

Peter Porter Transformed Hearts

by Rob Ens

On my first visit to Daybreak, I remember standing at the doorway of the original Dayspring chapel, gazing through a sea of people at two individuals — Peter Porter and Steffen Müller, a German assistant from the Green House. Peter reclined comfortably on the floor against Steffen. The pair displaying a palpable trust and mutual respect that really moved me. Tears welled up in my eyes as I tried to process what was going on inside me. Steffen had revealed to me the treasure in Peter, and both men had shown me the gift of mutuality. I knew one thing for certain — I had come to the right place.

On initially meeting Peter, I had no sense that I was connecting at any level, because Peter was someone who waited. He waited to see if you genuinely wanted a relationship with him. He didn't say much, and what he did say was full of "Peter-isms". I had to listen hard to understand his distinctive expressions: "No need to get excited. No need to get rambunctious!", "Dat Gordie?", "Boot in the bum!", "Dayspring tonight?", "Dentit don't work on bitmit day!" (The dentist does not work on Christmas



Peter Porter, with Kyely Werheid, greets John Smeltzer at the Dayspring on New Year's Eve. Peter died suddenly from a heart attack later that night at the Green House.

Day!), "I'm a worry wart," and constant chatter about a long-deceased cat, named "Souris". Peter loved cats. He loved church too, but when he felt the sermon was getting too long he would sometimes try to move things along by calling out "AMEN."

My awakening to Peter's inner life was a slow process, but an incredible journey. That once distant figure came to sit with me at the Dayspring, rest his hand on me and ask, "Hard week?" On Friday nights after the pub, I would help Peter get ready for bed and lay out his clothes for the morning. As the ritual drew to a close,

Peter would often say, "Thank you, Rob." I would sit and talk for a few minutes before turning out the light.

"Good night, Peter."

"Good night, Rob. See you in the morning?"

"See you in the morning, Peter."

"Rob?"

"Yes, Peter."

"I don't want those pants."

"Good night, Peter." ♣

An Associate Member of Daybreak, Rob gave the eulogy at Peter's funeral from which this article has been adapted.

I Like to Drum by Anne Todd

"I like to drum." "There are special people here." "I like the rhythm." These are comments from some of the participants of Daybreak's Drumming Circle that meets on Monday afternoons at the Big House.

The program began as a pilot project about a year and a half ago thanks to a generous grant from Canada's New Horizons Program. The program includes participants from Daybreak homes as well as the local area. Terri Segal, from *Rhythmic By Nature*, helped to start the group and to train the facilitators: Tiago, Tanya and Anne. All participants share in the leadership, from choosing a rhythm which everyone then follows,

to counting us down so we come to a stop together. When it's Kevin's turn to do this, his whispered, "Stop" comes with a huge smile, which only grows bigger when he starts up again. Barbara says that she's so inspired with drumming that she practises on her desk at home, or even at the table while she's waiting for dinner. Heather was on fire during a recent session, keeping a quick, steady beat for the entire hour that led the circle in the movement of sound.

The group is open to new members and has grown steadily. Even those who work in the Big House are benefitting from hearing the drumming, as it brings life to the building. ♣



Barbara Atkinson and Anne Todd beat their drums at the Drumming Circle.

Peter Dwelled in Community

by Chris Jarvis

“See you at 4, eh?” These were Peter’s words, uttered most every weekday for years as he headed off to work. For Peter, 4 o’clock each day was more than simply a time of arrival back home. It was tea or hot chocolate. It was checking on dinner preparation and sneakily stealing a snack. It was taking a seat on the couch or his favourite wing chair. It was re-uniting with assistants who had been on days away. Embedded in Peter’s farewell was always the promise of communion to come.

One of the readings at Peter’s funeral was a section of John’s Gospel commonly referred to as “the Farewell Discourse.” In it, Jesus describes the place of reunion and communion as a house with many “dwelling places”. I want to invite you to ponder this word “dwell”. It has a certain quality of depth. It suggests that something else is going on beyond just sitting around. Webster defines “dwell” as “to live as a resident, to keep attention directed, and to speak insistently.” Some scholars suggest that to dwell is to commune with God.

Peter Porter was a dweller. He dwelled in his favourite chair. He dwelled as a faithful member of the Green House. He could dwell on the whereabouts of any number of articles of clothing, and, well, he knew something about speaking



Peter Porter and Rhona Weidner were good friends who for many years attended the Friday night Dayspring service, then went out together to a local pub for a beer.

insistently. I realize now that I needed to come to L’Arche, among other reasons, to learn a little about dwelling. And this was Peter’s great gift to me. It was his gift to many before and many since. Peter drew me and so many others into the privilege of dwelling with him through his own way and his own truth.

Peter’s way led us. Peter’s way was rooted in the very sacred routine of his ordinary, daily rhythm: waking and dressing, putting important items in his pocket for the day, getting his teeth clean and organized, morning greetings, breakfast, securing lunch bag and coat and shoes, waiting for his ride to work. There was Saturday breakfast out, Sunday church, cooking with Carl, watching

“Friends” on TV, supper, prayer, bath, bed. Peter’s way flowed with the sanctity of the ordinary. Its simplicity, its repetition, its predictability prepared daily the dwelling places of communion.

Peter helped me understand that our anxieties come from an honest search for and desire to be rooted in what we feel to be true. In this way, anxiety is often a part of the very fabric from which faith is woven. Peter’s very life led us. It was a life wholly shaped by friendship. And Peter never dwelled without friends. He lived with intention, continually searching for places to dwell with others. Perhaps the greatest gift of Peter’s life was his unlimited generosity for dwelling with those he loved. †

Community Notes



John Smelter gives Gord Henry a hug.

La Ferme, the spiritual centre at the original L’Arche community in Trosly, France, was the site of a retreat in February animated by Jean Vanier, Joe Egan, and Ruth Patterson. Daybreak sent Carlene Danes and Lisa Jarvis as retreatants.

John Smeltzer came home from the hospital in mid-December in plenty of time to spend Christmas at the New House. In early February, John moved to the Newmarket Health Centre, a long term care facility close to several of his long-time friends who live in Newmarket. John enjoys the regular pub nights and he quickly befriended a fellow resident who plays the spoons! John’s room number is 1032 at the Newmarket Health Centre.

Gord Henry moved to the Elginwood Long Term Care Centre in Richmond Hill in mid-February. Gord has made a good transition to his new home which is very familiar to community members as it is the same place that Thelus George and Linda Slinger lived in their later years. Gord’s room number is 2202.

Logan Ronald Evans was born to Ashley and Trevor Evans on December 23. Ashley is an assistant on the Stephenson house team.

Wedding bells rang for Anne Todd and Stephen Harper who were married on December 28. Anne is the Volunteer Coordinator at L’Arche Daybreak.

Alan Dobb has been at Scarborough Centenary Hospital since early February. Alan is making good progress and he has recently moved to the rehabilitation unit of the Hospital.

Congratulations to Guilherme Mascarenhas who became a Canadian citizen on February 22. Masca, who is originally from Brazil, is on the Woodery team.

A Reflection by Joe Egan

Faithful Friendships

“I would not be in L’Arche today if it wasn’t for David Harmon. That became crystal clear to me in the moment that I tried to tell David that I planned to leave after my second year at Daybreak,” Joe told Daybreak members last month. Joe and David were seated at the front of the room and together were animating our annual community retreat. Joe has been in L’Arche for 43 years, David for 48.

Joe continued, “David got very upset at the news I shared with him about my plans to leave, and he started to cry. After a few minutes he said, ‘I have something I want to give you.’ He left and came back with a little black and white picture of himself.” Joe removed a small photo from his wallet and held it up for us all to see and continued, “In the photo David is 8 or 9 years old and was on vacation with his family somewhere in Florida. He gave me the photo and said, ‘I want you to have this picture so you will never forget me. And I want a picture of you so I’ll never forget you.’ And I started to cry.

“In that moment David helped me to discover what was hidden in my heart — that I really wanted to stay. I had forgotten in all the busyness of community life and making plans for the future why I had come in the first place. David took the risk to be vulnerable



Old friends David Harmon and Joe Egan led this year’s inspiring Community Retreat Day with the theme “Faithful Friendship” on March 10 at the Dayspring.

and say that it made a difference to him whether I stayed or left and he reminded me that our relationship meant something to both of us. I’ve kept this picture with me for 43 years. It’s like a compass. I can always take it out and find true north again — to be in touch with my call, my desire to be faithful to my relationships.”

Joe continued, “I think what’s really important is that we discover who we are committed to and what we’re committed to because that is the only thing that gives us the passion and energy to live community well. It’s so much easier being against something than for something. Who are we really committed to and what are we really committed to?”

“In 1964, when Jean Vanier wel-

comed two men, Raphael and Phillippe, they discovered friendship and mutuality as they began to live together. That discovery, Jean called ‘the way of the heart.’ That is when one heart becomes bonded to another heart, through friendship which, over time and commitment and daily life, changes both people and calls us to be faithful.

“Faithful friendships touch what is deeply human in all of us — a desire to belong and be accepted as we really are and discover and share our gifts with each other. To know that I am not always on the receiving end of life but on the giving side of life, that I can make a contribution to someone else’s life, that I can have an impact on someone else’s life.” ♣



Hazel Bradley of L’Arche Lambeth (London, England) animated this year’s Assistants Weekend.

Thank you to our faithful supporters for your generous response to our Wish List. Recently, we received the gift of a beautiful piano for Brookwood House. We have also been able to replace all the chairs at the Meeting Hall. Gifts like these really enhance the environment of our homes and programs.

Samuel Joseph Grassby was born to Andréanne Legault and Will Grassby on March 6. Will is a former house leader at the Green House, and Andréanne, an assistant at the New House.

Eileen Glass, Vice-International Leader for L’Arche, visited Daybreak from March 29-30. Eileen gave a retreat to 60 long term assistants from L’Arche communities across Ontario.

Community Wish List

Pillows.....	\$50
Pruning saw.....	\$60
Pruning shears.....	\$75
Blanket.....	\$100
Tablecloths.....	\$200
Copper Beech tree.....	\$200
Art supplies.....	\$300
Pots and pans.....	\$400
Barbeque.....	\$650
Tree shredder.....	\$2,000
Sun shade for the Day Program.....	\$3,000
Sectional sofa.....	\$4,000
Stairlift.....	\$7,000
Mid-size car.....	\$25,000

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

“Making Room” Opens at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts on April 4

by Debbie Dew and Warren Pot



Artists from Daybreak's Craft Studio recently exhibited artwork, ceramics, candles and hand-made paper during a lively event at the popular local coffee shop Cover Notes.

“Making Room” is a new exhibition featuring L'Arche Daybreak artists, which runs from April 4-29 at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. The opening reception was held on April 12.

Included are pieces by John Smeltzer and Bill Van Buren (d. 2009) two elders of our community. Their presence in the founding years inspired growth and prepared the space for new people to be welcomed.

Clarissa Buttarazzi, who is our newest member at the Craft Studio, often paints very detailed scenes that reflect a sense of quiet and calm. Adam Whaley's “Community” speaks of a human desire to be connected with each other beyond our differences. The houses in Amanda Winnington-Ingram's work “Houses” seem to be dancing and making room for each other.

An innovative dimension of this exhibition is the inclusion of several large format drawings that were originally designed as wrapping paper. Each of the artists' drawings and images can be found on pottery and cards, but when presented on this scale they take on a meditative quality in the repetition and reflective quietness of the artistic process.

Art shows like this introduce the creative gifts of people with intellectual disabilities to the wider community, help to raise the profile of our artists, and add a unique voice to our society. Michael Grit, Director of the Richmond Hill Centre for

the Performing Arts, commented that he always looks forward to this annual show of L'Arche art because the pieces make a bold and vibrant impression on viewers. We are very grateful to the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts for its partnership and generous support of our arts programs.

Each piece in the exhibition “Making Room” reflects the intentionality of making room for art, expressing ideas through colour, line, imagination and design. At L'Arche, we are often making room — for each other, for welcome, for silence, and for art. This show is an extraordinary opportunity to share with the greater community the creativity and skill of the many artists from L'Arche Daybreak's Craft Studio.

For inquiries regarding the purchase of artwork, contact the Craft Studio at 905 737 5159 or craftstudio@larchedaybreak.com. ♣



Kevin Lyttle's “Welcoming” illustrates how we make room for those new to our city and country.

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.

DAYSPRING CLOSED

Friday, July 1, Canada Day.

L'ARCHE

L'Arche is an international movement of nearly 150 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

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