratitude for God's abundant love,

Denise Haskett
Community Leader/Executive Director

The L'Arche Retreat Edition

Sometimes to move forward you have to retreat. This edition of our newsletter highlights some of the retreat opportunities members of our community have participated in during the last year. Spirituality is at the centre of our lives and an integral part of the mission of L'Arche. Retreats are an investment in care of the whole person and a unique feature of life at L'Arche.

Retreat at Rivendell

Everybody needs some time to reflect on what they base their life upon. At the end of November a small group from our community went on retreat together to reflect on the theme "We are God's beloved". Our retreat place was Rivendell Retreat Centre on Bowen Island, a peaceful and welcoming place.

On our first day we went on a treasure hunt together to look for Jesus' treasure. As we all know a treasure is something valuable, special and important and so we discovered through different activities and different clues what is so valuable, special and important for Jesus. The answer we found at the last station in the chapel was: it is us! We are very special for Jesus and very much loved by him.

The next day we listened to the story of the prodigal son. We reflected on all the things we think make us happy and learned from the story of the prodigal son that the place where we can find happiness is in the arms of God, our father, who welcomes and forgives us with open arms.

We had a little celebration together and on our last morning we blessed each other and called each other to use our gifts to show love and care to the people in our homes, families, communities and neighbourhoods.

But the most important thought for us to take home was that "We are God's beloved".



From L to R: Barbara, Nydia, Caroline, Christina, Alana, Linda, Patrick and Annette at the Rivendell Retreat Centre on Bowen Island.



Retreat Reflections: Evelyne and Sue

It is such a gift to be able to participate in a L'Arche Retreat. My favourite retreats are when we are partnered with a core member.

The last retreat that I attended was held in Montreal for all of the Canadian communities. I had the privilege to accompany Sue (one of our core members) on that retreat. What a pleasure it was to see so many familiar faces from other communities and meet new people.

Retreats help all to grow, our core members, long term members and newer assistants. L'Arche is like a big family.

Evelyne is a confirmed member of L'Arche Greater Vancouver who is now retired from her duties as a live-in assistant, but is still very much an active member of the community. She prays for us daily and regularly assists in one of our day programs.



Sue and Evelyne at the Covenant Companion's Retreat.

Retreat Reflections: Annette and Ken

When Ken and I were asked to give the reflection at the L'Arche Covenant Companions Retreat we were both excited about it. We had been participants on retreats before, but it was the first time for us to lead and share with others about our faith in God and our experience in L'Arche.

Before the retreat we met together to read the Bible texts that were given to us as the foundation of our sharing. We talked about times when we know God is near and times when God seems very far.



Ken and Annette at the Covenant Companion's Retreat.

Ken shared with me how he did not know God before he came to L'Arche. Ken had lived in a foster family and Woodlands School before coming to L'Arche. When he moved into L'Arche he started going to St. Mary's church where he met someone who enabled our L'Arche community and Ken to connect with his family of origin.

I asked Ken if he believed that God loves him. His answer was: "Of course!" So I probed a bit more and asked: "How do you know that God loves you?" Ken just looked at me as if I was asking a very stupid question and said: "Because God is God! And because God gave me my family back, because I have my friends at church, my friends at L'Arche and you as my friend."

I thought his answer was so true. God uses each of us to reveal his love to the people around us. Ken experienced God's love through the love of the people in his family, his church and our L'Arche community.

When Ken and I shared his story at the retreat many of the attendees could relate to his experience. The retreat was an opportunity for them to talk about painful and joyful experiences and bring these in prayer to God. It was also a time for people to be affirmed of God's love for them and that their life has a purpose.

Upcoming Events

Coffeehouse

Saturday January 30, 2010
 Saturday May 1, 2010
 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
 South Burnaby United Church
 7591 Gray Ave. (Burnaby, BC)
 Free Admission

The Art of Being Together

A celebration of art. A celebration of community.

Saturday March 6, 2010
 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
 National Nikkei Museum & Heritage Centre
 6688 Southoaks Cres. (Burnaby, BC)
 Admission \$5

Join Vancouver's most talented emerging artists and a panel of respected judges to celebrate the spirit of community.



Tribute Giving

L'Arche Greater Vancouver gratefully acknowledges the gifts made in celebration of the following individuals:

Robert Brekelmans
Nelly Doherty
Diane Karpinsky

Audrey Middleton
Millie, Chantal and
Tempest

A Sprinkler System Celebration

L'Arche Greater Vancouver celebrated the successful installation of a sprinkler system in our main building at 1704 Sussex Ave. A celebration was held to thank those who made this project possible, specifically the Vancouver Foundation, The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver (Project Advance), CLBC, Gisborne Group and Sure Hazmat.



From L to R: Tom Nowak and Michael Bryant of L'Arche, Guy Clarkson (Gisborne), Penny Lim of L'Arche and Jim Sawers (Gisborne) in the sprinkler system control room.

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VanCity, South Burnaby Community Branch

Foundations

J & G Servant Foundation
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Project Advance
Saint Mary's Health Foundation
Vancouver Foundation

Ways to Support L'Arche

Sponsor a Special Event. There are several opportunities a year for individual and corporate sponsorship. Market your product or service through a partnership with L'Arche.

Invite a L'Arche Speaker to come to your community, church or school group. We have a growing speaker's bureau that is eager to share the message of L'Arche.

Give through Payroll Deduction. Designate an amount from your earnings to L'Arche.

We invite you to share your copy of this newsletter with someone else.

Give online: www.larchevancouver.org and click "Donate"

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