

An introduction to the  
Mandate & Community  
Leader Discernment Process

# Glossary

- **Mandate:** A document that outlines the goals of a L'Arche community for a set number of years and provides guidance towards growth.
- **Discernment:** A process used to develop understanding, perceive direction, and make decisions.
- **Discernment Team:** A team of people holding different roles within the community that forms towards the end of a mandate term to listen deeply to the community in order to develop a new mandate. The team is also responsible to discern the Community Leader, who will lead the community in the new mandate.

# Glossary

- **Federation:** Every L'Arche community in the world is part of the International Federation. Each community in the US is a member of L'Arche USA, which is a member of L'Arche International.
- **Regional Leader / Manager of Community Support and Learning / Federation Representative:** A member of the L'Arche USA team who is a bridge between L'Arche USA and the local L'Arche community. They are responsible to assess and support communities in living the mission and vision of L'Arche.
- **Member:** All who take part in the mission of L'Arche.

Why do we use discernment?

We believe decisions made through discernment are made prayerfully, thoughtfully, and inclusively.



# Mandates in the Federation

Mandates are drawn up at the community, national, and international levels.

Community, National, and International Leaders are discerned by their gifts that serve a particular mandate with the expectation of serving as leader for the length of the mandate.



Consider a time when  
you've had to discern  
something in your  
personal life.

# Mandate Discernment

# Who informs the mandate?

All levels of the community provide input – the leadership, board, assistants, staff, core members and friends of community.

A Discernment Team leads this process through prayer, careful listening, and open questions **using a variety of in-person consultations and surveys.**

# Who sits on a Discernment Team?

Members of the team typically include a combination of:

- board members
- short-medium-long term assistants, live-in and live-out
- other members of the staff
- core members
- a Federation Representative
- a friend of L'Arche

# Who selects the Discernment Team members?

Together:

- the Manager of Community Support and Learning (MCSL)
- Board of Directors (Board)
- and Community Council and/or the Leadership Team

The MCSL and a board member/community member often co-chair the team.

# More about the Discernment Team

Any consultation is confidential and the team is committed to hold confidences as they listen and discern.

After the consultations and surveys, a draft mandate is created and shared with the community for feedback. The final mandate is affirmed by the board.

This new mandate will inform the Community Leader discernment.

# Community Leader Discernment

# Who selects the Community Leader?

Usually, the same team that leads the Mandate Discernment.

The team does this with consultation from the community and final confirmation from the Board.

If a Community Leader is affirmed, a mission letter is drafted that outlines that particulars of employment, including details on term limits.

How is a  
Community  
Leader  
selected?

The Discernment Team considers the unique skills and capacities a leader needs to animate the new mandate.

They also keep in mind the State requirements and an updated job description for the role.

# Key Questions in the Process

- If the current Community Leader has not reached term limits, are they open to leading the community in another mandate?
- Has a recent review of the Community Leader been conducted?
- How does the community perceive the leader, especially as aligned with the new mandate? Are they open to continued leadership from the Community Leader?

# Transition Teams

If the current community leader will be leaving the role, a transition team may be developed to accompany them. This team serves as a support to the leader in this time of change.

Transition Team members are approved by the outgoing leader and may be recommended by the MCSL, board members, or the leadership team.



## First Steps...

- Decide:
  - When to start?
  - Who is on the team?
  - Who leads with Fed Rep?
- Update the full community
- Begin surveying people about their experience in community in relation to the last mandate