

# Friends of AMA Newsletter

December 2024



Dear Friends of AMA,

As this year draws to a close, we reflect with gratitude on all that has been made possible through God's grace and your generosity.

We were thrilled to renew our partnership with L'Arche in Cork, Ireland, as we sent Katherine Heffernan and Emily Saunders earlier this year. You'll hear from both of them in this newsletter! They've both expressed the desire to continue volunteering with us here in Worcester for a few months in 2025—a testament to their ongoing commitment to service. We're eager to welcome them here.

In August, we bid farewell to Jillian Boes as she wrapped up her time with the Kids Kabin community in Newcastle, England. Her creativity and dedication brought joy to countless children in the neighborhood, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

One recurring theme we've heard over the years is how AMA volunteers grow through their experiences. While change is often challenging, the transformation that unfolds is profound, shaping lives in unexpected and beautiful ways. Through their service, our volunteers discover Christ not only in those they serve but also within themselves.

We all wish you a joyous Christmas. May Christ's light shine brightly on you and your loved ones in the year ahead. -Peace, Sandy

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*Grateful*

*"True love is generous."*

-St. Marie Eugenie

## Katherine Heffernan - L'Arche, Cork, Ireland

A Year in the Life: L'Arche Cork

Hi friends,

This will be my last report from my outpost here in Cork Ireland as my Irish volunteer year is sadly, coming to a close. Still, on the bright side, it seems like a good time to share some of my favorite moments from this year. I must start by saying that L'Arche Cork has incredible core members who make their program truly something extraordinary. Over the last year, I have had the privilege to share life with Aoife, Sharon, Mary, Nuala, Eileen, and Jim. The six of them not only opened their home but their hearts to me. When I look back at the past 11 and a half months so many fond memories flood my head. Days filled with friendship and laughter. Highlights of my time here include our weekly trips to Mass and Le Chelie for tea and scones, our weekly house reflections, outings to the cinema, walking in Ballincollig Park, our house holiday to Skibbereen, and the retreat to Rostrevor, Co. Down, in Northern Ireland.



**Aoife, Nuala, and Katherine catching the bus home after watching Dragonkeeper at the cinema.**

***“We laughed and had so much fun just living in that moment. Aoife and I shouted to the clouds, ‘God is good!’” -Katherine***

One of my treasured L'Arche memories concerns the time that Aoife and I saw a sun shower outside the kitchen window during breakfast. The sun was peeking through the clouds and the rain was pouring down when I jumped from my seat and ran out the front door. Aoife followed behind me and we twirled and danced around while the rain came pouring down. We laughed and had so much fun just living in that moment. Aoife and I shouted to the clouds, “God is good!” -- just as we did when we shouted it to the cliffs on our house holiday to Skibbereen.



**Katherine helping Aoife with her homework.**

Throughout my time here in Ireland, God has been my strength and refuge. I also continue to be inspired by the words of St. Mary Eugenie: “Love never remains idle: it makes us creative and impels us to heed all the appeals of the world and to find new ways of answering them.” God lit a fire within my soul to serve, and I would urge anyone questioning if they are called to this path to jump into service. This experience has changed my entire life. My faith life, for example, has grown exponentially. It's clear to me that faith and service go hand in hand, as they've helped foster a deeper relationship with God in me.

**TIME to STUDY**



## Katherine Heffernan - L'Arche, Cork, Ireland

It's sad to say goodbye, but there's some good news, too. Inspired by time in Ireland, I decided that my time as a volunteer didn't have to be quite over. So, you'll be hearing from me at the AMA location in Worcester, Massachusetts in the coming months. I would like to say a sincere thank you to the Assumption Sisters, Sandy, and to my beloved family and friends who have supported my journey here.



**Katherine and An Croi house take a trip to Marina Market for dinner and to see the Christmas Lights!**



## Emily Saunders - L'Arche, Cork, Ireland

Hello!

Several passages in the Bible reveal to us that God does not call the qualified, rather he qualifies the called. For example:

1. For the LORD gives wisdom, from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (New American Bible Revised Edition, Prov. 2:6)
2. Whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (American Standard Version, Rom. 8:30)
3. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. (American Standard Version, Eph. 2:10)

L'Arche is the perfect example of how God does this. Many of the volunteers in L'Arche have only just finished high school, and even those with higher degrees don't necessarily have relevant experience - let alone experience working with individuals with intellectual disabilities! However, this experience is not needed. Just as God provides for individuals, L'Arche provides training for volunteers and allows us to learn and gain first-hand experience. For example, I have a bachelor's degree in International Affairs. While the coursework for that degree allowed me to develop some transferable skills, none of them was directly related to social care/work. When I started in L'Arche, I never thought I would be able to complete the tasks I now complete with ease. I would not have had the confidence to assist others in their daily routines nor know how to safely administer medication. On top of all that, I learned to drive on the opposite side of the road, which as an American took a while for me to get used to! I'm glad I was able to confidently learn to drive on streets that were so foreign to me and help out my community.

**"I never thought I would be able to complete the tasks I now complete with ease." - Emily**



**Emily, Angela, John and Esther having fun bowling.**



## Emily Saunders - L'Arche, Cork, Ireland

Even more importantly, L'Arche also taught me life skills. Since coming to Ireland for L'Arche, I have been away from home for the longest period of my life, and I fully expected that to be a rough and difficult adjustment. While it wasn't the easiest transition, I was surprised by how quickly I adapted to it. When my emotions are high, I am grateful that there's always someone around who notices and jumps in to offer comfort or support - residents, staff, or the house leader.



**Residents, Therese and Clodagh, with Emily and friends Berenice and Anna, heading out to the monthly Disco Party!**



**Emily with friends Jessica, Assisants Esther and Katherine at Black Rock Castle**

I have also, become part of a vibrant community of friends. I am so blessed to meet this friend group who became my family away from home. Going home will be bittersweet because I'll miss the home and community we created together in Cork. Still, I know it's time for the next chapter.



## Trip to Ireland in April!



**Retreat in Rostrevor, Northern Ireland with residents and assistants, (left) and a visit to Emily's house for breakfast! (right)**



**Thanks to Director Kathleen Keaney for the invite!**

**Fun with the AMAs in Cork, Jillian joined us for a few days! (right)**

