

## **Assistants in L'Arche Winnipeg**

In L'Arche Winnipeg, we are approx. sixty people, 28 of whom are adults with a developmental disability, living in several different homes throughout the city. Assistants who live in our homes come from a variety of backgrounds and countries. Our Community is made up of men and women, young and old, married and single, with a diversity of religions and cultural affiliations.

L'Arche is not a job. It is a way of life in which persons with a developmental disability and those who help them (Assistants) live, work, and share their lives together. Assistants live right in the home with the people with a disability. Our homes are households of 7 - 9 people with either 4 or 5 members with a disability and 3 - 5 Assistants in a house. Each person has his or her own bedroom. The rest of the house is shared as in a family home. Members of the house share meals, activities and household chores. The persons with a disability and the Assistants live together in the same home, each giving and receiving according to their unique gifts and abilities.

The most important responsibility of an Assistant is to help create a loving family environment in the home. The Assistants accompany the members with a disability in their activities of daily life. Previous experience is not required, but new Assistants must be willing and open to learn new skills and to grow humanly and spiritually.

The two main goals are:

1. to create home with the members with a disability
2. to support them in dignified, meaningful activities that help them to reach their full potential so that they can use their gifts in the broader local neighbourhood and community.

L'Arche is a faith-based Community. In L'Arche Winnipeg this is expressed mainly through the Christian tradition. The members with a disability and Assistants are encouraged to be attentive to their own sacred or life journey and to be rooted in their particular faith or church community of choice. There are regular times of prayer/worship in the home and in the Community. Assistants are expected to support the members with a disability in their spiritual /church activities.

We ask for a one-year commitment in order to maintain Community continuity and stability. The first six months are a probationary period. During this time, the new Assistant learns about the values, philosophy and way of life in L'Arche.

Assistants receive a monthly salary of \$1060.00 during their first year (12 months). This is the net amount after room and board and other mandatory deductions have been made. The salary is meant to cover personal needs and also to enable Assistants to participate in activities with the people in their house and/or the Community e.g.: going to a movie, going out for dinner, local and regional events.

Assistants have two free days each week. Once a month, these 2 free days may be taken during the weekend (Saturday and Sunday). Assistants are encouraged to take 2 - 3 hours of personal rest time each day (Monday to Friday). First year Assistants are entitled to 10 vacation days (after one year is completed), 11 additional free days in place of statutory/civic holidays and 3 personal days.

Assistants who are committed for one year or longer will be covered under our Extended Health Benefit Plan which covers some areas not included in the basic Manitoba Health plan such as a percentage of dental work, prescription glasses, prescribed medicines and physiotherapy, and long-term disability. The extended plan becomes effective three months after the Assistant's arrival in L'Arche Winnipeg.

New Assistants receive a lot of training and formation during their first 3 months. The House Leader provides the hands on training in the home, while the Assistants Coordinator provides weekly orientation sessions. After receiving some initial practical training (Medication Administration for example), the new Assistant will learn about the L'Arche mission and philosophy and will be supported while adapting to a new way of life. Ongoing formation in L'Arche philosophy and way of life is provided for all Assistants during their first 2 years.