

*Embracing Our Neighbour  
and Our Common Home*

## GREETINGS FROM MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY



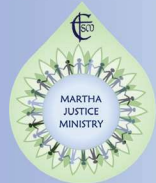
**Greetings to you all!**

**As we move through the Season of Lent, it seems more and more like a time for a different kind of fast. I am finding myself working on fasting from “doom scrolling” on social media, as we are now overwhelmed with the challenges we face personally and politically. I’m shifting my focus to what is joyful and what really speaks to the Spirit working with and within us.**

**As you’ll read in this Standing4Justice, there is so much good to be celebrated. People around the world are standing for justice by speaking for the rights of people and the planet. Civil society groups are calling for social protections for all, and ecumenical organizations want to see debt forgiveness as an act of justice that works to change the structures of oppression. It is a real blessing to be part of this wonderful work! I hope you find this edition uplifting, as we deepen our Lenten experience of grounding in love and hope. Peace and Blessings,**

**~ Darlene O’Leary, Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry**





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## UN COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

In February, in my role as the Marthas' UN NGO Liaison, I was privileged to be a delegate at the United Nations Commission for Social Development at the UN Headquarters in New York and it was a wonderful experience!



This annual event brings together country representatives from around the world to **focus on social policy needs and initiatives**. The priority theme for this year's Commission was enhancing solidarity, social inclusion and cohesion to advance the goals of the Copenhagen Declaration, the World Summit on Social Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

**MORAL COMPASS:** Guides governments with ethical principles

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Ensures governments uphold their commitments

**COMMUNITY IMPACT:** Plays a key role in implementing social policies

It is always important to ensure the voice of civil society is present at the Commission and other UN events. It allows grassroots groups to share their voices in guiding discussions forward.

This year, our Sisters of Charity Federation group—including NGO Representative Jimmy Walters, NGO Liaisons and Communicators from each member congregation—was the largest civil society group at the Forum!

### CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

Civil Society Forum is a scheduled part of the Commission that is led and organized by civil society groups and offers **space to raise concerns and share initiatives**. This year, discussion focussed on the importance of social protections for individuals lacking support—such as those unemployed, in informal work, or without adequate or any social benefits or programs.



*Sr. Grace Hartzog, Executive Director of Sisters of Charity Federation, NGO Representative Jimmy Walters, and NGO Liaisons, Communicators, and NGO Interns from each member Congregation.*



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## UN COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT *continued*

### CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION

In advance of the Commission, non-governmental organizations come together to develop a **Civil Society Declaration**, stating the concerns shared by civil society on the progress of social policy, particularly considering the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030.

The declaration also offers specific **Calls to Action** for the Commission as it develops its resolutions, which will inform the coming World Social Forum in Doha later this year. The Declaration was signed by over 1000 individuals and groups.

*Darlene O'Leary*



### CALLS TO ACTION:

#### 1. EQUAL ACCESS FOR ALL

- ◆ Healthy and safe environment
- ◆ Affordable housing
- ◆ Affordable nutritious food
- ◆ Quality healthcare
- ◆ Basic income
- ◆ Public services: water, sanitation, energy, financial services and digital access

#### 2. STRONG SOCIAL PROTECTION

- ◆ Human rights-based, well-funded safety nets
- ◆ Support for communities facing climate change, pandemics, economic shifts

#### 3. DEBT RELIEF FOR JUSTICE

- ◆ Cancel debt for least developed countries
- ◆ Establish a UN-led debt relief system

#### 4. RECOGNIZING & SUPPORTING CARE WORK

- ◆ Child care, elder care & care for people with disabilities as a shared responsibility
- ◆ Address unpaid care work

#### 5. INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

- ◆ Ensure marginalized voices shape policies
- ◆ Empower women, youth, elderly, Indigenous peoples, refugees, and other marginalized groups to participate in solutions

Adapted from the text of Civil Society Declaration  
accessible @ <https://ngosocdev.org/the-2025-civil-society-declaration/>



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## UN NGO LIAISONS MEET WITH COMMUNICATORS

In addition to the UN activities in February, I had the opportunity to join the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO Liaisons and Communicators meetings at Thomas Berry Place in Queens, NY, alongside CSM Communications Coordinator, Beata Gesicka.



*Communicators/Liaisons Meeting in New York was organized by Sister Grace Hartzog (Federation Executive Director, photo), Jimmy Walters (Federation NGO Representative) and Melissa Falle (interim Federation Communicator)*

The Communications Coordinators from member Congregations met for a full visioning day, where they shared ideas about what collaboration could look like. There were separate Liaison/Communicator discussions the next morning, and a joint afternoon discussion. Participants heard from Sr. Elizabeth Davis, RSM, who joined us virtually and shared about the Federation work being changed by encounter and openness, with lessons from the Synod. It was very good to spend time together in person, getting to know each other better, and sharing ideas about how we can amplify our work together.

**NEW FEDERATION HASHTAG: #Thisischarity**

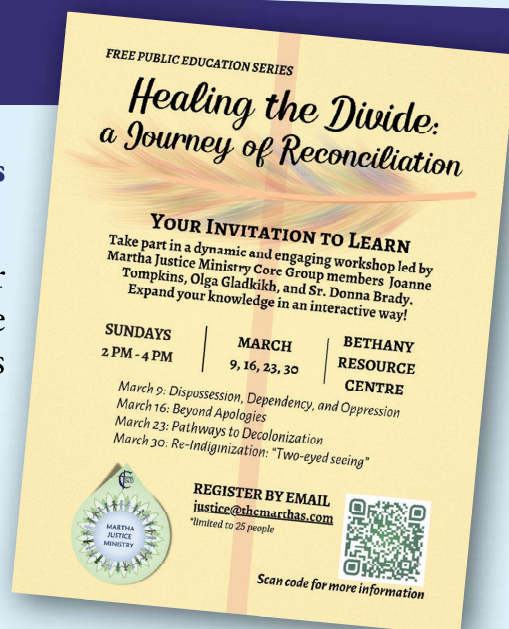
## HEALING THE DIVIDE

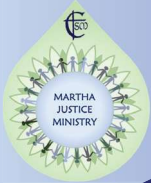
**Martha Justice Ministry hosted a free public education series HEALING THE DIVIDE: A JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION**

Our sessions were designed to help us, as settlers, better understand the experiences of Indigenous peoples and the work required to build right relationships. We see this as an important step in preparing for honest and meaningful dialogue with Indigenous communities.

The March sessions were well attended, with over 20 participants, and were very well received.

We are looking forward to more workshops like this in the future!





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## ORCIE WEBINAR AND WEBSITE



**On March 18th, the Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology (ORCIE) offered, as part of the Jubilee 2025 From Debt to Hope campaign, a webinar "From Ecological Debt to Ecological Hope", led by Sr. Sue Wilson, ORCIE Board Chair.**

Sasquia Antunez Pineda, ORCIE's Advocacy & Communications Officer, provided background on the link between ecological debt and global financial exploitation, emphasizing how poorer countries of the Global South are being hit hard, as they are forced to pay back debts to rich countries – the result of structural financial exploitation. While repaying unjust debts, they are unable to fund essential services like health care or social policies, along with being unable to respond to ecological and climate impacts.

Brazilian speakers, journalist Elton Bozzetto and Sr. Nilva Dal Bello, CSJ shared stories of communities in Brazil harmed by international industrial polluters. We also heard about the important work of religious congregations in supporting these communities in their struggles for justice and speaking out in solidarity.

Participants had a chance to talk in small groups about actions religious congregations can take to support the global and national Jubilee debt relief campaign. We ended with a reminder of the success faith groups had during Jubilee 2000 campaign in securing unjust debt forgiveness.

We hope this year's Jubilee campaign creates lasting change and we urge everyone to sign the Jubilee 2025 *Turn Debt Into Hope* petition and follow Kairos, ORCIE, and Development and Peace for campaign updates! *Look for more details on the next page.*

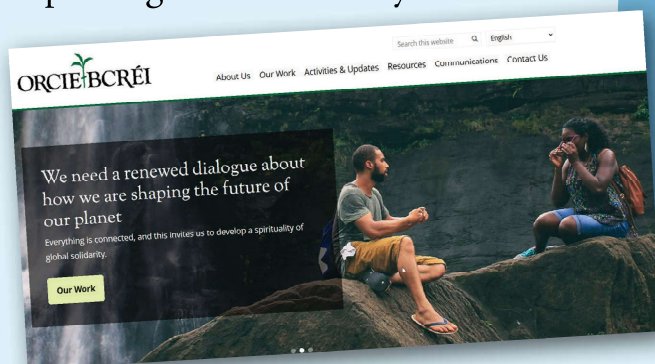
**ORCIE is excited to share the launch of the organization's website!**

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

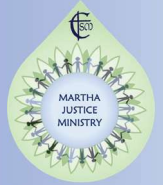
**Find Resources!** – Find policies on integral ecology, with focus on ecological justice, and reconciliation.

**Advocacy in Action!** – Stay updated on advocacy campaigns and petitions.

**Make an Impact!** – Explore opportunities to take action & inspire others.



***We invite you to take some time to check out the new ORCIE website!***



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## TAKE ACTION! JUBILEE 2025: TURN DEBT INTO HOPE

As part of the Jubilee Year, a global campaign called **TURN DEBT INTO HOPE** has been launched calling for countries to initiate a process of financial debt forgiveness and compensation for ecological debt to countries made poor by exploitation.

**KAIROS** is leading the ecumenical campaign in Canada, with organizations like Development and Peace – Caritas Canada, the Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology (ORCIE), and the Canadian Council of Churches supporting the campaign. As Kairos explains,

Throughout history, Jubilee years have been a call to restore justice by cancelling debts, caring for people and the land, and addressing inequality.



Today, forty percent of the world's population is living in countries that are forced to spend more on repaying debts than on health, education or tackling the climate crisis.

Meanwhile, wealthy corporations and countries, including Canada, exploit resources from heavily indebted nations and Indigenous Communities causing human rights violations and severe ecological harm. This creates an "ecological debt" owed to those countries and to Indigenous Peoples.

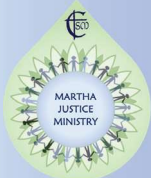
**1. More than 200 people attended the Launch Webinar, with more than 400 total sign-ups. You can hear some of the most pertinent portions of the KAIROS campaign launch here:**

<https://www.kairoscanada.org/jubilee-2025-official-launch>

**2. Please consider signing the petition for the TURN DEBT INTO HOPE CAMPAIGN, which can be found at**

<https://www.kairoscanada.org/jubilee-2025-canada/petition-turn-debt-into-hope>





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## TAKE ACTION! *continued*

### PRAYER FOR WISDOM AND JUSTICE IN ADDRESSING EXTERNAL DEBT

Loving and Gracious God,  
Help us understand that  
we have the power and  
the duty to act against  
the injustices that bind  
people in poverty and  
debt.

Grant us the courage to challenge  
the structures that perpetuate these  
conditions, and the strength to work  
tirelessly for a world where every person  
can achieve their full potential.

Inspire our hearts with Your compassion  
and justice. Empower us to be bearers  
of hope and agents of change. Together,



may we help bring forth solutions rooted in  
fairness and equity; economic systems that  
uplift and create hope for the downtrodden;  
and a future where every nation can walk  
the path of sustainable development, free  
from the shackles of debt.

May we be instruments of Your peace, secure  
in the faith that, through our collective  
effort, poverty can be overcome.

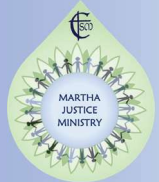
Amen.

- Fr. Charles Chilufya, SJ, Zambia



3. Learn more about DEVELOPMENT  
AND PEACE – CARITAS CANADA SHARE  
LENT CAMPAIGN, which includes  
wonderful prayer and educational  
resources:

<https://devp.org/en/campaign/turn-debt-into-hope/>



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## MARTHA NEW GROWERS



**Winter has not been a dormant season for Martha New Growers!**

The Martha New Growers, David Matheson and Meghan Johnny, were happy to be able to continue selling at the Antigonish Farmers Market all winter long with carrots, cabbage, spinach, kale, garlic, and more – a first for the program!

Meghan and David will continue to farm the land for the growing season 2025-2026. [The Martha New Growers Program](#) itself is currently undergoing

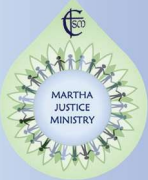


*Winter bounty at Antigonish Farmers Market*



a transition period to facilitate exploration of innovative farming techniques and restructuring, ensuring it can better serve our community. David Matheson continues in his role of the Program's onsite Manager.

Meghan and David plan on offering, once again, a series of gardening educational workshops for the local community to be held throughout the growing season. These workshops are free and open to everyone. The first one covers starting seeds and growing transplants. [Follow us on Facebook](#) for updates on workshops all season long!



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## MJM LIBRARY

The most recent addition to the Martha Justice Ministry Library is a book on care for creation and action for the planet.

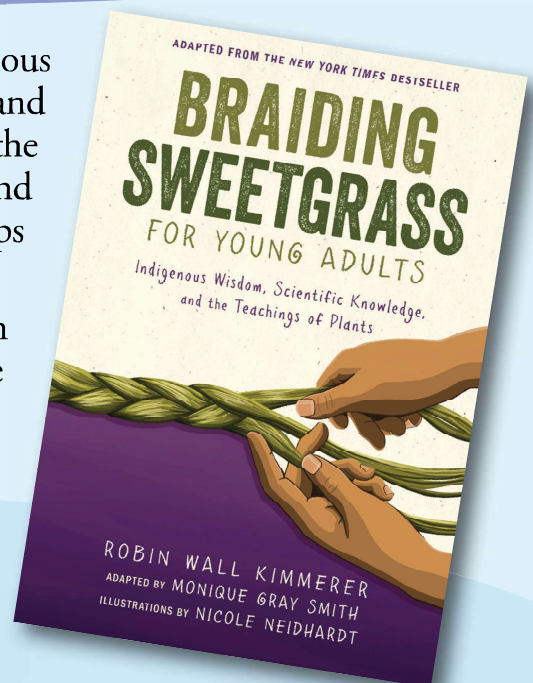
Robin Wall Kimmerer

**BRAIDING SWEETGRASS FOR YOUNG ADULTS: INDIGENOUS WISDOM, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, AND THE TEACHINGS OF PLANTS.**

Adapted by Monique Gray Smith

This book is a young adult-focused adaptation of Indigenous Biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer's immensely popular and profound book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, which builds on the importance of bringing together Indigenous wisdom and western scientific knowledge in deepening our relationships with all of creation.

The adaptation takes the beautiful stories and lessons from the original book and offers a design to further engage learning and reflection for young people, along with lovely illustrations.



*An interior page from Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults, adapted by Monique Gray Smith and illustrated by Nicole Neidhardt. (Lerner Publishing Group)*

We used this book as part of our Lenten workshop series, *Healing the Divide*, which looks at Indigenous reconciliation, truth telling, and Indigenous traditional knowledge as we build healing relationships with each other and creation.