

Our Life as Mission

NEWS FROM MARTHA
LEADERSHIP TEAM

*Sisters
of
St. Martha*



Issue 6
December 2021

"Standing together in undaunted hope"



SEASON OF ADVENT

Once again, in this season of Advent we await in joyful hope the celebration of the birth of Christ. In the midst of so much turmoil at every level of life, the cry of Earth and the cry of our neighbours calls each of us to be people of hope.



ADVENT PRAYER

*God of our Ancestors, God of Hope,
We, your holy people, wait with hearts filled
with anticipation, expectation, and joy.*

*As people of faith, we believe that your son,
Jesus, continually comes into our lives
breaking through the darkness and choosing
to dwell with us in our midst.*

*May each light that adorns the Christmas
trees in our home and communities
remind us of the "Light of Christ"
that transforms the darkness of doubt,
discouragement, despair and moves us all
into living lives of "undaunted hope".*

~ Sr. Brendalee Boisvert

Advent blessings to all our collaborators and friends.

BETHANY CENTENNIAL GARDEN OPENING

On September 21st of 2021, the 100th anniversary of Sisters of St. Martha arriving on Bethany land, we were delighted to officially open the newly constructed Bethany Centennial Garden, built on the site of our former Motherhouse.



L to R: Tina Beers of Viridis Designs, Marilee Sulewski of Colliers Project Leaders, Sr. Madeline Connolly, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert and Mike Howe of Dexter.

Deacon Tom Sylliboy lead all gathered in a smudging and blessing of Bethany Centennial Garden. The ribbon cutting concluded the official opening. Afterwards, guests were free to stroll around the garden. Thank you for being with us on this special day, either in person or virtually.

Basked in the warm afternoon sun, Sisters of St. Martha and a small number of guests took part in an official opening and blessing ritual of the new garden. Sister Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader, welcomed all gathered with a speech acknowledging people and organizations who made this project possible.



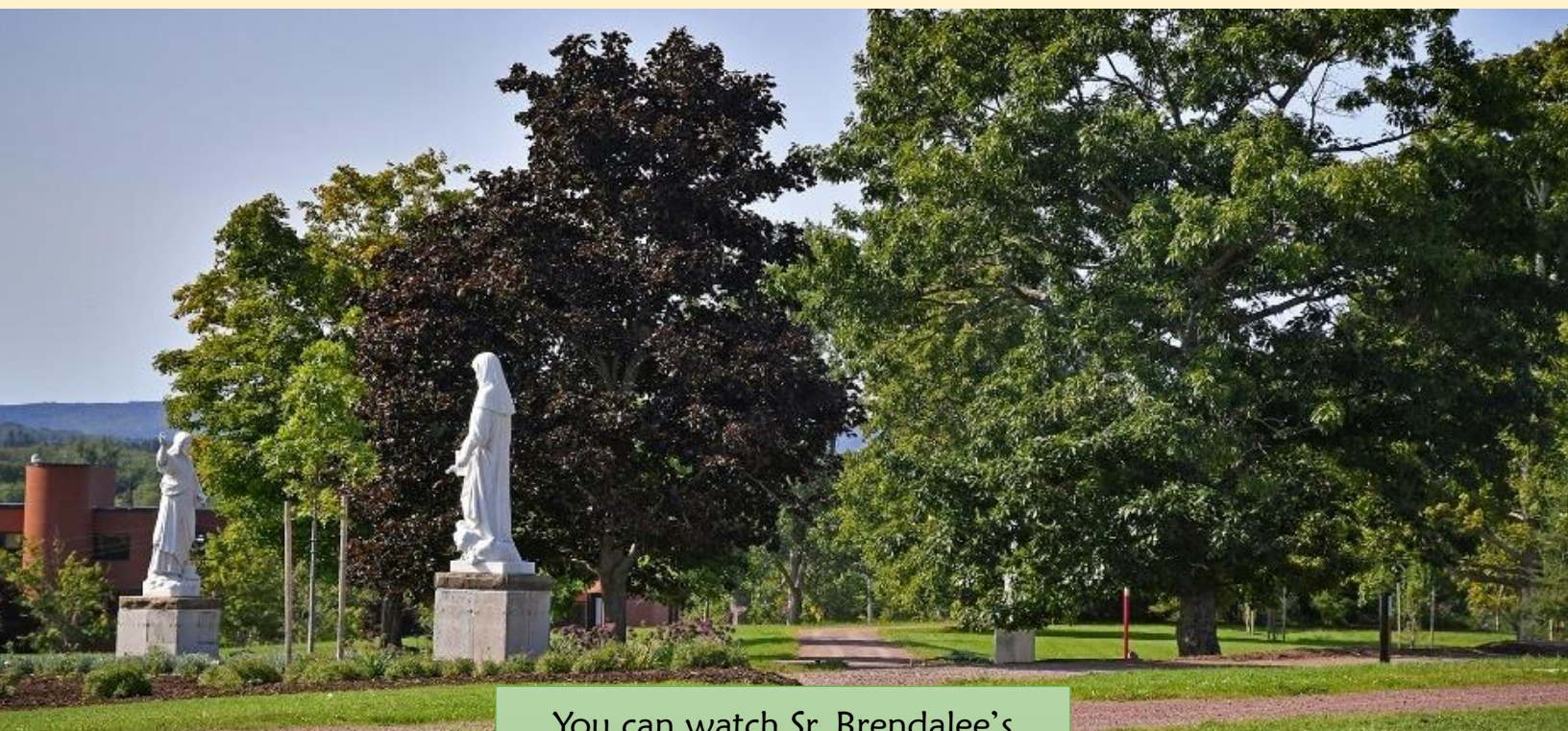
L to R: Sisters Dorothy Moore and Veronica Matthews, Deacon Tom Sylliboy



We believe that in sharing this Garden we are able to offer you, the community of Antigonish Town, County, and surrounding area who supported us over the years, a place to rest, to walk, enjoy and to learn.

Our fervent hope is that you will spend time in this space and feel embraced in the tender care of our Creator deepening your awareness of the interconnectedness of all creation.

~ Sister Brendalee Boisvert



You can watch Sr. Brendalee's speech video and photo galleries from the opening day on our website www.themarthas.com



THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

In November 2021, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader, participated in the meeting of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) in Montreal.



The UISG meeting provided an opportunity to look at different ways Congregations held Chapter this year with COVID-19 restrictions in place. Sr. Bonnie MacLellan, CSJ, presented on new governance models and how congregations can work with them into the future. Participants were able to speak directly with Father Alain Ambeault, the Executive Director of the CRC, who shared on immigration issues and many projects on the topic of **INTEGRAL ECOLOGY** that he is encouraging Congregations to support.



Sr. Brendalee Boisvert

What is INTEGRAL ECOLOGY?

In his 2015 encyclical letter, “*Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home*”, Pope Francis appeals for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Central to this conversation is the notion of **integral ecology**, a way of seeing today’s world and its numerous problems without separating the social and economic aspects from environmental and cultural ones. Everything is closely related; an integral ecology approach allows us to respect all dimensions of the current global crises and come up with better solutions:

“It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. [...] It follows that the fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality.”
(LS: 138)

Integral Ecology and our Congregation

Rooted in decisions that we as a Congregation have made in the recent past, and which continue to unfold, we, Sisters of St. Martha, can see that witnessing to life-giving choices and promoting integral ecology are processes that lead us forward as we continue *to live our lives as mission.*

Interconnectedness with all creation

The awareness of our interconnectedness with all creation is something we as a Congregation keep in front of us in our daily living and decision making. It helps keep our vision broad and our hearts sensitive.

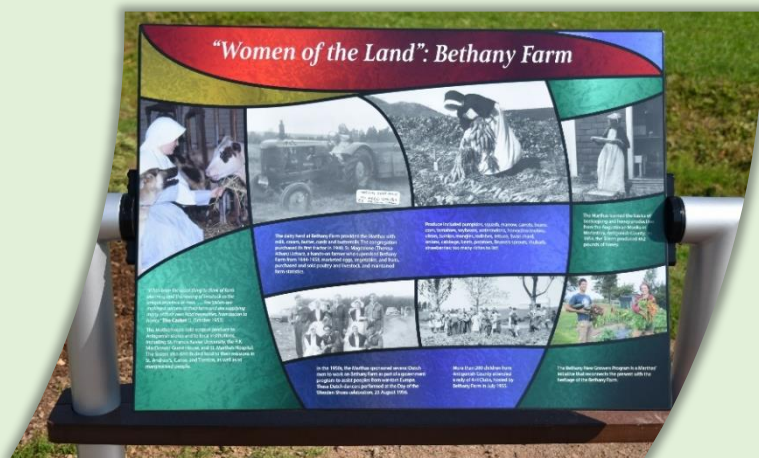
“To tell the story of anything, you have to tell the story of everything. It is the same story.”
(Thomas Berry)

Perhaps the most visible expression of integral ecology is the ongoing development of the Bethany Centennial Garden.

Through the unfolding of this project, from the decision to deconstruct Bethany Motherhouse to the opening of the new garden, we have promoted integral ecology by:

- ◆ deconstructing rather than demolishing,
- ◆ lessening our carbon footprint,
- ◆ living more sustainably,
- ◆ returning the land to a more natural place for pollinators, birds, and all sorts of trees, flora and fauna,
- ◆ inviting people to contemplation,
- ◆ connecting to our sacred story through the building's ruins and a heritage walk.

“Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment” (LS: 143).



The creativity of this garden has given new life to physical elements of our Bethany story. Part of promoting integral ecology means that preserving these elements helps us and the larger community in which we live to...

“increase our sense of belonging, of rootedness, of ‘feeling at home’ within a city [or town] which includes us and brings us together” (LS: 151).

Bethany Centennial Garden is just one of the ways that we as a Congregation are responding to our Chapter Direction Statement in which we say that we are *“called forth by the Spirit of the Living God, within creation and Living Our Life as Mission we witness to life-giving choices and promote integral ecology.”*

Sister Marion Sheridan has been a Sister of St. Martha for 61 years. Although she has been gradually slowing down in the last few years, she is still immersed in many important projects moving forward the plight of the poor and underprivileged.

Sister Marion entered the Congregation in 1960 as a fully formed clinical social worker and an experienced ballet dancer and ballet teacher. Teaching ballet is how she supported herself through her master's program in Social Work. One of her social work jobs was in a Catholic orphanage and she remembers inviting orphan children to her family's modest house in Halifax, NS, for Christmas to offer them warmth and holiday spirit. Having grown in a home where one always did what one could for people who were poor, Sr. Marion has always felt deep compassion for people affected by life's adversities. Her accepting and non-prejudiced approach to other human beings allowed her to offer real help and assistance to marginalized people throughout her life. She has always felt the responsibility to try and do something, even if it meant running "where the brave dare not go"- these lyrics of 1971 song *Impossible Dream* really spoke to her.

Why would a person whose deep need to help others was being fulfilled through the social work come into Religious Life? When asked this question, she says "it's a long story" and then explains that she didn't come because of social work:

"I always had a leaning towards the idea that 'there is something more', I studied at the time of existential philosophers so there was always that angst of 'what is this all about?', 'why is there all this suffering?'"



Sister Marion Sheridan

She felt there was something else out there, beyond the ordinary life with marriage and kids, or work. She longed for deep spirituality and growing in intimacy with God and that's probably why she first applied to cloistered congregations that politely refused her, saying "you sound like you belong in an active community". Her father had pointed out various issues troubling the institution of the Catholic Church and she was not encouraged by the conservative way of life of many active orders. And then, by chance, she met the Marthas and found herself immediately at home with these earthy, pioneering women who ran hospitals, were educators, did social work, household management, and lived in a deep relationship with God. They offered a balanced approach to Religious Life that fit Sr. Marion's need for being spiritual and deepening her relationship with God through prayer and retreats, but also being out there, in the community, using her education and gifts to help others.

"The spirit of the Sisters of St. Martha is a generous love of God, a gift which leads and inspires us in all our relationships and activities" (CSM Constitutions, #4)

The above paragraph in the CSM Constitutions resonates profoundly with Sr. Marion and she is deeply grateful for the opportunities that the Marthas have given her. “They pulled me beyond what I thought my capacity would be”, she says. And she did a lot during the last 61 years...

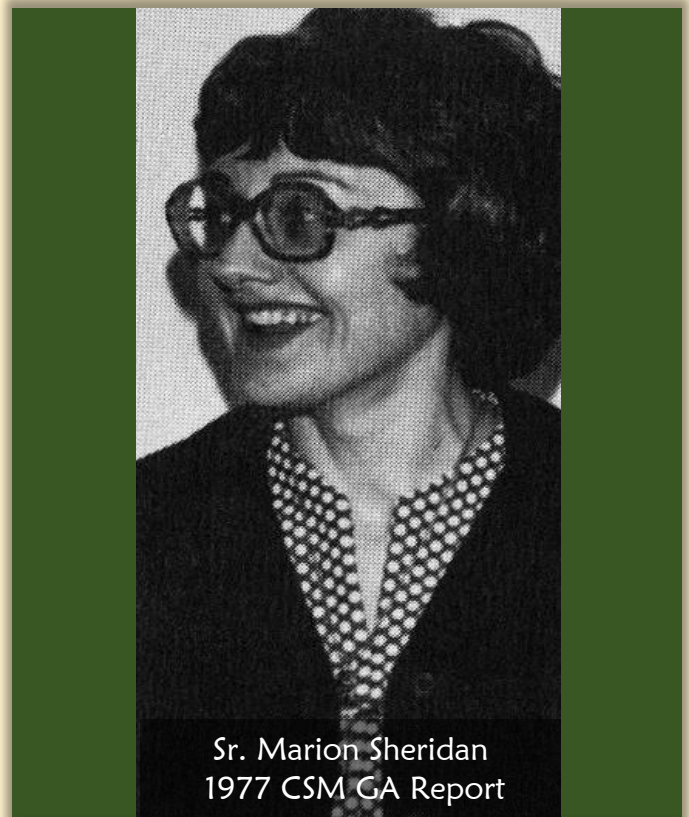
She worked for 30 years in Trenton, NS, helping form Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia and, most importantly, developing a strong connection with poor and marginalized people, “a great grace” to her. Always able to see people beyond their mental challenges, violence and precarious life situations, she stuck with them through their problems, just doing the work that was in front of her and needed to get done in order to move forward their plight. Sr. Marion also had a private practice in clinical social work.

For years, she worked with other Sisters to help them find a meaningful ministry, steering everyone’s efforts towards helping others. While working in Boston as a Martha, she taught ballet in a housing project to children of colour and Sr. Winifred MacDonald, a homemaker, taught the children cooking, a ministry that continued for 4 years.

“We work for development of persons, for the improvement of human and social conditions, with special concern for the poor, so the works and its peoples, may continue to grow in Christ”

(CSM Constitutions, #6)

Sr. Marion’s take on it is that, in order to be helpful in the development of persons, one needs to operate on two levels: the individual and the systemic. To get anything done, one needs to form relationships with people but also address social barriers that often create the issues



Sr. Marion Sheridan
1977 CSM GA Report

“My identity is so much in what I did, and I did a lot... I was glad to, and I never thought about it when I was doing it, just had to be done”

that deeply impact individuals. This belief in the need for systemic change has been underlying her work with different international organizations such as the UN and Sisters of Charity Federation, as well as local ones: Antigonish Affordable Housing or Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition, both of which she helped create.

Sisters of St. Martha joined the Federation of the Sisters of Charity in 2004. The Federation has an NGO at the United Nations where each Congregation sends their NGO Liaison. Sr. Marion had already been going to the UN with another NGO group, Partnership for Global Justice, when, in 2009, she was asked to be a Federation NGO Liaison for a year. She agreed and is still there as of now, although this is her last year.

Sr. Marion has been particularly influenced in her work by the SDGs, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set up by the United Nations in 2015 “to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all” by 2030. Upon learning these goals and their 169 targets, Sr. Marion resolved to bring them to the local level. She took the framework of the SDGs to the CSM General Council which prompted discussions, responsible decisions, new collaborations, and new relationships. The crucial message of the SDGs for Sr. Marion is “no one will be left behind” and she is currently involved in two activities that are rooted in this idea.



Sr. Marion Sheridan, CSM with Sr. Teresa Kotturan, SC, UN-NGO representative for the Sisters of Charity Federation.

One is the collaboration with Tamarack Institute, a Canadian organization focusing on solving major community issues across Canada and beyond. As members of this organization, Sr. Marion and Darlene O’Leary, Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator, are working hard at getting Atlantic provinces to cooperate in promoting guaranteed livable income for everyone through education about advocacy on this issue.

Equally important to Sr. Marion is her current ministry in Enhanced Care in Parkland Antigonish where the elder

Marthas live. As geriatric clinical therapist, Sr. Marion spends quality time with the Sisters and helps them adjust to this often-trying time when their abilities to live their lives through ministry is greatly diminished. In addition, these days, COVID-19 pandemic is having a serious impact: some Sisters are left behind, robbed of the opportunities to be involved. Repeated lockdowns mean that they cannot gather freely to discuss issues and topics brought up by the Leadership Team or Sr. Marion herself, which is a great loss to the Congregation.

She herself feels she’s getting older and starting to feel it. Although at 85, this is to be expected, it is not easy for her to admit that she needs to slow down. Having Darlene to continue ministries is giving her peace of mind. When asked what keeps her going and gives her hope, she puts her faith first, pointing out that her basic model of reference is always Jesus. Equally important is her belief in people and in change that often does come, although it may take decades. She also reveals that she is constantly looking for new things to learn:

“I think I live on the edge. I think the edge for me is there is always something new you can learn. There is no end! I think that gives me energy!”

And finally, there is music, jazz in particular, to keep her alive...



L to R: Sr. Marion, Sr. Roma DeBurtis, SCIC, and Sr. Irene Legere, NDSC



Julia Townsend, Martha Associates Director, gives an update on how the Martha Associates from East and West have been faring throughout this past year, always “going forward”, just as the seasons continue to change.



Martha Associates pin

Our Western Associates have had a very tough year indeed! Alberta has had a rough ride with the coronavirus and has been in and out of restrictions! However, one thing our Western Associates are not short on is spirit, commitment, and hope! With the help of Kathy Gillis and Annella Wehlage, group coordinators, the Western Associates have remained in touch virtually with a few important meetings held online in the spring. To date, the Western associates are still not permitted to meet, so they have delayed any in person gatherings until January of 2022. Until then, Zoom, email and the telephone are proving to be wonderful tools!!!

Our Eastern Associates have had a bit more luck with gathering. The Sydney and Glace Bay group had its first gathering in October and will be receiving a new associate, Sylvia Chiasson, in November. Our Sydney Mines group came together for a short road trip to Antigonish to visit the Centennial Garden back in October! This was followed by a regular gathering at St. Clare's Convent on October 26th, 2021. The Trenton and Sydney Mines group, as well as Eskasoni, were not able to gather earlier this year. The Trenton group has been planning to gather as well.



Martha Associates Retreat 2021: in person and virtual





Our Martha Associate retreat was another first this year! We were able to hold a live/virtual retreat on September 18th, 2021. The majority of participants joined via Zoom and it was wonderful to actually have a blending of East and West! Sr. Theresa Parker was our retreat leader. She was truly amazing as she guided us into the retreat day with two powerful reflections. The theme for the day was: *"Behold, I am doing something new... Can you not perceive it?"* We were blessed that a small gathering of Associates and Sisters were able to be on site at the Bethany Resource Centre.

If you would like to listen to Sr. Theresa's reflections, a video recording can be found on the Associate page on our website www.themarthas.com



Sister Theresa Parker and Julia Townsend,
Martha Associates Director.



Martha Associates Retreat in Antigonish, September 2021



“You Touched My Heart” booklet

Despite the challenges of the year due to the ongoing pandemic, we were still able to publish a *Sycamore*, a yearly newsletter, and, most importantly, we were able to complete our special project which has been in progress for over a year: “**You Touched My Heart**” booklet full of personal letters of gratitude, remembrance and joy written to the Sisters of St. Martha from the hearts of Martha Associates.



Our Martha Associate Committee is revising our Handbook. This may take some time, but we have a wonderful group of Sisters and Associates who have begun the process. We also will be looking at how Associates are moving forward as we follow and listen to the signs of the times.

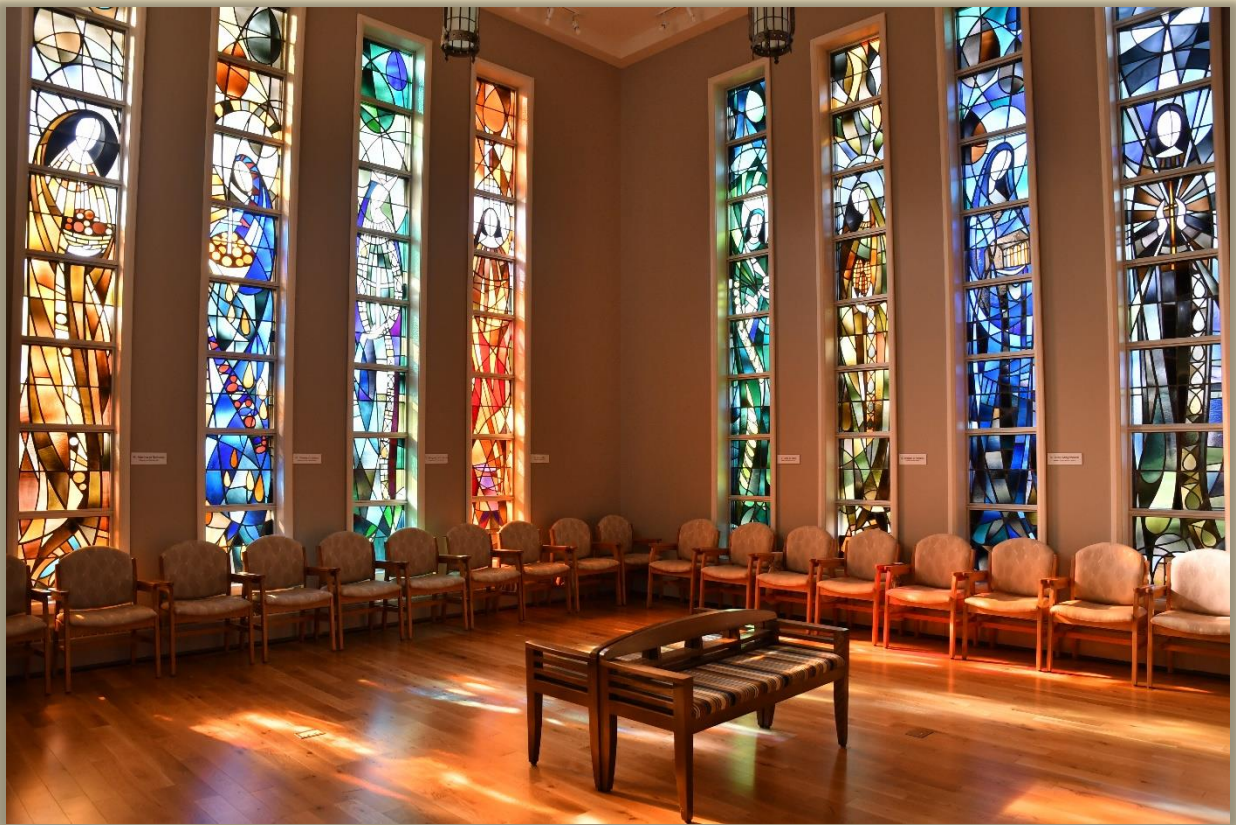
Seasons and times are forever changing, but what is not changing is the commitment of Martha Associates to live out our Baptismal commitment as best we can and live with Gospel Hospitality. Our Sisters of St. Martha are always in our thoughts and prayers. Blessings to you all!

~Julia Townsend, Director, Martha Associates

NACAR | North American Conference of Associates and Religious

Earlier this year, Julia Townsend and Mary Anne Wensveen from Lethbridge participated in a virtual NACAR retreat titled: “*Charism Carriers: Embracing the Call to Leadership*”. The keynote speaker was Sr. Carol Zinn, SSJ. The focus was on the radical shift and transformation that is occurring in religious life and associate life. Associate Leaders who are interested in shaping the future of associate life were encouraged to ponder and reflect upon new ways to integrate and carry forth individual charisms.

CSM Archives, is a private archive located in Bethany Resource Centre. It preserves records that document the growth and development of our Congregation from its formation (1894-1900) to the present day. Our archivists collect, arrange and describe textual and photographic material and work on various projects such as exhibits. Check out our History & Archives page at <https://themarthas.com/about-marthas-history.php> to learn more.



The Heritage Gallery of the Sisters of St. Martha in Parkland Antigonish provides a beautiful and meaningful place in which to remember, ponder and dream of the ways in which Gospel Hospitality has been expressed in life-giving choices and promoting integral ecology of the Congregation.

It houses the beloved long stained-glass windows of 8 women saints, each shown in the color and symbols that indicate her mission in life. The Heritage Gallery also serves as a venue for various displays depicting rich history of CSM and a continuing Martha Story.

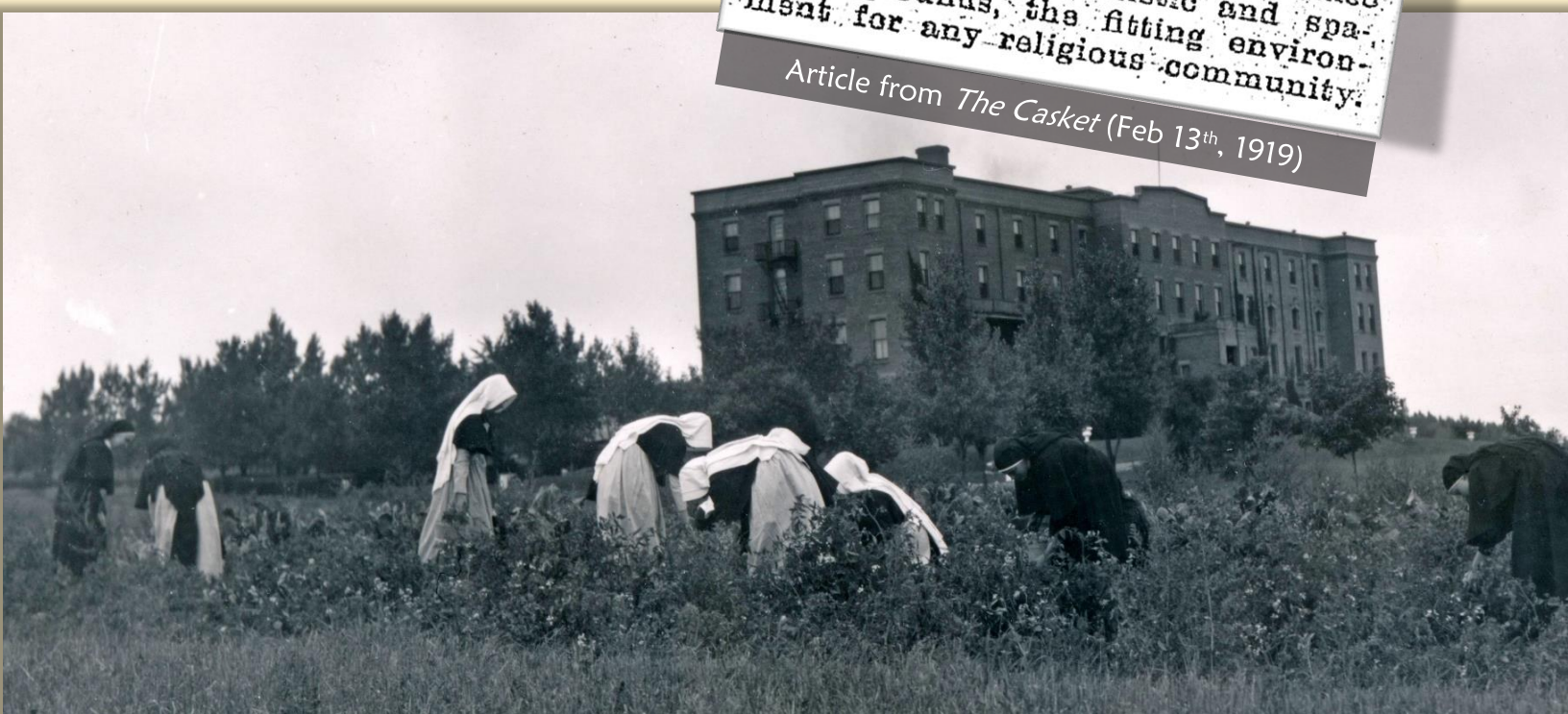
On the centennial of Martha presence on Bethany Grounds, the Heritage Committee created a display "100 years on Bethany Grounds". While access to the Heritage Gallery is restricted at this time due to COVID-19 health protocols, we are working on creating an online exhibit on our website, accessible to anyone interested. **Stay tuned!**



SISTERS OF ST. MARTHA
NEW MOTHER HOUSE FOR CANADIAN COMMUNITY

The Sisters of St. Martha are having plans prepared for a new Mother-house which is to be erected at Antigonish in the near future. The site of the new building is to be on the property formerly owned by Mr. D. G. Kirk, lately purchased by the Sisters, which is situated on Bay Street, adjoining the grounds of the present Hospital. No more ideal spot for such a building as the Sisters contemplate erecting could be found in Antigonish. It is a large lot containing over a hundred acres, a beautiful elevation over-looking the town, on which there will be ample room not only for all future buildings which may be desired but also for the creation of artistic and spacious grounds, the fitting environment for any religious community.

Article from *The Casket* (Feb 13th, 1919)



Novitiate Sisters in the Field. Bethany, Antigonish. CSM Archive

The Sisters of St. Martha were founded in 1900 to manage the domestic needs of St. Francis Xavier University, and so their first convent was on the college grounds. As the Congregation and their responsibilities grew, so did the need for greater space. In 1917, when Marthas achieved their independence from the university, they also decided to build a larger Motherhouse on new grounds. Land was purchased from D.G. Kirk in 1918 and the Motherhouse at Bethany was formally opened and blessed 100 years ago on September 21, 1921.



Novitiate Sisters Skiing. Bethany, Antigonish. CSM Archive.

The grounds at Bethany were not only home for the Sisters, but a source of sustenance as well. What started as a small-scale operation, eventually grew large enough that excess crops could be sold locally or distributed to smaller missions and those in need. Operating for over 50 years, from 1922-1970, Bethany Farm produced a huge variety of crops and housed an assortment of animals.

Whether it be in their personal or professional lives, Marthas have never been confined to the Motherhouse. The Bethany grounds provided not just food, but also places for joyful recreation and solemn prayer.



Novitiate Sisters Walking. CSM Archive.



ADVENT MESSAGE FROM MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY

The Season of Advent is upon us!

It's a time to take stock of the year and reflect on how we have experienced the movement of the Spirit in our lives and in our world.

Certainly, it has been a year of challenges. We are still deep in the global Covid-19 pandemic. We are seeing the impacts of the climate crisis grow more intense. For those already struggling, things are getting harder. So, where do we experience the Spirit and what is the response of justice?

I've been so inspired by local and global movements of youth, Indigenous land defenders, faith communities, and civil society organizations working so hard to protect the planet, to love creation and their neighbours, and to work to change unjust systems. So much good work is being done!

I hope you find stories of inspiration to guide you each day of Advent.

Please continue to pray for and support those working for justice, peace, and love of creation.

*~Darlene O'Leary,
Martha Justice Ministry Director*



Darlene O'Leary



CATHOLIC CHURCH AND RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

In response to a request following the finding of unmarked graves in Kamloops, BC, Martha Justice Ministry offered three 2-hour sessions titled, “The Catholic Church and Residential Schools; What We Know, What We Need to Learn” facilitated by Sr. Donna Brady.

A group of participants gathered for each session, and our discussion raised the questions of how men and women religious who dedicated their lives to the care of others could be part of something so destructive. It also included topics of the relationship between the Church and Government and the awareness or lack of awareness of the culture and spirituality of Indigenous People.

The group watched and discussed a

documentary revealing a little-known part of Church history: the Doctrine of Discovery, a Vatican directive from the 15th century that set the stage for the injustices of colonization and residential schools to unfold.

Our discussions and sharing made us aware that individually and as a Church there is much we need to learn and do to bring about reconciliation, but the interest and commitment of the group was strong.

SEASON OF CREATION EVENT

On Sunday, Oct 3rd, a small group gathered in St. Theresa’s Garden, Bethany Grounds, to celebrate the Season of Creation.

Season of Creation is a month-long celebration of creation from September 1st to October 4th, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Our prayerful gathering focussed on the theme “*A Home for All: Renewing the Oikos of God*” and how we live “radical hospitality” with all of creation. We shared in prayer, song, and thanksgiving for creation, reflecting on the beauty and wonder of all creation and how we are in deep relationship.



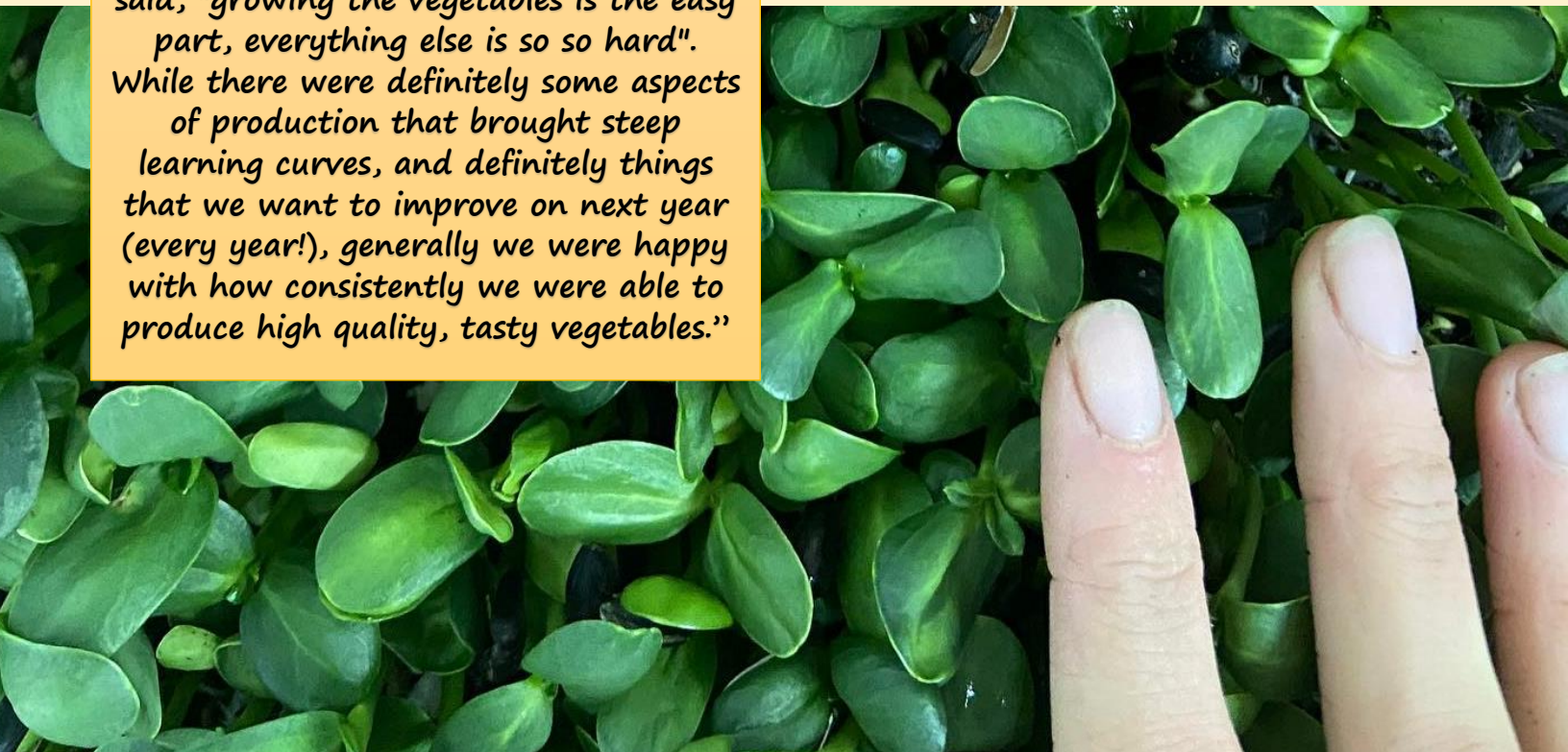


MARTHA NEW GROWERS UPDATE

Martha New Growers had a busy and plentiful season. As fall comes to an end and the growing season is winding down, Meghan and David are far from done: they are extending their time at Bethany till late winter and will be growing microgreens!

Meghan and David kept people updated via weekly emails describing their experience and updating on their produce for a given week. Below are the excerpts from their November 21st, 2021 message: Meghan's reflection on their time at Bethany.

"People have been asking us how the season went. It's a hard thing to summarize eight months in a few sentences. If you asked me in May how things were going I would have probably said, "growing the vegetables is the easy part, everything else is so so hard". While there were definitely some aspects of production that brought steep learning curves, and definitely things that we want to improve on next year (every year!), generally we were happy with how consistently we were able to produce high quality, tasty vegetables."





MARTHA NEW GROWERS UPDATE *continued*



"The thing about starting a farm is that you are not just starting to grow vegetables, you are also starting a business. For us, right during the busy spring production season we were simultaneously trying to learn how to do bookkeeping, register a business, and market vegetables in a community which was new to us. All of those things were definitely difficult at first but with time have become easier. Living in a new town is also always a challenge but we have started to make more connections in the past couple of months which has made it easier."



Meghan Johnny and David Matheson

"Overall we are really happy with what we have accomplished this year and grateful to everyone who helped us get to this place. We are feeling positive about "digging in" again next year and continuing to build a business that is aligned with our values and goals. Our sincere thanks to everyone who has supported us in any way this summer, whether it was ordering a harvest box or answering a teary phone call, we really couldn't have done it without you."



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

COP26 ECUMENICAL DELEGATION

This fall, Martha Justice Ministry had the opportunity to be part of an ecumenical virtual delegation to COP26, which took place between Oct 31st and Nov 12th. This was an official delegation of the United Church of Canada and For the Love of Creation, an ecumenical organization working on climate justice.

For The Love of Creation &
The United Church of Canada



Virtual Ecumenical
Delegation to COP26,
the UN Conference on
Climate Change

Top: Nelson Lee, Mennonite Central Committee, Vancouver, BC; Rev. Alecia Greenfield, Anglican Church of Canada, Vancouver, BC; Stephanie Stringer, Development and Peace and the Anglican Church of Canada, Montreal, QC; Darlene O'Leary, Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish, Antigonish, NS. Bottom: Janet Gray, The United Church of Canada and KAIROS, Victoria, BC; Sabrina Chiefari, Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, Toronto, ON; Karri Munn-Venn, Citizens for Public Justice, Luskville, QC; Tony Snow, The United Church of Canada, Calgary, AB.

The climate COP, which stands for **Conference of the Parties**, is an annual United Nations multilateral gathering of heads of state, global country representatives, civil society organizations, and others who come together to work on ways to address the climate crisis. COP26 is the 26th gathering, and this year it was hosted by the United Kingdom in Glasgow.

As a delegation, we were able to participate in sessions, including public virtual events with heads of state and public side events (Green Zone) and some

closed events involving country representatives (Blue Zone). We also came together daily to share what networks on the ground in Glasgow were seeing and hearing and to share our impressions of daily events and announcements.

Our delegation hoped to see significant commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from countries, financial support for countries in the Global South struggling already with the impacts of the climate crisis, and support for Indigenous communities in guiding the global climate response.



COP26 ECUMENICAL DELEGATION *continued*

While the conference outcome document, the **Glasgow Climate Pact**, made a few steps forward, including the first ever mention of fossil fuels as a contributor to global emissions in a COP document, there were significant disappointments, including the weakening of commitments to phase out coal production.

Our delegation expressed feelings of disappointment in the lack of urgency by developed countries, including Canada, to move forward quickly on climate commitments. However, we were inspired

and uplifted by the initiatives of movements and organizations around the world leading the way on climate solutions, particularly Indigenous and faith communities. Two sessions that stood out in these areas were a session hosted by **Indigenous Clean Energy** from Canada and **Catholics@COP** hosted by the **Laudato Si' Movement**.

The four goals of the COP26:

1. Secure net zero emissions by 2050 and keep 1.5C in reach
2. Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats
3. Mobilize finance
4. Work together to deliver



You can find COP26 daily newsletters by Darlene with highlights, stories, impressions, and reflections on MJM News page on our website.

Being part of the COP26 delegation was a wonderful learning experience that brought together faith communities from across Canada to witness a global gathering at such a moment of urgency. Our **daily newsletters** were an effort to bring everyone into this process of witness and of shared love of creation. Following on COP26, Martha Justice Ministry will continue to work with delegation partners and our ecology and climate justice networks for further education and advocacy on this issue.



BASIC INCOME IN ATLANTIC CANADA

This fall, Martha Justice Ministry and the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition have been involved in webinars coordinated by the Tamarack Institute on basic income in Atlantic Canada.



Basic income guarantee (BIG), or a guaranteed livable income, is an income security measure that would ensure that no one falls below the poverty line, through government income support.

The webinars have been an opportunity to bring together those working on basic income in each of the Atlantic provinces, and to see where there might be areas to collaborate and build support.

As part of the commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and **Agenda's 2030** call to “**leave no one behind**”, basic income is one element of a poverty eradication program that must be comprehensive to address systemic poverty, including affordable housing, healthcare, childcare, and food security.

JPIC ATLANTIC GATHERING

This fall, we had our first Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Atlantic Gathering (virtually) in some time! It was a wonderful opportunity to come together and share the great JPIC work is being done in religious congregations in the region.

The gathering included a session on ways of collaboration and priority areas for JPIC work, as well as a focussed session on *Laudato Si'* and ways communities are engaging in the **Action Platform**, along with navigating the many initiatives for faith communities on ecology and climate justice.

Many thanks to Sabrina di Matteo and the Canadian Religious Conference for hosting and facilitating, as well as the organizing committee for planning the gathering.



DIGNITY FOR ALL LETTER

Martha Justice Ministry signed a letter from *Dignity for All* asking MPs and Senators to pledge to end poverty and inequity in Canada.



The campaign was founded in 2009 by Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice.

Fragment of the *Pledge: End Inequity, End Poverty*:

Specifically, I pledge to support the legislation of the following targets, along with adequate federal investments and action plans:

- ◆ Ensure sustainable access to **safe drinking water** by 2023 and to adequate, culturally appropriate, **nutritious food** in the territories and on reserves by 2025. Eliminate **food insecurity** for all by 2030.
- ◆ Establish a **minimum income floor** for all people living in Canada, bringing them up to 60% of the median income of all Canadians by 2025.
- ◆ Eliminate **core housing need and homelessness** by 2030, tracking data to ensure equitable progress along the way. Close the gap in funding for rural vs urban housing and homelessness immediately.

- ◆ Eliminate **unmet medical needs** due to financial constraints by expanding Canada's public health care system to include in-community, culturally appropriate access to publicly funded pharmacare, mental health, dental, vision, and physiotherapy by 2025.
- ◆ Ensure all families can access affordable, flexible, accessible, publicly funded, and culturally appropriate **early learning and childcare**, investing in the creation of additional subsidized spaces and fair compensation for staff by 2025.
- ◆ Close the gaps in **employment rates and pay equity** experienced by equity-seeking groups by 2030.

The full letter and a digital sign-on form is available at
<https://dignityforall.ca/pledge-for-mps-and-senators/>



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

LAUDATO SI' MOVEMENT LETTER

Martha Justice Ministry signed a statement from the Laudato Si' Movement, signed by over 60 Catholic organizations globally, to ensure a strong final agreement from COP26.

As Catholics, united for our common home, we urgently ask leaders at the United Nations 26th Climate Change Conference to follow Pope Francis' leadership in reaching a prophetic final agreement.

The science is clear: an extractive, unsustainable economy, fueled by fossil fuels, is causing the climate crisis that's destroying God's creation and harming the most vulnerable among us the most, those who have done little to cause the crisis.

We owe it to our poorest sisters and brothers, future generations, and all of God's creation to seize this historic opportunity. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote in Laudato Si' that fossil fuels need "to be progressively replaced without delay." Now, in 2021, we have reached a decisive moment. We must reach an agreement in Glasgow that sets a **clear and ambitious timeline for a just transition away from harmful fossil fuels**. Setting out such a pathway is an essential step to accelerating investment in a clean energy future for all.

As Catholics, we have other priorities for the final agreement as well, including recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and keeping the commitment of 1.5 degrees. It is also essential that the final declaration reaffirms the commitment to climate finance for adaptation, as well as loss and damage.

But above all, a final agreement must deliver on a clear pathway forward to a just transition away from an extractive economy based on fossil fuels, the root cause of the climate crisis. We will continue working and praying for that prophetic outcome.

SOURCE

Laudato Si' Movement letter:

<https://laudatosimovement.org/2021/11/12/catholic-organizations-issue-statement-on-cop26-draft-agreement/>



**LAUDATO SI'
MOVEMENT**

*formerly
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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.