

Belfast 2017-Federation Assembly

Lewis B. Andrews

During the week of June 20 to 27, 2017 I was privileged, as a representative of L'Arche Avalon, to attend the Federation Assembly meeting of L'Arche International in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The meeting was attended by approximately 520 delegates from around the L'Arche world and included persons with and without disabilities.



Business at the meeting, which takes place every five years, included the election of a new Chair, Vice Chair and Board of Directors of L'Arche International, as well as approval of the financial report and consideration and approval of a new Mandate for the next five year period.

But there was time for a lot more than business. There was time for fun and laughter, for relaxation, for eating and for prayer and reflection. There was also a daily presentation demonstrating the journey and life of Saint Patrick, the Patron Saint of the Irish. As a group we visited Downpatrick and saw where Saint Patrick had been imprisoned and where he later started the first Catholic Church in Ireland.

Throughout the meeting it was evident that music is a powerful aspect of L'Arche worldwide that

overarches most every activity. The prayer/quiet time allowed those present to simply sit and reflect, while listening to music and also participating by singing.

Meal times provided opportunity to meet others from L'Arche and to build relationships. I found it amazing how many people were aware of L'Arche Avalon and who expressed support as we continue our journey toward opening a L'Arche home in NL.

Overall, it was a wonderful opportunity to experience what L'Arche is all about and to witness the interaction between persons with and without disabilities. You could see how they appreciate and complement each other, whether laughing or sharing difficult moments.

A truly wonderful experience.



WALK

The second Saturday of the month we have our walk either around Kent's Pond in pleasant weather, or at The Works when the weather is not so pleasant. It is usually 2:00-4:00. If at the Field House Cost is \$3.05 (people with attendant's pass are free).

Bring indoor shoes and a snack to share if possible, please.

A visit to L'Arche Lyon

D.J.Buckley

In June this year I visited France for a conference. I took this opportunity to visit L'Arche Lyon.

On one of my first days in Lyon I had lunch at the L'Arche Café

called Katimavik. Before I left for France, Sarah King told me that the name is an Inuit word meaning "meeting place". The café is open during the week for lunch. It is situated in the old area of the city close to the St.Jean Cathedral.



Whilst at the café I met a group from the nearby L'Arche community when they were celebrating one of the core members' 40th birthday. The café also has crafts for sale, made and decorated by the local core members: cards and porcelain cups, plates etc.. The core members make the crafts upstairs on a second floor in the building of the café.

Later in the week I visited the main L'Arche Lyon community. L'Arche Lyon has 3 houses on the site and one house close to the café, with altogether 31 core members. In 3 of these homes live 9 core members each, and in one 4. The houses on the L'Arche main site were specifically built, with

bedrooms and bathrooms for each person living in the home.

There is also a large villa on site, mainly used for administrative purposes and people visiting. Day-activities are organized for the core members as most are not able to work outside the home. Four can work outside the home and the managing of this is fully done by the French social services. All core members are physically able. In France a different categorization is applied if a core member has special medical needs.



L'Arche is fully funded by the state in France so there is not a big need for seeking donations or other means of raising funds. Extra money is needed though for vacations or special trips. Assistants live on or off site depending on their duties, most work for at least one year, some stay much longer.

I was invited for a tasty lunch in one home and visited 2 of the other homes. I was welcomed by Elisabeth Richard who kindly showed me around, explained the set-up and I met many core members.

I wish L'Arche Lyon well for the future and thank all members for allowing me to visit and take some photographs.



Life before L'Arche

Sheilah MacKinnon Drover

Long before L'Arche was founded by Jean Vanier in 1964, our family lived the L'Arche philosophy of inclusion, thanks to amazing parents who were forward thinking and ahead of their time. My sister Tiny – Maureen Mackinnon was born in 1942. As a baby she was referred to as “Tiny” because she was so small but the name stuck. In Corner Brook where she grew up and lived until she was fifty-three, and Nova Scotia, where she lived with our sister Babs for almost seventeen years, she is still known by that name.

After Babs died in 2014, Tiny came to live with me. When we talked about her name, she said that in St. John's she wanted to be called Maureen. I try to remember to call her Maureen, but we often run into people who stop us and say, “Tiny Mackinnon, I haven't seen you in ages.” They knew her from her years in Corner Brook and/or the many years she went with our mother to Killdevil Camp in Lomond where Mum was Camp Mom and counsellor. Tiny's memory is amazing and as often as not she remembers them.



In 1943, when our parents were advised by specialists in Montreal to put the baby in an institution as she would live only about five years, both my parents said, “No. Whatever time she has, it will be lived with family.” Many of you helped us celebrate Maureen's 75th Birthday at the end of May.

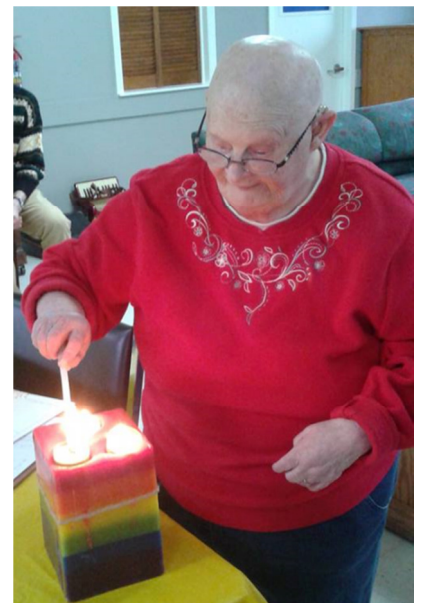
When we were growing up in Corner Brook Tiny went everywhere that we went, did everything that

we did, and was very much part of the community. She was expected to do chores and everything that we did within the limits of her ability to do those things. Her optimistic outlook, willingness to help people and include everyone, her generosity and her hospitality set examples for all of us. I feel ashamed that I am not as patient, or giving, or generous as I should be – I'll never measure up to either my mother, my sister, or Tiny herself but their lives have given me goals to strive toward.

Often when we were young and walking with our mother, children who didn't know Tiny would walk with us for a while and then ask why she was different or what was “wrong with her.” Mum always engaged them in friendly conversation and from then on, they became friends; they watched out for her, and made sure she was always alright.

Growing up took Tiny longer than many children; however, when she was older and my brother and sister and I had been long gone from home, my mother was getting older and couldn't do things she had once done. It was then Maureen's time to shine. In many ways she became the caregiver: getting lunch and supper – with some help from her assistant – reminding Mum when it was time to take her meds. How she always knew is amazing as she can't tell time.

Tiny – Maureen - reminds us that just as we can't judge a book by it's cover, we can not judge people by how they look. It is only by getting to know people that we see the person within and the contribution that each person can bring to a community if given the opportunity. Maureen has been an influence for good in so many lives; she has taught us all so much about how we ought to



live and how we should treat others.

When my son was fifteen he wrote an essay for a writing competition open to high school students. He titled it "A Time to Love" and it was about his Aunt Maureen – Tiny. Somehow it was read by someone in the CAMR [Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded] and he was invited to present it at their conference in Marystown in May, 1985. We no longer use the word "retarded" but it was in common use at the time. The essay is an interesting perspective from a teenager's point of view and one which I will share in the future.



GOODBYES, HAPPY BIRTHDAYS AND WELCOME



Pictured above is our newest board member Sheilah. Celebrating Maureen's 75th birthday. L'Arche Avalon would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Clotilde, Luc, Jaqueline, and Madeline for their enthusiasm and dedication to our project. We wish you the best of luck on your new adventure in Scotland!

Happy Birthday

to

Sr. Diane and Lewis in July, Mary Beth in August and Christopher, Anne Marie, Sr. Eileen, Norm, and Peter in October.



LUNCH

L'Arche Avalon invites you to a drop-in Lunch at the Avalon Mall food court by the fireplace every Thursday between noon and 1:30 pm. Bring your lunch or buy one on site and join us to hang out, share a meal (an important feature of L'Arche communities around the world) and meet our community members. Everyone welcome.

JAM CIRCLE



Each month the Jam Circle requires some help. Setting up the room with chairs and displaying instruments on tables. Also, refreshments as part of the social time are an important aspect of this time together.

Where? Mmap Gallery at the ACC

When? the fourth Saturday of each month

How long? arrive at 1:30 and done by 4

What? Set up chairs in a circle leaving space for those who use wheelchairs. Help clean up too. Set up refreshments on a table.

Please let us know if you can be of any help. Come join the fun!