

10 Rules for Life (continued)

9. Listen to your deepest desire

Vanier said, "We are very different from birds and dogs. Animals are very different." He says that unlike with animals there is a "sort of cry of the infinite within us. We're not satisfied with the finite." He asked, "Where is your greatest desire?"

10. Remember that you'll die one day

"I'm not the one who's the king of the world and I'm certainly not God," said Vanier. "I'm just somebody who was born ninety years ago and will die in a few years time and then everybody will have forgotten me. This is reality. We're all here, but we are just local people, passengers in a journey. We get into the train, we get out of the train, the train goes on."

* As reported by Edward Kendall in *The Tablet*, September 14, 2018. To see the entire video go to YouTube and search for "Jean Vanier—10 Rules for Life"

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Barbara Der João Rocha
Fred Dunston Jean Vanier
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Summer 2019

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On Becoming More Human

The Wisdom of Jean Vanier

When Jean Vanier turned 90 last fall he commemorated the occasion with a YouTube video, sharing his thoughts on life and on growing older. He spoke about success, vulnerability, listening, fear and love. *

1. Accept the reality of your body

Vanier said we must become at ease with our bodies. That body is fragile, like all bodies. We are born in weakness (as a little child); we will die in weakness. And when we get to a certain age – ninety – we begin to get weaker." He added, "I have to accept that I'm ninety. I'm not fifty, or forty, or thirty."

2. Talk about your emotions and difficulties

Being human is to love, and we must learn to speak about our emotions.

3. Don't be afraid of not being successful

Vanier added, "we judge quickly because the need to win is so powerful .. but you have to discover that you are beautiful as you are, regardless of whether or not you are successful."

4. In a relationship, take the time to ask "How are you?"

Vanier asked "Has he married his success in work, or has he married his wife? What is the most important? Is it to grow up the ladder in promotion?" He continued, "Take the time to ask how others are, what they need, and try to listen."

5. Stop looking at your phone. Be present!

To young people he said, "You are people of communication." But then he asked, "Are you people of presence? Are you able to listen?" "To be human is to know how to relate," he added.

6. Ask people "What is your story?"

Vanier emphasized the importance of relating to people and listening to them. He said, "To meet is to listen: Tell me your story. Tell me where your pain is? Tell me where your heart is? What are the things you desire?" He added, "I need to listen to you because your story is different than my story."

7. Be aware of your own story

"You are precious. You have your ideas: political, religious, non-religious, you have your vision for the world. Your vision for yourself," said Vanier. He acknowledged that when we fear our

identities, worldviews, and cherished opinions are being taken away from us we are liable to become angry. He added, "we have to discover where our fears are because that is the fundamental problem." He asked, "Maybe in your story there is a story about fear?"

8. Stop prejudice: meet people

Vanier said, "The big thing about being human is to meet people." We need to "meet people who are different" and "discover that the other person is beautiful."



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Public Launch!

On April 8 we officially launched the “We All Belong Campaign” as part of our plan to redevelop our current property. The new accessible building will replace three L’Arche homes and provide 10 suites for people who are able to live semi-independently. We will also provide affordable housing for others who wish to be part of our intentional community. The campaign is well underway with 50% of the project cost secured through the support of BC Housing and many generous donors who have already come forward. *We will have more about our project in the Fall edition of our newsletter.*



Denise Haskett describes some of the unique features in the plans for our new building at the Public Launch.



Sr. Marie Zarowny, spokesperson for the Sisters of St. Ann, addresses the Public Launch audience with thoughts on the importance of this project and why her congregation decided to support it.

My L’Arche Journey

I first became involved in L’Arche in the mid to late eighties. I was in my late twenties and was coming to the end of an architecture degree at UBC. It was a time of real spiritual upheaval in my life. I was very open to the spirit, read a great deal and began attending church for the first time since growing up in the Anglican Church in Ontario.

Perhaps it was something on the radio, or something I read by chance. Maybe the familiar name Vanier caught my attention and somehow I became aware of L’Arche and as luck would have it there was a community nearby – Shiloah in Burnaby. I visited and don’t have a clear memory of that visit. But I do recall reading Vanier’s Community and Growth and I will never forget finishing that book while seated at a kitchen table, pushing it away and saying “uh oh”. The message was undeniable. Here was a real faith and I couldn’t ignore this.

Shortly afterwards one of the leaders of Shiloah asked me what I planned to do when I graduated from architecture in a month or so. I had no plans and she invited me to come and live in community at L’Arche.

Far from the comforts of home, uncertain of my immediate future, the message of Jean Vanier firmly in my mind and heart, I said yes. It seemed quite natural.

So I lived in Nazirah house with Guy, Marvin, Chris and Barbara and there I learned the joys of a simple life. How were the Canucks doing? What pair of socks to wear? What were the favorite streets to walk on a warm evening? And of course the joy of coming together for all manner of celebrations. It was truly living in community.

Hugh Ker

Hugh is the Vice President, Development, at Polygon Homes. He also serves L’Arche as a “We All Belong” Capital Campaign Ambassador and is a member of our Honourary Campaign Committee.



Thank You Shiloah Event :

Louise Cummings gave a reflection on Ezekiel 47: a little stream become a healing river .

From Denise’s Desk

Celebrations

During the month of June we hosted two very different celebrations. Both involved our founding and our future.

If you had walked past our main building (also known as Shiloah) in Burnaby on the weekend of June 14 you would have thought the circus was coming to town. Big white tents were set up in the parking lot and in the courtyard as we prepared for our “Thank You Shiloah” celebration. The mission of the weekend was to express appreciation for this building and all the memories it holds and connect with the friends who had created those memories with us over the last 45 years. With the planned redevelopment of this property we thought it would be important to recognize how important this place has been in our history.

It was wonderful to see old friends greet each other, hear their stories and learn more about how their L’Arche experience had been formational in their lives. There was a slide show that spanned the 45 years of our history, a thanksgiving service in the courtyard, games in the park, a dance with live music in the parking lot and, of course, the opportunity to share meals together once again.

There was one guest who came whose experience in the building was not as positive as the rest. In fact, it was terribly painful. She lived in this building when it was still the United Church Home for Unwed Mothers. A few years ago she reached out to us as part of her healing journey. She came on the weekend to also say good-bye to this building and to support the redevelopment of the property. I was honoured that she chose to be here and pray that her healing will continue.

We are grateful for all who made this celebration possible and for those who willingly shared their stories with us. Although the size and shape of our building will change, I trust our community will remain strong and vibrant.

Two weeks after our “Thank You Shiloah” celebration we hosted another important event that spoke about our history— a public celebration of Jean Vanier’s life.

Even though we took time to remember him within L’Arche, it became evident that we needed to give people in our city an opportunity to celebrate his life as well. For that reason, we hosted a public memorial service where we could honor the life of this extraordinary man.

Two highlights of the service stand out for me - the first was when people attending the service came forward to receive a blessing from people in our community. The second came at the close when church leaders from three different denominations stood together to pray for L’Arche globally and locally. It was just the kind of thing that would have made Jean smile.

With his passing, we feel even more deeply that it is now our responsibility to continue to live out his vision and legacy. Thank you for helping us make that possible.

Denise Haskett

Executive Director/Community Leader



The Most Reverend J. Michael Miller, CSB, The Reverend Dr. Gordon How and Dean Peter Elliott at the Jean Vanier Memorial



Procession by L’Arche Community Members offering symbols of Jean’s life.