



Sisters  
of  
St. Martha

# Our Life as Mission

NEWS FROM MARTHA  
LEADERSHIP TEAM

Issue 1  
Feb 2020

*“Standing together in undaunted hope”*



## THE GARDEN/PARK ON THE FORMER MOTHERHOUSE SITE

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Tina Beers of *Viridis Design* presented to the Sisters the design plans, drawings and images for the proposed garden/park on the former Motherhouse site.



Tina Beers of *Viridis Design* presenting the design for the steeple.

The goal for the new space is to capture the historic and religious significance of this site. The Martha Story will be told through interpretive panels and the incorporation of the salvaged landmarks from Bethany Motherhouse, such as the bell tower or the steeple. The garden/park will provide green spaces, walking paths, and a few contemplative areas. Once the project is complete, the Sisters will welcome the larger community to enjoy this unique place. The hardscaping begins this spring and the park is expected to be completed within two seasons. CSM will hold an official information session for the public in the future.

## FAREWELL TO BISHOP BRIAN DUNN

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Sister Mary MacFarlane and the Team at Martha Place/Mary's Court hosted now Archbishop Dunn for a farewell and a thankyou dinner.

Before the dinner, Sister Brendalee Boisvert accompanied Archbishop Dunn to the rooms and general areas of Enhanced Living and Assisted Living at Parkland Antigonish, where he offered a blessing to each Sister present. At the dinner, Sr. Mary welcomed him and then offered a special grace for the occasion.

Following the meal, Sr. Brendalee offered a blessing prayer for prophetic wisdom on behalf of all the Sisters of St. Martha. She asked that he continue to speak prophetic words when our world demands balance, the needs of the poor are untended, and the cares of the voiceless go unheard. She prayed that he continues to promote unity and to work towards accomplishing radical change through deep listening and daring to speak truth without fear. Archbishop Dunn offered some words of thanks for our Martha support over the past ten years.



Bishop Dunn, Sr. Brendalee and a Parkland Antigonish resident

## WELCOME LUNCHEON FOR BISHOP WAYNE KIRKPATRICK

*We women religious, commit ourselves to openness to work with Bishop Kirkpatrick in our mutual concern and vision for the people of the Antigonish Diocese.*



Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, photo from The Casket

On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, Sister Brendalee Boisvert welcomed Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick on behalf of those who live consecrated life in the Diocese of Antigonish.

Sr. Brendalee told the new bishop that he was soon to become part of a rich ancestry and heritage, diverse and unique in its character. He would meet women religious who are committed to living and sharing the Gospel, in and among the people of the Diocese, and to caring for the Earth, our Common Home. She welcomed Bishop Kirkpatrick with a blessing prayer for vision when hope is in short supply and that the bishop be graced with prophetic words when co-workers lean on him for advice or guidance and when difficult decisions need to be made.

*"Dawn might find hope in his heart as he approaches each day with dreams and that he returns to rest each night blessed, sheltered and protected"*

## CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE (CWL) PRAYER BREAKFAST

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Sister Brendalee Boisvert offered her reflection for the Catholic Women's League Prayer Breakfast. She presented personal examples from her own faith journey which led her to eventually *follow the call* to join the Sisters of St. Martha.

Sr. Brendalee shared that meeting along the way women and men religious who faithfully lived their vows, opened her to explore where God was inviting her to use her gifts and live her life of service.

God is a God of *Indwelling*, already within, desiring for us to live in communion with one another and with all creation. Sisters of St. Martha are called into relationship with God, one another and all creation. Their lives continue to be led by discernment. At times, they need to make difficult decisions for the good of all. An example of such decision was the deconstruction of Bethany Motherhouse and the move to Parkland Antigonish. Sr. Brendalee spoke about the sisters who inspired her during these difficult times.



Sister Brendalee Boisvert at the CWL Prayer Breakfast

Marthas continue to live in hope, while at the same time they embrace the realities of aging. Sr. Brendalee invited people to continue praying for vocations to religious life. Following the presentation, many shared with her that they felt inspired to think about their own call and how God might be inviting their further growth.

## MAKING FRIENDS



Sister Catherine Arsenault

Sister Catherine Arsenault creatively used recuperation time to create these adorable creatures. They will soon be on their way to the St. Patrick Day bazaar in St. Paul's River, Quebec.



In February 2020, Sister Marion Sheridan attended the UN Commission for Social Development in New York.

**75** years of the UN

**25** years since

**Copenhagen Declaration of Social Development placing “people at the center of development by ensuring full participation by all”**



*Affordable Housing and Social Protection for all to address Homelessness.*

*“This Commission is not about homelessness, it is about homelessness.”*

This was the Priority Theme for this year’s Commission, and it was the first time these issues were discussed on a global stage. While it was wonderful to hear where strides are being made to increase affordable housing for all, there is yet a lot to do. Global statistics are overwhelming, however, there are signs of hope. In Finland, for example, there is good political will to provide affordable housing for all citizens.

The above, profound statement was made by Mary McAleese, a former president of Ireland. She emphasized the necessity to relate to that fact. A home is needed to provide security, stability and human development. It is not just a matter of getting people off the streets. The question is what solutions we can offer when we help: sleeping in cars, couch surfing, etc.



From left to right: Sr. Teresa Kotturan, Sr. Marion Sheridan, Sr. Carol De Angelo, Sr. Ellen LaCapria and Sr. Margaret Tuley

Sister Teresa Kotturan, UN Federation NGO and Sister Marion Sheridan, CSM had the privilege to be welcomed once again at the Canada Permanent Mission – home of the Canadian Ambassador to the UN and his staff. They discussed how many positive things are

being done in Canada and this needs to be recognized at the Commission level. Canada is a member of the Commission for the Status for Women and the Indigenous Persons. It’s a wonderful chance to connect the local with the global.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### CSM FACTS

One of many ways in which we engage in *our life as mission* is to be current and informed about vocation discernment, formation processes, both initial and life long, and deepening our understanding of Charism.

We are able to do this through membership in a few organizations whose focus is to further the development of our way of life. Membership gives us access to conferences, gatherings, articles, and conversations that are enriching and aid us in *broadening circles of Gospel Hospitality*.



### National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors



### National Religious Vocations Conference

This Canadian association is focused on fostering a *Culture of Vocations* in which opportunities for engagement and discussion are offered. It hosts a conference every two years where all who are involved in a ministry that supports vocations, formation, and accompaniment are invited to gather and deepen their own formation and network with others. There is a website ([www.vocations.ca](http://www.vocations.ca)) that provides information to searchers who seek to understand discernment and discover the various forms a vocation may be lived.

This American Association focuses mainly on Vocation Ministry. It is particularly dedicated to vocations to Religious Life, both male and female. As members, we benefit from the resources that this organization offers its members such as Horizon Magazine, opportunities for conversation within the larger context of North America, and a conference at which we can have input by a variety of speakers and workshops, as well as a chance to dialogue with others.



### Company of Charity Formation Personnel (CCFP)

This group within the Sisters of Charity Federation provides opportunities to deepen our connections as Federation members and to discuss ways in which we can share formation programs and discernment materials and develop common experiences. Currently, there is a working group looking at the possibility of a shared or common novitiate program.



### Religious Formation Conference (RFC)

RFC focuses on initial and life-long formation of women and men religious. This association provides us with opportunities to learn about and be engaged in the evolution of religious life. Resources include webinars on various topics related to life-long formation, articles, books and conferences.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY

From Amy Brierley, former Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator:

The winter season gives us the opportunity to pause and look inwards. As we witness Indigenous land protectors and their allies gathering across the country, standing for their right to sovereignty over their unceded, unsundered territories, we are called to reflect on the ways that our struggles are interconnected. We are called to listen with an open heart and ears to those who are standing

to protect Mother Earth, who are committed to helping our leaders see that protecting Indigenous rights and supporting vibrant livelihoods are one in the same. Let us bring our creativity, love and solidarity to these conversations and bring forward better ways of being in this place now called Canada—creative, sustainable and live-giving ways of generating abundance, that still centre human rights.

## MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY (MJM): CORE GROUP

In February 2017, the Core Group met for the first time. It consists of 8 members:  
4 Sisters and 4 Lay Collaborators.



Left to right: Sr. Joanne O'Regan, Olga Gladkikh, Mark Overmars, Sr. Franklyn Ferguson, Sr. Marion Sheridan, Sr. Donna Brady. Members of the Core Group missing from the photo are Amy Brierley and Mark Nixon.

Since then, the Core Group has worked on developing a common understanding of the Martha vision, values and mission and the ways in which these understandings form the foundation of our work as the Martha Justice Ministry (MJM). In 2019, we developed and wrote a Statement of Purpose for the Martha Justice Ministry.

## MJM STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

**In pursuit of justice, we strive to work in solidarity with others for immediate and systemic change; to foster and contribute to spaces for dialogue, contemplation and collective actions. Emboldened by our belief in the inherent dignity and interconnectedness of all creation, we strive on the path of right relationship, to contribute to the thriving of peaceful and resilient communities, locally and globally.**



## MARTHA NEW GROWERS PROGRAM

Each year, between March and December, the fields at Bethany become alive with activity and new growth. Martha New Growers Program is 7 years old and thriving!

In 2011, Sister Florence Kennedy, inspired by the documentary “Dirt! The Movie”, wondered how to connect the Bethany property, once a flourishing farm operated by the Sisters, with Martha values of collaboration, service, justice and stewardship. Together with Sister Donna Brady, they explored the idea of putting in place a one-acre vegetable garden that would attract youth passionate about gardening.

Such a project would address the Congregation’s commitment to sharing values and resources with youth, empowering and developing people, as well as living in right relationship with the land. In 2013, Sisters of St. Martha entered partnership with Jen and David Greenberg, established organic gardeners based in Centre Burlington, NS, to begin an apprenticeship program.



Martha New Growers fields at Bethany Grounds



Jen and David Greenberg



Martha New Growers Program focuses on vegetable production that is economically viable and environmentally friendly. Throughout the season, the new growers gain experience and confidence in small scale market gardening. The Greenbergs are program managers and mentors while the Sisters provide the land and the support structures for season extension. In 2017, CSM opened another acre to allow for more growers.



## 2019 NEW GROWERS: SAYING GOODBYE TO ELI AND MICHELLE

In November 2019, we gathered at Martha Place to celebrate Eli Milton and Michelle Moore after a successful season with the New Growers.

We are so proud of everything Eli and Michelle have accomplished throughout the season! Their growth was inspiring! They contributed so much to the program—their creativity, perseverance, love of the land and, of course, their dedication to growing ecologically sound food for the community.

Even though this was Michelle's first season growing at this scale, she was successful in producing a variety of crops and connecting with the community at the Antigonish Farmer's Market. In Eli's second year with the New Growers, she grew in her leadership in every element of market garden operation. She deepened and expanded her growing practices, taking on new challenges, and has established herself at several Farmers' Markets, including Mabou and New Glasgow.



Left to right: Eli Milton, Sister Theresa Perro and Michelle Moore at Martha Place

## THE SIGNING OF 2020 MARTHA NEW GROWERS

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the New Growers for 2020, signed up as two teams: Olivia Gowan and Andrew McGillicuddy, and Alaa Abo Alhawa and Osama Sulaiman.



Left to right: Olivia Gowan, Andrew McGillicuddy, Osama Sulaiman, Alaa Abo Alhawa.

The signing was part of a crop planning day. Present were David and Jen Greenberg, program managers and mentors, Sr. Brendalee, Sr. Florence, Sr. Donna, Harry Daemen (supporting Alaa and Osama) and Yannick Laplante, who will be assisting with the program. Sr. Florence gave a brief background on the origin of the Martha New Growers Program and Sr. Brendalee shared how it fits with the CSM Chapter 2019 Direction Statement.

The new growers received the keys to the barn and were taken on a tour of the barn and the garden site – still under snow! They were shown which parts of the garden and the greenhouse they will be planting.



## CLIMATE CHANGE MONTH: PEOPLE'S SCHOOL WORKSHOP

In November 2019, StFX University and Antigonish community members held a week of activities regarding climate change. A collaborative workshop on Spirituality and Ecology was presented on Saturday morning, November 16<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Adéla Sandness (Buddhism), Jeff Ward (Indigenous Spirituality) and Sister Donna Brady (Christianity), with the assistance of Amy Brierley, prepared a presentation on spirituality and ecology, exploring the topic from the three traditions. The purpose was to give some basic information from each tradition and to invite people into an experience of connecting with a prayer practice to help guide us in our responses to the climate crisis.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Jeff Ward was unable to participate. Approximately 25 people came to the presentation, many of them Sisters of St. Martha, and entered fully into the time of information and prayer. Everyone left more aware of the richness these two traditions (Buddhism and Christianity) bring to the discussion on climate change.



Sr. Donna Brady and Dr. Adéla Sandness led the workshop at People's Place Library in Antigonish

## NEWS FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

The new website will:

- ◆ have a more contemporary look: lots of images and interactive, updated content;
- ◆ be organized in a clear, concise and functional way so it's easy to find information and resources on CSM Ministries and the issues Marthas care about;
- ◆ show that CSM is a vital and active congregation;
- ◆ convey Martha charism and express Sisters' commitment to the CSM Mission.

Look forward for these changes to the website in the early summer!

**We are re-designing the CSM website!**



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### CSM MISSION

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