Together.
With and without intellectual disabilities.
A letter from our International Leaders

In a year of on-going pandemic and increased isolation in 2021 L’Arche continued to adapt to challenges and build connections as we engaged together as people with and without intellectual disabilities. In a world where the risks of fractures are increasing, being a worldwide community continues to give us the unique privilege of being able to connect with our need for one another and to witness the incredible gifts to be found in diversity.

L’Arche is responding to an ever-changing world by continuing, strengthening, and expanding the reach of our mission. In 2021 we established five strategic priorities to guide our efforts: 1) a united global community responsive to the diverse realities across the world 2) high quality of life for individuals and communities, 3) a strong infrastructure of evaluation and learning, 4) public engagement that effectively invites new people into our mission, and 5) sustainable revenue to sustain the mission over the long term.

We are pleased to share with you our 2021 Annual Report which highlights how L’Arche has engaged the lives of individuals, communities and neighborhoods around the world. The following pages display the creativity and resilience L’Arche has shown in responding to opportunities and challenges.

We are deeply grateful to each of you - donors, partners, and friends - for joining with us, communities of people with and without intellectual disabilities, as we work together to build a more human society.

Stephan Posner
International Leader

Stacy Cates-Carney
Vice-International Leader
Equipped for the Mission

Many people have noted that L’Arche is much easier to feel and experience than to describe. One member said "you can walk into a community anywhere in the world and know you are in L’Arche." And this has nothing to do with a logo on the wall - it is a profound experience of belonging.

As L’Arche continues to grow, and the world continues to change, we’ve set as one of our top priorities the need to hold onto, pass along and cultivate the essence of what makes L’Arche “L’Arche”; to be united around core values, while being responsive to the needs of the local context; to be equipped to live the mission today, and answer the call of L’Arche for tomorrow.

New charter

One of our major highlights from 2021 is the extensive process we’ve gone through together to develop a new charter. True to our values, we’ve worked very hard to make sure every member of L’Arche had the opportunity to add their “voice” to the process, including of course members who are non-verbal. Communities around the globe spent hours reflecting on our shared life together and creating “beads” to illustrate what is important to us.

"We hope that these moments of truth and other pearls and beads we discover can become the new roots that grow down and become strong and sustain us into the future."
Silas, L’Arche Cape Breton, Canada
Formation Programs

Life in community is not always straightforward and cultivating relationships of belonging takes intentionality. L’Arche Formation programs help members to explore our identity and mission, to practice new ways of engaging one another, to share best practices, and to explore how to live our unique roles in L’Arche well.

L’Arche is also developing an online resource we call “the kitchen” so that communities or other structures will be able to access quality resources to help members develop in the areas of spiritual life, safeguarding, inclusion practices, and communication. This resource is continually growing, as we invite our communities around the world to share from their experience and inspire new ways of living our values.

"This is an essential formation weekend for every board member as it helps to understand the bigger picture of L’Arche, the questions and conversations were extremely thought provoking for the future."
Member of L’Arche Ireland National Board, Participant in Board Formation event.

New Ways to Connect

We’ve discovered L’Arche can connect online, and have found that online events such as the L’Arche Light Festival held every October is a way to connect members across the Federation.

"Ismael is happy to participate in the various virtual meetings organized by L’Arche International. He is very intelligent. Although he does not speak, he always has the microphone in his hand to interpret a song as best he can, impressing the audience. He is our ‘singer without words.’"
Community Leader L’Arche Carrefour, Haiti

We trust that all of these initiatives, tested by the reality of daily life, are preparing a Federation that is Equipped for the Mission.

A Healthier, More Mature Organization

L’Arche continues to be committed to learning from our past, to build a more mature and healthy organization now and into the future. For this reason, in 2021 we continued the work of a “study commission” to further understand our history, the foundation of L’Arche, and the relational dynamics at work between the founder and the people who knew him.
Quality of Life and Community

Within our large Federation we live a diversity in cultures, languages, and geographic locations. We are aware that if L’Arche is lived authentically in Argentina or India it will look different than the way it is lived in Chicago, USA or London, UK. Yet, we share a set of core values which focus around building mutual relationships that honour the gifts and dignity of every human being.

Thus, it is one of the important mandates of L’Arche International to make sure that a L’Arche standard of quality of life and community is upheld even in the most difficult contexts, and especially in places where it is counter-cultural to hold people with intellectual disabilities in such high regard. We are committed to strengthening and developing the initiatives that help us do this in such a diverse Federation.

- **International Delegates and Envoys** – supported 33 single communities in 26 countries and 7 national structures (34 communities) through Federation Representatives; to strengthen local Boards, discern new community leaders / establish mandates, fundraise, facilitate formation programs, develop strategic plans and more.

- **The International Mission Program** – provided 7 experienced L’Arche members to accompany 5 communities in India, Uganda, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso during times of transition, opportunity, or crisis. The program facilitated another 6 L’Arche assistants to spend time supporting and learning from communities in Argentina, Honduras, and Mexico. In total over 500 members were impacted by this exchange of skills, experience and culture.

- **Financial Aid** – empowered 23 L’Arche communities to live the mission in their local context, and honour their local members, all through a process that encourages strategic planning and development.

- **Safeguarding** – developed a L’Arche Safeguarding Framework and quality tools to build positive safeguarding atmospheres in communities across the Federation, available to our over 10,000 members with and without disabilities.

"The International Envoy allows us to stay in touch with the Federation, helps us carry out our mandate, and guides us through the financial aid process... The financial delegate helps us to efficiently manage the resources made available to us by L’Arche International." 
Community Leader, Ivory Coast
Highlights from communities

- **Bethlehem** – The welcoming environment and joyful atmosphere of L’Arche Bethlehem has long been a much-needed testimony in a region that has a long history of conflict, and that welcoming environment is about to expand! The community has worked long and hard to open the **first boutique hotel hosted by people with intellectual disabilities**! The building, an official heritage site in Bethlehem, is ready to welcome up to 23 guests at a time in the heart of the city. Members of L’Arche Bethlehem will share the responsibilities of preparing for, and warmly welcoming, guests. Book your stay, and don’t forget to check out the woolly lambs in the souvenir shop!

- **Zimbabwe** – L’Arche Zimbabwe has been strengthening their network of assistants and local volunteers. A neighbour turned volunteer assistant tells the story of her first visit to L’Arche Zimbabwe. Her grandfather sent her to the L’Arche grinding mill, and while she was waiting for her “meal” L’Arche member Bobby walks over to greet her. “He greets me with such warmth which I can never imagine and shows a genuine interest in my well-being.” Since that first introduction she has found a true home in L’Arche; “All I can say is that my heart is full. In a short space of time, I have learnt that you can love and be loved unconditionally.”

- **Poland** – L’Arche Wroclaw had the opportunity to reach 4,500 children and teenagers through school presentations, using puppets with disabilities to help the younger children understand disability differently.

- **Honduras** – L’Arche Honduras really stepped into the 2021 Battle of the Fans – an international lip-sync competition hosted by people with disabilities, organized by L’Arche Canada. One goal of the event is to **spread disability awareness** and encourage disability pride. L’Arche Honduras singlehandedly brought Battle of the Fans to Latino audiences through outstanding performances of “No Tengo Dinero”, “This is Me” and “Nos Pertenecemos”. Check them out! Be careful though… once you start watching the Battle of the Fans it is hard to stop...

    Angeles Flores, who grew up in an institution before becoming a member of L’Arche Honduras says: “What makes me happy in L’Arche is that I am recognized as a person and I feel I have a space here.”
**Ukraine** - Recognizing that many members were suffering from isolation, stress and anxiety in the challenging context of the pandemic response, L’Arche Kovcheh organized several therapy classes, including 30 classes of music therapy, 40 classes of dance therapy, 20 group art classes hosted by an artist. The impact was tangible, “When their hands touched the instruments, they changed, their eyes began to burn, and their fears seemed to recede as far as possible. It seemed to us that if our orchestra was not stopped, it would play all day and night.”

“Andrew and his mother have changed a lot since they joined the Community. They seem to have found the meaning of life. Andrew loved his workshop, for him, it was the center of his life.”

Cousin of a member of L’Arche Ukraine.

**Mexico** - In 2021 L’Arche Mexico City continued to live and express gratitude for the blessing of life and friendship in community. A volunteer wrote “L’Arche has changed my life. I didn’t know that I could experience such friendship with people with disabilities. It has been a huge discovery for me, and I’m so grateful that L’Arche has opened their home to me to live this beautiful experience.”

**Bangladesh** - 2021 was another busy year for L’Arche Bangladesh as they worked hard to support the families of children with disabilities in the neighbourhood, including making sure they had basic food staples, amidst the ongoing difficult economic context due to the pandemic response. But everything stopped one day when Priya, around 22 years, old held a glass of water in her hand for the first time, and then drank it. The other members of the community were full of joy seeing this milestone, which felt like a dream.

**Egypt** - L’Arche Al Fulk continues to think about ways to increase local sustainability and local impact at the same time. Throughout 2021 they were working hard to prepare a guest house to be used as both a place of retreat, and a hub for a local network for building peace in the region. The guest house is now open, and can welcome up to 38 overnight guests, 100 conference participants, and 50 people into a small chapel. Since members with disabilities are at the heart of the guest house activities, it will provide an effective opportunity to share the mission of L’Arche with the wider community.
India - L’Arche India invited experienced L’Arche member Robert Laskowiecki to support the community in Chennai in building the capacity of the local assistants, via the International Mission Program. Robert supported the local community to develop an Occupational Therapy Day Program for aging members with intellectual disabilities. The aim of the project is to maintain the physical and cognitive abilities of senior members as long as possible, by means of a balanced variety of therapy programs such as physical exercise, culinary activities, music therapy, art therapy, games and relaxation activities.

Ivory Coast - Despite all the challenges of 2021, L’Arche Ivory coast was able to provide a livable and dependable wage to the Community Leader, Assistants and other staff, making sure they could stay with L’Arche, that programs ran smoothly, and a positive atmosphere was maintained.

"L’Arche has not only given me a job, but it has given meaning to my life."
Assistant, Ivory Coast

"Thank you L’Arche for helping us. Without you many of us would be alone in the streets"
Core Member Bragory KOFFI, Ivory Coast

"We can never say thank you enough to L’Arche international and to the donors who, through their actions, help the people we welcome and their families. They allow us to fight against the stigmatization of this vulnerable population."
Board Member, Ivory Coast

Burkina Faso - One main element of the community’s mandate is to increase local stability by diversifying funding sources and community resources. In 2021 the community developed their garden, piggery and chicken coop projects to provide direct and fresh sources of food to the community.

Uganda - L’Arche Uganda has been working hard to strengthen the local Board. They welcomed a whole new team in 2020, so 2021 was their first full year working together. The Board Chair writes “Being a L’Arche board member has been a life changing experience for me. I have had the opportunity to meet amazing people with special gifts and talents. I now have an opportunity to make the community and board better and stronger through more compassionate and people driven support approaches. Members of L’Arche Uganda are happy because here they are respected, loved, cared for, safe and treated as equals.”
Evaluation and Learning

As has been said, L’Arche is much easier to feel and experience than to describe, and perhaps that will always be true to some degree. But we also know that data supporting our beautiful and inspiring stories can help us understand the health of our Federation, and the impact our mission is having.

2021 saw the launch of a major effort to improve our evaluation and learning practices, in order to empower strong healthy communities to live and express the mission and demonstrate impact.

The Evaluation and Learning team engaged nine L’Arche communities or structures in a pilot learning experience. Rather than a dry exchange of information, most participants found the experience to be “life giving.” It was an opportunity to be seen and heard. And it uncovered some stories of how L’Arche communities are living the mission and impacting lives in their local context.

“...we will be able to know the life of other communities and I believe that this shared knowledge will enrich all the [L’Arche] communities in the world.”

Participant in the Evaluation and Learning Pilot Project.
Highlight: 
L’Arche Querétaro (Mexico)

L’Arche Querétaro was one of the communities that agreed to participate in the pilot study. As the Director of Evaluation and Learning began to ask questions about their community and different expressions of mission, he discovered their new local initiative to involve members and friends with disabilities in society through social entrepreneurship - an initiative few others in the Federation knew about until now.

A few years back, while reflecting on their own culture and context, L’Arche Querétaro realized that people with disabilities are often isolated, and one way to reduce this isolation could be through economic activities. So now they support people to develop their own business and to sell the products they make.

By doing so they encourage a shift in the way local society views people with disabilities. Families, a local university, and people from the community are all involved in developing and running this initiative.

One very beautiful expression of this initiative was a local art exhibit that was held in the city, highlighting the art of six members of L’Arche. The exhibit was extremely well received, with approximately 600 visits.

If the story ended there, it would still be amazing. But by participating in Evaluation and Learning, L’Arche Querétaro can inspire and help others to think of new and innovative ways to live the mission in their local context, and it is also a powerful voice affirming the quality and quantity of L’Arche’s impact around the world.
Engaging Society

Members of L’Arche Canada hosted the 2021 Battle of the Fans international lip sync competition. It was an excellent way of engaging society, with the videos being watched over 85,000 times! L’Arche International seeks to facilitate the sharing of experiences and resources from the local or national level, and thereby build L’Arche’s skills to share our core values with society and create opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to have a voice.

Watch Battle of the Fans on YouTube!
We are deeply convinced of the power of L’Arche, of communities of true belonging, to change the world. And because of this conviction we are committed to building sustainable revenue for L’Arche now and into the future.

In 2021 we received a significant donation earmarked primarily for building sustainable revenue capacity. This gift affirmed that friends and partners see the importance of L’Arche in the world and are ready to work with us to secure the mission well into the future. But for such a large mission, facing such an overwhelming call, this is only a cornerstone gift.

With the support of this grant, we engaged an experienced fundraising consultant to help us discover new and effective ways to invite many more friends and financial partners into the mission. This is an opportunity for us to work collaboratively with L’Arche members across the world, united for one common goal. It is also an experience through which members with disabilities can discover their own gifts of engaging new people and inviting them to partner with us.

So, we’re excited, and at the same time we feel a sense of urgency. People with intellectual disabilities remain one of the most vulnerable and isolated people groups in the world, and the call upon L’Arche far exceeds our current capacity to respond, in just about every country we operate in.
Our finances at a glance

Fiscal year 2021 was, like last year, marked by the impact of the pandemic. In addition to having a significant impact on the lives of each member of our communities, the pandemic forced us to reduce some of our activities. This has mechanically reduced our expenses, especially for travel of the various members of the international team.

What is the outlook for the coming years?

Over the past three years, combination of increased resources and reduced expenses has enabled us to build up modest reserves. These reserves are essential to secure our activities in a context of economic and geopolitical uncertainties of which people with intellectual disabilities are often the most vulnerable. There are still many unmet needs, and we need to increase our resources and continue to provide L’Arche with the financial support necessary to ensure the sustainability of its missions.

Sincere thanks:

We are deeply thankful to all our financial partners who directly supported L’Arche International in 2021, as well as all our donors who through their donations to member countries have supported L’Arche communities around the world.
Creative Initiatives

At L’Arche, art and creativity are means of expression and fulfillment for everyone. The crafts produced around the world reveal the richness of each person’s personality and culture. Each product is unique, like each of us!

Moreover, for many communities in the world, they represent a large part of their income.

Don’t hesitate to support them!

This page is too small to show the products of our 156 communities, but here are some examples.

Scan the QR codes and discover some of the online shops of Bethlehem (Palestinian territories), Kana-No-le (Japan), Kaunas (Lithuania), Querétaro (Mexico).

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