Message from Patrick and Eileen:

The preparations for the Federation Assembly in Belfast are well underway. The Team, led by Pat Favaro, has spent time in the city, discovering the place, the people, and their stories. Meanwhile, in your communities and countries you have been invited to think about who will be the people to represent you at the Assembly. You have been reflecting on the Mandate for the Federation, and we hope you are praying for the Nomination process for the new International Leaders.

A Federation Assembly always signals a time of significant change and it brings an invitation to growth. The theme for this Assembly is **Re-membering our future … Rappeler l’a-venir ensemble**. During our Jubilee year, we experienced the life and vitality of our communities across the Federation. We showed our best face to the word and we drew inspiration and energy from the experience. It is tempting to think that our best face is the one we wear all the time, but we know that is only part of the story. In our daily lives we all struggle to be true, to love, to forgive one another. We all experience breakage in relationships, we suffer the death of our hopes and dreams, we hurt one another. This is the reality of our lives. It is important to acknowledge that reality and to make choices that will take us ‘back to life’. Re-membering is an act of our memory, in which we recall our experience of living as our best selves and it leads to a decision to go forward with hope, with faith in God and in one another. As we make life-giving choices we re-member, reform or rebuild the body of our community and of the Federation.

The material that Hazel Bradley and others have prepared is a rich resource to help us all begin the conversations and rituals that will help us re-member the body of our communities. We know you will be moved and inspired by the story of Michael Lapsley and the experience of Ruth Patterson as they witness to the ways in which they re-member their lives and the lives of those with whom they work for healing and reconciliation. We encourage you to take time in your communities over the coming months to use this material as a preparation for our time together in Belfast next June.

We also ask you to hold in your prayers those members of the body of L’Arche who are living particular challenges at this time; the communities in Africa are facing significant leadership transitions and as we know, times of change bring insecurity. We continue to hold in prayer the communities in the Middle East where the impact of war and the movement of displaced people is a daily reality, especially for the community in Damascus.

And above all, give thanks. Give thanks for the life of each of our communities and in particular for the witness of those who were able to be part of World Youth Day in Cracow in August, where thousands of young people were touched by the presence of people who live with the experience of disability and their companions in L’Arche.

*May your celebration of L’Arche Family Day serve to deepen the bonds of communion throughout the Federation.*

Patrick Fontaine          Eileen Glass
International Leaders
SEPTEMBER TO OCTOBER RESOURCES

Recognising that we are one body, and each one is needed; identifying what we need in order to build the body

We invite you in your communities over the weeks of September and October to begin the Journey to Belfast by:

1. Watching some short films:
   - Michael Lapsley: Film 1 – MY OWN STORY
   - Ruth Patterson: Film 1 – WHAT I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT FORGIVENESS
   - Web Series # As I am: Il Chicco, Raffaella Monterosso - TAKE CARE OF YOU
2. Celebrating L’Arche Family Day (1 October),
3. Praying for the preparations for the Federation Assembly
4. Finding ways to become more aware of the wider body of L’Arche and the gift of each one
5. Identifying what you can do to build up the body of L’Arche

MICHAEL LAPSLEY and RUTH PATTERSON FILMS on FORGIVENESS and RECONCILIATION:

An Introduction

Families are places of struggle and reconciliation, as are communities. We need to deepen our understanding of how to work on forgiveness and reconciliation. To help us with this, L’Arche International is providing a series of short films, 7 of Michael Lapsley, 6 of Ruth Patterson, who very generously gave of their time and wisdom for L’Arche. Each speaks in English but the films are sub-titled in French and Spanish. These films which form part of the L’Arche Forgiveness and Reconciliation Project are good resources and a helpful preparation for Belfast 2017. With each film there is a reflection paper. The films and accompanying reflection papers can be used for formation, in team meetings, for reflection days etc. We encourage you to make good use of this material which will be available in the months leading up to Belfast 2017 starting from September.

Fr. Michael Lapsley was exiled by the South African Government in 1976. He joined the African National Congress (ANC) and became one of their chaplains. Whilst living in Zimbabwe he discovered he was on the South African Government hit list. In April 1990 he received a letter bomb in the post. He now runs the Institute for Healing of Memories in Cape Town. He has also written a book about his experiences: Redeeming the Past: My Journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer.
http://healing-memories.org
Michael Lapsley: Film 1 – MY OWN STORY

1. Show the film

2. Work with the accompanying Reflection Paper

3. Reflection Questions on the film in terms of Re-membering the Body, the theme for Family Day:

   • Michael felt he could not be fully part of the body as he ‘couldn’t be a neighbour to a black person.’ This was because of the South African political situation. What stops you individually in your community being part of the body of L’Arche; what stops your community being part of the body of the International Federation?

   • Michael’s response was to join the ANC. What is your response – as an individual / as a community?

   • After the bombing Michael received love and support from all over the world which helped him when he was most needy. What do you receive from the wider body which helps you when you are in need? How can you help others in need in your community? In the federation?

Ruth Patterson was the first woman to be ordained as a minister in Ireland. She is a Presbyterian minister, and since 1988 has been Director of Restoration Ministries, a non-denominational, Christian organisation committed to peace and reconciliation based in Northern Ireland. She is one of the Church Leaders that L’Arche International works with and has written a number of books on forgiveness and reconciliation. She has given many talks and retreats in L’Arche and co-founded Faith and Friendship in Northern Ireland, a movement inspired by Jean Vanier.

http://www.restorationministries.co.uk
Ruth Patterson: Film 1 – WHAT I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT FORGIVENESS

1. Show the film

2. Work with the accompanying Reflection Paper

3. Reflection Questions on the film in terms of Re-membering the Body, the theme for Family Day: Ruth talks of the importance of being a good listener. We need to re-member and to tell our personal stories – and to be heard. The more we know each other’s past stories and have compassion for each other, the more we build the body.

- Take time in small groups for each person to tell his or her personal story.
- Really listen to the personal stories of the other people in your group.
- Take time in silence to honour each person’s story after the person stops speaking.
- Give thanks for each person.

Web Series # As I Am : Il Chicco, Raffaella Monterosso – TAKE CARE OF YOU

The video from Il Chicco is part of a series of 12 videos on the International Website (there is one a month over 2016). Do watch the others!

Show the As I Am video from Il Chicco of Raffaella Monterosso

Reflect or discuss: In your community are you:
   a. The one who is helped?
   b. Or the helper?
   c. Is it always like this, or do the roles sometimes change for you? How?
L'ARCHE INTERNATIONAL FAMILY DAY 2016 (1 october 2016)

Re-membering the Body

Introduction:
At the International Federation Meeting in 1993 at Cap Rouge, Quebec it was decided that the first Saturday in October each year should be celebrated as L'Arche International Family Day. The aims were to:

1. Pray for all the communities across the world and become more aware that we are an international family linked together.

2. Raise money for L'Arche International so that it can continue to support communities locally.

This year we begin the preparations for the International Federation Assembly which takes place next June 2017 in Belfast. The theme for the assembly is:

Re-membering our future ... Rappeler l’a-venir ensemble

The theme for L’Arche Family Day 2016 is **Re-membering the Body** to help us on the ‘Journey to Belfast’. In English a literal meaning of ‘re- member’ is ‘to put back together again the different parts (members) of the body’. On Family Day we recognise that we are part of a larger body, where each ‘member’ is important, each ‘member’ has a place. We are one body and each one has a place and is needed for the particular gift he or she brings. We need to be aware of what we need in order to build up the body of L’Arche – in our own communities, and in the body of the federation.

In Belfast next June, we will become more aware of the wider body of the Federation, of the place of each community in it, and look at what we need in order to build up the body for the future.

L’Arche Family Day is also a time to help us as we continue to reflect on Forgiveness and Reconciliation. To be one body together, we need to be able to celebrate each other, forgive each other and be reconciled.

Below are some suggestions of ways to celebrate L’Arche Family Day. There are many suggestions. Choose what works for your community. Use your own creativity adapting the suggestions for your own reality – and ENJOY!

**IDEAS FOR A CELEBRATION**

Feel free to adapt, change, add to, ignore the suggestions as is best for your community and culture. And please make the material accessible for the people in your community.
If you plan to celebrate all together as a community then when reflecting on any question, choose just one main central question, choose one clear activity and symbol. The other ideas could be used on other occasions. Some people could appreciate having more questions to reflect on and so we offer several questions for them.

1. Sing some gathering songs of praise and celebration

2. Give a word of welcome affirming each one’s place of belonging in the community and in the L’Arche family worldwide.

3. Project a map of L’Arche in the world or stick one on the wall:
   - Point out the countries where there are L’Arche communities
   - Point out the communities which have connections with your own community and tell the stories of the links
   - Point out the communities named by Patrick and Eileen and explain why they have named these communities

4. Read – or tell – a simplified version of 1 Cor. 12: 12-31, 13:13 (the body)

   For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

   Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

   On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way…..

… now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

A simplified version:

A body has many parts.
All these parts together make up the body.
Each part is needed.

A foot on its own is no good.
If all we had were eyes, how would we hear?
If all we had were ears, how would we smell anything?

So there are many parts of a body – but all have a place and all are needed.
The eye cannot say, “I don’t need hands!”
The head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”

In fact the weakest parts of the body are the most needed,
And those parts of the body we are ashamed of need to be treated with the most respect.

When one part of the body suffers, the rest of the body suffers.
When one part of the body is happy and well, the rest of the body is happy and well.

Now, we all make up the body of Jesus Christ – and we all have different gifts:
Some are leaders, some are teachers, some are good at healing, some are good at helping others, some are good at speaking languages.

But not everyone is a leader, not everyone is a teacher, not everyone is good at healing, not everyone is good at speaking languages – each of us is needed to give our gift whatever it is.

There are 3 great gifts – faith, hope and love, but love is the greatest gift.
5. Activities:

a. Invite everyone in the community to stand holding hands forming the shape of a body if seen from above (see the photo of L’Arche in Switzerland forming the L’Arche logo as seen from above to give you an idea of what is possible):

- Explain we are all needed to make the body!
- Ask which part of the body people would like to be: the hands making things, the eyes to see where we are all going, the heart to love, the feet to travel, the stomach to enjoy good food!

“I can do nothing without you!”
On the Ark, in L’Arche, we need each other!
b. Make a large cardboard cut out body / or ask one person to lie on the ground and lay a rope around the outline of their body so when s/he stands up the shape of a body is visible on the ground / or place flowers, sticks or stones to make the outline of a body:

- Put photos of communities on the body shape until the body is filled, especially photos of communities your community is linked to. Name the communities as you do this and sing a song of thanksgiving for them.

- OR put photos of each community member on the outline of the body until it is filled in, name each person out loud then sing a song of thanksgiving.

c. Stand round the outline of the body and different people read lines from the following reading about how to live well in community, how to be one body:

**Romans 12:**

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine;
hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;
love one another with mutual affection;
outdo one another in showing honor.
Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope,
be patient in suffering,
persevere in prayer.
Contribute to the needs of the saints;
extend hospitality to strangers.
Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.
Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.
Live in harmony with one another;  
do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;  
do not claim to be wiser than you are.  
Do not repay anyone evil for evil,  
but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.  
If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.  
Beloved, never avenge yourselves, … for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”  
No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.”  
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

A shortened simplified version:

We are many people, but we belong to one body. We belong to each other.  
We each bring a gift to the whole body.

Love one another.  
Do good to one another.  
Do all you can with enthusiasm,  
serve each other,  
serve the Lord.  
Rejoice in hope,  
be patient in suffering,  
be faithful in prayer.  
Help those in need;  
Welcome strangers.  
Rejoice with those who rejoice,  
weep with those who weep.  
Live in kindness and peace with one another;  
Do not be proud.  
When someone hurts you, be kind back to them

d. Show the painting “Mutuality”: 
• Who is giving? Who is receiving?
• How do we give and take in a family?
• Get into pairs:
  o A stand, B sit
  o B stand, A sit
  o Discuss how you felt standing, sitting? In which position did you feel strong? Weak? Comfortable? Uncomfortable?
  o How can we give and receive?
  o Tell a story of someone ‘weak’ who gave to someone ‘strong’.

e. Show the paintings below, and others from the Online Art Exhibition and from members of your own community – all are paintings of people by people with learning disabilities in L’Arche.

• Reflect on the people in the paintings:
  o What do you see in the painting?
  o What is the story behind the painting?
  o What do you find beautiful, interesting, challenging in the painting?
  o What was the past of the person, people in the painting?
  o What is happening for the person/people now?
  o What is the future of the person/people in the painting?

• OR simply enjoy looking at the paintings.
• Invite people to draw/paint each other.
• OR invite people to draw/paint their community.
• Send your paintings as a gift to another community with whom you are linked with an accompanying message:
  o Naming and giving thanks for the gift the community brings to the whole federation.
  o Assuring them of prayers for what is difficult at present.

‘Untitled’, by Elizabeth Pereyra, El Arca Argentina

‘Hannah’, by Katie Benulis, L’Arche Irenicon, USA
'Untitled',
by Rouamba Kouka Gildas (Kouka),
L'Arche Nongr Maasem, Burkina Faso

'47 Centre Street',
by Tom Krysiak, L'Arche Daybreak

'Untitled'
by Hani Zaki Habeeb, L'Arche Al Fulk, Egypt

'Och Aye The Noo',
by Ionutsa McClelland, L'Arche Inverness

'Imagination',
by Ismaël Charles, L'Arche Carrefour, Haiti

'The Saint is Smiling',
by Alina Domnicz, L'Arche Sledziejowice, Poland
6. Suggestions for prayers:

- Sing “Father make us one” in as many languages as you know.
- Pray for the Family of L’Arche:
  - that each community might be a real home for each one
  - in thanksgiving for each community and especially for those we know
  - for those communities who are going through difficult times
- Pray for wisdom, sensitivity and compassionate understanding so that we might truly build communities of forgiveness and celebration which are places of growth and a sign of hope for our world
- Pray for the preparations for Belfast 2017
- Say or sing or listen to a recording of the L’Arche Prayer from another country
- And / or all say the Lord’s Prayer in your own language as you hold hands in a circle

7. End with a celebration meal

- Ask for recipes from community members from other countries, or from communities in other countries with whom you are linked. Cook these recipes.
- Sing a grace from another country.
- Take a photo of your community enjoying the Table of Fellowship, being one body together.
- Send the photo to another community and to L’Arche International.