

# 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 – *Ode to the Dodo – Poems from 1953 – 78*

ARCAN Logo Designed by Phyllis Gallant, CND



## 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.

## NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

**Anne Bown**, Mercy Associate, NL  
**Mary MacLean**, PEI Marthas Associate  
**Ronnie Macdonald**, Charities of Halifax Associate  
**Deirdre Greene Lono**, PBVM Associate

## We are Pilgrims of Hope

### Message from Newsletter Committee

Welcome to the summer issue of “The Leading Edge.” This issue continues to focus on the theme “**Pilgrims of Hope**” for the Jubilee Year. The last issue reflected on some aspects of “pilgrim”, and this issue will reflect on “**hope**” in positive and real actions in relation to people and a greener earth. You will also find a re-cap of our spring ARCAN meeting and its Spiritual session. This sharing keeps us connected as we “live a commitment of love in relationship with all.” (ARCAN Vision Statement)

The focus on “Hope” was prevalent in many of the check-ins at the April meeting. PEI Marthas used “Holding Hope for the Journey” for its Chapter meetings. The CND’s had a gathering in June with the theme “Pilgrims of Hope in a Synodal Church” and plan August’s meetings with “Cultivating Seeds of Hope”. Halifax Charities’ retreat was on “Hope”, and the NL Mercies meetings reflected on “Mercying in Hope, Peace, and Compassion to Mission”. In this issue you can enjoy an article on the NL Associates Retreat, with reflections on Hope which led to some very positive action. We also include a beautiful Jubilee Year Prayer.

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We HOPE you enjoy this Newsletter. Feedback is appreciated. Enjoy this summer in **continued amazement** and appreciation of all its blessings with your families and friends and all the visitors who will also be blessed by the presence of God in our peaceful and beautiful environment and culture, and will return home filled with “Hope”!

*Cheers: Anne, Déirdre, Mary, Ronnie*



## ARCAN 2025 SPRING MEETING MINUTES

The eight Atlantic Region's Congregations were represented by 4 sisters and 15 associates.

**Associate Check-ins:** The **Mercy Associates** had an advisory committee who submitted a report to the Congregation of recommendations on how Associates may continue to exist as the congregation moves to completion. All the recommendations were approved and the associates continue to invite and provide formation for new associates. Their associates are very involved in parish and community ministries.

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**ARCAN 2025 SPRING MEETING MINUTES – CONT'D**

The **Presentation Associate Group** has an East Coast and a West Coast division, each with a regional Director who co-ordinates activities. They are very committed to continuing in existence with the Presentation charism and identity.

The **Associate Group for the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception** has been existing autonomously for nearly two years and continues active in spiritual, social, educational, and outreach programs. They are especially proud that, now for over 10 years, they, the sisters, and friends provide a hot meal on the first Sunday of each month to people in need of food and / or social support.

The **Congregation of Notre Dame sisters and associates** in Atlantic Canada is called “Visitation Province”. The Associate co-ordinator visits the associate groups, and plans and provides a variety of programs while being very conscious of the transitioning of the Congregation. Two notable programs they experienced included a 6-part series by Lisa LaFlamme called “History and Stereotypes”, and a Pilgrims of Hope presentation by Fr. Raymond LaFontaine entitled “Inequality in a Synodal Church.”

The **Associate Group of the Halifax Charities** uses the concept of “Contemplative Circles” for decision making and for spiritual exercises. They are expecting to move into a state of completion.

The **Associate Group of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Halifax)** is one of 13 RSCJ groups in North America so has a great international focus in service to the Church and the world.

The **Associates of the Antigonish Martha Congregation** will celebrate the Congregation’s 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in June. They are divided into east and west divisions, and a new group with 13 members just organized in Antigonish. They regularly offer a “Come and See” to encourage new associate relationships.

**Sisters’ Check-ins:** Sr. Maureen O’Keefe reported there are 63 Mercy sisters with 23 living outside of NL. They are preparing for their 23<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter with the theme “Mercying with Hope.”

**Sr. Sandy Butler of the Presentations** shared their grief on the recent loss of members.

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**ARCAN 2025 SPRING MEETING MINUTES – Cont'd**

**Sr. Pat Poole of SCIC** reports there are 34 sisters, and they will have their last leadership team, and the theme of their gathering is “The Women in the Gallery---Exploring Possibilities”.

**Sr. Helen Danahy of the Sisters of Charity, Halifax,** reported their preparation for Chapter using “Contemplative Circles” and are very happy to include associates in all their activities.

**The sisters RSCJ Halifax** sent a report they will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonization of their foundress, Sophie Barat. They continue to operate their Spirituality Centre in Halifax, and be involved in the school on their grounds. Their Congregation experiences great growth internationally.

**Business session:** We began to develop a policy on how to disperse remaining funds in the case of ARCAN’s coming into completion.

**Spiritual Session:** Revered Dr Elizabeth Stevenson gave a presentation on “Be Amazed by Spring” (see recap below)

*(Respectfully submitted – Mary MacLean – PEI Martha Associate)*

**Spring ZOOM Gathering - “Be Amazed” with Reverend Elizabeth Stevenson**

**Saturday Morning’s Spiritual session** was led by Rev. Elizabeth Stevenson, a United Church minister from NB (formerly from PEI). It was entitled “Be Amazed by Spring” and explored the mysterious wonder and awe of creation especially in the new life of spring. “God promises a new heaven and a new earth.” “Creation holds the spark of the divine.” “The only way to know God is to know the things of God.” Endurance is taught in scriptures, and it is also taught in what Elizabeth called “God’s cathedrals” in nature such as the development of a butterfly, the growth and attachment of seaweed, and dandelions. “Let God and the world know that you are grateful. Be attentive. Be astonished. Tell about it.”

*(Respectfully submitted by Mary MacLean, PEI Martha Associate)*

## Detailed Outline of Reverend Dr Elizabeth Stevenson's Presentation

**Amazed with Spring** (facilitated by Rev. Elizabeth Stevenson) explores the beauty of nature, spiritual reflections, and the lessons of endurance found in creation.

### **Peaceful Lake**

- Nature reflection walk encourages participants to share observations and feelings.
- Biblical verses highlight the renewal and beauty of spring.
- L.M. Montgomery and Mary Oliver's quotes emphasize the uniqueness of each spring.

### **Amazed with Spring Awe & Wonder**

- Discussion on understanding God through creation.
- Reflection on personal identity and connection to the universe.
- Encouragement to ponder the significance of seeing one's reflection.

### **God's Cathedrals: Dandelions & Hummingbirds**

- Psalm 65:8 emphasizes the awe in creation.
- Dandelions and hummingbirds symbolize resilience and beauty in nature.
- Participants are encouraged to reflect on their emotional responses to nature.

### **Amazed with Spring: Endurance of Monarch Butterflies**

- Monarch butterflies represent endurance and transformation.
- Romans 15:4 discusses the importance of endurance and hope.
- Reflection on the miraculous journey of monarchs and their wisdom.

### **God's Cathedral: Seaweed - Holding Fast with Persistence**

- Seaweed symbolizes persistence and strength amid challenges.
- Encouragement to find hope in nature's resilience.
- Mary Oliver's poem inspires gratitude and connection to the earth.

### **Instructions for living life**

- Emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the wonders of life.
- Encourages sharing experiences of amazement and gratitude.



## JUBILEE YEAR PRAYER

Praise to You,  
God of Hope, born in darkness,  
radiating generous Light.

Drinking gladly from your living stream,  
we watch, advocate, celebrate  
Hope's tender healing, trustworthy integrity,  
unwavering justice.

Encourage us to walk together,  
hearing ... responding to cries of Earth  
and those made poor.

Send us your vibrant Spirit  
filling hearts, planet, universe  
with Hope's shining promise.

One with Jesus, we pray gratefully in his name,  
rejoicing to be called your friends ...

Pilgrims of Hope  
now and forever. Amen.



Thank you for this prayer written and shared by: Sr Roma De  
Robertis - SCIC



## HOPE: The Call of the Associate

### *a Retreat for Redemptorist, Presentation and Mercy Associates*



Far from the world's great pilgrim ways, such as the Camino de Santiago, how can Associates in Newfoundland engage with this Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope? That was the question on the minds of Mercy, Presentation and Redemptorist Associates in May of this year. The answer came through our individual communities' shared vision of the Associate Relationship as a journey toward understanding and living the spirituality, charism and mission of our respective founders.

That conversation begat "Hope: the Call of the Associate", a retreat for Associates and those who walk with them. On May 10<sup>th</sup> 2025, more than 60 Associates and vowed members of the three communities gathered to explore the Associate journey as a pilgrimage of hope. The day focused on contemplation and sharing around just two words: *hope* and *yoke*.



*Mercy, Presentation and Redemptorist Associates gather in St. John's, NL, to explore their call as Pilgrims of Hope*



The first is obvious in the context of this Jubilee Year: the day began with contemplation and sharing about what "hope" means, the challenges of maintaining hope in difficult circumstances, and the ways in which we seek hope. In group discussions, many retreatants shared that they looked for hope in their Parish and Associate relationships, in their connection to the Body of Christ.

Then our facilitator, the extraordinary Dr. Anne Walsh, CSSR, introduced the second, more surprising word at the heart of Jesus' call to discipleship in Matthew 11:28-30 ("My burden is easy and my yoke is light"). Retreatants were invited to contemplate what "yoke" meant to them; most associated it with heavy labour and servitude, until we looked at images of people using a yoke to make it easier to carry or share our burdens.



Photo credit:  
Edith S. Watson

The images invited the question: "How are we called to be *yokes* as Mercy, Presentation or Redemptorist Associates?"

Our conclusion was a revelation: while each community focused their responses to the call through their individual charisms, our Congregations shared a deep commitment to care for the most isolated, poor and vulnerable. So, we are called to bring hope to those who need it most, including ourselves, through sharing the burdens of poverty and vulnerability through presence, acceptance and resources.



Dr Anne Walsh, CSSR, asking retreatants to consider "What can I do?"

We turned again to the word *hope*, contemplating the comments of poet and political activist Vaclav Havel in *Disturbing the Peace*: "Hope is not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but... rather an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed." Havel's words fit perfectly with Pope Francis' insight that *hope* is not "a passive virtue, which merely waits for things to happen.... Rather, "it is a supremely active virtue that helps make them happen."



By the end of the day, through the spiritual alchemy of shared prayer, retreatants somehow spontaneously knew how to answer our call. We pooled our cash on hand to purchase groceries for the empty fridge of an immigrant family whose story was shared by Presentation Associate Gerry Marshall. That's what we could do. That's hope in action.

*Submitted by Deirdre Greene Lono, Presentation NL Associate, with deep gratitude to Ann Walsh, whose Retreat facilitation gave us this beautiful moment*

## Hope for the Earth

### ***Hope for the Earth Blooms in Halifax through Gardening and Community Development***

**"Hope Blooms"** is a non-profit organization in North-end Halifax leading positive change in the community. This began with six youth reclaiming an abandoned plot of land and has led to a movement empowering over 300 youth and families cultivating more than 10 000 square feet of food gardens. A member youth has become Director of a Board who helps provide support and direction to ever-increasing activities and projects. They grow and sell fresh fruits and vegetables at their "Fair Food Market". One shared kitchen provides space for members to cook, sell, and celebrate culturally rich and diverse foods. With their "Social Business" program they make and sell a variety of products such as Happy Hibiscus tea, From the Ground up Medium Roast Mushroom Coffee, Hot Cocoa Boys drink, and five flavors of Salad Dressing. The proceeds have helped provide \$250 000. In scholarships. "Hope Blooms" engages youth to become change agents positively impacting the community. (This Information and more, from <https://hopeblooms.ca/welcome>)



*Article suggested by Sr Helen  
Danahy, Charities of Halifax;  
Written by Mary MacLean, PEI  
Marthas Associate*

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## TREES

In the Garden of Eden, planted by God,  
There were goodly trees in the springing sod.  
Trees of beauty and height and grace,  
To stand in splendor before His face.  
Apple and hickory, ash and pear,  
Oak and beech and the tulip rare,  
The trembling aspen, the noble pine,  
The sweeping elm by the river line;  
Trees for the birds to build and sing,  
And the lilac tree for a joy in spring;  
Trees to turn at the frosty call  
And carpet the ground for their Lord's footfall;  
Trees for fruitage and fire and shade,  
Trees for the cunning builder's trade;  
Wood for the bow, the spear, and the flail,  
The keel and the mast of the daring sail;  
He made them of every grain and girth  
For the use of man in the Garden of Earth.  
Then lest the soul should not lift her eyes  
From the gift to the Giver of Paradise,  
On the crown of a hill, for all to see,  
God planted a scarlet maple tree.

***(Bliss Carmen)***



## ***Hope for the Earth through PEI Watershed Alliance***

Access to clean, safe water is a fundamental right, and essential for the physical, social, and economic well-being of all. All of our drinking water on Prince Edward Island comes from groundwater. I find hope in the protection of our water source when I learn about and from the staff and volunteers in my local Watershed Group. There are 25 Watershed Groups on our Island, each working independently on its own watershed issues, and in cooperation with the others under the identity of PEI Watershed Alliance. This is a list of activities these valued groups focus on:

- |                                       |  |                      |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| * <b>education</b>                    | *water quality                           | *climate change      |
| *stream cleaning                      | *permanent forests                       | *wildlife habitat    |
| *carbon storage                       | *protection from high-level water events |                      |
| *decreased erosion                    | *run-off                                 | *assistance programs |
| *mixed climate-adaptive plant species |  | *public policy       |
| *native plants                        | *water conservation                      | * <b>education</b>   |

The Watershed Groups engage in communities, and work in collaboration with other community-based organizations and sections such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, tourism, schools, and all levels of community governance. These groups provide hope through the example and dedication of their environmental stewardship, and deserve our gratitude and support. (More info at <https://peiwatershedalliance.org>)



Article submitted by Mary MacLean, PEI  
Marthas

### ***Hope for the Earth - Sustainable access to produce made possible by students***

Students of Copper Ridge Academy in Baie Verte, Newfoundland and Labrador wanted to take an existing student project to the seniors' community. The students of the Design and Fabrication course constructed four hydroponic garden boxes for a local senior's complex. The hydroponic gardens boxes can be used to grow herbs, greens and flowers indoors.

The students installed the hydroponic boxes and set everything up. There has already been a crop of lettuce for salads. The Seniors enjoy checking the daily progress of the plants. Employees of the retirement home will take care of the plants during the summer months; the students will be back in the fall.

The goal is to enable the seniors to have continued and accessible access to gardening throughout the year.

The project, which is financially supported by the Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland, provides a wonderful opportunity for students to engage the seniors in their community by creating a sustainable and tasty activity.

The "Seeds of Mercy" Associate group from the Baie Verte act as liaisons with the students on this project.



*Submitted by Mercy Associates Ellie Gavin, Baie Verte, and Anne Bown, St. John's*



**BOOK REVIEW – HOW WE LEARN TO BE BRAVE – MARIANN EDGAR BUDDE**

**“How We Learn to Be Brave”** (Decisive Moments in Life and Faith) – Mariann Edgar Budde, Episcopal Bishop of Washington. Avery books 2023 186 pages

Mariann talks about the decisive moments in our lives. They are preceded by ‘seasons’ of preparation which lead us to those moments and followed by ‘seasons’ of alignment as we live with the decision. At these moments we hope to be able to step up, lean in and do the right thing.

In Chapters 1 to 5 Mariann lays out 5 types of ‘decisive moments’:

- Deciding to Go
- Deciding to Stay
- Deciding to Start
- Deciding to Accept what we did not Choose
- Stepping up whether prepared or not

She illustrates these moments with references to her own life and the lives of others.

Chapters 6 and 7 reflect on the emotional terrain that follows decisive moments:

- The Inevitable Letdown
- The Hidden Virtue of Perseverance

Mariann shows us how to understand and work with the emotional letdown that occurs after a decision. And ends the book with a discussion on perseverance.

Mariann’s language is easy to understand and her references illustrative. There are many ‘gems’ in the book to guide us in our life.



Bishop Mariann Budde is the Episcopal Bishop of Washington DC. She delivered the homily at the January 2025 interfaith prayer service following Donald Trump’s second presidential inauguration.

Her book is available through Chapters.

*Book review by Anne Bown, Mercy Associate*