

# “L’Arche” by John Cook and Fritz Schloss

May 19, 2013

## Pentecost

Frederick Schloss and John Cook are both members of L’Arche Greater Washington, DC ([www.larche-gwdc.org](http://www.larche-gwdc.org)), and both have personal ties to Seekers and other churches living in the Church of the Saviour tradition. Frederick’s mom Emmy Lu Daly is a member of Seekers. John has been the leader of L’Arche locally for 17 years.

L’Arche is an inter-denominational Christian community that welcomes people of all backgrounds to share life together. Community life is centered around four communal homes and the 16 members who have intellectual disabilities, known as “core people.”

No text of their joint sermon is available, but the following was given to members of the congregation as a handout:

### **Becoming Jesus, Becoming Human: The Journey in L’Arche**

L’Arche offers a journey of corporate and personal transformation and liberation patterned on the story of Jesus’ life journey and purpose, as described in the following excerpts from *Befriending the Stranger* by L’Arche founder Jean Vanier:

Societies are generally built like pyramids, founded on a hierarchy of power: at the top, there are a few rich and

powerful people; at the bottom, a great number of weak and marginalized people; in between there are different categories, more or less clearly identified. At the very bottom – perhaps even outside the boundaries of the pyramid – are all those who are rejected for one reason or another.

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Jesus came into the world to change and transform society from a “pyramid” in which the strong and clever dominate at the top, into a “body,” where each member of society has a place, is respected and important.

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If we are close to people who are weak and broken, the pyramid will gradually be changed into a body and we will live in unity, thanks to them.

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The vision of God is to go down the social ladder to take the lowest place in order to be with the weak and the broken. Then God rises up with them to build a new humanity which does not forget or exclude anyone.

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Do not seek the company of the powerful and influential but go down the social ladder to meet the poor and broken, not to do things for them but to be with them; to enter into a heart to heart relationship with them, to become their friend.

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1. What stands out to you as you read this?

2. When you were a child or a teen, what was your understanding or vision of what it would mean for you to “succeed” as an adult?

3. As you contemplate the societal pyramid and the journey that Jean Vanier describes, where are you on the pyramid? How do respond to his notion of going down the social ladder to take the lowest place in order to be with the weak and the broken? What would be the cost to you of your choosing that journey? What would be the cost to your family? To your faith community?