



BUILDING BLOCK NEWS



Building on the L'Arche model in Newfoundland and Labrador

Address from the Chair of the Board

Hello Friends,

With this newsletter we are very happy to introduce our “newsletter coordinator” – Meagan Anderson-White. Meagan brings proven L'Arche experience to her role having served as House Assistant and House Leader at L'Arche Inverness in Scotland. We are delighted she has taken over responsibility for the newsletter and welcome her fresh perspectives.

The hope and dream of a L'Arche community in Newfoundland has been alive in the hearts and minds of many people for many years. Cornerstone Housing Society is simply the latest group to rise up and work for the realization of the dream. But before Cornerstone came into being in 2012 there was a group that had been meeting at MUN Queen's College; a group of people who shared the values and philosophy of Jean Vanier and supported the ideals of L'Arche. And even before that there was a dedicated group in Corner Brook led by two Sisters who founded a L'Arche community and Board and even had a house ready to go. Sadly, the timing and circumstances prevented that endeavour from flourishing. And this summer I learned that Jean Vanier actually visited Newfoundland more than 30 years ago... and there are people in our circle who met him at that time! So in fact, the foundation, perhaps even the “cornerstone” for our group now known as Cornerstone Housing Society, was laid decades ago. We may be a new group of people for a new time in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, but our efforts are the realization of the hopes, dreams, and the prayers of many over the years past.

What is different now? What makes it more likely that we as Cornerstone will see this hope and dream come to fruition? There are many factors in our favour, not the least of which is the economic reality in Newfoundland and Labrador. There is also the very important fact that L'Arche Canada is open to working with us as evidenced by the support we have had from the L'Arche Atlantic region since our inception. However, money and the will to succeed does not a community make. As the little song we sing says, “it's you... it's me... that builds community.”

I want to share with you a somewhat lengthy passage from one of my favourite Jean Vanier books, “A Door of Hope” – and likely the first Vanier book

I read after discovering L'Arche while living in Calgary.

“Community is essentially a place where we learn to live in a way that meets our deepest needs. It is a coming together of people who want to show that it is possible to live, love, celebrate and work together for peace, justice and a better world. It is a sign that love is possible in a materialistic society where men and women ignore one another or even kill one another.

It is the people who love, forgive and listen who build community. It is those who are sensitive, who serve others, and who nourish them and pray for them. And each of us, by the grace that has been given to us, exercises our gifts according to our own good and unique expression of love and tenderness. A community is only really a community when all its members realize how deeply they need the gifts of others, and try to make themselves more transparent and more faithful in the exercise of their own gift. So a community is built by every one of its members, each in their own way.”

Jean Vanier, A Door of Hope, p. 42.

It is this growing sense of community that I will deeply miss as our family embarks on the next season of our life together. We are currently in the throes of a significant life change as we prepare to relocate early in the New Year, following Mel's retirement at the end of 2015. So it is with very mixed emotions that we plan to take our leave from our involvement with Cornerstone and reconcile ourselves to following your progress, with great interest and with our love and prayers, from across the water. We are looking forward to being close to family in Nova Scotia but know we will miss the connection with our Cornerstone community. Thank you for the privilege of working together these past few years.

Your Board is already at work on a transition plan, details of which will be forthcoming. In the meantime, please continue to hold Cornerstone and its leadership in your thoughts and prayers. Without a doubt, Cornerstone Housing Society **IS** “building on the L'Arche model in Newfoundland and Labrador” and will continue to do so with hope, faith and love.

Evelyn Friesen, Chair

Cornerstone Housing Society Incorporated

...building on the L'Arche model in Newfoundland and Labrador

Cornerstone in the Community

Autism Society Garden Update

The Cornerstone vegetable patch at the Autism Centre is thriving. Earlier this fall, the Buckley family made a tasty soup from peas harvested from the garden.



The garden plot was gifted to Marie Rowe from her family this year, and she has invited Cornerstone Housing Society members to visit and help tend to it after the winter.

Cornerstone Participates in a Volunteer Fair



Cornerstone was lucky enough to receive a booth at the Memorial University of Newfoundland Volunteer Fair after a last-minute cancellation. Members of Cornerstone represented the group with a display and provided MUN students with information about Cornerstone's mission and progress. Special thanks to Marilyn and Mark Andrews, David Buckley, Petra Sunner, Clotilde and Madeline Raydon, and Marc Lafreniere for their help with the booth!

Cornerstone Members attend Sharing the Light Symposium – by Lorraine Angelopoulos

On September 12, 2015, Cornerstone Housing members Marilyn Bruce and Lorraine Angelopoulos attended a symposium, *Shining a*

Light on Hope and Peace, at Memorial University. The symposium brought together Memorial University staff, faculty, students and community groups and organizations working with and advocating for vulnerable populations. The symposium was organized by Dr. Mary Frances Scully in memory of her late husband, Dr. Chau Nguyen, a Vietnamese boat refugee. Although the symposium dealt mostly with victims of war and natural disasters, such as the earthquake in Haiti, Cornerstone members went because they too are advocates for a vulnerable population.

The speakers included Sally Armstrong, an award-winning journalist and author who has covered stories about women and girls in war zones such as Bosnia, Somalia, the Middle East, Rwanda, Congo and Afghanistan. Her presentation was riveting, heartbreaking and hopeful. "Your voice is the most powerful tool you have!" she said as she urged the audience to pressure the Canadian government to change its policies around immigration.

The message was similar from another presenter, Dr. Samantha Nutt, founder of War Child Canada. She talked about the world wide pandemic of arms production and urged the audience to question where their investments and pension funds are invested. She questioned why Canada has not yet signed the International Arms Trade Treaty and also challenged the corporate social responsibility of Canadian multinational companies operating in unstable areas of the world.

Dr. Andrew Furey spoke about his volunteer medical missions to Haiti since the earthquake in 2010. Dr. Mohamed Ravalia compared his experiences in Zimbabwe and rural Newfoundland. Dr. Kevin Chan, clinical chief of children's health at Eastern Health, described his efforts to tackle the high suicide rate in Northern Labrador and the epidemic of diabetes and obesity in this province. All three were very interesting speakers.

Vulnerability and vulnerable populations was a

thought-provoking and timely topic, especially relevant to Cornerstone Housing Society. In fact Jean Vanier has a lot to say about this topic. He believes that power and strength actually separate people, whereas weakness and vulnerability bring people together. The cry for help can bring forth the best in people as in the protective response to a small child, the call to action to help the distressed people of Haiti, or the response of some countries to the recent wave of Syrian refugees. Vanier himself experienced that same flood of compassion when he met Raphael and Philippe. It was their cry for love and respect and friendship that moved him to open the first L'Arche home in France in 1964. The core of L'Arche is that compassionate response to the vulnerable and the revelation and celebration of their strengths.

All of the speakers at this symposium urged the audience to take action, to listen to each other's stories, to inspire one another and to use the gifts they have to create more nurturing societies and a better world.



Cornerstone Events

This Quarter

Cornerstone has had several events this quarter which were well attended and enjoyed! In August, several Cornerstone members gathered for a Town Hall session where the Community Outreach committee shared an educational presentation, intended to be used for public events, on the Cornerstone Housing Society. The committee was able to receive lots of positive feedback and some suggestions for making the presentation even better. Now that the presentation is complete, if you know of an event where it could be well received, please get in touch with someone from the Community Outreach Committee.

In September, the community gathered for the first time after summer ended. Community members shared their summer experiences with each other while enjoying games, a nature walk, and cold plate dinners. Here are some photos from the event:



October's and November's gatherings consisted of a Town Hall with a showing of the video "Belonging" and an afternoon of Zumba!

A Reflection on Belonging – by Clotilde Raydon

Last October, Cornerstone gave us the opportunity to hear a young lively guest speaker, Mr. Brad Glynn, Director of Campus Ministries for St. Bonaventure's College, about a subject that affects us all: Belonging. Although unfortunately I could not stay for the whole talk, the few words I heard were very promising, and I still envy those who could be there til the end. Because it all started on a very strong point: What is belonging? When and how do we feel we belong somewhere?

As a French citizen who has been living out of her country for so long a time, you can imagine how these questions were resonating in my head and heart! The answer was unequivocal: we belong where we leave a noticeable hole after we leave, and we all have a stronger need for belonging than being loved. Well, nobody is irreplaceable, you'll object, and we should never run after self-glory, for sure! But this human truth remains so true that I've always tried to get involved in a way or another in all the countries of the world where I've lived so far.

Belonging might be one of the reason pushing me to sometimes take my accordion out of its

box, and on that very town hall day to have asked all the persons present this simple ice-breaking question: "What do you enjoy about fall?" This is true, and longing for belonging surely motivates all of us. But there's more to it. During the answering time, we experienced laughter and priceless spontaneous reactions that seem to have broken the ice indeed, and for a moment, it was as if I was back in one of the L'Arche week-end meetings I was co-animating in France. For this very reason, even more than belonging, I strongly felt that I indeed hadn't lost my time coming to only half of the Town Hall meeting! That day, L'Arche breeze had blown on Adams Avenue ...

Community Announcements

News from the Board

In follow-up to our July 2nd community dinner with Jenn Power and her son Josh, the Board has begun to explore the criteria to become a L'Arche Project. The Board will also be looking to the wider Cornerstone membership for their thoughts and insights. Stay tuned!

In August, Cornerstone was invited to make presentations to two St. John's Rotary clubs. These presentations, given by Evelyn Friesen with other Board members in attendance for support, were very well received and we anticipate other opportunities to present to service clubs in our area.

At the September meeting of the Board of Directors, we accepted with regret the resignation of Board member Don Rowe. We will miss his valuable contributions of expertise and ideas and we wish him well as he chooses to devote his time and energy to other issues and groups to which he can be of service. We look forward to his continued presence at our gatherings and events. As per our by-laws, the Board will be seeking to fill the vacated position for the remainder of the term.

Welcome!

Welcome to Sarah Parisio who moved to St. John's in the summer to begin work with the Federation des francophones de Terre-Neuve et

du Labrador as coordinator of the Francophone Immigration Network. Sarah grew up in L'Arche and lived in L'Arche communities in Bologna and Rome, Italy. Closer to home, she volunteered in communities in London and Hamilton, Ontario as well as in Montreal. Now we are thrilled to have her in St. John's!

Also welcome to Rachel Lutz who moved to St. John's to attend MUN where she is studying Political Science and Philosophy. Rachel hails from Wolfville, Nova Scotia and spent her summer working with L'Arche Homefires on an interesting administrative project. We appreciate Rachel's willingness to volunteer with us.

We welcome with enthusiasm both Sarah and Rachel and look forward to their participation with us.

Congratulations!

We congratulate Sister Diane Smyth who recently celebrated 50 years with the Sisters of Mercy. We know she has touched many lives in her years of faithful service to her calling and Cornerstone Housing Society is blessed to be part of her current circle. Petra Sunner and David Buckley were guests at the special gathering celebrating this milestone in Sister Diane's life.

Congratulations to Marc LeFreniere who convoked with a Bachelor of Education from Memorial University in October. Marc's teaching area is intermediate/secondary, with a focus in History and English.

And on the ball field - to Paul McCarthy, Cornerstone Board Member and Treasurer, whose softball team *The Browners* won the Caribou Men's Softball E League Championship.

Weddings Congratulations and Thank You!

Congratulations and best wishes to Christine and Alexander Wunderli of Switzerland on the celebration of their marriage on August 8th. In honour of Christine and Alexander's marriage, Cornerstone was the recipient of donations

totalling \$1600. Christine is the daughter of Jane and John Pippy. We wish Christine and Alexander a lifetime of love and happiness.

Membership Renewal

Now is the time to renew your membership for 2016! Added to the membership application form is an authorization to use your photograph either on our website or in other media formats. The membership fee is still just \$20. The updated membership form is included with this newsletter.

Upcoming Events

Randy Lewis of the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities of Newfoundland and Labrador will be hosting an event called "How to Include More Persons with Disabilities in your Workplace" on December 7, 2015. Visit www.codnl.ca for more information.

Our last gathering of 2016 will be held on **December 13th** at Rotary Sunshine Park. Mark your calendars! Details will follow.



On Behalf of Cornerstone Housing Society, **Merry Christmas** and **Happy Holidays!**

We hope you have a blessed and joyous season with your family and friends. We wish you a happy and healthy **2016.**



Summer Times

Here are some photos of warm summer memories submitted by some of our members. Be sure to take a photo with your family and friends over the holiday season and submit it to be included in the next newsletter.



Adrian is happiest when with his friends Erin and Robyn. They like to walk around the pond and feed the ducks.
Evelyn Friesen



Family picture taken by one of the many hikers we met, totally baffled by the fact that a 2 year-old could just walk the whole trail by herself!
Clotilde Raydon

Mark and his respite worker Katie had a great summer. They spent a lot of time visiting Katie's relatives in Mount Carmel where kitchen parties and good music were a nightly occurrence. Mark and Katie went to the park every fine day and Mark learned to relax and sit on a swing. We were so pleased to see him happy and having fun. Katie has now moved away for school and Mark misses her a lot.

Marilyn Andrews

