

125th Anniversary of the Sisters of St. Martha
45th Anniversary of Martha Associates

MARTHA ASSOCIATES *Sycamore* 2025

A Message from The Martha Associate Director

***“Be Joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16 – 18)***

I love this line of scripture from St. Paul, and it spoke to me as I was preparing my write-up for the SYCAMORE. Many of you know that I am a news watcher, and too much of that is not good for anyone. It can bring you down and make you angry! I can attest to that! And yet, I am also aware of a joy deep in my heart that cannot be erased, a desire to come to prayer and a deep sense of gratitude for everything and everyone in my life.



It is with that sense of joy, prayer and gratitude that I think back over this year with our Martha Associates. In this special year of 2025, we celebrate 45 years of Martha Associates and 125 years of the Sisters of St. Martha. The Sisters have already begun their Anniversary celebrations, and they are to continue over the course of the year, from July 29, 2025, to July 29, 2026. One of the special Anniversary events is a play that was written by Laura Teasdale, a professional actor, musician, playwright and teacher, which honors the 8 values of the Sisters of St. Martha: **Hospitality; Communion; Consecrated Life; Justice; Service; Simplicity; Collaboration; and Stewardship.** An early preview of the play was done in a staged reading in Antigonish on September 5, 2025, for the Sisters, and on September 6, 2025, for the Martha Associates. This second reading was videotaped, so it was able to be shown the following weekend to the Western Associates during their annual Retreat. The play was written to be performed outdoors in the Centennial Gardens, and that will happen next July 2026. The reading was amazing! I cannot imagine how beautiful it will be to see it performed in the gardens!!

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CENTERFOLD: Celebrating 45 years of Martha Associates and 125 years of the Sisters of St. Martha

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A Message from The Martha Associate Director

This year, 2025, has also been designated as a Jubilee year in our Church. Pope Francis declared it as a Jubilee of Hope with the theme: “**Pilgrims of Hope**”. The Jubilee year began with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome by Pope Francis on December 24, 2024, and ends with the closing of the door on January 6, 2026. Sadly, our dear Pope Francis died on April 21, 2025. When I think of Pope Francis, it can only be with a sense of joy and thanksgiving that we had this prayerful, pastoral, compassionate man as the head of our Church for 12 years. Already I feel grateful for his successor, Pope Leo XIV, who was elected on May 8, 2025. May we keep Pope Leo in our prayers!

I am also feeling a great sense of joy and gratitude for the time I spent with our Associates this year. For my visits with each group, where I was warmly welcomed. For all the communication between myself and our Associates and Sisters via email, telephone and ZOOM. For the wonderful retreat we had this year with Sr. Donna Brady (you can read all about it in the SYCAMORE). For the dedication and work of the members of our Martha Associate Committee, represented by **Kathryn Gillis and Annella Wehlage in the West; Dale Romeo, Arlene and Gary Fancey, Joy MacIntosh; Gary Rankin; Debbie Pettipas** in the East along with our Martha representative, **Sr. Sandra Cooke**. Your friendship and support are gifts to me and all Martha Associates. For Sr. Jovita MacPherson, our Martha Liaison with the CSM Leadership, I give thanks for her guidance and support. For the CSM Leadership and all the Sisters who support us with prayers and kindness always...thank you! For everyone who helped with the production of our SYCAMORE...thank you!

There is a great sense of joy and gratitude within me as I acknowledge that 18 new Martha Associates were received in 2025!! How wonderful is that? It truly reflects our Jubilee year....a year of Hope!!

I am overjoyed to report that the **Martha Associate History** has been completed up to the present time! It was a long and arduous task, but a necessary one! I was delighted to present it to Sr. Brendalee Boisvert at the Eastern Retreat! Special thanks to our Marthas, past and present, who helped to gather all the original details of our History: Sr. Sarah MacPherson*; Sr. Maria Lawrence O’Keefe*; Sr. Claudette Gallant and Sr. Catherine MacFarlane.

*deceased



Julia completes the history!!! September 2025

As well, in 2025, with the help of the Martha Associate Committee, we completed the revision of the Martha Associate Handbook and developed a brochure to tell a little about “**Who are the Martha Associates?**”. This was approved by the CSM Leadership, and we have been circulating the brochure since January 2025. This is a helpful tool to give to an individual who may be interested in knowing more about the Associates. Each Associate group has copies of the brochure, and you may check with your local coordinator.

I am excited for you to read the 2025 edition of the SYCAMORE. Enjoy it with a cup of hot tea or coffee! Hopefully, it will bring feelings of joy and gratitude as you reflect on being Associates of the Sisters of St. Martha.

Please know that you are in my prayers always!
God Bless, Julia

Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator and Marthas UN NGO Liason

June 2025

It is wonderful to have this chance again to share with you the work that Martha Justice Ministry and the Sisters of Charity Federation UN NGO have done over this past year! As always, I am so blessed to share in this ministry with wonderful people and organizations committed to social and ecological justice and reconciliation. In our work, we build on the Marthas’ Direction Statement 2024-29 to “**welcome and help shape the emerging future**” through the lens of integral ecology, embracing our neighbour and our common home, creating spaces for transformation, and more!

Here are some of the highlights.

Basic Income and Poverty Eradication Martha Justice Ministry continues to be active in the Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada network and planning group. In September, Martha Justice Ministry Core Group members, Joanne Tompkins, Sister Marion Sheridan, and Amy Brierley took part in the annual Basic Income Guarantee Nova Scotia conference in Halifax, called “**Confronting the Challenges: A Livable Basic Income Guarantee for All Who Need It**.” Joanne moderated a panel discussion on the work of Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada, and Marion spoke as one of the founding members of the group, which now includes representatives from each of the Atlantic provinces. In October, Marion, Joanne, and I joined the Tamarack Institute’s Natasha Pei and Sylvia Cheuy in a workshop, as part of Tamarack’s annual EngageFest Conference. The workshop was called “**Building a Movement for Change: Lessons from Atlantic Canada**.” We had a great discussion about the Marthas’ engagement in work on poverty eradication, particularly through Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty, the larger context of the Antigonish Movement, and the more recent initiative with Tamarack of the Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada group.

Ecological Justice Momentum is growing for the Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology (ORCIE)! ORCIE is a relatively new organization based in Ottawa for religious congregations that want to amplify their concerns and priorities on federal policy related to climate justice, biodiversity protection, and reconciliation. I represent the Marthas on the Board and serve on the ORCIE Executive Committee.

One of the important accomplishments of the past year is the launch of the **ORCIE website: <https://orcie.org/>** This allows ORCIE to have a strong



Darlene O’Leary
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry
Martha’s NGO Liason

online presence, sharing resources, campaigns, and important updates. ORCIE has also been very active this year in the **Jubilee 2025 Turn Debt into Hope campaign**. This is a global campaign, and in Canada it is being led by Kairos, along with ORCIE, Development and Peace, CPJ, and other ecumenical faith-based organizations. The campaign will work through the year to gather signatures and advocate to governments for the end to unjust global debt and the creation of fair financial structures. This will allow poorer countries to invest in social protections and climate response.

New Growers

Meghan and David, the Martha New Growers, have had another busy and productive year on the Bethany farm property! Along with growing amazing food, they are continuing to host free seasonal community workshops on gardening.

More and more groups are coming to learn about what's happening on the farm, including from the Coady Institute, St FX Nutrition, Climate/Development classes, and others. Meghan and I had a chance to speak to a Religious Studies class at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, who were interested in the connection between theology, in particular integral ecology, and local, organic farming. We had a great discussion, touching on themes including what Gospel Hospitality means in sustainable farming.

Meghan and David also gave a presentation to the Marthas at Parkland about their year, what they have learned, what challenges they faced, and their hopes for local food security and for young farmers. They are continuing to work with the Lochaber Growers Coop, contributing to their food boxes, some of which are subsidized for those on low-income.

Reconciliation and Right Relations

This Lent, Martha Justice Ministry Core Group members Sister Donna Brady, Olga Gladkikh, Joanne Tompkins, and Mark Nixon organized and facilitated a series of workshops called "Healing the Divide", which offered sessions for settlers to deepen their understanding of the history of colonialism and residential schools in Canada and the ways we can work toward reconciliation and right relations with Indigenous peoples. The series ran for four Sundays in March during the Lenten season. Participants found it to be a profound learning experience, and we hope to build on this with more programing in the future.

On June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Sister Donna Brady, Sister Josephine Keyzer, and I attended the 5th annual Freedom Day Walk at Shubenacadie, at the site of the former residential school. The walk is held to honour residential school survivors and to remember those children who did not return home. It was a powerful gathering with drumming, prayers, and celebrations of resilience. Following the walk there was a shared outdoor meal. The first song from the Mi'kmaw singer at the event was about Sister Dorothy Moore, which was such a lovely surprise!

Federation UN NGO

As the Marthas' NGO Liaison to the Sisters of Charity Federation UN NGO, I meet regularly online with other liaisons and NGO Representative Jimmy Walters. Jimmy keeps us informed of what is happening at the UN and engages us and Federation members in activities and advocacy campaigns. Jimmy offered two UN Orientation sessions this fall to Federation members and Associates, one of which I spoke in about the work of the NGO Liaisons. The big activity of the winter was the UN Commission for Social Development at the UN Headquarters in New York, which I attended in person this year (no major snow storms this time!). The week included joint Federation Communicators and NGO Liaison meetings. We all had the experience of participating in the Civil Society Forum at the UN on the final day of the Commission, and the Federation NGO/Communicators group was the largest civil society group in attendance!

There were many more activities and community engagements this year that I've shared in our Standing4Justice section of the Marthas' Our Lives as Mission newsletter.

It is such a gift to be part of the wonderful work being done and to share in this ministry for justice with the Marthas, as we engage and deepen the charism of Gospel Hospitality!

Feel free to be in touch if you want to learn more! As always, your prayers and support are deeply appreciated.

Peace and blessings,

Darlene O'Leary
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry

Marthas NGO Liaison
Justice@themarthas.com

**"Whatever you do,
work at it with
all your heart."
(Colossians 3:23)**

Hi everyone,

As many of you may know, I am one of the new members on the 2024-2029 Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Martha. Julia, kindly invited me to share a little bit about this new beginning for me.

I am excited about many aspects!

First, I find our Direction Statement: **Graced with Courage, We Welcome and Help Shape the Emerging Future**, empowering and creative! A future is always emerging, but to actually embrace the task of shaping it can be a grace-filled time for us and the world.

Second, along with the overall leading responsibility of the Congregation, each team member has a particular, designated focus and mine happens to be Liaison for the Associate Program; how lucky can I be!

Julia has welcomed me graciously and skillfully; thank you Julia! I have a lot to learn and many folks to meet; I am excited.

Third, it is a jubilee year, a year of Hope! One of my favorite lines in the Jubilee Prayer follows here:

**"May your grace transform us into
cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel!"**

I love this line, because, I believe, it is one, key way to 'Welcome and Help Shape the Emerging Future.'



Fourth, it is an anniversary year; 45 for you, the Associates and 125 for the Congregation as a whole! We have been blessed and have much for which to be grateful and to celebrate!

Julia, thanks for inviting me to share; hopefully we will all connect often this year!

Gratefully,
Sister Jovita

ARCAN (2024~2025)



The **ARCAN (Atlantic Religious Congregations and Associates Network)** Steering Committee continues to work and thrive! The structure is the same, two weekend meetings a year via ZOOM which also includes an educational / faith sharing morning for all 8 member Congregations and Associates of ARCAN.

The ARCAN Steering Committee met October 18 – 19, 2024. Our special guest speaker for our Saturday morning faith sharing session for all ARCAN members was Sr. Joan Lewis, CND. The topic for the morning was: **"SHOWING UP"**. Sr. Joan explained that "Showing

Up" meant bringing our hearts and minds into the actual suffering and problems of the world. It means engagement, social presence, and sincere concern for justice and peace, and others beyond ourselves.

The Spring ARCAN meetings were held April 11 – 12, 2025. Our special guest for the Saturday morning faith session was Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Stevenson. Her topic was: **"AMAZED BY SPRING"**. In her presentation, Rev. Stevenson spoke about Hope in all of Creation! She encouraged us to see fresh possibilities for the future and be permanently amazed with Spring!

An ARCAN newsletter continues to be published twice a year, and can be found on the Martha Website under the Associate section at www.themarthas.com.

God Bless,
Julia Townsend

~WELCOME~

WOW!! In the year of the Martha's 125th Anniversary and the 45th Anniversary of the Martha Associates, **eighteen** new Associates were received. It is so exciting!! As Director of Associates, I was delighted and privileged to receive our new Associates on behalf of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha.

On **May 25, 2025**, at St. Clare Convent in Sydney Mines, **Debbie Aker and Alicia Buffet** were received and welcomed by the group and in the presence of Sr. Franklyn Ferguson.

On **June 1, 2025**, in Sydney, **Linda Neville; Carol Farmer and Flora Marchand** were received and welcomed by the group.

On **June 15, 2025**, in Antigonish, **Sheila Redden; Leon Maclellan; Marielle Assad; Joseph Khoury; Marie Delorey; Pauline Maclellan; Barry MacKenzie; Janet Becigneul; Debbie Pettipas; and Betty Jane Cameron** were received and welcomed in

the presence of many Sisters of St. Martha including Sr. Sandra Cooke and Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, both of whom were instrumental in forming our new Martha Associate group in Antigonish.

On **September 6, 2025**, during the Martha Associate Retreat Day, **Angie Kolen** of the Antigonish group was received in the presence of many Associates and Sisters of St. Martha.

Finally, on **September 14, 2025**, in Lethbridge, Alberta, **Lisa Noronha and Warren Blust** were received in the presence of the group and Sisters Donna Brady and Jovita MacPherson.

Blessings on each and everyone of our new Martha Associates as they continue to live the charism of Gospel Hospitality!

Julia Townsend

Director Martha Associates

“When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the Creator”

(Mahatma Ghandi)



Debbie Aker and Alicia Buffet,
May 25, 2025



Carol Farmer and Gary Fancey,
June 1, 2025.



Flora Marchand and Sylvia Chiasson,
June 1, 2025



Linda Neville, Flora Marchand,
Carol Farmer, June 1, 2025



Antigonish Reception,
June 15, 2025



Sr. Sandra Cooke, Angie Kolen,
Sr. Brendalee Boisvert,
September 6, 2025



Julia Townsend and Linda Neville,
June 1, 2025



Martha Associate Reception September
14, 2025 Kathryn Gillis, Lisa Noronha,
Sr. Jovita MacPherson, Warren Blust,
Annella Wehlage

Happy Birthday Donna!



A special milestone birthday was recognized by the Sydney Associates for **Donna Luedey**! Donna is now 80 years young and going strong, just like the Marthas!!! Donna was received as a Martha Associate on February 15, 2005! A 20-year milestone!

Congratulations Donna!!

Beware Sr. Sandra Cooke!!!



BEWARE OF SR. SANDRA COOKE and her CAKE KNIFE!!!!

Mass For Shut Ins



Mass For Shut Ins. April 5, 2025.

On April 5, 2025, the annual taping of Mass for Shut Ins was held at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Sydney, NS. The Liturgy was for Palm Sunday. The group was delighted to be joined by Sr. Franklyn Ferguson with Fr. Bill Burke as our presider, assisted by Deacon David Lewis; Martha Associate and Director of Mass for Shut Ins. Lectors were Dale Romeo and Gary Fancey, music was provided by our own Mike Finigan.

A time of hospitality was shared following the taping. We are so thankful to have this wonderful Ministry in our community. Mass for Shut Ins is viewed across the country and beyond!!

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”

(Proverbs 3:5)

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

(John 15:13)

“Be still and know that I am God.”

(Psalm 46:10)

Celebrating 45 Years – Tribute to Our Martha Associate Pioneers

In honor of the Martha Associate's 45th year I thought it would be fun to gather and share a few Western Associates' stories about what it has meant to be an Associate with the Sisters of St. Martha.

Eleanor Schamber (Lethbridge) – Eleanor and her husband, Adam, joined the Martha Retreat Centre Associates on January 28, 1996. They were invited to 'come and see' by Steve and Frances Slemko who were part of the original pioneers when this faith group started in 1988. Eleanor and Adam joyfully attended the Sunday evening Associate faith gathering.

"In those days, even in the summer, we would meet. Not always at the Centre but in parks, each others homes and at restaurants for coffee. We had so much fun. It was a little family within itself. How we loved sharing together and spending time with all the Marthas that came out west."

Eleanor shared that one of her fondest memories was being part of the 'west and east' Associate exchange which happened in the late 1990s.

"Several of us went to Antigonish. It was so much fun. Sister Brendalee was our driver. Well, she kept us in stitches, and at times, song, as we drove about sightseeing. We all stayed at the Mother House on the 4th floor. That was such an honor and privilege. What memories I still hold from that trip. The exchange was that several Eastern Associates then came to Lethbridge. We, of course, had to take them to Waterton and shared the beauty of the prairies and the Rockies. We also had a splendid night of skits, singing and laughter in the basement of St. Patrick's church (Refer to photo attached). I really loved those days."

Sadly, Adam passed away in September 2008. Eleanor continued to attend the faith gatherings until 2018 when her health prevented her from joining in person. Since that time fellow Associates have kept Eleanor up-to-date on how the Associates are doing and what topics are shared at the faith gathering. She enjoys reading the news in the Sycamore. When she is well enough she also attends mass where she catches up with old Associate friends.

Eleanor shared that she will be 93 in September. I asked her what it means, today, for her to be a Martha Associate and this is what she said:

"Being an Associate with the Sisters of St. Martha has always filled me with a feeling of belonging. Even to this



Eleanor Schamber, Lethbridge Alta

day, your visits, reading the Sycamore and seeing fellow Associates at mass still make me feel that way – I belong."

In honor of the Sisters of St. Martha celebrating 125 years of ministry and service, Eleanor offered prayers and gratitude. She also sends love and prayers to all Associates as we celebrate 45 years of faith sharing and belonging.

Eleanor, I thank you for sharing your story. Our visits are always heartfelt, spirited and inspiring. God bless you and your family.



Barb Learmont, Sr. Delores Sagz, Sr. Veronica MacNeil, Mary Kennedy & Sheila Mattar.
(Calgary Associates with Sisters of St. Martha)

Calgary Associates – The Emmaus Centre Associate group started in 2000. Here are a few memories from Barbara Learmont and Yvonne Donahue.

Barb's Reflections – "The founding Sisters of our group were Sister Mary Gouthro and Sister Josephine (Josie) MacLellan. Emmaus Centre had limited space, so our group was smaller. We had eight folks who attended our 'come and see' start. At the end of our first 18 months, or so, there were four received: Sheila Matter, Mary Kennedy, Yvonne Donahue and myself. We really enjoyed our monthly Sunday afternoon gatherings. Most of the time we alternated meeting in each other's home. Our spouses often joined in for our Christmas socials. Much to my joy many of the sisters like to play cards so we'd get together for that too. Oh, the laughs we had! We shared a lot and grew together.

Over the years we were honored with several different Sisters coming to Emmaus Centre. Sisters Mary MacFarlane, Josephine Keyzer, Clotilda MacIntyre, Veronica MacNeil and Delores Sogz, all who served with abundant gospel hospitality and shared faith. I was also blessed to serve with the Sisters in various ministries and at many events at St. Thomas More Parish. It allowed me to really get to know them. I think because we were small, we easily and quickly created a family. It was so sad and hard to adjust when the last sister left with no one new to fill her shoes.

Our Calgary Associate group stay connected to this day, albeit mostly by phone. It was with much joy that Yvonne and I were able to attend the 2023 Associates Retreat in Lethbridge. We have created loving and sincere friendships with our Lethbridge Associates too."

Barb concluded her reflection with this: "being a Martha Associate has meant sisterhood; faith and spiritual growth; hospitality and respect; friendship abundant in love and support. What was said in the room stayed in the room. I really appreciated that! Now that's a special family I'd say."

Yvonne's Reflections – Yvonne's Associate story comes with a little 'twist' – she was born in Nova Scotia and before being an Associate she was a Sister of St. Martha, Antigonish. Yvonne shared, "I am forever grateful to the Martha's commitment and love for me. They helped me get my education and shared their deep faith in God with me. I dearly loved my time with them. However, as life would have it, I was later called to be a wife, mother and grandmother. I moved to Calgary in 2001 to be closer to my daughter and her family. I am so grateful I made that choice.



Yvonne Donahue, Kathryn Gillis, Barb Learmont
Lethbridge, Alta September 2023

My becoming an Associate was a bit by accident. Back then I didn't realize that the Martha's had Associates in Calgary. It was Sister Josie MacLellan who invited me to 'come and see'. What a blessing that was and still is. Being an Associate reinforced the life I was intended to live. Even though I left the congregation for another call, I held my vows close in my heart. To this day, I try to live them out in all I think, say and do. I hold deep love, gratitude and respect for all the Marthas, past and present who believed in me. I treasure the memories of the sainted women, who crossed my path during needed times in my life. They were truly saints before they left this earth. God love them.

It means so much to me to receive the emails, the Sycamore, the phone calls and contact with everyone. I have long enjoyed going to Lethbridge for the Western Associates September retreats. Now that I am older, I can't make them all, however, I thoroughly enjoyed Sister Brendalee's retreat in 2023. It was remarkable that I could attend. I agree with Barb's word of 'family' that is who we are. Being an Associate has expanded my Martha family circle. Even though we don't physically get together I still feel actively involved and very much a part of the Associates.

God bless the Sisters of St. Marthas as you celebrate your 125th year – just marvelous!

Thank you for your vision to grow the Martha family through Associates. May we all be blessed with a healthy and fabulous 45th year filled with peace, hope and faith."

Submitted by Kathryn Gillis

Martha Associate Retreats

Martha Associate Retreats

September 6, 2025, Antigonish NS

September 12 – 14, 2025, Lethbridge, Alta

THEME:

“Healing the Divide: A Journey of Reconciliation”

Facilitator: Sr. Donna Brady CSM



A wonderful and powerful retreat kick- started our year for Martha Associates. Sr. Donna Brady gave a beautiful retreat titled: **“Healing the Divide: A Journey of Reconciliation”**. Sr. Donna delivered the retreat with grace, gentleness, compassion and love.

Sr. Donna began the retreat by prefacing the greatest commandment: **Love God and Love neighbor**. She also reminded us of the Sisters of St. Martha Direction Statement:

**“Graced with Courage, We Welcome and
Help Shape the Emerging Future”**

How do these come together when we are looking at our relationships with our Indigenous peoples?

She played a wonderful song, written and performed by Morgan Toney, a Mi'kmaq musician and singer from Waycobah First Nation in Cape Breton. His song is called: **“Heal the Divide”**. His words are deep and heartfelt:

***“We are born to live and die, it's been this way before my
time. Common will to survive, Somewhere back along the
line, there was born the divide.***

***Brothers, sisters far and wide, Time is now to all unite.
Choice is yours to decide how to use the voice inside....
we got to heal the divide.***

***We can meet in the middle, lay our differences aside.
We've got to give just a little and compromise.....***

***Voice between wrong and right,
only peace can win the fight.***

There will always be two sides until we heal the divide.”
(Morgan Toney)

Sr. Donna told us that we are all Treaty People. When we talk of relationships, that is what we are. So, why is it that we cannot recognize this? This is linked to the truth that there is a Great Divide. How was the Divide created? What is our own experience with Indigenous people?

Using a visual exercise, Sr. Donna outlined how the Divide was created; what was the experience of the Mi'kmaq people? What is the journey that we have traveled together? Seeing the Divide widen with the exercise was horrifying! How could this have happened?

Once Sr. Donna had opened our eyes to how the Divide was created, the second part of the day was spent reflecting on and discussing ways we could help with healing the Divide. Here we looked upon the great commandment from Scripture and the Martha Direction Statement.

In the West, Sr. Donna gave a little reflection on the Friday evening which can speak to all of us, to ground us for where we needed to go during the retreat and to ask for that grace. She highlighted the **“Big Sky”** in Lethbridge and encouraged us to ask for the grace to enlarge our horizons and our vision, to help us receive any warmth to any part that may be frozen or stuck in us. She encouraged us to think of the **“wind”**, and how it can be so delightful, yet, at other times, it is strong and stirs things up! It begs us to ask this question: does something in me need to be brought to life? And the **“land”**how is it calling for us to be more productive?

A very special part of the retreat came when Sr. Donna played a clip from Sr. Dorothy Moore's Documentary.

To see and hear Sr. Dorothy was profound indeed. Most profound is to think of her incredibly difficult story, and yet her incredible faith and trust in God remained.

Toward the end of the afternoon, Sr. Donna encouraged us to come up with a vision of how we might see the world 10 years down the road, as treaty people and partners in building a society of peace and friendship. Our responses reflected the desire for friendship; respect of each other's identities; equality and acceptance of all people; listening without judgement; strive to focus on “we” rather than “them” and “us”; love and patience.

Sr Donna ended each of her presentation times with a guided meditation.

The list of resources that we were given is included at the end of the newsletter.

Thank you to Sr. Donna Brady for presenting this topic in such a beautiful manner which encouraged us to learn, to pause and to reflect.



Sr. Donna Brady Sept. 6, 2025



Martha Associate Retreat, Lethbridge, September 13, 2025



Sr. Jovita and Sr. Donna, September 13, 2025



Martha Associate Retreat, September 6, 2025 Antigonish

Celebrating 45 years of Martha Associates

Glace Bay, NS

Kamloops, BC

Sydney, NS

Lowell, Mass

Sydney Mines, NS



Trenton, NS

Eskasoni, NS

Lethbridge, AB

Antigonish, NS

Calgary, AB

Celebrating 125 years of the Sisters of St. Martha

Associate Group News ~ East: Sydney 2024-2025

The Sydney Martha Associates had another good year of gatherings and another year of expansion as we welcomed some journeyers into the group as new Associates.

Our gatherings began as usual in Antigonish at Martha Place for the retreat, this year's theme being "Rooted in the Living God, We Live Our Lives as Mission", with our presenter Sr. Theresa Parker. We had a good representation from the various groups from Cape Breton, Antigonish and Trenton as well as some good group chats and social time among the Associates and the Sisters of St. Martha. Always a wonderful time at Martha Place, and a nice getaway from the everyday.



Sydney Associates, June 1, 2025

Our first local meeting took place in November, 2024, on a Saturday. We had visitors from Antigonish in Marielle Assad, who is the Sisters of St. Marthas' Director of the Charism Ministry. She was joined by Debbie Castle and they came to talk with us as Journeyers on the Charism of Gospel Hospitality, specifically on how we can set the charism free in the world. An entertaining, thought-provoking morning of discussion, followed by a fine lunch. What would a Martha meeting be without one? Many thanks to Marielle and Debbie for paying us a visit.

And then December is upon us just like that. Our December gathering is always a special one, involving either going out to have a meal together or staying put and having a Christmas potluck. This year we did a little of both. We all went to "The Hanging of the Greens" event at the United Heritage Church in Sydney. The church puts this event on each year. It's a celebration of Advent and Christmas as they light up the church a bit at a time and tell the stories of how different traditions came to be, from Christmas Trees, wreaths, stars and so on and how they connect to biblical passages. Each story is interspersed with a song or two from guest musicians, solo singers, and choirs. It was a very special afternoon, followed by a meeting back at our usual gathering place, Bethel Presbyterian Church, a pizza party and some carol singing. We decided to offer our social justice fund collection to Loaves and Fishes during this meeting as well. I think we'll be back for the Hanging of the Greens again.

In January, 2025, our guest speaker was sick, so we spent time in prayer, reflection and planning the rest of the year.

February was a storm month! Cancellation for the group!

In March, we welcomed lay Minister, Martha MacDonald. Martha gave a lovely reflection on Hope, as 2025 is the Jubilee Year of Hope.

In April we technically met twice, once as the host 'parish' on CTV's "Mass for Shut Ins", after which we enjoyed a nice lunch at St. Marguerite Bourgeoy Parish, which is where the show is always taped. Thanks to Julia Townsend for setting up a great lunch and baking such delicious muffins! Then during our regularly scheduled meeting for April we went over and reflected on the new Martha Direction Statement for 2024-2029.

In May, 2025, we welcomed Martha Associate Journeyer, Betty Jane Cameron, a member of our Antigonish Associate group. Betty Jane shared some of her experiences as a Missionary in Zambia with us all. An incredible story!!

In June, 2025, another potluck. Imagine! But we had more than food on our agenda for this year-end gathering. We officially welcomed three journeyers into the Martha Associates. Welcome to Linda Neville, Flora Marchand, and Carol Farmer. Great to have these folks with us. Our group is growing and flourishing!

Mike Finigan

Co-coordinator Sydney Martha Associates



Mike Finigan and Sr. Lucy MacNeil, September 5, 2024

Associate Group News ~ East: Sydney Mines 2024-2025



Sydney Mines reception May 25, 2025

The Martha Associates have wrapped up another year. We give great thanks to our Marthas, Sr. Claudette Gallant and Sr. Franklyn Ferguson who provide us with guidance, faith and hope with their leadership. They invite us into their home every month for our regular meetings. The Associates provide a wonderful cup of tea and treats every month.

On September 7, 2024, we attended the Martha Associate Retreat directed by Sr. Theresa Parker: "Rooted in the Living God, We Live Our Lives as Mission." Not all Associates were able to attend due to weather conditions. Sr. Theresa reminded us to reflect upon our roots, our story of faith which came to us from our experiences, family, and community.

The Sydney Mines Martha Associates provided Christmas treat bags to the Veterans Ward at the Harbourview Hospital on Christmas Eve, along with Santa Clause and singing!!



Debbie Aker and Alicia Buffett with Sr. Franklyn Ferguson
May 25, 2025

The Sydney Mines Associates were delighted to welcome two new Martha Associates to our group. On May 25, 2025, Debbie Aker and Alicia Buffett were received and welcomed by the group in the presence of Sr. Franklyn Ferguson and Martha Associate Director, Julia Townsend. We are also pleased to have 2 new journeyers with us, Bernadette and Beau Lovell.

I have taken on the duties of Coordinator of the group, kindly assisted by Norma Blinkhorn. I am looking forward to a wonderful year of being together.

Blessings to all!

David Lewis

Coordinator Sydney Mines Associates



David Lewis, Sydney Mines Associate

Our year began with our annual retreat in September. As we arrived at the tables where our names were, we were overjoyed to realize that our whole Associate Journey Community was present for the retreat! The title, **“Rooted in our Living God, we Live our Lives as Mission”** brought us through a wonderful day- listening, reflecting, sharing, meeting members of other Associate Communities helped us expand our vision of Martha Associates.



Antigonish Martha Associates

Over the previous year we had planned to have Darlene O’ Leary, Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator, come to share her ministry with us. Weather, colds, etc. seemed to keep moving our date to welcome Darlene, but it did happen! We had a very good evening, having answered many questions: housing and difficulties today, income, etc. helped bring a new awareness to the situations and needs not only of the world but to our small towns.

We anticipated the Congregation’s General Chapter which happened in the spring of 2024. Sister Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader, gave us a super overview of the preparation from beginning right up to the actual Chapter. Later after the Chapter happened, Sr. Brendalee give us a “better-than-a-bird’s eye view” of the outcomes of the Chapter including naming our new Leadership Team.

Advent and the Christmas season helped us move deeply into the joy, peace, hope, of these beautiful days as well as the sharing of memories of our own younger days of Advent and Christmas. Our evening gathering found us gathered around our chapel Advent wreath, where candles, glowing beautiful light invited us to sharing that touched our hearts. The “take-away” was tree decoration which when chosen and turnaround to read the word on it revealed a word that we might practice during the four weeks of Advent! Some decoration had “joy”, “peace” “kindness”. etc. and one even had “patience”!

January came, so did snow and wind that caused us to reschedule one meeting. The joy of this season brought a wonderful gift to us. Two people, Allan and Muffy

came, they were ready to travel with us as Martha Associate Journeyers. We also welcomed Sister Catherine MacFarlane as a team member. Sr. Catherine began by helping share an article she had given us. We learned much about group sharing.

Lent, Easter and Spring arrived! Sister Brendalee helped us prepare for the biggest event of the year: we were ready to move forward; we were ready to become full Martha Associates! The date and the time were decided; Julia Townsend was committed to being with us. We were on our way!

June Fifteenth arrived! Our community chapel was filled with Gospel Hospitality as we welcomed, ten “journeyers” who were received as Martha Associates. Our neighboring sisters came, the community in our home, Martha Place, Parkland Antigonish arrived, and a others from various places came to celebrate! To say it was well over the top might be a minor expression-it was super. Following the “Rite of Reception” we moved into an adjacent room for further hospitality. The delicious cake (and food), conversation, joy, everyone meeting and greeting. The room was filled with laughter, conversation, blessings and greetings. One of our “Journeyers” could not be present as a long-time commitment drew her elsewhere, now we know she will experience her “Rite of Reception” at our September retreat. Our two “journeyer’s” who came after Christmas will be received in January. We have three names of people who would like to begin a journey when we meet again in the Fall.

We did have some changes in the year, Sister Loretta Gillis, a faithful team member, had an unfortunate in-house accident, which sent her to surgery and recovery. Sr. Loretta is home now and doing very well. We hope she will join us in the future; she will be most welcome.

We close our little resume by wishing everyone a little poem:

“Love our planet.”

Remember:

Stars are beautiful lights that do not require batteries.

The moon is always smiling, even in diminishing stages or behind a cloud.

The sun is far more reliable than an alarm clock.

Rain reminds us that tears are needed whether for, joy, love, sadness, or hope.

The earth is strong and firm, a safe place to keep us steady.

The planet is a gift of God, let’s be grateful and care for it!

~~~ Martha Associates, Antigonish NS ~~~  
Sr. Sandra Cook CSM

Our Trenton group meets the second last Sunday of each month at St. John the Baptist Parish in New Glasgow, NS. We love to come together for faithful sharing in word and prayer and faithful sharing in tea and fellowship following our gatherings!

Our first gathering of the year usually follows the September Martha Associate annual retreat. We meet initially in October and spend this first gathering discussing what we would like to do over the year, what topics are we interested to discuss, or speakers we would like to hear from.

One extra special event that we held this year was a **“Come and See”** day held on Saturday, April 26, 2025. The purpose of the day was to invite a friend who might like to “Come and See” what Martha Associates is all about. We welcomed three friends: Maureen Willis, Sheila MacMillan and Paulette Fraser, as well as two Marthas: Sr. Mary McMahon and Sr. Theresa Parker, and Martha Associate Director, Julia Townsend. Our day opened with prayer, followed by a few short presentations:

- **Who are the Martha Associates**
- **The Call of our Baptism**
- **Comments from a Martha (Sr. Mary McMahon)**
- **Comments from an Associate (Linda Longmire)**
- **Going Forward on the Journey**
- **Discussions**
- **Closing Ritual**
- **Lunch**



Trenton Martha Associates 2025

It was a wonderful morning, and we are hopeful our new friends will accept the invitation to journey along with our group!

Our year ended with a gathering and a potluck on May 25, 2025.

We are looking forward to seeing each other again, sharing our faith in Christ and supporting each other in friendship and prayer.

God Bless,

Joy MacIntosh,

Coordinator Trenton Associates

**“I was complaining that I had no shoes till I met a man who had no feet.”**

**(Confucius)**

**“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.....it keeps no record of wrongs.”**

**( 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 )**



Greetings from the West, from sunny Lethbridge in southern Alberta!

The Martha Associates welcomed Sisters Theresa Parker and Sr. Josephine Keyzer home to the Martha Retreat Centre in September 2024. We were so joyful and grateful to have them with us again, and we thank them for travelling to Lethbridge to spend a few days with us. The love, affection, and solace we felt in their presence was palpable.

Sister Theresa spent the weekend of September 13 to 15 in retreat with us and shared the meaning and breadth of our call “**Rooted in the Living God, We Live Our Lives as Mission**”. She said that God is always trying to woo us to Him. He is the initiator of a relationship He wishes to have with us. How does God get my attention? God calls, captures our attention, and provides. We are to “be open, to accept, to be challenged”.

We prayed this opening prayer, prepared by one of our Associates, as we recommitted ourselves to our call and mission of Gospel hospitality.

*Lord Jesus, you send your people on mission to make*

*God's love and mercy known in the world.*

*Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us so that we may*

*Go forth to reflect God's love in the world.*

*Help us to love with Your heart,*

*to carry out our mission with Your hands,*

*and to be a voice for all.*

*Help us to bear radiant witness to communion and service,*

*to ardent and generous faith,*

*to justice and love of the poor and marginalized,*

*So that the joy of Gospel hospitality*

*may reach to the ends of the earth,*

*illuminating the fringes of our world.*

*Give us strength to approach others with love and*

*to deepen our prayer,*

*so that we may receive Your guidance.*

*Pour out your Spirit so we may be strengthened*

*to go forth and witness to the Gospel*

*through our words and actions.*

*May God grant us the gift of perseverance on our journey.*

*May our lives bear fruit in this community*

*as we seek to accompany others toward You,*

*who live and reign with God the Father*

*in the unity of the Holy Spirit,*

*Lord forever and ever. Amen*



**Sr. Jovita, Kathryn Gillis, Sr. Donna Brady  
September 12, 2025 at St. Patrick's Cemetery, Lethbridge, Alta**

Sisters Paula Mullen, FCJ and Sister Mary Kelly, FCJ joined us from Calgary at our October gathering. They shared with us the work the FCJs are doing in building and providing resources for school systems to inform students and staff about human trafficking awareness in southern Alberta. Human trafficking is the act of recruiting, transporting, or holding victims, often to coerce them into providing manual labour or sexual services. HTEP (Human Trafficking Education for Prevention) was created in Calgary in 2023 by a small group of Catholics (religious and laity) who shared a concern about troubling statistics indicating that a disproportionate number of marginalized individuals are being targeted for human trafficking in Southern Alberta.

Sisters Paula and Mary shared personal stories of how they have helped people who have been trafficked. They also handed out copies of the written materials HTEP has prepared for its 'education for prevention' programme. An article about the Human Trafficking Education for Prevention appeared in the December 15, 2024 Diocese of Calgary newsletter and can be read at <https://www.catholiccycc.ca/blog/human-trafficking-education-for-prevention>

On All Souls Day several Associates gathered for our second annual All Souls Day prayers for the Sisters of St. Martha buried in Lethbridge's oldest cemetery, St. Patrick's Cemetery. There were readings and hymns, plus the necrologies for four of the Sisters – Sisters Dionysius, M. Emmanuel, Marie, and Agnes. Those present took their turn proclaiming the readings and reading out the necrologies, which helped deepen our relationship with the Sisters, as we heard their mission stories and how they served their missionary calls in Lethbridge. A flower was placed at each Martha gravestone and at the headstones of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus, some of whom are buried very close to the Martha Sisters. We also remembered in prayer Joan Magliocco, our dear Associate who died in January 2024. We were blessed to have her husband, Romano, and her son join with us in remembrance.

At our meeting later in November Kathy and Annella spoke to us about the special week they spent in Antigonish at the Sisters of St. Martha Chapter held in April 2024. They shared with us some of the reflection and discussion topics they had participated in during

the week, which helped us to also unfold the theme of 'Animating Charism' in gospel hospitality, both for the Sisters and for Associates.

Our January gathering was held in the afternoon so that we could participate in a Zoom conversation with the Martha's Charism Ministry Team. Most of our Associates attended in person at the Retreat Centre and two Associates living in Calgary were able to participate via Zoom. Debbie Castle and Marielle Assad led us in this session to assist them in discovering new language and fresh expressions to convey insights into the Charism of Gospel Hospitality, which would “make them accessible and life-giving for all within our communities”. Many questions were asked, and much discussion took place, as we tried to understand what the word 'charism' means and how we are called to respond. We must first hear the cries of need which call out to us in our community, and then we must respond to those cries.



**Sr. Paula Mullen FCJ and Lisa Noronha, Lethbridge 2025**

At our February gathering, we watched a video recording of, and reflected on, one of Father Tim Boyle's talks in his “Enlarge the Tent” series of sessions at St. Martha's Church in 2023-2024. This talk was from the second year of his “The Art of Accompaniment” sessions and they are recorded on the St. Martha Church's YouTube channel. This particular one is entitled “What Unbelievers Can Teach Us About the Mystery of God” and can be viewed at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p\\_VHNsaHckI&ab\\_channel=St.Martha%27sParish-Lethbridge](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_VHNsaHckI&ab_channel=St.Martha%27sParish-Lethbridge)

The theme of this talk is atheism or non-belief and what we may learn from non-believers. Father also introduced us to a new concept, for most of us, which is “anatheism” or a “returning to God after God”, a time of creative “not knowing” or doubting. The large group broke into smaller groups, where we considered questions for reflection, and then came together to share our thoughts with the whole gathering.

In March we learned about Messianic Judaism from Rabbi Sydney and his wife Linda. They founded the Joyful House of Prayer in 2007 in Lethbridge. Rabbi Sydney said that Messianic Jews are raised Jewish, or are from Jewish heritage, but believe in Jesus. They celebrate the feasts of Israel, such as Passover. Rabbi Sydney lived in Israel for eighteen years doing humanitarian aid work at a centre he and Linda established. Israel's Supreme Court did not

allow them to gain citizenship because they believed in Jesus, so they were kicked out of the country by the Israeli government. Their aid centre assisted mostly Ukrainians, and they formed a congregation there. The Joyful House of Prayer has opened a Christian day care centre, which looks after children of new immigrants from sixteen countries in the world. They also have a 'bread ministry', where they give out bread, an elderly ministry, and a prison ministry. Rabbi Sydney has worn the kippah or yarmulke (Jewish skullcap) for forty years and was beaten one evening in Lethbridge because he was wearing it. The evening was very pleasant and informative, particularly the portion where we learned about the Passover Seder meal.

With spring in the air, our April session theme focused on “The Sacred Green Teachings”. There is a wonderful poster shared on the “Faith and the Common Good” website ( Sacred Green Teachings - Faith & the Common Good ) which grounded our prayer time. Special guests from the City of Lethbridge's Waste and Environment Team provided a detailed overview for responsible recycling. We all left with more than one tip and actionable item to help us better care for our common home.

In May, in partnership with Diana Sim, Executive Director of the Martha Retreat Centre, we engaged in the Centre's Pilgrimage Passport Jubilee 2025 – Pilgrims of Hope. This passport was created by The Retreat Centre team, with a focus on 9 Lethbridge locales where one can embark on a journey of renewal, reflection and spiritual growth. Together we took our pilgrimage prayerfully and silently through the beautiful labyrinth located on the Centre's grounds. After our pilgrimage we shared reflections and insights which resulted from walking this path of hope.

Our annual Christmas celebration was held on a December afternoon at the Retreat Centre. The Retreat Centre's gathering space was filled with laughter and camaraderie as we opened our gift exchange presents, enjoyed delightful Christmas treats, and revelled in each other's company. We enjoyed our annual spring barbecue on a Saturday afternoon in early June. It was a beautiful spring day and Harry and Jim barbecued hot dogs and hamburgers for everyone. We were grateful to be able to spend the afternoon with Julia Townsend and with each other.

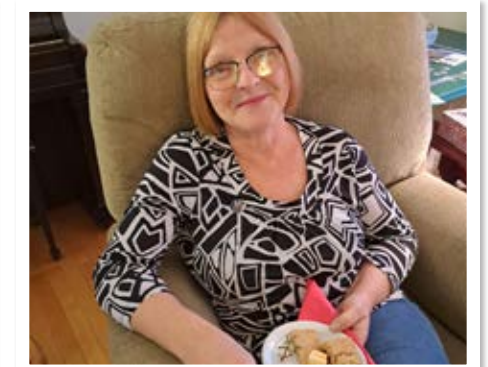
Many blessings from the Lethbridge Associates.



**Martha Associate Retreat September 14, 2025, Lethbridge, Alta**



# *Sisters of St. Martha & Associates Memories*





# More Memories





## Jubilee Year of Hope

The Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 is a Holy Year for the Catholic Church, with the theme “**Pilgrims of Hope**,” focusing on renewal, reconciliation, and hope amidst global challenges like war and the climate crisis. Declared by Pope Francis, it invites Catholics to deepen their relationship with God, each other, and creation through prayer, pilgrimages to Rome, and acts of mercy. The Jubilee began with the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica on Christmas Eve 2024 and continues until Epiphany 2026.



## Truth and Reconciliation Resource List

(from page 14-15)

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions 94 calls to action.

<https://www.reconciliationeducation.ca/what-are-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-94-calls-to-action>

Joseph, Bob. 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act. Port Conquitlam, BC: Indigenous Relations Press, 2018.

Sinclair, Honourable Murray. Who We Are; Four Questions for a Life and a Nation. McClelland & Stewart, 2024.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2013.

Two-Eyed Seeing: A weaving together of Indigenous and western thought. Presentation by Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall, and Cheryl Bartlett. Conference in PEI in 2010.

<http://www.integrativescience.ca/uploads/files/2010June-Marshall-Bartlett-Integrative-Science-Two-Eyed-Seeing-environment-Mi'kmaq.pdf>

## A Moment To Remember



*Let us remember, our Sisters of St. Martha, 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.*

Mary Bradley (2014)

Isabel Kerr (2015)

Carmella Pembroke (2015)

Steve Slenko (2015)

Anne Hoveling (West)

Donna Marinelli (2016)

Barbara Spiess (2018) (West)

George Hovelling (2018) (West)

David Kerr (2018)

Anne Brennick (2018)

Deany Walker (Oct. 2019)

Johnny Walker (Sept. 2020)

Jim McGinty (May 24 2020) (West)

Barbara Denny, (March 2021)

Colleen MacNeil, (July 2021)

Gertrude Laffin, (May 30, 2022)

Ann Poulette (March, 2023)

Gerald Edwards (March 29, 2023)

Jack and Anne MacDonald (May 2023)

Mary MacKinnon (May 22, 2023)

Joan Magliocco (January 13, 2024)

Sarah Francis (September 18, 2024)

Marguerite MacNeil (January 18, 2025)

David Nearing (Feb. 26, 2025)

June Lewis (April 15, 2025)

Rhodena Stevens (June 27, 2025)

Theresa Gillis (August 19, 2025)





## The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven,  
may the *faith* you have given us  
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,  
and the flame of *charity* enkindled  
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*  
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us  
into tireless cultivators  
of the seeds of the Gospel.  
May those seeds transform from within  
both humanity and the whole cosmos  
in the sure expectation  
of a new heaven and a new earth, when,  
with the powers of Evil vanquished,  
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee  
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,  
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.  
May that same grace spread  
the joy and peace of our Redeemer  
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,  
be glory and praise for ever. Amen

*Francis*



Canadian Conference  
of Catholic Bishops

Mount Carmel Administration Centre  
Sisters of St. Martha  
75 Marian Drive  
Antigonish, NS  
B2G 2G6  
902-863-3113

Parkland Antigonish  
153 Highway 337  
Antigonish, NS  
B2G 0G5  
902-735-8900

The Martha Website is: [www.themarthas.com](http://www.themarthas.com)

Any Associate group who has news items or pictures that speak of the life of your faith community  
please email material to Julia Townsend at [julia.townsend@themarthas.com](mailto:julia.townsend@themarthas.com)

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