



Hello to each and every one of you, our friends from each and every one of us here in L'Arche Belfast,

We hope that you are well. It's been a while since we have seen some of you so I invite you to come when you can and know that you are always welcome. In fact, every Sunday in the Ember at 6 p.m. around the table in the kitchen people gather for Sunday Prayer. Whoever comes is welcome – there is always enough room. Not surprisingly our prayer starts with food (*really we should have been called 'Faith and Food'!*)

Last Sunday James led the prayer. He is a musician and he suggested that we compose a song together like the psalms of old. In our psalm everyone got to contribute a line. Larry's line was Thank you God for bikes and electric! Thomas was grateful for 'Church' (*he loves Holy Grounds on a Sunday night as his new place of spiritual belonging*) and Jillian as ever was grateful for a lovely day. Helen was busy baking. There was also gratitude for Co-op bread, ice-cream, chocolate, and open hearts. The miracle was that James was able to put it all together to music that we could sing along with and we sounded great!! Our very own hymn! Moments like these make me realize just how lucky I am to be in a L'Arche Community where everything is a bit upside down and at the same time the right way around. I love it because there is always enough room for my heart.

'The Field' (*Helping hands, opening hearts*)

These days we feel the need to grow and spread our wings a bit more here in Belfast. Ours is a fast paced world and many people with or without disabilities are lonely and longing for places to connect with others for friendship and a sense of meaning and belonging. In the past 8 years we have witnessed over and over again the transforming power of simple presence and 'a wee cup of tea' around the kitchen table.

We are now actively seeking a new space in which we can cultivate community together with others with enough room to offer hospitality to all who come. Years ago Thomas defined Community as 'a roundy thing' an around the table kind of thing. It's the best definition I know and that is how we want to grow - around and around like a spiral growing organically in ever bigger circles from the kitchen table where there is always enough room, good home grown and cooked food, fun and friendship for everyone who comes.

We have named our longing 'The Field' because we imagine a space with room to grow, not just the food we eat, or the friendships we create but a living community where everyone, irrespective of background, belief, age, stage or capacity has a space where they belong and the opportunity to contribute their gifts to something that makes a real difference to them.

'The Field' is not only a shared future to which we are committed; it is also a way of being in the here and now. It is a sign that it is possible, in our disconnected world, to come together in very simple ways and to re-claim the connections and the relationships that transform our hearts, soften our world and keep us human.

As Spring opens up new possibilities for all of us I wish you faith, hope and love this month and a field in which all that is possible in you becomes visible.

Maria 010309

In the News:

10 Years and British Citizenship! – On February 25th Scott celebrated his 10th anniversary in L'Arche with aplomb because on the very same day the Shively-Blinns celebrated dual citizenship in Hillsborough Castle. From now on they can join whichever queue is the shortest in the airport!!!

As you may know, we had an **inspection by RQIA** on 6th February and WE PASSED WITH FLYING COLOURS!

The Regional Assembly: On March 6th Scott, Noah, Thomas, Sharon and Maria will go to Dublin for the Regional Assembly. We know they will represent us well.

Welcome to Matthias and welcome back Barbara! Matthias is an assistant who comes to us from L'Arche Cork. The lads love having another male in the house! Barbara is back to us from Hungary and she brings a real sense of 'home' with her!

On Monday March 9th Thomas, Larry, Jillian, Matthias, Maria James and Faythe will make the trek to Cork to participate in a **workshop lead by Luther Smith Jr.** (Theologian and author). We will also support Maria as she co-facilitates an event in University College Cork with Luther

Dates for your Diary:

6th March 2009- Music in March

Join us at Fisherwick Presbyterian Church for a night of music by Jonathan Johnston, Rory Dowse and Shelagh Greer. Tickets are £10 each and proceeds go to L'Arche Belfast. Contact Shelagh Caldwell for more information or tickets 02890 662 308

17th March 2009- St. Patrick's Day

In honour of St. Patrick we will be planting potatoes at the Allotment! Join us for fun and a little bit of hard work. Contact Scott in the office for more information or how to help!

10th April 2009- Good Friday

We will be making a pilgrimage together as a community from South to North Belfast. If you are interested in taking a walk with us mark it on your calendar and stay posted for more information.

11th June 2009- L'Arche Golf Tournament

Save the date. If you are an avid golfer or have friends who live for the golf course, here's your chance to Golf for L'Arche. We will be having our first annual L'Arche Golf Classic at Rockmount Golf Club. Contact Faythe for more information.

Prayer Requests:

- We pray for continued consolation for Sandra, Kathy and Kerry Harris and an abundance of memories that warm their hearts and remind them of Robin.
- We pray with all of our hearts that we find the space in which we can grow and be the community that we long to be – a soft and human space at the heart of Belfast where everyone is welcome.

