

We Painted Her Coffin

by Carl MacMillan

Clara Fraschetti, in her moving eulogy for Rita, listed “10 Things I Learned About Rita.” One was, “Rita shocked us to honesty.” She did when she died too — and we needed to find ways to ground ourselves as we prepared to honour the gift of Rita’s life.

Joe Child was the leader of the Woodery for twenty years. When Henri Nouwen died in 1996, Joe led the Woodery team in making a coffin for him. Carrie Whitney-Brown coordinated the painting of Henri’s coffin, integrating artwork by core members into the design. Everyone loved it. With Joe’s guidance, the Woodery produced a series coffins over the years, and perhaps a dozen members of our community were buried in them. These were simple, but beautifully crafted wooden coffins with no painting or decoration.

The Woodery team had recognized that building coffins was no longer work that was really accessible for today’s core members. So, Thelus George was the last person to be buried in a Woodery-made coffin in October of 2014. Joe Child could see that this was the right move — yet he was committed to finding a means for community members to participate in a creative and tactile way as we prepared to



Clara Fraschetti and her three daughters — Ysabel, Sophie, and Tessa — are pictured here painting Rita O’Connor’s coffin. At the back, Trish Glennon paints with her daughter Frances.

celebrate the life of someone dear to us.

Joe found new inspiration when he attended the funeral of Ellen Weinstein’s sister, Susan, where her friends and family had been invited to paint her coffin. Joe appreciated that and he thought it could work for Daybreak. He presented the idea to our Community Council, and they were all for it. As we sat down with Rita’s sisters to plan her funeral, I described the idea for painting her coffin. They adored the idea, and they knew that Rita would too.

The empty coffin was delivered to the Meeting Hall’s Forest Room where it stayed for two days. Rita had been a teacher, and she was well known among

the children in our community. Many children and core members, as well as assistants and friends, painted symbols and remembrances on the coffin in a rainbow of colours that suited Rita perfectly.

Rita’s rainbow coffin became a moving centerpiece at her funeral celebration at the Dayspring — a place where Rita was so at home, and where she so generously shared her gifts of hospitality, storytelling, and reading scripture. Her visitation and funeral became a deep and soulful experience of community for many of us. I sense that Rita’s death brought us to a place of gratitude for our own belonging that touched and surprised us — Rita’s wonderful parting gift! ♣

Jean Vanier is Honoured with The Templeton

Jean Vanier has been awarded the 2015 Templeton Prize. The award honours a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension. The paragraphs that follow are excerpts from Vanier’s comments when the award was announced on March 11th, in London, England.

“I want to thank in a special way all those I represent here, people with intellectual disabilities of L’Arche and Faith and Light. They have brought me so much over the past 50 years, and have taught me more than all those teachers and professors in schools and universities that I have attended. They have taught me about what it means to be human and about how our societies can be transformed to become more peaceful and unified.

“Change is gradually taking place, like a little seed in fertile earth, a seed of peace... Universal peace can only come if we develop and awaken those very human qualities, hidden under the more superficial needs for power and of winning, which lead us to welcome reality. These qualities are those linked to the heart — the capacity to love people, to respect them deeply, to live authentic relationships with others, to yearn for truth and justice in the huge family of humanity; qualities of humility, of forgiveness and of compassion for



Mary Anne Larcina and Tanya Brethour joined over 40 others from for a week-long session on “Announcing L’Arche” in Trosly, France. Mary Anne and Tanya are seated to the left of Jean.

those who are weaker and in need; in short to seek the wisdom of the heart.

“There is also a huge evolution as people from different religions begin to meet. It is not just a question of dialogue between religions, but essentially a meeting of people from different religions. Before being Christians or Jews or Muslims, before being Americans or Russians or Africans, before being generals or priests, rabbis or imams, before having visible or invisible disabilities, we are all human beings with hearts capable of loving.

“It is here that I want to speak of what we have learned in L’Arche and Faith and Light. As you know, people with intellectual disabilities are not able to assume important roles of power and of efficacy. They are essentially people of the heart. When they meet others they do not have

a hidden agenda for power or for success. Their cry, their fundamental cry, is for a relationship, a meeting heart to heart. It is this meeting that awakens them, opens them up to life, and calls them forth to love in great simplicity, freedom and openness. When those ingrained in a culture of winning and of individual success really meet them, and enter into friendship with them, something amazing and wonderful happens. They too are opened up to love and even to God. They are changed at a very deep level. They are transformed and become more fundamentally human...

“It is only as we meet and share together person to person, eye to eye, and heart to heart that we discover what it means to be human and to discover the joy of being together, working together towards a common mission of peace and unity.” ♣

Community Notes

Kevin Lyttle is a new member of the community who lives at our Church Street house. He works at the Craft Studio. Kevin grew up in Markham and is a recent graduate of Muki Baum High School.

Lisa Cataldo animated this year’s Assistants Weekend, building on our community theme of *Taking Time*. A former assistant at the Corner House, Lisa teaches at Fordham University in New York City where she has a practice as a psychoanalyst.

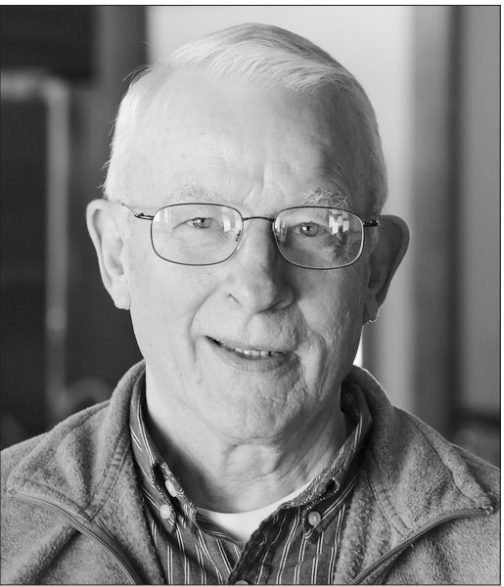
Identity and Mission was the theme of a week-long formation session at the original L’Arche community in Trosly, France during the first week of January. Debbie Dew, Trish Glennon, and Cassie Wilson participated along with L’Arche members from around the world.

Gus Leuschner retired as Community Leader of L’Arche Antigonish after more than 20 years in the role. John Smeltzer, Ann Pavilonis and Carl MacMillan travelled to Antigonish to attend the celebration for Gus on December 13th. Gus and Debbie Leuschner and their family were part of Daybreak from the mid ‘70s until going to Antigonish in the early ‘90s. Under Gus’ leadership, L’Arche Antigonish has grown to include five homes. The community holds a prominent place in this Nova Scotian university town.

Linda Martin and Mary Anne Larcina were welcomed as Confirmed Members of L’Arche Daybreak on November 14th at the Dayspring. Linda lives at the Centre Street house and Mary Anne lives at Brookwood House.

Announcing L’Arche was the theme of a week-long formation session in early March for 24 pairs of assistants and core members from all over the world. This dynamic session took place at La Ferme, the retreat centre in the original L’Arche Community in Trosly, France. L’Arche Daybreak Members Mary Anne Larcina and Tanya Brethour were participants.

Trish Glennon has begun a new role as Recruitment Coordinator for L’Arche Canada. Trish is the L’Arche Canada Servant Leadership team member working on the recruitment of assistants to serve in communities across the country. She travels in her role and maintains an office at the Big House. Trish remains a member of the L’Arche Daybreak community and lives with her family in Newmarket.



George Strohmeier, co-founder of L’Arche Erie, animated this year’s Community Retreat Day.

George Strohmeier animated this year’s Community Retreat Day on February 24th. Our Lenten theme this year, shared in L’Arche communities everywhere, is *The Gaze of Love* which George introduced very beautifully. George is the co-founder of the L’Arche community in Erie, Pennsylvania. He is a diocesan priest and currently serves as chaplain at Gannon University in Pennsylvania.

The Kortright Centre was the site of this year’s Community Weekend on November 8th. Nearly 100 members of L’Arche Daybreak gathered together to reflect on our theme for the year, *Taking Time*. This centre for outdoor education in Kleinburg was a wonderfully welcoming place to build the life of our community surrounded by the beauty of the forest.

Community Wish List

Pillows.....	\$50
Blanket	\$75
Tablecloths	\$100
Canadian White Spruce tree.....	\$100
Art supplies	\$500
Pots and pans.....	\$500
Barbeque	\$650
Compact upright piano.....	\$2,000
Tree shredder.....	\$2,000
Sun shade for the Day Program	\$3,000
Sectional sofa	\$4,000
Stairlift	\$7,000
Grounds equipment.....	\$10,000
Mid-size car	\$25,000

For more information, please call Warren Pot at L’Arche Daybreak’s Development Office (905) 884-3454 ext. 285.

L'Arche International Art Exhibition — Online and at the Richmond Hill Theatre



Artist: Rouamba Kouka Gildas, *L'Arche Nongr Maasem (Burkina Faso), Untitled, pen on paper, 2013*

Songs of the Heart, an exhibition of artwork from L'Arche communities around the world, will be showcased at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts during the month of April. The exhibit is free and open during the theatre's opening hours.

The show includes a selection of 19 prints drawn from the L'Arche International online art exhibit (<http://art.larche.org>), as well as a number of original pieces and prints from artists at L'Arche Daybreak.

The full online collection of 72 works was brought together to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of L'Arche. Jacquie Boughner,

a local artist, is the show's curator. Jacquie is also a member of the L'Arche International Stewardship Board. Many of the 147 L'Arche communities throughout the world have created workshops and studios for creative expression in the visual arts. L'Arche Daybreak's Craft Studio is one example of the many place of creativity and self-expression found in L'Arche.

The opening reception will take place on April 16th at 1:30 p.m. at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts at 10268 Yonge Street. Please call (905) 787-8811 before you visit the exhibit. ♣

Come Walk *WITH* L'Arche Daybreak on May 2nd



Woodery and Craft Studio worker Jason Clinker is gearing up for this year's "Walk for Hope."

L'Arche has been on a profound journey of transformation that has touched the lives of many people and changed the way that society recognizes and values people with intellectual disabilities.

Our annual fundraising event, the 5 kilometer *Walk for Hope*, engages friends,

family members, and students from local high schools to experience the spirit of L'Arche as they walk with community members and raise funds for L'Arche Daybreak. Young people bring a wonderful energy and encourage us all to keep moving forward!

Jason Clinker joined Daybreak a year ago. Jason's enthusiasm and pride in his work is infectious. He greets his co-workers every day with a huge smile. Jason says, "I found the *Walk* to be a very nice time to spend with the community. My sponsors were very kind to support me and participate with me. I really liked that. This year, I want to go again. It's important to me!"

Join us on Saturday, May 2nd, at 9:00 a.m. The walk will begin at Jean Vanier Catholic High School, 10475 Bayview Avenue, and end at L'Arche Daybreak, 11339 Yonge Street. To register and donate please visit www.larchedaybreak.com/walk-for-hope-2015. ♣

L'ARCHE DAYBREAK

The first L'Arche community in North America, L'Arche Daybreak began in 1969 and now includes eight homes in Richmond Hill, as well as *The Woodery* wood-working shop, *The Craft Studio*, and the *Dayspring* spiritual centre. The L'Arche Daybreak community is a dynamic example of how people of different intellectual capacity, social origin, religion, and culture can live and learn together.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 8:30 at Dayspring.

Friday evenings at 7:30 at Dayspring.

L'ARCHE

L'Arche is an international movement of over 140 communities around the world where people with intellectual disabilities and those who care for them share life together. Canadian Jean Vanier founded L'Arche in France in 1964.

"Can we reasonably have a dream of a world where people, whatever their race, religion, culture, abilities or disabilities, whatever their education or economic situation, whatever their age or gender, can find a place and reveal their gifts?"

-Jean Vanier



Daybreak Newsbreak is

published by
L'Arche Daybreak's
Development Office
11339 Yonge Street
Richmond Hill, Ontario
L4S 1L1 ~ Canada
Telephone: (905) 884-3454 ext. 285
e-mail: wpot@larchedaybreak.com
www.larchedaybreak.com

Editors: Christine Gameson
Carl MacMillan
Warren Pot

Printing of *Daybreak Newsbreak*
donated by Creative Path Digital
Imaging.

Daybreak Newsbreak

Core Member Orientation Group Rocks on Fridays

by Liska Stefko

What's your favorite day of the week? At most office meetings, it's easy enough to guess that "Friday" would be the number one answer. But not at *this* office meeting. In this group gathered at the Big House on a recent Friday morning, the answer ranged from "Sunday — I go to church," to "Saturday — I go bowling," or — for life enthusiast Justin Colford, "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday!"

This delightful circle is the Core Member Orientation group, made up of members who are new to Daybreak over the past few years. The 10-week orientation program is designed to help us learn more about what it means to be part of L'Arche.

Each meeting begins with a song and a short prayer. A pair of guest speakers then present on the week's theme, drawn from the *Bubble of the*



Justin Colford stands with Carl MacMillan during an exercise using the Relationship Circles Map at a Core Member Orientation session at the Big House.

Month resources from the L'Arche Canada Servant Leadership Program. One week, Joe Egan and David Harmon gave a brilliant presentation on "Embracing the Identity and Mission of L'Arche," referring to their friendship which began in 1973. Another week, Clara Frascchetti and John Smeltzer helped us to reflect on "Living in Joy," drawing us into their friendship through singing, clapping and, of course, playing the spoons.

Each theme is then captured in a homework sheet that allows participants to share their learning with others at home.

Our learning takes shape in many forms — not just through words spoken, but also through listening, singing, moving, and drawing. We are grateful for the wisdom and the joy shared in these times together, and we look forward to growing together in the mission of L'Arche. ♣

Some Things I Learned About Rita by Clara Frascchetti



Rita O'Connor, long-time Associate Member at Daybreak, died on March 16th.

Rita O'Connor, a beloved Associate Member of L'Arche Daybreak, died suddenly on March 16th. Her funeral took place on March 21st at the Dayspring. Rita had served as an assistant at our Centre Street House and at The

Club. She was active at the Dayspring where she often read scripture.

Rita had visited my family weekly for ten years, beginning when I had four children at home under the age of five. These are some of the things I learned about Rita:

Rita had a huge heart. Rita was mindful about remembering the struggles and celebrations of her family and friends, as well as suffering in various parts of the world. Rita always made a point of expressing her gratitude. She once took an extra chair home from our place. The next day we got an email. The subject line read: "Message from my bum." The e-mail read: "The chair is great."

Rita was a great story and joke teller. Rita had an amazing capacity to remember and tell jokes, share songs and jingles, and she would pull them out with synchronicity when the moment called for it. The last one

she shared was, "What do you get when you cross the Atlantic with the Titanic? About halfway."

Rita was part of our village and we a part of hers. Rita was looking for a place to belong and to share her love. We found each other. After one of the children's birthday parties, I sent a message to the adults who attended, thanking them for being part of the village raising our children. Rita wrote back, "I realized — decided — that I am a villager. So, when the kids' friends ask who I am, they can just say, 'Oh, she's a villager.' I am a villager, and I love it." ♣

Clara Frascchetti, currently House Leader at the Green House, was a close friend of Rita who had endeared herself to everyone in Clara's family. Clara gave the eulogy at Rita's funeral from which this article was adapted. The full eulogy is available at www.larchedaybreak.com/blog