

GENESARET GAZETTE



*Winter Edition
June 2021*

"Changing the world one heart at a time"

Winter of endings: facing deaths, griefs and changes together

Greetings from Brendan Price

Outside it's winter, with a chill wind coming off the hills and even snow falling on my way home a few days back. As well as the cold outside, it is easy to feel that we are living an internal season of endings and grief, facing deaths and change. In these winter moments the gift and promise of community becomes particularly important: how welcome to be with friends, to mourn and celebrate together, to pray and share our story, and be reminded and encouraged that Jesus always walks with us.

At our June gathering we particularly remembered **Liz Archer**, who died last month. Liz was a delightful friend and ambassador for L'Arche, bringing joy over her 35 years in Genesaret. Her death is an enormous loss, and we continue to pray for her family and everyone who mourns for her. Liz's funeral was a wonderful celebration of a special life, a graced occasion that brought together many past members and friends of Liz and L'Arche Genesaret.

We are also carrying other sadnesses, especially the sudden loss of **Deb Kensey**, also in May. We are in the midst of the significant process of withdrawing from NDIS-funded service provision, handing over this part of our life to CatholicCare. We remain committed to being an intentional community. There is uncertainty and pain as we continue to talk with L'Arche Australia and L'Arche International about whether and how there is a place for us in the Federation: please continue to pray for these conversations.



Vale Elizabeth Archer

8 February 1961 – 28 May 2021

Many of you will have already heard the very sad news that our dear friend Elizabeth Archer died last month.

This newsletter was prepared earlier to share the wonderful news of her 60th birthday celebrations, held in February this year.

Unfortunately, due to multiple challenges, this edition could not be published until now, and so the coverage of this joyous event on page 3 remains as a poignant celebration of Liz and her unrepeatability gift to the world.

After five years we have moved out of the Hub, carrying memories of arts and crafts, drama concerts and the Busy Hands Festival, meetings and community gatherings. I'd like to acknowledge with appreciation the many members who contributed to getting us ready for the end of the lease, ably marshalled by Sheree Crothers who herself made a truly formidable contribution – this would be a big project at any time, but with everything else being lived it was a remarkable achievement. Thank you.

There have been many other moments of gratitude in these past few weeks. Core members travelled to Hobart to participate in L'Arche's National Listening and Speaking Group, and connected with old friends while celebrating L'Arche Hobart's 35th anniversary. Several members were privileged to attend the Order of St Lazarus's annual dinner, continuing a long tradition of their faithful and generous partnership with L'Arche. Core members have also received colourful quilts specially made by a local quilting group (how welcome in this weather!), and we have witnessed the warmth of CatholicCare staff welcoming our office employees with home-made baking.

These moments are welcome as we live this very significant change for our community, with funded service provision transferring to CatholicCare soon. I have now finished up in my paid role, although I am staying on in a voluntary capacity and looking forward to seeing you all at community events, which will continue. The transition to CatholicCare providing NDIS-funded services will allow core members to continue to receive high quality support, while enabling L'Arche Genesaret to continue independently as a community of faith, providing a place of belonging and mission. At the same time there is also a significant sense of loss after forty-three years of Genesaret providing funded disability support, with many remarkable outcomes over that time. Please pray for core members, employees, the whole Genesaret community and CatholicCare, both during the transition and into the future, as we continue to tell the stories of what's been lived before and work together as a community on writing the next chapter.

In the midst of this change and the sense of loss it brings, may we also hear Jesus continuing to call us on, trusting in his presence and care for us. May we be renewed as together we seek to make known the gifts of people with a disability, revealed through mutually transforming relationships.

With gratitude, and wishing you every blessing,

Brendan



Above: A precious way to remember our dear friend Elizabeth Archer as she makes a triumphant, joyous entry to her 60th birthday celebrations in February to thunderous applause ... more on next page.

Thank you to our many friends from around the country and across the world who have sent condolences. Please find the link below to view Elizabeth's beautiful funeral service which was attended by about 200 people.

[Click this link: Elizabeth Archer's funeral footage](#)

Liz's 60th birthday full of song, love and fun

Elizabeth Archer, in life and death, surely gathered a crowd.

Her 60th birthday celebrations began with a rock star entry, accompanied by The Bee Gee's "More Than A Woman" that played just at the perfect time. Highlights included the humming energy of 120 guests, a specially written song sung by family members and even a surprise vice-regal guest with our Patron Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley (*photographed above*).



Liz summed up the day: "It was magic ... everything ... I loved everything, all the people, all my family and friends, the song. I loved it!" In her speech, Liz acknowledged the First Nations people of our country and thanked her beautiful family and her many friends for all their love and support throughout her life. Speeches included moving tributes from her mother Diana Archer and sister Louise McDonough, and a series of reflections from L'Arche friends spanning more than 35 years of shared life, with Eileen Glass, Claire Lawler and Prayer Companion Annie Patterson.



Who is the Lady?

**Song by Peter and David Archer,
sung with Ruby Archer**

Who is the girl walking down the street
with the beat coming from her hands?

Who is the girl with the smile so connected
to her soul and she lets you know?

Where is the girl who remembers everybody's
name better than her brother Dame?

She's here with us now / she's lying down now

Who is the lady looking through the
cake shop window cappuccino swirl?

Who is the lady, the Queen of Hughes Shops
scene with her magazines?

Where is the lady, with the vice-regal types
always ready to attend her things?

She's here with us now / she's lying down now

Where is the girl? ...

She's here with us now / she's lying down now



A speech celebrating the gift of friend Elizabeth Archer

By Prayer Companion, Annie Patterson

Thank you, Liz, it's wonderful to be here with your dear family and so many friends to celebrate this very special, big birthday. If it weren't for a pandemic, there would be many others from interstate and overseas who would very much like to be here, such is your reach. It's my great privilege and blessing to be Prayer Partners with you. We accompany each other through the ups and downs of life, usually over a coffee, stalking the best lamingtons and lemon slices in cafes across Canberra. We've even been to High Tea at the Hyatt, thanks to Louise and her generosity. We have great fun together, going to movies, pouring over recipes books, cooking together, sharing meals, visiting my family in Brisbane, speaking in public together, even travelling to Uluru on pilgrimage with L'Arche.



I would like to remember Bernadette Downie (right), who was your Prayer Partner for many years. I remember Bernadette openly saying that L'Arche really helped her to come to deeper self-acceptance and acceptance of others, and you, Liz, were a big part of that journey. Before Bernadette died three years ago, we would often visit her together and it was beautiful to witness the natural and loving friendship you shared with one another.



Liz, I often say you know half of Canberra and Scott Andrea knows the other half! Every time we go out together, we run into someone you know. Some years ago, Anne Mullins asked me to accompany you to your water aerobics classes in Deakin. I quickly wondered who was accompanying who. You were clearly the heart and soul of the most socially cohesive group fitness class I'd ever encountered. You knew everyone, knew what was going on in their families, knew who was recovering from what illness or injury. Later, when I joined a water aerobics class, the experience was completely different. No-one spoke to anyone and I didn't feel socially confident enough to follow your magnificent lead. I thought: "Where's Liz? I need Liz!" You've enabled so many social connections over the years through your spontaneous generosity. And even now, there is a family making enquiries with L'Arche because you started up a friendly conversation at the Yarralumla Nursery last year.

In L'Arche, we share a lot of good times together, but it's not always a barrel of laughs, isn't it, Liz? Sometimes there's conflict and difficult relationships, and so many times I have been floored by your capacity to forgive and be kind and generous toward someone who has hurt or upset you. And you ask for forgiveness too, when you feel the need.

You're a great lover of life and freely share your excitement. I remember when I came to dinner for the first time at your place in Curtin nearly 13 years ago. When we pulled up in the drive-way I heard you announce

our arrival from the lounge room ... “They’re here, they’re here!” I felt so welcomed, even before I got to the front door!

I admire your inner freedom to say it just as it is and be honest about how you feel. There’s no pretending, no guessing with you. And when you greet us, invariably you will say “and how arrrrre you?”, with an emphasis on the “are”, as if to say, “how are you really”? You have an uncanny ability to pick up on what people are feeling or going through, and you will come up to us and say, “Are you ok?” or “how’s Sandra?”. And when you faced major surgery yourself last year, we were so touched and inspired by your honesty, acceptance and courage, and how your concern for others, even in the midst of this distressing experience, blessed so many people around you.

And finally, Liz, I’m often blown away by your heart intelligence, wisdom and perception. So many times, after the evening meal or at a gathering, you will pray or ask a question with exceptional insight and clarity. You live very close to the Spirit. You have a hot-line straight to the Divine Heart and we are all so much the richer because of this gift in you.

Thank you, dear Liz. You are a much-loved leader of L’Arche, a great ambassador. You’re a community-builder and healer, and most of all, you are our fun-loving, life-affirming, compassionate, faithful friend. We love you, we thank you, we bless you. (And may her beautiful soul now rest in deep peace.)

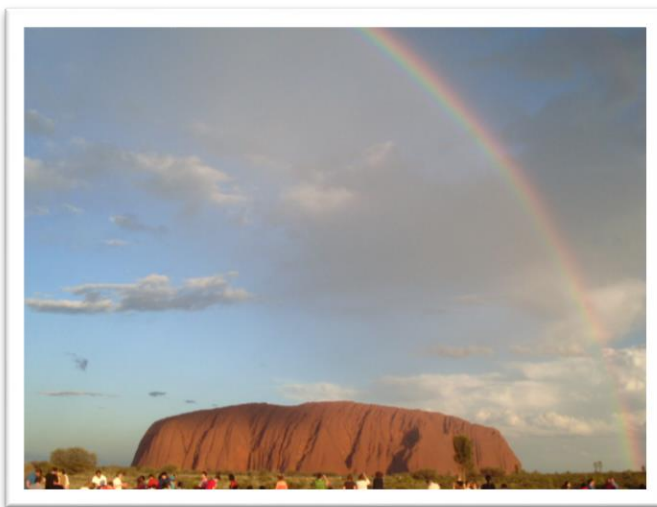


Liz and Annie visiting
Brisbane in 2016.

“WOW!” Nurturing Awe and Wonder in Challenging Times

Our theme for Desert Morning this year has been inspired by Julia Baird’s book, **“Phosphorescence: On awe, wonder and things that sustain you when the world goes dark”**, published last year in the midst of the global pandemic.

Members are responding to the theme and sharing their “wow” moments and so far there’s been experiences of Uluru, awe in artwork depicting the life of Jesus, the wonders of nature, the gift of music and painful experiences that expand our hearts and souls. Here’s a quote below from Julia Baird’s book:



“How do we continue to glow when the lights turn out? All we can do really is keep placing one foot on the earth, then the other, to seek out ancient paths and forests, certain in the knowledge that others have endured before us. We must love. And we must look outwards and upwards at all times, caring for others, seeking wonder and stalking awe, every day, to find the magic what will sustain us and fuel the light within – our own phosphorescence.”

Washing of the Feet invites us into the crucible of trust

We were grateful to gather again for our sacred liturgy of the Washing of the Feet during Holy Week.

Mindful of on-going hygiene protocols, we didn't fully participate in the ritual, but watched quietly as Anne Mullins tenderly washed Rhonda Atkinson's feet. We blessed each other in a shared action by placing hearts and stars on drawings of one another's feet, to extend love and light to present and absent friends.

Community Member Robert Henderson shared the following reflection, drawing inspiration from the song "Trust Me" by John Coleman, based on the poetry of Noel Davis (published in full on p9).

This passage from John's Gospel (John 13:1-10; 12-14), that records how Jesus washed the disciples' feet, is a powerful message. Jesus' action in undertaking this intimate task of foot washing is all about humility, hospitality and the giving away of power. These are all strong L'Arche themes that we strive to model in our communities.

We are soon going to listen to a song by John Coleman called "Trust Me", based on a poem by the late Noel Davis. It refers to the wide range of feelings and emotions that we as human beings are often subject to and how they are all mixed up together in what he refers to as a crucible. A crucible is defined as "a vessel in which substances are heated to high temperatures for the purpose of refining". So Noel uses the word crucible as a metaphor to say that we are all subject to many feelings and emotions but it is our challenge to refine them so we use them positively and productively—for good, for the loving support of others.

In the crucible are all the feelings that we can relate to such as confusion, fragility, sadness and absurdity—feelings that may be hard for us to handle but can also see us emerge as wiser and more understanding of others. There are also feelings such as ecstasy, thanksgiving, blessing and tranquillity that buoy us up and give us the energy to survive, to carry on. These feelings/emotions can readily be seen in the human Jesus as he lived his life so humbly, broke down barriers between people and reached out with love, concern, empathy and understanding to all people.

In L'Arche, we see a lot of trusting where people are prepared to give away their power (or have little power in the first place), where people are prepared to admit how they really are and how God's love shines through when we find the support and care we need from those who stand with us in community. Long may it be so in our loving community of L'Arche Genesaret.



Disciples cry “do you not care” as Jesus brings the still point in the storm



Sometimes it feels like the Lectionary Readings are shuffled just at the right time ... here are some photos from our June Community Gathering, including a re-enactment of the Gospel of Mark 4: 35-41, involving a large boat, a very big storm and Jesus as the still point within ...

The disciples jumped into the boat, to cross over the Lake... the wind blew and the storm raged ... the disciples cried out: “Teacher, do you care that we might drown?” ... and Jesus awoke from his sleep and calmed the storm ...



*We must risk delight ... We must have the stubbornness
to accept our gladness in the ruthless furnace in this world.
To make injustice the only measure of our attention is to praise the Devil.*

from "A Brief for the Defense" by Jack Gilbert

Thanksgiving for Noel Davis and rich legacy of Australian soul poetry

With gratitude and great sadness, we honour the life of **Noel Davis**, who died peacefully on Saturday 27 March in his home in Narooma, on the NSW south coast, alongside his beloved wife Trish.

Noel's poetry runs deep in the heart and soul of L'Arche, especially through the evocative song "Bush Beatitudes", written by John Coleman, based on Noel's poem of the same title, which has been played countless times at farewells and celebrations over the years.

Many of Noel's beautiful poems and prayers have also found their way into L'Arche liturgies, meetings and gatherings. Since 2013, Noel Davis and John Coleman have collaborated in bringing a collection of Noel's poems to music. This collaboration came to fruition in the album, "Shade Tree Place", in 2016. Noel is photographed (*at far*



right) at a CD launch held here in Canberra at the L'Arche Hub. Also pictured are John Coleman (centre) and Elizabeth Archer, who joined the stage to sing "Bush Beatitudes" with spontaneous, joyous dancing.

We bow in deep gratitude for Noel Davis, for the gift of his integrity, friendship and the legacy of his poetry spanning some 30 years.

Please uphold in prayer or be mindful of the following:

- The Archer family following the **death of Elizabeth Archer** on 28 May and the Kensey family since the **death of Debbie Kensey** on 31 May and the many friends who share their grief and loss;
- The on-going challenge and escalation of the global pandemic in many countries, and friends and families with loved ones impacted by these circumstances;
- Our **Core Members, family members, assistants, co-ordinators and wider L'Arche membership** as we embrace a time of great change and transition, in collaboration with CatholicCare in Canberra;
- Our on-going process of deep listening and dialogue as we remain steadfastly committed to being the L'Arche Genesaret community in Canberra and being faithful to the L'Arche identity and mission;
- Long-term community members as they grieve, particularly **Alan Doolan** and his family as they mourn the death of **Sandra Doolan** who died on 5 January; **Tarlie and John Alcock** as they mourn the death of Tarlie's mother Natalie Dowling who died on 20 January;
- **Margaret Benson** and her specialist in Sydney as she receives treatment to lower her eye pressure, particularly in her left eye;
- The on-going journey of reconciliation in Australia, remembering **NAIDOC Week** (4-11 July) and the L'Arche Seed Group in Alice Springs;
- **The L'Arche International team and L'Arche communities around the world**, particularly in view of the L'Arche Charter review process, the Covid-19 Pandemic and on-going reflections since the sexual abuse reports released last year (**[L'Arche International Report](#)**);
- **Our National Leaders, David Treanor and Claire Lawler, and the National Board of L'Arche**; for all L'Arche communities across Australia in being faithful to our identity and mission, listening to what the Spirit is inviting us into as we respond to various opportunities and challenges in Australia;

- **Stewart Betts** and family as they take up new life in Hobart, Tasmania, and as Stewart serves as Acting Community Leader with L'Arche Hobart; also remembering our L'Arche friends in Hobart as they celebrated their 35th anniversary as a community on 29 May;
- **L'Arche Brisbane** as they discern a new community leader;
- For **leaders and governments around the world**, for the way of co-operation and peace;
- For **our precious environment**, that we find ways to protect vulnerable habitats and species;
- For **all who are hurting, grieving or suffering** in any way - in heart, body, mind or soul – that the way of healing, comfort and peace may be a lived, shared reality;

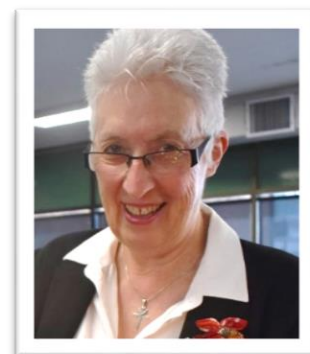


Stephen James presents Stewart Betts with gifts of appreciation as we share a fond farewell as Stewart and the family settle into life in Hobart and service as Acting Community Leader with Beni Abbes.

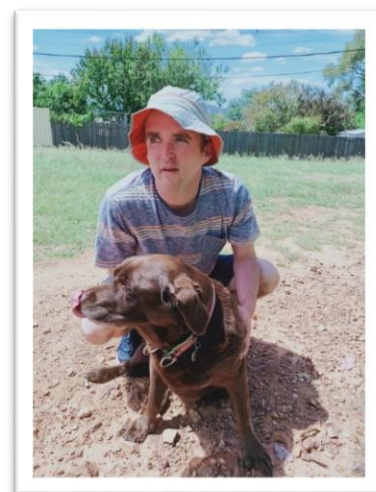
We give thanks for:

We join with others around Australia and across the Federation in thanking God for the gift of Eileen Glass and her role in forming and building L'Arche across Australia, New Zealand and around the world.

Eileen retired from her paid role in L'Arche Australia as Director, Fundraising and Development in March. As many people will know, Eileen has held numerous roles in Australia, Canada, Asia-Pacific and with L'Arche International in an incredible commitment spanning 47 years. We pray Eileen is deeply blessed as she enters a new chapter of her journey.



- We give thanks for the lives of **Noel Davis, Elizabeth Archer and Debbie Kensey**, their love and generosity, and the legacy of each of their lives; may they rest in deep peace;
- We give thanks for the enormous and intense contribution of **Brendan Price as CEO of L'Arche Genesaret**, navigating huge challenges since December 2019 with calm and grace, and his continuing desire and commitment to serving as Community Leader on a voluntary basis moving forward;
- For **each member of our Community** and the unique gifts and vulnerabilities we each bring and share;
- The **support of CatholicCare in Canberra** and their commitment to supporting L'Arche Genesaret continue in a new way as an intentional community in Canberra;
- The leadership of our **Canberra Listening and Speaking Group, Community Council, the Genesaret Board and long-term community members** at this time;
- **Our many friends and supporters** who are praying for us during this time of change, challenge and grief; and
- Those who donate and provide sponsorship to L'Arche, in particular the **Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem** who hosted another wonderful fundraising dinner on **Friday 4 June**. Thank you!



Embrace life, all of life

From "Together at the Edge"

By Noel Davis

(1943 – 2021)

Trust me, launch into the deep
into bliss, into blessing
Trust me, launch into the deep
into confusion, into comedy
Trust me, launch into the deep
into sadness, and your absurdity
Oh trust me ...

Trust me, launch into the deep
into your ecstasy, your humanity
Trust me, launch into the deep
into your wholeness, and your fragility
Trust me, launch into the deep
into the diamond, into your crucible
Trust me, launch into the deep
into your glory, and your tranquillity
Oh trust me ...

Trust me, launch into the deep
into your new life, thanksgiving
Trust me, launch into the deep
into the maelstrom, the holy orchestra
Oh trust me ...

Trust me, launch into the deep
into bliss, into blessing
Trust me, launch into the deep
into bliss, into blessing

Published in "Together at the Edge, 2011, p15

Song, titled "Trust Me", produced by John Coleman on "Shade Tree Place" released in 2016

John Coleman's music is available for purchase on <https://johncoleman.bandcamp.com/music>



A snapshot from our February community gathering, celebrating a string of January and February birthdays ... We have now packed up and left the Hub, so we give thanks for good times shared together there, friendships formed, creativity expressed, and many big lessons learnt along the way. We trust in the providence, love and mercy of God and the kindness of others as we move forward together in hope and faith ...



L'Arche Genesaret community

**Founded in 1978,
first L'Arche community in Australia**

Community Leader: Brendan Price

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For more information about L'Arche:

Australia: www.larche.org.au

International: www.larche.org

Feedback to L'Arche Genesaret: We welcome feedback, including compliments and complaints, as this can assist us to improve the lives of people living with the experience of intellectual disability. If you would like to offer us feedback, please refer to the contact information above, including our [on-line feedback form](#). We can provide support in this process if you need any assistance.