

NEWS FROM BENDIGO

Christmas 2023



From the Editor

The evolution of L'Arche in Bendigo took another step on November 30th when the leadership team participated in a day of formation facilitated by Audrey Brown. It was a privilege for me to join with Bhupinder, Carolyn, Margaret, Caraline Kelly and Anna Williams.

Audrey took us through Lencioni's model of leadership which stresses the importance of trust, managing conflict, commitment, accountability and results.

Effective team members demonstrate trust by asking for help, sharing their weaknesses and acknowledging that others are doing their best. Effective teams have healthy debates, are solution focused and challenge poor behaviours. Effective teams have clear objectives, achieve buy in and fully engage members. Effective team members deal with poor performance, have consistent expectations and complete their own work. Effective teams are highly motivated and focused on results.

The day was both reassuring and challenging. Special thanks to Audrey for giving up her day to be with us and for her skilled facilitation. Thanks to Mark McLoughlan for generously giving us access to the dining room of the Central Deborah Motel. We want to especially thank those who covered us for the day whilst we participated in this very important opportunity.

Jim Rolfe

Reflection

Yesterday, when I was about to use my phone, I paid attention and reflected on what was before me. You guessed it – multiple app icons. While I didn't count them, these little images take up 3 screen "pages". For the most part I have no idea what they do, or how they are meant to enrich my life. While I am as guilty as any one else, of checking emails, reading the news, and playing Quordle, I can honestly say that my primary reason for having a mobile phone, is to make contact with people by email or phone. I would love to rid myself of the apps I

never use, but Samsung won't allow that. As I looked at and reflected on images on my screen, it seemed that the same screen might be an excellent metaphor for the clutter that I sometimes unthinkingly assume, or the clutter that seems to be forced on us. The world, in 2023, seems to be such a sad place, and my

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head and heart struggle to make room for the world's pain. Preparing for Christmas, for joy, for getting together with loved ones seems so difficult in the current climate of the world. Yet this is the time we absolutely must find joy in our respective worlds. On our own, we cannot change the world's chaos, but we can change our response to it. I am not even sure how I might manage this, but I suspect it might have something to do with turning off the television, visiting a friend, reading a good book, turning up our favourite music to full volume. Perhaps when our own buckets are full of love and joy, we can begin to share this love with those around us. It might also include being grateful for what we have in our life. It just might mean saying 'thank you' more often.

Last Saturday night I went to one of the loveliest birthday gatherings of my life. The friend who celebrated his birthday, began his speech by addressing his wife. "You still are the love of my life", he said. My friend then went on to speak of the pride he has in his children. He spoke too of the life he has had, the life he has, the things he has learnt along the way. Perhaps my friend was not conscious of the 'message' in his thank you speech, but his invitation to all gathered to find and celebrate joy, laughter, friendship and family was mighty in a gentle kind of way. It was a speech that was about gratitude.

So, while we must care about the desperate plight of so many people on the planet and respond in whatever way we are able, we must also respond to those we love in our lives – our families, our friends and our neighbours. After all, a wise man once said "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full."

Blessings to you all this Christmas however you may celebrate it.

Angela Allen
Spiritual Life Group

Member Profiles

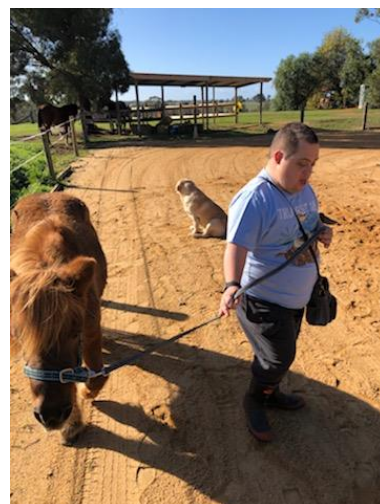
Isaac Joseph Fiddelaers, as he sometimes introduces himself, is 31 years old.

Isaac has 3 older siblings and one younger. He lives in Heathcote with Dad, Mum and Mark, his younger brother. He moved to Heathcote from Sale in Gippsland in 2018.

Isaac enjoys life-----every part of it, food, he is good at food prep and cooking, people: (all ages, size, colour etc.), family, sport; he likes to win but don't let him, fun (and church, it's a social event) AND more food.

Isaac is ever ready to try his hand at anything, even with deteriorating vision. He has driven the quad bike on the farm, participated in a 3 day/2-night kayak challenge on the river from Sale to Lakes Entrance, he was best man at his brother's wedding and was for some years a player in an All-Abilities cricket team.

Isaac loves his 6 nieces and 5 nephews checking up on their wellbeing through phone conversations and face time, sometimes being a virtual babysitter when their mums need a break.



Isaac is currently supported in the community to attend and participate in a variety of activities and settings, connecting with many people and developing useful life skills, e.g., swimming, gym, equine assist, lawn bowls and dance, to list a few.

Isaac is genuinely concerned about people, and he gives the best hugs.

Mark Benedict Fiddelaers aged 28, lives in Heathcote with Dad, Mum and Isaac (his older brother).

This is a very short introduction to a gentleman with many talents and virtues. Mark is a Tech guy. You can rely on Mark to have your phone, iPad, ear pods, even your shaver *fully* charged. Mark travels with a kit of extension cords, power packs, USB chargers, USB cables, and a power board with 5 outlets.

He likes to dress “to kill”: shirt, tie, suit. If you need an extra at a funeral or wedding, invite Mark.

He enjoys listening to music, all genres and to “dance” along with his favourite.

Last year Mark went to see the Elvis movie 3 times and was disappointed on the 4th trip when the support worker got tickets for something else.

He also enjoys movies that have some “slap/ stick” elements.



Although his speech is limited, he understands a lot and notices a lot. He is very inquisitive and has an eye for details in his environment. If his nieces and nephews get too noisy he asks their parents to take them home. Although he withdraws from a crowd and noise he is pleased to be on the sidelines. Also he has a sense of mischievous humor. One of his jobs at home is to set the dinner table but he deliberately misses an item or sets 2 forks and no knives or vice versa as a prank.

Mark likes to go on holidays and asks to pack the Ute and camper, but it’s been a while since that has happened.

He is supported in the community to attend gym, swimming (though he prefers the sauna and spa), exercise physiology, dog training, lawn bowls and more.

Birthdays

Kay celebrating her 80th birthday with Tania celebrating her 21st.



Prayer Points

For the war torn areas of the world. As another new crisis unfolds we tend to forget the plight of the people in places such as the Ukraine, Syria and Myanmar. May the hearts and minds of authorities in Gaza be better guided in their actions by the importance of human life and the need for a safe home for all.

We give thanks for the generous provision of accommodation which our community enjoys especially the procurement of another long-term lease. We spare a thought for those suffering due to the housing shortage and the increased financial pressure resulting from a rise in interest rates and cost of living expenses.

Help us during this Christmas season to better appreciate the part that gratitude plays in a fulfilling life. Gratitude helps us participate in life. The positives become more obvious and that makes life more pleasurable. May Christmas be a time where we celebrate goodness rather than adapting to goodness.

Member News

Sam is representing our community on the National Listening and Speaking Group. This group is an advisory committee of the Board of L'Arche Australia for the review and direction of L'Arche. Sam made a wonderful contribution at his first meeting recently in Melbourne.



Board News

The board recently welcomed Patrick Skahill as a new member. Patrick works in the Real Estate Industry in Bendigo and is keen to offer his skills and passions in the service of L'Arche. We thank Patrick for taking up this invitation.

The well-attended AGM of November 28th provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the achievements of L'Arche. At the meeting a constitution for L'Arche Victoria was launched. This body will govern all L'Arche communities in Victoria. This in no way takes away from the identity of each community. Each community makes local decisions about day-to-day matters.

A highlight of the meeting was the announcement that Donella Cutts has been awarded life membership of L'Arche Australia. Donella has been involved in L'Arche for most of her life and

has served as secretary of the board for twenty years. We congratulate and thank Donella for the generous sharing of herself in the service of L'Arche.

Important Information

L'Arche recently procured a long-term lease on a beautiful property, 14 Isabella Grove Strathdale. This will provide the community with many additional accommodation opportunities and is a source of great joy. Plans and timelines for taking up the lease are being finalised.

The annual L'Arche Christmas Market, held on November 26th, was a wonderful community day. It is reassuring to see so many people gather to support the work of our community. The efforts raised over \$9,000. Thank you to Laurie Whelan, manager of the Good Loaf, for making his premises available and to Maureen Connelly and her willing band of helpers for all the work put into organising the day.

Sandy Grace has taken up a position as a live in Assistant at Bethany. This position is an important aspect of the L'Arche tradition and a further expression of our commitment to create a community of support for our members. We thank Sandy for her offer and the further opportunities which will result from further sharing life with Yvonne, Matt and Andy.

The community enjoyed the hospitality offered at the Central Deborah Motel for our community gathering on October 11th. We were very comfortable and we thank Mark McLoughlan for giving up the dining room for our use.

L'Arche Australia highlighted the importance of the "With and Without" program on December 3rd, the International Day of People with disabilities. "With and Without" highlights the bond based on the friendships of people living with a disability and those without. This is an unforgettable, exhilarating transforming experience in the L'Arche tradition.

Assistant Profile

Q and A with Sam Coughlin

Sam was born and raised in Knox. Her father was from a strong Irish background. She grew up surrounded by animals, particularly horses. She enjoyed riding, breaking and grooming and competed in shows on a regular basis. The family moved around a lot to places such as Milford in South Gippsland where the only distinguishing building was the fire station. School was challenging for Sam as the constant moves made it difficult to make friends. She completed much of her secondary education at Leongatha.

Sam however completed many courses in the TAFE system where she has made lifelong friends. Her studies have included Tourism, Hospitality and a Diploma in Business. Sam assisted her father in the tree lopping business and eventually came to work in disability through involvement in SCOPE in Melbourne. She has gained a Certificate four and frontline management qualifications in disability. After thinking she would try this work for a while she is still in it and loves it twenty years later.



Sam enjoys the outdoors, reading and walking. She is looking forward to walking the Pinnacle in the Grampians with her family at Easter. The joys of her life are her fourteen year old girls, Hannah and Kaitlyn. After resigning herself to the fact that she was unable to have children she received the best 40th birthday gift possible, the news that she was having twin girls. The celebrations soon took off in a different direction than was planned. Sam now lives in Inglewood where she enjoys the quiet, friendly, country life. She enjoys the mutual benefits of having her mother live next door.

Sam is proud of the women her daughters are becoming. She is heartened by their courteous and compassionate ways. They are always on the lookout to help others. New Year's eve is always a double celebration in the Coughlin household; it's the twins' birthday. Celebrations continue all day and well into the night as the New Year is welcomed. Sam is looking forward to the home time which Christmas brings, time to relax with a crossword or puzzle. L'Arche is lucky!

Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration

L'Arche was founded in Bendigo on April 21st 2013. Dreams and plans were long in the making before that day. The ten-year anniversary celebration provides for us the opportunity to acknowledge and thank all who have worked so hard for what we enjoy today. It is through hearing our story and celebrating our achievements that we gain strength to embrace current challenges and those of the future. Everyone is welcome and warmly invited to participate. Details for the celebration are outlined below:

When- Sunday April 14th 2024

Venue- St. Kilian's Hall

Luncheon inclusive of a two course meal and drinks- \$70 donation (Primary age children free)

A formal invitation with RSVP will be circulated in the New Year.



Dates

Wednesday February 6th, 9.30 until 2PM- Working bee at Bethany to extend the watering system, install a compost area and complete pruning and general gardening. Further details will be circulated closer to the day.

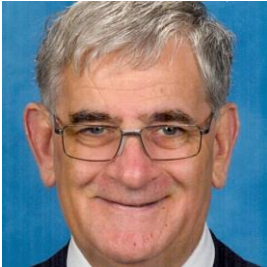
Sunday February 11th- Community Gathering at Bethany (Annual Review)

Wednesday March 27th- Easter Community Gathering at Bethany.

Council News

The community council has been working on finalising the annual report and is reviewing the L'Arche Bendigo brochure. Mark McLoughlan's generous offer to give the community use of the dining room at the Central Deborah Motel has given us a spacious option for gatherings in the colder weather. The council is planning for a consistent approach to donations to L'Arche communities in poorer countries.

Farewell Fr. Andrew Fewings



The L'Arche community has mixed feelings about Fr. Andrew's transfer to Wodonga. On the one hand we will miss him and on the other hand the people of Wodonga will benefit from his generous ministry and friendship.

Fr. Andrew has played a critical part in the establishment of L'Arche in Bendigo. He was part of a group who visited Trosly in Northern France where L'Arche was founded. The party made good use of his IT skills which were central in putting together a presentation about Bendigo's journey. This was shared with the other International visitors.

Fr. Andrew has been a member of the many committees which needed to be set up to establish and manage the development of L'Arche. He enjoys the fellowship generated at community gatherings and he always contributes generously to the liturgical aspect of these. In this role he has been strong advocate in wanting the best for people with an intellectual disability.

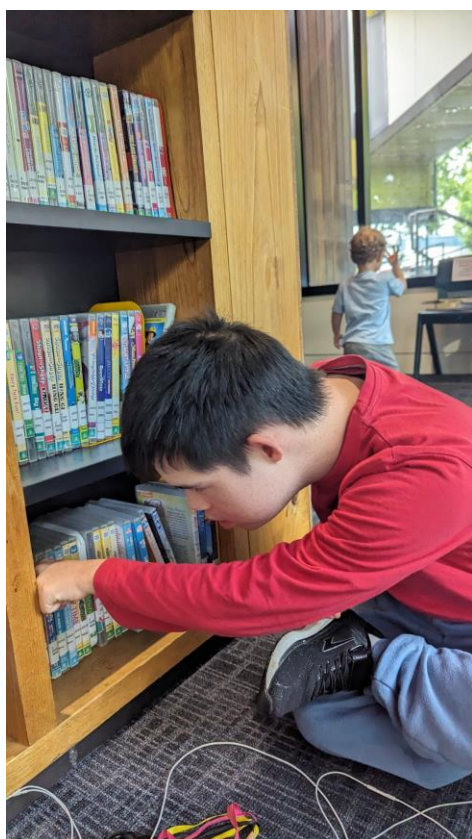
The ritual of the washing of the feet at Easter is central to the L'Arche tradition. This ritual speaks strongly of the importance of service and the sharing of our skills and talents for the greater good. Fr. Andrew embodies the importance of service in the way he so generously gives to others. He always extends the hand of friendship and hospitality and generates a positive morale in and beyond the L'Arche community. He is proud that 8 Grandview Crescent is in the parish of Kennington.

We thank Fr. Andrew for his long, consistent and loyal involvement in the L'Arche community. We acknowledge that many groups draw on his generosity and gain strength from his reassuring presence and regular words of encouragement, yet being with us is a high priority. We wish him every blessing in his work in Wodonga.



Wishing you all every blessing at Christmas and for the coming year.

Programs at Hesse



Top left - Simon and Anna

Top right – art and craft at Hesse

Damien enjoying mini golf.

Ryan using his DVD and computer skills at the Bendigo Library.



Life at Bethany



House meetings are important



An outing to Inglewood



L-R

Andy, Yvonne and Matt



Grandview



Mary preparing for Christmas.



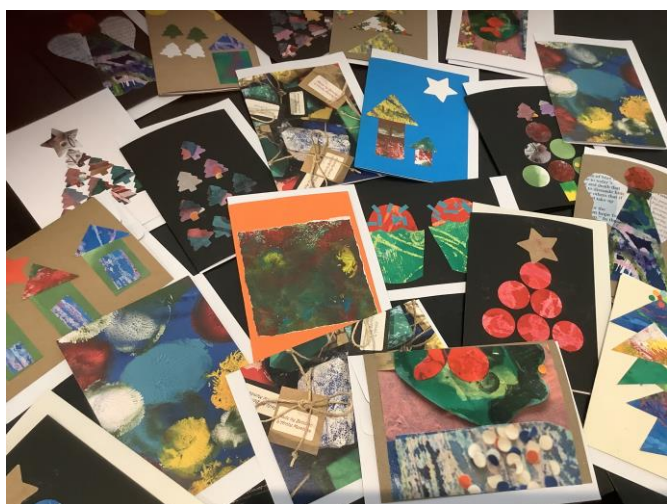
Sam enjoying a meal out with Matt

The Christmas Gathering at Bethany





The Christmas Market





Donations

Donations to L'Arche are tax deductible and can be made directly to the L'Arche Bendigo Bank Account.

BSB-633-000

Account Number- 152536827

The Community has long-term capital needs. Bequests to L'Arche are one means which will enable the community to work towards these. Please consider L'Arche if you are planning a bequest or make the case for L'Arche if you have friends considering this.

<i>L'Arche Identity</i>	<i>Mission</i>
<i>We are people with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in Communities belonging to an International Federation.</i>	<i>To make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities revealed through mutually transforming relationships.</i>
<i>Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together.</i>	<i>To foster an environment in Community that responds to the changing needs of our members, whilst being faithful to the core values of our founding story.</i>
<i>We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognise our need of one another.</i>	<i>To engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.</i>