



H(ARK)!

A Sign of Hope in a Broken World

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Fall 2011

You're Invited: Celebration at Our House

As we strive to create community and inclusiveness through our events, we are delighted to have the opportunity to provide an occasion to experience the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles by building together a Sukkah.

"What's a Sukkah?" you ask.

Join with us as we build a fragile dwelling place. We will build and decorate, eat and fellowship. We will hear the words that explain this Jewish holiday of thanksgiving that encourage us in our community as we live together in unity, strong and stronger, bright and brighter, fragile and more fragile. Please join with us for a wonderful event and meal. A free will offering will be taken.

Sukkah Raising Dinner

Sunday, October 9
4 to 6 pm
305 Mead Rd, Decatur

What to bring: Perennials, flowers, leafy branches, anything natural you would like to decorate with.



Building Community

This past Saturday, there was a blast of goodness at the L'Arche house. Over 50 people came for the first of our Saturday workdays, volunteer work that will help us complete the house renovation project for early October. We painted every wall of the house with paint donated by Sherwin Williams. We cleaned the yard and built a path for the wheelchair ramp. We had a wonderful lunch, provided by John Rick and Chris Clark of Wood Logic, the builders doing the renovations. And Mark Gale of the Fuller Center skillfully guided the volunteer work and orchestrated the day. The baseball team of Decatur High School came, as did the St. Thomas More Youth Group, as well as many friends and neighbors, to make this happen! There are some great pictures of this on our Facebook page.



On one level, there is all of the work! But, of course, the "blast of goodness" that could be felt so strongly on Saturday was not really about work, nor about a house – it was about people. About people giving of themselves, about people caring about others, about the great power that human beings reveal when they work together for the common good.

On Saturday, I found myself looking ahead to next year at this time, imagining people living in the home. This is what Saturday's workday was enabling to come to life, and something about the people there enabled me to see it. I could see our core members, individuals with developmental disabilities, finding a fully engaged life. I could imagine our assistants, thinking they're coming to help, finding themselves changed, transformed, through this simple life together. I could see our neighbors, many of whom stopped by to say hello on Saturday, having their understanding of others and themselves changed as they become friends with the members of our home. To be honest, I could feel all of this in myself, going back to early memories of my own first days in a L'Arche home twenty years ago.

L'Arche reveals new dimensions of our own humanity to us the more we know of it. It has been heartening to be received in this community by neighbors, businesses and faith communities as they learn about L'Arche's aim. As Rev. Jill Oglesby Evans, pastor of Emory Presbyterian Church, said recently in her beautiful sermon, "...L'Arche's aim is no more to glorify those with differing abilities than Paul's was to argue that the ear is somehow more worthy than the eye. Rather, the point both make is that for wholeness, all members of the body, every single member of the body, is both mutually dependent and equally important. No member of the body, however weak or dishonored or marginalized, is any less indispensable to the whole..." At our open house for the neighborhood last Spring, one family thanked us for choosing their street for the L'Arche community. We are all lifted up by communities in our midst which put relationship at the center. They become places of meeting and listening and celebration where we put down our customary filters of judgment and see ourselves and one another with clearer vision.

This year holds much work for building L'Arche here in Atlanta – finishing house renovations (we'll have a workday each Saturday through October 8th), furnishing the house (you can help – see article on page 4), writing policies and procedures for licensure, undergoing trainings, and continuing to expand the vital foundation of support for this growing community. We will even be helping L'Arche USA and L'Arche International welcome 500 people from L'Arche communities around the world to Atlanta next summer for the L'Arche International General Assembly!

While there is much work to do, the most important thing we'll do this year has to do with
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A Room Full Of Joy

By Lisa Persons

At the FOLA contra dance in June, I felt a lot of joy in the room. Later, looking at the photos of all the smiling faces, I was reminded of the title of a book, Enough Room for Joy, about the early day of L'Arche. Most of our social events, but especially our dances have this joyful quality. As a newcomer to L'Arche, I am full of wonder at the power of gathering as a community and the power of music and dance to stir our spirits and reveal new ways of living and moving together.

That evening after an un-hurried potluck dinner, during which we shared treats and stories, we cleared and moved the tables. A light-hearted fiddle and bass began to play.

Throughout the evening, we were guided by our caller, Scott Russell. We joined in a big circle and moved in to the center, forward and back with a big “Whoop!” Throughout the circle dances and line dances every person moved with the cadence of the joyful music, not worrying about making a mistake or keeping up. Everyone could relax into the music and reach out to their neighbor, even if just with their eyes. The group would slow down to the pace of the person next to them and somehow it all worked out in a joyful whirl. Slowing down for one another was one factor that created room for joy.

In this time of waiting (and working) toward our first L'Arche home being opened, these dances and other monthly social events are places at which we can express and be nourished by moments of celebration. The celebrations are also places at which we can all learn more about such things as limitations; true friendship; and the very real beauty and gift of each person.

Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, described L'Arche celebrations, not as “compensations for daily tedium” but as being, “like the flower which blossoms on the stem of everyday life.”

With L'Arche's help, I am learning ways of creating “enough room for joy” in my own life, while also making friends with the different realities L'Arche invites us to learn about – the realities of members of our human family who are too often excluded. I find this leads me to slow down rather than try to “keep up;” and to make time for celebrations – celebrating nothing in particular, but simply the joy of being together. And in the midst of it, I give thanks for the sacred space that L'Arche creates in our human family for all to be welcomed.



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people. I ask for your prayers, as we begin an admissions process and name our first core members, adults with intellectual disabilities who will be invited to come and make their home at L'Arche, finding a place for a fully engaged life. I also ask your prayers as we hire our first assistants, who will help build this community through sharing daily life with our core members. The most important thing we'll do this year has to do with people. And, of course, as Saturday reminded us once again, it's not only about the people living in the house. It's about each of us – at the workdays, at the monthly social events, offering financial support, giving of ourselves as we are able. It's about each of us working towards a better world, a more human society, and a place where each of us has an essential place in the human family. As Rev. Oglesby Evans concludes her sermon, “Perhaps joining in [this] dance might help us perceive what it means to be beloved of God. And who knows? It might even make us happy!”

Thank you for journeying with us.

Gratefully,
Curt



A sign of hope in a broken world

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The Mission of Friends of L'Arche Atlanta

To be a sign of hope to the greater Atlanta community by choosing to embrace the mission of L'Arche International and open a few small, family-like homes here in Atlanta to bring together people, some with developmental disabilities and some without, who choose to share their lives by living together in a faith-based community.

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You can now donate online at our website www.friendsoflarcheatlanta.org and/or sign up to receive the email version of this newsletter!

Finish the House Fund ***Goal: \$25,000 by October 15th*** ***To date: \$10,000 donated***

FOLA is deep in renovations of the future L'Arche house and we are nearing the finish line! The many renovations on the Mead Rd. house include a new dormer which enlarged the bedrooms upstairs, a new kitchen with donated cabinets and a wheelchair ramp to the back of the house. The crew has been faithful to our timeline and has even volunteered to grill hotdogs and hamburgers for our first couple of workdays.



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

As we near the finish line, we need monetary donations to help us over the hump of furnishing the house. For our Finish the House Fund, we would like to raise \$25,000 toward buying simple and comfortable furnishings for our beautifully renovated home.

Please consider a donation this fall to help us create a home for our first core members and assistants. **We just received a family donation of \$10,000 toward furnishings, which is wonderful news but we still have \$15,000 more to raise and so we would really appreciate your help.**

Examples of how your donation will be used to help us furnish the house:

- A gift of **\$2,000** would furnish a complete bedroom for a core member or assistant.
- **\$1,200** would help purchase appliances (we need 1 refrigerator, 1 freezer, 1 stove, and 1 washer/dryer)
- **\$1000** would help furnish the beautiful porch and yard with rockers, swings, or Adirondack chairs.
- A gift of **\$500** would help upholster an oversized chair, buy rugs needed throughout the house or buy a whole set of bedroom accessories for a core member or assistant.
- **\$300** would help buy a piece of furniture like a porch rocking chair, a loveseat or furnish a bathroom, or buy a new lawn mower.
- **\$250** would buy a mattress or items like gardening tools.
- **\$200** would go toward things like a comfortable chair for our living areas, a couch cover, or toward bedding for the seven bedrooms.
- **\$100** would help us buy things like lamps and chair covers.
- **\$50** would go toward an outdoor chair or houseplants to cheer the house.
- **\$25** would help us buy shower curtains, towels or a bedside lamp.

To donate please either go to our website page called “Finish the House Fund” and click “Donate Now” or write a check, indicating “Finish the House Fund” and mail it to: Friends of L'Arche Atlanta, P.O. Box 2359, Decatur, GA 30031

Thank you for helping us finish our first house – one more step toward making L'Arche a reality in Atlanta that will impact lives and be a concrete sign of the sacred value and unique gifts of every human being.