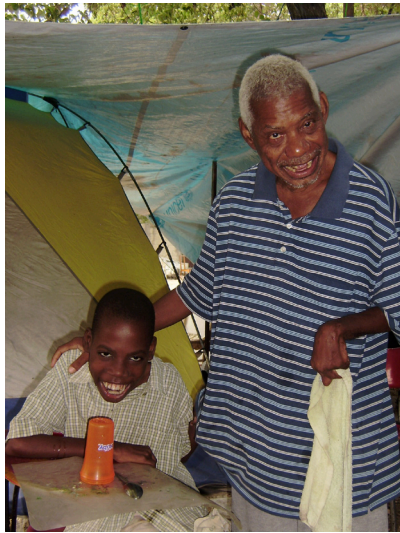




## Visit to Haiti

■ Jean-Christophe Pascal, International Coordinator



The little two engine plane has just cut through the cloud cover. All of a sudden, Port au Prince is beneath us. A mosaic in all shades of beige, with dots of blue and white, the colours of tarpaulin and tents, colours which dominate the countryside of Port au Prince when seen from above.

After the unavoidable jams, we finally arrive at the community. The last part of the journey is very difficult. Most of the houses are rubble.

The occupants have set themselves up in tents, planted directly on the street since their own land is unusable. So the street is packed with tents, as well as the huge pile of debris that is being slowly shifted by hand.

The gate of the community is opened and I am treated to the kind of welcome that has become a Carrefour speciality. I enter into the courtyard. Since the neighbours and friends have taken refuge there, this has now become a refugee camp. Every single little corner is occupied. The three foyers have been condemned. Two of them will need to be demolished.

Since 12th January, Jacqueline is not only responsible for the community but also for a little village of 70 people who need to learn to live together, sharing space as well as tasks. So it was wise to send a dozen people to Chantal, which is situated in a



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rural area not affected by the earthquake. These are the people who could not have coped with the promiscuity and the size of the group.

The rainy season is on its way, along with the inevitable floods. It is clear that the tents will not stand up to the strong winds which mark the "cyclone period". So the Board is setting about ensuring their replacement by cabins made of wood and corrugated iron. This is all the more urgent since the tents are not large enough for beds. The money we have raised is therefore being directed towards meeting this pressing need, putting in place a short term fix, as well as preparing the ground for the rebuilding. This will not happen quickly. In this place, a huge effort is required even to take the smallest step forward. In the short time that I spent at Carrefour, I saw no sign of any diggers, bulldozers or in fact any building work at all. What I did see was a whole people who have come through a great trauma, who have lost much and who are still weeping for their dead. One afternoon during the siesta, a 7.9-er shook the whole quarter awake, everyone running everywhere as they attempted to escape the 'goudougoudou' (Creole word for earthquake) - food for the rest of the day's conversation.

Clearly, many questions are surfacing: where, what and how to rebuild? I am full of admiration for all those grappling courageously with this question for it implies totally re-defining the community project in the post-January 12th context. When the time comes, we will be there to support the reconstruction on the plans established by the community. But as of now, we should anticipate the costs of a total rebuild.

I left Port au Prince again with a deep respect for the Haitian people, the memory of the smiling children playing in the ruins, and a renewed appreciation of each minute of life, knowing that at any moment, everything could be taken away. Life is so fragile and yet so strong!

## Egypt: Out of the desert... and into the city!

Al-Fulk Community in Egypt is on the move, thanks to the international Catholic charity, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). Magdi Asham Henein, Board President, explained: "Our present house is in the desert. But we cannot integrate people into society if we are living in the desert. ACN has helped us buy the land for the new community building in the nearby city of Minia."

ACN has already given more than \$20,000 and promised further support for the construction of the new premises. Outlining the planned move, Magdi Henein added: "It will create some kind of social life for the residents with mental disabilities - they like to buy things from shops and to visit people." There are at present seven people in the house - and another eight who come to make candles in the workshop. "We hope to expand to 10 in the house and 20 in the workshop."



Malak from Al-Fulk.

"The community is a sign of unity as they have Catholic and Orthodox living at the same house - and they are hoping in the future that there may be Muslims involved as well. In the future Al-Fulk could be a bridge bringing Muslims and Christians together."

Thanks to ACN for this article: <http://members4.boardhost.com/acnaus/msg/1267662522.html>.

## Easy Language Report of Stage One, Commitment & Belonging

■ Tobias Gerken, Chair of the steering committee

Dear participants,

Stage two has now been launched! And you might have already gathered together in order to share your experience. As you will know, the focus this time is on the difficulties and challenges around your commitment and belonging in L'Arche.

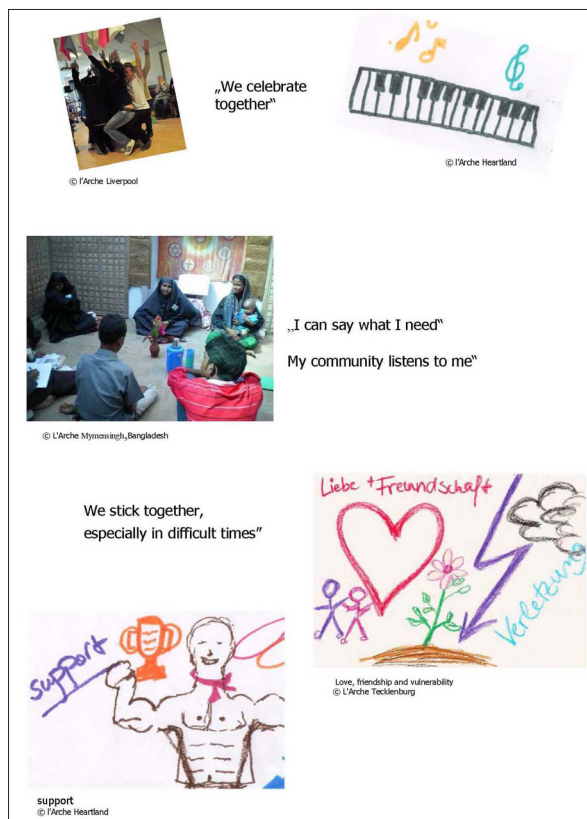
We hope that the Easy Language version of the report on Stage one will help you prepare the second stage, especially with the people with a learning disability.

You will find the Easy Language report in English, French, Spanish, German, Polish and Dutch on the website <http://www.larcheinternationale.org/cb/>.

We invite users of these languages to use the terms and pictures in the report to share the results of stage one before entering into the meetings, reflections and prayers for stage two.

On the right side, you can see an extract of the report concerning the question how L'Arche is committed to us.

If you have questions around the process of stage two, please don't hesitate to contact us at [secretariat.cb@larche.org](mailto:secretariat.cb@larche.org).



## Sharing is caring: an offer and an appeal

The International Communication Service is here to help! For instance, recently, a Country Coordinator asked us for a diagram of our international structures. (To view it, see the 'Toolbox' section on the International documentation website <http://archives.larche.org>: please do remember you need to log in with username 'federation' and password 'raphael'.) Another recent request has been for a computer tool that improves access to computers for people with a disability. Or for an up-to-date power-point presentation on L'Arche International... so if you need a resource and you think we could help, please ask us ([communication@larche.org](mailto:communication@larche.org)). Similarly, we invite you to share your own resources with us. That way, we can make them available more widely. Sharing know-how around the Federation is what we are all about!

## News from Asha Niketan Kolkata, India



Jean Vanier and Rakhi

Rakhi asks us to remember Pratap in our prayers. Pratap, a member with a disability welcomed into their Candle workshop, was drowned recently, having fallen into a pond near his home. Rakhi also asks for prayers for herself and her family. She will soon be stepping down as community leader and Subrata Chatterjee will be taking her place. In addition, the new Day care centre building is almost complete. You can write to Rakhi at her new address: [paul.sankar32@gmail.com](mailto:paul.sankar32@gmail.com).



## A different film: 'L'épreuve des mots'

■ Anne Chabert d'Hières, director of the project for L'Arche International on the participation of people with a disability



In March, L'Arche France launched 'L'épreuve des mots' (*The trial and challenge of words*). It is a film of interviews with people with a disability, focussing on the questions of society.

Nicolas Favreau brings people with an intellectual disability out into the open. The respect for silences and the time it takes to elaborate one's thoughts on the great issues of society: love, work, money, politics... their sincerity overturns ideas one has about disability, life and

the world!

Various showings have been arranged, notably with the press and our institutional partners. In addition, within L'Arche to the Federation Council, Board members and to those who give retreats... on each occasion, the film has touched and challenged people. But, perhaps the most moving showing was

to a Parisian audience who had no idea about people with a disability. Here is a selection of comments made afterwards: *"I receive this film like a precious gift. There is nothing superfluous in it. They speak with their hearts. It all comes from a point of truth."*

*"You don't necessarily think of people with a learning disability as capable of having a political viewpoint. I think you have broached these little taboos and shown the reality, and I thank you for it."*

*"What touches me is the beauty... the beauty of the people. When you keep your distance from disability, they are people who generate fear, people not associated with beauty. But here... the beauty of their faces and the truth of their expressions, it really is very touching."*

*"I found this film super, because you could really laugh. Even if it is a very serious film, you could have a laugh."*

You can read all the comments on the Facebook page 'lepreuvedesmots'. Check out the trailer for the dates of future showings, whether private or at festivals in France and beyond.

This film is arousing such interest that the work of subtitling is ongoing in Dutch, Spanish, Polish and German. And perhaps soon we will start in Italian, Slovenian or Arabic... The DVD, in the original version and subtitled in English is available at L'Arche in France, for cost of postage only. To obtain a copy, contact Céline Roche: [celine.roche@arche-france.org](mailto:celine.roche@arche-france.org).

## The Malja letter writing campaign: an update

■ Pierre Kubler, former L'Arche volunteer in Palestine

First, a big thank you to all those who have written to our friends. Your letters come from France, from the US, from Canada, Switzerland, Germany, from Ireland, from South America... the list goes on!

For reasons that we don't really know, the letters are not arriving regularly at the Malja. Even so, many have arrived and brought joy to our friends. Even if you don't get a response, your letters and your pictures are essential for our friends in the Malja.

You will be aware that the conditions in the Malja are not ideal. So the campaign also aims to remind the administration of the Malja that, even from afar, we are watching over our friends.

This campaign is very important not just for our friends but for ourselves in the wide family of L'Arche across the world. It is a good way to remain faithful, by nourishing our links of friendship with all our friends who have lived in the past in a L'Arche home.



Mahmud and Wafā

We hope that this little update will encourage those who have written in the past year to commit themselves again this year. And of course, if new communities or new people would like to join the campaign, you will be welcome!

*Note: In the meantime Pierre has returned to France. If you want more information on this campaign or if you want to write to the Malja you can contact Françoise Lagand: [françoise.lagand@orange.fr](mailto:françoise.lagand@orange.fr).*



## A nice surprise for Slovenia! The gift of a new workshop from Germany A businessman teaches us about keeping promises

■ *L'Arche Slovenia*



Presenting L'Arche can bring amazing results! Five and a half years ago, we did a presentation in a German parish. Afterwards, a building company boss offered to build us an eco-house. But having just opened our second foyer, we badly needed a workshop. No problem! If we found a suitable site, and arranged the necessary permissions etc., then they would do the building. Who says fairy-tales don't come true?

Miraculously, a good local man donated the land! Our post-communist bureaucracy of course spent five long years to give permission, but finally, in January, the foundations were ready. And then lorries started appearing, laden with the wooden parts of our future workshop. Fifteen lorries packed with nine volunteers who worked 14 hour days for two weeks without a break. And all to fulfil a promise made five years earlier. In the meantime, the company had been hit badly by the world financial crisis: so would they keep their promise? Not many people are prepared to sacrifice three days of their vacation

to construct the wooden parts. But they did it willingly, later assembling them all on site.

And what is more, they started a whole new "initiative" to get the interior ready, enthusing all their own suppliers with this project. So today, about 60 other German firms are engaged – all for free!

It is a beautiful sign of hope to see that a free gift like this is possible in a world suffering from the ugly side of capitalism. We do all we can to share it with others. You can imagine how our members with a disability love the TV interviews! To cap it all, the most prominent anti-Christian, left-wing newspaper even published our story under the heading "Miracles still happen..." Bringing refreshments to the workers has become another daily ritual, to last from now till November, when presumably the workshop will be finished. How wonderful to see that after a few days they are all on first name terms...



## Holy week at L'Arche Brussels

■ *Michel Bacq s.j.*

Maundy [Holy] Thursday is the most important community meeting of the year in L'Arche Brussels. This year, we asked Andrea, who comes from the Jewish tradition, to organise the first part of the celebration. Andrea worked for hours on to put it together for us, with a dynamic team. She introduced us to the customs of a Jewish supper: the lamb, the bitter herbs, the unleavened bread, the cup of wine... or raisin juice. The biblical texts recalled the history and the meaning of the Jewish Paschal festival. Each household as well as the workshop commemorated an important event in the year. The blessing of the cup was proclaimed in Hebrew by Andrea, and in French



© Andrea Filop

by Jean Pierre, the community leader. The Eucharist followed as an integral part of this meal. This enabled the community better to understand how Jesus has taken the symbols of the Paschal meal to their fulfilment in the gift which he made of his own life.

One of Andrea's drawings for our Way of the Cross with the parish.



## 2010

### JUNE

#### **Fundraising workshop**

St Cuthman's Retreat Centre  
Coolham, West Sussex  
UK

June 3 (3:00 pm) to June 6 (m)

#### **International Board Meeting**

Lyon – France

June 20 to June 27

### JULY

#### **International Experience (English only)**

Formation of LTA's  
Sydney – Australia

July 26 to September 26

### SEPTEMBER

#### **The Gospel of Saint John (English only)**

The program will consist of two 10 days  
sessions by Jean Vanier  
La Ferme de Trosly – France  
30 participants maximum

September 13 to September 24, 2010 (first session)  
February 7 to February 19, 2011 (second session)

### OCTOBER

#### **Foundational Covenant Retreat**

(Ecumenical – open to families)

Orval Abbey – Belgium

Speaker: Sue Mosteller

Reference person: Anthony Kramers

[anthony.kramers@larche.org.uk](mailto:anthony.kramers@larche.org.uk)

#### **International Mission Council**

West Africa

October 16 (5:00 pm) to October 22 (2:00 pm)

October 20 (e) to October 27 (m)

### NOVEMBER

#### **International Board Meeting**

St-John – NB – Canada

November 17 (e) to November 21 (m)

## Nominations

#### **National Coordinators**

Ruth Joseph, Switzerland

#### **Delegate Coordinators**

Basia Pestka, Bangladesh

#### **Community leaders**

Jennifer McCauley, L'Arche Sudbury, Canada

Natanael Carranza, Choluteca, Honduras

Gladys Sánchez, Santo Domingo

Subrata Chatterjee, Asha Niketan Kolkata, India

This list is not exhaustive; we welcome updates you are aware of at the address [bdd.international@larche.org](mailto:bdd.international@larche.org) (database managed by L'Arche International in Paris)