



Hello from L'Arche Belfast - September 2008

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from L'Arche Belfast. What a wet summer it's been. Despite the floods we hope that now and again you managed to sing and dance in the rain and that you're well rested and ready for the best year yet! Let's add to our lives this year by taking away what is not essential.

The Spirituality of Subtraction – A good Lesson.

I found a puddle on my kitchen floor the other morning and it was clear that the time had come to buy a new fridge. My first impulse was to head for the nearest super-store: Somehow I always forget that places like that overwhelm me in a matter of minutes. An eager salesman had to give me the a-z's on over 30 fridges before he could accept that I had already chosen a fridge within the first 5 minutes. After a half an hour of sales talk and a lot of persuasion about why I should buy an extended warranty, to my utter dismay, I discovered that the fridge was out of stock and could not be delivered for at least 10 days. How long does it take for a puddle to become a lake!! Then I remembered a small family run local electrical shop. Down the back behind the plugs and bulbs, there were three fridges; small, medium and large. It took all of 2 minutes to buy the one I wanted and not only did they deliver that day... they also set me up to dispose of the old fridge, unpacked and plugged in the new one and helped me to transfer the food. Now that's what I call service with a smile.

This is the kind of world that I want to live in; a place where I am treated as a person not just a customer. I can grow old and fragile in this kind of world – knowing that there are people around to help me when I need it. Sometimes I worry about growing old in a world that is too big and too fast and too focused on getting the best choice for the least money. In a big warehouse – I am just another consumer with money to spend. In a small local shop – I am a neighbour, a friend, someone who needs help, service and care.

Year after year you have heard me talking about time. What I am beginning to realize is that maybe its choice not time that's the issue. It's a bit of a paradox. The more the choice the less the time! Maybe the trick for me is to limit my choices and increase my possibilities for relationship. In this context small and local are surely the first steps in The Spirituality of Subtraction where 'less is definitely more'.
(I can give you the name of the shop if you want.)

THANKS TO:

All those who gave feedback from the last newsletter! Your input is invaluable and we are still working at finding the best way to be connected.

Volunteers: Maeve and Gerry - Where would we be without you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Thanks to all the work over the Summer 'The Ark' is almost ready to welcome Helen home from hospital soon.

Cáit- spent the long, wet days of summer knitting socks for our winter sale. Looks like we will be needing those socks, keep it up!

In the News:

Goodbyes: Our beloved Father Joe- a member of the community for six years is leaving! We are broken hearted. He is off to the Phillipines with his marist community in January. In the mean time, he will be in Rome, home and Australia for a short visit. Our last day with him will be next Tuesday, September 9th. For anyone who would like to say a personal goodbye his email address is: joeholyfamily@gmail.com.

Welcome:

- Henri who brings a new sparkle to the office. Her expertise in bookkeeping is going to help Murray to relax into a new way of being a community member with Pam with confidence that all is well in the financial world of L'Arche Belfast.
- Gabriela who came from Germany brings a favour of Lebanon in her roots.
- James is back from six months away in which he was married in America, worked in a kitchen in England and now is back here with us where he belongs.
- Heather and Jana are on their way to be with us in the end of September.
- Helen who is coming back before the end of the month.

Babies: Maureen and Malcom welcomed baby Andrew into the world... and Megan and Scott are expecting baby number 3 to join Noah and Octavia this December.

School: Noah has started school. He is wearing a uniform with a tie! And is in P6 this year. His only homework so far is spelling. Octavia has started play group not to be confused with play school!!!

Save the Date: It's Larry's 40th Birthday Party on October 18th. More details to come...

"All Are Welcome" Sunday Nights - 'Bring In The Manna!!' Ever wanted to come and spend time at the Ember but felt a bit awkward as to how to make it happen? Fret no more! From now on Sunday evenings are open evenings; every week. Evenings will include both *food* and *prayer* time. The plan is that anyone who wants to come and eat and share tea with us brings along a dish or plate of food with them at 6pm. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. Keep it simple!

After a meal there will be a time of prayer, that will last for up to half an hour. The core members and assistants will lead for the first few weeks, but then the floor will be open. There will be a sign up sheet available for all those who want to lead prayer. This will be a great opportunity for us to learn from each others' faith traditions and ways of relating to God. This may be through words, music, silence or art. -Come along and bring in the manna!

Maria has an assistant! Hello, I'm Faythe; wife of James and brand new to Belfast from America. I am thrilled to be working alongside Maria as her assistant. Together we are taking on several new development projects; whether it be fundraising, PR, or communications we are a new unstoppable team- watch out! I feel passionate about enabling people to find their hope in God and to feel encouraged for who they are. The best part about this passion is learning to make hope in God tangible in our day to day lives. I look forward to meeting you!

Lots of love,

Your friends in L'Arche Belfast