

Our Life as Mission

NEWS FROM MARTHA
LEADERSHIP TEAM

 Sisters of St. Martha

ISSUE 16
NOVEMBER 2025

"Standing together in undaunted hope"



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*Photo: July 29, 2025 — Celebrating the
beginning of our 125th Anniversary Year*



ON THE ANNIVERSARY YEAR...

As we marked the Anniversary of 125 years from July 29th, 1900, our hearts were filled to the brim with gratitude and a sense of awe.

The story of the Sisters of St. Martha began with a humble call to serve as homemakers at St. Francis Xavier University, a call extended by Bishop John Cameron who invited us into the sacred rhythms of domestic life for the college. Fifteen women responded to the invitation to begin a new Congregation in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

From our beginnings, we were committed to responding to the needs of the time, and it is that spirit of discernment and generous service that has guided us through the past twelve plus decades. Our journey has called us to let go of the familiar, to surrender what once sustained us, and to step forward into the unknown with trust. Our *collective "Martha yes"* led us from kitchens and laundries to hospital wards where we worked to address the health care needs of the community with compassion and care. It also led us into the classrooms



ON THE ANNIVERSARY YEAR... *continued*

of rural communities, recognizing the transformative power of education. As poverty and hardship persisted, we heard the cries for justice and stepped into the work of social service—advocating for those often forgotten and fiercely loving those in most need.

Today, *that same voice continues to call us*. We stand as advocates for social justice, for affordable and dignified housing, and for our sacred Earth whose voice must no longer be silenced. We carry forward the Mission and Charism of Gospel Hospitality in collaboration with many kindred spirits who walk beside us—we are grateful for your presence.

We, the Marthas, are committed to a life of transformation—a sacred journey that spans a lifetime. Though each of us walks this path from a different place, we are united in spirit, purpose, and mission. We bring our unique gifts and our strengths and weaknesses to this communal call, knowing that *together*

we move ever deeper into the mystery of God's love.

We hold fast to undaunted hope, allowing it to shape our hearts and inform the emerging future we help to build—one that honors our past and embraces God's unfolding promise.

We embrace this anniversary year rooted in tradition, alive in the present, and ever attentive to the Spirit's call. This celebration is not ours alone. With hearts full of gratitude, we embrace the future, trusting that our collective witness will continue to be a light for justice, hospitality and the healing of Earth.

~ Sr. Brendalee Boisvert,
CSM Congregation Leader

**Adapted from the speech "A Lifelong Journey of Transformation and Hope" written by Sr. Brendalee for the Special Mass on July 29, 2025.*

The future is emerging
God graces us with courage
To welcome and help shape it
As we discern God's plan.
Our hearts are open to listen
As we join in prayer together
To walk the way that God reveals
It's a New Martha Day,
It's a New Martha Day to love the world.

~Sister Mary Gouthro

CSM 125TH CELEBRATION UNDERWAY

Standing
together in
hope

The Sisters of St. Martha are currently celebrating their 125th anniversary, marking over a century of service. The Congregation began their commemorative year on July 29th, 2025, under the theme "*Standing Together in Hope: Shaping the Emerging Future*". Since then, several meaningful events have taken place to honour the Congregation's legacy, celebrate the relationships, and look ahead to the future.

MUSEUM EXHIBIT

On July 16th, an impressive crowd of more than 100 people gathered at the Antigonish Heritage Museum for an official opening of Martha Exhibit: *Gospel Hospitality in Action*. The visitors shared greetings with the Sisters and joined in a symbolic walk or bus ride to StFX. The day concluded with a visit to the original Motherhouse on campus. Since opening, the exhibit has attracted visitors from across Canada and beyond, many engaging thoughtfully with the interactive displays, especially the "Wrapping the World in Hospitality" activity. We invite you to view the exhibit!



LECTURE SERIES

The [Antigonish Heritage Museum](#) is also hosting a historical lecture series highlighting different aspects of the Congregation's rich history. Follow the museum's social media channels for updates on upcoming topics. The series will continue through April 2026.



celebrating the present Honoring the past Looking to the future

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ANNIVERSARY YEAR



The anniversary year was officially proclaimed on July 29th, 2025, the Feast Day of Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Sisters, Associates, collaborators, and friends gathered for a special Mass presided by Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick of Antigonish Diocese. After the Mass, guests followed the pipers to Bethany Centennial Garden, where they shared lunch and enjoyed friendly conversation.



CSM 125TH CELEBRATION UNDERWAY



WELCOME AT BETHANY PROPERTY

September 21st, marked a special Feast Day for the Congregation— commemorating the Marthas' move to Bethany Property in 1921. This year, on that beautiful Sunday afternoon, the Congregation hosted a public event titled "Wander With Us!" The celebration began with an official welcome and a short prayer at the Peace Pole, concluding the formal portion of the program. Guests were then invited to pick up specially created brochures —also available on the [Martha website](#)— and enjoy a self-guided tour highlighting key features of the property. Martha Dragon was on hand to greet visitors with her characteristic warmth and peaceful presence!



Peace Pole prayer

THE GIFT OF FOOD

As part of the 125th Anniversary celebrations, Sisters of St. Martha co-sponsored with StFX University the food for this year's Frosh Week Welcome BBQ on August 30th, with another part of the donation supporting efforts to address food insecurity on campus throughout the year.



*L to R:
Muffy, Sr.
Jovita, and
Marielle*

During the event, Sr. Jovita MacPherson reflected on the Marthas' 125-year legacy at StFX. She was accompanied by the university's Orientation Crew chanting the Congregation's Mission Statement. Muffy MacIntyre, Wellspring Coordinator, spoke about the Marthas' ongoing presence at Wellspring, and Marielle Assad, CSM staff, shared how the Charism of Gospel Hospitality continues to shape the Xaverian Spirit and student life today.



celebrating the present Honoring the past Looking to the future

TWIN TREE PLANTING

On Thursday October 2nd, two Red Oak Trees were planted, one on Bethany Grounds, and the other on the campus of St. Francis Xavier University. These “sister” trees, planted and dedicated by St. Francis Xavier University in recognition of our 125th Anniversary, symbolise our shared roots.

Founded in 1900 to care for the household and domestic management of the then-struggling college, the Sisters of St. Martha have nurtured an evolving relationship with the University as homemakers, teachers, librarians, chaplains, students, staff, extension, and Coady Institute workers.



Marthas around the new oak tree at Bethany



*Around the new oak tree on StFX campus,
first Motherhouse behind*

For the last 32 years, the Marthas have offered a space of Hospitality and Welcome on campus at the Wellspring Centre.

We are grateful for the gift of these trees and the generous recognition of this important relationship. May we continue to deepen our roots and be nourished by them.

ANNIVERSARIES AND A JUBILEE

On June 14th, the Sisters of St. Martha gathered to celebrate milestones of Religious Profession — one 75th Jubilee, along with 70- and 60-year anniversaries. The theme, *“Living and Serving with Gratitude and Hope! Alleluia!”*, reflected the joy and faith that have sustained their years of service.

As usual, the celebration began with a special Mass attended by the Sisters, their families, and friends. Each celebrant held a lighted candle—symbolizing the light of Christ received at baptism—and renewed her vows in gratitude for God's love and faithfulness. After the Mass, the Sisters continued the joyful celebration with a festive meal.

May you continue to hear the profound invitation of our loving God to be pockets of hope in our world!



*Sitting in front: Sr. Therese Richard who celebrated her 75th Jubilee.
Standing, left to right: Sr. Jean Harris (60th Anniversary),
Sr. Liz Riopelle (60th), Sr. Lucy MacNeil (70th),
and Sr. Rosaline Tynski (70th)*

CANADIAN RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE (CRC)

During the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) Assembly held in Montreal on May 22nd-25th, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, CSM, was re-elected to a second, 2-year term, as President of the CRC.



Her re-election was met with great affirmation in the form of a standing ovation. Members of the [Canadian Religious Conference](#) and their teams showed their appreciation for Sr. Brendalee's leadership as well as her desire and commitment to improve her French language skills—she is only the second English speaking Religious to serve as President. Her dedicated service to the organization is a significant contribution to building community among Religious Women and Men throughout Canada.

UISG PLENARY

On May 5-9th, Sister Brendalee Boisvert attended the 23rd International Union Superiors General (UISG) Plenary in Rome. The theme was "*Consecrated Life: a Hope that Transforms*".



This Assembly is one of the most significant events in the life of the [Union](#). It brings together Superiors General of Religious Institutes and Congregations from around the world, offering them the opportunity to engage in dialogue and reflection on the theme of consecrated life at an international level. Many view it as a special time to *journey together as pilgrims of hope*.

This particular year, Sister Brendalee attended the Plenary during the exciting time of the Conclave, and experienced the thrill of the *white smoke* and election of Pope Leo XIV! Among the many highlights was the opportunity to visit the tomb of



Pope Francis. She also spent some time at St. Peter's Square where she prayed for the Martha Sisters, Associates, Staff, and Collaborators.

ATRI CONFERENCE



The Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutes (ATRI) conference took place in Halifax, NS at the end of September.



[ATRI](#) offers education programs and workshops addressing relevant issues impacting the temporal stewardship of religious institutes. It also provides a mechanism for the exchange and distribution of information and resources among treasurers and lay collaborators across Canada.

This year, Sr. Jovita MacPherson and Courtney King, CSM Accountant (photo), served as co-chairs of the annual meeting. Five other Sisters as well as members of the CSM Finance Department attended this annual event. Joan Dewar, CSM Executive Assistant, and her family provided music for the event!

MARTHA'S PLACE AT GALILEE CENTRE, ON

On September 19th, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert attended the blessing of a newly renovated space at Galilee Centre in Arnprior, ON—now named Martha's Place. This space is dedicated to fostering community, personal growth, and spiritual enrichment.

The Sisters of St. Martha first arrived at the [Galilee Centre](#) in 1975. Sr. Teresa Ryan, CSM, along with Father Roy Boucher, OMI, laid the foundation stone of the Galilee Centre. Soon after, Sisters Patrice LaRusic and Rosalee Lavalee joined Sr. Teresa in forming the first Martha community to reside in the White House on the property.



Over the years, many Sisters of St. Martha served in ministry at Galilee or participated in its one-year Renewal Program. It was during such a program that Sr. Brendalee herself first encountered the Marthas. Through spiritual direction with Sr. Teresa Ryan, she discerned and embraced her call to join the Congregation.

Sr. Brendalee was honoured to take part in the blessing of Martha's Place. Father David Perrin, Chair of the Galilee Board, welcomed her along with guests, friends, and volunteers. A special lunch was shared before the formal blessing ceremony. This event marked Galilee Centre's 50th anniversary—a celebration of gratitude and a reaffirmation of the deep and enduring connection with the Sisters of St. Martha. It was a privilege to be part of this meaningful milestone.

VOCATIONS CANADA CONFERENCE



On September 22nd-25th, several Sisters of St. Martha, a staff member/Associate attended the bi-annual [Vocations Canada](#) conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Gathering around the theme: *"Hope is our North Star, Shine Your Light!"*, participants experienced two exceptional and inspiring keynote talks, one by Br. Guy Consolmagno, SJ and one by Sr. Barbara Reid, OP.

Br. Guy, a Physicist and Research Astronomer, recently retired as Director of the Vatican Observatory, is a current Director



of the Vatican Observatory Foundation.

He led us through a intriguing, informative, and inspirational talk about his life as a Jesuit Brother, and Scientist. He reminded us of the profound *interconnectedness of all creation*, inviting us to engage both mind and heart in a joyful response to the divine call. He reflected on how science and faith,

VOCATIONS CANADA CONFERENCE *continued*

held in balance, together lead us to Truth.

Sr. Barbara Reid, President Emerita of the Chicago Theological Union and Carroll Stuhlmuehler, CP, Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies and a renowned scripture scholar, transported us through time as she spoke about the Stars and Biblical Journeys. Her presentation was equally inspired and inspiring. She reminded us of how our biblical ancestors regarded the stars,

and what the stars may have to say to us today, pointing out that they themselves respond to the divine call in their very shining, as if to say “*Here I Am.*”

There were several workshops as well that expanded the conference topic with engaging presentations that challenged and invited participants to deepen their understanding of how to build a culture of vocation.



COADY ARBORETUM DEDICATION

On September 18, 2025, the Sisters of St. Martha and the StFX Coady Institute gathered at St. Theresa's Garden for a meaningful ceremony to dedicate four Black Ash trees.

The initiative began after Hurricane Fiona in 2022, when the Sisters lost many trees on their land and Coady Institute generously offered support. The Black Ash, chosen for its cultural significance to the Mi'kmaw people, aligned with Coady's Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program.

With care from Michael Overmars, Jake Monroe, and Brian Haines, the young trees

were nurtured to planting size.

During the ceremony, Executive Director Eileen Alma unveiled a plaque inscribed with the words: “With shared commitment toward social justice, truth and reconciliation. Coady Institute.” She described the dedication as a symbol of lasting friendship and a shared commitment to reconciliation and social justice.



MARTHA ASSOCIATES UPDATE



September 23, 2025

WOW! The year 2025 is proving to be quite an exciting year in many ways! It is the 125th Anniversary of the Sisters of St. Martha and the 45th Anniversary of the Martha Associates. It has also been my distinct privilege to receive 18 new Martha Associates this year!



June 15



- ♦ May 25: Debbie Aker and Alicia Buffet were received at St. Clare Convent in Sydney Mines.
 - ♦ June 1: Linda Neville, Carol Farmer and Flora Marchand were received at the Bethel Presbyterian Church Hall in Sydney.
 - ♦ June 15: Sheila Redden; Leon Maclellan; Marielle Assad; Joseph Khoury; Marie Delorey; Pauline Maclellan; Barry Mackenzie; Janet Becigneul; Debbie Pettipas and Betty Jane Cameron were received at St. Martha Chapel in Antigonish.
 - ♦ September 6: Angie Kolen of the Antigonish group, was received during the Martha Associate Retreat in Antigonish.
 - ♦ September 14: Lisa Noronha and Warren Blust were received in the Chapel at the Martha Retreat Centre in Lethbridge, also during the weekend of the Martha Associate Retreat.
- All our new Associates expressed such great joy at the time of their reception. It was indeed a blessing for all who were present to witness this joy!***

MARTHA ASSOCIATES UPDATE



**THE MARTHA ASSOCIATE
RETREATS THIS YEAR WERE
HELD ON SEPTEMBER
6 IN ANTIGONISH AND
SEPTEMBER 12 – 14 IN
LETHBRIDGE.**

**The theme for the retreats was:
“Healing the Divide: A Journey of
Reconciliation”. It was beautifully
led by Sr. Donna Brady who offered a
sensitive and compassionate view of
the Great Divide with the Indigenous
peoples. She encouraged us to
recognize our own experiences with
Indigenous peoples, and how we can
be a part of the healing process too.
It was eye opening, informative, and
very timely in today’s world.
Thank you, Sr. Donna!**



MARTHA ASSOCIATES UPDATE



I am also delighted to report that a “Come and See” morning was held in Trenton on April 26, 2025. Three lovely ladies accepted the invitation to “Come and See”, and they are all planning to journey with the group this Fall! In addition, we have at least two journeyers in the Sydney Mines group, and two in the Antigonish group, with the prospect of several more! This brings a sense of hope and joy to my heart!!

In 2025, I am also happy to report, that, with the help of the Martha Associate Committee, the Martha Associate Handbook has been revised and a brochure on “Who Are the Martha Associates?” was developed as a tool to share with possible journeyers, or

curious individuals! The Martha Associate History was revised and compiled for the Archives. A great sense of gratitude goes out to Sr. Sarah MacPherson; Sr. Maria Lawrence O’Keefe; Sr. Claudette Gallant and Sr. Catherine MacFarlane who gathered and arranged much of that material, in particular, to Sr. Sarah MacPherson who outlined the early history in such great detail. May Sr. Sarah and Sr. Maria Lawrence rest in peace.

Wishing all our beautiful Sisters of St. Martha a colorful, crisp and delightful Autumn!!

God Bless,

*~ Julia Townsend
Director Martha Associates*



Sisters and Associates

In our mutual sharing:

- We join in prayer, faith development, hospitality and friendship as a means of living out our Baptismal Commitment
- We learn from each other
- We listen to each other and grow as listeners
- We are open to others, accepting of who they are and what they have to offer
- We welcome every encounter in life as an opportunity to show hospitality.



MARTHA ASSOCIATES

We are:

A Ministry of the Sisters of St. Martha and have been in existence since 1980.

We have Associates in both Eastern and Western Canada.

Contact Us

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Sisters of St. Martha

Antigonish, Nova Scotia



Martha Associate Pin

The twin masts on the sailboat represent the Sisters of St. Martha and the Associates, journeying together on the restless sea of life under the protection of St. Martha. Together, the sails form the letter “M”. The vine with the letter “A” identifies the wearer as an Associate

WHO ARE THE MARTHA ASSOCIATES?

READ and SEE

What We are all about!!

MARTHA ASSOCIATES UPDATE



Martha Associates share friendship, a desire to walk together in faith and to answer the call of our Baptism to love and serve God and one another in responding to the cries of the world.

MARTHA ASSOCIATES

We are:

Women and men who identify with the Mission, Vision and Values of the **Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish, NS**. Through the association with the Sisters of St. Martha, Associates have the opportunity to come to a deeper understanding of their Christian call in each of their respective life situations.



MARTHA ASSOCIATES: CARRIERS OF THE CHARISM OF GOSPEL HOSPITALITY!

Martha Associates begin as journeyers who “Come and See” what we are all about. They journey with an Associate Group for at least a year before making a commitment to Associate Life.

Martha Associates gather monthly to share prayer, faith development and fellowship.

Martha Associates participate in an annual Fall retreat.

Martha Associates stay connected through our prayers, gatherings, emails, phone calls and ZOOM.

Did you know?

CSM FACTS

The Martha Justice Ministry was founded in 2016 through the merging of the Social Justice and Ecology Committees, uniting their shared commitment to justice for people and the planet.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- ◆ Since their founding in **1900**, the Marthas have encountered the marginalization of those who are poor and vulnerable. Initially, they distributed relief to the people living in poverty and cared for the vulnerable in institutions, easing poverty through charity.
- ◆ Since **1920s**, they partnered with reform-minded clergy in the Antigonish Movement to improve rural education. By the 1930s and 1940s, their focus expanded to community development and economic self-reliance through study groups and co-ops.
- ◆ In the **1950s**, they pressed for reform of the social services system and for changes in social legislation. Later, they took part in public advocacy events and demonstrations and worked on social justice issues through the **Martha Social Justice Committee**, established in the early **1980s**.
- ◆ In **2010**, in collaboration with the Women's Resource Centre, the Social Justice Committee founded the **Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty**, dedicated to eradicating poverty in the Town and County of Antigonish and beyond. A number of community initiatives have grown out of this coalition, including the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society. Sr. Marion Sheridan, CSM, was a founding member and dedicated leader of the latter.

ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE

During the **1990s**, the Marthas embraced the *Universe Story* and the idea of the *interconnectedness of all creation*. They moved from awareness to action and formed their first **Environment Committee** in **2002**. Five directions were identified for making big and small changes.



Notable achievements include changing to sustainable housekeeping products, the opening of the Contemplative Trail, labyrinth and two hermitages. New recycling and composting practices earned the Congregation the 2011 Mobius Environmental Award.

FOCUS ON JUSTICE

now...



Grounded in the vision of integral ecology, Martha Justice Ministry works at the intersection of social and ecological justice, and in the spirit of

the Truth and Reconciliation process, seeks to foster right relationships among all peoples and with Earth itself. Its mission comes alive through:

- ◆ **EDUCATION:** *raising awareness and inspiring change*
- ◆ **DIALOGUE:** *building understanding and connection*
- ◆ **JUSTICE:** *addressing systemic inequities*
- ◆ **SOLIDARITY:** *standing with communities in need*
- ◆ **COLLECTIVE ACTION:** *working together for transformation*
- ◆ **ADVOCACY:** *speaking truth to power*

Did you know?



MJM Core Group annual meeting in October 2025.

L to R: Mark Nixon, Sr. Joanne O'Regan, Sr. Donna Brady, Darlene O'Leary (MJM Coordinator), Joanne Tompkins, Pauline MacIntosh (meeting Facilitator), Sr. Marion Sheridan, Olga Gladkikh, Sr. Franklyn Ferguson, and Emma Dixon (missing Amy Briereley).



In 2000, between March and October, Marthas stood weekly, side by side with the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and others for the World March of Women 2000 events.

THE MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY CORE GROUP brings together Sisters of St. Martha and lay collaborators united by a shared passion for justice. They guide and support the Ministry's vision and the work of the Coordinator—shaping strategy, creating foundational documents, and stewarding the budget.

THE MJM COORDINATOR leads the educational and advocacy work of the Ministry—developing programs, sharing resources, and collaborating with coalitions and networks on key issues of social, ecological justice, and reconciliation. The Coordinator also oversees the Martha New Growers program, and serves as Liaison to the Sisters of Charity Federation UN NGO.

LIVING THE MARTHA SPIRIT

Darlene O'Leary on finding her place in Martha Justice Ministry

Before coming to work with the Marthas, I spent many years as an academic, studying the work of Jesuit Bernard Lonergan and other theologians. My PhD at Saint Paul University in Ottawa focussed on ethics and economics in Lonergan's own original economic works. My question then was around the function of profit, not as a way for a few to become wealthy, but as re-directed to improving the standard of living for everyone. Lonergan's deeper understanding of economic rhythms helped to outline this ultimate purpose.

In the years following, I can see how I would have loved to have Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* when I was doing my research, in its helpful framing of the connection between economic and ecological justice and integral ecology. Certainly, that work was being done by liberation and feminist theologians and others already but bringing integral ecology into Catholic Social Teaching would have reframed my own work. Now, I am finding an interest in revisiting Lonergan's work in reflecting on where we are as global and local economies struggling with increasing inequality and

This anniversary year is Darlene O'Leary's fifth year as Coordinator of Martha Justice Ministry. She's been invited to reflect on what brought her to the Marthas and the significance of the work the ministry is doing in this time of challenge and opportunity.



the climate emergency. It is challenging work that is needed to address this and to meet the targets set out through the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

During my studies, I had the joy of working at Galilee Centre in Arnprior as the director. I know many Marthas know and love Galilee. It was lovely to be in that space of spiritual grounding. I had the pleasure of developing programs on social justice while there, as well as welcoming people to the land and Ottawa River. Being at Galilee affirmed my need for work that brought spiritual grounding, social and ecological justice, and reconciliation together. Thankfully, I'm able to do just that here with the Marthas.

LIVING THE MARTHA SPIRIT

Darlene O'Leary on finding her place in Martha Justice Ministry

Another important experience for me was working as a socio-economic policy analyst with Citizens for Public Justice in Ottawa. I think CPJ was the place that allowed me to grow in understanding how academic work and faith and justice work can come together through policy and advocacy. I had the wonderful opportunity to work with a great team, and my own work focussed on poverty eradication. We were co-leads of the *Dignity for All* campaign that ran the annual *Chew on This!* events on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (October 17). We also developed an outline of a poverty eradication plan for Canada, a plan that mapped out the strategy we wanted to see from the federal government. This plan was released in 2015, and we think it influenced the federal government to develop its poverty reduction strategy. While the government's strategy wasn't what we hoped, it provided building blocks for continued work to end poverty.

I was so impressed when I started working with the Marthas to see the essential work that has been done with partners in Antigonish to address these fundamental issues that people living in poverty are facing, particularly through the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty. Groups like the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society, Antigonish Community Transit, Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada, and others are models for other communities working

to provide foundational support and structural change.

I think what continues to energize me in this work is the opportunity to deepen our grounding in integral ecology. We do this through time on the land, through the New Growers program supporting young farmers, sustainable farming, and food security, and through building relationships with Mi'kmaw communities. As we see things falling apart throughout the world and challenges in our own communities, I think **we are offering space to deepen and to ground ourselves and others.** Ultimately, I think we are nurturing a way of being in the world that is essential to our survival and thriving. How exciting to be part of this important work!



LIVING THE MARTHA SPIRIT

A conversation with Joanne Tompkins

Martha Justice Ministry Core Group member, Joanne Tompkins, is talking about her involvement in the Martha Justice Ministry Core Group.



Joanne Tompkins recently retired from a 40-year career in public education. She spent the first 15 years of her teaching career in Nunavut working towards creating Inuit-based schooling. In 1996, she "moved South" and spent the next 25 years working in teaching education at StFX University. Her teaching, research, and service have been grounded in social justice and were centered on supporting equity, diversity, inclusion in schooling. She found the most joy being involved in partnerships building the capacity of Inuit, Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian teachers. Prior to joining the Martha Justice Ministry Joanne was a member of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Board for 5 years. For the past 10 years she has been a co-facilitator with Terena Francis, Band Councillor at Paqtnekek, for the Kairos Blanket Exercise, providing education about Truth and Reconciliation to public schools and the wider public.

What inspired you to get involved with the Martha Justice Ministry?

I feel that they look at a broad range of social justice issues and they look at issues in a 'critical' way - looking for structural or systemic solutions that are grounded often in Catholic Social Teaching and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They are involved in DEEP change.

What part of the ministry's work speaks to you the most? What's your 'why' for being part of this group?

I hope I bring some perspectives on Reconciliation related to the Calls to Action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the need for more public education on Treaties, TRC, as well as some knowledge of working 25 years with many Mi'kmaq communities in the province. I feel that the approaches used by the Martha Justice Ministry are more critical and look at issues from a systemic perspective - rather than say using a "charity" response that doesn't look at the larger deeper systems of colonization, Eurocentric thinking, capitalism. I also know the Marthas 'walk the walk' and that I could learn a LOT from being in the presence of these religious women. They have courage and wisdom...

Was there a moment that made you feel like, 'Yeah, I need to be part of this'?"

I think when we did the Blanket Activity with the Marthas, and with the Lenten Offerings. I also appreciate how the Marthas are willing to look critically at their roles within colonization...not many

LIVING THE MARTHA SPIRIT

A conversation with Joanne Tompkins

organizations do that. I also appreciated being able to be part of the Basic Income conferences in both Ottawa and Halifax - and seeing the work that the *Basic Income NOW, Atlantic Canada* group is doing in trying to advance this very progressive social policy.

Did you always see yourself doing justice work like this, or did it just kind of happen?

I was extremely lucky to have been steeped in three social justice settings. One was being an educator in the Northwest Territories prior to Nunavut, and being involved in efforts to re-center Inuit language and culture into schooling. This was way ahead of its time - well before the TRC. We hardly even had the name 'colonization'... There were some amazing Inuit and non-Inuit who were incredibly progressive. While this was happening, the Baffin Divisional Board of Education in 1982 also committed itself to the inclusion of Inuit children with "special needs" into community schools in the territory and I was part of the lead team helping orient and support teachers to teach to groups of students that had previously been left out of public schooling. This thread of supporting student with diverse abilities and exceptionalities, as well as creating classrooms that expected and welcomed diversity, was one I continued in my role as a teacher educator at StFX University. Both these efforts were ahead of their time

and they deeply shaped me as an anti-racist inclusive educator (1982-1996).

Then, in 1996, I came South, to Antigonish as a teacher educator. The Mi'kmaw were just beginning their decolonizing journey



MJM Core Group members at work during the annual in-person meeting, October 2023

and StFX University was a key partner in creating a new 2-year BED program that was grounded in equity, diversity and inclusion. Over 25 years, we saw 250+ Mi'kmaw students acquire a BED degree and go back into their Mi'kmaw communities as educators. Over 100 Mi'kmaw educators also completed MEd degrees. I was very active in supporting this program, it created the capacity we now have in Mi'kmaw education in Nova Scotia.

These 3 experiences over 40 years grounded me in decolonizing work and I am grateful

LIVING THE MARTHA SPIRIT

A conversation with Joanne Tompkins

for that. I also did grow up in a household that had connections to the Antigonish Movement and a father involved in his teachers union (and the power of unions). So it was not exactly a surprise I entered up in this work...

What's been the most meaningful part of being involved so far?

I think it is how much I learn from the other Core Group members. There is great cross talk of different areas of focus - the Martha New Growers, Integral Ecology, and much more....honestly I see the progressive nature of the Marthas in so many ways.

What keeps you coming back to the meetings and the mission?

I think more than ever in these times, there has to be places where we see possibilities... and working with people who see the systemic and structural nature of the deep

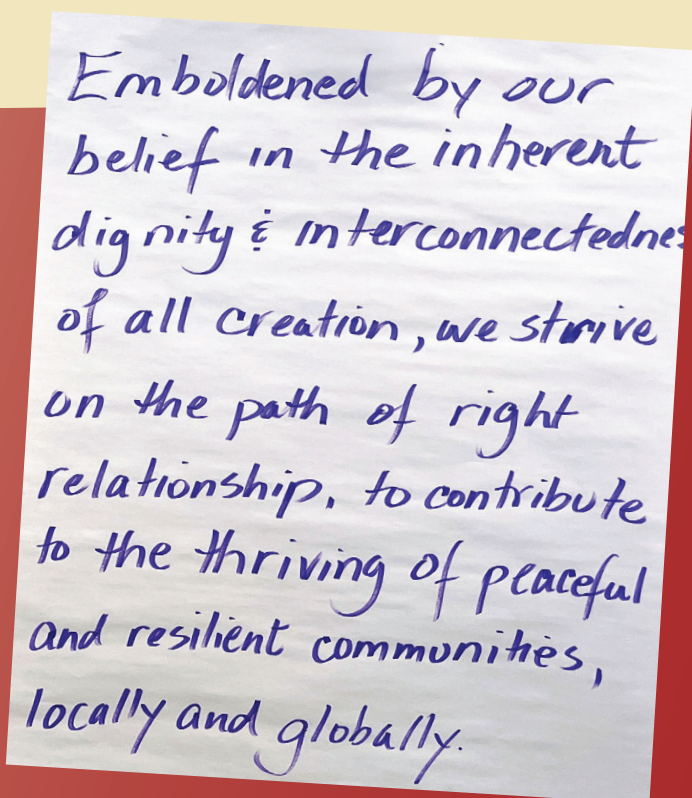
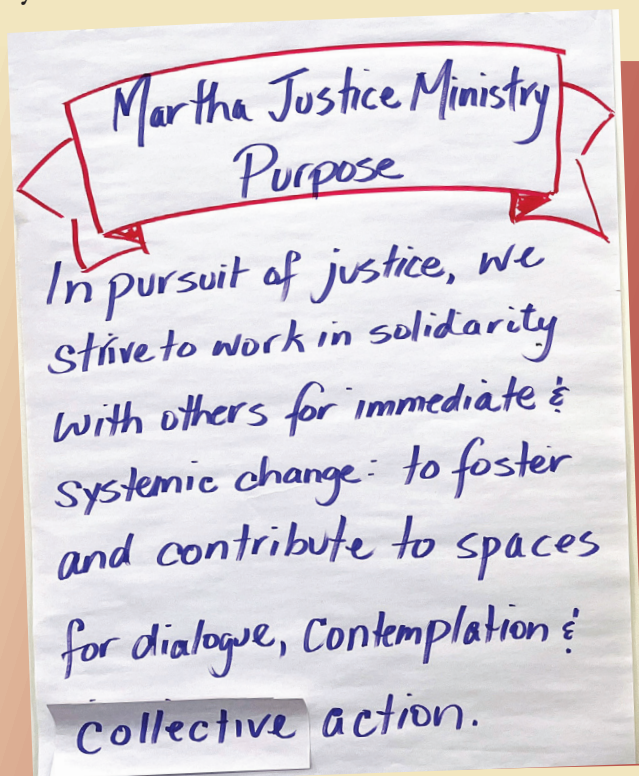
changes in consciousness we need ...it feeds my soul.

If someone asked you what the Martha Justice Ministry is all about, what would you say?

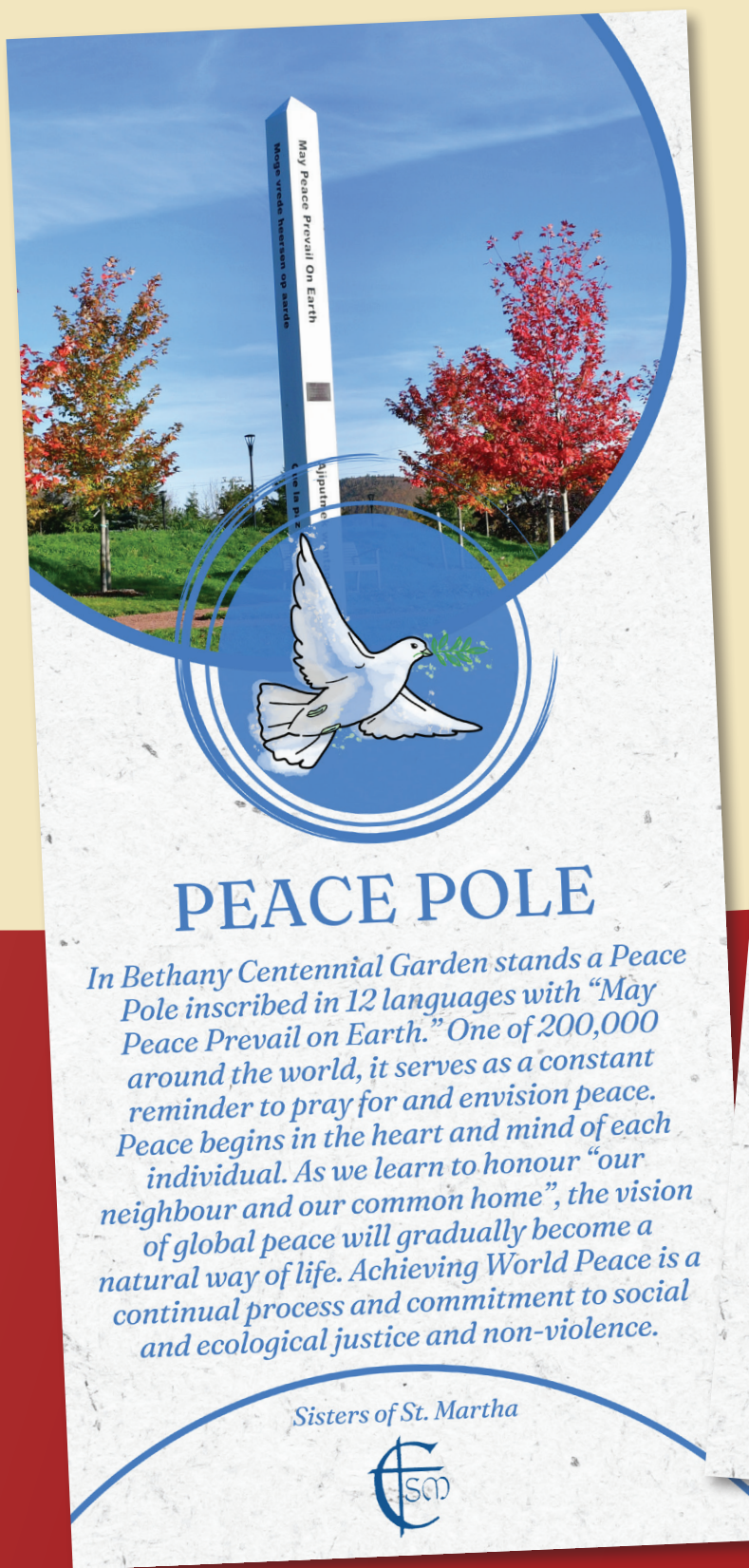
It is about trying to create the Kingdom of God on Earth - to advance that change of consciousness we need towards each other and the planet and all creation to really create a world in which LOVE rules.

What's something you've learned or experienced here that really stuck with you?

Probably watching how the Marthas 'are'... their way of being in the world..."standing in undaunted hope" AND they really understand Catholic Social Teachings and live by its principles. So they are really smart about social change...



MARTHA MEMORIES IN OBJECTS



PEACE POLE

In Bethany Centennial Garden stands a Peace Pole inscribed in 12 languages with "May Peace Prevail on Earth." One of 200,000 around the world, it serves as a constant reminder to pray for and envision peace. Peace begins in the heart and mind of each individual. As we learn to honour "our neighbour and our common home", the vision of global peace will gradually become a natural way of life. Achieving World Peace is a continual process and commitment to social and ecological justice and non-violence.

Sisters of St. Martha



Sisters of St. Martha



PEACE POLE PRAYER

As you stand before this Peace Pole take a moment to consider the many ways that Peace may be experienced and what it means:



To you personally



To your loved ones



To your community, your country



To other communities and countries around the world



To Indigenous peoples around the world



To people who live in poverty without adequate housing, food, water, healthcare



To people who are marginalized or are excluded



To the whole community of life that surrounds you



To Earth

www.themarthas.com

MARTHA MEMORIES IN OBJECTS



Marthas walking to join the Peace Pole prayer, 2008

THE PEACE POLE

The Peace Poles project began in 1955 in Japan, initiated by Masahisa Goi. Moved by the devastation of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, he dedicated his life to promoting peace and harmony throughout the world. The Bethany Peace Pole, one of over 200,000 around the world, carries the universal message for world peace

“May Peace Prevail On Earth” inscribed in 12 languages on its sides. It was placed on the Bethany grounds in 2001. On July 1st of that year, the Sisters gathered for a short dedication ceremony, and for several years afterward, they held weekly prayers for peace—welcoming people of all faith traditions and raising awareness about the importance of peacebuilding. The Peace Poles themselves stand as a symbol of this commitment, quietly inviting reflection and action toward a more peaceful world.

**THE PEACE POLE ALSO
SYMBOLIZES THE
CONGREGATION'S DEEP
COMMITMENT TO PEACE.
IT REFLECTS THEIR
SERIOUS CONCERN FOR
FOSTERING A MORE JUST AND
COMPASSIONATE WORLD
THROUGH NONVIOLENCE,
DIALOGUE, AND RESPECT FOR
HUMAN DIGNITY.**

May Peace Prevail On Earth

平和が地球に君臨しますように

In a recently published article *"Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let It Begin With Me"*, Sister Marion Sheridan voices her concern for today's youth, growing up *“in a milieu where there are few models of how to be peaceful within oneself and share it with our world with respect for the dignity of each human being.”* She believes it is the responsibility of elders to support young people in this journey—a challenging, yet essential task. *“Most young people are willing to engage themselves,”* she writes, *“but they need us, with our peacebuilding systems, to reach out to them in trust and hope.”* She goes on to ask a compelling question: *“Why could we not help make peacebuilding part of their school curriculum?”* (*Global Voices for Peace*, 2025, Susan Hartley, Ed., p. 80)



Peace Pole prayer, 2008



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

GREETINGS FROM MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY



It's wonderful to share with you some of the activities and campaigns Martha Justice Ministry has been involved in over the summer and fall. After a very dry summer, we enjoyed the beautiful colours of fall, and now, finally, are getting some much-needed rain.

This summer and fall there were many hard challenges in our communities and globally that entered our minds, hearts, and prayers. We could not push aside the tragedies we see unfolding, especially in Gaza, as famine has now added to the suffering so many are enduring. We continue to pray for real efforts for lasting peace. As well, there has been the disturbing anti-democratic steps being taken in the US. We also could not ignore the impacts of the climate emergency, as we and others across Canada experienced frightening drought conditions, restricted access to wooded areas, and wildfires.

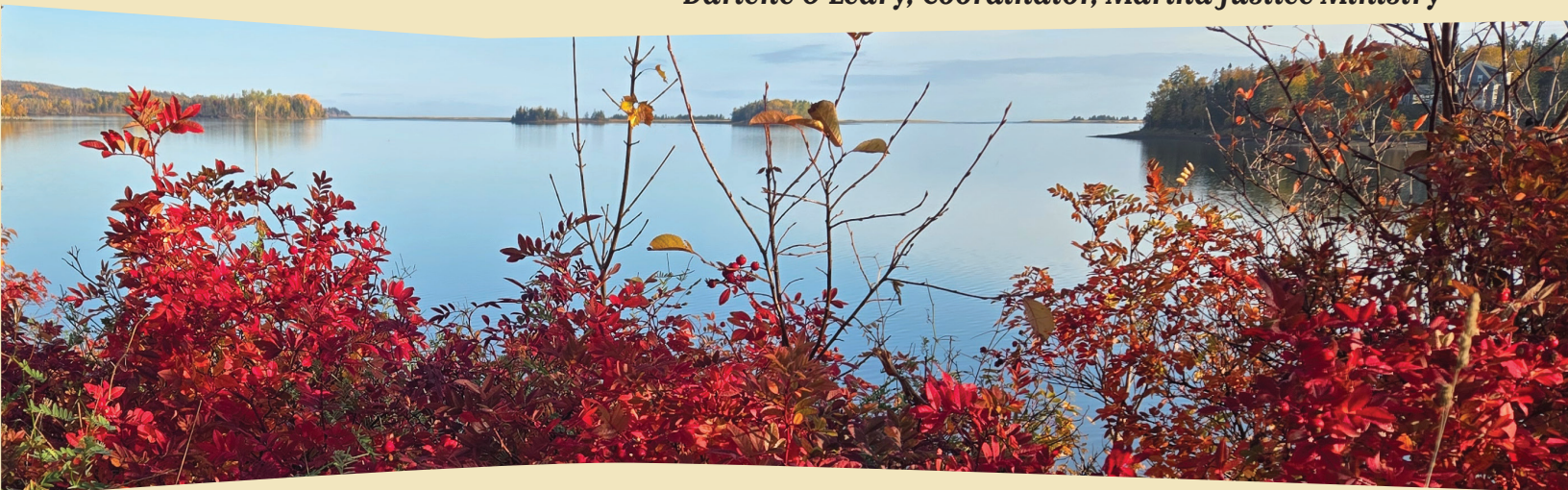
Along with these challenges, we are seeing amazing movements of celebration and creative resistance. If you've seen the inflatable frog-costume protests in Portland and elsewhere, you know what I mean. People are being motivated to act in beautiful ways to protect each other and the planet. As hard as things are, there is a beautiful and growing Spirit-filled movement that continues to bring us hope.

As you will read, there are many wonderful actions and campaigns that we've been involved in this summer and fall. It is heartening that so many people across our communities, the country, and the world are taking action out of a deep sense of compassion, love, and justice!

I hope you are motivated and inspired by this edition of Standing4Justice, as we continue to live and work together grounded in Gospel Hospitality!

Peace and Blessings,

~ Darlene O'Leary, Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry





*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

LAUDATO SI' 10TH ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*- *On Care for Our Common Home*. The message of *Laudato Si'* is as important as ever, 10 years on.

We are increasingly experiencing the impacts of human-caused climate change in our communities and around the world. At the same time, we are seeing insufficient action by countries globally to take urgent measures to address this emergency. However, people around the world and in our communities are taking action! To recognize this anniversary, Kairos offered a series of reflections connecting the importance of *Laudato Si'* with the Jubilee 2025 **Turn Debt into Hope** campaign.

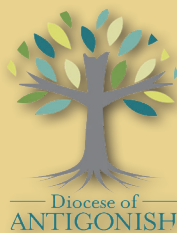
We encourage you to sign the Jubilee 2025 Turn Debt into Hope petition: <https://devp.org/en/campaign/turn-debt-into-hope/act-debt-2025/>



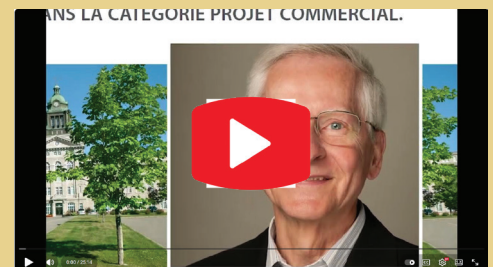
I was able to offer a reflection from the lovely Contemplative Trail on the Marthas' Bethany property, joined by a very loud woodpecker adding her voice to the reflection!

<https://kairoscanada.org/ten-years-after-its-release-laudato-si-continues-to-inspire-and-challenge-us>

As part of this anniversary, the Diocese of Antigonish held an event on October 4th at Our Lady of Grace Monastery (Monastery, Nova Scotia). The day began with a Mass for the Care of Creation, presided over by Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick. After a wonderful light lunch with locally sourced food, the group watched a screening of the latest documentary by Kevin Moynihan on the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* followed by a discussion. I then had



the opportunity to speak about the importance of *Laudato Si'*, living out Integral Ecology, and how we are called to respond. It was a wonderful day of celebration and shared learning!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkxEFswBfhA>



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ORCIE LEARNING & LOBBYING

The Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology (ORCIE) held its Learning & Lobbying Days in September in Ottawa. This was an opportunity for religious congregations, staff, and associates to participate in webinars and training on federal policy and campaigns on climate and ecological justice.

It was also an chance to take part in lobbying on Parliament Hill with MPs, staffers, and civil servants to share our priorities and our voices on these issues of urgency. Our group of about 10 participants included religious and congregational staff and associates from Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario.

◆ There was a wonderful ORCIE webinar with the Climate Emergency Unit's Seth Klein and Anjali Appadurai on advocacy pointers and on how Canada can contribute our fair share in tackling the climate crisis. They shared their helpful perspectives and experiences in lobbying and advocacy, particularly drawing on ideas like a Youth Climate Corps and lessons about how

Canada has mobilized for emergencies in the past.

◆ We had in person lobbying preparation meetings at Saint Paul University in Ottawa

◆ Participants took part in the ORCIE Lobby Day on the Hill, with a full schedule of meetings with MPs and staff. We were pleased with the open conversations and things we learned in each of the meetings!

As a follow up to the Learning & Lobbying, congregations will be encouraged to use the materials ORCIE shares to meet with local MPs in their ridings.

[HTTPS://ORCIE.ORG/](https://orcie.org/)

FREEDOM WALK 2025

On June 21th, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Sister Donna Brady, Sister Josephine Keyzer (photo), and I took part in the 5th annual Freedom Walk at Shubenacadie.



This walk takes place each year starting at the site of the former Shubenacadie Residential School, to honour the residential school survivors and those children who did not return home. It is a powerful event, as survivors and their families, friends, and community members offered prayers, words of strength and courage, and songs of hope. Participants walked from the site across the bridge to a park where there was food, songs, and celebrations. The first song we heard was about Sister Dorothy Moore! *It was a beautiful day of remembrance and solidarity!*



ROOTED IN THE LAND: A CONVERSATION WITH EMMA

In spring and summer 2025, Martha Justice Ministry (MJM) engaged Emma Dixon, a StFX University student in Development Studies and Sociology, on a short-term, part-time contract. Emma has been working with Dr. Riley Olstead as part of a Youth-Elder alliance focussing on Indigenous traditional knowledge sharing, as well as land-based curriculum. During her time with MJM, she joined various meetings and events with wonderful enthusiasm and openness. She is now part of MJM Core Group.



Emma Dixon

What sparked your interest in working on land-based education?

Growing up in Unama'ki, otherwise known as Cape Breton, has given me a deep sense of connection to the land and water which surround me. My parents have always ingrained in me the importance of respecting and protecting our environment. This belief system, along with the guidance of Elder Albert Marshall and many others, led me to believe that working on land-based education is a way I can attempt to reciprocate value back to Mother Earth. I believe our future is in the hands of the youth, and we

can only make a positive change if we have the proper guidance and education. This, to me, takes the form of a land-based curriculum facilitated by Indigenous and settler youth and elders, so we have a diverse understanding of what the land means and contributes to our collective survival.

How did you become involved in the Elder-Youth Alliance and what has been your most profound learning from this experience?

I became involved with the Elder-Youth Alliance after sharing my struggles of being away from home with a mentor at StFX. I

told her how being in Antigonish—without the constant view of the water—left me feeling suffocated and disconnected. After that conversation, she introduced me to Elder Albert and a few others from both Mi'kma'ki and the traditional territories of the Musqueam and Squamish peoples, also known as British Columbia. From those initial connections, our group began to grow, and the Elder-Youth Alliance was formed. The most profound learning I've gained from this experience has come through the deep, personal relationships we've been able to build across generations and territories. These connections have



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

ROOTED IN THE LAND *continued*

taught me the value of listening, of holding space for one another, and of grounding ourselves in both story and action. It's through these relationships that I've come to better understand the strength of intergenerational knowledge and the importance of community care.

What draws you to MJM, and how does that relate to your interest in Mi'kmaw knowledge and land-based learning?

Its deep commitment to justice, care for our common home, and the dignity of all beings. One teaching that has stayed with me is the importance of meeting people where they are at — a reflection of the ministry's profound respect for the interconnectedness of all life and our responsibility to live in right relation. What resonates most is how this work connects to intergenerational knowledge — something I believe we've lost touch with in today's fast-paced, individualistic world. Martha Justice Ministry creates a rare and meaningful space where wisdom is shared not just through words, but through presence, patience, and action. Being surrounded by so much life experience nourishes me both personally and spiritually. I feel grounded by the guidance offered — not just to me, but to the wider community. Learning from my Elders, both Indigenous and Settler, has shown me that knowledge isn't something to be consumed quickly, but something that grows through relationship, time, and care.

What do you hope to learn and engage in more deeply as you continue to work with MJM and with your programs at StFX University?

My hope is always to deepen my relationships with the life and land around me. I want to continue listening with open ears and an open mind — not driven by personal interest alone, but by a conscious commitment to honouring the life and relationships that surround me. I hope to engage in future efforts with humility, care, and a deeper awareness of the interconnectedness that grounds all meaningful work.

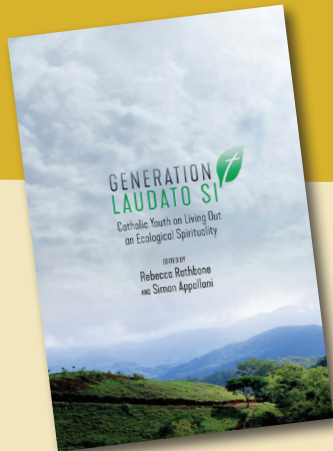
Is there anything else you would like to share about your learning and what brings you hope and energy in the work you are doing?

What brings me the most hope and energy in this work is how deeply my thoughts and experiences are valued by those I'm learning from and alongside. Feeling truly heard has given me the courage — and the nourishment — to see this not as “work,” but as a way of living in harmony with all of ecology. I'm uplifted and strengthened by the people I surround myself with. Every member of the MJM and all the Sisters of St. Martha I've come into connection with has offered me a profound sense of hope and belonging. Their presence reminds me that I'm not walking this path alone — and that my age does not limit my ability to contribute meaningfully. Instead, I'm continually encouraged to grow, give back, and walk forward with purpose.



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

MJM LIBRARY



GENERATION LAUDATO SI': CATHOLIC YOUTH ON LIVING OUT AN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY

EDITED BY REBECCA RATHBONE AND SIMON APPOLLONI

<https://generationls.com/>

*Youth centred
stories that
inspire action
and hope*

Generation Laudato Si' is an easy-to-read, hopeful, and energizing collection of stories from young people around the world who are turning Pope Francis' message into real action. It highlights how communities everywhere are coming together to care for our shared planet.

This book isn't just for reading—it's for reflecting, sharing, and living. *Generation Laudato Si'* will leave you inspired and feeling more deeply connected to earth and each other.

As a student and a young person, *Generation Laudato Si'* has given me valuable tools and insights. It reminds me that true success lies in being sensitive, compassionate, and grounded in purpose. It has left me feeling more hopeful, empowered, and ready to be a part of the change our world needs.

~Emma Dixon

PRAYERS FOR JIMMY WALTERS



This summer, we were sad to hear the news that the wonderful Sisters of Charity Federation UN NGO Representative, Jimmy Walters, is facing a difficult health diagnosis. We offer our ongoing prayers for Jimmy's recovery to wellness. We hope he feels strengthened by the love and support of so many of us through the coming months.



*Jimmy Walters wiith Darlene,
February 2025, NYC*



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and Our Common Home*

MARTHA NEW GROWERS



Meghan Johnny

This year we were lucky to have an abundance of tomatoes and beans, while carrots and cucumbers have struggled. As we headed into the fall "harvest season" we saw the impacts that a dry summer had on our storage crops. We will continue pushing for climate policy which supports a livable future for ourselves and all living beings!

~Meghan Johnny

This season on the farm has been a reminder of the importance of water and diversity as we grow through record drought. Some crops thrive in the heat and sunshine, while some struggle without cooler temperatures and abundant water. We are always cognizant of the interconnectedness of life, the way that climate change impacts our garden as well as all of the creatures who live in and around it. We are learning and adapting each year to the changing climate conditions, practicing water conservation where we can, and feeling gratitude for those things that thrive despite the challenges.



David Matheson



Sisters of St. Martha

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CSM MISSION STATEMENT

*We Sisters of St. Martha, inspired by God's graciousness,
hear, embrace, and respond to the cry for Gospel Hospitality.*