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GREATER
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Summer 2013

HOME *matters*

**BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH
AND LIFELONG HOMES WITH PEOPLE
WHO HAVE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

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Looking for an adventure in community living that will help you discover the depths of the human spirit? L'Arche accepts applications on a rolling basis for assistants for the Washington, D.C., and Arlington, Virginia, homes. Find out more and watch our video about being an assistant at www.larche-gwdc.org.

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Housemates James Schreiner and Hazel Pulliam explore Lourdes, France, together. Photo by Michele Bowe

On Tuesday mornings, members of L'Arche in Arlington meet for what we call "faith and sharing"—an occasion to describe how we are growing in our community and the joys and challenges of previous weeks. As we share in a spirit of trust, we experience vulnerability together.

When our community first welcomed me in July 2011, I faced much fear. Transitions have always been difficult for me, and transitioning within L'Arche was particularly challenging. New assistants must embrace a great deal of training, and it was intimidating to learn all the ways that we offer support to our core members. It often takes me a while to learn how to drive in unfamiliar areas, and I compared myself to other assistants who had also recently joined but were already familiar with Arlington and Washington, D.C., roads.

Most of all, I worried about cooking. In L'Arche, ten or more people are often present for dinner at our homes each night! As housemates prepared creative meals from scratch, I felt embarrassed that I didn't know the basics of cooking.

One of the most beautiful gifts of L'Arche is that we are all called to share our weaknesses in faith. In *Community and Growth*, L'Arche founder Jean Vanier writes, "Look at your own poverty, welcome it, cherish it, do not be afraid, share your death, because thus you will share your love and your life."

There have been times when I trembled while revealing experiences of my brokenness. As I confided in fellow members, my challenges remained, but they became lighter. Eva Hernandez and I cooked a favored chili recipe together. Bruce Weaver and I had a great time making pigs in a blanket. Everyone was patient as I learned how to drive in the area.

After two months or so, I began to feel more comfortable

**THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE.
BUT PERFECT LOVE DRIVES
OUT FEAR. —1 JOHN 4:18**

Finding Calm in Love

BY JAMES SCHREINER

in the role of assistant, but other fears persisted. As our Arlington households continued to meet for Tuesday faith and sharing, I confided additional struggles with worry and self-acceptance and often felt a miraculous sense of peace soon after our meetings.

In addition to challenges, I also had joyful moments in community life. Bruce and I often visited parks, Eva and I created artwork on the weekends, and it was wonderful to attend worship with fellow members. While expressing sentiments of gratitude and vulnerability, I realized that my fellow members valued me, just as I am.

In the summer of 2012, I was invited to move to the other L'Arche home in Arlington to serve as a leader. I felt very honored to have been chosen for the role, but soon after moving I experienced intense anxiety and grief. I sought some professional support and soon had to humbly admit that I could not fulfill all the responsibilities of the role. While continuing to serve as an assistant, I experienced all kinds of emotions. I was self-conscious about no longer serving as a leader, but it was a relief to seek some help.

One way I was able to cope with the transition was by going for walks with my housemate Hazel Pulliam. We both really appreciated the opportunity to visit a nearby park, and I felt so peaceful with her.

Being a member of L'Arche has been the best commitment of my life. Our community is so life-giving, and it is uplifting to realize that God has called each of us to grow together.

✦ Prior to coming to Greater Washington in 2011, James Schreiner was a member of the L'Arche community in Clinton, Iowa. He is known for his contemplative reflections, practical jokes, and affinity for hip-hop music.

Thirty Years of Letting Our Light Shine

BY JOHN COOK

This year is a special year for L'Arche here in Greater Washington. 2013 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the day Michael Schaff moved into our first home and fulfilled the dream of a small group of people who wanted L'Arche for Washington.

Over the years we have deepened our commitment, strengthened our leadership, and replicated our model. Today, we have grown to a vibrant community of four homes—two in Adams Morgan and two in Arlington—and sixteen core people.

Though we may seem small, we are not alone. We are part of an international federation of 137 L'Arche communities around the globe—eighteen of which are in the United States.

I REMAIN IN L'ARCHE BECAUSE WE PRACTICE WHAT WE BELIEVE: THAT EACH PERSON BRINGS LIGHT AND THAT EACH PERSON'S LIGHT IS NECESSARY TO CREATE A WORLD LIVING IN LOVE, A WORLD WHERE EVERY PERSON HAS ENOUGH AND WHERE EVERY PERSON HAS A PLACE OF HONOR.

Recently, Ellen Garcia passed. She was the beloved mom of L'Arche community member Linda Garcia. One evening during the weeks preceding her passing, Charles Clark and I were out for a walk. Charles asked, "Did you hear that Linda's mom is dying?" "Yes," I replied. After a few moments of silence, Charles said, "Well, she"—meaning Linda's mom, Ellen—"she won't have to worry. We'll take care of Linda."

We'll take care of Linda. Tears came to my eyes. Yes, Charles, we will take care of Linda.

When I entered the church on the day of Ellen's funeral service, I was amazed to realize that about half of the people there were from L'Arche. I had expected to see community members who knew Ellen well, but there were others present who didn't know her at all. Then I remembered what Charles had said: "We'll take care of her." And there we were, taking care of Linda in the most important way that we could in that moment—by being with her. Our light was shining.

A few weeks after the funeral, we held our annual variety show, where community members and friends sing, dance, perform magic tricks, and otherwise entertain. L'Arche community member Garrick Jordan and two other friends of Linda's sang "Edelweiss" in honor of Linda's mom. As they began, L'Arche community member Megan Hrdlicka encouraged Linda to join them singing on stage, and Linda did. It was a moment of pure joy for Linda, and for us who watched. Charles was right, and it was happening again. We were taking care of Linda, and her light was shining.

L'Arche succeeds to the extent that it does in keeping the kind of promise that Charles voiced, "We'll take care of Linda," only because of a huge number of people—assistants, board members, volunteers, donors, the Greater Washington community like you—support L'Arche's vision and mission. It's our light that's shining.

So, with thirty fruitful years behind us, what's next for L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C.?

I am happy to announce three ways in which our community will grow. One is that we will open new homes in Greater Washington. We have heard from many of you who long to see L'Arche grow. Even more importantly, our community members who have intellectual disabilities have urged us to create new homes where more people can experience the love and light of L'Arche. We've already begun connecting with

government officials and others in D.C., Virginia, and Maryland as we explore where to expand next.

Also, L'Arche transforms human services by revealing each human as a bearer of gifts that are necessary for a better world. We have begun creating a curriculum for revealing the human through human services, with love as the motive, mutuality as the method, and integration as the aim. I believe the curriculum will be usable in any long-term care setting, from group homes to prisons. Some of you may be able to help us develop it, and, once it's ready, we'll need your help in persuading organizations to try it.

Those of you who've spent time in our homes know that something miraculous happens there. We believe it can happen elsewhere, so we are developing a curriculum for creating community centered on people who are marginalized and guided by people who are left behind. Here, the curriculum will focus on three "re's": re-rooting in prayer and trust, re-centering the common life in the lives of people who tend to be left out and left behind, and re-uniting through a covenant of love. I believe it will be usable by any faith-based group, from families to organized religious groups. When it's ready, perhaps some of you will want to try it in your family or faith community.

There are three main challenges to our growth: enough people who lack intellectual disabilities and who have made a promise to stay the course; enough able leaders; and enough money. We ask you to join us in meeting the challenges ahead by considering what promise you might make.

As we continue this thrilling journey into our thirty-first year as a people of promise and light, we ask for your prayers, we treasure your promises, and we look forward to more experiences of the light we share. Together we can create a world where parents like Ellen Garcia can rest in peace because they know there will be people who love their children and treasure the light they bring.

✦ John Cook is executive director of L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C. He gave this talk at the annual Heart of L'Arche Breakfast at the Mayflower Hotel on April 9, 2013.



John Cook lead the L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C., community in expanding into Virginia and looks forward to new growth in the future. Photo by Brian A. Taylor Photography

Voting with Confidence

BY MARI ANDREW



The line snaked out the door and spilled onto the street as chilly voters waited to cast their ballots in the District of Columbia. L'Arche members Eileen Schofield and Megan Herron waited, too, anticipating the moment they would be able to scroll through the list of candidates and questions to make their selections.

While some people in the line grumbled, Eileen was too happy to let the cold weather or the wait bother her. "I was feeling great," she said.

"On our way out of our polling place we started singing patriotic songs—loudly—for other voters in line," Megan said. They let their voices be heard all the way up the street: "God Bless America," "This Land Is Your Land," and "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Advocating for the voting rights of a person with a disability doesn't just mean taking him or her to the polls. It also entails researching the candidates before the big day.

Charles Clark, who votes in Arlington, said he read about the issues and then discussed them with his housemates. Charles was looking for a candidate who was devoted and who would help people find employment, work with other countries, give aid during disasters, and live up to his word. "I was very sure about my opinions. I knew exactly how I was going to vote."

When voting for the nation's leader Eileen's top priorities included caring for the poor. "It would be good if people weren't living on the streets," she said. "That's something I feel strongly about."

Until recently, polling places were often inaccessible for people with disabilities. Many precincts were in church basements, in upstairs social halls, or in public buildings without elevators or where the doors were too small for a wheelchair to fit. The Help America Vote Act of 2002 mandated that all polling places be accessible and have an accessible private voting booth.

If people with disabilities were encouraged to vote at the rate of those without disabilities, there would be about ten million more votes counted in each presidential election. Every vote cast by a person with a disability will impact the community's political muscle. Advocacy groups are working hard to make voting easier for people with disabilities—improving the machines to include visuals, simple language, and oral instructions. These changes would not only make the voting process less challenging but also send the crucial message to people with disabilities that they are welcome to speak in the political arena and make choices that will affect them.

"It made me feel really happy to vote," Eileen said. "I made a difference." She proudly wore her I Voted sticker on her coat for the rest of the afternoon, announcing to coworkers and passersby that she'd done her civic duty that day.

Naturally, not everyone in the L'Arche community and across the country has the same political views, but Eileen believes everyone should vote. "If you don't vote, how are you going to know what's happening in the world and in D.C.?" she asked.

Charles agrees with her sentiment. Voting makes people feel important and good about themselves, and he's "glad that all people can vote now—men, women, and everybody."

✚ Mari Andrew joined the L'Arche community in April 2012. She serves as development associate and volunteer coordinator.

The Gift of L'Arche

BY TIM SHRIVER

Many of us have never lived at L'Arche and have never given a full life commitment to the community, but nevertheless we have watched and observed and tried in some way to capture these lessons: how to live in a community, how to call people by their names and not by their labels, how to welcome people as being valuable and not just as being productive, how to celebrate gifts and not judge weaknesses. As Jean Vanier said, we ought to remember "we are never imprisoned by our weaknesses when we are in the hands of God."

I decided about a year ago that I would try to have a part-time life at L'Arche. I approached John and others and asked if I could rent a room in the basement to write a book. They allowed me the use of an empty room, and Eric, Linda, Fritz, and Hazel invited me to come into their home, where they welcomed me.

I moved in on a Saturday, bringing an SUV full of books, a bookshelf, and a desk. I unloaded it all and put it in the basement room, and I had my little fan turned on and everything. I was down there for a few hours getting all situated. When I came up out of the basement for dinner with the household, Linda looked at me and said, "Have you finished the book yet?"

The answer, Linda, is no. I have not, even now, a year later. I have not finished my book yet. But I share that story because I think what Linda was saying to me was "Are you focusing on your story?"

WE EACH HAVE A STORY, SOME KIND OF BOOK WE'RE EACH HOPING TO WRITE, EACH HOPING TO CRAFT. ONE OF THE GREAT GIFTS OF L'ARCHE AND THE WAY PEOPLE LIVE THERE IS THAT ON SOME LEVEL WE ARE REMINDED THAT WE HAVE WORK TO DO THAT IS VALUABLE AND IMPORTANT ARE ENCOURAGED TO FOCUS ON IT AND NOT BE TOO DISTRACTED BY ALL THE OTHER NOISE, THE PRESSURES, THE WAYS THE WORLD AND LIFE CAN KEEP US FROM DOING WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT.

So I thank Linda for her question. I promise you, I will finish my book, and when I do it will be in great part due to the community of L'Arche in Washington and communities around the world.

L'Arche has for far too long been seen by others as a place for people with intellectual differences—I like to say dif-abilities—and their companions or friends. I think L'Arche is a gift to this city, to the country, and even to the world, and certainly to our faith.

I hope that part of what we think about today is how each of us can help share that gift so that the spirit of L'Arche can become a bigger part of each of us and through us a bigger part of the communities in which we live.

✚ Tim Shriver is Chairman and CEO of Special Olympics and a long-time friend of L'Arche. He delivered this talk at the Heart of L'Arche breakfast at the Mayflower Hotel on April 9, 2013.

Founding Story of L'Arche, in Rhyme

BY DOTTIE BOCKSTIEGEL

In 1977 John Vanier came into town.
He spoke so eloquently that some people sat right down
And said that we must have L'Arche here in Washington D.C.
And so they started meeting just to see how things could be.

At first they thought of Georgetown as a place where we might start,
And Georgetown University could have a central part.
This didn't seem to work out, so things took a different turn,
And for a L'Arche director this group soon began to yearn.

When Dennis Calderone arrived, we scooped him up quite fast,
And everyone was certain that we had someone at last.
But then his marriage plans kept his directorship on hold,
And Kathy Brunner came along to help things to unfold.

The Church of the Savior had a house they thought that
they could share,
So we all cleaned and painted it in hours we could spare.
A board was formed according to a plan that L'Arche had stated.
It started raising money and got us incorporated.

Dolores, Dennis, Kathy, our assistants come on board,
And into finding core members our efforts soon were poured.
And Michael Schaff became our first to come for respite care,
But we decided he was ours. He had that special flair.

Then Glen and Gene, with eagerness, from Forest Haven came.
There was no doubt for all of us—this was their home to claim.
Nathaniel came to be with us as our lifestyle he tried.
We came to terms with pain and grief when in a year he died.

And Mo Higgs came the next year just to stay a little while.
But we could never let him go; we really like his smile.
When Kathy left it was discerned that Dennis now would be
The one who would direct and lead our young community.

Before long it was time to try to start another home.
We picked out Euclid Street so we would not have far to roam.
The rules for starting houses were incredible to see,
Especially since the agencies themselves could not agree.

Though renovating, decorating left us rather beat,
We opened late in eighty-eight our home on Euclid Street.
Then Glen and Gene and Dottie, Fred, and Wendy all moved in
And formed a bond together so a new home could begin.

John Schofield joined Ontario, and later on came Ray.
At Euclid, Melanie and then Eileen came here to stay.
When Ray moved on, Elizabeth came knocking at our door.
With zest and vim she moved right in; we could not ask for more.

A few core members came and went according to their plan.
They were Barbara, Laura, Deborah, Charles, Willie, and Diane.
Glen Houser has moved also now to follow his own dream;
Elizabeth has died, but we still feel her special gleam.

Ontario House expanded, and we moved out for a while.
When we returned our houses had more roominess and style.
Then new core people—Sonny, Walton, Deborah, Andrew—came.
With each one adding something, life is never quite the same.

To add to L'Arche beyond D.C. became another dream.
And starting homes in Arlington, Virginia, was our scheme.
So after lots of work and prayer and learning this new game,
Our new core people—Hazel, Fritz, Eduardo, Linda—came.

Now Highland House has settled down and in its life has grown.
Eduardo left and Eric came and new seeds have been sown.
But still they needed one more house to build community,
And so they started making plans to see where it would be.

They picked a handy place that was just right around the block
And built a very lovely home for adding to our flock.
On 6th Street in two thousand ten our new home did begin,
And finally Eva, Charles, Bruce, and Francene all moved in.

A host of good assistants have arrived and gone or stayed.
And we're so grateful for the many roles that they have played.
To live together day-by-day and letting lives entwine
Has been at times exhausting, but most folks have liked it fine.

For several years John Cook's directorship has kept us humming,
And we appreciate the volunteers that keep on coming.
We thank our board, who through the years has helped us all so much
And given us so many gifts, each with their special touch.

Our days and years have gone quite fast, sometimes in quite a tizzy.
So many things have happened that it almost makes us dizzy.
Birthdays and anniversaries we always celebrate,
And also holidays or any special kind of date.

We've valued every Prayer Night and community event
And in gatherings of the region all the good times that we've spent,
The sessions at the U of M, the buddies that we met,
And wonderful art classes that we never could forget.

To have friends over and to visit others has been fun,
And all the things we like to do have kept us on the run.
We've had a lot of meetings—five or six most every week—
And we've worked hard to bring about the values that we seek.

We've had hard times with illness and with things that went awry,
And when a person leaves us something in us seems to die.
We're not so fond of paperwork or courses we must take
Or various inspections that our cities like to make.

But when we look at where we've been and what has happened to us,
We hope that in our floundering sometimes God is shining through us.
And certainly we know that it is worthwhile to keep going,
And with your love and help we will be able to keep growing.

✚ Dottie Bockstiegel is a founding member of L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C.
She continues to play an active role in community life and serves as
membership coordinator.



Photo by
Brian A. Taylor Photography



Hostess with the most-ess Dorothy Copps brandishes a smile and a knife while she, Mari Andrew, and Karen MacDonald prepare for a tea party.
Photo by Bethany Keener

Dorothy Copps to Retire; Bob Jacobs Takes New Leadership

BY BETH QUILL AND BETHANY KEENER

After nearly fifteen years of service to L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C., Dorothy Copps plans to retire this year.

Dorothy first came to L'Arche as a volunteer. She and her husband, Tom, moved to D.C. from Tucson, Ariz., to live in a discipleship community. In Tucson, Tom had been a preacher, while Dorothy had worked as a teacher and, later, with people with disabilities. After serving as an assistant at L'Arche, she took on the role of home-life leader and then stepped into her current position as community leader for the Ontario and Euclid homes.

While Dorothy has served the L'Arche community, she emphasizes the richness of relationships L'Arche has given back to her. Two highlights of her time with L'Arche were accompanying Gene Sampson on an Elvis tribute Caribbean cruise and organizing a get-together of six L'Arche communities in the eastern region.

This summer Dorothy will pass the torch to Bob Jacobs, who currently serves as home-life leader at Euclid house. She'll remain with L'Arche until December, sharing time with core people and working on special projects. Then she and Tom will relocate to the Southwest to enjoy the climate and be closer to two of their three adult children.

Bob came to L'Arche in 2007, thinking he'd take a yearlong break from his work in the corporate world. That break became a new life, and in accepting the community leader role in L'Arche this spring Bob has committed to the community for four more years.

In addition to his steadfast friendship with the core members of Euclid house, Bob has given many hours to L'Arche's spiritual-life committee and is one half of the renowned emcee duo for Solidary Night, an annual variety show that raises funds for L'Arche's sister communities.

✿ Meet Bob Jacobs in L'Arche's newest video, *Called to Love*, at <http://www.larche-gwdc.org/about-us/called-to-love-video>.

L'Arche Celebrates Thirty Years in Greater Washington, D.C.



L'Arche founder Jean Vanier shares a hug with Eileen Schofield during his 2002 visit.
Photographer unknown



L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C., founding members (L–R, from top) Mo Higgs, Glenn Houser, Gene Sampson, and Michael Schaff. Mo and Michael still live in L'Arche. Glenn lives in his own apartment in D.C.; Gene passed away in 2011. Photographer unknown



Community Notes & Photos

On March 13 and 14, **Sarah Clemmer** and **Fritz Schloss** (Highland) went to Capitol Hill to urge Virginia representatives to sponsor the ABLE (A Better Life Experience) Act. If passed, this act would enable people who have disabilities and their families to save for the future without losing benefits they receive from Medicaid and other government sources. Currently, people receiving these services have a cap to their bank accounts. Sarah and Fritz joined 220 others from around the country to make their voices heard through the annual Buddy Walk on Washington, sponsored by the National Down Syndrome Society. *Photo by Sarah Clemmer*

Mo Higgs (Euclid) reeled in some fun on an expedition with friends **Megan Herron** (Euclid home-life leader), **Fritz Schloss** (Highland), and L'Arche GWDC alumni **Dick** and **Kristen Dobbryn** (not pictured). *Photo by Dick Dobbryn*

Andrew Commisso (Euclid) showed his devotion to monsters, grouches, and bigus canarius during the Million Puppet March on Washington in support of PBS. *Photo by Michelle Wirth*

James Schreiner and **Hazel Pulliam** traveled to Lourdes, France, with the Order of Malta Federal Association, U.S.A., May 1–8, 2013. As pilgrims, they visited the baths, joined candlelit processions, attended worship services, and toured the town by train. At the conclusion of the Lourdes Pilgrimage, it is a tradition for pilgrims to participate in a talent show. Hazel and James sang “This Little Light of Mine” to express gratitude for the wonderful experience. *Photo by Michele Bowe*

Toni Modugno, **Fritz Schloss** (Highland), **Eva-Elizabeth Chisholm**, **Bruce Weaver**, and **Sara Feser** (6th Street) made sure to stop along the shore of the Great Lake while celebrating L'Arche Erie's fortieth anniversary. *Photo by Eva-Elizabeth Chisholm*

“I love pink roses,” **Eva Hernandez** coos, plucking one from a bush as she and **Salimah Bey** walk home to 6th Street. *Photo by Bethany Keener*

Brothers **Walton** and **Johnny Schofield** (Ontario) don't care if they ever come back from the National's Park. *Photo by Sarah Ruszkowski*

Steve Keener (COO/general counsel), Va. Del. **Patrick Hope**, and **Charles Clark** (6th Street) connect at the awards program and proclamation ceremony for the Arlington County Including People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Month. *Photo by Bethany Keener*

Kara Downey, **Deb Green**, and **Sarah Ruszkowski** (Ontario) celebrate Valentine's Day in “matchy-match” pajamas. *Photo by Sarah Ruszkowski*

Francene Short (center) channels her inner Mrs. Claus while visiting the National Christmas Tree with elves **Eva-Elizabeth Chisholm** and **Sarah Feser** (6th St). *Photo by Paul Popernack*

Linda Garcia and **Garrick Jordan** (Highland) honor the memory of Linda's mother, Ellen, by singing “Edelweiss” at L'Arche's annual variety show. *Photo by Dick Dobbryn*

Abigail Dobbryn discovers **Eileen Schofield** (Ontario) has great taste in jewelry. *Photo by Dick Dobbryn*

Singer-songwriter **Calvin “Sonny” Clarke** and sidekick **EunSung Kim** (Euclid) wow the Solidarity Night crowd with Sonny's original tune, “Happy Birthday, Baby.” *Photo by Dick Dobbryn*

Eric Arntson (Highland) blesses housemate **Karen MacDonald** as she prepares to return to her native England. *Photo by John Cook*

Judge Michael Schaff (Ontario) settles the case of the missing hamburger in a Solidarity Night sketch. *Photo by Dick Dobbryn*

BIRTHS

Caitlin (recruitment coordinator) and **Luke Smith** (Virginia community leader) welcomed twins, **Joseph Brendan** and **Patrick Byron**, on September 12, 2012.

Oliver Eric was born to **Andre** and **Melissa Javier-Barry** (former recruitment coordinator) on June 2, 2013. He joins older siblings **Aaron** (6) and **Elise** (2 1/2).

Congratulations to everyone!



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