



International Mission Council

■ Christine McGrievy, Vice International Co-ordinator

When a coordinator visits the community in Port au Prince, Haiti, Jolibois one of the members with a disability takes you over to a quiet corner and relates all his concerns for the community and needs to know that he has been heard. At the end of the visit Jolibois comes back, takes you again to the same place and needs to know that you have witnessed directly the questions and problems and that you will take care of things. And then he lets go and trusts...



© Basia Pestka

the IMC in Aix-en-Provence

The sun shone down on the International Mission Council as we met in la Baume, Aix-en-Provence, 21-27 October. This is the second time that this group has met together since we voted a time of experimentation of the structures and configuration of the Federation. A number of intuitions were confirmed; that all coordinators have an international component in their mission and that as it is important to be altogether to develop a global vision and understanding. It is also very necessary to meet with peers to deepen the specific nature of our different roles.

Please note, that as of the next edition, this newsletter will simply be called 'International Newsletter.' The reason for the change is that our new intranet -soon to be launched- will take over the name 'International Meeting Ground'.

In future we will send it to you 4 times a year, another effect of the new intranet. What hasn't changed is our warm encouragement to you to send in your stories, and projects! This is your newsletter. Others in L'Arche across the world are enriched by reading what's new in your community, your country. For any comment, suggestion or contribution to the Meeting Ground, please write to communication@larche.org.



N° 16 - November 2010

We thus spent three days in the large group and then split into our sub groups of confirmed country coordinators, national coordinators and delegate coordinators.

The different members of the international coordinating team were present also to provide service and support to the coordinators and the three new functions: strategic development, fundraising and people management were launched.

This meeting marked the beginning of the preparations for the next General Assembly in Washington with work being done on new structures and the processes to develop the next mandate and name the future International Coordinators and International Board President. We have begun the time of transition.

So we are in a time of change and it was heartening to see how each coordinator was well in their role and well in the dynamic that is being lived by the Federation. Together we were able to look at the questions and new challenges of this phase.

Being in Aix we were able to meet with the brand new community in Marseille, what a wonderful breath of fresh air! We received their request for probationary membership as well as that of L'Arche Grenoble and L'Arche in Brest's request for permanent membership... a lot of new life in L'Arche in France! We will take forward these recommendations to the International Board for ratification.

The experience of competence and wisdom in this meeting gives us the courage to go forward.

Jolibois is right to trust.

New communities are on their way

The Membership Committee gathered in Aix en Provence to study the conformity of the dossiers of application for adjustment of status submitted by the L'Arche communities in Brest (permanent), L'Arche in Marseille (probationary) and L'Arche in Grenoble (probationary).

For each of these requests the Committee has issued a favorable opinion and informed the IMC members. These applications will be forwarded to the International Board for approval at its next meeting in early December in Edinburgh.

Nominations

Regional Coordinators

Robert Morisson, Vice-Coordinator for the Region of Quebec, Canada

Community Board Presidents

Mykhaylo Salo, L'Arche Kovchek, Ukraine

Community leaders

Hélène Anctil, L'Arche l'Etoile, Canada

Ildiko Draskoczy, Barka, Hungary

Jennifer McCauley, L'Arche Sudbury, Canada

Other

Philippe Gosselin, Board President of the 'Association des Arches du Québec', Canada

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

The International Experience in Australia

■ Eileen Glass, L'Arche Australia

Exclamations of delight on arrival at Mulgoa, near Sydney, were elicited by the presence of kangaroos in the paddocks and rainbow lorikeets in the tree outside the dining room. Participants from communities in Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, England, France and Bangladesh spent the first week learning about Australia, the natural environment, the history, the worldview from the south Pacific, and of course, L'Arche in Australia! We also began listening to each others' stories, the stories of our communities and exploring different forms of prayer.



Experience participants by the Nepean river at Mulgoa

The following four weeks were spent in the Australian communities where participants offered formation sessions, presented their own communities, participated in the life of the local community and visited other programs for people with disabilities. This exchange was greatly appreciated as only rarely do long-term members of other communities make their way to L'Arche in Australia.

We returned to Mulgoa for a week of feedback, some input on living with cultural diversity and a presentation on changing attitudes and trends in response to people with intellectual disabilities.

We then joined thirty members of L'Arche Australia for a pilgrimage to Uluru. How amazed we were to discover a desert in bloom and to see the Todd River flowing in Alice Springs!

As we watched the sunset on the first evening we were delighted to see a rainbow over Uluru! When members of local communities returned home after a week together, Experience participants began a week of retreat in Alice Springs. Each day included an excursion into the natural or social environment, linked to the Word of the day. On clear nights some people chose to sleep under the stars.

The final week at Mulgoa gave time to begin to assimilate the importance of the Experience for our own lives and to identify the learnings we wanted to bring back to our own communities. In the words of three of the participants:

"To come apart and rest awhile – to reflect, to take time for myself, to get in touch with the inner, to reconnect with the sacredness of all that is in us and around us ...and to give thanks."

"This experience has made me whole with a heart full of gratitude. It has been a huge learning for me on how to live."

"The International Experience feels like going from bread and water to a five course meal! It's an incredibly rich experience. Be ready to be transformed."





Commitment & Belonging

■ Tobias Gerken, Chair of the Steering Committee

Dear participants,

Most communities have completed stage two of the process and we are grateful for the reports from reflecting groups, community process and individual consultations that took place. If your community hasn't been able to complete stage two until end of September, please feel encouraged to send us your reports and reflections at a later stage – on the international level we will take into account all reports that we receive until 10th of January 2011. So far, we have received 70 reports from all over the world and we look forward to unfold the stories and themes around the difficulties and challenges of our commitment and belonging.

We like to remind you of the opportunity to conduct individual consultations with former assistants and members of the communities, countries or international. We believe that every contribution makes a difference. Please feel encouraged to consider individual consultations if you haven't been able to do that and if you need further assistance, please contact your regional coordinator or a member of the steering committee.

The Countries will soon start to synthesise the reports from their communities. They will either meet on regional or national level to summarise the most essential themes around commitment and belonging in their country. This will take place between November and December before the steering committee will meet mid of January in Tirol, Austria, to synthesise all reports of stage two and to prepare the third stage. The steering committee will be supported by the International Reflecting Group.

To facilitate your planning, we will as soon as possible define the timeframe for stage three. It will be most likely similar to stage two, from March to end of September 2011.

Thank you for your participation in the process. Thank you for sharing your personal stories and for naming the difficulties and challenges. This helps us to better respond to them in the future.

L'Arche Family Day: The why, the when and the how...

■ Maria Garvey, Community Leader L'Arche Belfast, Ireland

Strange to think back to the time when we didn't have a L'Arche Family Day! But there is a time for everything under heaven, says the Hebrew scripture. For Family Day, that time was Cap Rouge, 1993. Here, Maria recalls what inspired her to propose that L'Arche needed a Family Day. The rest is history.



Antoine and Evelyne from L'Arche Haiti

Many years ago at a General Assembly meeting in Quebec we were concerned about ensuring the sustainability of our communities in the Global South and West. We were particularly worried about our seemingly scarce resources.

In that moment I knew myself to be Evelyne's sister and was moved by the responsibility of our shared and common humanity. That evening a conversation about the power of Evelyne's hope spread from table to table.

Next morning we invited everyone present to consider dedicating one day a year to remembering one another in prayer, in story, and in generosity - a day when we would celebrate our belonging to one another and allow ourselves to be moved into action by the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable in our global L'Arche Family.

I was touched by something that Evelyne Verdier from Haiti said. From the depths of her despair about the plight of her people she declared from the stage – 'Our only hope is that we know that God doesn't want his people to suffer so'.

We promised that we would remember that we are members of a 'World Wide Fellowship of Fragile Humanity' – A Family... in every way that matters and makes a difference in our world.



L'Arche Family Day 2010

■ Asha Niketan Nandi Bazar

Hello friends,

We celebrated L'Arche Family Day on 2nd October Saturday. Every year we celebrate it. This year we also arranged special prayer at Yogalayam, our prayer hall, at 10 am.

We invited the parents, friends and Board members. Before the prayer, the community leader shared about L'Arche Family Day and the stories of the beginnings of L'Arche. Then P.K Kunhikanaran, our National co-ordinator and Kanaka lit the lamp. He shared how L'Arche is today. We divided into groups for prayer for the communities and the countries. After the prayer, each one put a pepper candle on the floor. At the end of the prayer we all went for a cultural programme. Prasannan started the prayer and our chairman N.P Prabhakaran talked about the connection between Gandiji and Jean Vanier - Gandhi's birthday and L'Arche Family Day are on the same day. Finally, we all got together at the Craft centre for lunch. The whole morning was a good time which people enjoyed very much.



Kunhi and Kanak lighting a candle

The Zimbabwe Chicken Project

■ Ulrike Dürrbeck, national Board President L'Arche Germany



At present, the L'Arche community in Zimbabwe feeds itself with vegetables from the garden and sadza (mashed corn flour). Once in a while, their meagre finances stretch to a little meat, bought in a supermarket, but even then each

resident gets barely as much as a tea-spoon.

In such circumstances, hens are very valuable. They can be bought young for 30-40 US cents, and sold fully grown for around 6\$. So, if the community were to breed its own hens, they could both improve their diet and generate much needed income.

The good news is that the L'Arche grounds are large enough to set up a chicken coop at both houses. They would be fed partly from the refuse from the corn mill, (whose purchase represents another feature of the chicken project) and

from the leaves of the Agricultural forest trees – still to be planted.

Plans for erecting the chicken huts and coops are already well under way. They need to be burglar-proof and protected from rats and snakes. This means that the chicken run will be concreted over, and covered with sawdust (provided free by the Agro Forest Centre). This will later be used as garden fertilizer. In the construction, we will take care to avoid any materials with asbestos, relying instead on alternative building materials like corrugated sheeting or roofing tiles. (Unfortunately, asbestos is very widely used here in the building trade, since the dangers it poses are not widely known in Zimbabwe).

We are finding out about getting finance from a Finnish relief organization. People with a disability will need to be integrated into the project right from the start, contributing to its planning, preparation and construction, as much as engaged in the project itself once it is up and running. In addition, the German-Zimbabwe Workcamp Association is an important partner as it will possibly undertake the efficient transportation of sawdust and fodder, as well as providing young volunteer workers.



Haiti and Hope

■ *Evelyne Bazin-Verder, Board President, L'Arche Haiti (interviewed by Jonathan Boulet-Groulx: http://larchecommons.ca/en/news/Latest_News_from_LArche_Haiti_-_October_15th_2010_2010-10-27)*



© Jonathan Boulet-Groulx

Ten months after the earthquake, Haiti remains at sea, in a mess, in unknown territory. Haitians have seen nothing of the rebuilding announced or financial aid promised. The absence of infrastructure, the wretched shelters, the overpopulated camps – and now cholera in Port-au-Prince – makes it very hard to find solutions.

In contrast, L'Arche Haiti has almost completed constructing temporary buildings, in spite of delays. Happily, our donors were mobilized from the start, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank every one of them.

In fact, the temporary shelter we are constructing, with its anti-hurricane and anti-earthquake design, will become a semi-permanent residence. For now, however, the community members still live in tents. The threat of tempests, cyclones, and rains is a constant worry. Sometimes the rain virtually invades the tents....so much mud – but hope re-emerges quickly, and it keeps people strong.

Our neighbours are still in the grounds of L'Arche Carrefour. Some have left. In eight months: three deaths, three births, and two weddings. We weren't really set up to house these people, but we did know how to show solidarity.

The European Union remains an essential partner of L'Arche Haiti, financing an expansion in the schools in our two communities.



© Jonathan Boulet-Groulx

How to maintain this new energy? This work of empowering all our members starts now. Meetings about the future of L'Arche Haiti will start in early November, with Board members, Isabelle Robert (L'Arche International's representative for Haiti), and community members.

We will keep you updated. We are taking all necessary hygiene measures to protect ourselves against cholera. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers.

L'Arche is his home

■ *Gottfried Lamprecht, Community Leader in L'Arche Tyrol, Austria*



Tanja and Lambert

For the past 18 years, -and therefore since the foundation of L'Arche Tyrol - Lambert Kleissl has been living in our community household in Gries am Brenner. On 26th February this year, we celebrated his 70th birthday with him. It was a big celebration: the present members of L'Arche Tyrol, as well as former assistants and friends from the village

all took part. Even the Brass band from Gries came and played for Lambert. He himself conducted the players with such deep feeling, that he was moved to tears of joy.

In earlier years, when Lambert could still walk (he now uses a wheelchair) he would enjoy going to local farms, to gather the hay and chop the wood. And then, just as happily, he would drink a beer with the farmers. Although he can only speak a few words, he engages warmly with people. Lambert's enjoyment in connecting with people and capacity for friendship has contributed greatly to L'Arche's successful integration in the village. Today, he enjoys sitting in front of the house, waving cheerfully at the cars as they drive past. Alternatively, if he is upset, he raises his fist! When passers-by give him a friendly word, he has a chat with them.

A couple of days after his birthday, I was in his bedroom. I was very moved when I saw the many beautiful birthday cards that he had received. I realised that Lambert has a lot of friends. Through L'Arche he has also found a family and found his home. He is well known and respected in the village, and he himself contributes a lot to the village.



Outreach initiatives from L'Arche in France

■ Céline Roche, Communications L'Arche in France

Today, we are clear that wherever L'Arche finds itself, the community has a mission to its local society. It is about justice, but it is fundamentally about making our society a friendlier, more welcoming place for each person, especially those often pushed to its margins. But how to enter into dialogue? How to get our message across? How to make an impact? L'Arche in France shares news of four ways it is doing just that.

“Let's be different” was a five day festival for 600 young people, which took place near Paris in July. The theme was “dare to be different!” The essential ingredient for success was the pairing of the participants: one person with a disability and one without. Some of the pairs already knew each other, but not all.

The programme was full of activities: art workshops, sports events, reflection groups, moments of prayer, times of personal sharing, vigils, and soirées. All in the company of one's partner. If they didn't know each other well before the event, they certainly did by the end!



festival Let's be different

Underneath it all, the festival had a serious purpose: to celebrate difference, and build the kind of authentic relationships that welcome weakness, and so transform us.

In addition, the festival provided a good opportunity for L'Arche to work in partnership with other organisations: Jean Vanier shared the stage with two founders of other charitable organisations, as well as an economist specialising in sustainable development. In addition, the whole event was co-organised by Faith and Light, the OCH (Christian office for people with a disability), and A Bras Ouverts, under the leadership of Bertrand Figarol. You can enjoy the videos of Let's Be Different on www.letsbedifferent.com.

Secondly, a film on « the volunteers in L'Arche – an experience for life”. Communities depend on the people who come and live

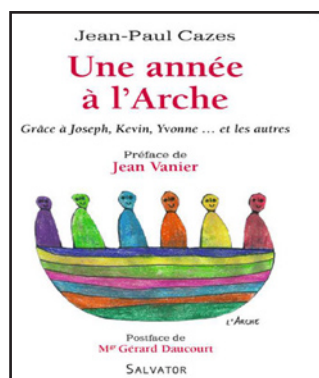
in the foyers, (in France, they are called volunteers). France had the idea of producing a resource to encourage new people to come to L'Arche. And what better way than to let the volunteers speak for themselves?!

Anne Chabert d'Hières and Nicolas Favreau were the film-makers, and they interviewed a group of volunteers on their work, the reasons why they joined L'Arche, their daily life, what this experience has revealed to them, awoke in them. The volunteers shared about the privileged moments spent in the company of people welcomed with a disability in their house: in the company of Céline, Aurore remakes the world; in the company of Maelle, Swantje rediscovers the joy of simple things like marvelling at millions of colours reflected in a necklace shining in the sun.

Volunteers tell us about their first day, how they felt, the richness of the relationships with the people welcomed with a disability: they tell how the whole experience has taught them to listen, to live each moment, and allow themselves to be discovered at the same time.

L'Arche in France intends to launch the 12 minute film on the general public and through organisations that supply volunteers. To find out more, check it out for yourself: www.arche-volontaire.org.

And finally two recent books: in the first a priest, Jean-Paul Cazes, shares his reflections on his year at L'Arche



La Rebellerie, and how he discovered that love is a good doctor; the other, from the community of Dijon, is an imaginative fundraising initiative! For 10€, you not only get a good read, with beautiful drawings, but also the joy of knowing you are helping L'Arche Dijon realise their dream of a pilgrimage to Rome to celebrate their 20th anniversary!



2010

DECEMBER

International Board Meeting

Edinburgh – Scotland

December 1 (e) to December 5 (m)

Workshop on Formation

Montreal – Canada

December 7 (e) to December 12 (m)

JANUARY

International Reflection Council

Steering Committee Commitment & Belonging

Innsbruck – Austria

January 12 (e) to January 16 (m)

January 16 (e) to January 19 (m)

Covenant Working group

Trosly – France

January 19 (e) to January 22 (m)

MARCH

Federation Council

International Mission Council

Krakow – Poland

March 23 (e) to March 27 (m)

March 27 (e) to March 30 (m) / March 31 (m)

Companions Covenant Retreat*

Poissy – France

Coordinator Chantal Macabeo: chantal.macabeo@aliceadsl.fr

Speaker: Michèle Dormal

March 27 to April 2

JUNE

International Board Meeting

Belgium

June 15 (e) to June 19 (m)

OCTOBER

International Mission Council

Ivory Coast

October 19 (e) to October 27 (m)

NOVEMBER

International Board Meeting

Toronto – Canada

November 16 (e) to November 20 (m)

* More information about the different types of Covenant Retreats is available in the International Meeting Ground n° 9 (April 2009)