

MARTHA ASSOCIATES *Sycamore* 2023

A Message from The Martha Associate Director

Welcome to all Sisters of St. Martha, Associates, Journeyers and friends, to SYCAMORE 2023. You may remember that we had decided to delay the printing of the SYCAMORE to the Fall of 2023 so that we could include both the 2022 and the 2023 Martha Associate Retreats. In addition, you will find our annual updates from the Associate groups, along with reflective material, lots of pictures and some fun sections as well!

It has been a very busy year! All of us are back to in-person gatherings, which is wonderful! I very much enjoyed my visit to all our Associate groups this year and was blessed by your wonderful hospitality! However, we still need to be mindful that covid, RSV and the flu will be all around us as we head toward winter, and we must take precautions! Clean hands, masks and distancing will still serve as important health care tools throughout the Fall and Winter seasons!



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“Take Heart! It is ! Do not be afraid!”

(Matt 14:27)

During the summer months, I often like to attend Mass on Saturday evenings. Sunday mornings become a time for an early morning walk and usually some baking....if it is not too hot!! One Saturday afternoon, the Gospel for the Liturgy was **Matt 14: 22-33**, the story where Jesus comes to the Apostles walking on the water. Our Pastor, Fr. Bill Burke, shared a marvelous homily which touched me deeply, so much so, that I thought I would make it the “heart” of my annual message!

Fr. Bill prefaced his remarks around **verse 27: “Take heart! It is ! Do not be afraid!”**. He reminded us that, with all the issues that face us in the world, the flash flooding, the wildfires, the Fionas, the tornadoes, the loss of life, war and violence, illnesses, racism, homophobia, and climate change....to name only a few....we are asked to **“Take heart”** and see Jesus present in every situation. You may well ask: **How do we do that?**

It is often quite a challenge to see Jesus in the messiness of our world. It is important to let our hearts speak to our minds, so the face of Jesus becomes clearer to us in the adversity of all that surrounds us. Our hearts will tell us that it is easy to see Jesus in the loving actions of our community, helping each other with food, clothing, and opening places of shelter during the floods and wildfires that we have seen unfold across our country and the world. We see Jesus in groups who are caring for our environment, in people who fight for the rights of others, who are not afraid to stand up for others. We see Jesus in our first responders, in health care workers, in the care provided by friends and family, in everyone who attempts to make a difference to make our world a better place for all.

We can recognize Jesus in Pope Francis, truly a shepherd who is trying to make a difference in our Church and indeed, in the world. The synod he has called for in October is not just a synod of Bishops, but it will also include over 150 lay people, including women (YAY!), who will be voting members at the Synod.

If you think back to Matt 14: 22-33, you will recall that Peter walked on the water with Jesus.....until he took his eyes off of Jesus! Then Peter began to sink! Jesus invites us to take heart and keep our eyes fixed firmly on him, allowing Our Lord to lift us up, to be courageous and to trust in him.

It may be tempting to look away, to trust in ourselves, and to try and “fix” things on our own.

Ask yourself today: **“Do I keep my eyes on the Lord? Do I fully trust all things to Him?”** Spend some time praying with Matthew 14: 22-33 and open your heart to the words of Jesus: **“Take heart! It is ! Do not be afraid”**.

God Bless,
Julia Townsend
Director Martha associates

August, 2023



Even though many groups have resumed face to face meetings, the **ARCAN (Atlantic Religious Congregations and Associates Network)** committee has continued to meet virtually. This is, of course, very reasonable since the committee has members from all four Atlantic provinces, and ZOOM allows for a larger attendance of the membership

The Fall meeting of ARCAN was held October 14 – 15, 2022. The special guest speaker for the spiritual section of our meeting was Anne Walsh from St. John’s, NFLD. Anne is very well known for her work in religious education and adult faith formation programs. She works with the Redemptorists of Canada. Anne’s presentation was called: **“Walking Together – How the synodal way proposed by Pope Francis can inform the Associate movement”**. Anne used Luke 24:13 – 35, the Road to Emmaus story, to illustrate what it might mean to walk together in faith, to listen and to learn.

All ARCAN members and associates can join the spiritual sessions via ZOOM. Notices are sent

out prior to each ARCAN meeting regarding date and time. This has been working extremely well overall

Our next ARCAN meeting was held on April 14 – 15, 2023 via ZOOM. At each meeting, a “check in” is always completed at the start of the meeting to allow one associate member and Sister from each member congregation to give a short summary of their events and activities.

The special guest speaker for our April spiritual session was Dr. Marie Battiste, a Mi’kmaq educator, a member of Potlotek First Nation and Aroostook Band of Micmac’s in Maine. She was previously Professor Emerita at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Battiste has returned to Nova Scotia and is currently a Special Advisor to the Vice president Academic at Cape Breton University on decolonizing the academy. The title of Dr. Battiste’s talk was: **“Reconciling Truths and decolonizing Practices for the Head, Heart and hands”**. An excellent presentation!

Summaries of these talks and more information about ARCAN can be found in the ARCAN newsletter which is now compiled twice a year and may be found under the associate section of the Martha website, www.themarthas.com

“As stewards of God’s creation, we are called to make the earth a beautiful garden for the human family. When we destroy our forests, ravage our soil and pollute our seas, we betray that noble calling.”
-Pope Francis

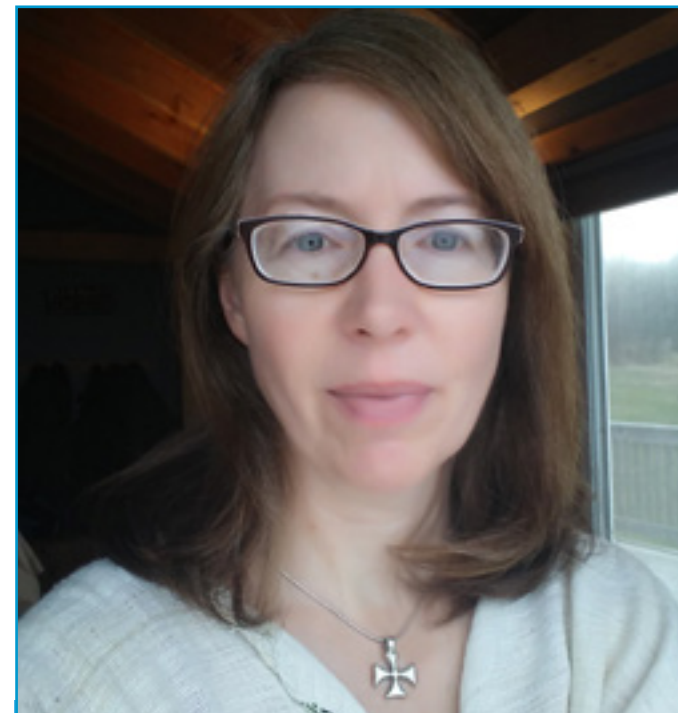
Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator and Marthas UN NGO Liason

June 2023

Dear Associates,

It is a pleasure to share with you the work of Martha Justice Ministry and the Sisters of Charity Federation United Nations NGO! It has been such a full year of learning and sharing our voices for justice. I'll share with you a few highlights.

We had a very active year with the **Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty**, which I co-chair, particularly in our work on basic income. We organized our annual event for October 17th, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which included a lunch and learn with Catherine Hart from Engage Nova Scotia to talk about Nova Scotia's progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We also had a chance to make presentations to Antigonish Town and County Councils in May and June requesting a resolution for the Mayor and Warden to send letters to the Prime Minister,



Darlene O'Leary
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry
Marthas' NGO Liason

Premier, and relevant ministers in support of a basic income program. We were very pleased that both councils voted unanimously to support the resolution!

Our **Basic Income Atlantic Canada** group, in partnership with the Tamarack Institute, hosted an online Atlantic Summit in November, which was an opportunity to bring together elected officials from different levels of government to discuss the kind of basic income program we want to see, progress on the PEI proposal, and jurisdictional challenges and opportunities. The Summit participants included Senator Kim Pate, Halifax Mayor Mike Savage (by video), MPs Sean Fraser (by video) and Sean Casey (PEI), former MP Wayne Easter (PEI), Mi'kmaq Chief Darlene Bernard (Lennox Island First Nation), and others. It was a great gathering to show the growing support for providing the basic income security that so many need for their well-being. The Basic Income Atlantic Canada group continues to actively work to advocate for a basic income program that would ensure the Agenda 2030 commitment that "no one is left behind."

We joined two events this year with the **Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Atlantic** network, which is a branch of the Canadian Religious Conference. The first was an in-person event at the Villa Madonna house in Rothesay, NB. The gathering featured a wonderful talk by Wolastoqey Elder Dr. David Perley from Tobique First Nation to talk about "A Season for Reconciliation". We also had the chance to share on the work of our justice offices and to discuss collaborative actions we can share. The second event was a joint JPIC Atlantic and Religious of Atlantic Canada (RAC) event in Halifax in May, with the highlight being a day long-event with Franciscan Sister and scholar Ilia Delio on "The Word Beyond," bringing together the insights of science and religion in responding to current issues. What an enriching discussion!

We've also been blessed this year with two amazing couples taking part in the **New Growers program**. David and Meghan are in their third year and Danielle and Clayton are in their second year of the program. It is amazing to see the transformation of the farm area at Bethany as they do such impressive growing! They've been successfully selling their produce at the local Antigonish Farmers Market, at markets in New Glasgow and Mabou, and with the Lochaber Growers Cooperative food boxes. It's inspiring to see the next generation of farmers doing such good work!

In our ongoing work on **Indigenous reconciliation**, we had the chance this March to have a book study with Sister Dorothy Moore's book, *A Journey of Love and Hope: The Inspirational Words of a Mi'kmaw Elder*. We had a lovely group of about 20 people participating, and we met each Sunday in March through Lent. It was deeply moving to come together around Sister Dorothy's story, and to have Sister Dorothy join us for the final session. We also were blessed to have a chance to do a **Blanket Exercise**, led by Terena Francis and co-facilitated by Joanne Tompkins. It was a deeply powerful learning experience of the history of colonization from an Indigenous perspective. We were so grateful to take part!

In my work as the **Marthas NGO Liaison**, it was also an eventful year! In October, Sister Marion Sheridan and I travelled to New Jersey and New York for an Orientation at the UN and for a meeting of the NGO Liaisons. We were so pleased to be there for a celebration farewell to Sister Teresa Kotturan, the outgoing Sisters of Charity Federation NGO Representative, and to welcome the new NGO Representative, Jimmy Walters.

Sister Marion and I were also able to be at the UN in New York in February for the **Commission for Social Development (CSocD61)**. The theme

was focussed on decent employment, post-Covid recovery, and the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was wonderful to have this introduction to the Commission, starting with an Orientation and Networking Session. We attended high-level panels, side events, and civil society briefings throughout the week. We also participated in the Civil Society Forum, which offered several interesting panel discussions on the theme.

In June, the Marthas welcomed the Sisters of Charity Federation leadership to Antigonish, a gathering co-hosted this year by the PEI and Antigonish Marthas. We were so pleased that Jimmy Walters was able to be here to join in some of the meetings. This gave us a nice chance to have Jimmy meet the Marthas at Parkland. He did a presentation on his work and his spiritual foundations in the Vincentian and Setonian charisms. He shared lovely stories about his family, how they ground their lives together in their shared spirituality, and how this carries him in his work as the NGO Representative. There was a very engaging conversation with the Marthas to follow. It was a very special time together.

This is a snapshot of some of the wonderful activities of the past year. I'm grateful everyday to work with the Marthas and all the amazing people committed to justice, peace, and reconciliation, grounded in Gospel Hospitality and a profound sense of being global citizens.

You are most welcome to drop by or give me a call if you'd like to hear more! As always, your prayers and support are deeply appreciated!

Peace and blessings,

Darlene O'Leary
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry

Marthas NGO Liaison

Mass For Shut Ins

Sisters of St. Martha and Martha Associates gathered on Saturday, April 1, 2023, for the taping of Mass for Shut Ins (Liturgy for April 16th). Four Sisters of St. Martha, seventeen associates along with three journeyers attended the taping. Fr. Bedford Doucette was the presider. Lectors were Mary Gillis and Sr. Josephine MacLellan. Music was provided by Mike Finigan.

Mass for Shut Ins celebrated its' 60th year of being on the air in 2023. It can be seen Sundays at 11:30 am Atlantic time on CTV from the first Sunday after Thanksgiving through to the end of May.

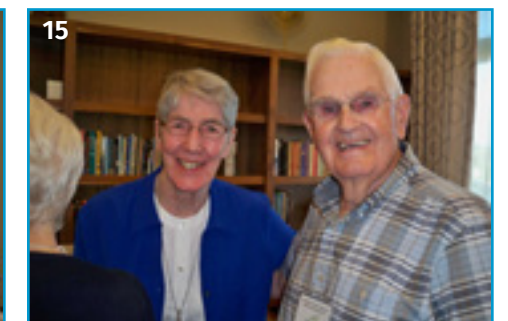
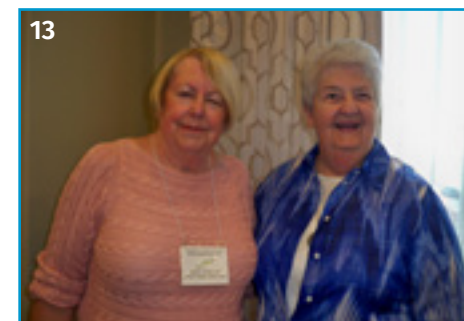
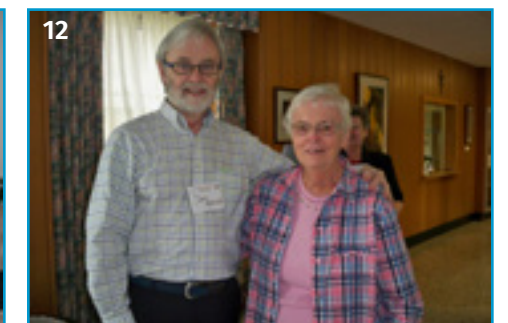
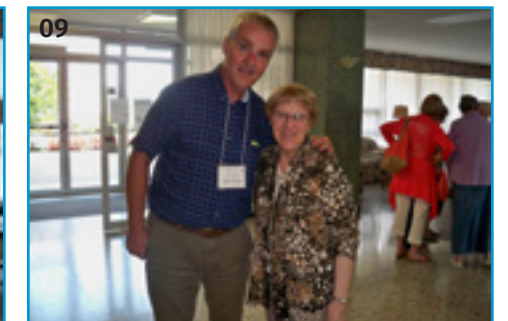


Mass For Shut Ins
April 1, 2023

**“Let us pray for peace: peace in the world
and in each of our hearts.”**

- Pope Francis

Fun Fotos For You To Guess. Who Are We? Answers on Page 9



Special Events in the lives of Martha Associates



Gary Rankin with his new furry friend, YODA, 2023.



Kathy and Dale Gillis celebrated 35 years of marriage on June 11, 2023.



Congratulations to Anne and Terry Campbell on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary, July 21, 2023!



On June 20th, 2023, The St. Clare Martha Associates (Sydney Mines), surprised Sr. Franklyn Ferguson with a special 60th Anniversary cake along with a card and enclosure. The Martha Associates gathered at Norma and Harry Blinkhorn's home for a pot luck supper, fun and laughter to close out the year.



On June 3rd, 2023, a celebration took place at Martha Place, Parkland, Antigonish to honor six women celebrating 60 years in religious life. Pictured here are:

BACK ROW: Sisters Theresa Perro; Josephine Keyzer; Franklyn Ferguson.

PHOTO: BACK ROW: Jacqueline Cantwell; Lola Tobin; Jean Brennick; Mary Frances Brennick; Sr. Franklyn Ferguson; Deacon David Lewis; Harry Blinkhorn; Brenda Blinkhorn; Louise Confiant; Dale Romeo. FRONT ROW: Mary Hall; Sr. Claudette Gallant

FRONT ROW: Sisters Mary Chisholm; Mary Delores Sogz ; (Sr. Joan Fultz in absentia)



Kathy Gillis of Lethbridge celebrated her 60th birthday on June 1st, 2023. Here she is with her daughter Sara, (whose birthday was June 3rd), and with husband, Dale, son, Steven and his girlfriend, Nastia.



A visit to Antigonish and Cape Breton for two Westerners! Hope you had fun!

Photo: Ellen Wagner; Diana Sim; Sr. Josephine MacLellan; Sr. Josephine Keyzer



Congratulations to Mary Frances Kandel and her husband, Andy on their 50th wedding Anniversary, May 5th, 2023!

Three New Martha Associates Welcomed

On Sunday, September 25, 2022, three new Martha associates were received and welcomed at Martha Retreat Centre, Lethbridge, Alberta. Sharon and Boyd Dunn, and Linda Pedersen were received by Julia Townsend, Director Martha Associates, in the presence of two Sisters of St. Martha; Sr. Theresa Parker and Sr. Josephine MacLellan, as well as associates of the Lethbridge group. It was a joyful occasion, followed by a lovely luncheon. Congratulations to our newest Associates! Blessings on them as they continue to live the charism of Gospel Hospitality each day.



Boyd Dunn, Sharon Dunn and Linda Pederson
Sept. 25, 2023



Newly Received Associates. Sharon & Boyd Dunn, Linda Pederson with Sr. Theresa Parker, Sr. Josephine MacLellan, Kathy Gillis and Mary Frances Kandel
Sept. 25, 2023

Fun Foto Answers:

1. Sr. Jovita MacPherson and Sr. Claire MacNeil
2. Barbara Learmont and Sr. Marian Knapik
3. Sr. Florence Kennedy, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert and Sr. Mary Gouthro
4. Sr. Therese LeBlanc, Caroline Martin, Sr. Geraldine Fodoy, Matilda Holsch, Sr. Theresa Kurtz, Nick Renyk and Sr. Magdalene Lichacz
5. Annella Wehlage, Sr. Sandra Cooke, Caroline Martin and Sr. Brendalee Boisvert
6. Sr. Therese Leblanc, Jim McGinty and Sr. Agnes beaton
7. Sr. Mary McMahan and Lorna Burbine
8. Gert Laffin, Sr. Joan Walker, Louise Confiant and Mary Gillis
9. Ken MacAdam and Sr. Lillian Gaudet
10. Lillian Gerrior, Shirley Van Ryswyk, joy MacIntosh, Vivian Jeddore, Frances Roussy, Gary Rankin
11. Front row: Sheila Morris, Sr. Genevieve MacDonald, Rhodena Stevens.
Back Row: Annie Catherine Denny, Vivian Jeddore, Elizabeth Stevens, Nora Bernard, Sr. Catherine MacFarlane, Ann Poulette, Richard Poulette
12. David Nearing and Sr. Clotilda MacIntyre
13. Brenda Blinkhorn and Sr. Stella Chafe
14. Mary MacKinnon and Sr. Marie Smith
15. Sr. Alexis MacLellan and Gerald Edwards

“Come and See” Days

Many Associate groups throughout North America are examining ways to invite new people to learn and share about the associate experience. The Martha Associates are no exception! With the support of the Martha Associate Committee and the Leadership of the Sisters of St. Martha, a separate day was set aside for our Associates and Sisters to invite a guest to a **special morning of exploring what it means to be an Associate.**

This event took place on Saturday, May 13, 2023 at the Bethel Presbyterian Church Hall in Sydney, NS. All eastern groups were invited to participate. We had a total of 10 Associates, 10 guests, and 4 Sisters of St. Martha in attendance. Our morning consisted of prayer, information on what it means to be an Associate, and the call of our Baptism. We also listened to the witness of a Martha Associate (Dale Romeo). We completed the morning with

a prayer ritual followed by lunch. Several of our guests indicated they would be interested in becoming journeyers with an Associate group in the Fall.

A similar **“Come and See”** event was hosted at Martha Place in Antigonish on Saturday, June 24, 2023 from 2:00 until 4:00 pm. The difference with this group was that most guests were new to the concept of Associates, as we do not currently have an Associate group in Antigonish. A total of 12 guests attended the afternoon, along with 2 Sisters of St. Martha and the Director of Associates. There was a wonderful positive spirit among these newcomers, and they seemed eager to become journeyers! Stay tuned for more information as planning for an Antigonish Associate Group continues.



“Come and See” Days



“Love is the measure of faith.”

- Pope Francis



March 2023

“Grumble, grumble, grumble!”

“What is going on down there?” I called to my Husband Allan, who was in the laundry / furnace room. “What are you grumbling about?”

“I think a bird found its’ way down our chimney and is stuck in the furnace pipes. It has been there at least two days and it has not found its’ way back out. It is scratching on the pipe and at the bottom of the chimney. It is making a mess too, as it pecks at the door trying to get out. We must figure out a way to get it out. “

As I arrive in the laundry room, I stop and become aware of the pecking sound at the bottom of the chimney clean-out door. There was a mess of little specks from behind the metal door that was being pecked at. “Maybe it’s not a bird. What if it is a rodent? EEWWW!! Maybe we need to call pest control?”

“That will cost a small fortune!” Allan replied! No, let’s see if we can do this ourselves.”

As Allan and I began to hatch a plan, I was struck by the fact that a bird, or any animal, could live inside the furnace pipes for two days, with all that heat and smoke going up the chimney! Wow! It must be a tough little creature.....maybe with a fireproof coat!! It deserved saving in that case!!

As we pondered what to do next, we could hear the scratching of nails inside, trying desperately to get out. Then the sound of wings, like a flutter, but incomplete due to the lack of space within the pipe to allow the wings to stretch open! “Maybe it is a bird!!!”

On one side of the furnace was the furnace vent which Allan had been keeping shut so our uninvited guest would not find its’ way into the house. “Let’s try to wrap a plastic bag around the vent, then open it and see if the bird would find its’s way into the bag”.

With great care, we wrapped the bag around the vent, affixing it at the back so it would not slip off the furnace easily. I positioned myself in front of the vent, holding the plastic bag on each side tightly. Now....open the vent and wait.

The air in the furnace pipe seemed to suck the plastic bag into the vent. “I don’t think this is going to work”, as I kept pulling the bag out of the vent. Secretly, I hoped this scheme did not work so we could call a professional. I was not at all sure I could hold the bird, being afraid it would be moving around and make me nervous. I imagined I would jump and let out a yell! Then the bird would escape and fly all around the house, and then what would we do? What a calamity that would be!!!!

But wait.....peck, peck.....the beak poked through the bag. Freedom was near! **“ALLAN, QUICK, GRAB THAT HOUSECOAT. THE BIRD IS CUTTING THROUGH THE BAG WITH ITS’BEAK!!! HURRY”**

Working together, we quickly wrapped the housecoat around the vent so the bird could not escape into the house. Holding it tightly, I could feel the bird had exited the vent and was in the housecoat. Slowly, I peeled the housecoat away from the vent, holding the fabric securely so the bird could not make a break for it!

I could feel the little body of the bird next to my chest as I walked gingerly to the basement door, which Allan had opened in advance. Then, laying the housecoat on the ground, and gently opening the housecoat and unravelling the plastic bag, our uninvited guest treated us to a beautiful lift off as he soared upward toward the sky, seemingly unscathed from its’ harrowing adventure in our furnace pipe!
Allan and I just stood for a moment. Then we smiled at each other. “We rescued a bird today! A beautiful little creature of God. That little bird will live to sing another day!” I felt certain his song would be one of gratitude and praise.

“Bye, bye little birdie!!”
- Julia Townsend



Allan & Julia Townsend

SEPTEMBER 10, 2022 (East) and September 23 – 25, 2022 (West)

Walking Together in Hope and Prayer:
Synodality and the People of God

Our annual Martha Associate retreat was held in September 2022. Our theme for the day / weekend was: **“Walking Together in Hope and Prayer: Synodality and the people of God”**. Our guest speaker was Dr. Moira McQueen, a moral theologian and bioethicist and a member of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Toronto. Dr. McQueen was able to take up a complex topic and break it into smaller, easier to understand pieces.

Dr. McQueen highlighted the fact that change in our Catholic Church has been very slow to happen over the centuries. Even the reforms of Vatican II have not been fully implemented. Pope Francis is keenly aware that we need change in our Church. His vision for the church is that of **“synodality”**. **What does that mean? It means a church where everyone is recognized; where no**

one is more important than another, where there is equality by virtue of our baptism; where service to others is paramount and everyone is listened to; where mercy is apparent, and inclusiveness is encouraged. A Church where clericalism has no place.

These are no easy tasks! The first meetings of the synod will be in October 2023 in Rome. Synods are not new to the Church, but what is new is the inclusion of laity, and especially of women! While the synod is an event, synodality is a process. It must be guided by the Holy Spirit in order to discern the way forward for our Church. Prayer, trust, and hope in the Spirit is what is needed most in this process. Let us all continue to offer our prayers for Pope Francis and for the power of the Holy Spirit to open the minds and hearts of all who will participate in the synod.



Gary Rankin and Dr. Moira McQueen
September 10, 2022



Dr. Moira McQueen and Kathy Gillis
September 25, 2022



Western Associate Group and Sisters
September 25, 2022



Eastern Associate Group and Sisters
September 10, 2022

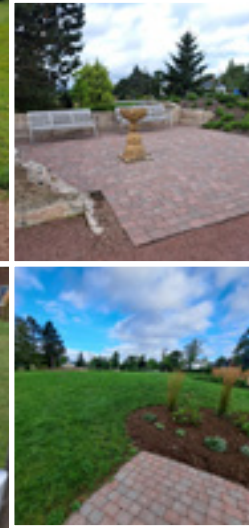


Bethany Centennial Gardens



The Sisters of St. Martha acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This land is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, which Mi'kmaq Nations first signed with the British Crown in 1752.

The Sisters of St. Martha commit to seeking a deeper relationship of trust and friendship with Mi'kmaq People, as we work toward reconciliation and right relations.



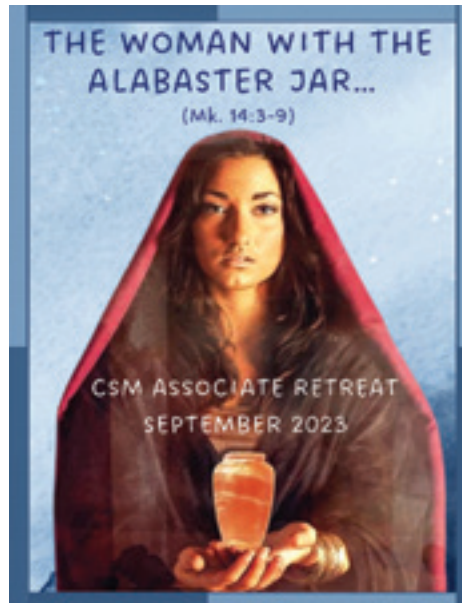
"Standing together in undaunted hope"



SEPTEMBER 10, 2023 (East) SEPTEMBER 15 – 17, 2023 (West)

A beautiful, peaceful, and prayerful retreat was facilitated for us by Sr. Brendalee Boisvert CSM, Congregation Leader of the Sisters of St. Martha. Using the scripture passage from the Gospel of Mark, (Mk 14:3-9) as her foundation, Sr. Brendalee led us gently through the theme :

Faithful To The Journey: Walking Together In Communion; Pouring Out Our Lives.



FAITHFUL TO THE JOURNEY: Sr. Brendalee shared that the theme of the retreat has been with her in prayer over the past three years. It challenged her commitment to listen to, and hear what God was asking of her. The work of listening occurred during pandemic

we live out the charism of “Gospel Hospitality” in whatever way we are called. This is what it means to be “faithful to the journey”.

WALKING TOGETHER IN COMMUNION: Sr. Brendalee reminded us that “Communion” is one of the Martha’s deepest values and flows from that growing consciousness of our oneness with God and all creation. “ At our core we are interconnected to one another, to God and to the Earth” (Sr. Elizabeth Davis RSM) The Sisters of St. Martha are called to live together in communion and to create communion. This was a great challenge for them throughout covid times. The Sisters remained faithful to creating communion even in difficult times by being faithful to their prayer and their presence with God; by continual learning and spiritual growth through reading and ongoing education; by celebrating the Eucharist; and advocating for those who are voiceless.



Sr. Brendalee Boisvert CSM
September 9, 2023

times, during isolation and lockdown, during the horrible discoveries of unmarked graves of Indigenous children, and the damage the Church and Government has done through residential schools. The work of listening continued throughout the fight against vaccine mandates and mandatory masking, and when the threat of war between Russia and Ukraine was no longer a threat but a grim reality; and a time when Pope Francis has called us to engage on a Synodal Journey! The Sisters of St. Martha are being called to respond to the signs of the times, and to be faithful to their call to live their Mission:

“We, Sisters of St. Martha, inspired by God’s graciousness, hear, embrace and respond to the cry for Gospel Hospitality”

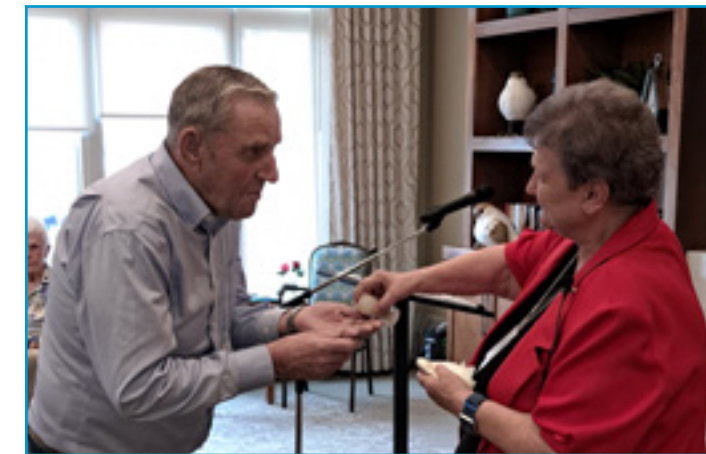
Sr. Brendalee reminded us, that, as Martha associates, we too are called to live the mission! We join with the Marthas to respond to the cries we hear every day, the cries in our community, our families, our earth, our world! As Martha associates,

As Martha associates, we are also called to deepen our connection with God each day and to create communion at home and in our communities. We are invited to pray and spend regular time with God, to be aware that we are part of the whole of creation, that we need to make room for others in our lives, embracing and welcoming diversity among us all. We are invited to walk along with the Sisters of St. Martha to places we have never been before and to see what plans God has for us.....plans for peace, not disaster (Jeremiah 29: 11). The journey ahead is not for the faint of heart. It is for women and men called to be “faithful to the journey” and called to “live the mystery of being in Communion”.

POURING OUT OUR LIVES:

Sr. Brendalee found herself drawn to the story of the woman with the Alabaster jar who anoints Jesus, particularly to the courage of the woman to give all, to hold nothing back....she gave the gift of extravagant love! Although she is harshly judged, the woman is unafraid and goes to Jesus and breaks open her most precious possession, the costly oil and pours it on the head of Jesus.

Sr. Brendalee challenged us.....could we be so bold



Sr. Brendalee Boisvert anoints the hands of Martha Associate
Lawrence MacDonald
September 9, 2023

as this woman? We are all called to move forward, to offer all we have, pouring out ourselves in abandon, making way for the new. Yet, often we live in fear, delaying moving forward on the journey because we cannot see



our way through. As associates, we are called as companions to the Sisters of St. Martha to help create the path forward where we share with others how to be faithful on the journey; how to live in communion with one another and the whole of creation, and how to pour out our love so that others may see and proclaim that Gospel Hospitality lives here...is alive here!

As associates, we are called to build community in our homes and surrounding workplaces. Like the Sisters of St. Martha, we are called by Baptism to witness to the loving heart of Christ. Our response to those in need and to one another matters. Making room for diversity makes all the difference. We are called to offer ourselves as we are, as God created us to be.

And so, what is in our own Alabaster jars that needs to be poured out? For the Sisters and the Associates, the costly oil we pour out is our life in common, our daily prayer and our commitment to the mission of Jesus. Let us share our gift of extravagant love; let us be bold enough to pour out ourselves, filling our neighborhoods, the Church, and the world with the healing oil of Gospel Hospitality!

“Grace is not part of consciousness; it is the amount of light in our souls, not knowledge nor reason.”
- Pope Francis

Sydney / Glace Bay Martha Associates Year In Review 2022-2023

We lost some. We gained some. We survived Fiona. We survived Covid. We learned some things we didn't know before. And mostly we kept showing up.

But here are the details.

Well, we began the year, as mostly we do, attending the Martha Associate Retreat in Antigonish. Last September's retreat's theme was **"Walking Together In Hope and Prayer": Synodality and the People of God**, and the presenter was Moira McQueen.

Little did we know that in a couple of weeks' time after that, Fiona would blow in and wreak havoc. Sydney was hit hard, and Glace Bay and surrounding areas were devastated. And while everybody got back on their feet, we decided to cancel our October meeting.

We got back together in November and basically talked about what we would do for the year in terms of activities and guest speakers, and we talked about September's retreat, and looked at ARCAN, the Zoom meetings and looked at ways to grow the attendance there.

We also had an All-Souls portion of the meeting where we remembered those people we lost over the year, though we did not necessarily limit our memories to just this past year, or to people we lost personally.

And all of a sudden, we were looking at planning our Christmas potluck. Before Covid we had Christmas dinners at HERS, a dining room in Sydney, but this year, Covid was still a factor in our decision and so we had a potluck at our regular meeting place in the Shaw Room of the Bethel Presbyterian Church in Sydney. Very much our group's home.

On December 4th, we had a small but intimate Christmas meeting. Sr. Catherine led the group in a thoughtful opening prayer.

We went over some business matters and decided to donate our Social Justice fund to Loaves and Fishes.

We watched a Christmas show from "The Chosen" on the birth of Jesus in the manger, a story from the perspective of a poor shepherd. Excellent show! Cathy MacAdam sent a link to the movie "The Chosen" for anyone who wants to see it

online. I will paste it here in case anyone wants a reminder about it.

<https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch>

After we watched the show, we had a brief reflection and discussion.

- And then we had a Christmas carol singalong.
- And then we ate. A great feed! And went home full of prayer and Christmas food and spirit.

January's meeting was a fine one.

We began with a welcome, the land acknowledgement, and our check-in.

Then Julia led us through a grounding meditative prayer (Leaving the Old and Welcoming the New) the kind we (I) really need and never think I do, until, all of a sudden the rush just falls away.

We went right to our guest speakers then. Irene Khattar and Patricia Jackson from Hospice gave a talk about hospice and palliative care. Their talk emphasized the community that was and is involved in building the idea, physicality, maintenance, and growth of hospice. Right now, there is a beautiful new building which houses a home away from home for terminally ill patients; it sits on a quiet and wooded bit of land near the Regional Hospital just off of Terry Way. They spoke about how the notion of providing hospice care and finding money to provide the service for people living out their last days at home and within the building began with a small group of people and eventually grew into an extensive network of staff and volunteers who helped see the project through. And of the special people who work there.

While terminal illness and end of life care is a concept most of us might tend to shy away from, Irene and Patricia talked about how the community around them brings a sense of joy to the work, to the patients and to their families. It was a really uplifting presentation and lent itself to a host of questions and stories from Martha Associates who have had friends and family who encountered hospice and palliative care in their last days. Thanks very much to the people of Hospice!

In February we kept our study close to hospice and palliative care. Jill Murphy was our guest speaker. Jill practices music therapy for Hospice / Palliative Care service in Sydney. She talked

about the impact music makes on people nearing the end of their lives, and how music weaves its way throughout people's fondest memories, how it enables people to express their affections for family and loved ones. Jill spoke about how busy she is visiting people, playing music for them and with them, interviewing and writing songs for people as living memorials, recording their voices to last for their families long after they're gone. She talked about a teddy bear program where recordings of patients are inserted into stuffed teddy bears, ready to be activated for loved ones after their passing.

In March we had a Lenten reflection and watched a DVD called "BEWARE THE HOLY SPIRIT" (Fr. Anthony Gittins) followed by small group breakouts with questions to ponder and then large group sharing.

On April 1st we were on TV for Mass for Shut-Ins with presiding priest Fr. Bedford Doucette. And on April 2 we had a meeting to talk about the Mass and to go over business matters and reports.

During our May meeting we did the Rosary for the month of Mary, and we had a reflection and discussion led by Julia. Julia was thinking on her feet that day as we had a guest speaker lined up who had to cancel last minute rather than bring us her cold. (It was quite a year for viruses, infections, and colds!)

Also, on May 13, a Saturday morning, Julia put together a "Come and See" event for all eastern groups to meet and to bring a friend or interested person to come and learn about the Martha Associates and maybe think about becoming a journeyor.

In June we held our Year-end Potluck, which would have been held at Keranna but for the threat of rain. We did have it at Bethel in the end. First of all though, we remembered a long-time member of the Martha Associates, who was there from the beginning, Mary T. MacKinnon, who passed away on May 22. We will certainly

miss Mary. Sister Catherine MacFarlane also led a reflection with small breakout groups to discuss questions, which resulted in some spirited conversation. We had some music and singsong. And the food! Well. The food.... We all went home stuffed to the gills.

We have a lot of great bakers and sandwich makers in our group and we end every meeting we have with a great bite to eat, tea, and coffee. Many thanks to all of our contributors! It's great to be a Martha Associate!

Michael Finigan,

Martha Associate
(Co-coordinator of Sydney / Glace Bay Associate group)



Mike Finigan with Michelle Finigan, Mary MacKinnon and Theresa Gillis
June 2022

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."

- Pope Francis

September 2022:

On Saturday, September 10, 2022, we attended our Annual Martha associate retreat in Antigonish. Dr. Moira McQueen presented an all-day session titled: **“Walking Together in Hope and Prayer: Synodality and the People of God”**. At the close of the day, we enjoyed a “Meet and greet” with the sisters. A lovely supper, a tour of the gardens and an overnight stay was provided by the sisters for those who wished to participate. Many thanks to the sisters of St. Martha for their hospitality and a great weekend!

October 2022:

Our group took time in October to share the experiences of our uninvited guest: “Hurricane Fiona”. We also shared our experiences of our retreat day with others who were unable to attend.

We took time to remember the lives of Sr. Marie Lawrence O’Keefe CSM, who journeyed with the Sydney Mines associate group for a number of years, as well as the sister of Doreen Lewis.

We repeated the prayer for Truth and Reconciliation, followed by a reflection. As always, our gathering ended with prayer and a good cup of tea and coffee.

November 2022:

After our opening prayer, Sr. Claudette shared a special story with us: **“The Goose Story”**. We have many lessons to learn from birds and animals.

Norma presented the Diocesan Synod Report, followed by discussion.

We ended with prayer and a social time.

December 2022:

Our reflection for December was: **“Cultivate a Reserve of Hope”**.

We collected donations for a family who needed extra help during Christmas. Norma and Sr. Claudette did the shopping and wrapped the gifts.

We end with prayer and a hymn “To Our Lady”, followed by lunch and tea.

January 2023:

We enjoyed our annual potluck supper. We remembered and honored our deceased sisters and associates by lighting a candle and offering a prayer for each member.

A card and gift were presented to the Sisters for all they do for the associates, and the community around them.

February 2023:

Brenda and Mary welcomed everyone and asked how we all did with the “Freeze”?

Our Prayer: “To Whom Shall You Go” was read and reflections shared. A thank you card from the sisters was shared. Our evening ended with prayer and a

social time.

March 2023:

Following our opening prayer, Norma shared the Synodality Working Document, Chapter 2: Listening to Scripture.

We reviewed a timeline of events for the group from March to November 2023.

We closed with prayer and tea.

April 2023:

On April 11, the group welcomed Julia Townsend, Director Martha Associates for her annual visit. Julia presented a summary of events and timelines from the past year and for the coming year, including the outline for our Martha associate retreat on September 9, 2023. Julia presented the idea of a **“Come and See” day** and asked the group’s input. There was wonderful discussion and sharing, followed by a social time.

May 2023:

This gathering was dedicated to the presentation of the History of the Sisters of St. Martha (given by Sr. Claudette and Sr. Franklyn) and the history of their associates, given by Julia Townsend. This was a wonderful review for our associates and information for the journeyers as they continue their preparations to become Martha associates. Dale Romeo also gave a short reflection on what it means to him to be a Martha associate. Special guest for the evening was Fr. Fabian.

Our evening closed with the Martha associate prayer, followed by a social time.

June 2023:

Our St. Clare’s group were guests at the home of Norma and Harry Blinkhorn. It was a beautiful evening with a delicious meal, lots of laughter and great conversation. The special celebration of the evening was honoring Sr. Franklyn Ferguson on her 60th Anniversary as a sister of St. Martha. Thank you, Harry, and Norma, for your wonderful hospitality.

Many blessings,

Brenda Blinkhorn and Mary Hall



St. Clare Martha Associates & Sisters
April 2023

The Trenton Martha Associate group was both excited and grateful to have our first full year of in – person monthly meetings since pre-covid times!

The theme for our October 2022 meeting was: **“All Souls Day”**. We learned about the history and purpose of the day and customs of how it is celebrated. We reflected on **Wisdom 31:9.....” the souls of the just are in the hands of God”**, and that if we remain in friendship with God, we can abide with him forever in Heaven. Thus, death is not the end, but the beginning.

In November, we featured a video presentation by **Bishop Robert Barron of the Word on Fire Catholic Ministries**. The video focused on the meaning and purpose of Advent, and how Advent should be used as a time of preparation to strengthen our faith to receive Christ in our hearts at Christmas.

Unfortunately, due to scheduling challenges, travel and holiday commitments, our December meeting was cancelled.

Again, with scheduling conflicts with our January speaker, we transposed our January and February topics and had an early presentation on **Ash Wednesday** and preparing for **Lent**. Our program was based on **Mark 6: 1-6; 16-18**. We reflected on embracing our vulnerabilities, and about being open to the fact that we are nothing without God. We also took time to review and article outlining: **“Forty Ways to get more out of Lent”**.

For our February meeting, we were blessed to have **Deacon Sander Burke** speak with us. Deacon Burke spoke about the discernment process that led him to become a Deacon. He outlined his studies and the training involved in his formation. Also, he highlighted the commitment and time that was necessary, not only for himself, but also for his wife. Deacon Burke also shared some insights into his duties which include participating in weekend Liturgies, providing spiritual care for Long Term care Residents, as well as inmates at a Correctional facility. An informative talk which was followed by an enjoyable discussion!

Our March theme focused on the **raising of Lazarus**. After reading the **Gospel (John 11: 17-44)**, we followed with a guided reflection involving the state and emotions of Mary and Martha as the events unfolded; the experience of Lazarus, how he felt during death and after rising from the dead; the feelings of the crowd, including the followers of Jesus and the detractors. We also discussed how Jesus may have felt, noting that he was so deeply affected by the death of Lazarus that Jesus wept.

In April, Julia Townsend, Director of Martha Associates, came for her yearly visit. Julia’s enthusiasm, spirituality and commitment to hard

work always energizes the group. We had a great discussion about the September 2023 retreat, the Synod, and most especially, we pondered and discussed how to keep the Charism of Gospel Hospitality alive. How might we invite new members to experience associate life? The idea of a **“Come and See” day for Trenton was discussed**. We will visit this in our upcoming year, 2023 – 2024.

Our Closing meeting in May 2023, was followed by a discussion of **Sr. Dorothy Moore’s book: “A Journey of Love and Hope”**. Sr. Dorothy was unable to attend the meeting, but we hope she may be able to visit us in the Fall. We also reflected on a poem by the very **talented Linda Longmire** who wrote a tribute to Sr. Dorothy Moore. The poem appears in Sr. Dorothy’s book (Pg.55 – 58).

We reflected on how blessed the Trenton group has been to have had Indigenous Elder, Sarah Francis, as an associate for many years. Her wisdom was welcomed among us.

At the completion of each Martha Associate gathering, we took time for friendship and sharing over a delightful lunch with good, hot tea! We also celebrated our last gathering in the Spring with Chinese food.

We are blessed that Sr. Mary McMahon continues to travel from Antigonish to join our monthly gatherings. Thank you, Sr. Mary!

We feel grateful to share prayer together each time we meet. Overall, the Trenton group has had a wonderful year. We deeply appreciate being Martha Associates, living out our Baptismal call together, along with the Sisters of St. Martha, deepening our own spirituality and attending to our spiritual wellbeing.

May God’s blessings and the peace of Christ be with all the Sisters of St. Martha and the Martha associates.

Gary Rankin

Coordinator Trenton Martha Associates



Trenton Martha Associates
April 2023

Lethbridge Martha Associates Martha Retreat Centre 2022-2023

A huge, loving hello from the Lethbridge Associates. I feel privileged to share with you what we have been up to since our last Sycamore. God richly blessed us with inspiring topics and reflection times that expanded our hearts, spirits, and wisdom. I hope you enjoy reading about our year's journey.

The year started with several very special gifts:

NO COVID restrictions – This enabled us to begin our year together at the Martha Retreat Centre. 'Zooming' together is just not the same as 'being' together.

Special guests arrived from the east – Five Sisters of St. Martha came to Lethbridge during the month of September. Our first opportunity to hug, break bread and hold 'sacred' time with them, in Lethbridge since July 2019. Sisters Theresa Parker and Josie MacLellan joined us during our retreat weekend. Sister Loretta Gillis and her travel companion, Maria VanBerkel came in early September. Sisters Marion Sheridan and Joanne O'Regan came in later September to share their Social Justice ministry work with our local catholic high school. Each of these generous, wise women left us feeling loved, held in prayer and entrusted with continuing our Martha Associate ministry work within our communities. We want to sincerely thank the CSM Leadership and the entire Martha congregation for supporting these beautiful women to travel west.

Welcomed three new associates – Linda Pederson, and Sharon and Boyd Dunn. We are so blessed to have these faithful individuals, who live the Martha charism, join our 'Martha' family.

A new journeyer – Ellen Wagner, who is a lifelong friend of the Sisters of St. Martha, began exploring and learning about the Martha Associates. She is excited about being on this journey and we look forward to getting to know her more.

These gifts sparked and opened us to opportunities and possibilities filled with hope and joy as we began this year's faith gatherings.

Our faith gathering season started with our informative and enlightening retreat entitled, **"Walking Together in Hope and Prayer"**. What an invitation for us as we listened to and reflected on the wise, inspirational teachings provided by Dr. Moira McQueen. When we started our weekend, the meaning and purpose of this synod was fuzzy, at best; however, it grew clearer as we listened and reflected together. Time was dedicated to understanding the key elements of the synod - take time to share; listen with humility; speak with courage; be open and willing to change opinions; avoid ready-made answers; and to listen to what the Spirit suggests. We wondered how these elements could become part of our 'walking together' as our future gatherings unfolded.

Throughout the retreat many questions were raised for us to ponder and pray about. How did Jesus teach God's

word to others? He 'walked' full filling his work lead by the Spirit. What does that mean for us? How do we 'walk' among others hearing and responding to our call to holiness? How could Jesus' teachings, along with the invitation of synodality lead or inspire our 2022 – 2023 faith gathering year? Mixed feelings between hope and hopelessness for the church emerged throughout this weekend. Yet, by the end of the retreat, Dr. McQueen's presentations helped us see the opportunity and the gift this synod offers.

Our spirits were on fire and our hearts were beating with enthusiasm as the retreat experience spilled over into October. Joyce Rupp's poem, **"Autumn Prayer of Acceptance"**, opened us to explore the journey which is offered through seasons and change. Our discussions lead us to explore how, God of transformation, touched our hearts and spirits as: individuals, associates and friend of the Sisters of St. Martha, stakeholders with the Martha Retreat Centre, and disciples of Jesus. As we shared throughout the evening, we began to realize that the separation created by COVID, and the gift of new members, invited an opportunity and need to share our stories.

Sharon Dunn led a beautiful November evening, grounded in Ephesians 3: 12, 14 – 19 and storytelling. She encouraged us to see how, "we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him," which enabled us to share our stories. She invited stories about how we share ourselves for Christ, responding to our call; how we serve our community; and what spiritual fruit was yielded. This evening helped us to learn about each other's gifts, talents and hopes. We were grateful for how Sharon created a safe space for us to share, listen, speak with courage, be open to hear each other's stories lead by the Spirit. All elements which are part of the synodal journey. Sharon, thank you for your courage to help us 'walk together in hope and prayer'.

We ended 2022, in December, with a bountiful potluck and social time. The traditional 'gift exchange' was full of fun and laughter. We were profoundly grateful for being together, leaving the feelings of isolation, caused by the pandemic, in the past.

The new year began a three-part faith sharing experience. Inspired by **Elder Sister Dorothy Moore's publication, "A Journey of Love and Hope: The Inspirational Words of a Mi'kmaw Elder"**, we began to explore and learn about the detrimental impact of colonialism and oppression on our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Her story sparked our spirits to begin our collective journey to **"disrupt the dominant narratives of complex Indigenous issues such as colonialism, oppression, racism, and discrimination"** (quote from her book cover).

I researched and utilized many resources including YouTube videos to structure our January, February and April faith gatherings. In January we watched part one of a three part video series called, Walk with Us: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirit People



Yvonne Donahue & Kathy Gillis
September 17, 2023

(MMIWG2S - Defend Dignity) and The Tina Fontaine Story (How Tina Fontaine's death forced a community to take action - YouTube). In February we watched part 2 of the MMIWG2S series, The Coin Theory – Privilege 101 (Privilege 101 - YouTube), a video to begin our understanding of the impact of colonialism (colonialism definition video youtube - Google Search) and If I Go Missing – a book written by Brianna Jonnie (If I Go Missing - Book Trailer - YouTube). Finally, in March, we closed up this series with part 3 of MMIWG2S, The Indigenous Doctor Helping Trans Youth (The Indigenous Doctor Helping Trans Youth - YouTube), The Amazing Race Canada (Amazing Race Canada's Two-Spirit couple on Indigenous representation on TV | Xtra - YouTube) and The Reconciliation Song (Reconciliation Song - YouTube).

The video series, **"Walk with Us"**, was created for use within churches to start these needed conversations. Discussion questions and scripture readings were provided which guided us and made us very mindful of Jesus' presence. Karen, in the series made clear that: "we, as Christians, are called to walk together on the path Christ laid out for us." We were beginning the 'walk'. The information and discussions, at times, were challenging and uncomfortable. They were also extremely powerful and humbling and empowered us to start the 'conversation' and learn together. We began to recognize our own colony minds and our position of privilege on the coin. We honored our caring hearts and spirits which we hold for our Indigenous brothers and sisters yet were left feeling helpless on how we could affect meaningful change. We came to realize that by holding these discussions, praying together, and

beginning to learn more about the impact colonialism has had on the Indigenous Peoples was the beginning of change for us. That was a very important place to start, change within, before we can effect change that extends beyond us.

So our walking together has begun, and much like the invitation from the synod, we held a safe space where we shared, listened, spoke with courage, were open and heard the stories provided through the YouTube video stories and our own stories. Our conversations were enlightening and grew more spirited with each gathering. I wish I could describe this journey more richly and emotions felt and shared. I can truly say that this experience helped us all expand our understanding of colonialism, racism, injustices, oppression, and discrimination of the Indigenous Peoples. Sister Dorothy, we thank you for your courage, faith, and gift of words to spark our journey. We have much more to learn! However, we are so grateful to have begun these conversations together as Martha associates.

In March, during Lent, we enjoyed celebrating Taizé together at the Martha Retreat Centre's chapel. It was a prayerful time which positioned our hearts and spirit in readiness for Holy Week and Easter.

We finished our spring gatherings with another potluck/BBQ where we welcomed Julia Townsend back to the west. We are always grateful when we get that personal touch from the east and get to catch up with news from the Marthas and fellow associates.

I hope and pray that our 2022 – 23 faith journey brings interest, opportunities, and curiosity to your learning. I included the video links in the hope that you might be able to look up those that may be of interest to you. I highly recommend listening to the Reconciliation Song. It is full of 'undaunted hope'. May we all be a presence of reconciliation and peace spreading the good news and love of Jesus. Blessings for a healthy and joy filled year.

Yours in St. Martha
Kathy Gillis
On behalf of the Lethbridge Martha Associates



Western Associates
March 16, 2023



Martha Associate Retreat ~ Antigonish, NS ~ September 9, 2023



Martha Associate Retreat ~ Lethbridge, AB ~ September 15-17, 2023

“We have to work harder to develop profound theology of women within the church. The feminine genius is needed wherever we make important decisions.”

- Pope Francis



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.



*Sisters of St. Martha
& Associates Memories*



“The Watered Lilies”

by Anonymous

*The Master stood in His garden,
Among the lilies fair,
Which His own right hand had planted,
And trained with tend’rest care.*

*He looked at their snowy blossoms,
And marked with observant eye
That the flowers were sadly drooping,
For their leaves were parched and dry.*

*“My lilies need to be watered,”
The Heavenly Master said;
“Wherein shall I draw it for them,
And raise each drooping head?”*

*Close to His feet on the pathway,
Empty, and frail, and small,
An earthen vessel was lying,
Which seemed no use at all;*

*But the Master saw, and raised it
From the dust in which it lay,
And smiled, as He gently whispered,
“This shall do My work today.”*

*“It is but an ‘earthen’ vessel,
But it lay so close to Me;
It is small, but it is empty-
That is all it needs to be.”*

*So to the fountain He took it,
And filled it full to the brim;
How glad was the earthen vessel
To be of some use to Him!*

*He poured forth the living water
Over His lilies fair,
Until the vessel was empty,
And again He filled it there.*

*He watered the drooping lilies
Until they revived again;
And the Master saw with pleasure.
That His labor had not been vain.*

*His own hand had drawn the water
Which refreshed the thirsty flowers;
But He used the earthen vessel
To convey the living showers.*

*And to itself it whispered,
As He laid it aside once more,
“Still will I lie in His pathway,
Just where I did before.*

*“Close would I keep to the Master,
Empty would I remain,
And perhaps some day He may use me
To water His flowers again.”*

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Sisters of St. Martha
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Antigonish, NS
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Parkland Antigonish
153 Highway 337
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The Martha Website is: 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

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