Introduction by Tim Moore
In L’Arche, we’ve developed a culture of strategic planning called Mandates. Mandates are fixed year periods, somewhat like presidential terms, in which a community has discerned “This is what God is calling us to pursue in the next few years.” There’s an elaborate process in which a committee is tasked with seeking input from every level of the community: from Core members to Board members, from staff to volunteers engaging the question: where do we hear the heart beat of God? After gathering initial feedback, all parts of the community gather for a structured day of dreaming together and then deciding together. So a mandate is a clarified direction: a community says of itself “we’re going there.”

L’Arche Atlanta 2014-2018 Mandate:
Strong Heart + Deep Roots = Broad Impact

During the course of our community’s first mandate, we carried out the invaluable work of founding our community, based on the L’Arche Identity and Mission.

How will we continue the great adventure of L’Arche in Atlanta?
The adventure lies in the challenges we face today:
• Finding the resources we need.
• Calling new people into the Mission.
• Navigating the ongoing transitions at all levels.
• Facing the specific challenges of our social system in Georgia.
• Discovering how we will grow.

The following tensions are crucial to hold because there is life in them:
• Being a fundraiser, service provider and principally a life-giving faith community.
• Hearing the great cries of need and desire in our city and determining how best to engage or respond, in fidelity to our Mission.
• Being a young and transitioning community.
• Celebrating the founding of a loving and healthy community and recognizing we can become more inclusive and diverse.

The impact of L’Arche in Atlanta is directly connected to both the health of our household community (which is our heart) and the depth of our roots in the broader community.

Recognizing our transitional phase and growth potential, we aim to build upon our foundation and strengthen our community’s leadership by
• Working to facilitate healthy transitions in the community at all levels.
• Ensuring that core members and assistants have a significant voice in decision making.
• Identifying, nurturing, and modeling essential qualities of L’Arche principles at all levels.
• Keeping structures and strategies consistent with our Identity and Mission.
• Strengthening our partnership with communities and governing bodies throughout L’Arche USA and the International Federation.

Recognizing the opportunity to nourish our new roots of community life, we aim to deepen our communal and spiritual life by
• Continuing to cultivate a spiritual life that is rooted in the essential nature of L’Arche and welcome the wider community to also share in our spiritual life.
• Deepening our roots as an ecumenical faith community, and growing our relationships with others from a broader spectrum of faith and cultural expressions.
• Supporting and strengthening the rhythms of community life in the house
• Broaden our network of support relationships, i.e., therapists/counselors familiar with disability needs, accompaniers for assistants (and potentially for core members)
• Continuing to offer opportunities for growth and formation for all members of the community
• Continuing to strengthen our professional competencies as a licensed provider in Georgia
• Determining ways of inviting the wider community to participate in our L’Arche spiritual life
• Maintain thriving connection with the region/US/Federation

Recognizing that relationships are at the heart of our work in the L’Arche house and in the broader community, we aim to deepen our roots and broaden our impact by
• Establishing a strategic growth plan for L’Arche in Atlanta (exploring various sustainable models, rooting ourselves in a more diverse way).
• Maintaining and strengthening fundraising capacity for short and long term growth.
• Maintaining and strengthening relationships throughout Georgia (telling our stories, forming and educating others in the philosophy of L’Arche, developing partnerships).
• Developing our communications tools both internally and externally.
• Connecting more intentionally with groups who are often excluded (disability, culture, geography, faith, and race) so we can listen more broadly, increase our diversity, and find more ways to live the Identity and Mission of L’Arche.
• Acknowledging our unique position of receiving calls from those seeking help and those offering help, and finding ways to listen, connect and support, as we are able.
• Adding at least one more house to the community and exploring new ways of growing our daily life community and expanding our impact beyond residential services.
Dear Friends of L’Arche,

It’s official: L’Arche has had a successful beginning. As I greet you for the first time as the new Community Leader & Executive Director for L’Arche Atlanta, I’m filled with gratitude for all the hands that contributed to the success of the founding period of L’Arche Atlanta. I give thanks for the leadership of our founding Director, Curt Armstrong, and for his dedication to moving L’Arche from an idea to a reality. Under his direction, L’Arche established itself as a community, built a strong network of financial supporters, developed the rhythms and rituals of a faith community, and established a strong social services agency. I give thanks also for our Board of Directors for their countless hours of support and dedication to building L’Arche in Atlanta. And of course, I give thanks to you, our community of prayer partners, financial supporters, friends, colleagues in mission, and fellow sojourners on the journey towards wholeness. Thank you for holding L’Arche in your heart, for carrying us with your financial support, for remembering us in your prayers, for being a part of our community.

These last few months were full with the richness of transition. We said goodbye to Curt, and to Sara, one of our founding assistants, and to Chelsea, a live-out assistant from the Episcopal Service Corps. Our hearts were heavy and our spirits sad but we looked with hope at their new and exciting futures and blessed them on their journeys forward. We were also given a passage of great joy as we welcomed two new assistants, Megan & Andrew, who you will read about later.

And so what comes after a successful beginning? An emerging future, one filled with hope and possibility. In this issue, we look at the last few months and give thanks for what we’ve experienced. We also look to the future with hope and excitement about what’s to come. We’ve only scratched the surface of what God’s calling us to be in the City of Atlanta.

Let us go together,

Tim

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**Five Questions For Our Two New Assistants**

Pictured with core member Patrick on the left are **Megan Best** and **Andrew Kleczek**

1. **Where are you from, where did you grow up and where did you go to college?**
   - **Megan:** I grew up in Coppell, Texas, and came to Atlanta from the Dallas area. I just graduated in May from the University of Dallas. I received a bachelor of arts in History with a focus in women’s American history.
   - **Andrew:** My father is retired military, so I grew up wandering across the country and parts of Europe. I’ve lived in New Jersey; Texas; Virginia; North Dakota; Bedfordshire, England; Bitburg, Germany; Omaha, Nebraska; Central Illinois; Indiana; Michigan; and, most recently, in Boston, Massachusetts.

2. **How did you first learn about L’Arche?**
   - **Megan:** When I was a senior in high school, I did an author presentation on Henri Nouwen. He was the first to introduce me to L’Arche. I was attracted to the way he described the “at-home-ness” he felt at L’Arche Daybreak in Canada.
   - **Andrew:** I first learned about L’Arche three or four years ago in passing from a friend of mine Chris Lyman-Waldron. Chris’ wife, Leah, was a classmate of Tim Moore’s at Candler Seminary. I connected with Tim this April and learned more about L’Arche then.

3. **What led you to pursue being an assistant with L'Arche Atlanta?**
   - **Megan:** Through reading more of Nouwen’s works during college I felt more and more called to visit a L’Arche community. I also talked with friends at the University of Dallas who had heard of L’Arche and encouraged me to pursue joining a community, preferably close to Dallas. I contacted the folks at L’Arche USA, and Ellen Eischen encouraged me to visit L’Arche Atlanta during my winter break. Even though there was not a current assistant position open, she assured me that I would enjoy the vibrant L’Arche Atlanta community. I visited in January of 2014 and loved my stay! John, Terry, and Patrick invited me into their lives for that short weekend, and I couldn’t stop talking about them when I went back to school. Needless to say, when I heard that there was an assistant opening, nothing held me back from joining L’Arche Atlanta.
   - **Andrew:** L’Arche’s model struck me as far more human than any other that I’ve experienced or come across while working in the field.

4. **What unique skills, interests and passions do you bring to the community?**
   - **Megan:** Throughout my life, I’ve found my listening to others a natural gift. Effortlessly curious, I am always eager to ask people about their life experiences and empathize with them throughout our conversation. I do find it relatively easy to live in the present moment with the person who is right in front of me. Interruptions are sometimes the most significant moments in life, and we miss out when we dismiss them. I also have an affinity for the everyday (what some may call “mundane”) since I know that in the most humble situations, Christ is present. Cleaning and organizing are probably some of my most favorite tasks. Last, but not least, I love to laugh and smile! Enthusiasm is rarely lacking in my life. I strive to work towards the cheerfulness and deep joy of the L’Arche Atlanta home.
   - **Andrew:** I’m a recovering balloon twister. Well, maybe not fully recovering (you can check out my work at www.drewsballoons.com or follow me on twitter @drewsballoons). I’m pretty passionate, goofy. I keep things pretty light and like to have some fun, which I think carries over to the work and to the core members. Also, I’ve previously worked in more clinical or medical model settings, so I’m familiar with how some of that works.

5. **Do you have plans for the long term as far as vocation? If so, what do you want to be and do going forward?**
   - **Megan:** I would love to always have a hand in L’Arche. I feel called to living a simple and honest life with others in a welcoming home. Right now, L’Arche fits that calling perfectly. I pray for God’s continued guidance and direction.
   - **Andrew:** I plan on moving to a mountain top, raising goats and chickens and writing a long and dark series of children’s dystopian novels. That, or I’m going to move to a seaside town and twist balloons for tourists on their way to and from the beach. Or maybe I’ll join a monastic order and make beer and train dogs.
Affirmation Day 2014

A glorious day was had by all as the core community of L’Arche – core members, board, assistants, Faithful Friend volunteers, staff members, visiting members of other L’Arche communities and family members - gathered to affirm the Mandate for the next five years, commit specific ways we would support it and affirm Tim as the new Community Leader.

The process of writing a Mandate and making the transition between Community Leaders is a well-established ritual that is practiced in L’Arche communities around the world. It felt as if L’Arche Atlanta was truly entering the world federation as we made these first major transitions.

One enduring image of that day is of L’Arche Atlanta as a tree – with deepening roots and a broadening cover of branches, offering shade and protection for all who seek to sit under its branches. There are many specifics that go into deepening the roots of L’Arche and in strengthening its heart so that its life-blood flows. We each named how we would contribute to supporting the Mandate’s goals. Many voices had gone into writing the Mandate and the process was affirmed by individual commitments to living it out.

Another enduring image is of Curt passing the wooden shepherd’s staff to Tim. Gratitude abounded. Folks offered gifts to Tim – lighthearted and serious – and named the gifts Tim brings to L’Arche. We also named ways we will support him in this new role. We wrote his gifts and our commitments of support on paper leaves that were hung on a small tree that will stand in the L’Arche office.

In the midst of food, laughter, tears and stories – a new phase of L’Arche Atlanta’s life was begun. The day ended with the blessing song for Tim that could also be for L’Arche Atlanta as a whole in it’s new chapter, “May the blessing of the Lord be upon you, we bless you in the name of the Lord!”

Lisa Persons has been a volunteer, founding board member, neighbor, and advisor to the L’Arche Atlanta community for several years and shared this report with us.

L’Arche Jubilee!

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of L’Arche in our world. On August 4, 1964, Jean Vanier welcomed Raphaël Simi and Philippe Seux into a small home in Trosly-Breuil, France, and planted the seeds of what has become a worldwide movement of 146 L’Arche communities in 35 countries.

L’Arche will be celebrating this golden “Jubilee” anniversary across the world from May 2014 – April 2015. Friends of L’Arche are invited to celebrate and rejoice in the gift of life shared with people with intellectual disabilities. Visit the L’Arche USA anniversary page or contact us to learn more about how you can join the celebrations.

L’Arche is 50 years old! To be able to celebrate our Jubilee year is an amazing gift. When I welcomed Raphaël and Philippe from a violent institution, little did I know that L’Arche would grow into the worldwide network it is today. So many people over these years have come to L’Arche and discovered the deep value of people with intellectual disabilities, who if accepted, loved, and honored have much to give to our world.

Let us all go forward into the next 50 years with much hope and intentionality, growing but also deepening our vision and letting ourselves be continually transformed by the relationships we share in our communities so that we may become an ever more inspiring presence for our world.

- Jean Vanier

Farewell Party for our founding community leader Curt Armstrong and his family.

In the course of the evening, we celebrated Curt as a man who wore many hats!
During 2013, we certainly learned and lived the reality that L’Arche Atlanta is a public-private partnership. It was our first full year to be a full-service provider of contracted services for adults with disability licensed by the State of Georgia and a fully recognized community in the international federation of L’Arche. The marks of this dual identity were prevalent every month of the year.

Here’s a quick journey through the year with highlights that brought growth and maturity to our young community. In January, Curt Armstrong and Jimmy Locklear participated in and helped lead a fundraising workshop in Montreal with representatives from L’Arche communities across the US and Canada.

In February and March, the extended L’Arche Atlanta community gathered for a potluck meal and a movie at St. Bart’s and contra dancing at Oakhurst Baptist. We also launched into a several month audit by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability. Both of these were steps on our road to excellence as a celebrating community and a professional provider.

As we grew, we experienced change and the need for different resources both human and material. Growing pains are natural and expected. For sustainability, we launched the Heart of L’Arche Society to develop a group of people who believe in our vision and want to make three-year commitments. Tim Moore, then a house assistant, began to split his time between building this society and fostering life in the house. House Coordinator Jessica Bridges was building an atmosphere of welcome and trust and also helping core member Lara Swenson move to a place that would serve her needs better.

As the state audit continued, assistant Sara Ellet was knee deep in tracking all of our compliance activity during the summer. Core member John was learning new skills in contributing to the life of the house along with welcoming neighbors into the joy of friendship. By August, we had another new core member in Patrick who continues to give Terry and everyone in the community a smile whenever he enters the room.

David King joined the team as program director and we said a fond farewell to Lisa Downs who had served the community well as the program coordinator through the initial launch phase of our community.

September brought our first anniversary celebration and an amazing experience of gratefulness and satisfaction to the hundreds of folks who have helped the birth of L’Arche in Atlanta. Along the way there were many meals shared together and the celebration of Thanksgiving, birthdays and accomplishments. And we played more music, danced, played games, shared meals and watched movies.

By the end of 2013, we had successfully completed the audit, expanded the HOL society and built a foundation for life in the house. We also began the process of asking God and each other what the future of L’Arche Atlanta might be. The groundwork of developing a new mandate for the community was being laid.

Approximately 250 friends, families, fellowships, foundations, faith communities and businesses gave annually, quarterly or monthly to sustain this young community during 2013. Right at $200,000 was invested in the vision to bring a vibrant sign of life and imagination to Atlanta. And another $159,000 came through government funding as our public-private partnership came to full fruition on Mead Road.

You were a part of this in so many ways. Give thanks and as you reflect on this community and your own families and fellowships, reflect on L’Arche as an expression of our most human and peaceful desires to give and receive, to bless and be blessed.

L’Arche Atlanta Board President
James Washburn’s Message

Looking back on 2013, we have had many reasons to celebrate. One year ago we celebrated our house’s first anniversary, recognizing the efforts of so many of you who contributed in innumerable ways to the creation of our L’Arche Atlanta Community. More recently, we celebrated the success of Curt Armstrong’s term as our founding Community Leader, and Curt has returned to France to begin work with L’Arche International.

But even as we were celebrating our Community’s first major milestones, we have wasted no time in looking toward the coming years. Beginning last December, we embarked on a process for defining what we will seek to achieve in the next four years. In June, we affirmed our new Mandate, embraced Tim Moore as our new Community Leader, and welcomed two new assistants to our home. As we continue to build roots to strengthen our foundation, we are branching out to spread our message and diversify our community. L’Arche Atlanta is poised to reach out more widely to welcome new friends across the region and to broaden the reach of our message.

Yet for all of the excitement and opportunity, we remain grounded in our humble mission of living life together as persons blessed with a wide array of gifts and talents. It is this mission that brought us together in the first place and will continue to center us in our future efforts. The home you have helped to create is a place of wonder and joy. Thank you for all you have done, and we look forward to moving forward with all of you.

### FRIENDS OF L’ARCHE ATLANTA, INC.

#### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2013 (UNAUDITED)**

**PUBLIC SUPPORT & REVENUE:**

- Community Investment:
  - Contributions –
    - Individuals $169,329
    - Foundations 26,200
    - Community Organizations 6,491
    - Corporations 15,000
    - Board Members 14,300
  - In-Kind Contributions 28,641

- Other Revenue:
  - Medicaid Provider/Agency Funding 136,114
  - Social Security Room & Board 22,815
  - Miscellaneous Revenue 2,691
  - Interest Income 8

**Total Public Support and Revenue** $421,589

**EXPENSES:**

- Program $279,863
- Management & General 57,634
- Fundraising 52,262

**Total Expenses** $389,759