

THE LEADING EDGE.... "Edge Thoughts"

Come to the Edge. We might Fall. Come to the edge. It's too high!
COME TO THE EDGE. And they came; and he pushed; and they flew.

Christopher Logue – from Ode to the Dodo – Poems from 1953 to 1978 ARCAN Logo Designed by Phyllis Gallant, CND

ARCAN NEWSLETTER – SPRING EDITION – JUNE 2021

ARCAN MISSION STATEMENT

Rooted in Gospel values and inspired by the charisms of each religious congregation the mission of ARCAN is to provide a supportive network committed to adult learning, inclusive actions, embracing diversity, along with an awareness of the new consciousness that all life is sacred and connected.

ARCAN VISION STATEMENT

The vision of ARCAN is to be a mutually supportive network of Associates and Sisters in Atlantic Canada living a new and dynamic expression of religious life and spirituality for the 21st century. We inspire to invite one another to a wider embrace of Gospel values and to live a commitment of love in relationship with all creation.

A message from the editors:

Welcome to the 2021 spring edition of the ARCAN newsletter. The theme of this issue is planned around HOPE; spring offers hope in many ways, especially in nature, and in our basic industries of fishing and farming.

Dear Pope Francis spoke in his address to workers in September 22, 2013," We must sustain hope in everyone, among all of you and among all of us who are far away. Hope is both yours and ours. Hope belongs to everyone." Today we are all pained at the news of horrific past events which have caused unbearable suffering in our indigenous peoples, and we must have hope there can be real actions for truth and reconciliation.

We hope as you read about the charisms of four of our religious congregations, and how the associate groups live out of these charisms, your hope will be sustained. The info on "SAFE" illustrates actions offering hope for persons with addictions; info on "JPIC" offers hope for responding to current social issues, and a memorial is a reminder of the hope for eternal reward after a life well-lived. We hope you enjoy.

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What is the most looked up scripture reference in the Bible? The answer is Psalm 23. It gives a great **HOPE** and reminds us not to quit, not to give up, and not to surrender to the pressures of life. When you know the Lord is walking with you, you will press on and keep your eyes fixed on the author and finisher of our faith.

ARCAN ZOOM MEETING MINUTES RECAP

The semi-annual ARCAN Steering Committee meeting was held on Friday/Saturday, April 16/17. All 8 congregations and associates were represented. New religious members from the Sisters of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary were welcomed.

Following a review of the agenda, the regular 'check-in' took place. At this meeting, in addition to the associate update, some of the sisters provided updates on the current issues within their own congregations. Many of us are experiencing increasing age and decreasing membership, which causes us to think of the future. Groups are embracing the ZOOM (or similar) technology in order to gather safely, although some have been able to meet face to face.

The financial report was presented and approved. In addition, a report to the congregations was sent out to the Steering Committee for review. The report is an update on the activities of ARCAN designed for the congregations who have provided sustaining funding. (Post Script - The report was finalized and sent out to the congregations in May, 2021).

The Saturday meeting started with a morning of reflection led by Anglican Priest Reverend Gerald Wescott.

We were advised of the pending 'dissolution' of NACAR – (North American Conference of Associates and Religious). ARCAN (and many Canadian congregations of religious and associates) has been a member of NACAR for many years. It was decided to send a thank you letter to NACAR on behalf of ARCAN, and Ronnie MacDonald offered to do this (Post Script – this was sent out in May, 2021)

2022 will be the 20th Anniversary of ARCAN. A committee is being struck and ideas for celebration sought. The newsletter team for 2021 was formed, consisting of Dianne MacAskill, Mary MacLean and Anne Bown. The two newsletters will follow the Spring and Fall 2021 meetings. Ronnie MacDonald's executive term concludes at the Fall 2021 meeting and a new Executive member will be sought at that time.

Bill C-15 "UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act" is now before Parliament. Dianne Macaskill provided information on this bill and encouraged members to review the material and write the Minister of Justice requesting that the bill be passed. The Steering Committee agreed that ZOOM was still the safest way to hold a meeting and the Fall 2021 meeting, scheduled for Oct 22/23rd will take place by ZOOM.

Respectfully Submitted Anne Bown Secretary-Treasurer



Fr. Gerald Wescott - DEEP LISTENING

Alden Solovy in his prayer "Wildly Unimaginable Blessings" invites us to dream blessings so unexpected. I think that our time together in April gave us those moments in so many ways. Friday as each group shared, we were gifted with hearing the many ways that our charisms invite us to live in and from love.

How fortuitous that Sister Maureen O'Keefe described the theme for the Sisters of Mercy's upcoming chapter as "Mercying: Imaging the Face of God in all Creation" and then to have Father Gerald Wescott present a spiritual session on how we arrive at that imaging through <u>deep</u> <u>listening</u> and centering prayer.

Father Gerald invited us to think of the Trinity as the lover, the beloved, and the breath of the Spirit. He then connected that to how we honour each other, and God in each other, and open ourselves to the Spirit in and around us and in all of creation.

Father Gerald shared different modalities for deep listening. He invited us to open our minds and move from ordinary awareness to a deeper awareness of life and love in Christ. He also asked us to open our Christ's self so that we might recognize that all life is connected. We are not whole until we are all whole.

Several times throughout the session he said "my new friends whom I am in love with already" This seemed to me to be a model for encounter that allows for a sacred connection and invites each one to enter that place where we are always inside love. Gerald called us to practice deep listening by noticing the divine that permeates all that is.

The second part of the session was on centering prayer. Gerald asked us to be still, focus on breathing in and out. On the in-breath, listen for God's "I love you" and speak that love out into the universe as love returned to God. Some descriptors of that time were that the practice was soothing, peaceful, calming, and tingling.

He also quoted Merton as saying, "The door to heaven is everywhere begging for love" Father Gerald's presentation helped to anchor us in love through deep listening, attention to contemplative practices and noticing the love that is within and around us. He ended by reminding us to honour each other and God in each other; So...in the words of Alden Solovy...

"Let us dream together wildly unimaginable blessings to notice where kindness flows from the river of love and goodness flows from the river of grace."

Peggy Gorman RSCJ Associate Halifax, Nova Scotia

CHARISMS - The Spark Within Us

Sisters of Martha of Antigonish

As Associates of a particular religious community, we are all called to the charism of the Congregation. At a May, 2021 NACAR ZOOM Conference, the keynote speaker, Sr. Carol Zinn CSJ, spoke about charism as the spark within that ignites the Gospel flame! We are called to do the work of the Gospels! This call begins with our Baptismal Call, to love God and to love and serve neighbor as Jesus has shown us. We are carriers of the charism from the very beginning! We are blessed to have our journey confirmed again and again by choosing to be faithful to the call of the Gospel every day!

As Associates, we are called to live this wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit we call charism, in many ways. "Charism" does not depict only one gift, but a variety of gifts, as St. Paul tells us in (1 Cor 12: 4-6),

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit.

There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people"

As an Associate of the Sisters of St. Martha, I felt that spark ignite within me when I met a Sister of St. Martha, Sr. Millie Campbell, for the first time. God rest her soul! There was something different and unique about how she was with others. It was her kindness and openness to others, and her welcome to all no matter their circumstances, that drew me in. I did not know exactly what that

attraction was, but I would now say it was the Martha charism of "Gospel Hospitality" that I came to recognize in Sr. Millie. That charism was being called forth in me!! Being called to live the charism of Gospel Hospitality means being called to live a life of love, a love that is open to all of life. I am challenged to see every encounter in my life as a chance to live Gospel Hospitality, a chance to offer kindness, acceptance, compassion, and friendship. The charism of Gospel Hospitality also invites me to deepen my relationship with God and to nurture that relationship with time spent in dedicated prayer. Answering the call to live Gospel Hospitality invites me to listen, to grow and allow myself to be transformed to the best version of myself, the one that God chose me to be!

As Associates, we are carriers of our respective charisms. They call us to love: to love God, each other and all the earth. We must allow our charisms to move and breathe through us so they may be reflected in lives of love, service, and joy!

Julia Townsend Director Martha Associates for Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish, NS



Congregation of Notre Dame

"~It is true that all I have ever desired most deeply and what I still most ardently wish is that the great~precept~of the~love~of God above all things and of the neighbour as oneself be written in every heart" from the writings of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys

The Charism of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys is "Liberating Education." Marguerite sought to raise people up so that they might, in turn, raise up others. The sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, founded by Marguerite Bourgeoys, have been teachers for a very long time. Now, due to the evolution of society and due to age, there are considerably fewer teaching sisters; however, they still carry Marguerite's charism, only differently.

Some sisters of the Congregation work for and with children who have serious family problems. The sisters welcome them, help them succeed in school and accompany them in their physical, emotional and spiritual development. They teach them how to relate to others and show them how important they are. They free them from being demoralized and help them find their dignity. Some sisters also work for and with adults. They have thus contributed and continue to contribute to the liberation of persons who find, in the endless apprenticeship to freedom, a road that leads to the well-being of women and men who know how to raise up others in order that they may be happy.

This same charism lives on today in the hearts of the Associates as they live out their Baptismal call. Over the history of Associate Relationship much has been learned about the foundress of the

Congregation of Notre Dame. The Sisters and Associates lived and continue to live the charism of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys in a spirit of mutuality by developing a deeper understanding of Visitation Pentecost Spirituality, the CND mission, and the Chapter Orientations.

Together we are rooted in Jesus Christ, therefore we continue to come together in prayer, gatherings, meetings and celebrations. CND Associates seek to extend the heritage of Marguerite Bourgeoys by casting the net wide, sharing the charism of their foundress as they spread the Gospel values in today's world.

We dare to dream that the spark within us fans into a flame to bring about love, justice, compassion and joy to all our brothers and sisters. We dare to dream that the cries of the wounded world will be heard and peace will dispel the darkness. We dream that we can make a difference in this world by loving God and loving our neighbour. When we love and share compassion as Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys lived, we fulfill our promise to God, and the charism of Marguerite Bourgeoys remains very much alive in today's world.



Theresa Ann MacNeil Associate Co-coordinator Congregation of Notre Dame Visitation Province, East

Sisters of Mercy

Catherine McAuley, (1778 – 1841) foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, chose "Mercy" as the congregation's charism and expressed God's Mercy in a way that was radical for a woman of her time, reaching out to serve the neediest in her city.

Catherine was drawn to alleviating the misery of poor and uneducated Irish women. Following the receipt of an inheritance, Catherine and a couple of friends built a house in Dublin and began the work of educating poor Irish catholic women and children, teaching them skills which would enable them to earn a living. The ministry of healthcare was also undertaken.

A congregation of sisters was established, which is now worldwide.

The sisters began their work in education (of women) and health care — but since governments have now taken over these roles, the sisters have moved on to other areas of service: prison service, caring for the poor and vulnerable, focusing on the environment etc.

Mercy Associates today live Catherine's charism through their ministries. Many volunteer to visit and care for those who are alone, elderly or disabled. Some do hospital visitation and participate in various parish ministries, such as sacristan, lector, bereavement team member, Eucharistic Minister.

Volunteers work with St. Vincent de Paul food pantries, other food banks and "The Gathering Place", where the vulnerable and

sometimes overlooked members of our society may find refuge.

In the words of Catherine McAuley, "There are things the poor prize more highly than gold, though they cost the donor nothing; among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look, and the patient hearing of their sorrows."

Barbara Hawley – Co-director Mercy Associates



"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."

— Isaiah 40:31

The Charity Charism

"We share the gift of a call to give joyful witness to love: the love of God, of one another and of all persons. We strive to show forth the love of God by serving those in need in a spirit of humility, simplicity and charity, according to the circumstances of the times. By living this charism in the Church, we share in the saving mission of Jesus who is the love of God made visible."

The Sisters of Charity - Halifax is a congregation of Catholic women religious with a mission (charism) to give joyful witness to love: the love of God, of one another, and of all persons. The Sisters ministries commenced in 1849 in education, health care, and social services in Canada, USA, Bermuda, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Africa. The Sisters founded the Halifax Infirmary and Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, N.S., the first degreegranting institute for women in the Commonwealth.

The gift of a charism is a living grace freely given to those open to receiving it. It is built on the foundation provided by our founders. In the case of the charism of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, on Saints Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac and Elizabeth Seton. And, because it is a living gift, it can be applied in all situations and to all needs in society and the universe throughout time.

Sisters under vows and associates who make promises strive to live out the charism of charity each in her/his own way. The various groups of Charity associates in Canada, the U.S.A, Bermuda and Peru live

the charism in their families, parishes, organizations to which they belong, in nursing homes and in schools or businesses where they may work. Where ever they are called to be, they strive to love as God loves, to serve as Jesus served and to create an atmosphere of hospitality and welcome to anyone in need. Collaboration with other established organizations that serve societal needs is also encouraged.

My dream for the future is that others will hear the call and respond to the charism and its opportunity to play a role in mending hearts broken by racism and prejudice. That the young people who today are so alive to the needs of God's earth will join forces under the charism to help save a world damaged by greed and selfishness. That their enthusiasm will lend a new spirit to the efforts begun by those before them. What shape, what form this united front will take? We do not know. But, rest assured, the gift to accomplish the needed work will always be available to those who listen with an open heart and mind. That is the way of the Spirit.

Ronnie MacDonald Associate – Sisters of Charity of Halifax



JPIC – Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation

JPIC project of CND Sisters and Associates.



Thomas Merton wrote, "You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope."

The CND Sisters and Associates have attended many educational presentations, workshops, webinars, zoom meetings and conferences on topics related to JPIC which encompasses social justice initiatives such as poverty, mining, climate change, peace, and human trafficking.

We have focused on annual action plans, signed petitions, adopted a corporate stance on the protection of and right to clean water; truth and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples; and Bill C-15 presently before our Senate.

The coordinator of JPIC, Monica Lambton, met with our Visitation East coordinators and liaison Sister, Maureen MacIsaac, in May 2021. Although Monica Lambton will be relocating to British Columbia, she did provide our coordinators with HOPE that many of these important projects will continue. The objective of her presentation was to identify the key pieces of JPIC work that was developed with the intention that they be on-going.

Project Water is a forever project. It will never stop until everyone has the "right to clean water". Decolonization and anti- racism issues will continue as we dig through our history books and look at how we can make amends for some of our wrong-doings with our First Nation communities.

Fossil fuels (tar sands) issues are transitioning with a new awareness of their effects on our environment and our employed Canadians. Initiatives on climate change, care of our planet, and supporting Pope Francis' "Laudato Si" and "Fratelli Tutti" encyclicals need to continue. The Climate Action has several programs and resources for education, awareness, spiritual reflection and advocacy on climate change, and various collaborative efforts.

It was recommended CND Associates take further concrete action on only one or two issues of great concern. It was also recommended that we join with other faith and inter-faith groups to be stronger in these urgent concerns. Our support to these great causes can transform ourselves and others.

Dianne MacAskill – Co-Coordinator Visitation Province East Congregation of Notre Dame



"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning" great is your faithfulnss." Lamentations 3:21-23

REFLECTIONS OF HOPE

If we were to conduct a survey today (April 23, 2021) on what we HOPE for, I expect the majority of us would say, "I hope that the pandemic will end soon" or "I hope the borders open soon, so I can see my children and grandchildren". But what does the word *hope* mean.

The word *hope* in the New Testament is from the Greek word *elpis*, meaning expectation, trust, and confidence. It comes from the root word *elpo*, which means to anticipate (with pleasure) and to welcome (https://www.google.com/search). So, hope is a positive expectation.

Hope does not always represent complete freedom from a negative situation. Each day, people hope for different reasons.

A person who has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer hopes the tumour is confined to one small section of her breast, or she may hope that surgery will be scheduled as soon as possible.

A woman receiving radiation for pelvic cancer, hopes that she will be able to maintain her independence and role as mother to her family.

For a patient in a palliative care unit, hope may represent freedom from pain or nausea for a few hours; it can be an expectation of peaceful sleep with no interruptions; or it can be hope that the hospital authorities will allow a few family members to accompany the patient on her/his journey.

How do we develop and preserve *HOPE?*

MY HOPE IS IN THE LORD

In the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, there are almost 150 verses in which the word *hope* occurs, many in the New Testament. (https://www.google.com/search) One of the most famous is found in The Letter of Paul to the Romans:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". (Romans 15:13)

We need no further direction if we prayerfully ask God to sustain us with His Loving Presence.

Denise Isaacs – PEI Martha Associate (no photo available)

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11



Sober and Friendly Environment (SAFE)

Sober and Friendly Environment (SAFE) is a ministry of the Sisters of St Martha of PEI. Opened in the heart of Charlottetown in November, 2018, there have already been about 2,000 individuals come through our door.

We have had to change through Covid-19 experiences like many, but our committed volunteers and benefactors help meet our needs. Working with community agencies when we can to help our clients, we remain committed to the following: What is SAFE? Purpose SAFE is a place for people to socialize in the evening hours without the pull of drugs or alcohol while fostering community connections to help gain and sustain recovery.

Vision Statement: Supporting recovery through connections. Mission Statement: We are committed to our core values of Compassion, Respect, and Hospitality.

We practice these values every day as we engage with people at SAFE, supporting them as they take steps towards recovery. Presently, we are offering yoga, acupuncture, a "Women's Way Through the Twelve Steps", a "Big Book" study, and individual counselling.

We have offered journaling, reading time, movie nights, open mic, disc golf, gardening, games, barbeques, painting and crafts, and parent-child activities. More information is available on Facebook, Instagram, and our website.

Sister Laura Kelly, Coordinator (no photo available)

Soberandfriendlyenvironment@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/SoberAndFriendlyEnvironment

www.safepei.ca



NACAR ZOOM RETREAT – MAY 18-19-20

On May 18, 19, and 20, 2021, over 200 Associates and Sisters from various Congregations in North America attended an Online Retreat via Zoom entitled <u>Charism Carriers: Embracing</u> the Call to Leadership.

The facilitators for the Retreat were Amy Kulesa and Linda Mastro, both Spiritual Directors and Associates of the Sisters of Bon Secours, USA. The Keynote Speaker was Sr. Carol Zinn, a Sister of St. Joseph (SSJ).

The Retreat Experience flowed between prayer, presentation, personal reflection, reflection in small groups, back to large groups and prayer. Some of the highlights were: On Day One of the Retreat: Sr. Carol Zinn in her reflection spoke of the term Charism Carriers. Charism can be defined as a spark or gift of the Holy Spirit for the World. Our work is a response to our Vocation

in Life or our Gospel Call to be followers or disciples of Jesus. As carriers of the Gospel, we are to build up the Body of Christ. We are to be an example of a Vulnerable Love, a love that is open to all of life. We will need to have a Discerning Mind, Heart and Will to discover our strengths and decide to surrender (yield or give over) the ways of the past. Embracing a Call to Leadership will require us to have a commitment to the future, to live fully in the NOW, and to keep our eye fixed on tomorrow, as we live with the total giving of Self.

On Day Two of the Retreat: Session one, Linda Mastro spoke about History and Legacy-Charism as Inspiration for the Future. Linda defined Charism as a favor freely given, a gift of the Holy Spirit, and a spark that lights the Gospel flame. Session Two: Amy Kulesa presented on Discipleship and Personal Call Amidst Changing Structures.

Our Personal Vocation is the call of God of our heart. The Sacred Fire within is our personal sense of Divine Presence and Call, which manifests in unique gifts of service, community, and leadership. We also need to find ways to nurture our own fire within!

On Day Three of the Retreat: Session one, Linda reflected on our Spiritual Life: Our Evolving Vocation. We had time for personal reflection on our Spiritual journey and we started to develop a Spiritual timeline to highlight our Journey to date. Session Two: Amy presented on Servant Leadership: Call as Gift. We had time for personal reflection of our experience of past Leaders.

It is through the development of our relationships with each other that we will create future structures for our Associate Relationship. Amy reflected that the duty of the moment is the Call of God. She discussed that people may be reluctant to be involved in Leadership due to lack of confidence, burn out, over commitment, or a preference to remain in the background. In living the Charism, we are guided by the Spirit. The Charism will move and breathe as it will. We are challenged to keep living it, and bear witness by our lives. Our Leadership is expressed by recognizing and cultivating our Giftedness and Living the Charism.

As Associates, we need to move from Emulation to Expression of our unique manifestation of the Charism's life through our living in the NOW. Leadership will manifest in the future as we develop the following traits: strong and vibrant prayer life (remain close to Christ), vulnerability, openness, helping our communities ask the right questions, thinking outside "the box", creative waiting (having Patience), taking initiative, connecting, surrendering (yield, give over to new ideas), and having resilience and flexibility

Eileen Coombs – Associate Unit Coordinator Western and Central Newfoundland NL Unit of the Union of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (PBVM)



REMEMBERING LINDA – LIFE WELL LIVED



The Sisters of Saint Martha PEI and Associates are remembering one of their beloved associates, Linda Blanchard, who left us on April 27 to join her God and so many of her beloved family members. Linda had lived with cancer for 34 years. Since her diagnosis, she journeyed through sickness and the death of her husband, parents, and siblings. During all this time her faith never wavered.

Her Catholic faith was solid and a great inspiration to us. Linda was initiated into her faith at the age of fifteen. She then felt a call to religious life and joined the Sisters of Charity, NB. Home issues drew her to take a one-year break, but during that time she met her husband, Jack. They were devoted to each other for their 45 years, and raised four fine sons, with whose families Linda had daily communications. Linda also became a second mother to her niece and nephew after her sister died. Linda nurtured her friendships and enjoyed dining out, laughing, joking, and socializing. Linda was devoted member of her parish. She would often be off to daily mass, on a retreat, or a pilgrimage.

The **Ignatius Exercises** changed her life and her life mission. Her mission led her to give the "exercises" or become a "spiritual companion" to many people including some sisters of Saint Martha. This was a blessing to her and to those she accompanied. She was soon invited to be an Associate with the sisters. Her quiet presence was an inspiration to all. She wasn't always able to be present at meetings, but she maintained a great interest and participated as a prayer companion. Many months she would say "Maybe I can attend this month. Call me to remind me."

We were so pleased that Linda did join us for a meeting just a few weeks before she went into Palliative Care, where her hope was "to get my strength built up." She often said that she told the doctors that God was her surgeon. Linda enjoyed many long-time friendships, but she was kind and attentive to people she met and treated everyone as an old friend. We all enjoyed and appreciated Linda's courage and trust in her loving God, and feel confident all her hopes have been fulfilled. Rest in peace, lovely lady!

Submitted by PEI Martha Associates

Spiritual Resources

UTUBE Contemplative Videos – check our own Linda Longmire on uTube www.youtube.com/user/sacredpresence/featured

Linda offers a series of short video reflections on a number of topics.

The BARAT Spirituality Centre offers a number of programs. Including one in December in which our own Linda Longmire participated. To learn more please check out www.baratspirituality.org

The website <u>www.gratefulness.org</u> is recommended. It has articles on, practices for and stories of gratefulness.

A book recommended is <u>"The Happiest Man on Earth"</u> (Beautiful Life of an Auschwitz Survivor) by Eddie Jaku

ARCAN NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE FOR 2021 – Anne Bown, Dianne MacAskill, Mary MacLean

ARCAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - Linda Longmire, Ronnie MacDonald, Anne Bown

We are looking for VOLUNTEERS to form a 20TH
Anniversary Committee. This Committee would come up with ideas to present to the Steering Committee
Fall Meeting in October. Please contact Anne Bown at ambown@nl.rogers.com