

Dear friends,

We are entering a new phase of our history. Jean's death marks the transition from our founding stage to a new post-founder era. This important time in our story is also marked by the launch of the **Charter Process**, the new **Learning Project** (which we will tell you about later in this letter), and the inquiry that we launched some months ago. All three call for both our fidelity to the past and our responsibility for the future.



The Charter Process

We launched the Charter Process in June. This is an important part of our current Mandate. Throughout Stage One (until April 2020) we are looking at our experiences of community life and re-reading them to determine what gives life and what does not.

Our contributions to this first stage of the charter will be called "beads", which like pearls are precious and unique, each individual bead forming an essential part of a "string of pearls"

Each setting in the Federation has been invited to participate in the process (communities, regions, countries with a national structure, and international). Resource people have been named to bring the process to life - this means 220 resource people in 38 countries!



Training session of the Charter Process, in Montreal (Canada), September 2019

To train all these resource people, is a big challenge and so is translating all the documents into our different languages but we are overcoming these challenges.

We encourage you to go to the [Charter Process website](#) where you can see more about the process, meet the team, and share the beads from your setting.

The Learning Project

How do we know if a community is «really well?». And what does «really well» mean? « To help us to answer these questions we have started "The Learning Project". The goal of this work is to better assess our communities, including the professional and spiritual dimensions of our communities and the broader impact on of L'Arche in the world.

Some countries in the Federation already have evaluation processes in place, others don't. Our challenge will be to find evaluation tools and criteria common to all but flexible enough to adapt to the realities and cultures of the 38 countries of the Federation.

Establishing a more deliberate, consistent, and systematic approach to learning and development will play an important role in helping us mature as an organisation. It will mean adopting a number of processes, some unfamiliar, like data systems, performance metrics, causal studies, benchmarks, and surveys. We are collaborating with a London-based nonprofit evaluation group called Keystone Accountability, founded by David Bonbright, to help us grow our learning muscle. Pat Favaro will lead this project. He and David are piloting the programme in Comox Valley (Canada) and Punla (Philippines.) Their experiences will provide the foundation of a next phase, which will involve rolling out learning activities. We are especially grateful to Comox Valley and Punla for volunteering to be our learning pioneers and we look forward to sharing their progress with you.

Although they are quite different, we believe the Charter Process and The Learning Project are also

complementary. If relationships are at the heart of L'Arche and cannot be reduced to a set of data, experience has also taught us that a lack of objective knowledge about the quality of our organisational and community reality affects our ability to make an impact and, ultimately, relationships suffer.

The Inquiry

We have already written to you twice about the inquiry we have commissioned «*which will allow us to better understand our history, to refine our abuse prevention work and thus to improve our own current policies and practices*». As you know, our decision to undertake this work was a result of the questions raised about the environment surrounding Father Thomas Philippe at that time, including Jean Vanier's role in that setting.

The first stage of this work will probably give us a better understanding of our history, and leave us with a less idealized and a more critical picture. This work is taking longer than expected. However, we remain committed to providing you with the results as soon as we are able to do so in the coming months. We are grateful for the support and encouragement we have received in leading this challenging and difficult process.

Our teams

In our January letter we talked about the many changes that are taking place in L'Arche International's leadership team and in the support team and while this work continues, the leadership team is now complete after a long period of transition: Rajeevan Cheriya Chalil, former National Leader of L'Arche in India, is the International Delegate for Asia and the South Pacific; Stan Dubourg, former International Envoy, is the International Delegate for Africa, Central and South America; Laurence Rahmaoui, former Regional Leader in France, is the International Delegate for Europe and the Middle East. Finally, Loren Treisman, new to L'Arche (!) is the National Leader for the United Kingdom. In two years, 9 of the 10 members of this team are either new or have changed positions within it! Another example of how we are changing and living through important transitions!

L'Arche Family Day



L'Arche Family Day in the community of Nandi Bazar (India), October 2018

And finally on October 5th, the first Saturday in October, we celebrate "L'Arche Family Day". This is a day, throughout the Federation, to recognize and celebrate our interconnectedness, because to be a L'Arche community, to be a member of L'Arche, means simultaneously to be connected locally, nationally, and internationally.

The international dimension of L'Arche is indeed one of our most beautiful dimensions; it is unquestionably also one of our biggest challenges. Once again, we are all invited to be aware of the connections between us and the ways we can contribute to building a more caring society.

On L'Arche Family Day we will launch an Inspiration Wall on the [Charter Process website](#), which contains one "bead" from each setting where Stage One of the Charter Process has taken place. It will grow over time as more reflections are shared.

Let's stay in touch

We would like to encourage you to keep in touch with the international dimension of L'Arche: visit our [website](#), find out more through the [Intranet](#), follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and share your stories or films (like this one for example from the [community of Saint Louis](#) in United States).

For our communities and our members, scattered across 5 continents, these «tools» bring us together and nourish our common belonging to something bigger than «my» single community, «my» home, or «my» workshop. The more we use and nurture them the more they can help us cultivate this sense of belonging to something «larger».

With all our affection,
Stephan Posner and Stacy Cates-Carney

