



Julia Townsend, Director of Martha Associates, gives an update on Martha Associates activities in the past few months. Associates are meeting again, and more gatherings are planned for the future!

Well, as I look out my window, I can clearly see the trees are in bloom and the flowers are beginning to burst to life in vibrant colors!! All hopeful signs that Spring is well under way! The days are becoming longer, the early mornings brighter, while the birds sing joyfully (and very loud!) at the first light of day!! The seasons have changed, and time continues to march forward.

The past two years have presented an enormous challenge for everyone all over the world! We kept waiting for things to be “normal” again, to live again and enjoy life. I suppose, in many ways, we are at this point. At least, we are engaging in life once again, continuing to be cautious as we step out in the awareness that we may never be COVID-free.

Such is the case with the Martha Associates. We are slowly returning to a time where we can gather, embrace each other, and share our faith and our stories. Over the last several months, most of our Associate groups have begun to gather in person. I am delighted to report that I have been able to meet with our Associates and Sisters in Sydney Mines on April 6, 2022. Also, with the Trenton Associate group on April 24, 2022. The Sydney/Glace Bay group have been fortunate to continue a monthly gathering since January 2022. I am blessed to share with this group often, being that it is also my home Associate group!



Our Western Associate Group has endured many struggles during the pandemic. Alberta was subject to frequent and strict lockdowns at times. Although our Associates kept in touch with emails, phone calls and ZOOM, this became tiring for everyone. The isolation was exhausting! Finally, on May 19, 2022, the Lethbridge Associates were able to gather in a large group at the Martha Retreat Centre! It was a special time for them to see each other, to embrace and to share a cup of tea in person. I was also delighted that I could be a part of this gathering. After two years, it was exciting to travel to the West to be with our Associates. The Charism of Gospel Hospitality was certainly alive and well in the West!!!

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During my visits to our groups, I spent time sharing news from the east and the west; also allowing some time for us all to “catch up”. Rather than prepare a formal presentation for my visits, I decided to have a discussion with each group, exploring their thoughts on the future of the Associate movement. As well, I invited them to share their ideas on how we, as Associates, have a role to play in recognizing the charism of Gospel Hospitality in others, speaking what we see and offering those whom we recognize as living their life with Gospel Hospitality the chance to “Come and See” what Associate life offers. This is one way that Associates may assist in the evolution of the Martha Charism.

Since 2019, the Martha Associates have not been able to gather in a large group for the annual Fall retreat. Thankfully, our current plan is to gather in person this year, first in Antigonish on September 10, 2022, and then in Lethbridge from September 23-25, 2022. We have a special guest speaker, Dr. Moira MacQueen, author of the book *“Walking Together, A Primer on the New Synodality”*. Our excitement is palpable!!! Most important however, we are eager to see some of our beautiful Marthas once again, and maybe even be permitted a hug or two!! We are waiting patiently for the day!! Blessings to you all!



~Julia Townsend
Director Martha Associates
June 6, 2022



Julia Townsend (left) with Martha Associates in the Lethbridge, May 2022