



CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF L'ARCHE COMMUNITIES

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Preamble

The communities of l'Arche around the world form the International Federation of l'Arche Communities (the "Federation"). The purpose of the Federation is to unite in the common vision and spirit declared in the Charter of the Communities of l'Arche. To fulfill this purpose, the Federation is legally incorporated in Compiègne, France.

The communities of l'Arche adopt this constitution and structure in order to foster solidarity among communities, unify their diversity, establish the conditions for membership, develop new communities, and to create conditions for trust, service, dialogue, and mutual support.

Article 1. Principles

The structures and leaders of l'Arche seek to embody the following principles:

- **Servant Leadership:** Structures and leadership positions are designed to serve l'Arche communities. The fruits of servant leadership are a common vision, support, and effective communication.
- **Partnership:** Trust and cooperation operate freely within l'Arche. The structures are to foster that dynamic and embrace the partnerships among the spiritual, legal, financial, and communal elements.
- **Subsidiarity:** Matters affecting l'Arche are dealt with in the circle closest to the people affected and are only referred outward when they cannot be solved in that circle.
- **Accountability:** Each person charged with a mandate is accountable for that mandate to specific people or entities, as well as to those who provide the funds.
- **Participation:** Decision-making processes are defined, published, and open. Wherever practical, they involve the people who implement and are affected by the decision.
- **Inculturation:** L'Arche communities live in different cultures. l'Arche embraces this diversity while engaging in an on-going process of reciprocal and critical interaction, adaptation, and challenge between L'Arche and the culture.

Article 2. Membership in the Federation

Members include communities, zones and individuals:

2.1 Communities

L'Arche Communities are communities of faith, rooted in prayer and trust in God. At the heart of these communities are people with developmental disabilities, and those who share life with them.

Communities have a document that describes how the Community is organized and governed, including how disputes will be resolved. In order to foster lifetime commitment, communities are required to incorporate, if legally possible.

- *Types of membership for Communities*

There are two types of Community membership, probationary and permanent. Probationary members participate in all aspects of the Federation but do not have the right to vote. Permanent members have the right to vote. The International Board delegates to the zones the right to grant Community membership so long as the criteria are consistent with the Charter, Constitution, and policies of the Federation. The zone's grant of Community membership must be ratified annually by the International Board.

- *Rights and Responsibilities*

Membership involves rights and responsibilities, which are specified in a membership agreement. The basic rights include participation in and support from the l'Arche structures, and the use of the name and logo of l'Arche. Basic responsibilities include operating in accordance with the Charter, Constitution, and policies of the Federation, financial transparency, payment of dues, and solidarity with other communities.

- *Removal*

The International Board, upon the recommendation of the Zone Board, removes Community membership. The grounds for removal are a substantial and ongoing violation of the Charter, Constitution, policies of the Federation, or membership agreement.

2.2 Zones

Zones (see article 4), consisting of regions and communities, are members of the Federation when incorporated. The International Board creates and grants membership to zones.

2.3 Individual Members

The following are individual members:

- International Coordinator and Vice International Coordinator , Secretary General, and the four at-large board members,
- International Pastoral Minister and one pastoral minister by Zone,
- National board presidents, Regional Coordinators, and Zone Coordinator and Board President of unincorporated zones.

Article 3. International Structures

3.1 General Assembly

Ultimate authority in the Federation rests with the General Assembly, which is the meeting of the membership of the Federation occurring at least every three years. The General Assembly consists of at least one representative from each member Community, the Coordinator and President of member Zones, and individual members. The General Assembly works on the basic orientation of the Federation, reflecting the experience and concerns of the long-term members of the communities. The General Assembly reviews, amends, and adopts the Federation's Charter, Constitution, policies, statements, and recommendations. The General Assembly approves the international mandate and elects the International Coordinators, and the Board President. The General Assembly reviews the financial management of the Federation, and policies that affect dues and obligations of members.

- *Meetings*

The International Board will notify the membership and circulate an agenda at least three months in advance of a General Assembly. The International Board or one third of the members of the Federation may call a meeting of the General Assembly. A quorum consists of at least two thirds of the members.

Each permanent member Community has one vote which is cast by the representative chosen by the Community. Member Zone Coordinators and Board Presidents and individual members have one vote per individual. Adoption and amendments of the Charter and Constitution, and the selection of the International Coordinators and International Board President, require approval of two thirds of the voters present. All other actions require a simple majority of voters present.

- *Federation Meeting*

Each Community sends delegates to a Federation Meeting called by the International Board every six years. The Federation Meeting is a forum to share, provide mutual support, deepen and renew our sense of mission and solidarity. It aims to celebrate the diversity of the Federation and create a sense of one body.

The Federation Meeting shall include:

- ◇ Community delegates: long-term members (the number and criteria are fixed by the International Board), Board Presidents or their Representatives, Community Leaders, spirituals animators.
- ◇ Regional, Zone, and International Coordinators.
- ◇ Provincial, National, Zone, and International Board Presidents.
- ◇ Four members at-large of the International Board and the Secretary General.

The General Assembly may meet during the Federation Meeting.

3.3 International Board

The International Board governs the Federation between the General Assembly meetings. In accordance with the direction provided by the General Assembly, the Board shall take the necessary steps to ensure the functioning and growth of the Federation. This includes adopting policies and procedures, fundraising, selecting the auditor, creating needed structures and positions, and approving the budget, annual accounts, and financial reports.

The International Board is composed of the Presidents of the Zone Boards, the Zone and International Coordinators, the International Pastoral Minister, and up to four at-large members. The four at-large members are selected by the Board for their expertise and/or involvement in l'Arche and are ratified by the General Assembly. At-large board members serve three year terms, renewable once for a total of six years.

Any board member may be removed by a two thirds majority vote of the International Board members present for violating the Charter, Constitution or, policies of the Federation, or for failing to fulfill board responsibilities.

In case of resignation, death, or removal of an International Coordinator or a Board member at large, the Board will name a replacement within six months who will serve until the next General Assembly.

The Board shall meet at least once a year. The Board President or one third of the board members may call a board meeting but must give all board members at least 14 days notice of the meeting and the agenda. The Board may meet in person or by teleconference call if each member can hear and be heard by all present. A quorum consists of two thirds of the members of the board. Decisions are made by a simple majority of members present.

The Board has two standing Councils, the International Mission Council and the International Stewardship Council.

- *International Mission Council*

The International Mission Council, consisting of the Zone and International Coordinators, and the International Pastoral Minister, unifies and renews the vision of l'Arche by listening to the communities, regions, and zones. The Mission Council encourages members to live l'Arche faithfully and provides direction regarding the mission of l'Arche. It encourages the international solidarity of communities, organizes international retreats, renewals, and formation, and makes recommendations to the Board regarding structural changes, membership, policies, procedures, and commissions. The International Coordinator chairs the Mission Council. The International Board President and Vice President are invited to participate as non-voting members of the Mission Council.

- *International Stewardship Council*

The International Stewardship Council consists of the Zone Board Presidents, and the at-large Board members. The Stewardship Council serves as a bridge between l'Arche and society, particularly in their areas of expertise. It takes responsibility for developing strategies for fundraising, preparing and reviewing the budget and finances, recommending an auditor, ensuring compliance with appropriate laws, and raising the concerns of zone boards. It makes recommendations to the Board regarding structural changes, membership, policies, procedures, and commissions. The Board President chairs the Stewardship Council. The International Coordinator and Vice Coordinator are invited to participate as non-voting members of the Stewardship Council.

○ *International Executive Committee*

The Executive Committee of the Board, consisting of the International Coordinators, the Board President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, has authority to act for the Board between Board meetings. The Board President chairs the International Executive Committee. The committee meets at least twice a year and sends the minutes of these meetings to all members of the board. The committee appoints the Secretary General to facilitate the work of the Board.

○ *Officers of the International Board*

- ◇ The President is responsible to call together and preside over the International Board, International Executive Committee, International Stewardship Committee, and the General Assembly. The President works with the International Coordinators to ensure the overall good functioning of the Federation.
- ◇ The Vice President assists the President and fulfills the duties of the President when that person is temporarily absent or otherwise unable to perform the duties of the office.
- ◇ The Treasurer has overall responsibility for the finances of the Federation. The Treasurer oversees the preparation of the budget and financial reports and collaborates with the auditor.
- ◇ The Secretary is responsible for ensuring the safe-keeping of the documents of the association in the registered office and to provide copies as required. He oversees the preparation and circulation of the minutes of the International Executive Committee, the International Board, and the General Assembly.

The President of the International Board is selected by the General Assembly through a process established by the Board. The Board, through a process it establishes, selects the Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. The terms of the officers of the International Board are three years, renewable once for a total of six years. In case of resignation, death, or removal of an officer, the Board may replace such individual until the next General Assembly.

3.4 International Coordinator and Vice International Coordinator

The International Coordinators are attentive to the signs of the Spirit of God at work in the l'Arche communities, regions and zones around the world. The International Coordinators support, challenge, and give direction to Zone Coordinators in the way they live with, and are responsible for, their zones.

The International Coordinator animates and represents the Federation and is accountable to and works with the board to fulfill the mandate of the General Assembly. All Federation employees answer to the International Coordinator. The International Coordinator chairs the Mission Council and works with the Board President and the Executive Committee to ensure the overall good functioning and administration of the affairs of the Federation.

The Vice International Coordinator assists the International Coordinator in fulfilling these duties and replaces the International Coordinator when that person is temporarily absent or otherwise unable to perform the duties of the office.

The International Coordinators are elected by the General Assembly in a process established by the Board. The terms of the International Coordinators are for six years, renewable once.

3.5 Jean Vanier

As the founder of l'Arche, Jean Vanier is a member of the General Assembly, International Board, and the Board's Councils. In the capacity of Board member, he will serve until he is 75 years old.

3.6 International Commissions

The International Board creates International Commissions to deepen the vision of l'Arche in specific subjects of common interest to the whole Federation. Any member, through the region or zone, may petition the Board to create a commission.

Article 4. Regions and Zones

The Federation is organized in geographical subdivisions of regions and zones.

Where possible, each Community belongs to a region. Membership in the Federation is lived and expressed primarily through the region. Regions have an organizing document reflecting how they are structured and governed, which must be ratified by the Zone Board.

Each Region belongs to a zone. Zones oversee the support that regions give to communities, organize inter-regional and zone activities, foster inculturation and represent communities at the international level. Zones also have an organizing document that must be ratified by the International Board.

4.1 Assemblies

Regions and Zones develop assemblies according to their reality. These assemblies have similar purposes to the International General Assembly. Assemblies are encouraged to include long-term members and spiritual animators, as well as board presidents and Community leaders, and name the Board of Directors and the Coordinator.

4.2 Boards

Each zone and some countries are governed by its own Board for the purpose of insuring financial accountability, developing policies, raising funds, representing l'Arche, and addressing issues which are of common interest or are better handled at the zone or country level. When incorporated, the Board assumes legal responsibility for its structure and staff and for any agreements it enters into with the Federation.

4.3 Regional and Zone Councils

Regions and Zones have Councils that support local communities to remain faithful to living the vision and mission of l'Arche. They encourage members to live l'Arche more fully and provide direction regarding the mission of l'Arche. They recommend communities for membership, develop policies and procedures, and recommend the establishment of commissions.

4.4 Regional and Zone Coordinators

Regional and Zone Coordinators animate and represent their respective regions and zones. They are accountable to and work with their Board and/or Council. They encourage the international solidarity of communities, plan retreats, and formation and training, and coordinate their respective assemblies.

Regional Coordinators follow and guide new applicants for Community membership in the Federation as well as assess how member communities in the Region assume their rights and responsibilities of membership in the Federation. Regional Coordinators provide direction and guidelines to Community leaders and Community boards.

Zone Coordinators help communities discover how to live l'Arche in their own culture as well as increase their awareness of l'Arche in other cultures. The Zone Coordinator presents the gifts, needs, and aspirations of the Zone to the international level to nourish and expand its vision, and brings the vision and wisdom of the whole of l'Arche to the Zones. They are responsible for the selection, formation, and support of the Regional Coordinators.

4.5 Commissions

In order to examine topics more deeply, regions, countries and zones may form commissions, as their organizing documents permit.

Article 5 Legal declarations

5.1 The International Federation of l'Arche Communities Association is governed by a French law passed on July 1, 1901. The present Constitution serves as the by-laws registered in Compiègne, France. The registered office of the Federation is in Trosly-Breuil, France, and can be changed by a decision of the Board.

5.2 The income of the Federation consists of:

- ◇ members' donations
- ◇ gifts
- ◇ donations from any association or foundation
- ◇ subsidies
- ◇ income earned on the assets of the Association
- ◇ any income not forbidden by the law

5.3 The President of the International Board and the International Coordinators represent the Federation and sign legal documents for the Federation. The Federation assumes no legal liability for disputes between its members or its members and third parties.

5.4 A special summoned General Assembly may decide to dissolve the Federation by a vote of three-quarters of the voters present. That General Assembly shall make arrangements for the liquidation of the assets of the Federation. It shall decide on the transfer of the assets of the Federation to one or more associations whose purpose is serving persons with a mental handicap, with first priority being given to other l'Arche Associations or associations with the same spirit.