



Theologians' meeting in Trosly

■ Christine McGrievy, International Vice Coordinator



Deborah, Jean, David and Frances - Trosly - September 2011

This September marked the beginning of this important year of transition for us as a Federation and for Jean Christophe and I as International Coordinators. It was therefore good to take a weekend to meet with David and Deborah Ford, Frances Young and Jean Vanier in Trosly. As theologians, David and Frances have accompanied L'Arche for almost twenty years and have been in the core group carrying the theological reflection on the international level. At this particular stage of our development in L'Arche it was good to read our collective experience from a theological perspective. As well as talking about the evolution of the Federation and how our own journey fits in with the evolution of the world, we also spent time on a paper written by Frances on "Wisdom in Weakness". As International Coordinators this was also a good place of support and communion as we journey in our own transition.

News from Syria

■ Ghada Tourna, community leader

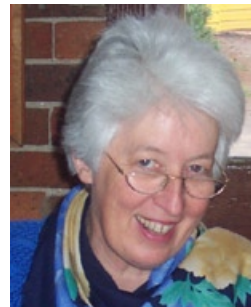
6th September: here we are back again from our holidays, picking up our activities where we left off. Of course, this year is quite unlike previous years, since, despite the tragic events that are taking place in Syria, the community is fortunately in good shape. We were able to take off for a week's holiday by the sea. At Damascus, it is calm and so far our daily life can carry on without running a risk. What is vital for us, are your prayers



N° 20 - October 2011

Reminder of Covenant letter

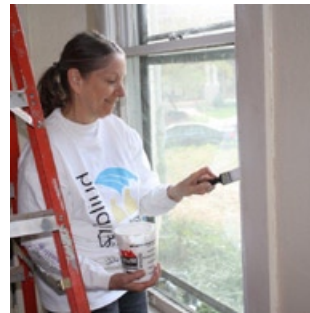
■ Eileen Glass, Chair of the Covenant Working Group



The Letter from the International Working Group on Covenant was sent to you with the last issue of the International Newsletter. Thank you to those of you who have already responded to the letter and the questionnaires. The Working Group will begin work on your responses in the middle of October and encourages you to send your

questions, reflections and responses to questionnaires to the contact person for your country, or to a member of the Team as soon as you can. Thank you for your participation in this important reflection in the life of the Federation.

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Hope in Iraq >>> p. 7

and much more news to discover!



Toward Atlanta '12

■ Tina Bovermann, Coordination General Assembly

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve"
(Martin Luther King Jr.)

A couple of weeks ago, I spent some time in the future house of L'Arche Atlanta. It was one of several volunteer days (see photos). During the week, a contractor built staircases, moved walls and connected cables and water pipes.



Yet, the finishing touches were being left for men, kids and women who have come in weekend after weekend to paint, hammer, saw and clean. Some of them – friends of friends – had never even heard of L'Arche. They just came because... well, because it seems to be the thing to do here in the Deep South. When somebody asks for help, you help!

When I travel the city of Atlanta to present L'Arche and the 2012 gathering – and to ask for help – I am most often greeted by this sense of service and solidarity. Typically and no matter what my question, I hear something like, *"No, we don't know L'Arche. Oh, what a wonderful project. Yes, of course we can do this."*

I am touched by the ease of giving and sharing that I experience here in Atlanta. And as preparations pick up speed, as the liturgy team decides on readings, as the decorators start to think about colors and material, as our musicians choose songs, as video clips are being edited, as questions of transportation and finance are being dealt with, as future delegates start to register... looking together towards June 2012 becomes much simpler, *"Oh, what a wonderful project. Yes, of course we can do this."*

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don't



have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" Martin Luther King Jr.

The gathering Atlanta '12

1-3 June: Family Weekend
3-10 June: General Assembly
8 June: Community Day

The General Assembly: you will vote on!

- Coordinators', President's and Treasurer's reports
- A new constitution
- A new international mandate
- A new leadership team (Coordinators and President)
- Recommendations on commitment and belonging

The Registration process has started. Please take time to fill in the forms on the participants' section of <http://atlanta.larche.org> as soon as you can.



New Appointments:



Sally Partridge
Board President of
L'Arche Mobile, USA



Ron Pendleton
Board President of
L'Arche Harbor House, USA



Donn Raabe
Board President of
L'Arche Chicago, USA



Virginia Muraoka
Board President of
L'Arche St. Louis, USA

Karen Sherry

Board President of L'Arche North Bay, Canada

Don Dickson

Board President of L'Arche Saint John, Canada

Karen Sherry

Board President of L'Arche North Bay, Canada

Tom Nowak

Board President of L'Arche Greater Vancouver, Canada

Donna Cranston

Board President of L'Arche Blue Ridge Mountains, USA

Rhodes Jules Garcon

Board President of L'Arche Haiti

Samar Sangma

Board President of L'Arche Mymensingh, Bangladesh

Marie Roberts

Board President of L'Arche Ipswich, UK



Cathy Wilhite

Community leader, L'Arche
Blue Ridge Mountains, USA



Georges Huet

Community leader of
L'Arche Pierrefonds, France



Pierre Jacquand

transition Community leader
of L'Arche Trosly, France



Scott Shively

Community leader of L'Arche
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Blanca Guevara

Community leader of L'Arche Choluteca, Honduras

Rafał Ślusarczyk

Community leader of L'Arche Sledziejowice, Poland

Marc Larouche : Reference person for L'Arche in 'new countries'



Since autumn 2010, at the request of L'Arche International, I have been the reference person for groups interested in founding L'Arche in 'new' countries, i.e. those where L'Arche is not yet established, and which are not already covered by one or other of the Coordinators. My role focuses on the 'Contact' phase between L'Arche and the group; it is an initial period of dialogue where information is given and received, eventually discerning if necessary conditions are being met. If they are met, a proposal is made that the group passes on to the 'Pre-foundation' stage and is then allocated to the

relevant L'Arche coordinator; alternatively, if conditions cannot be met, and/or the Federation is not able to accompany the group further, the latter would be steered, when possible, to possibilities other than L'Arche.

Playing a part in the emergence of new communities in some very diverse cultural environments, is a captivating experience: so many are crying out for support. In this role, it is an advantage to have lived in L'Arche in some pretty varied cultures (India, Haiti, Canada, (Quebec)) for several years. But given that some expressions of interest come from cultural milieus in ongoing evolution, I find I also need to remain open to new ways of founding a community. The document, 'Guidelines for founding a L'Arche community' (currently under revision) will be a very useful reference tool in this regard.





Commitment and Belonging - Beginning of Stage 3

■ Tobias Gerken, Chair of the Commitment and Belonging steering committee

Dear participants of commitment and belonging,

Remember Archie? The little guy who represented the results of the second stage of Commitment and Belonging?

Well, Archie is back on stage to launch stage three! This stage will take place between the end of September and mid January 2012. We are asking you to reflect upon the Affirmations and Recommendations that emerged from stages one and two.

We have continued to explore the image of Archie in the garden. This time, we propose that each individual, community, and country as well as L'Arche International assumes responsibility for each particular part of the garden. Try checking out the easy read version on <http://www.larche.org/members> (username 'federation', password 'raphael') to find out more.

The overall objective of stage 3 is to prepare for the General Assembly. There, we will be voting on the Affirmations and Recommendations. We need to know from you if this is a helpful direction.

As one of our major focuses is the partnership between people with and without learning disabilities, we warmly encourage you to use the Recommendations as a guide on how to live



partnership in meetings. It is important that we adopt the right approach, using methods that will enable the full participation of our members with a learning disability. Have a look at the Affirmations and Recommendations in the easy read version, also available online. We hope you find that this helps us all to understand better so we can all join in the conversation on how to foster commitment and belonging – individually, in our community and in whatever context or culture we are living.

'La Source', Trosly 2011

■ Odile Skjellaug, adjunct at international formation

It is called La Source: the name of an event where 16 assistants from Canada, India, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Slovenia and Switzerland came and spent four weeks in Trosly in order to trace not just the source of L'Arche's story, but also of their own



commitment. The programme included sessions on the identity and mission of L'Arche, a week in a foyer, a week's retreat with Jean Vanier, as well as a good deal of time just sharing together. It was all that and more, and it was good! And the new contacts that are created renew each participant's enthusiasm to go back to their community. So let this encourage you to think about participating in such a formation, when it is next proposed!

On the next page is a delightful poem by one of the participants, on how she lived La Source. It captures the spirit of the event! Further information on La Source can be found in the International Newsletter, April, 2009.

Pianissimo 2011

by Carmel Hunt, L'Arche Edmonton, Canada

*It's quiet in here this morning,
Only the ticking clock breaks the silence,
Providing accompaniment for the songbirds.
Listen to the silence...
Tick, tick, tick,*

*Recall the words spoken here,
Captured by the sturdy walls.
There's lots of history in this room,
Listen to the whispers...
L'Arche, relationships, celebration,
Forgiveness, Jesus, identity,
Beatitude... God.
Sign, hope, reveal, gift.
Heart ---
Tick, tick, tick,*

*Commitment, consent,
Agree to commit,
Deepen,
How?
Listen to your heart,
Tick, tick, tick,*

*See the person,
Commit to each other,
Day by day,
Heartbeat by heartbeat,
Tick, tick, tick,*

*See the faces,
Hear the stories,
Be seen,
Share my story.*

*Walk together,
Forgive and ask forgiveness.
Listen to the silence.
Listen to the joy.
Listen to the anguish.
Listen with an open heart.
Listen to the cries.
Laugh together.
Cry together.
Pray together.*

*Be silent together.
Listen...*

Be...

Western Canada Regional Pilgrimage

■ Pat Favaro, Regional Coordinator

300 people: that is how many took part in the recent L'Arche Western Canada Regional Pilgrimage from September 12 – 24, 2011. Special guests included Hazel Bradley and Richard Keagan-Bull (from L'Arche Lambeth in the United Kingdom) who led the pilgrimage.

Of course, L'Arche has a rich history of pilgrimage, as noted by Kathryn Spink in her book on L'Arche, *The Miracle, the Message, the Story*: "From the very first Jean Vanier had seen the importance of journeys and celebrations in lives that might otherwise be monotonous and devoid of hope, to keep up spirits and open hearts and minds to other realities."

Normally, a pilgrimage is a journey from home to a holy place. But given that our Region includes 7 Communities in 4 provinces spanning 2500 kilometers, gathering everyone together to make a pilgrimage can be a challenge! So this pilgrimage was designed to allow more people to participate. Most people entered the journey in one of the sacred spaces that we created in three different cities. In addition, a few pilgrims participated in several places so that links could be made throughout the journey.

At each stage there were stories and sharings by Hazel and Richard, as well as times of walking together, foot-washing and celebration.

And what were our holy places? In Calgary, we walked to the Monastery of the Precious Blood, where the Sisters were



celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of their order – the first contemplative order in Canada. In Vancouver, we followed a cross through city streets and a beautiful park. And in Winnipeg, the walk took place at the Forks and St. Boniface Cathedral. The Forks, the place where the Assiniboine and Red Rivers meet, has been a meeting point of people of the First Nations for 6000 years. St. Boniface is a holy place, where early missionaries to western Canada came to serve those in need.

As hoped, graces flowed throughout the pilgrimage, making it a wonderful celebration of the relationships we have with one another.

Towards one ESAT in the Oise Region, France

■ Jean-Christian Poirel, Coordinator-director of L'Arche Oise

Nothing stays the same forever, and now it is the turn of the ESATs of France to do a few cartwheels! An ESAT is a kind of social enterprise offering people with a disability the chance to work: the present changes have been brought on by the ongoing demands of supporting people, the ageing of the disabled workers, and the harsh economic climate.

In Oise, two such ESATs have been on the go for a long time, close by one another: Trosly (118 workers) and Le Levain at Compiègne (47 workers). As part and parcel of their communities, they come under the direction of the community leader.

To stimulate a new dynamic, we launched a reflection process, which would enable our culture to evolve, and with it our structures, while still hanging onto our distinct identity.

After necessary consultation with the key players, we took the

decision to regroup the ESATs into a single entity, to operate independently of the community. This will allow activities undertaken at Trosly and Compiègne to be harmonised. There is a cast iron guarantee that the L'Arche project can continue in the ESAT, but a renewed openness to innovation will be noticeable, along with a distinctly more commercial approach.

Organisationally, the ESAT will be led by a director, on an equal par with community leaders. Role discernments have led to Silvère Jauny being appointed to this post, while Paula Winters takes charge of the ESAT assistants, and Karol Okecki of internal services.

Much work still remains to be done, such as allocating tasks, harmonising working practices, and clarifying the links with the communities... all the while remaining attentive to what it means to be "a L'Arche ESAT."

France : *Tous fragiles, tous humains* (All weak, all human)

■ Céline Roche, communication for L'Arche in France



On February 19th-20th this year, 1500 people responded to the invitation of L'Arche in France and its partners, to take part in an exchange on our relationship with weakness, and what weakness, in all its forms, might be saying to our society.

Never before, has society tried so hard to run away from weakness, and never before created so many weaknesses. The more we are pushed to succeed, the more our failures stare us in the face, us meaning both our society, and

us as individuals. This book is the fruit of a cross-pollination by the authors, who freely shared their own raw experience of weakness, what they have witnessed in others, and their interpretation of the data. Whatever the subject under discussion - illness, disability, work, poverty or youth - on each issue the authors point up the crying need to change our attitude and approach.

Without a trace of complacency, this book dares us to welcome weakness as a source of richness, a tree bearing good fruit. It lays down the gauntlet for our society, which can be taken up either together or alone. A clear sighted gamble that offers new hope.

The team was led by Erik Pillet, a former Chair of L'Arche in France, and included: Marie-Hélène Boucand, Jean-Paul Delevoye, Guillaume de Fontclare, Bruno Frappat, Julia Kristeva, Michela Marzano, Jean-Marie Petitclerc, Bruno Tardieu and Jean Vanier.

A discovery :



In 2009, over 17 days, a small film crew filmed Jean Vanier follow the steps of Jesus in Bethlehem, Galilee and Jerusalem. In the course of these 14 films*, Jean Vanier shared his thoughts on the Gospel of John: this was the fruit of years of reflection, study, prayer and "Our life together" at L'Arche. The director, Valerie Bouchez, is a religious sister in the Chemin Neuf community. Recalling the experience, she said** : "out of his lived experience, in the light of the

Gospel of the beloved disciple, springs forth a true spirituality, a vision of life for the world and for each person. Jean, through his experience close to the poorest people, those whom we so easily reject, reveals to us who Jesus is, and his vocation, and who we are ourselves. (...) Producing this film has transformed me and confirmed me in my own true vocation: that of letting myself be loved by this God who has stooped down in order to love all people, whoever they are; that of the gift of oneself for others (and not just self-affirmation); that of not being afraid of what is small and fragile... (...) Thank you to Jean, this prophet, for his yes to lovingly following Jesus; thank you to him for having taken the risk of sharing his vision and of living it out."

*Available as four DVDs: www.lafermedetroslly.com see the title 'Nouveau - Jean Vanier en Terre Sainte'

**To read the whole of her statement, go to: www.jean-vanier.org > Friends voices (on the right side on the welcome page)

Iraq: Light in Improbable Places

For years we've been hearing news of the horrendous situation in Iraq, the suffering of the Iraqi people, the destruction, the instability – a situation that seems truly hopeless. Yet what we haven't heard about is the indomitable spirit of the Iraqi people, in particular the spirit of the Christian community in Iraq.

Twenty-five years ago the community of Al-Mahabba wal-Farah (Joy and Charity) was born in Iraq in the midst of the violence of the Iran-Iraq War. Today Al-Mahabba wal-Farah includes more than twenty-five communities throughout Iraq, communities that bring together people with disabilities, their families, and young people. When Imad Hassib and Fr. Faraj Rahho founded the community, they had no knowledge of Faith and Light or L'Arche or Jean Vanier.

In 1998, however, a friendship between L'Arche/Faith and Light and Al-Mahabba wal-Farah began to develop when Jean Vanier was invited to visit. Over the years, simple exchanges have taken place through correspondence, phone calls, and rare visits. This past summer, as members of Al-Mahabba wal-Farah were preparing their 25th anniversary celebrations, they asked their sister communities of Faith and Light and L'Arche to help them celebrate.

Widad and Kathy from L'Arche and Myrna and Ala from Faith



and Light went to the town of Qaraqosh in northern Iraq to participate in the four-day celebration. Over 320 people from communities throughout Iraq gathered in a spirit of gratitude to be nourished and to celebrate the gift of Al-Mahabba wal-Farah.

In this country of suffering and sadness, the joy and hope that radiated from the gathering was overwhelming. There is a living faith that is founded not only on the martyrs of the early church but also on the martyrs of today and on the belief that the human spirit can find life and joy in the midst of even the bleakest reality.

L'Arche Argentina in the media

■ Maria Mullen, communications L'Arche in Latin America



From April to July this year, L'Arche in Argentina and one of the most respected daily newspapers, *La Nación*, worked closely together on a media campaign to make known the work and message of Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche. A publicity agency (Cuko) also worked with members of the community, offering their services for free.

Three of the people welcomed into the community of L'Arche Argentina, Sandra, Osvaldo and Marcos, were highly involved in this project. By means of drawings and articles about L'Arche, the campaign made full use of media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, as well as Internet adverts. The central message highlighted the special abilities of each of these people, their unique gifts, through telling a little of their personal history and showing how each surmounts the difficulties that crop up in daily life.

The campaign was a great success, shown by over 3000 visits being made to the community website. Most obviously, this indicated a significant diffusion of L'Arche's message, but the community was also glad to receive offers to volunteer, online subscriptions to the Spanish edition of *Jean Vanier's Daily Thoughts*, donations and many requests for information.

Photo on the left: «Marcos has a special ability: he knows how to trust».

Calendar of Upcoming Meetings and Retreats

2011

OCTOBER

Leadership team

October 19 to 23

International Mission Council

October 23 to 25

Session « Pre-Foundations »

October 26 to 29

Delegate Coordinators meeting

October 29

Madrid - Spain

NOVEMBER

Covenant retreat ("open")

November 13 to 19

Orval - Belgium

Speakers: Jean Vanier and Stephan Posner

Contact person: Susanne Allermann susanne.allermann@arche-cognac.org

Covenant retreat

November 20 to 26

India - Kolkata, Dhyanaashram

Speakers: Eileen Glass, Rakhi

Contact person: Leo Jalais leojalais@gmail.com

DECEMBER

International Board Meeting

December 1 to 4

Toronto - Canada

2012

FEBRUARY

The Gospel of Saint John (by Jean Vanier)

February 7 to 17

Session 2 - English only (fully booked)

5 years + in L'Arche

The Farm at Trosly - France

1-3 years assistants retreat (ecumenical)

February 9 to 15

Rallingen - Switzerland

Contact: Astrid Froeb region@arche-deutschland.de

Leadership team

February 20 to 24

International Board Meeting

February 22 to 25

Namur (Wépion) - Belgium

APRIL

1-3 years assistants retreat

April 21 to 27

Nevers - France

Contact: Feyrouz Cortas retraite-3ans@archoise.org

JUNE

International Federation Meeting

June 1 to 10

Atlanta - USA

New assistants retreat "Walk with the word"

June 24 to June 30

Saint Pierre de Chartreuse - France

Contact people: Ben and Stéphanie Nolan best.nolan@club-internet.fr

If you'd like to receive the Newsletter directly in your inbox, please send us your address at communication@larche.org.