



Dear Friends,

The theme of this newsletter is **Spirituality**. I wanted to start by sharing with you the introduction of our current community mandate. Carefully thought-out words conveying what we live on a daily basis. Please read it slowly and let the words sink into your heart and mind.

L'ARCHE HALIFAX COMMUNITY MANDATE December 2011 - December 2015

"L'Arche Halifax is at the same time a **home**, a **community**, a **spiritual body** and an **organization** that positively affects all those within its reach.

- In our **homes**, we provide places to learn about the sacredness and the uniqueness of one another; places to learn about cooperation and compromises, giving and receiving, acceptance, forgiveness, and compassion.
- As a **community** we offer a welcoming and fun environment based in friendships and celebrations, creating a sense of family amongst our members.
- As a **spiritual body**, united in prayer, we support and encourage our members to learn and to share the gifts of spirituality and to join in the creation and celebration of traditions that give life.
- As an **organization**, we are committed to the well-being of all our members, and we strive to provide professional services in accordance with the requirements established by L'Arche Canada and the province of Nova Scotia.

L'Arche Halifax is a **new community** that has already experienced many growing pains, goodbyes, and new beginnings. It is a community that is **moving forward**, exploring new ways of doing things and looking to expand its reach while balancing **professionalism**, **community living** and **spirituality**.

Indeed, L'Arche Halifax is a place of rebirth in which healing, personal growth, spiritual growth and transformation occur on a daily basis. It is a sign of hope in the city of Halifax, in the province of Nova Scotia, and in our world today."

I am so touched by these words. Think about what phrase stands out the most for you. For me it is, "united in prayer." We pray together daily, in planned and unplanned ways. Sometimes our prayers are just too much to speak out loud so we leave space in the



silence for our hearts to speak with God. Sometimes we cry, sometimes we feel peace. We pray in thanksgiving and we pray in sorrow. We call out for God when we are afraid and our prayers are often answered in the arms of a friend, someone who sees us at our worst yet still loves us, reminding us that we are always loved, even when we feel we are unlovable.

I once read that the deeper we go within ourselves the closer we come to God. I would build on this notion that the deeper we go in community, the more easily we are able to see Jesus in the eyes of the other, be that a core member who is struggling or an assistant who has learned a hard lesson and has come to us for forgiveness. When we have hit the end of our ropes and we feel that we are nothing more than an empty shell, God comes to us in the words of someone who loves us anyway. I remember hearing two assistants sharing after they had known each other for many years and one said to the other, "I knew I loved you the first time I saw you cry." There is something very beautiful and deeply spiritual to open up our wounds to another, to make ourselves vulnerable and to be reminded that yes, you are loved, just as you are.

We are blessed when we answer the call to live community in L'Arche. The beauty we see on a daily basis, the moments of joy, sadness, hope and faith that we are witness to over and over again swell our hearts and blow our minds. "Love one another and you will be happy. It's as simple and as difficult as that." This is one of my favorite prayers by Michael Leunig.

I'll end by sharing with you the beginning of The Prayer of L'Arche. "Oh Father we ask you to bless us and keep us in your love. May L'Arche be a true home where the poor in spirit may find life. A place where those who are suffering may find comfort and peace."

Kelly Geddes
Community Leader

GIFTS

Coming to L'Arche in August 2011 I was to be a part-time night awake. I was to monitor everyone in the L'Arche community and ensure everyone was well and safe while they slept. As everyone was sleeping except for the occasional washroom break or a night of someone having trouble sleeping, I was left to learn a lot of the ideas of L'Arche through word of mouth from assistants on their way to bed, or through readings. Over the 18+ months since coming, I learned that I received "gifts" from all the members of L'Arche when I expected none. Shawn is an example of one of these gifts that I would receive.

My relationship with Shawn began whenever he would call out at night for assistance. It did not take long to realize we were kindred spirits. It was through Shawn that I first learned the true meaning of L'Arche. For about six months, Shawn was the one core member I would see the most, he would call religiously every night for assistance. I discovered quickly that Shawn had a very lively laughter and enjoyed jokes, which worked well for me as I am known for my light hearted nature. Many nights, while everyone was asleep, I would get Shawn into a rip-roaring laughter, him smacking his thigh in hysteria and banging his head into his pillow. Laughter would come to be the thing that brought our friendship together. The gift of friendship, I never expected to happen starting at L'Arche.

My relationship with Shawn was what first awoken me to L'Arche's ideas of friendship, family, community, and belonging. It's through L'Arche, and Shawn that I learned that people can come together to be friends from two completely different worlds; someone you would never ever think to become bonded with. Before coming to L'Arche, becoming friends with those I am to assist would be considered a big ethical "no-no" in my previous jobs. The concept of L'Arche showed me this doesn't have to be taboo; on the contrary it may even be more just. My thinking now is, how can someone **truly** "care/assist" for someone if you're not emotionally invested? That's what being a human is about; caring for someone, feeling for someone, loving someone. That's part of what being with L'Arche is about.

"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."



Shawn Moulton & Andrew Johnston
at Vanier

Today, Shawn and I see each other still at nights when he calls, but I now get the opportunity to join Shawn and the rest of L'Arche during the day as a relief assistant. It is because of the bonds that I created with Shawn, the other core members, assistants, and volunteers that my wife and I even make visits to the community on our own personal time. L'Arche has become more than just a job, but a place to be among friends; friends I call family now. My relationship with Shawn has grown to now going for weekly swims, playing video games, listening to music, and talking about all the things "guys" would discuss. We have gone to tattoo shops to get a tattoo, and plans to possibly get out to a movie.

It's through my friendships, and bonds founded here with Shawn and others at L'Arche that I know I have grown a family. That I am part of this community- that I belong!! After all the jobs, I have worked, and education received I now know it is not what a person can do for another that is important, it's the life changes that they offer that's the gift. For Shawn and myself, I feel that we have given each other such joy and happiness in our lives to be that gift to change us. It's through the tears of laughter, the jokes said, the games and "guy time" between us to shape our friendship, to become family.

I see now, Shawn and I have created a kind of bond that keeps us tied together, and maybe it is God's design we were meant to have our paths cross. God realized that we have important gifts to offer to each other, to have us grow and be better individuals. So I thank God and Shawn for teaching and giving me so much. It is the gift of friendship from Shawn that blossomed my new thinking that everyone can grow further, to reach a higher potential, to expand our horizons of what defines our friends, family, community. It is with this idea that **everyone** has gifts to offer others and that is the spirit of L'Arche.

Andrew Johnston,
Assistant

A very special “thank you” goes out to all who support L’Arche Halifax. As Saint Francis of Assisi said, “It is in giving that we receive”. These photos capture just some of what your giving has made possible for our members.



New instruments for Music Night!



Best Buddies!



Community retreat!



Art Therapy!



On the way back from Neptune!



Art Lessons!



Gardening!

Our major Fundraiser for the year:

5th ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

September 5, 2013

Sherwood Golf & Country Club, Chester, NS

If you wish to golf, sponsor a team or a hole, donate items for auction and/or prizes, join the Golf Tournament Committee or for more information, please contact:

David Banks at dbanks@assante.com

or email: office@larchehalifax.org

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PLEASE KEEP US UP-TO-DATE!

Please inform us if you change your address or if you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email.

Contact us by email: office@larchehalifax.org

or telephone: (902) 407-5512

The Friends of L'Arche and L'Arche Halifax invite you to join us at St. Agnes Church Hall for fellowship and fun.

Please join us at 1:30 pm on the following dates:

September 8, 2013

November 10, 2013

December 8, 2013

You may donate financially to L'Arche Halifax by:

1. Mail a cheque to L'Arche Halifax, 5512 Sullivan Street, Halifax, NS B3K 1X7
2. Credit card - Phone (902) 407-5512 and provide the following Information: Type of card, card number, expiry date, name on card or by completing the following and return it to the above address: Type of card: Visa or Mastercard;
3. Number on Card: _____ Expiry date: _____
Name on Card: _____
4. Through CanadaHelps.org – Go to website: www.canadahelps.org, search for charity and complete online information
5. United Way – Pledge through United Way and request your pledge be allocated to L'Arche Halifax
6. Monthly Giving – call Office at (902) 407-5512
7. Leave a Legacy – call Office at (902) 407-5512

Thanks for your support!