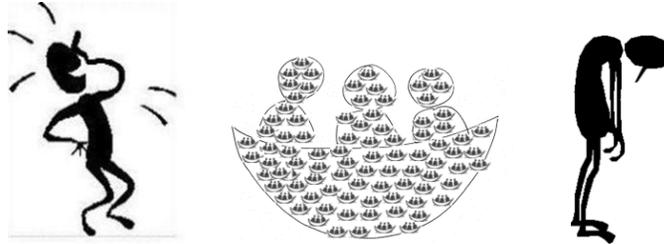


## L'ARCHE ERIE 2020-2025 | ACCESSIBLE MANDATE

L'Arche Erie has had happy and hard times since we wrote the last mandate 2 years ago.



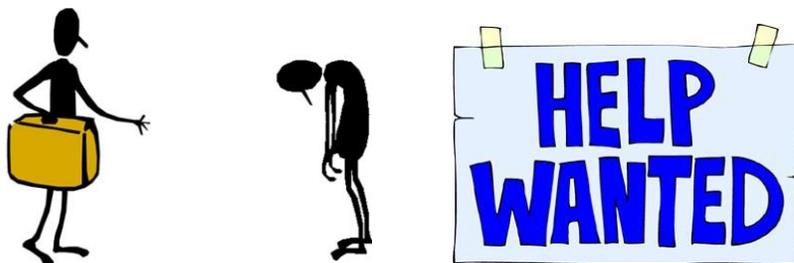
In the mandate, we were called to remember our mission; develop good leaders; connect with the broader Erie community; grow; and prepare for Vicki leaving the role of Community Leader.



As part of this work, we offered formations and created a group to draft a new mandate and look for a new community leader.



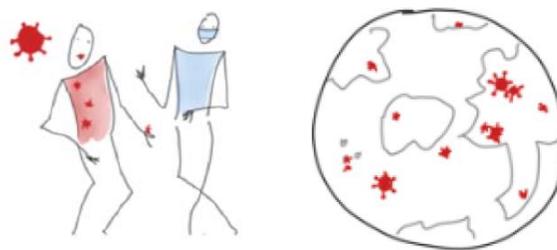
Some things we didn't expect made our work difficult. It was hard to find enough assistants to share time. Some friends retired or left the community.



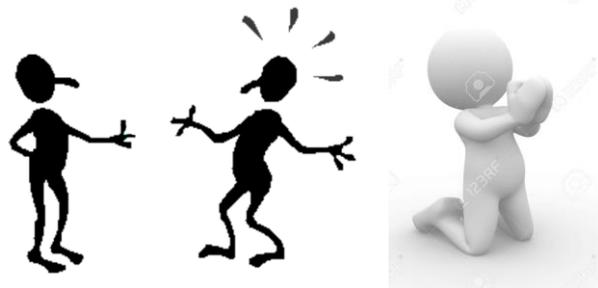
We began to support each other as we learned about Jean Vanier's lies and abuse.



Today, we are working to keep our community safe from the virus, which is affecting the world.



In good times and bad, we support one another and trust in God.



L'Arche inspires us to celebrate our gifts as individuals and as a community.



It can be hard to live together. Each of us is unique. We see things differently and act differently. We want to find more ways to listen and accept each other as we are.



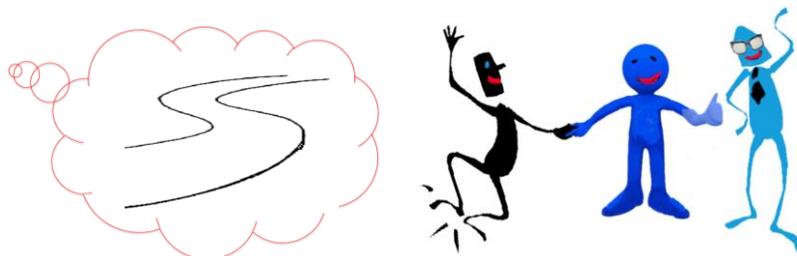
Vicki has been our Community Leader for 15 years! And soon we will welcome a new Community Leader.



We want to make sure people feel safe, heard, and supported as things change.



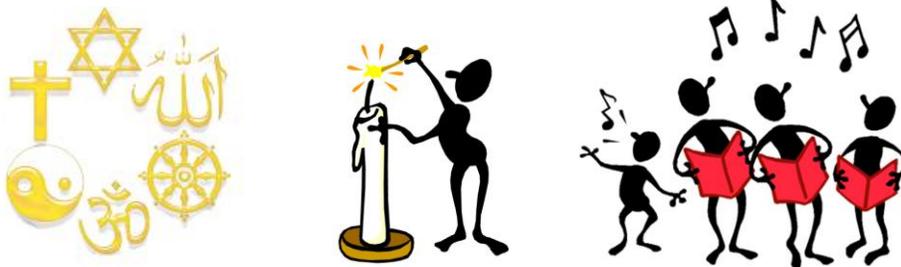
We want to work together to make our dreams for the community real.



In the next five years we will:

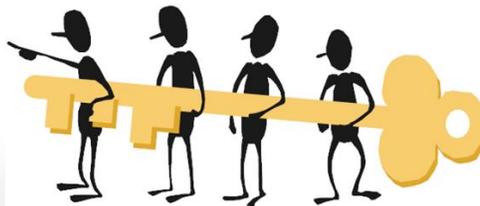
**Spirituality:** Keep talking, learning about, and being open to what feeds our spirits

- make space for prayer / pause / silence
- reflect personally and help each other grow spiritually
- focus on the spirituality of L'Arche, where we celebrate every person, accept differences, and remember the good in all of us
- keep worshipping and praying in the ways we love and find new ways to worship and pray in ways that make everyone feel included



**Service:** Support each other in doing our best to care for one another

- be more open, honest, and united
- celebrate how important assistants are for our communities
- help assistants understand how to support core members well
- help current, new, and future leaders grow
- help core members speak up for themselves and what they want in their lives
- remember that each of us is responsible for our community



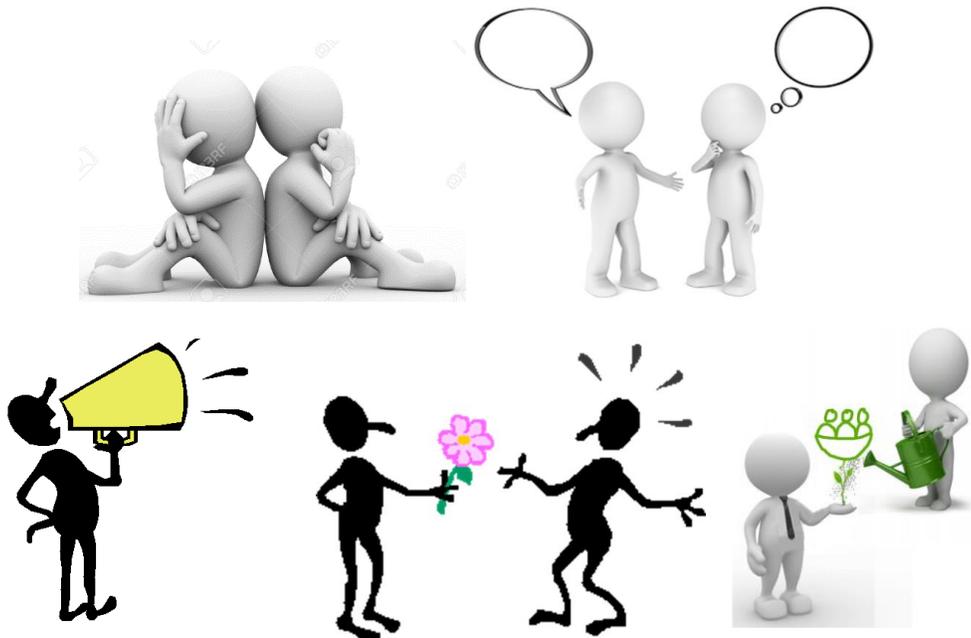
**Mutual Relationship:** Listen to each other and respect each other

- understand what keeps us from connecting and make improvements; build trust between each other
- make sure everyone feels seen, heard, and cared for
- continue formations about L'Arche
- live the new membership definition



**Outreach:** Understand why and how we want to connect with people outside of our community

- together, talk more about Jean Vanier's lies and abuse and understand there is joy and pain in our shared story
- revisit how we talk about who we are as L'Arche and what we do
- share our gifts in support of this work
- connect and work with like-minded / like-hearted organizations



## L'ARCHE ERIE 2020-2025 MANDATE

JUNE 2020

As members of the L'Arche Erie community, we have lived through many joys and struggles since the last mandate was written two years ago. In the 2018-2020 mandate, we were called to: renew our commitment to the mission and identity of L'Arche; develop good leaders; engage with culture and society; support the growth of our community; and prepare for the transition of our Community Leader. We made progress towards the priorities outlined in our goals, including a renewed focus on member formation through the work of our Formation & Training Leader and the creation of a Discernment Team in collaboration with our Regional Leader.

Our work towards the mandate goals was affected by a number of unforeseen challenges. We struggled to find assistants to join L'Arche, a difficult crisis faced by communities across the country. We said goodbye to friends who started new journeys outside of L'Arche. We began and continue to process the inquiry and findings about Jean Vanier's deceit and abuse. And today, we are working to keep our members safe from the spread of COVID-19, a pandemic affecting people in all corners of the world.

In good times and bad, we are grounded by our relationships with one another and by our trust in God. The spirit of L'Arche inspires us to name and share our individual and collective gifts, and to work through the difficulties of living our lives together in community. In this we feel the tension between our different ways of seeing and being in the world and want to find ways to engage those differences and embrace them more fully.

Soon we will say goodbye to Vicki – who has led our L'Arche Erie community well for 15 years – and prepare to welcome a new Community Leader. In this transition, we want to help each person in L'Arche Erie to feel safe, heard, and supported. We also want to fulfill our collective dream for the next five years -- remaining rooted in our core values and open to the new ways we might imagine living them.

We've organized the 2020-2025 mandate goals through the structure of the four elements of a L'Arche community with the following calls to action:

- **Spirituality:** Continue the conversation about our collective spirituality and remain open and responsive to the needs of our members
- **Service:** Create individual and communal supports to ensure we do our best to care for one another
- **Mutual Relationship:** Foster a culture of deep listening and respect at all levels
- **Outreach:** Clarify the scope, purpose, and goals of our efforts

Together, the L'Arche Erie community will work to meet the following goals:

**Spirituality:** Continue the conversation about our collective spirituality and remain open and responsive to the needs of our members

- make regular space in community for prayer / pause / silence
- encourage and support community members in personal reflection and spiritual growth
- renew our understanding of spirituality in a broad sense **and** in the spirituality of L'Arche, which calls us to celebrate the unique value of each person; accept differences; and trust in and embrace the goodness of our common humanity
- maintain community traditions that hold meaning while seeking and incorporating practices and rhythms that are inclusive and nourishing for all members

**Service:** Create individual and communal supports to ensure we do our best to care for one another

- improve policies and processes to be more transparent, collaborative, and cohesive
- affirm the importance of the assistant role in the mission of L'Arche
- clarify, train, and provide ongoing support to assistants in the essential aspects of supporting core members
- develop and provide ongoing support to current, new, and emerging leaders
- empower core members to have meaningful engagement and self-direction in their lives
- foster a sense of shared responsibility for community **and** individual ownership of role / responsibilities

**Mutual Relationship:** Foster a culture of deep listening and respect at all levels

- explore and address barriers to connection; create opportunities to build and grow trust
- ensure spaces where members can be seen and heard, as well as supported
- continue formation in the core values of L'Arche and what it means to live in community
- discern how to honor and live the renewed definition of membership

**Outreach:** Clarify the scope, purpose, and goals of our efforts

- in dialogue with the Federation: process the results of the inquiry into Jean Vanier and the founding of L'Arche; discern how to integrate the findings into our shared story
- develop messaging and approach that is in harmony with the identity of L'Arche
- invite the sharing of community members' unique gifts / talents / capacities to support outreach
- connect and co-operate with like-minded / like-hearted organizations

## MANDATE GLOSSARY

- **Assistant:** individuals without intellectual disabilities who share daily life with core members. Assistants typically provide professional services, but in some cases the term “assistant” also includes people in supportive roles. Assistants may live in or out of a community home.
- **Belonging:** recognizing one as / being accepted as part of a group; knowing one has a place; a sense of being at home; in L’Arche, belonging grows through joyful hospitality, embrace of difference, and service to one another
- **Collaboration:** two or more people working together towards shared goals
- **Community traditions:** e.g. the celebration of members’ birthdays and anniversaries of coming to L’Arche; sharing meals together around a common table; reflecting / praying together; accompaniment of core members who are dying and memory sharing at funerals; Foot Washing; community gatherings
- **Core member:** individuals with disabilities who form the heart of a community. The word “core” is derived from the word “heart” in both French (Coeur) and Latin (cor). This is a term of respect that indicates the person’s centrality and place of honor within the community.
- **Core Values:** the beliefs that are central to L’Arche and are important in the ways we live and work together in community; core values help direct our focus and determine our priorities. Examples of L’Arche core values: welcome; mutual respect; celebration; inclusion.
- **Discernment:** A process used to develop understanding, perceive direction, and make decisions, in this context, related to the life of the community, its members, and its leaders. Discernment can happen at an individual or communal level. This practice is used widely in L’Arche as we believe decisions made through discernment are made prayerfully, thoughtfully, and inclusively.
- **Discernment Team:** A team of people that forms towards the end of a mandate term to listen deeply to the community in order to develop a new mandate, which is then vetted and approved by the community’s members. The discernment team is also responsible to name the new Community Leader, who will lead the community in the new mandate. The team relies on prayer, careful listening, wise questions, honest dialogue, and a variety of in-person consultations and online surveys in its work.
- **“Essential aspects” [of supporting core members]:** responsibilities of the assistant role that are foundational to the accompaniment of core members. The areas of relationship, direct care, and core member empowerment hold these essential aspects.
- **Federation or International Federation:** Every L’Arche community in the world is part of the International Federation. The role of L’Arche International is to unify the L’Arche communities throughout the world; it supports communities administratively, legally, and financially, and it helps them live out the mission of L’Arche.
  - Each community in the US is a member of L’Arche USA ([larcheusa.org](http://larcheusa.org)), which is a member of L’Arche International ([larche.org](http://larche.org)).
- **“Four elements of a L’Arche community”:** In its 2017 document “What is a L’Arche community?” L’Arche International identified spirituality, service, mutual relationship, and outreach as the four dimensions of a L’Arche community. L’Arche International returned to the founding spirit of L’Arche and its early stages of development to determine what specifically defines a L’Arche community.
  - Founding value → essential element
    - compassion and generosity → spirituality
    - competence → service
    - communion → mutual relationship
    - outward fruitfulness → outreach

- **Formation:** An ongoing process wherein one first learns about the philosophy and mission of L'Arche with subsequent deepening. Formation in L'Arche can take many shapes and usually involves:
  - learning about or grounding in the identity, call, or values of L'Arche;
  - reflecting on and sharing about one's own experiences in the light of that learning;
  - considering how one might integrate the learning more fully into daily life in L'Arche.
- **Identity [Statement] of L'Arche:** We are people, with and without developmental disabilities, sharing life in communities belonging to an International Federation. Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together. We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognize our need of one another.
- **Inquiry:** the independent investigation into Jean Vanier and the founding of L'Arche. L'Arche International published the findings of this investigation in February 2020. "The inquiry received credible and consistent testimonies from six adult women without disabilities, covering the period from 1970 to 2005. The women each report that Jean Vanier initiated sexual relations with them, usually in the context of spiritual accompaniment." *Full findings of the independent inquiry can be found at [larche.org](http://larche.org).*
- **Mandate:** a document that outlines the goals of a L'Arche community for the next five years and provides guidance towards growth. All levels of the community take part in crafting a mandate – the leadership, board, assistants, core members and friends of community. All likewise take part in helping meet the goals outlined within it.
  - A mandate summarizes the key issues and opportunities to be addressed in the next three to five years.
  - The work of implementing the mandate is separate from the daily administrative tasks within the community. The community often uses strategic plans to identify tasks, teams, and timeframes needed to accomplish the mandate's goals.
  - Mandates are drawn up at the community, national, and international levels. Community, National, and International Leaders are discerned by their gifts that serve a particular mandate with the expectation of serving as leader for the length of the mandate.
- **Membership:** All who take part in the mission of L'Arche. L'Arche International released a document in 2017 which defines "What does it mean to be a member?" The document says Everyone, with or without an intellectual disability who: has asked to be part of L'Arche in whatever capacity; who has successfully fulfilled the requirements of a trial period (formal or informal); who has been formally welcomed into L'Arche by the appropriate authority and who engages in an ongoing dialogue with L'Arche is a member.
- **Regional Leader/Manager of Community Support and Learning:** A member of the L'Arche USA team who is a bridge between L'Arche USA and the local L'Arche community. They are responsible to assess and support communities in living the mission and vision of L'Arche in a healthy way. They offer coaching and consultation and shepherd the mandate and Community Leader discernment processes. Sometimes called the "Federation Representative."