

Sycamore 2017

Greetings from the Martha Associate Co-Directors



In 2016 I focused on Pope Francis Encyclical, “God’s Name is Mercy” and asked us all to pause and reflect on our own understanding of mercy and how we are living out of mercy while passing it on to others. We continue to need mercy daily because of our own failings and so does our world in order that we may live in hope and peace with each other.

This year, my focus was on a certain section of our Direction Statement namely “In a spirit of gratitude and welcome to our life as mission, we respond to this sacred voice moving us to engage in prophetic life giving choices”.



“There’s a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in”
Leonard Cohen

Religious are first and foremost lay people. This was made clear to us at Vatican II. So Religious are on a level plane with the Associates. Following the way of Jesus is asked of each of us baptized Christians. Through our Baptism we are all called to be prophets.

Albert Nolan, a Dominican, in “Hope in an Age of Despair” has a whole chapter on Consecrated life as a Prophetic Witness. It is prophetic because it dares to stand up to worldly values that many people take for granted. It wants to transcend the culture of sex, the culture of money and the culture of individualism. For Albert Nolan, the vow of poverty is a commitment in sharing. The vow of chastity is a commitment to unconditional love and the vow of obedience is a commitment to the common good, that is, what is best for all.

The Marthas have envisioned the vows within the context of our Mission, Vision, Values and recently the Direction Statement.

What can help you and me to live the prophetic dimension of our lives?

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Believe it or not, our Christian Tradition provides us with two ways to help us.

- ♦ The Contemplative response: time for reflection and prayer, deep listening.
- ♦ The Ascetic response: an invitation to live a simple life style and to ward off the demands of consumerism.

In the coming year let us reflect alone and together on how we can respond to our baptismal call in relation to our Prophetic witness for hope and peace in our world.

Sister Claudette Gallant



Reflections of a Martha Associate Co-Director

If anyone had told me, just over a year and a half ago, that I would begin the process of being mentored as a Co-Director and eventual Director of Associates for the Sisters of St. Martha, I would have replied with a chuckle and a “very unlikely”!! And yet.....that is exactly where I am at! I can hardly believe it myself! Our great God is a Master of wonderful surprises!!

I have certainly felt like a “fish out of water” at times. My background has been in health care, where I was proud to work as a Physiotherapist for 33 years before my retirement in September, 2016. Thankfully, I have been under the very capable direction and mentoring of Sister Claudette Gallant, who has been incredibly patient and kind as she carefully leads me through all of the necessary education and preparation that I require in order to do the job well!! And Heaven knows, I am not always the easiest student, but at least I would consider myself an enthusiastic student!!

Looking back over this past year, I cannot believe all that I have learned and experienced! I have participated in the preparations for the Eastern Associates Retreat Weekend, assisted in the planning of the ARCAN Conference and

attended many meetings over the year. Most importantly, I have had the opportunity to meet many of our Eastern Associate Members, which has been a real joy to me. I have not yet had the opportunity to travel West to meet our Western Associates, but I am looking forward to that meeting in September, 2017. I have also had the privilege of spending additional time at Bethany with Sister Claudette and where I have had the wonderful opportunity to speak with and meet some of our beautiful Sisters of St. Martha. It has been a special time indeed!

I will continue to be mentored by Sister Claudette for another year (2017 -2018). I am looking forward to continuing my learning experience and taking on more of Sister Claudette’s duties myself. I am truly grateful for this special opportunity and I am excited to join with all of you as we continue to live out our Baptismal call together as Associates of the Sisters of St. Martha! God Bless!

Julia Townsend





Atlantic Religious Congregations Associate Network (ARCAN)

AWAKENING THE ENERGIES OF LOVE

ARCAN, the Atlantic Religious Congregations and Associate Network, held its conference on June 2-3, 2017 at MSVU. The theme was *Greening Our Hearts*. It was a meaningful look at the evolving nature of Christian spirituality, through the 'greening' of our hearts-- opening , growing, evolving hearts -- toward the alluring call of God within all of creation. And by the very nature of Love, *connecting* us all.

The facilitator was Dolores Hall Dmin. She is a warm, genuine, and deeply spiritual woman, who had been a Presentation Sister from Newfoundland, and is now living with private vows and is an Associate of the ecumenical Christian community of Iona, Scotland. The facilitator wove the conference throughout with the wisdom of the poet, Mary Oliver, from her poem *Instructions For Living a Life*: Pay attention. Be grateful. Tell about it.

The conference began with a respectful acknowledging of the Aboriginal peoples for their understanding of what the rest of us are just awakening to; that, indeed, the Creator Spirit of God is within *all* of creation. Sister Dorothy Moore CSM, and three Associates of the Marthas, from Eskasoni, - Sheila Morris, Vivian Jeddore, and Nora Bernard- led us in a four directions prayer in traditional Mi' Maq' dress, with drumming and a prayer in Mi' Maq'. It was the honourable way to begin.

Among several environmental issues, we learned about the destruction of the cod fishery in Newfoundland as one example of a devastating ecological crisis that was a



sociological crisis as well, for families and whole communities. The facilitator stressed the importance of accepting reality and grieving for these losses, yet not to get stuck in grief so that we are able to move toward hope. Hope was defined as 'moving in love's direction'.

We were reminded that Jesus teaches us that he has come that we may evolve spiritually, "That you may have life, and life abundantly". And that God asks all of creation "Do you Love me?" An evolving Christian spirituality awakens to this Love with awe, wonder and imagination. It was Tielhard de Chardin who said that the spiritual, human, and creation journey is fundamentally an awakening the energies of Love.

We recognize that our evolving spirituality also embraces the evolving nature of the relationship of the Sisters and Associates . Dolores, the facilitator, feels strongly that the Church and the world needs associates to be carriers of the great charisms of the many religious congregations, and that together we are choosing to be an integral part of an evolving Nature rather than a culture of extinction.



Martha Sisters & Associates at ARCAN

Peg Madigan, co-founder of ARCAN, spoke to me of *how God led her* from within her deep need for spiritual community to an Associate group, and to her eventual formation of ARCAN with Sister Alma MacLellan CND. I pointedly asked her why she did not simply join a prayer group at her church, why her need for an Associate group? Peg spoke of the *spiritual depth* she was hungering for and that it was with the Association with the Sisters that she found it. She also encourages us to turn to God and to allow God to be the one leading us as we evolve in this relationship.

It seems to me that the Associates are to the Sisters as Green Peace activists are to

protecting the environment. The Sisters have nurtured the inmost environment where hunger for spiritual depth is found. The Sisters and, by influence, the Associates, have evolved from being nurturers and protectors of this inmost, sacred environment of the heart, into protectors of the furthest environment of the Cosmos, aware that it is all, every bit and particle of it, Sacred and connected, and full of the heart of God.

As Sisters and Associates we are the 'light and fire' that our spiritually hungry world so cries out for. And together we can pray that beautiful prayer that our facilitator shared with us from the simple Scottish folk of a time long past, 'In the name of God who creates life; in the name of Jesus who loves life; in the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.' Together, we are awakening the energies of Love.

Linda Longmire
Associate, Trenton Group



The North American Conference of Associates and Religious is a membership organization that acts as a catalyst to serve, empower and promote the Associate- Religious relationship.

In sharing the blessings of the Association, Cathi Duffy, from the NACAR board asks us to take time to *reenergize our commitment to the charism of our respective congregations*. For us that would

be the Direction Statement of the Sisters of Saint Martha and to see what it means in our life as Martha Associates. She goes on to say, *let us reflect on the joys of the associate relationship and how it shapes our perspective and actions*. That could certainly be an evening reflection for the groups in the Fall and Winter season. Then share your reflections through the Associate website.

Eastern Co-Ordinators Meeting

April 24th, 2017

A meeting of the Eastern Coordinators for the Martha Associates was held on Monday, April 24th at St. Clare's in Sydney Mines. Although all of the Coordinators were unable to attend, the meeting did provide a wonderful opportunity for sharing of ideas and looking toward the future. Summaries of activities were presented by the Eskasoni, Sydney Mines, Glace Bay and Sydney Martha Associate group representatives. It was obvious that each group has been not only busy, but very committed to living our lives as best as we can reflecting the Martha's mission, vision and values!!

One issue that was discussed centred on the new look for our Martha Associate Retreat Day. With the closing of Martha Centre at Bethany, the Associates will no longer be able to enjoy staying at Bethany during the annual Retreat. This year we will be exploring a new way to continue with our Retreats by offering a one day Retreat. This will be held on September 16th. We are hoping this will be successful and meet the needs of our Associates.



David Nearing, Sister Claudette Gallant, Sister Genevieve MacDonald and Harry Blinkhorn coordinators meeting in the East

Other items discussed revolved around possible ideas for future gatherings, how to invite someone new to "Come and See" what we are about, how to share ideas between groups.

The meeting was completed with a delicious lunch provided by Sister Claudette and Julia!

Western Coordinators



Sister Theresa Parker, Annella Wehlage and Sister Josephine MacLellan, coordinators meeting in the West

Martha Justice Ministry

Dear Associates,

It is my pleasure to share with you a bit about the Martha Justice Ministry and its current exploration and discernment of issues of social and ecological justice. The Martha Justice Ministry arose out of a desire of the Marthas to bring together more closely the work of the former Ecology and Social Justice Committees. Recognizing the innate interconnectedness of issues that impact our common home and neighbours, both in our local communities and around the globe, a Core Group was formed, and the position of Coordinator brought to life. This group of folks will play a key part in guiding, shaping and sharing the activities of the Ministry.

The Core Group consists of both sisters and lay people. These individuals bring a wealth of perspectives and experiences to the group, speaking to many realities that continue to inform and deepen our collective understanding of social and ecological justice. The members of the group have much experience in adult education, teaching and mentoring youth, community organizing, peace and conflict resolution, ecological farming practices, environmental protection, communications, solidarity and international advocacy. These are but only a few of the many skills and perspectives that the group brings!

Further to this, the group continues to be grounded in the Martha charism, drawing upon the wisdom and experience of the many Marthas who, for so long, have contributed, and continue to respond to the needs of our time, centering the values of justice, collaboration and stewardship in their work and livelihoods. In this sense, then, we hope that the work of the Martha Justice Ministry will connect with and be enriched by the commitment to social and ecological justice expressed by the whole of the

Martha community—including our steadfast Associates!

My work, then, as Coordinator is to play a key role in facilitating the activities and development of the Martha Justice Ministry. With guidance from CSM Leadership, the Core Group, individual sisters, associates and the communities and organizations we connect with—locally, provincially, nationally and internationally—I will coordinate actions of the Ministry, support and serve as a resource person in regard to social and ecological justice, advocate for issues in a peaceful way, act as a connector between the Marthas and like minded organizations, and represent the Martha Justice Ministry through action such as relationship building, public statements, education, and advocacy.

I hope that you will join us as we experience the journey of the Martha Justice Ministry. Along our path, we will grow together in our commitment to the ideals of Catholic Social Teaching, the Living Universe Story and truly living in right relationships. As my work develops, I hope that there will be many opportunities for me to connect with you, as Associates, and draw upon the unique experiences and knowledge that you, too, bring to this work. Please don't ever hesitate to get in touch with any questions you might have, or if you would simply like to connect and chat about the Ministry!

I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to be with the Marthas and Martha Associates on the path of being pockets of hope in the world!

Warmly,

Amy Brierley



Charity Federation Martha NGO Liaison and the United Nations.

I attended the NGO Liaison meetings of the Sisters of Charity Federation in Tarrytown, NY, May 30 – June 2. The focus of the meeting was persons who are Migrants and Refugees. There were representations from twelve religious congregation, four of which were Canadian. Three NGO Liaisons presented, as a panel, to the Leadership group of the Federation. Two American Sisters presented some of the situation in the United States. We Canadians presented a shadow of the Canadian scene including the Safe Third Country Agreement and Refugee Detention Centres. I had met with our MP Sean Fraser, who is learned in international law, about the Safe Third Country Agreement between the US and Canada as signed under President Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2004. Under



the leadership of President Trump, it appears the Agreement is in jeopardy. Many Canadian groups are strongly asking the Government to withdraw from the Agreement while others are calling for a review, as is the Canadian Government.

At the United Nations, each of the 194 nation states, which form the General Assembly, has a Mission at the UN. Presently, the Canadian Mission is one of the most welcoming Missions for NGOs and proving very helpful. This approach has improved under the present government.

During these meetings, we hear what the other congregations are doing in their role as Liaisons. I think we Marthas can be proud of all we - Marthas, Associates and collaborators - try to do locally, provincially, federally and globally. Our approach to social and ecological justice is applauded and appreciated by all NGOs at these meetings. We, too, learn much from the ministries of the other Congregations.

Prayer remains the back drop of being a global citizen. I thank each one of you for all you do to move our mission forward.

Sister Marion Sheridan,
Charity Federation Martha NGO Liaison



We don't set out to save the world. We set out to wonder how other people are doing and to reflect on how our actions affect other people's hearts. (Pema Chodron)

"Blessed are the meek, the merciful, and the peacemakers, those who are pure in heart and those who hunger and thirst for justice"

(Jesus, in an excerpt from the Beatitudes)

Mass for Shut Ins



May 21st, 2017

Members of the Cape Breton Martha Associates were delighted to participate in Mass For Shut Ins on May 21, 2017. Mass For Shut Ins has been a part of the Cape Breton Community for over 50 years. Mass is broadcast to all three Maritime provinces, and can be picked up across the country as well! The Mass would not be possible without the commitment of many dedicated volunteers who ensure that Mass is taped each and every week (except the summer months!). Some of these volunteers are also members of our

Martha Associates. Members like Terry and Anne Campbell of Sydney have been volunteering their time and talents for several years so that many who are unable to attend Mass, may do so while at home, or in hospital, or whatever challenges may keep a person from attending Sunday Mass. It is a wonderfully blessed Ministry!

The Mass on May 21st (taped on May 16th!), was absolutely a joyful event!! Members of the Martha Associates attended from Eskasoni, Sydney Mines, Glace Bay and Sydney. We were accompanied by four of the Sisters of St. Martha, Sister Mary Gouthro, Sister Marie Lawrence, Sister Catherine MacFarlane and Sister Genevieve MacDonald! Fr. Everett MacDow was our presider. All of the Ministries were attended by members of the Martha Associates. Our beautiful music was provided by Mike Finigan (Sydney group), Richard Poulette (Eskasoni), and guest, Allan O'Donnell.

There was a great energy and joy, as well as a sense of gratitude among us as we celebrated together at Mass for Shut Ins. We shall continue to make this an annual event!

Progress on the New Building in Antigonish

As time continues to fly by, we, sisters, are preparing to move from Bethany to the new Shannex facility on our property, named “Martha Place”. Plans are to complete construction and move by February, 2018. The building will house three levels for the Sisters of St. Martha: Hospitality and Wellness – 24 rooms; Supportive Care - 19 rooms; and Long-Term Care – 25 rooms. In addition, there will be 18 Hospitality and Wellness rooms available to the greater Antigonish community. Shannex has told us that by the end of June, they had received 109 enquiries from the general public. Construction is coming along well and there are currently no delays. Monthly meetings are held with Shannex representatives to anticipate and clarify the changes that await us.

Renovations are also progressing well on the former Gym which will house the congregation’s archives, and office, some heritage storage, a gathering space and a general office. It will be known as the Bethany Resource Center.

The former residence for the congregation’s Leadership Team is also being renovated to house offices for the General Administration of the congregation. Renovations are due to start in



September. The building will retain the name Mount Carmel.

In the words of our own Mission Statement, we are encouraged to ‘welcome our life as mission’ and to ‘respond to this sacred voice moving us to engage in prophetic life giving choices.’ Although the decision to not own or operate a new facility is a difficult one, we believe it is the right choice for us at this time.

We are grateful for all the prayers and support we have received and continue to need for this big venture.

Sister Joan Fultz

“ We in our family don’t need bombs and guns to destroy to bring peace,...
just get together, love one another, and we will be able to overcome all the evil
that is in the world “ (St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta)

Welcome our new Martha Associates



Norma Blinkhorn, Harry Blinkhorn, Mary Hall
in Sydney Mines



Jean Peinsznski with Bev Mullins and
Anne Campbell



Reception of Mary Schmid, with Sr. Claudette Gallant
and Sr. Josephine Keyzer, Lethbridge

A MOMENT TO REMEMBER

Let us remember our Associates, family members and friends
who have died and are very much present to us.

We hold them in our hearts and remember how they have been
a pocket of hope for us through their beliefs, smiles, attitudes and presence.

Sister Yvonne Vigneault



Sister Yvonne Vigneault's sudden death January 12, 2017 at her family home in Cape Breton, N.S. shocked the Marthas, her family, friends, and also the Martha Associates. The Eastern Associates were especially taken aback as every September Weekend since Sister Yvonne was Bethany Leader we were welcomed graciously and made to feel at home. It was also a time when Mary Frances, her niece, had special time with Aunt Yvonne. Father Stanley Mac Donald, the homilist at the Funeral said, "during her life ...she manifested God's love, God's kindness." We certainly experienced this on the Weekends. Sister Yvonne, thank you for your hospitality, spirit and life.



Hospitality means more than serving a meal, opening a door or offering a bed. It means opening our hearts to others. (Dorothy Day)



Martha As Carriers of th



Associates e Charism



NEWS FROM

Christ the King Convent, Trenton

This year we have 12 Associates and 2 Sisters, Sister Mary McMahon and Sister Marie Smith. There are no journeyers at this time.

We meet on the last Sunday of each month. In October 2016, Shirley Van Ryswyk welcomed us back after the summer and did the opening prayer. We all expressed how much we enjoyed our Fall retreat and we had discussions on what we would like to do for the upcoming year and it was decided we would like to invite Sister Marion Sheridan to come back again. We said our closing prayer and had a lovely lunch, as usual.

November 2016 – Shirley welcomed Sister Marion Sheridan as our guest speaker and the Advent wreath was lit. We had our opening prayer which centred around hanging onto Hope. Sister Marion then gave her detailed and informative talk on the United Nations, Peace Keeping and securities in 15 countries. We then held our business meeting and discussed our Christmas meeting.

December 2016 – Our Christmas meeting consisted of our usual opening prayer and Gospel reading, followed by carol singing, game playing, and a wonderful Christmas lunch prepared by the Sisters. We left feeling truly blessed.

January 2017 – Opening song was: Come Fill My Heart. Prayer was prepared by Mary and Margaret. The Gospel was “The Beatitudes”, after which there was reflection and discussion. Gail Clark from Amnesty International was our guest speaker. She had a power point presentation / slide show on the Global Refugee Crisis. Handouts were given and then we had our closing prayer.



February 2017 – We all attended St. John the Baptist Parish where Sister Jovita MacPherson gave a wonderful Retreat leading us into Lent. We then went back to the Sisters’ home and listened to a part of a tape by Father Paul Curtain on Self Awareness – The Importance of Listening to God.

March 2017 – Opening song, prayer, Gospel reading, reflection and the continuation of the tape by Father Paul Curtain on the importance of listening to God.

April 2017 – We had a special visit from Sister Claudette Gallant and Julia Townsend. We were very glad to have them join us. Sister Claudette gave a great presentation on the Martha Statement. She stressed the importance of simplicity, common good for all, respect for all people, encourage the movement of Grace, motives for what we do, and why we do what we do, and the importance of working out our differences. The men of our group, Lawrence MacDonald, Greg MacGillivray, and Gary Rankin prepared the material for this meeting. The theme was “Let Go – Let God” with the opening prayer, Gospel reading and reflection. The handout

was fabulous and we were all very impressed. We then had our closing prayer and as usual, a wonderful lunch.

May 2017 – This was our closing meeting and was held at the Hall of Holy Name Parish in Westville. Shirley prepared the opening prayer and selected the music for the occasion. She did a great job as usual. We then had the Gospel reading, reflection, and closing prayer. After that we had a delicious

meal of Chinese food and a cake for dessert. A gift was presented to Mary Urquhart who is getting married in July.

It has been a blessed and wonderful year!

God Bless all the Sisters of St. Martha and Martha Associates.

Joy MacIntosh

“ As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure you have greater peace in your hearts “ (St. Francis Assisi)

Emmaus Group, Calgary, AB

Greetings to all you Associates from Calgary, Alberta. We have had beautiful summer weather. However it is difficult to stay in touch.

I volunteer in AGE CARE, next door to where I live. I have started using CD's on which a friend recorded the ROSARY. Some of the residents gather with me every Monday to pray for world peace, and all other intentions. They are beautiful people who are grateful for our quiet gathering. It also gives an opportunity to socialize.

This care facility opened 5 years ago. Every Friday I go there to help porter residents to an ecumenical church service. A couple of months ago Father Andrew started offering Mass when his turn comes around, once a month. It is a real blessing for the residents.

My sister associates also volunteer. Sheila has a lively singing group, THE HAPPY GANG. They sing at senior facilities and really liven up the joint!

Mary and Barb have their hands "in many pies" which my head cannot recall at present.

May we all be blessed with good health, peace and contentment. Blessings. Yvonne Donahue

RIDDLE:

I'm alive and I grow, and I'm tough as stone. Used for support, wherever you may roam.

A magic item used to make a wish. Without me, you'd be easy to squish. What am I?



Glace Bay Associates

The Martha Associates from the Glace Bay Area are a small group consisting of Paula Nearing, Linda McNeil, Kenneth MacAdam, Coordinator David Nearing and Sojourner Joanna Crosby. We meet on a monthly basis at the home of David and Paula.

Our meetings begin with a prayer which is usually the Martha Associate Prayer reinforcing our belief that God's call is written in the "sign of the times". This is followed by an associate sharing of experiences within the past month leading into the theme for the gathering. The Prayer of Trust and Confidence is another favorite.

This September all associates shared the gift presented to Sister Claudette by her Congregation. It was the Now You Know Media resource and study guide for **Mercy: The Heart of Faith, The Reason for Hope** presented by Fr. Dan Crosby, OFM Cap. Our Director, Sister Claudette, our soon to be Director Julia Townsend and David met a number of times using this valuable resource to plan the September Retreat / Workshop, "**Mercy**". This was held at Bethany and was felt to have been a quite worthwhile activity.

David was asked by Sister Martha Eileen of the Glace Bay and Area Adult Faith Committee to present the workshop both as an Advent and Lenten Workshop. Julia, David and Linda McNeil facilitated the Advent session and David and Linda presented the Lenten session. This was very well received.

Our Group also participated in the reading and discussion of three books. The first was **the Rebirthing of God**, *Christianity's Struggle for New Beginnings*, by John Phillip Newell. He



poses three responses to the decline of western Christianity. (1) denial, (2) trying to shore up the foundations of the old and (3) asking "What is the new thing trying to be born that requires a radical reorientation of our vision?" His suggestions are a series of eight connections which are the thrust of the book. Discussion was open and thoroughly enjoyed by our group.

Our second books study was **Amoris Laetitia**, The **Joy of Love**, the *Post- Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis*. One quickly came to realize that Pope Francis was writing for us, and speaking to us. The text was quite positive and an open invitation for discussion to all the people of God. This was also enjoyed by our group.

The open and free discussion of these two texts clearly embraced the Vision Statement of the Sisters of Saint Martha. I believe our small group "embraced in the Mystery of God, are empowered to move creatively into the future."

Our third book, "**Hope in An Age of Despair**" by Albert Nolan was presented to us by Sister Claudette. A review by Gregory Baum expresses the Church's unequivocal "Option for the Poor". He writes, "Albert Nolan outlines the basis of a theology and spirituality that sides with the poor and the cause of justice to speak to all

Christians living in a world marked by inequality, violence, and exploitation. We will be continuing this study next meeting.

Sheila O'Handley accepted an invitation to speak to our group about her life as a hermit. Fr. Norman MacPhee, who was very interested in the presentation, was also invited. Sheila answered many questions and certainly educated us in the nature of her calling.

Our meetings end with the joy of participation in a shared luncheon and good conversation.

We are very happy to welcome Julia Townsend,

as our new Co Director and welcome her and Sister Claudette to our sessions anytime!

We are deeply saddened by the death of Sister Yvonne Vignault, Community Leader at Bethany, the death of Sister Claudette's sister and brother-in-law and the sudden death of our associate, Linda McNeil's husband, Sheldon. May their souls and all the souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace. Amen

Deep peace of the flowing air to you.

David Nearing

To have loved another is to have seen the face of God.

Les Misérables

Martha Centre, Lethbridge

How quickly another year has come and gone and as always, it was marked with special events and blessings:

The year began with a September-end retreat affording us a time of quiet reflection, sharing and gratitude.

The Year of Mercy was made extraordinary for us due to our Retreat Center designation as a Holy Door and drew to a close in November. Offering that "Martha brand" of service and hospitality, a number of Associates assisted the busy Sisters as numerous visitors made the pilgrimage to the retreat center to proceed through that door which symbolized leaving sin behind and then walking into grace to encounter our Lord.



On a number of occasions and particularly in the Lenten season, the Sisters and we Associates delved into various aspects of Pope Francis' LAUDATO SI. Always mindful of his challenge to 'expand our vision of mercy' sacramentally (reconciliation), through works of mercy and by making a pilgrimage, we were always reminded the importance of taking good care of our Environment, our Common Home.

Sister Marion Sheridan, Charity Federation Martha NGO Liaison, paid us a most interesting and informative visit sharing some of her background experiences at the UN. She also led us in reflections on being a "Global Citizen."

We were gifted with the presence of a Syrian family at our Christmas celebration and financially contributed to a project to assist needy families at that festive season of giving and sharing.

In February we welcomed Stephanie Sawchuk as she began her journey with us as a future Associate and closed our year with the usual year end barbeque.

And though it was a year of spiritual growth and gratitude, knowledge and friendship, love and laughter, there was also sorrow and sadness as we bade farewell to Larry Spiess' wife, Barbara. She will be missed a great deal but we are comforted and assured that her good deeds have gone with her.

From the western part of this country, we extend warm greetings to all. May the summer months be filled with God's peace and presence, we pray.

Ina (Catarina)
Martha Centre Scribe



Items for Reflection from: Margaret Wheatley, Turning to One Another

- ⇒ Who I think you are will determine what I'm willing to do on your behalf. If I believe you're not as good or as important as me, I won't even notice you.
- ⇒ There is no power for change greater than community discovering what it cares about...
- ⇒ It's not differences that divide us. It's our judgements about each other that do.
- ⇒ Life is too short to be selfish.

Martha Community, Sydney

The Sydney Associates had a good year this year, beginning with the retreat in September ("God's Name is Mercy", given by Sister Claudette, David Nearing and Julia Townsend) where our members had the opportunity to rub elbows with folks from the other Martha Associate groups and of course the Sisters. The sad note though is that it was the last retreat at Bethany before the sisters say goodbye to their old home, but say hello to their new one next door. We look forward to seeing the new digs too! All the best to the Sisters of St. Martha as they take this bold and enthusiastic new step forward.

October's meeting began with a lovely opening Prayer: *The Spirit Hovers over Creation* and continued with a review of our annual retreat. Encouragement to add to our website so the Associates will use it. Planning projects to be "Pockets of Hope" in our community as we as a group throughout the year contribute to our social justice fund whose proceeds we donate to several local charities such as The Loaves and Fishes shelter and The St. Vincent de Paul Society. Also we enjoyed Cathy Macadam's Poem on Mercy is on the Associate website! What talent! A poet and an artist.

November found us, like other nearby groups, getting ourselves together after the heavy rain in October that left the city of Sydney in a state of emergency, forcing people to flee their homes on a moment's notice, some losing their homes altogether, and for some of our members here, losing their home parish – St. Marguerite Bourgeoys in central Sydney – indefinitely. (They were able to open the church for Easter, but as yet it is still under construction and available on a limited



basis. Soon, though, the parish will be back in full swing.)

Our meeting was a good one in November though and Sister Dorothy Moore gave a fascinating talk about her visit to Lejac, British Columbia, and the shrine of Rose Prince. She also showed us a video called "Uncorrupted: the story of Rose Prince".

In December we met to eat. We met on December 7 for our Christmas Dinner gathering at HERS on Bentick Street in Sydney, a quaint little place with one table that seats one group for one meal. The staff had the room decorated elegantly for Christmas and made us all feel at home. We had a delicious meal beginning with a salad with maple dressing, a main dish of stuffed chicken breast and a dessert of molasses cake. All topped off with tea and a night of great stories and conversation. A fine beginning to the season!

In January, we had a good turnout for our first meeting of the new calendar year and according to our monthly check-in, we are all in good health and spirits. We looked at bringing new and returning guest speakers in and bringing visitors in who might be

interested in journeying with the Martha Associates. And as the meeting went on we watched Queen Elizabeth's Christmas Address for 2016 which focused on ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Following the words of Mother Theresa (St. Theresa of Calcutta) that though not all of us are capable of being great, we can do small things with great love.

Our February meeting was cancelled due to one of many storms (which at this writing seem like it was all a dream.)

In March we listened to a talk from Reverend Robert Lyle, the minister at Bethel Presbyterian Church where we meet each month. Reverend Lyle gave us an interesting talk on his background and on the workings and structure (administrative) of the church locally, provincially and nationally. Rev. Lyle has been with Bethel now for just a few months' shy of 25 years and came here with his family via Hamilton, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and PEI. He gave an interesting talk and a continued welcome to the cozy room we use for our meetings.

Our meeting of April 12th was full of history and promise as we focused on Jean Peinsznski's orientation before her reception into the group as a full member.

This was comprised of three parts:

1. A talk on the history of the Sisters of St. Martha – given by Sister Claudette
2. A talk on the history of the Martha Associates – given by Julia
3. A talk on the personal experience of a Martha Associate – given by Marguerite

Then Sister Claudette continued her talk as pertains to the present and the direction and mission statement of the Marthas and Associates as we define and address new challenges and ideas as we continue on.

In May, the Sydney group welcomed Jean Peinsznski as a full member of the associates after her long journey with us. Sister Claudette Gallant presided over the ceremony and addressed the group with an engaging talk about vows the Sisters of Saint Martha take when beginning their own life as sisters. She talked about our baptismal call and asked us to reflect on how we are responding and how we will respond to the call. Then Julia Townsend our group coordinator conducted the Rite of Reception with Jean and her sponsors and the group, and Jean was welcomed.

In June we wound up the year with a potluck and a beautiful blessing ritual conducted by our coordinator Julia Townsend. Also, our thoughts and prayers went out to Theresa Gillis, one of our long time and faithful members, who had an accident at home and suffered some debilitating injuries. She continues to recuperate in the hospital but there is good news that she is getting better all the time and is able to get out to visit family occasionally and will soon enough be home again for good. We wish you all the best, Theresa!

It was another fine year and ran like a top thanks to the hard work and dedication of our coordinator Julia Townsend. Thanks, Julia!

We wish the Marthas and all our associate members everywhere all the best this summer. Here's to a safe and happy one! See you all this coming fall.

Mike Finigan

Love is much more demanding than law. (Desmond Tutu)

St. Clare Convent, Sydney Mines

Hello once again from St. Clare's Sisters and Associates in Sydney Mines! Our year was, as always, enjoyable, interesting, informative, and our friendship, comforting! The sense of togetherness is so encouraging!!

We are presently without a full time Coordinator, so it was decided at the October meeting that each month, two Associates would prepare the program, a prayer, an hour of Spiritual input (In whatever way they choose), and conduct the business section. Of course, we are blessed to have Sister Claudette "in residence". She is always available with support and guidance! The idea has been working well!

We had a visit from Julia Townsend, our soon to be overall Director. Her "spark" and enthusiasm is so inspiring!

One evening, one of our Associates did a book review. Harry Blinkhorn took us on a journey through Joyce Rupp's "The Open Door", which was a delightful and inspiring experience! We also had a presentation by a Lady who does amazing work with an organization called "Community Cares" here in Sydney Mines. Her name is Dorothy Halliday. Dorothy gave us an eye opening insight into what is happening around our community!



Another evening found us welcoming three new journeyers to our group, which is always a great event to celebrate! They are: Mary Patricia Hall, Norma Blinkhorn and Harry Blinkhorn.

We ended our year with our regular BBQ at St. Clare's with lots of good food, fun and chatter!! We are looking forward to September 16 (Associate Retreat Day!) with anticipation and trepidation!! It will be a bitter sweet time, but we look forward with hope and trust!!

God Bless all! Let us continue to pray for each other and enjoy the summer!

Respectfully,
Georgie Edwards

"I pray that the image and likeness of God in each person will enable us to acknowledge one another as Sacred Gifts endowed with immense dignity"

Pope Francis, 50th World Day of Peace, Jan, 2017

St. Monica Associates, Lethbridge

The St. Monica's Associates enjoyed another year full of friendship and prayer. We shared preparation and leadership for prayer, topics for discussion, and of course, tea and snacks. We were blessed with several collaborative prayer and celebrations sessions with our co-associate group, the Martha Associates. Together we celebrated:

- ♦ The gift of mass acknowledging the closing of 'The Mercy Door.' Father Kevin from All Saints Parish provided opportunity for reconciliation followed by a compassionate homily reminding us of God's forgiveness and love. The Mercy Door was closed.
- ♦ Our annual associates Christmas party was blessed with special guests. A wonderful Syrian family who recently moved to Lethbridge shared their journey of faith and perseverance to reach their new safe homeland. The sharing of stories, food and laughter was enjoyed by all.
- ♦ James Spiess, Spiritual Director and teacher from Catholic Central High School educated us on the leadership and compassionate work of their young Christian community who prepared Christmas hampers for Lethbridge families in need. So, wonderful to hear the caring and rich leadership of our youth and their compassion for others.



- ♦ And our annual year end barbeque which is forever blessed with amazing hamburgers made by Sister Josie; the just right cooking on the BBQ by the men and the variety of salads and desserts prepared by our ladies. We enjoyed a wonderful meal, had fun catching up and sharing stories.

In closing, we want to remember our Associate colleagues who have passed away this year. We particularly wish to acknowledge Barbara Spiess from the Martha Associates, Lethbridge. Barbara was well loved in our community and she is greatly missed by all.

May God continue to bless us as we journey together in faith and love for the 2017-18 Associate year with the Martha's. Sisters, we love you all and thank you for bringing each of us into the fold.

Submitted by: Kathy Gillis

**And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (T.S. Eliot)**

“Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish” (St. John Paul II)

Teachers' Residence, Eskasoni

The Martha Associate group in Eskasoni have had another wonderful year under the capable guidance of Co-ordinator, Sister Genevieve MacDonald. In addition to regular meetings, several members of the Eskasoni Group attended the Associate Retreat Weekend in September, 2016. Members of the group also participated and attended the annual Mass for Shut Ins with other eastern Associate groups in May, 2017. A visit from Sister Claudette Gallant, Director of Associates along with Julia Townsend, Co- Director, occurred in April, 2017. Sister Claudette delivered her annual presentation. It was a wonderful time for sharing and discussion. Finally, Sheila Morris, Vivian Jeddore, and Nora Bernard along with Sister Dorothy Moore of the Sydney Group, opened



the ARCAN Conference in June, 2017, with a beautiful prayer honoring our Creator and Creation using the four Directions. Looking forward to our Associate Day in September, 2017.

*“The name of God cannot be used to justify violence.
Peace alone is Holy. Peace alone is Holy, not war!”*

Pope Francis

[Sycamore 2017]

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Western Gathering 2016



Eastern Gathering 2016

*“Nothing is impossible if we
turn to God in prayer. Everyone
can be as artisan of
peace” (Pope Francis)*

The Martha Associate Website is: associates.themarthas.com

Any Associate group who has news items or pictures that speak of the life of your faith community please email material to: Tanya Mullin communications@themarthas.com

***Submitted items may appear on the website or in our newsletter.
Please help keep our news and website current.***