



# GRATITUDE

L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter #79



## December "Songs of Christmas" evening at new location



The third edition of the "Songs of Christmas" evening, featuring the Grace sisters & their musicians, will be held at a different venue this year. You are invited to join us on Thursday, December 19th, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at Transcona Christian Reformed Church, 131 Victoria Ave. West in Transcona.

Tickets for this event are \$15.00 each and can be purchased at the L'Arche Winnipeg office, 118 Regent Ave. East (open Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM).

Proceeds from this fund-raising event will be sent to L'Arche International for their Solidarity program, which

supports L'Arche communities in poorer countries where little or no government funding is provided. L'Arche Winnipeg is committed to raising funds every year in support of Solidarity, especially for the L'Arche communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, with whom we are twinned. Over the last two years, we've raised a total of \$5,830.00 for Solidarity with the two first "Songs of Christmas" events in 2017 and 2018.

A special thank you to the Grace sisters and musicians for generously donating their time and talent in support of L'Arche International communities.



## New wheelchair van for L'Ainé

L'Arche Winnipeg is very appreciative of grants from The Winnipeg Foundation and The Thomas Sill Foundation, which have allowed us to purchase a new wheelchair van for L'Ainé, the first L'Arche home in Winnipeg which opened in 1973.

In the above picture Ross, who first came to L'Ainé as a young 22 year-old in 1975, is being wheeled into the new van. Ross has lived his entire L'Arche life - 44 years - at

L'Ainé. He has led a full and active life in L'Arche (everyone knows his musical abilities!) and has only needed to use a wheelchair since last year. Presently, four of the five residents at L'Ainé have mobility issues.

A special thank you to all our friends and donors who help us in providing quality of life for all our members, especially those whom L'Arche welcomed in the 70's and who now have many aging, health & mobility issues.



*Akech & Russell enjoying a Mexico holiday*



*Margaret, Nancy, & Rick at Lenten retreat*



*Film-maker Monique with Linda, at Park Theatre premiere of Linda's Wish*



*Rick, in the entrance procession at Jean Vanier memorial service*



*Diane and Hazel, at Sobeys fundraiser for L'Arche*

## Highlights of the Year 2019

### January

- ◆ New grill for **L'Arche Tova Café** ◆ \$1,000.00 grant from **The Rotary** for a new van ◆ We mourn the death of **Clive Molyneux**, member of L'Arche since 1974 ◆ L'Arche member **Lee Ann's** art on display at the University of Winnipeg

### February

- ◆ **Servant Leadership** training extended to all L'Arche personnel ◆ L'Arche member **Russell** enjoys a holiday trip to Mexico ◆ **Memorial service** to remember all deceased members of L'Arche Winnipeg since 1973 ◆ \$20,000.00 grant for L'Arche Tova Café from "**Manitoba Municipal Relations Community Support Small Grant Program**"

### March

- ◆ **Lenten retreat** for all L'Arche members ◆ In a partnership with **Pasquale's** and **Five Guys** restaurants, a percentage of meals sold is donated to L'Arche

### April

- ◆ **Funding Innovation** cheque presented to L'Arche for sale of artwork displayed through L'Arche ◆ L'Arche member **Margaret** enjoys a holiday trip to Disneyworld ◆ L'Arche Tova Café celebrates its' 7th anniversary ◆ A new member, **Stacey**, is welcomed at our Elpida house

### May

- ◆ Annual **Walk with L'Arche** event raises \$60,854.00 ◆ L'Arche founder **Jean Vanier** passes away on May 7th, at age 90

### June

- ◆ Annual **day of retreat** for L'Arche members ◆ Friends of L'Arche are recognized at our annual **Volunteer Appreciation** evening ◆ Launch of Beth Porter's book "**Accidental Friends**" at McNally Robinson, as part of L'Arche Canada's 50th anniversary celebration ◆ **Annual General Meeting** of L'Arche Winnipeg, Inc. ◆ Premiere of Monique Pantel's L'Arche film "**Linda's Wish**" at The Park Theatre ◆ Public **memorial service** for Jean Vanier at Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens Church ◆ **Sobey's** holds a hot dog sale as a fundraiser for L'Arche ◆ Rotary's **Paul Harris Fellowship Recognition** is presented to L'Arche's Diane Truderung

### July

- ◆ New van for L'Ainé house, with the help of grants from **The Winnipeg Foundation** and **The Thomas Sill Foundation** ◆ Fresh L'Arche Tova Café baking sold every Thursday at **Transcona Biz Market Garden** in July & August ◆ A new community member, **Michael**, is welcomed at L'Ainé house

### August

- ◆ A third new L'Arche member, **Tim**, is welcomed at The Ark house ◆ We mourn the passing of **Albert Vinet**, member of L'Arche Winnipeg since 1975

### September

- ◆ New flooring and walls painted at L'Arche Tova Café, courtesy of a grant from **Richardson Foundation** in partnership with **United Way Essential Needs Fund**

### October

- ◆ Pancake breakfast at Applebee's raises \$745.00 for L'Arche International's **Solidarity** program ◆ **Music Night** with performers Kyle Cobb and Michael Peters is held at L'Arche Tova Café

### November

- ◆ **L'Arche Western Canada Regional Assembly** (7 communities) is held in Winnipeg ◆ 20 L'Arche members attend a **Winnipeg Jets** hockey game, courtesy of The North West Company

### December

- ◆ The Grace sisters & musicians present **Songs of Christmas** evening on December 19th as a fundraiser for L'Arche International's **Solidarity** program. ◆ Monthly grant payments of \$1,667.00 received throughout the year from the **United Way of Winnipeg** for L'Arche Tova Café.

## A Light in the World - Remembering Albert

by Jim Lapp  
Community Leader

I was one of a handful of people who welcomed Albert Vinet to L'Arche Winnipeg's farm in Lorette on May 1, 1975 and I have had the privilege of knowing Albert for over 44 years. It was a special place, where the Spirit of God was very present. Many visitors to the farm commented on how welcoming a place it was and certainly Albert's amazing gifts of welcome, loving kindness, and forgiveness were an important part of that beginning.

Evelyn, a member of L'Arche Winnipeg, has said that many of our members with a disability are mystics. They intuitively understand that God loves them as they are and that God calls us to be kind and compassionate to one another. Because of their vulnerability they know that friendships, relationships are the most important thing in our lives. We need each other. Albert was certainly a mystic. Not only did he recognize God's presence in his life but he reflected upon what he was living and what people he respected and loved said to him. More than any person I can think of, he was a man of God; a follower of Jesus. He valued every person he ever met.

He has had many companions on his journey. The members of L'Arche Winnipeg loved him, and he certainly loved us. He attracted kind, humble, and loving people like himself as close friends.

I was looking through some pictures from the farm days. About five months after he arrived, Albert was chosen to go on a Faith & Light pilgrimage to Rome with Sister Cecile, the mother superior of the small convent in Lorette. I have never met anyone more loving and compassionate than Cecile. Her smile would instantly warm your heart.

In the picture Cecile is holding on tightly to Albert's arm as they climb the steps of St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal. His face reflects a certain pride in being able to help this lovely lady. Spending a week with her must have really helped heal the pain he felt from being in the institution in Portage.

On the farm, Albert talked a lot about how big and strong Bob Nolan was. And Albert would say with great respect that Bob was a policeman. When the farm was closed down, Albert moved to the city and ended up living with Bob and Shirley. I believe with them he had the security he needed to really heal from his past and become the man we all

came to know and love.

On May 7th this year, the day after Jean Vanier died, I received a phone call from Carol Saunders, a Winnipeg Free Press reporter. She wanted to do a story that day about how Jean Vanier had influenced the life of a person with a disability at L'Arche Winnipeg. The first person to come to mind was Albert. When Carol and Ruth, the photographer, came he warmly welcomed them and they quickly connected with him. So much so that they didn't seem to want to leave even though a deadline was looming. I urge you to read it. It is still online and called "Legacy of Humanitarian Jean Vanier remembered by Winnipegger". In it Albert is quoted as saying "You'll be okay" to someone who was struggling. For the last few months, I have been comforted by those words.

One day Eunice, Albert's sister, phoned Dayspring house. Eunice was upset because her sister-in-law had passed away and she was concerned about how Albert would react to that announcement. Albert came to the



On the front page of the May 8th Winnipeg Free Press, in a story about Jean Vanier's passing, there was a large picture of Albert proudly holding the above picture of himself with Jean, taken in 1992.

phone and, when told the news, he responded, "She is not suffering anymore." Later in the conversation Albert added: "She is in a better place."

As we mourn his passing on August 23rd, let us remember these words of reassurance. Albert is not suffering anymore, and he is in a better place with all his loved ones. And I am sure he is waiting to give each one of us a hug or a handshake.

## New Volunteer Coordinator



Maureen, with Albert at the L'Arche Tova Caf 

I am very pleased to have joined the L'Arche Winnipeg team as Volunteer Coordinator. For many years I was a board member of L'Arche Winnipeg. In

my previous career in the banking industry, I would often see L'Arche members at the bank and I was pleased to assist them, and get to know them by name. I recall one time, while I was working on the computer in my office, a message popped up on my screen from one of the tellers: "He won't leave until you come out!" - "He" being Albert from L'Arche, who just wanted to greet me and give me one of his warm, loving hugs before leaving.

I am very thankful for the opportunity to be a part of L'Arche Winnipeg. If you would like more information about L'Arche or would like to become a volunteer, please contact me at 204-237-0300 ext. 20 or by email at [volunteer@larchewinnipeg.org](mailto:volunteer@larchewinnipeg.org)

- Maureen Manning

## Jean Vanier, Liberator

by Hubert Pantel

I was a 23 year-old journalist when I first met Jean Vanier at a press conference in 1973. I must admit that I was quite conflicted at that first encounter. I was immediately drawn to him, to his words, but at the same time I was very uncomfortable in his presence: I wanted to be there, and I didn't want to be there. It was like being drawn to a light, but not ready to have that light shine in certain areas of my life. Little did I know then, that the ensuing week-long Gimli retreat with Jean would be the catalyst that would eventually completely change the course of my life.

Since then, I've had the pleasure of being with Jean on a number of occasions - during his visits to Winnipeg, or at international gatherings of both L'Arche and Faith & Light where I was a delegate, or was brought in as a photographer, or as a translator.

Jean's passing in May stirred up many memories of experiencing, and witnessing, how God's love flowed through Jean. One word stands out to describe what Jean Vanier has meant to me: liberator.

Because of Jean, thousands of people with intellectual disabilities across the world have been "liberated" from institutions and found a home in L'Arche, or found a place of belonging in a Faith & Light community. There are aspects of Jean's legacy that are measurable: we can count the number of communities founded, the number of books he's written, etc. But there is one aspect of his legacy that is immeasurable, and that is the countless number of people across the world who have been "liberated" by him, that is to say whose lives have

been touched and transformed, by his words, by his spirituality, by the example of his caring for others.

An encounter with Jean Vanier, either in person or through his writings, most often meant being taken on a journey - an inner journey, a journey "home". In that sense too, Jean was a liberator. He could free us from our fears and doubts about ourselves with his words "*you are more beautiful than you dare to believe*". Jean could bring us deeper still, revealing to us, or reminding us, of our most fundamental identity - which is not the identity, the image, that we often forge for ourselves based on our work, our accomplishments, or what other people say about us. Jean could see through that, he could cut through the protective layers we put around our heart, and reveal to us our most fundamental identity: *you are a beloved son, a beloved daughter of God*. This is the "home" to which Jean could bring us.

From that place, Jean could then liberate in us, call forth in us - I want to say "springs of living water" - that is to say our capacity to love, and to put that love into action, on whichever path our lives take us on.

Jean was clear and transparent about his own journey, in regards to the source of his inner freedom, the source of the love that guided him. He left what could have been a successful career in the navy, and later as a university professor, "*in order to work for peace, to follow Jesus*".

Jean's "immeasurable" legacy is found in the hearts of so many people who have re-connected with God and with their own heart, and found therein the freedom to love.



### L'Arche Elders

At our L'Arche Night gathering in September, we celebrated 3 members who have been with L'Arche for 45 years: Dorothy, Linda, and Hazel.



### Summer Holidays

A L'Arche Winnipeg group enjoyed their summer holidays with a trip to Grand Forks and Fargo this past July.



### Pancake Breakfast Raises Funds for Solidarity

Approximately 70 people gathered for a pancake breakfast at Applebee's on October 5<sup>th</sup>.

Ticket sales and a silent auction raised \$745.00 for L'Arche International's Solidarity program, to help L'Arche communities in countries where there is little, or no, financial support from the government. Thank you to everyone who came out for this event!

## GRATITUDE FROM WINNIPEG

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