



## L'Arche Australia Newsletter

May 2020



Dom & Barbara  
L'Arche Melbourne,  
social distancing!

Tim & Peter, L'Arche Beni-Abbes.



Rajeevan CC who is the new International Delegate for L'Arche Australia & New Zealand. He is also the Delegate for Bangladesh, India, Japan and Philippines. We ask you to hold him in prayer. Welcome Rajeevan, we are delighted to share our journey with you!.

*Welcome to the winter edition!* I hope this newsletter finds you and your families safe and well as we live this time during the COVID-19 lockdown. We continue to be blessed in our efforts to live and announce the Identity and Mission of L'Arche in our lives and we feature the lives of two of our members in Hobart who recently died. I hope you enjoy reading them! On behalf of everyone in L'Arche I would like to THANK you for your generous and ongoing support.

David Treanor National Leader, Claire Lawler, Deputy National Leader, Eileen Glass Fundraising and Development Co-ordinator and Julia Walters Board Chairperson, L'Arche Australia.



L'Arche International [www.larche.org](http://www.larche.org) L'Arche Australia: [www.larche.org.au](http://www.larche.org.au)

### From the National Leader

The application by L'Arche Melbourne on behalf of our friends in Bendigo to become an official project of L'Arche by the Federation was accepted in December 2019. Congratulations and welcome to the Federation L'Arche Bendigo!. Our project in Perth have appointed a Project Co-ordinator/Community Leader with support from L'Arche Australia. Greg Smith took up the role on April 1 and we look forward to working with Greg to lead the Community into their next stage of development. On behalf of everyone in L'Arche Australia, THANKS.

### The Two of Us

Some wise people (including Charles de Foucauld who lived in the village of Beni-Abbes in Algeria) say we show what is most important to us by actually living it out in our daily lives, and later if needs be we can explain it by some words. Our Tim spoke the whole story of his life without needing the words, though his signing of key words like comics, cake, coffee, and his invention of the sign for Dr Who, helped him at times to quickly cut to the chase.

Tim's voicelessness called us into greater attention and awareness in his presence, and as we responded he gave us the great gift of his friendship. Tim created so many friends without needing to say a single word – quite extraordinary. When so many talk today of the sophisticated means and technologies that are needed and available to develop relationships, Tim reminded us that primarily heart-felt friendship relies on presence, vulnerability, openness... and simple joy!

In our Christian story we have the paradox from Jesus that it's the small who are great and it's the weak who give inspiration and strength to build up Community, and Tim demonstrated that with his life. Tim had a strong personality and a clear sense of who he was: some of that was seen in his amazing art-work; in later years with the help of people in his house he often was very fashionable; there was his appreciation of good food; and then there were the comics! In his strength Tim often stood his ground, and he could rightfully get frustrated with us when we couldn't understand his needs. But Tim also lived a deep call to forgiveness and

reconciliation, and in very little time would initiate a gesture showing he was sorry and wanted the relationship to be restored – this was a great witness.

Tim's spiritual life was rich and he shared this with many of us: his quiet and still presence in at times of prayer in the household; his calling us to prayer by lighting a candle; his companionship on retreats and pilgrimages; his delight in the music in L'Arche; his participation in church communities at Sacred Heart and St James.

Tim responded so positively to so many aspects of L'Arche. Maybe because Tim came from a big family he delighted in Community gatherings – there are wonderful memories and photos of Tim enjoying being dressed up and acting in the Christmas pageant. Tim relished Community holidays far and wide, and even overseas. But again what Tim seemed to value most were the long term friendships that Community offered: the invitations by Community Members for Christmas, going to the movies, invitations to stay with people for weekends, to go out for a drive or for a coffee. And the long-term friendships with Tim enabled jokes and tricks and teasing and great fun... on both sides!

Over the last 12 months it has been very sad to see Tim's deteriorating health, with the accompanying confusion and pain, yet there were many times too when we saw the fullness of Tim's life, right to the end. Sitting with him the day before he died Tim blew a kiss, one of the great gestures we know him to give. I asked who it was for, but there was no response. I told Tim that I thought it might be for all the people in his life, people that he loved and people that gave him life. It felt a precious summary of his life. It felt like Tim clearly spoke in his gesture about so many of the things we're struggling to name at this time... love, memories, loss... Tim's life spoke about so much that is essential to our lives and to the spirit of L'Arche... what a gift we have in Tim!

Peter Ryan – April 2020



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## Jean Vanier Inquiry, Mission and COVID-19

In L'Arche in 2020, we have already lived some intense and challenging times. We were shocked earlier this year when L'Arche International published the results of an inquiry from an independent organisation regarding Jean Vanier and his historical links to Father Thomas Philiipe. The Inquiry covers the years 1970 – 2005 and received testimonies from six women without disabilities who report that Jean Vanier initiated sexual relations with them usually in the context of spiritual accompaniment. The findings of the inquiry can be found at on the L'Arche International website under the news section: <http://www.larche.org/news>

Members of L'Arche Australia were shocked by these discoveries and unreservedly condemn his actions which are in total contradiction with the values Jean otherwise stood for. L'Arche International will continue to engage in further research and investigations to try and understand this part of our history and the roots of such behaviours. L'Arche Australia will continue to update you on the findings as L'Arche International shares them.

L'Arche was certainly inspired by Jean's vision however since he stepped down from his role in L'Arche International in 1981, we have focused more on our Charter and to living our Identity and Mission. We are Communities of faith where people living with and without the experience of an intellectual disability share life together – some people live in the same household, some gather for socially and most of all members are emotionally bonded through living meaningful and gratuitous friendships. It is also each member's commitment to our internationally ratified Charter that unities and guides our spirit- our belief in the

intrinsic human dignity of each human person; that each person has the capacity to learn and grow more fully human as a person and all persons living with the experience of an intellectual disability have personal gifts to offer other persons. The story of Tim and Peter shared in the Two of Us is for me of two members who lived our Identity and Mission for the best part of the last 30 years. As some readers might know, both Tim and Peter died in April within 7 days of each other – May they both rest in peace. Tim and Peter will be sadly missed by many members of L'Arche.

Our communities are managing to find creative ways to live our lockdown, which unfolds differently in each State and Territory Leaders have met three times a week with the national team during March and April to develop the necessary processes to ensure that we are vigilant in responding to the threat COVID-19 poses to members. We took the lead from our friends in New Zealand and lived, as much as possible, in a 'bubble' to minimise risk and spread of the coronavirus. We have found very creative ways to live our Identity and Mission. Like many other people, we are using zoom to connect with each other for meetings, we have alas had to cancel our Companions retreat in March and our formation programs in April. L'Arche Australia hopes these formation programs can be rescheduled for later this year or early next year. Attached please find a selection of photos from our Communities on how we are sharing lives and living as a Community.

## Share A Meal

October marks the launch of the **Share a Meal Campaign for 2020**. We want to double the number of hosts and the amount raised – so we need at least 60 people to host events and we want to raise over \$12,000 for L'Arche Australia and L'Arche Zimbabwe. If you are planning a gathering when restrictions are lifted, please consider hosting a Share A Meal on behalf of L'Arche Australia. Contact Eileen at [fundraising@larche.org.au](mailto:fundraising@larche.org.au) or call 0431898013 to register as a host and to obtain a copy of the host kit.



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