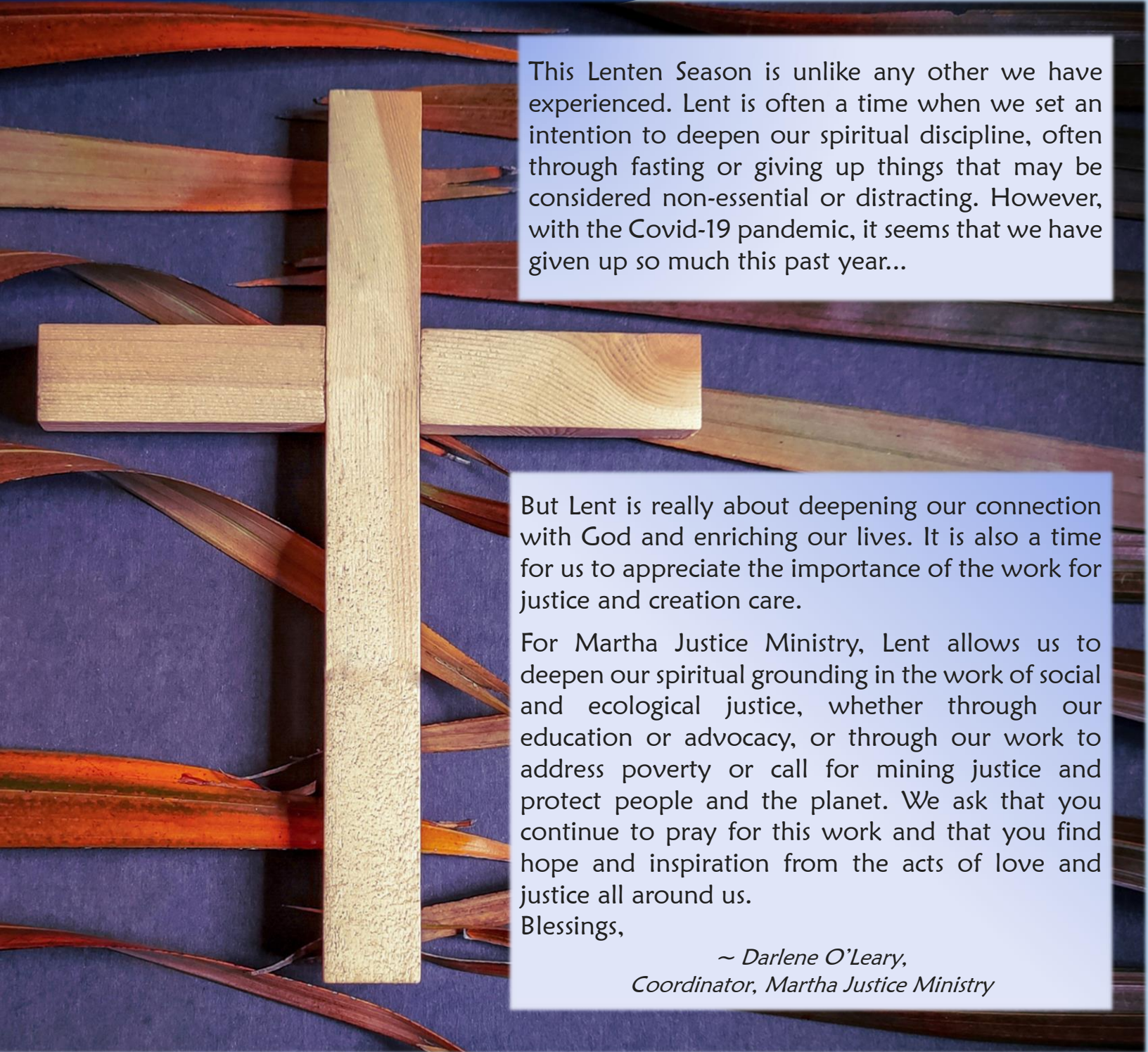




*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

A MESSAGE FROM THE MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY

Lent Reflection



This Lenten Season is unlike any other we have experienced. Lent is often a time when we set an intention to deepen our spiritual discipline, often through fasting or giving up things that may be considered non-essential or distracting. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems that we have given up so much this past year...

But Lent is really about deepening our connection with God and enriching our lives. It is also a time for us to appreciate the importance of the work for justice and creation care.

For Martha Justice Ministry, Lent allows us to deepen our spiritual grounding in the work of social and ecological justice, whether through our education or advocacy, or through our work to address poverty or call for mining justice and protect people and the planet. We ask that you continue to pray for this work and that you find hope and inspiration from the acts of love and justice all around us.

Blessings,

~ Darlene O'Leary,
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

FOR THE LOVE OF CREATION

As part of our Lenten commitment this year, Martha Justice Ministry has joined For the Love of Creation's faith-in-action campaign.

For the Love of Creation is a Canadian faith-based initiative for climate justice. Its goal is to bring together faith groups for education and advocacy for a sustainable future for our planet. This year, For the Love of Creation is leading a faith-in-action campaign that will run from Lent until October. It is an expansion of the *Give it up for the Earth* campaign previously led by Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ).

Actions for the campaign include personal commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) along with calling on the federal government to increase GHG emissions reduction targets, commit to investing in a just transition to a green economy, implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and commit to supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the Global South.



**FOR THE LOVE
OF CREATION**

We will be sharing materials and resources to engage people in our community about ways to participate, including through sharing action ideas, personal pledge cards, letter templates to send to MPs, and ways of engaging in Earth Day virtual celebrations.

If you are interested in participating in the faith-in-action campaign, feel free to reach out to Darlene O'Leary at justice@themarthas.com or learn more at <https://forthe loveofcreation.ca/advocacy/campaign/>

*We hope you can make
creation care and ecological
justice an important part of
your Lenten journey!*





*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

MARTHA NEW GROWERS 2021

This year, the Martha New Growers program will welcome David Matheson and Meghan Johnny as our 2021 New Growers. They will join us on site in April.



Meghan Johnny &
David Matheson

David and Meghan have several years of experience working on farms in Nova Scotia and Ontario and in market gardening and CSA programs. Both are eager to build on their experience as they move toward becoming independent farmers. They are looking forward to learning more from our New Growers mentors, David and Jen Greenberg, as they build their knowledge of farm management and contribute their goal of building a just food system.



Meghan and David getting to know the site on a cold February day,
guided by David Greenberg



ANTIGONISH POVERTY REDUCTION COALITION UPDATE

Martha Justice Ministry is a long-time active member of the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC), an alliance of diverse groups and community members committed to eradicating poverty in the Town and County of Antigonish.

Sister Marion Sheridan, Colleen Cameron and Lucille Harper initiated the APRC in 2010 to bring together many voices to address poverty in Antigonish.

For years, the APRC has engaged in extensive advocacy with all levels of government for a basic income that would provide income support for those not being served by other programs.



In the past several months, the APRC has worked on a number of initiatives:

- ◆ A submission to the Nova Scotia government with recommendations for the provincial budget. This included recommendations for policy and investments in income support (such as basic income), increased affordable housing, childcare, and a livable wage.
- ◆ APRC has engaged with municipal council members on poverty issues, following up on commitments at an All-Candidates Forum ahead of the municipal elections in October.

Eight priority areas of concern were highlighted, and several independent groups have now emerged in those areas, including Affordable Housing, Antigonish Community Transit, Food Security, and the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund.

TRANSPORTATION ◆ **HOUSING**
FOOD SECURITY ◆ **CHILDCARE**
EDUCATION ◆ **INCOME SECURITY**
HEALTH SERVICES ◆ **RECREATION**

*It is such a privilege and inspiration
to be involved with the APRC, and
we are eager to continue with the
great work being done.*

- ◆ Recently, the group provided input in a consultation by the federal Ministerial Advisory Council to End Gender-Based Violence as they develop a National Action Plan.
- ◆ APRC has worked on a project proposal to fund a Community Navigator and work on food security through a *Community Cupboards* project offering easy ways to access or drop off food, as the pandemic has had such an impact on food access.



CORE LETTER

Martha Justice Ministry sent a letter to Minister Mary Ng, indicating our serious concerns about the government's decision not to follow recommendations of a Parliamentary e-petition calling for a stronger mandate and investigative power for the office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE). Over 6000 people signed this petition in October 2020!

Read a few excerpts from our letter.

The federal government created the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) in 2018, following a decade of advocacy from faith groups and others after hearing reports of human rights and environmental violations caused by Canadian corporations or their affiliates abroad.

Disappointingly, in December 2020, the minister responsible indicated that **the office would not be given more authority to investigate these abuses.**



Dear Minister Ng,

[...] As you know, organizations from across the country and international partners have for years been reporting on instances of **mistreatment of workers, human rights abuses, sexual violence, and environmental violations** at the hands of Canadian-owned businesses and their subsidiaries across the supply chain and across industries ranging from resource extraction to food and garment production.

The seriousness of these violations led to years of advocacy calling for the Canadian federal government to create a meaningful Ombudsperson Office to address these complaints with independence, with powers to compel evidence, with accountability mechanisms, and with public reporting of findings.

(continued on next page)

The Office of CORE believes “human rights are best realized through collaborative approaches such as information sharing, mediation, and joint fact-finding” and is “committed to making recommendations for remedies that reflect Canada’s commitment to ensuring responsible business conduct.”

Source: CORE website



CORE LETTER *continued*

Our excitement with your government's commitment to creating this office has been dampened by the delay in its operations and in the weakening of its mandate.

[...] Canada has made significant commitments to human rights and environmental protections, particularly through adopting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, being a signatory to and recently tabling legislation for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and through the ratification of a number of human rights conventions and multilateral treaties.

Yet, we lack the basic institutional tools to implement these commitments when it comes to the operations of Canadian corporations globally. This is shameful and seems to reflect not a lack of capacity, but a lack of political will. Further, it is damaging to Canada's reputation globally as a human rights champion when we make these commitments and do not follow through, leaving already vulnerable communities open to further exploitation.

As long-time advocates for an independent, well-resourced Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, we would like to know why the decision has been made to allow this office to remain without the independence, resources, and accountability mechanisms it requires to be effective in fully addressing complaints.

We will continue to advocate for a stronger mandate for the CORE office by reaching out to our local MPs and through ongoing advocacy with networks working to care for the Earth and those impacted by these devastating violations. [...]

Sincerely,
Darlene O'Leary, PhD
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry

MJM also supported a letter sent by Development and Peace and signed by Catholic organizations, calling for the Minister to follow through on the government's commitment for an effective Ombudsperson.