



**L'Arche USA Receives Grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to Launch **Sacred Stories**, a National Initiative Elevating the Compelling Faith Stories of People With and Without Disabilities in L'Arche in the United States.**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Portland, OR – [L'Arche USA](#) has received a \$4.97 million grant from [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) through its National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life 2025. The grant will support Sacred Stories, a groundbreaking, multi-year project done in collaboration with [L'Arche Greater Washington DC \(GWDC\)](#), [EverAble](#), and the [Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate \(CARA\)](#), that will identify, produce, and share compelling faith stories told by people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in L'Arche communities in the United States.

L'Arche USA is one of 60 organizations from across the United States that have received grants through the initiative since 2024. Grantees include media organizations, denominational judicatories, publishers, congregations, educational institutions, and other nonprofit organizations.

**About Sacred Stories**

Sacred Stories is a five-year national project designed to center and elevate the lived faith experiences of people with and without IDD, and to widen both theological and everyday understandings of leadership, belonging, and spiritual depth. Building on L'Arche's six decades of inclusive community life, the project will:

- Identify and amplify diverse stories from within L'Arche that reveal the vibrancy and hope of Christian faith.
- Model inclusive storytelling, affirming the God-given gifts and leadership of every person, regardless of ability.
- Deepen connections between faith and disability communities, expanding opportunities for people with IDD to participate in and lead spiritual life.
- Invite the public into deeper spiritual reflection through films, audio prayers, retreats, and an accessible curriculum rooted in themes such as love, grief, hope, and forgiveness.



Over the course of five years, Sacred Stories will produce eight short films, a feature-length compilation, four interview-based videos, forty original audio prayers, and a fully accessible curriculum, as well as host multi-day and one-day retreats nationwide.

Laura Giddings, National Leader & Executive Director of L'Arche USA, said:

"We are honored by Lilly Endowment's support of this work. For decades, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in L'Arche have shared wisdom, faith, and leadership to transform communities. Sacred Stories will allow these voices to be heard more widely—and in their own words—inviting churches and the public into deeper reflection on where God is present and who leads us in faith."

L'Arche GWDC has played a central role in shaping the vision and approach for this national project from the beginning. Luke Smith, L'Arche GWDC Community Leader & Executive Director, shared:

"Sacred Stories is a unifying opportunity—one that reminds us how much we need one another's voice and wisdom. It's been an honor to work with our national partners in developing this initiative. We're excited to continue as a lead community, strengthening a partnership rooted in collaboration, faith, and deep respect for the diverse voices of L'Arche across the country."

Michael McDonald, the Founding Director of EverAble shared his hope for the films, and the impact Sacred Stories will make:

"From the earliest days of film, the stories that stay with us are the ones made with care and deep attention. But attention can settle anywhere—on celebrity's shine, on the churn of trends, on the spectacle and aesthetics of distraction. The real question is always the same: to what are we giving our attention? The attention that leans toward the soul is far rarer in modern cinema. This grant allows us to work in that artistic lineage—to make the kind of cinema where people with intellectual disabilities can share the depth and texture of their spiritual lives. Our hope is that these films create more space for wonder, for reflection, and for the quiet forms of faith that shape a human life."



### **About the National Storytelling Initiative**

The aim of Lilly Endowment's National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life is to help organizations identify, produce and share with a wide variety of audiences compelling stories that portray the vibrancy and hope of Christian faith and life.

### **About L'Arche USA**

L'Arche USA is part of a global movement of 180+ communities in 37 countries where over 11,500 people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities share life, foster belonging, and contribute their gifts to the world. Across 24 communities in the United States, L'Arche USA advances the rights and inclusion of people with IDD through inclusive leadership, engagement, and bringing the power of community to life, seeking to change society so people living with intellectual disabilities can thrive.

### **About Lilly Endowment Inc.**

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. A primary aim of its grantmaking in religion is to deepen the religious lives of Christians, principally by supporting efforts that enhance congregational vitality and strengthen the leadership of Christian communities. The Endowment values the broad diversity of Christian traditions and endeavors to support them in a wide variety of contexts. The Endowment also seeks to foster public understanding about religion by encouraging fair, accurate and balanced portrayals of the positive and negative effects of religion on the world and lifting up the contributions that people of all faiths make to our greater civic well-being.