



November / December 2017

Introduction

Welcome to the Core Values Newsletter for November-December 2017. Our Core Value for this newsletter is Foster a Vibrant Community, and we will be exploring the theme of “togetherness.”

I have been lucky to experience togetherness in a new way over the last few months. Our Core Values Newsletter committee has grown to include seven members, all from different communities. Yet while their communities may be different, they all have a deep knowing of what we mean when we speak of “togetherness” and the ways that we live this in L’Arche. They have each reminded me that while our communities may be far from each other, we are indeed companions on the journey together.

As we enter the season of Advent, we invite you to reflect upon the theme of “togetherness.” What values do you see

reflected in the community of shepherds and wise travellers that gathered around a little baby in a barn? What can they teach us about togetherness? What can we in turn teach about togetherness?

We have included new activities in this newsletter that we hope will bring you together to have some fun and be creative. Please send us your photos when you participate in activities from the newsletter together. We would love to include them in future issues. If you have any comments or would like to provide input or photos for future newsletters, please contact Elizabeth Nash at enash@larche.ca

Our upcoming newsletters will be:

- January-February “Fulfill Your Role in Community”
- March-April “Trust in God”
- May-June “Open to Mutual Relationship”

Introduction to Togetherness Activities:

Jean Vanier wrote in *Community and Growth* - “One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn’t as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find

self-confidence and inner healing.”

Living and being together isn’t always easy but at the core of our community there is love and communication; there is understanding and belonging; there is togetherness; there is Jesus. As Jesus said, ‘when two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’ (Matthew 18:20)

As a group, [watch the following video](#) created by Karima Panjwani, L’Arche Daybreak Assistant (music by Have Fun Teaching) on living in community and the respect that binds us all.

Activity 1: Togetherness Wreath

What you need:

- White paper or cardstock
- Washable paint - one or more colours
- Paint brush or sponge
- Disposable latex gloves for each participant (optional but avoids a lot of mess!)
- Construction paper
- Marker
- Glue

How to make it:

- Using a paint brush or sponge, paint the inside of each core member’s hand with one or more colours (use latex gloves and paint onto the glove for a mess-free craft!).
- Make an imprint of the hand on a piece of white paper.
- Repeat for the other hand.
- Let the paint dry and then cut out each of the hands (the cut-out does not need to be exact)
- In the centre of a piece of construction paper write out, “Hands Together, Friends Together”
- Paste the hand prints around the centre of the construction paper forming a circle.
- Write the names of each of the core members around the centre circle, as shown in the picture.
- Display the creation on a wall!





Together We Bring Unity to the Community, by Laura Manickaraj

“Foster a Vibrant Community” is the Core Value we reflect upon in this edition of

the Newsletter. This Core Value has six themes that include: Celebrate, Belonging, Welcome, Traditions, Rhythm and Togetherness. The focus of this reflection is on the theme of Togetherness: we enjoy spending time doing things together and communicating with one another to build togetherness.

Our International Identity and Mission Statement is full of ‘together’ words: sharing life, mutual relationships, journey together, need for one another, responds to changing needs, and working together. When I think of an image that reflects this I imagine a circle of people standing side by side, maybe holding hands, maybe not. The size and shape of the circle is not static-it moves and changes shape according to the people who come and go. How we understand what ‘together’ means will change as we allow ourselves to be influenced and shaped by the people with whom we share the circle.

Over 40 years ago, as a young

assistant, one of my earliest formations was about why we referred to one another as “assistants.” As I remember the story, Jean and those close to him were very intentional about the language they chose to describe their relationships with people with disabilities. They didn’t see themselves as ‘staff’ and people with disabilities as ‘client’ or ‘resident.’ They were conscious of the power differential between people and chose language that reflected equality and honoured the unique and sacred value of each person.

As equals we were invited to walk together with people with disabilities; some of my most profound life experiences have come from ‘walking with’ and ‘being together with’ my friends in L’Arche.

I remember living in the L’Arche community in Cleveland, Ohio and accompanying Gerald to church on Sunday. Gerald was a man of colour and a Baptist, I am a white woman, and at the time, I was an Anglican. Off we went to his church on Sunday morning -a storefront in the middle of the neighbourhood. He was among his church family and they were singing and

dancing and receiving the Holy Spirit and I was stiff and afraid and clearly a racial minority - I think a single minority.

My life was made richer that day, and in the days that followed, because I walked with Gerald and supported him to live his life in a way that was important to him. In that instance Gerald accompanied me, and because of that I experienced something new about myself and my understanding of God. I could not have experienced it on my own. I needed Gerald. Chances are I would not have joined the people in that storefront place of worship by myself. We did it together- Gerald and I.

We need each other to know what it means to be human and to build togetherness. I am guessing that by working toward togetherness and by embracing our diversity we are moving in the direction of a human society. A society where every human life makes an important contribution to the whole of humanity and we learn from one another what it means to be human. The circle of human diversity has room in it for all of us and is completed when we are all there, forming it in unity and together.

Tricia and Anna Togetherness Conversation - recorded by Lisa Sinclair

“I miss you spending time with me.”

“You haven’t asked me to spend time with you in a long time”.

“What are you doing tomorrow?”

“Something with you!”

“Well, that was easy!”



Tricia

Anna



Togetherness - Interview of Sharon and Tony by Vincent Then

How could we make the ways we communicate more inclusive for everyone?

Sharon: I like spending time together with my friends and family. We use sign language with Nonie and learn new signs to communicate with her. We try to include everyone in the conversation.

Tony: When we talk together, each person takes their turn.

Sharon: And we don't interrupt each other. Everyone can say what they want to say.

Tony: This makes people feel like they are being heard and respected.

How would you like us to spend our time together?

Sharon: I enjoy eating supper with the house.

Tony: I like going out for breakfast. When I visit my parents,

my dad sometimes takes me out for breakfast. Also, I enjoy going to church with my family and friends.

Sharon: I like going out for dinner and playing games at the house. I also really enjoy going to concerts. With Emmaus House we drive to Tim Hortons every weekend, it's a tradition in our house.

Tony: I like going for trips and stuff like that.

Why is eating together so important?

Tony and Sharon: We talk about our day and what happened at work. It's a good time for everyone to share.

Sharon: We can invite guests for supper!

Tony: It's easier if everyone helps to prepare supper and to clean up afterward.

Activity 2: Make Togetherness Bracelets

What you need:

- Fishing wire, string, or pipe cleaners
- Beads or foam cut-out (punch a hole using a hole-puncher so that a pipe cleaner can be weaved through)

How to make it:

- Thread the beads or foam cut-outs through the pipe cleaner or string
- Tie the bracelet
- Give the bracelet to someone in your house.



Together in Belfast, by Karen Stewart

Jenn Power, Atlantic Regional Leader and Silas Donham, Program leader at L'Arche Cape Breton met at L'Arche in 1996 as assistants together. They have been married for 17 years, have 4 children and one very busy house. They both have a passion for L'Arche, for rural communities and for people with disabilities.

In a very real way, L'Arche has helped them to experience togetherness as a couple, in ways that don't often include just being alone. In L'Arche all relationships have a communal context; alone time does not always happen. Jenn and Silas have learned and live, knowing that "mutual relationships are at their best when they are inclusive and not exclusive".

After a crazy amount of schedule juggling that would be a logistical

nightmare anywhere but L'Arche, Jenn and Silas went to Belfast together for the Federation Assembly this summer. They were most touched by the role of storytelling at Belfast. In L'Arche Cape Breton, and for that matter the East Coast, where Jenn and Silas live, storytelling is so much a part of their culture. It was amazing to have that resonate through Michael MacDonald's sharing. Michael is a co-producer of the "As I Am" web series of films. He told the assembly of how it's often the Core Members who have great stories to tell. He reminds us that it is, "stories, often about some little thing, but those little things are about the big things."

There are many ways that telling our stories of welcome, and our memories, can create a spirit of togetherness in our homes, programs and communities.



Thank you to Jenn and Silas for continuing to share their stories, and their togetherness, with us.

Services

Scriptures

John 13:34 - A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Matthew 18:20 - For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Psalms 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

Romans 12:4-5 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and

these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth." ~ Baha'u'llah

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." ~ Helen Keller

"God's dream is that you and I and all of us will realize that we are family, that we are made for togetherness, for goodness, and for compassion." ~ Desmond Tutu

"All people are a single nation." ~ Qu-ran

"At Christmas, I am always struck by how the spirit of togetherness lies also at the heart of the Christmas story. A young mother and a dutiful father with their baby were joined by shepherds and visitors from afar. They came with their gifts to worship the Christ child." ~ Queen Elizabeth II

"We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race." Kofi Annan
mitakuye oyasin (we are all related) ~ Lakota



Personal Growth (everyone including assistants, leaders, volunteers, alumni)

Reflection Questions

Who are the people I admire who make a real difference in building community? What is it they are doing?

How do I use my gifts to build community? Is anything holding me back?

Do I draw on the strength of community when I experience challenging times?

Is there an opportunity to "Foster a Vibrant Community" in other places I live, work and spend time beyond L'Arche?



Activity 3: 22 Days of Advent

What you need:

- Coloured paper or cardstock (purple and pink may be appropriate for the Advent Season or red and green for the Christmas Season)
- Scissors
- Markers
- A box, tin, a decorated Kleenex box, etc..
- Stickers or other decorations (optional)

How to make it:

- Cut out the cardstock into strips; the strips will be used to write on and can be decorated with stickers or markers.
- On each strip write an activity or a thought or a scripture passage.
- Fold all the strips and place in the box or tin.

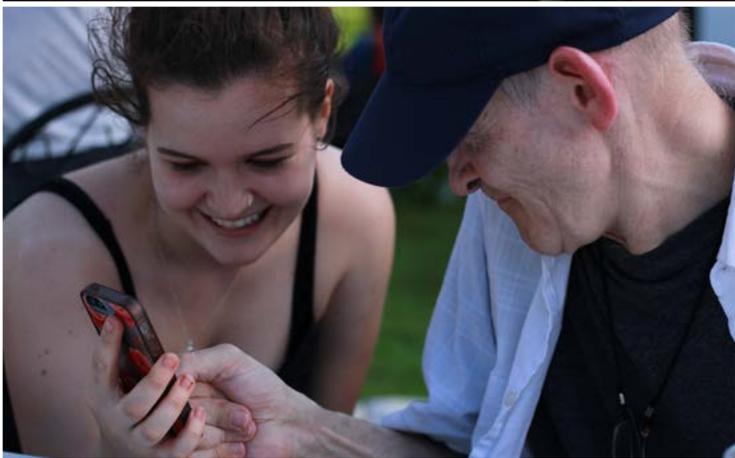
During each of the days of Advent, have one core member select a folded paper from the box.

Here are some examples of what can be written on the paper:

1. Drink Hot Chocolate Together
2. Share what you like most about 2 people in your home.
3. Do a chore for someone else.
4. Read the story of the Three Wise Men in Matthew 2:1-12
5. Read the story of the Birth of Jesus Foretold in Luke 1:26-38
6. Read the story of Joseph accepting Jesus as his Son in Matthew 1:18-25
7. Read the story about the birth of Jesus in Luke 2
8. Give a sincere compliment to someone in your house.
9. Tell someone they mean a lot to you.
10. Make a friendship bracelet for someone (from beads or cheerios)
11. Sing a few Christmas carols together
12. Say Thank You to someone in your home for what they did for you lately
13. Be kind to yourself today.
14. Make a special treat together.
15. Try not to complain today.
16. Tell everyone what makes you happy!
17. Make a meal or treat for another house.
18. Clean or tidy up a room together.
19. Have a pyjama day (or hours) together
20. Have a candy cane hunt in the house.
21. Make dinner together
22. Read a Christmas Story

Links to Modules on the Training Website

- [Great Mealtime Traditions](#)
- [Dinner Table Conversation Starters](#)
- [Know ME](#)
- [Celebrate ME](#)
- [Appreciate ME](#)



Foster
a Vibrant
Community



Welcome



Celebrate



Traditions



Togetherness



Rhythm



Belonging

We share
an extraordinary life
in community

