

L'Arche: Celebrating the gifts of all people.

In 1963, philosopher and spiritual leader Jean Vanier visited a friend who was working as a chaplain at small French institution for men with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In this and other larger institutions, Vanier witnessed a deep hunger for friendship among the men and women residing there, shut away from society.

Vanier was so moved by these experiences that, in 1964, he bought a house in a small village and invited two men from institutions to live with him. The house was named L'Arche, which means “the ark” in French and embodies a place of belonging and hope, grounded in faith and trust in God.

Since then, L'Arche has grown into an international movement. With more than 135 communities in 36 countries, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and those without disabilities live and work together. These remarkable communities are signs of hope where:

- People are welcomed, celebrated, and encouraged to grow as human beings;
- People are transformed through mutual friendship with others; and
- Justice, compassion and faith are practiced in the smallest acts of daily living.



Relationship.
Transformation.
Sign.



Relationship.

Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of every L'Arche community. The call to welcome God's love for ourselves and to joyfully share it with others inspires everything we do.

In L'Arche, vulnerability and imperfection are not viewed as obstacles, but rather catalysts to strong, nurturing relationships. L'Arche communities reflect the reality that persons with disabilities often possess inherent qualities of welcome, wonderment, spirituality, and friendship.

An extraordinary concept in our fast-paced and consumer-driven society, L'Arche believes that these qualities can make people with a disability our true teachers about what is most important in life: to love and to be loved.

THE MISSION OF L'ARCHE IS:

- To make known the gifts of people with developmental disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships;
- To foster community that is inspired by the core values in our founding story and responds to the changing needs of our members; and
- To engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.

Sign.

Living essential values of the heart.

L'Arche first came to the United States in 1972 with the opening of a L'Arche home in Erie, Pennsylvania. As part of the International Federation of L'Arche Communities, L'Arche USA has now grown to 16 communities across the country, with others in development. In each of these communities, made up of family-like homes and work or day programs, core members—people with intellectual and developmental disabilities—live side-by-side with volunteer assistants, enjoying a life that is both simple and transforming.

“When we first visited a L'Arche community, we went with the idea that we might do something for L'Arche. What we discovered was that L'Arche did something for us. In one afternoon we learned more about love, acceptance, inclusiveness, reciprocity, and vulnerability than we had ever learned in the ‘real world.’”

—DARCY WEIR, FRIEND AND VOLUNTEER



OUR COMMUNITIES:

L'Arche Clinton, The Arch (IA)
L'Arche Blue Ridge Mountains (Lynchburg, VA)
L'Arche Chicago (IL)
L'Arche Cleveland (OH)
L'Arche Erie (PA)
L'Arche Greater Washington (DC)
L'Arche Harbor House (Jacksonville, FL)
L'Arche Heartland (Overland Park, KS)
L'Arche Irenicon (Haverhill, MA)
L'Arche Mobile (AL)
L'Arche Nehalem (Portland, OR)
L'Arche Noah Sealth (Seattle, WA)
L'Arche Spokane (WA)
L'Arche Syracuse (NY)
L'Arche Tahoma Hope (Tacoma, WA)
L'Arche Wavecrest (Orange, CA)



“Community is not built upon heroic actions, but rather upon the love shown in the little things of daily life.”

—JEAN VANIER,
FOUNDER OF L'ARCHE

Relationship.
Transformation.
Sign.

Bridging the distance.

L'Arche communities recognize the beautiful diversity of cultures and religions within our world. But we're also acutely aware of the vast disparity in access to material resources.

We are thus called to promote understanding and interdependence among the

countries and communities of L'Arche. We've launched programs to encourage greater solidarity and friendship between the communities of L'Arche in the Americas. Through personal visits, assistant exchanges, meetings, prayer, and financial support, L'Arche communities in North America and in Latin America and the Caribbean are growing in mutual understanding and relationship. We also seek to build relationships with other organizations that work to promote justice and unity in our world.



Share our spirit of welcome, unity, and simplicity.

Do you have an interest in living and working with people with disabilities? Do you have a desire to get to know yourself better? Or do you want to contribute to nurturing new signs of hope in our world?

If so, opportunities abound at L'Arche USA for you to help us build our growing network of communities across the U.S., extending our values and vision along the way. Become an assistant. Volunteer in a local L'Arche community. Make a tax-deductible financial contribution to L'Arche USA or to a local community. However you are involved, you can make a difference and form new, life-transforming friendships.

For more information on how you can share in the mission of L'Arche, visit www.larcheusa.org.

“I believe that what we do here and how we live together matter, and not just to us, but to everyone who is desperately searching for a place to belong, a place to have a home and a family and a community.”

—RACHEL KNOKE, ASSISTANT



Building communities of faith and friendship with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities



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