

L'Arche USA New Leader Training – July 2017 CREATING HOME & TRADITIONS

CREATING HOME...

- is an art
- it is creating a place where we and others are loved
- it is more than providing a physical structure
- it is a number of attitudes – welcome, gracious hospitality, simplicity, cleanliness celebration, awareness, prayerfulness and...
- it is attending to...the small things and the big things, those things seen and unseen, those things obvious and not so obvious...
- is not only an individual endeavor but a team effort
- is the responsibility of everyone living in the home.
- is a critical part of L'Arche!

L'Arche Canada Bubble: Fostering a Vibrant Community

Log into L'Arche USA Member Ground (user:national / password: vanier) to be able to review these [resources](#) related to building home and community.

They look at:

- Welcome, Celebration, Traditions, Togetherness, Rhythm and Belonging

as the ways we share extraordinary life in our homes and communities.

Note: there are a range of activities for core members, assistants, leaders. Consider making use of one of these activities in the month ahead.

FOR REFLECTION: Living home life in L'Arche is to bless.

“To bless means to wish, unconditionally and from the deepest chambers of your heart, unrestricted good for others and events; it means to hallow, to hold in reverence, to behold with awe that which is always a gift from the Creator. The person who is hallowed by your blessing is set aside, consecrated, holy, whole. To bless is to invoke divine care upon, to speak or think gratefully for, to confer happiness upon, although we ourselves are never the bestower but simply the joyful witnesses of life's abundance.

To bless all without distinction is the ultimate form of giving, because those you bless will never know from where came the sudden ray that burst through the clouds of their skies, and you will rarely be a witness to the sunlight in their lives.” (from *The Gentle Art of Blessing: A Simple Practice That Will Transform You and Your World* by Pierre Pradervand.)

NOTE: We don't speak about a particular religion here. L'Arche was founded in the Catholic tradition but quickly through opening of new homes became interreligious. L'Arche began welcoming Hindus in India, Buddhists, Moslems, Protestants, Jews, and many others in many different countries. The next page offer several texts that take the form of beatitudes

Consider for yourself:

1. **How does your community welcome new people? What traditions do you have for someone moving into a home? Into an office role? How are core members involved in the planning, preparing and welcoming?**
2. **How do we re-create home when there has been a division or tension or conflict?**

Beatitudes of Jesus

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see Truth.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of the Most High.
Blessed are they that suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Beatitudes of Buddha

Not to serve the foolish, but to serve the spiritual; to honor those worthy of honor —this is a great blessing.
To dwell in the station befitting your condition; to consider the effect of your deeds; to guide the behavior aright —this is a great blessing.
Much insight and education; self control and pleasant speech, and whatever word be well spoken —this is a great blessing.
To support father and mother; to cherish spouse and child; to follow a peaceful calling —this is a great blessing.
To bestow alms and live righteously; to give help to kindred; deeds which cannot be blamed —this is a great blessing.
To abhor and cease from error; abstinence from strong drink; not to be weary in well doing —this is a great blessing.
Reverence and lowliness; contentment and gratitude; the hearing of the Law in due season —this is a great blessing.
To be long suffering and meek; to associate with the tranquil; religious talk in due season —this is a great blessing.
Self-restraint and purity; the knowledge of the Noble Truths; the attainment of Nirvana —this is a great blessing.
In the midst of the eight world miseries, like the person of pure life, be calm and unconcerned —this is a great blessing.
Listener, if you keep this Dharma, the Law of the spiritual world, you will know indescribable joy. This is the greatest blessing.

The Beatitudes of Muhammed

The Messenger of Allah said: Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection:
O Son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I feed you when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so asked you for food and you fed him not? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found that (the reward for doing so) with Me?...and so on... (Source is the Koran)

Reflection on living the beatitudes in our daily life and in our daily places (our homes, our offices):

- Which version of the beatitudes and what particular beatitudes speaks most directly to you at this time?
- Where do you find comfort and challenge in these words?
- When you think about creating home and creating belonging, how does this wisdom encourage you?
- As a leader in the community, how can you name, model and encourage these beatitude ways? How do you see others modeling them?
- It is often the small daily acts that show great love and offer blessing – where do you find those in your daily home and office life? How could you help these to increase?

Starting with ourselves: Home is where the learning is

- Take some time to think about places in your own life that have felt like home to you.
 - Picture them and remember them. You might want to list them or draw them.
 - Consider places that felt like home immediately. What about those places (people, “feel,” environment, events) made you feel a sense of belonging immediately?
 - Consider places that grew into a place of home over time. What went into that growth of comfort and belonging?
 - What have you learned from these places about how to build home?
- Also consider places that you’ve spent time that never did feel like home
 - What do you think made those places less comfortable, less homey, less right for you?
 - Was there anything going on for you that made feeling at home more difficult? What would have helped in that case?
 - What have you learned from these places about how to build home?
- Now consider the L’Arche homes you are a part of or support.
 - How at home are those who live there, usually? How at home are visitors? How at home are you there?
 - What from your own home-learning can you offer to any homes that are growing in their sense of welcome and belonging?



Rhythms:

MEALS

- ❖ *The meal includes a time of preparation.* An assistant and core member prepare the meal together. Thought is given to how they can make the meal appealing.
- ❖ *The table is attractively set.* Think about what this might mean? Dishes that match. Cloth napkins arranged at each place. Perhaps a single flower is a vase at the center of the table.
- ❖ *The meal begins with thanks for the food* or a song or gesture or other grace.
- ❖ *The meal is appealing, nutrition* and is food people like
- ❖ *Table conversation includes everyone* and each person is given an opportunity to share his/her day.
- ❖ *After the meal, there is a time of prayer* usually at the table. A candle may be lit, there may be a simple reading or song, and there is silence and time for those who wish to pray aloud. Each person is respected however they choose to enter that time.

Meals shared together are at the heart of L'Arche spirituality. Food is a gift to be shared and appreciated. Everyone can participate in the meal and in giving thanks. We are gathered in daily joy, daily life and common ground.

How does your community approach meal time? What traditions work? Which might need refreshing?

BIRTHDAYS and other SPECIAL DAYS

The person who has a birthday is honored and made to feel special.

- ❖ The person hears their gifts named.
- ❖ The person's family and friends may be invited to share with the community.
- ❖ Simple decorations help the time to feel festive.
- ❖ The meal and celebration are well planned and prepared with care. The person is invited to share their favorite meal and/or dessert.
- ❖ A gift that would be valued by the person is chosen.

The birthday celebration is a time to honor the unique presence and gift of the person's life. Everyone needs to feel special. Birthdays are a time to celebrate life and to have fun. L'Arche's Identity statement says: We celebrate the unique value of every person..."

HOUSE MEETINGS

- House meetings are held at regular times & a familiar format.
- All members of the household are present. Every person is invited to participate and helped to share their opinions, needs, desires.
- News, concerns, feedback are shared and plans are made for house events and tasks.

The house meeting is a time of intimacy and connection between house members. It is an empowering time that almost all core members look forward to. Each person's voice is valued in making decisions and resolving issues. This meeting helps each person to take ownership and feel responsible for HIS or HER home. Also, issues of conflict, such as typically occur around chores, television and care of the house, can be discussed and resolved. It is an important time to welcome new Assistants and Core Members.

For consideration: Who sets the agenda for the house meeting? Can core members take a more active role in conducting house meetings?

HOUSE ROUTINES

- Routine is very important to the life of a home.
- It brings a sense of stability and security.
- Everyone needs different degree of structure in their lives – not only core members but assistants as well.
- It is important to know one another's routine.
- It is important to know the routine of the home.

We each need to find a rhythm in life that is livable. What will it take for us to live a "healthy" life? Regular exercise, regular times of quiet, regular times of just "being", regular times of prayer or centering, regular amounts of sleep, nutritious meals etc.

For consideration: Which rhythms are important to you? How do you keep to them? As a leader, how do you help others to name and commit to the rhythms that support them? What are the collective rhythms of your home?