



Ina Boyden has been Martha Associate for about 15 years. Ina lives in Lethbridge, Alberta and is sharing a few memories of the Martha presence in Martha Retreat Centre.



Ina Boyden with Sr. Ivy Maccan, Lethbridge,

If it hadn't been for my husband Keith's savvy and the grace of God, we two may never have enjoyed the shared gift of experiencing life as Martha Associates. We had heard from good friends, both Associates, that we could not just ask to join; an invitation was absolutely necessary. So, while doing a few handyman tasks around the Martha Retreat Centre [in Lethbridge, AB] yard and garden, my husband dropped so many hints, Sister Theresa Parker could hardly say no... And the rest, as they say, is history. Keith would have walked over hot coals for those faith-filled women!

We marveled at how they role modelled as they 'aspired to live hospitality in a spirit of welcome to the reality of their lives.' (Vision Statement)

Here are a few stories to share about these women of Gospel hospitality...It was my

duty to round up three or four Associates to change and remake the many beds following a live-in weekend retreat at the Center. One can easily understand why those precious sisters would be bone-weary with people in their home all weekend and responsible for all the cooking and cleaning and hard work required to put on those endeavors but when we'd arrive at their door, a smiling Sister would warmly invite us in. When we had finished the many beds, they would invite us to the dining room for some talk, tea and a biscuit!

Occasionally we would accept their hospitality but many times we could see the fatigue and did not linger so they would once again have their home back and take some quiet time to rest up. We never heard a single complaint!



And no matter when we stopped by for one reason or another, the warm greetings and open arms always made us feel so welcome. They listened to our joys and woes with no judgment, always taking time to chat.

These Marthas, these women through whom the light shines, have meant so much to us all and we will forever be grateful but oh, we miss them so!

~ Ina Boyden, Martha Associate
March 2022, Lethbridge, Alberta



Martha Retreat Centre, Lethbridge, AB, 2022

In 1968, the Marthas built a western novitiate house in Lethbridge, Alberta that they named Martha Education Centre. Very soon, it became a residence for sisters teaching in the city. In 1974, to respond to the need for spiritual development for the people in the southern part of Calgary Diocese, the facility was renamed Martha Retreat Centre. Western Martha Associates have always been connected to the Centre.

Over the years, many Marthas lived in Lethbridge and were responsible for the operation and management of the Centre. They eventually trained lay people to assist with this ministry. In 2016, it became evident the present sisters would not be able to continue to carry on the ministry in the future, so the Marthas gathered a committed ecumenical lay group to explore the future of the Centre when the sisters would no longer be there.

In 2018, Martha Retreat Centre Society was created to assume the responsibility of the operation, management and ministry of this Centre and it received charitable status in 2020. It continues to be supported by and aligned with the mission of the congregation. “In collaboration with the leadership, wisdom and support of the Sisters of St. Martha, the Board of Directors of the Martha Retreat Centre is committed to maintaining and building on the Sister’s legacy of Gospel Hospitality.” (MRC website).

The Centre provides an ideal setting for personal prayer, contemplation, communal prayer and quiet walks.



To learn more about current offerings of Martha Retreat Centre, visit their website:

<https://www.martharetreatcentre.ca/>