

GRATITUDE

The L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter November 2025 Issue 97



50 years & BEYOND



Photos from past Christmas Nativity events featuring Core Members Juliette, Stacey, Shelton and more!

A Change in Narrative



Mira Ramlal

Funding & Communications Coordinator

My name is Mira, and I'm excited to be joining L'Arche Winnipeg as the Communications and Fund Development Coordinator.

In my short time with L'Arche, I've come to witness the vibrant and welcoming spirit that defines our community.

Whether through gatherings or simple daily interactions, the genuine care shared among community members radiates a sense of belonging, and mutual care.

I am grateful for the opportunity to manage fundraising and communications activities and to take part in a culture of mutual care, respect and compassion.

During my undergraduate studies in business, I was most inspired by the power of relationships—and how meaningful connections and collaboration can drive real impact. This experience sparked a passion for working in community and creating spaces that foster inclusion, belonging, and compassion.

In the coming months, I look forward to nurturing meaningful connections, learning from your inspiring stories, and building our strong web of support through meaningful partnerships and shared purpose.

Entering The Christmas Story



Julie Rempel

Spiritual Coordinator

If you really think about it, the story of Christmas can get pretty interesting. There are a variety of characters (shepherds, angels, wisemen and a little baby), the story changes locations (on the road, an Inn, the barn, a field), there's urgency (a baby will be born), a bad guy (King Herod) and an air of mystery (a dream, travelers from afar, a star.) Bring in actors from our current place and time and you've added a whole extra layer! Carlos Delmonte, a writer and theologian from Uruguay realizes while watching a local Christmas pageant that the actors on stage were, lending themselves - their

voices and gestures - to the people of the biblical Christmas narrative.* Just like Delmonte's community our community has also been involved in "lending themselves" to the characters of the Christmas story. In last year's Christmas Nativity we were surprised by the simple beauty of the scene between Mary (played by Juliette) and Elizabeth (Grace). The scene begins with Mary and Elizabeth talking

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*Carlos Delmonte, Uruguay from "Come Holy Spirit renew the whole creation" World Council of Churches Publications



Stacey as an angel at last year's nativity retelling

Communicating Through Creative Arts

Grace Slivinski
Events Coordinator



Self expression is a necessary part of human life. When we are experiencing or feeling something, we may take many different avenues in expressing ourselves emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually. Silence, tears, laughter, and other tangible displays of anger, sadness and joy are things we all witness and enact in our daily lives as we, and others, process what we think and feel. More often than not, we require different ways to self express and even more importantly, someone to share these inner movements with in healthy ways. Self expression may come easy to some and for others, be a much more difficult task depending on upbringing, psychology, confidence, and ability. In the communities of L'Arche, we encounter humanity on so many levels with unique backgrounds, cultures, ages and abilities as we interact and build relationships with one another. This Includes the unique ways in which we desire to and need to express ourselves. When communication may be lacking in certain forms, it is important that as a community, we find other ways of sharing with and understanding one another so that

each person is heard, seen and known. One way we are able to do this in our common humanity is through practicing creative Arts: an ability we've been given in order to express, process, understand, and feel through music, dance and creativity.

In recent months, L'Arche Winnipeg has been blessed through funding opportunities and partnerships, that have enabled our community to experience the arts in different ways.

Through our art gallery exhibit Experiencing Eden at La Maison des Artistes Visuels in August, a weekly Music Therapy program, brand new music and sound equipment, and multiple complimentary tickets to witness the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in Concert, we have been able to grow in our ability to witness the expression of people with and without disability in



*Experiencing Eden's' Sensory
Garden Room*

L'Arche Winnipeg. For the next 6 months (the cold winter ones) we will be particularly grateful for the funding we received through the

'New Horizon's Grant for Seniors' which has allowed us to purchase new music and sound equipment! We look forward to continue working with Music Therapist Danielle Savard, who creates opportunities for healing and sharing through music, movement, remembrance and creating song.



*Danielle and Barbara learning a
song together*

Attendance at eight WSO concerts throughout the upcoming year is also something both Core Members and staff will be appreciating. Last years experience of the "Share the Music" – for both staff and core members – was an opportunity to watch music, talent and culture live which as put by one of our Core Members is "so much better" to witness together and in person than listening at home. As we continue to embrace the creative arts in our daily lives, we celebrate the ways music, movement, and shared experiences deepen connection, foster belonging, and allow every voice in L'Arche Winnipeg to be heard, felt, and celebrated.

GIVE THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY THIS
**GIVING
TUESDAY**
DECEMBER 2, 2025

Saying “I Do” to L’Arche Tova Café



Mira Ramlal
Funding &
Communications
Coordinator

Saturday mornings at 7:30 a.m., L’Arche Tova Café opens its doors, welcoming early risers with hot coffee, hearty breakfasts, and the kind of warmth that makes you feel at home.

Among the familiar faces, you’ll often find Mitch and Kathy sitting at their usual table, sharing breakfast and conversation with staff and volunteers.

For years, the café has been part of a cherished Saturday morning ritual for the couple. On August 3rd, 2025, it was the setting for an important milestone in their lives, as Mitch and Kathy, stood side by side and said “I do.”

Their love story began years ago at a singles club Halloween dance, where they first struck up a friendship. It wasn’t until a few years later, at a wedding social, that fate stepped in again.

“I walked in with my friend and couldn’t find a table,” Kathy recalls. “Mitch saw us and ran over, saying, ‘I’ll get you a table,’ and sat down with us. We started talking and danced the night away.” And the rest is history — This September, the couple celebrated 13 years together.

Their relationship with L’Arche first began three years ago when



their friend Gail — now a familiar face at the café — joined the Tova team. From their first visit, they knew they would be coming back, drawn in by the café’s friendly team, delicious food, and a genuine sense of belonging. “It’s really a whole community,” Mitch says. “Everyone has their own little table they always go to. Quite often, when we arrive, they already have our coffee cups set out and our table ready. It’s all waiting for us at 7:30.”

Over time, those mornings became more than breakfast, they became part of a family. “On Saturdays, we chat with Gail and the girls, and we love it there,” Kathy says. “It feels like home.” So when the idea of getting married at the café came up, it just felt right. “We went to breakfast with Gail, and she suggested, ‘Why don’t you get married at Tova?’” Kathy recalls. “And I was like, ‘Oh, you know



*Blackboard drawn by Kathy’s
Granddaughter*

what? Yeah, why not?’ It was perfect.” “The team means so much to us,” Mitch adds. “It just made sense.”

In true L’Arche spirit, the entire Tova crew pitched in to make the day memorable, helping with setup, and of course the food. “Rob, catered the ceremony and reception dinner and did an amazing job,” Kathy explained. Mitch laughs, adding, “And we’re still eating meatballs.”

Looking ahead, the couple is excited for what’s next, “Retirement and travel and that’s happening very soon. And when we’re not traveling, we’ll be at the café.”

L’Arche is all about creating a place where everyone belongs. What started as a simple Saturday morning tradition has grown into a circle of community, and found family.

Visit L’Arche Tova Café and experience great food, friendly service and an amazing community. Open Tuesday to Saturday from 7:30am to 2:30pm.



*Mitch and Kathy with café staff Gail,
Rebecca, Rob and Carla*

Continuing from front page —

together in a quiet way. As an audience, we see a deep connection and excitement between them. The Magnificat [Mary's song] starts with a single melody line

“My soul magnifies the Lord”

and slowly builds with more voices into a fuller harmony. The lights are dimmed and Mary and Elizabeth are holding two candles. They begin moving the candles in a circle, touching them together and lifting them up. Like the music, there is a slow expansion but this time with light as candles are gradually added around their feet.



Angels gathering candles

The gentleness and connection between these two, the lifting of the light, and the presence of God's Spirit transforms this into a sacred moment. We experience Emmanuel, “God with us”.

The Spirit of God is present not just in the special moments but also our daily relating with each other, our deep caring for each other and our standing with one another. We know what it means to “be with” each other and realize

how profound it is that, in the form of Jesus, God came to *be with us*. Our community understands the Christmas narrative on another level. We understand how the baby King is very different from a hierarchical system of status and accumulation of wealth. When we hear Mary's song it reorients us to the kind of power that truly sees people and their suffering. This powerful love looks out for people who are hungry and lifts up people of low degree. Mary's song gives hope that God will scatter the proud and mighty of the world. This message of a compassionate higher power is not just for the people of ancient times it is also a message for our community and our world now.

And so we circle back to Carlos Delmonte who says... “[The actors in the pageant] become the actors of a story whose main protagonist is the Holy Spirit – the Spirit who, on the stage of this world, transforms our surprise into joy whenever we can discern what God is doing in us.” **Join us for our Christmas Nativity and enter into the heart of the story!**

Thursday, November 27, 7:00 pm – St. Boniface Cathedral. – 180 De la Cathedral Ave.



Introducing our Newest Member Ryan



Joined July 2025

I am : a son, an extrovert, kind

I love : reading comic books, Mr. Bean, singing

I hate : peas

I dream : of reading Marvel comic books all day

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November 2025

Dear friends,

Last year marked a significant milestone for Core Member, Kaelyn — for the first time, at the age of 28, she moved out of her family home, excited to build independence and create new connections in a group home setting.

While the move was a milestone, it came with unexpected challenges. Living in a basement suite with limited access to support and community programming left Kaelyn feeling disconnected and isolated. She had dreamed of expanding her horizons by making new friends, learning new skills, and gaining independence, but instead found herself less supported and lonelier than ever.

After some time, she made the decision to return home to live with her parents—feeling discouraged, yet still hopeful about finding a place where she could find community in this new chapter of her life.

Last January, a friend at L'Arche invited Kaelyn to join Community Circle—a daytime social program for Core Members. She decided to give it a try, and it didn't take long for her to discover the sense of belonging she had been searching for. Through shared experiences like volunteering, creative arts, and community meals, Kaelyn found meaningful ways to reconnect—not just with others, but with herself.

Kaelyn's experience of loneliness is one that I'm sure we can all relate to – who among us hasn't struggled to find a place of belonging? And yet, Kaelyn's persevering hope for community inspires us to remain open to connection.

We all yearn to belong in community where we are loved and valued for our unique gifts. When we share ordinary daily life with all its joys and sorrows, and mutually rely on each other for support, our lives are meaningfully enriched.

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For Kaelyn and 25 other adults with intellectual disabilities, that place of belonging is found in L'Arche. At L'Arche Winnipeg, we continue to grow as a community where everyone is valued, supported, and given the space to contribute their unique gifts.

While government funding helps cover essentials like housing and staffing, we depend on your generosity to support the heart of our mission—fostering an environment in community that responds to the changing dreams and needs of our members.

Your generosity makes it possible for us to offer life enriching programs to all members like Community Circle, Accessible transportation for outings, creative workshops, and inclusive celebrations. These moments of connection and belonging are what make L'Arche so special.

This holiday season, I invite you to support L'Arche Winnipeg with a gift that helps build and sustain meaningful community. Your contribution directly supports repairs to our homes, community events and programming, Core Member vacations and the purchase of vehicles and furniture. Your support ensures that our members can continue to share their unique gifts, form lasting connections, and have their evolving needs and dreams supported.

A donation cheque can be mailed to us, or you can make a secure online credit card donation through our [online donation form](https://www.larchewinnipeg.org/donate), which can be found on our home page at www.larchewinnipeg.org.

Wishing you peace, connection, and belonging this holiday season,



Dominic Opaka
Executive Director

