

# Our Life as Mission

NEWS FROM MARTHA  
LEADERSHIP TEAM



*Sisters of St. Martha*

ISSUE 13  
JUNE 2024

*“Standing together in undaunted hope”*



## *In this issue:*

- 20th General Chapter
- Martha Governance
- Farewell from the outgoing Team
- Martha Associate Reflection
- Standing4Justice from Darlene

*Photo: Artwork from the cover of 1989 GA Report*



# CHAPTER 2024 OUTCOMES

**Sisters of St. Martha held the 20th General Chapter at Parkland Community in Antigonish in April 2024. It was 10 days of rich and intense conversations about the state of affairs and the future direction of the Congregation.**

Chapter is always a very intense time of reflection, in-depth table discussions, and communal discernment, it is a "synodality in practice... a blessing in diversity and unity" - remarks Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader, in her closing speech for this event. She also emphasizes a deeply spiritual aspect of this very special event:

*Mystery has been our companion these days and has brought with it space to create the emerging future. Our Founding Women were present along with the communion of Saints. Our prayer participants were with us in communion and in dialogue as we heard their words of wisdom on our Chapter floor.*

At the 2024 Chapter, the current Leadership

Team discussed with the delegates the General Administration 2019-2024 Report and expressed their learnings over the past five years. They also shared recommendations as a Leadership Team and were attentive and responsive to a keynote conversation with Sr. Kelly Connors, PM, and Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ, as these set the context for further conversation on what is happening in the world, the Church, and in consecrated life, all through the particular Martha lens of Gospel Hospitality.

The delegates held conversations about Martha responsibilities such as vowed life, commitment to communal and individual prayer, and setting free the Charism of Gospel Hospitality for the life of the world.





# CHAPTER 2024 OUTCOMES

Lots of time was spent looking at **Integral Ecology** and how the future decisions of the Congregation need to continue making interconnections. Martha Associates joined the delegates in conversation and in listening for the prompting of the Spirit in their lives. They are truly carriers of the Charism of Gospel Hospitality and they embody its spirit in their daily lives and activities.

During Chapter of Elections, the delegates elected a new Leadership Team to continue the work of the Congregation for the next five years. The Congregation Leader and Councillors will begin their term during an official Installation on July 29th, 2024.

Finally, following all the conversations, the delegates looked ahead seeking to name a direction forward that would help shape the emerging future. Drafted by a small committee, the 2024 Direction Statement was approved and proclaimed as a guide for the new Leadership whose task it is now to explore, with the help of all Sisters, a way to live it for the next 5 years.\*

## THE NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM:

- ◆ Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader
- ◆ Sr. Donna Brady, Assistant Congregation Leader
- ◆ Sr. Claudette Gallant, Councillor
- ◆ Sr. Josephine MacLellan, Councillor
- ◆ Sr. Jovita MacPherson, Councillor
- ◆ Sr. Liz Riopelle, General Treasurer (2-year term, not pictured)
- ◆ Sr. Joanne O'Regan, General Secretary (2-year term, not pictured)



*Left to right: Sr. Josephine MacLellan, Sr. Claudette Gallant, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, Sr. Donna Brady; Sr. Jovita MacPherson, Missing: Srs. Liz Riopelle and Joanne O'Regan*

*\*Article adapted from Sr. Brendalee Boisvert's opening and closing speeches.*

## DIRECTION STATEMENT 2024

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

### **Rooted in the Living God, We Live our Life as Mission**

- ◆ Seeing Integral Ecology as a lens for discernment in our communal journey
- ◆ Collaborating with others, as we prepare to let go and make room for the emerging future
- ◆ Remaining open and responsive to the cries for Gospel Hospitality through prayer and contemplative dialogue

### **We boldly embrace the wisdom of our pioneering Spirit**

- ◆ Embracing our neighbour and our common home as we read the signs of the times
- ◆ Nurturing presence and welcoming diversity
- ◆ Creating spaces for transformation

### **We reaffirm our bond with the evolving Church**

- ◆ Offering support and encouragement to the clergy and laity
- ◆ Committing to broaden our circles in a Spirit of Synodality

***It's a new Martha Day to Love the World!***





# SR. DOROTHY MOORE HONORED

In recognition of her work as educator and activist, Sister Dorothy Moore was awarded Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa by St. Francis University in Antigonish, NS, her alma mater during 2024 Graduation Ceremony on May 5th, 2024.



Sr. Dorothy Moore's activist work covers an impressive span that includes First Nations preservation of language, education, and human rights. Sr. Dorothy has been widely acclaimed for her significant success in helping to improve the lives of Mi'kmaq First Nations people.

She began her career as an elementary school teacher in Cape Breton and for most of her 22-year tenure, Sr. Dorothy taught at schools in Nova Scotia and Alberta. In 1980

she became the Principal of the Eskasoni Elementary and Junior High School. From 1985 to 1995, Sr. Dorothy served on the faculty at Cape Breton University and was instrumental in developing the Mi'kmaq Studies Program which laid the foundation for what is now Unama'ki College. From

1995 to 2002, Sr. Dorothy worked at the Department of Education where she was instrumental in providing history curriculum in the high schools and Mi'kmaq language in the public schools.

*Congratulations, Sister Dorothy, on this important recognition of your life-long efforts that align so well with our CSM Constitutions #6 calling us to "work for development of persons and the improvement of human and social conditions". ~CSM Leadership*



*Left to right: Andy Hakin, StFX University President, Dr. Sr. Dorothy Moore, and StFX Chancellor John Peacock*



Did you  
know?

## CSM FACTS

# MARTHA GOVERNANCE

Sisters of St. Martha enjoy quite a unique governance model. It is not unique to Women Religious around North America, since mid-60s, most congregations have generated similar inclusive, non-hierarchical, and circular models of shared leadership.

The contemporary governance model stems from the call to renewal of Vatican II Council (1962–65), but the Marthas have functioned in a spirit of **shared responsibility** since their beginnings. The Congregation was established in 1900 not by one founder or foundress, but **cooperatively** - through deliberations of Bishop John Cameron of Antigonish Diocese, Mother Bonaventure of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, StFX College rector, "Dr. Dan" Chisholm, and 15 Founding Women who, on July 12, 1900, stood up and volunteered to form a new Congregation to work in the household department of the college.



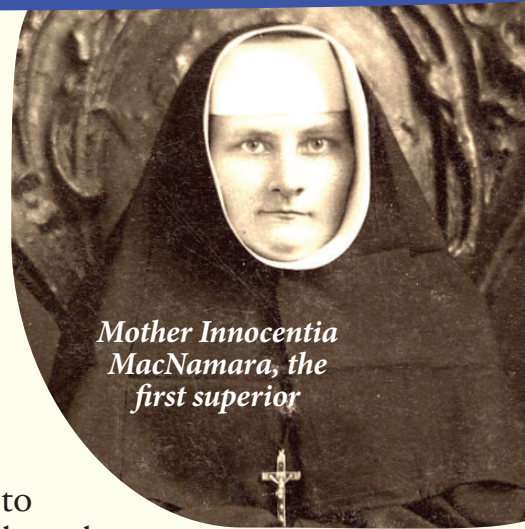
*Pioneering Sisters at StFX St. Martha Convent circa 1911*

Although governed by their own Superior under the direction of Religious Chapter, the Bishop was "the head of their community in spiritual matters, College Council was to guide their college ministries, and the Board of Governors of St. Francis Xavier College was to direct them in *temporal matters*" (Fay, p. 258). Very quickly though, the Marthas started responding to other needs in the communities around the diocese,

developing ministries in education, healthcare, and social work. They also started to upgrade their skills and education.

To raise funds for these various enterprises, they incorporated themselves in 1907 in the province of Nova Scotia (MacPherson, 93-4). Dependence on the college became a constraint to a dynamic Congregation eager to expand, therefore, with the backing of Dr. Moses Coady, the Marthas sought and acquired full autonomy from StFX in 1917 which translated into complete self-governance, the right to handle their own finances, and control over admittance into the community. Later on, the Congregation became a papal institution which gave the Marthas full freedom to govern themselves and expand beyond the diocese.

Collaboration, community building, and strong spirit of independence was a necessity for the pioneering Sisters. However, their governance model until Vatican II, was operating well within the traditional hierarchical nature of the institutional church with its pyramidal structure of leadership. In the first few decades, general membership was not participating in daily decision making, it was the Superior General aided by a few assistants who made most decisions. The supreme authority of



*Mother Innocentia MacNamara, the first superior*



## MARTHA GOVERNANCE *continued*

Chapters was restricted to delegates who needed to be nominated, and its proceedings were secret. Chapters always gave rise to one specific kind of change - a new leadership, but it is far from the only one. In early years, it was at Chapter that Marthas approved their Constitutions, decided about new missions, modified the format of novitiate, and formulated rules and regulations related to ministry, spiritual, and community life of the Congregation. Chapter decisions were always formalized into resolutions. Out of 20 Chapters held through the 124 years of history, some brought about radical changes, others called for a subtler shift in focus, all were events of first importance and shaped the Congregation, always trying to respond in depth to the signs of the times.

With the Congregation's expansion, the exclusionary governance structure started to become irrelevant. Even before the Vatican Council of 1965, the Marthas began exploring other options to remedy over-centralization of administration of the Congregation. A 1955 General Chapter made provisions for more flexibility in the government of local communities, and adaptations to meet the needs of Sisters in different fields of work.



*The most visible outcome of the period of renewal was a change of attire. Above, Sisters in Leadership in 1961-67 term; to the right, the Team elected at 1967 Chapter of Renewal.*



### *Chapter 2024*

By 1961, all Marthas were customarily asked to submit written recommendations to the Chapter beforehand. Some of the decisions of Chapter 1961 were to modify costume, prayers, community living and regulations regarding apostolate.

Vatican II Council offered guidelines for renewing Christian life in the world and in religious institutes in its every aspect (community, governance, lifestyle, Sister formation, internal communication, and external relations) and "inaugurated a strenuous period of intense self-reflection and exhilarating regeneration among





# MARTHA GOVERNANCE

*continued*

Marthas" (Cameron, p.259). In preparation for the Chapter of Renewal to be held in 1967, all Sisters were invited to make recommendations and to participate in the process of preparing their Chapter. Thousands of recommendations were received and classified. They revealed much dissatisfaction with the outdated way of life and great expectation of the future:

*Innovative emphases surfaced in the delegates' deliberations, such as concerns about openness, personal freedom, individual responsibility, democracy, relevance, and reform.*

(James Cameron, *And Martha Served*, 2000, p. 259)

One of the facets of the long period of experimentation that followed Chapter 1967 was adapting the governance structure to the needs of the modern times and reality of the Congregation.

*Using the expertise of outside persons as consultants in finances, management, and apostolic works, psychology, theology, and other areas of concern became established. The corporate person of the Marthas, the participation of the individual sisters as a member of the entire group became a return to our original focus on community as communal responsibility. Standing Committees throughout the Congregation were set up to assist in planning for and to facilitate the work of the Congregation. The GA Report for the 1981 Chapter estimated that about one-third of our sisters served on committees.* (Sr. Irene Doyle)

But its the introduction of the self-nomination for Chapters during 1989-1994 that was the most significant change. It opened participation to all Sisters, fostering

a deeper dialogue and equality among the membership. In the last 30 years, the governance structure kept shifting away from the hierarchical ladder, giving voice to everyone, and adapting to the changing needs of the ministry and community life.

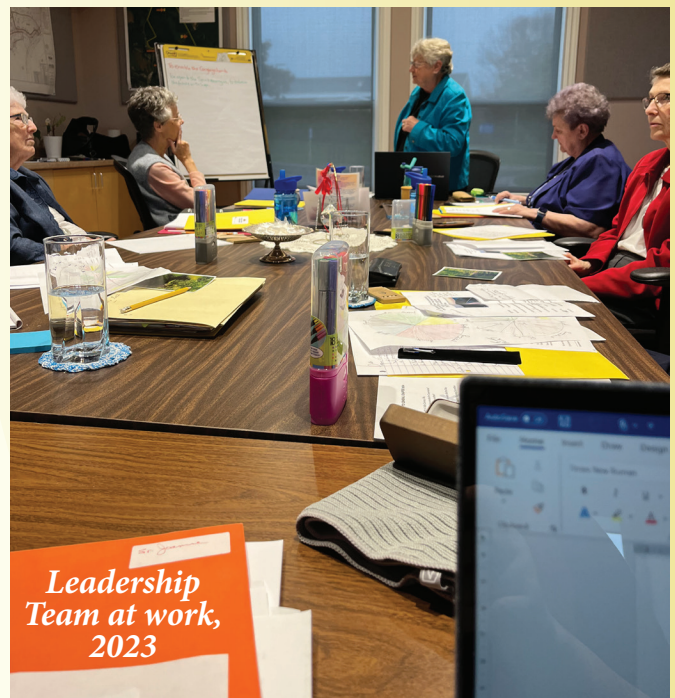
## BEYOND the altar

Women Religious,  
Patriarchal Power,  
and the Church  
Christine Gervais



Nowadays, the way the Marthas govern themselves resembles to a great extent what Canadian researcher **Christine Gervais** calls in her fascinating book *Beyond the Altar: Women Religious,*

*Patriarchal Power, and the Church* (2018) **a circular governance**, a form of shared leadership practiced by women religious in North America that is characterized by **decentralized, inclusive, non-hierarchical, life-giving, non-stifling, consultation-filled decision-making processes.** The emphasis is placed on relationships, mutual respect, and accountability; "it's more





about sharing responsibility; it isn't about questioning authority" (Gervais, 170). Of course, this model doesn't come without its challenges, the most significant one being the time commitment needed for thorough consultation, listening and talking, and continuous learning in order to be able to understand each others' point of view and manage differences peacefully.

The shift from a one-person controlled hierarchy structure reliant on obedience to a "group-led management configuration" or "a women-centered circularity" (Gervais, 163) is practiced through:

- ◆ changes in selection and inclusion of delegates,
- ◆ consultation among members,
- ◆ communal discernment,
- ◆ "leadership-sharing arrangements that support the daily management of both their communal living and their collective engagement." (Gervais, 164)

At 2024 Chapter, the Marthas chose a greater number of councillors (four, not three) to distribute the necessary tasks and responsibilities. The Councillors work with the Congregation Leader and are supported along the way by the lay staff and a multitude of collaborators. The Leadership meets every five to six weeks for Board and Council meetings to listen, share, discuss, and come to consensus on matters of all sorts. The mechanism to bring decisions about borrows from a democratic process but is not politicized, it is **a spirit-led process based on communal discernment.** *Living together their life as mission*, guided by their current direction statement, the Marthas practice a collaborative way of governance, **a servant leadership** where the women in charge are called to work productively on behalf of the membership. And they get things done quite efficiently!





# MARTHA MEMORIES IN OBJECTS

*General Administration Report* is a regular publication of the Sisters of St. Martha issued by the end of each Leadership term, a few months before the Chapter. It is an extensive 5-year report, covering all areas of responsibility of the outgoing team in terms of the ministries as well as the community life, projects and activities of the Congregation during the term.

The purpose of the GA report is to communicate the accountability of the Leadership to its membership, it is distributed to the Sisters, Associates, and some Collaborators. It is reflected upon and discussed extensively during Chapter. In addition, one copy is always sent to Rome, as the Congregation is a pontifical institute, accountable to the Vatican.

A comprehensive report has been issued by each Leadership Team since 1973, there are twelve publications of this kind in total. Before that, relevant information was most likely presented to the delegates during Chapter. With the post Vatican II commitment to strategic planning and inclusive decision-making, a need arose in the Congregation to keep the membership better informed so they could meaningfully participate in the dialogue.





# MARTHA MEMORIES IN OBJECTS

These twelve reports are fascinating accounts of the life of the Congregation, telling the story of its last fifty years. Just as the governance model has evolved through the post-Vatican II era, the reports themselves have changed greatly over the years in terms of content and design. The first report (1973) was a typed up eighty-five page document, each page full to the brim with extremely detailed information - a paradise for today's archivists, but surely a bit cumbersome for membership at the time. The second report (1977) reflects a huge shift in communications practices within the Congregation: much 'thinner', the report was printed professionally and the information was broken up and designed in a much more accessible and appealing way.

To the Members of the  
Sixth General Chapter of the Congregation

Dear Sister Delegates:

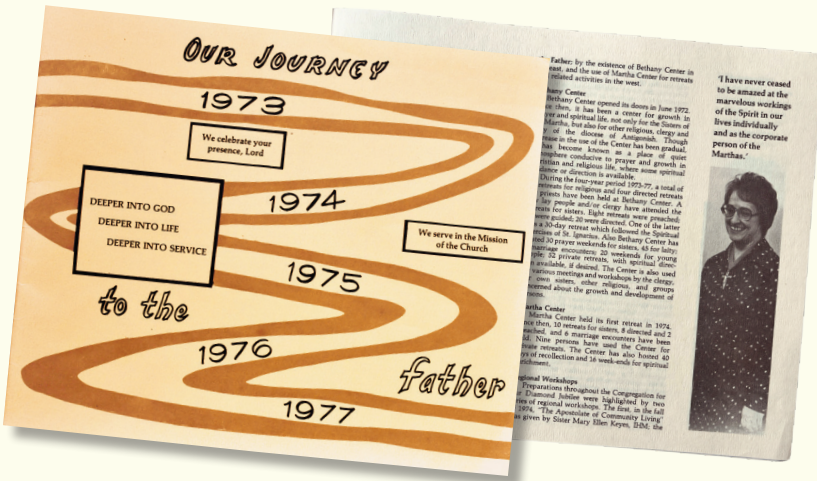
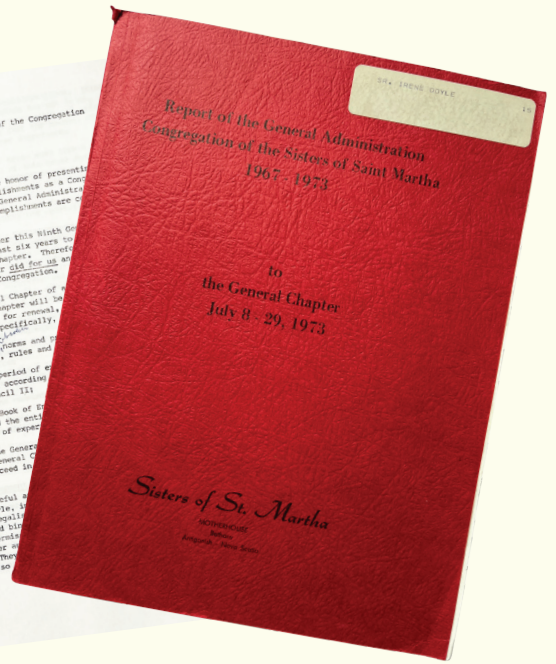
Today I have the honor of presenting our activities and accomplishments as a Congregation to you. I hope that the review of these activities and accomplishments are of some help to you.

We must consider this Sixth General Chapter as the last of the past six years of the efforts of the General Chapter, the efforts of the Sixth General Chapter, the efforts of the 1967-68 General Chapter, the efforts of what the 1967-68 General Chapter did for us and for the growth of the Congregation.

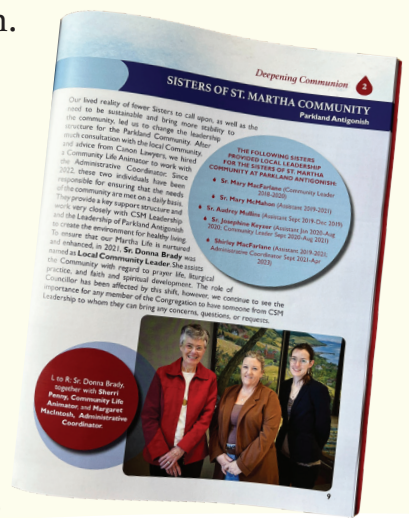
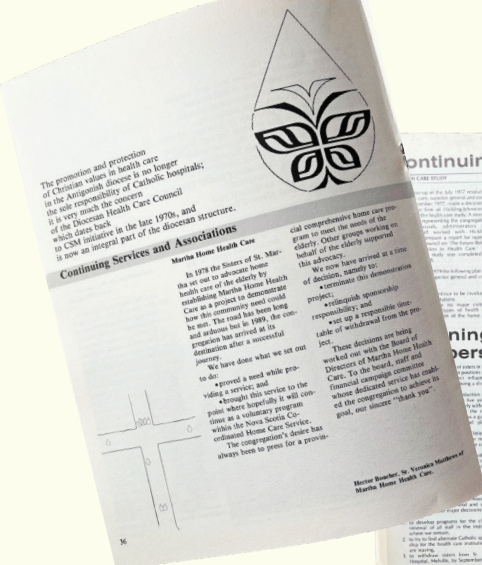
Every General Chapter of the Sisters of St. Martha since the 1967-68 General Chapter will be expected to do the same for renewal, that it set the stage for renewal. More specifically:

- not aside the norms and constitutions, rules and regulations of the Congregation;
- initiated a period of reflection and prayer in accordance with the teachings of Vatican Council II;
- provided a book of the activities of the Congregation for the period of reflection;
- gave to the General Chapter a period of reflection.

A careful study of the activities of the Congregation, specific and legal, and the restrictions and limitations of the pre-Chapter and the restrictions of the Chapter.



Subsequent issues experimented with the use of photographs or original artwork for cover and inside page design, played with fonts and text formatting, and incorporated charts and graphs. Each report is quite unique and reading them in sequence provides a perfect manifestation of the evolving reality of the life of the Marthas and women religious in general. The recent reports have embraced the visual era, the information flows from both the text and the images incorporated into the colorful design.





# VOICES FROM THE MINISTRIES

*There is a function for leadership and it's not on a pedestal ...  
it's a ministry and it's good hard work! (Gervais, 170)*

**B**eing on the Leadership Team is a life-giving ministry but it is not for everyone. Congregation Leader, Councillors, General Secretary, and General Treasurer meet regularly as a Board to discuss various matters related to the Congregation projects, financial, and property matters. In addition, Councillors carry on yearly

visitations with all Sisters in all communities and meet as Council to discuss community matters. In addition, they carry on work with collaborators, participate in various committees, and have numerous side projects. The Congregation Leader's role has its own level of complexity stemming from a representational character of the position.



## LEADERSHIP TEAMS SINCE 1961



# VOICES FROM THE MINISTRIES

In preparation for Chapter 2024 reflection on the GA Report, the outgoing 2019-2024 Leadership Team members were asked to choose a symbol to describe their **ministry of leadership**. They presented their reflections to their fellow Sisters during

one of the first sessions of the Chapter. In a spirit of farewell, we are sharing the excerpts from their presentations. Some Sisters are leaving their roles, while others will continue in the same or modified capacity, aided by three new, incoming members.

## SISTER BRENDALEE BOISVERT

Congregation Leader



*The image that came to me to best symbolize my experience over these 5 years is that of a stethoscope. As the stethoscope listens for the wellbeing of the heart and lungs, I have seen as my responsibility over these past 5 years to listen deeply to the heartbeat of the*

*Congregation. I listen for and sometimes initiate conversations on our way of life...*

*on our commitment to prayer...on feelings of being missioned to live our lives as witnesses to those with whom we meet and work. I listen for that spirit with which we made our commitment 20, 30, 40, 50,*

*60, 70, even 75 years ago. I listen for new life... new ways to do what we used to do in these new times. I listen to the irregular sounds of frustrations, loss of spirit, loss of meaning, signs of diminishment in a sense of call and/or commitment to that call. I listen and celebrate when I see signs of us living this well and I pray for guidance when I sense a loss of spirit.*

*During Covid, I heard sounds of skipped heart beats and racing hearts that I believe were caused by fear and a loss of a sense of community or communion. We as a Leadership Team were always seeking ways to reach out during that time...to you and to our staff. We were challenged to create a new communication system while working*

*from home so that the Congregation could continue to function and move forward. I was committed to listen deeply and non judgementally and to seek creative ways to move us all forward.*

*My experience of Visitation was always a highlight for me. Here is where I heard the full force of our communal heartbeat firsthand. I met in communities of 2, or 3 or 5 or 56. We spoke honestly together and at individual meetings. We shared conversations on our living our lives together, embracing the aging process, and conversations around vulnerability and fragility as you were trying to learn to let go of what is not needed for the journey ahead. You witnessed to me during those days/weeks about your own undaunted hope, and your desire to embrace Mission and Charism into the future.*

*A highlight of my role was working with this talented team of women and those with whom they work.*

*Their hearts are focussed on our Common commitment together. I grew in my ability to sit in the midst of diversity and wait for the wisdom to come to us and guide us forward.*

*Sitting at the CRC...LCWR...UISG...Atlantic Leaders...and Federation Leaders table quickened my heart rate, inspired me and made me proud of us and what we have to offer the Church and world as a Congregation whose desire is to witness to the world that it is possible to live together in love. I returned from these meetings inspired to continue deep listening to the heartbeat of you our courageous pioneers of this century and to invite us all to continue, in the spirit of collaboration, to move forward in hope.*





# VOICES FROM THE MINISTRIES

## SISTER DONNA BRADY

Assistant Congregation Leader and Councillor

*In my first time on Council, I was part of closing five of our houses including Bethany. This term despite all its turmoil and challenges has felt like new beginnings, supporting, and shepherding small fragile new life. The symbol I chose for my experience this term is the painting of Linda Johns that shows light breaking through the old to shine on the new.*

*Covid was a great adversary that challenged us to creatively respond and work in new ways to preserve what we value. (...)*

*"Charism Unfolding: Celebrate and Set it Free" has been a walk in faith as we delved into and discovered how our charism of Gospel Hospitality is experienced outside the structure of Religious Life. The seed that was planted in the last term has taken root and begun to flourish. (...)*

*New beginnings, supporting and shepherding small fragile new life has been my experience this term. Thank you to all of you who have helped make this pioneering time life-giving.*



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## SISTER FLORENCE KENNEDY

Councillor

*As I was reflecting on the past five years of serving on the Leadership Team the image that symbolized this journey for me was the ocean. Seventy percent of Earth's surface is covered by seawater, making it Earth's global ocean. On the Leadership Team we not only discussed Congregation issues and our local, provincial, and national situations but often the conversation at table was expanded to global issues and how we could financially and spiritually support persons living in war zones, drought etc. Being on leadership has expanded my awareness of interconnectedness.*

*The ocean symbolizes the diversity of experiences I had in my role as Councillor. Calm and turbulent waters, ripples, small, and large waves, storm surges, sea ice as well as a rich and vibrant diversity of life. The call to serve on the Leadership Team has helped me to grow as a person. Days of quiet, the support of the Leadership Team and members has been gift to me.*

*I am very grateful.*

*Thank you.*





# VOICES FROM THE MINISTRIES



**SISTER JOANNE O'REGAN**  
Councillor and General Secretary

*As I did in the last term, I continued to wear many hats in this term. (...) But what I really want to share about the GA Report is the stuff that is not written but that I hope shines through anyway. And that is the way in which we accomplished all that is reflected in that report. Were we a perfect team, no. Did we meet some of your individual expectations, likely not. Were we stellar employers, not always. However, we did our best, we gave our best, and we desired the best for each of you and for our staff and our partners in Charism.*

*(...) If we were not rooted in our values, particularly of Consecrated Life, Justice, Collaboration, Communion and Hospitality we would be in a very different place right now. I personally have grown in so many ways because of these 4 women who have encouraged me, supported me, and tolerated me! I have learned the true meaning of teamwork, of delegation, trust, and respect. Sr. Brendalee, you have steered us into many unknown waters, and not all calm. We have weathered some hurricanes and tornadoes, and come through them, a bit scarred and at times stunned, but your faith in us and compassionate leadership was always present. I am grateful to each of you, Brendalee, Donna, Florence, and Liz.*

*(...) These five years in many ways are a continuation of the 5 previous years, with many major shifts and happenings. The story of Martha and the Dragon symbolize much for me, we have faced many dragons, befriended most, learned from the ones that we were unable to, and have the scars from the breath of one or two. May we all continue to have the dragon taming courage to welcome and help shape the emerging future.*



**SISTER LIZ RIOPELLE**  
General Treasurer

*In preparing our talk today, we were asked to choose a symbol that could be used to help tell our part of the story. What came to my mind was "helping hands." The role of Treasurer and the Finance Department is very much a supporting role - helping to move things forward. (...)*

*The Congregation has had a history of caring for resources -for this we are grateful. (...) This Leadership Team, staff, local communities, sisters, and CSM staff at Parkland - everyone has contributed to caring for our resources. We deeply appreciate your cooperation and collaboration.*







## ASSOCIATES - CHARISM PARTNERS

*TOGETHER EXPERIENCING AND CELEBRATING OUR INTERCONNECTEDNESS*

**A reflection on Chapter 2024 from Lethbridge Martha Associate, Kathy Gillis**

My family and friends know that my preferred vacations are, 'an Alberta-stay-close-to-home vacation'. However, I have always held one exception close to my heart – visiting the Sisters of St. Martha's in Antigonish. I was 'over the moon' excited when I was invited, along with Annella Wehlage, to attend Chapter 2024! Truly, a prayer answered! My gratitude runs deep for the blessings and spiritual nourishment I received from attending Chapter and being at Bethany. So from the lens of an Associate, I am honoured to share some of my experiences and gifts from those days.

This was my first trip to Nova Scotia. What a beautiful part of our amazing country! Julia and Allen Townsend treated us like royalty as they chauffeured us on a rainy, site-seeing adventure, fed us abundantly and introduced us to family and friends.



We were blessed to also attend the Sydney Associates faith gathering, meeting fellow associates I had only seen on Zoom or saw as names on a list in an email. The reception

by all was warmly felt and now the miles apart, somehow feel less. A special thank you, to you, our new Cape Breton friends. You made our 3-day stay in Sydney spirited, faith-filled, fun and very special.

Five associates attended Chapter: Julia Townsend, Director of Martha Associates from Sydney; Dale Romeo from Sydney Mines; Gary Rankin from Trenton; Annella Wehlage, and myself from Lethbridge.

When we arrived at Martha Place, the



afternoon of April 15, it was a true homecoming. Sisters seemed to come out of the woodwork when they heard, 'the associates are here'. We were welcomed with abundant joy, love and warmth. Tears and laughter seemed to be an uncontrollable reaction when I embraced those beautiful women who were offering me over-the-top gospel hospitality. It had been almost 5 years since the Martha's left Lethbridge and I had greatly missed sharing time with them. What a start to Chapter, for me!





Before I speak more directly to the Chapter experience itself, I want to share how meaningful and powerful it was for me to be reunited with the Sisters. Being present, especially during the first mass, brought me to tears. Singing, praying and celebrating Eucharist together offered me the privilege to be back within a familiar community



whom I have so dearly missed. Going to Bethany gave me an opportunity to visit with Sisters who I had worked with at St. Michael's Hospital in Lethbridge; to chat with Sisters who had attended St. Martha's Parish; and to reunite with Sisters who had been anchors for our Lethbridge Martha associates, both at St. Monica's Convent and the Martha Retreat Centre. I also prayed and share memories at the graveside of Sister

Delores Sogz. She was the Martha who invited me to join the associates 27 years ago. May she rest in peace.

New encounters were also gifted to me. I met Sisters who have never been out West, or whose ministry work had taken them back to the East before I came to Lethbridge in 1994. Time chatting with these Sisters gave me an opportunity to explore their experiences with Associates. I learned that not all Sisters had actually had the occasion to engage or journey with Associates. What a wonderful opportunity it gave us to share our thoughts and ideas of how we understand the term 'associate', both as a noun and as a verb. Table discussions and larger group dialogue offered space and place to hold many conversations to unpack the deeper meaning of 'associate', and how Sisters and Associates collectively embrace, live, give and receive the charism of Gospel Hospitality.

The community of Antigonish easily communicated its experience with the Martha's gospel hospitality. When I walked the grounds and trails of Bethany I could feel the spirit of the Marthas who had walked, prayed and meditated, opening their hearts and lives to Jesus. The community members I met on those walks, shared their gratitude for being given an open invitation to enjoy the Centennial Garden, the labyrinth, and trails on the vast grounds of Bethany. When browsing and purchasing souvenirs in the shops uptown, shopkeepers readily shared how they knew the Sisters and expressed their gratitude for the generosity and support they have received. I am sure the smile on my face was wide as I listened to, and heard, the community speak of their respect and



# MARTHA ASSOCIATES UPDATE



love for the Sisters. It was a strong reminder of how my community, Lethbridge, was also cared for, shaped and supported by the Sisters for 90 years.

As I mentioned earlier, there were five Associates invited to attend five days of Chapter. This opportunity provided us with dedicated time to get to know each other; to share experiences from our respective associate groups; to explore the deeper meaning of being a Martha Associate; and to share abundant laughter. The conversations motivated me to remember to create and hold space for others; to continue building relationships and friendships; and to be bold and radical while believing and trusting in



the Holy Spirit. Those days offered time to explore and witness what it means to be a committed and engaged Martha Associate. Those encounters inspired my desire and passion to continue to forge forward with fellow associates as we aspire to be *“graced with courage to welcome and shape the emerging future”*.

From April 15 to April 20, we attended and experienced Chapter with the Sisters. Sister Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader, and Sister Mary Rowell, CSJ, Facilitator, generously invited us to pray, listen, and

share alongside the Marthas. I was amazed how the topics discussed could be unpacked from our Associate lens. The Sisters invited dialogue, asked curious and enlightening questions which led us all to a deeper understanding and appreciation for one another. The topics ranged from:

- ◆ the Leadership Team summation of the congregations’ prayerful, intentional and valued presence in the community and global world to their response to the needs and cries from our common home.
- ◆ the invitation to grow ever deeper into understanding and living gospel hospitality at this age and stage to holding space and grace for the diversity brought to their Martha community from within.
- ◆ respectfully and attentively honouring the pioneering Sisters of the past to the realization they are still pioneers in the present. “We have never been here before”, was heard more than once.

And when all was prayed, discerned, voiced and heard, and with genuine gratitude and undaunted hope, the Sisters boldly stated, “and we are not done yet.”

In closing, I want to again express my sincere heartfelt gratitude for being, not only invited, but truly included in those days of Chapter. I know our associate voices were welcomed, requested, respected and heard. Together we, Sisters and Associates, encountered one another and when we all said good-bye, we knew we were changed because of those encounters. May each of us continue to be “graced with courage to welcome and help shape the (our) emerging future”. God bless. With much peace, love and gratitude,

*Kathy Gillis*  
*Martha Associate, Lethbridge AB*





*Embracing Our Neighbour  
and Our Common Home*

## GREETINGS FROM MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY

**Greetings to you all!**

*It is so life-giving to take in the beauty of Spring – flowers are blooming, birds are singing, and the grass is vibrant green. It is a time to sit with the wonder of creation, as plants, insects, and animals bring new life after the winter quiet.*



*We take this into our souls as a source of joy and hope in our world, where there is so much grief and pain. We hold in our hearts so much that is happening in our world, especially those suffering from war and violence. We call out desperately for a ceasefire and permanent peace in Gaza and Israel. We pray for peace and justice throughout the world – for people and the planet.*

*At this time, we hold both the joy and pain of this time, facing them together with the faith that God is with us. I continue to be grateful for the Marthas and all of those we encounter in our work for social and ecological justice, reconciliation, and peace.*

*I hope that you are inspired and encouraged by this edition's Standing4Justice, as we continue to work together with wonderful people doing such important work for justice in our communities and the world. Peace and Blessings,*

*Darlene O'Leary, Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry*







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## ORCIE LEARNING & LOBBYING

In March, I was able to be part of the Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology (ORCIE) Learning & Lobbying activities in Ottawa.

ORCIE BCRÉI



**ORCIE group.**

*Left to right: Sabrina Chiefari; Sue Wilson, CSJ; Darlene O'Leary; Joan Atkinson, CSJ; Joe Gunn; Deirdre Pike; Sarah Rudolf, IBVM; Heather Rouselle*

This week of activities started with a very helpful [webinar with Alex Cool-Fergus from the Climate Action Network](#), who offered an outline of where climate policy is in Canada and where we could focus our advocacy. Then, a group of eight religious and lay representatives joined together at Saint Paul University in Ottawa to do a half-day training session on climate lobbying led by ORCIE Executive Director Genevieve Gallant. The next day, we started our lobby day at a Parliamentary Breakfast hosted by Above Ground with a panel of speakers

on climate action. The recording is here: [Experts to MPs: Canada must stop funding fossils | Above Ground.](#)

We then divided into two groups of four and went to our meetings with policy makers and MPs to discuss increased ambition in climate policy in Canada, including capping fossil fuel production and emissions.

My group met with Frank DesRosier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Innovative Sector, Natural Resources Canada; Jennifer Lash, Senior Advisor, Office of Minister of Environment and Climate Change; and MP Francesco Sorbara (Ontario). We had very good and engaging conversations at these meetings, and several of the meetings led to promising contacts in our ongoing work on climate policy and the UN SDGs. The second group had similar meetings that also led to some helpful information and contacts.

Following the meeting, we gathered for a debrief and lovely meal together at Joe Gunn and Suzanne Doerge's home!

It was a very positive lobby week, and it was great to help build these relationships and to let people know about ORCIE!





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## SCHOOL FOR LEADERSHIP, ECOLOGY AND EQUITY

Following the ORCIE Learning & Lobbying activities, I had the great pleasure of taking part in the launch of the Saint Paul University School for Leadership, Ecology and Equity.

This new school, located in Ottawa, will offer an MA and soon a BA program building on fostering and exploring integral ecology.

At the launch event, Dr. Heather Eaton was presented with the Thomas Berry Award by the Yale Forum for Religion and Ecology's Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grimm. It was a wonderful



celebration of the work and leadership of Dr. Eaton, a world renowned scholar in eco-feminist theology.

The event included workshop sessions that introduced those gathered to some of the topics that the new school will be teaching. It was exciting to see the interest and commitment of those gathered for this new initiative!

## JPIC ATLANTIC BISHOPS MEETING

**On April 9th, members of the Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Atlantic planning group, Sr. Denise Lirette, DJ, Sr. Mary Tee, RSM, and myself, gave a presentation to the Atlantic Episcopal Assembly in Halifax.**

This is a meeting of all Atlantic region bishops. In the weeks leading up to the presentation, we worked with Sr. Danielle Julien, FMIC, from the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) and Sr. Karen Kelly, CND, to pull together the presentation focus. Our presentation included some context for our concerns about the climate crisis and care for creation, theological supports for creation care, including *Laudato Si'*, and some initiatives and resources on climate and related issues. This included ORCIE, the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, Indigenous Rights, and water protection.



**Darlene with Sr. Denise Lirette, DJ and Sr. Mary Tee, RSM**

We talked about the need to share resources and collaborate in educating on creation care. We were given about an hour, and there were a few questions from the bishops. We were grateful to have the opportunity to meet with the bishops on these issues of urgent importance. We hope it planted some seeds for future collaboration.





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## FR. GREG MACLEOD LECTURE

**It was a great pleasure for me to give this year's Fr. Greg MacLeod Lecture at Cape Breton University this past April. The topic was "Deepening our exploration of the climate crisis through *Laudato Si'*: What does Integral Ecology ask of us?"**

There was a wonderful group of about 60 people at the event. We had an engaging discussion on integral ecology and Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, as well as the concrete ways we can deepen our work to address the climate, ecological, and socio-economic crises together.

The previous day, I was interviewed by CBC Sydney Mainstreet's Wendy Bergfeldt about the topic, and Wendy also introduced me at the event, offering an excellent reflection on the challenges we are facing.

Thank you to Fr. Doug MacDonald, CBU Chaplaincy, and the Newman Society for



inviting me to speak at this wonderful event and for their commitment to issues of social and ecological justice and faith.



## GAZA CEASEFIRE PILGRIMAGE

**We are happy to support the Kairos campaign that took place this Lent and Spring, "GAZA CEASEFIRE PILGRIMAGE: CANADIAN CHURCHES FOR JUST PEACE."**

Some Marthas and MJM Core Group members did prayerful walks for peace during Lent. Others joined local Ceasefire rallies. Several Marthas and I were able to join a silent prayer vigil in front of Town Hall, sharing with others our prayers, grief, and hope for Gaza.

The Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage global network outlines the following global calls:

- ◆ Enduring and Sustained Ceasefire.
- ◆ Immediate flow of life saving food, water, aid, fuel, and humanitarian assistance.
- ◆ Release of all captives.
- ◆ End all arms transfers to Israel.
- ◆ End of occupation so a just-peace can begin.

<https://www.gazaceasefirepilgrimage.com/>

**GAZA CEASEFIRE  
PILGRIMAGE**

A Via Dolorosa of Solidarity

Across every continent,  
we walked in prayerful  
solidarity — but the  
injustice continues, so  
we will too.

[Come, walk with us](#)

Learn more about the Kairos campaign at:  
<https://www.kairoscanada.org/gaza-ceasefire-pilgrimage>





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## NEW GROWERS

NE

**This is a transition year for the New Growers program!**

As we let some of the land rest to replenish the soil, we have hired David Matheson as the New Growers On-Site Manager to work with David Greenberg on testing new methods of growing. David Matheson and Meghan Johnny are continuing to farm during this transitional year, growing beautiful veggies to share with the Lochaber Growers food boxes.



During this season we will offer a series of gardening workshops for anyone in the community who wants to learn about gardening at different stages through the growing season. See the poster for more information!





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## BIG FORUM

The Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada group participated in the national Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) Forum that took place in Ottawa (hybrid) from May 23-26.

Martha Justice Ministry Core Group member Joanne Tompkins attended the event in person and acted as the moderator for the Atlantic group's workshop, "BIG Advocacy in the Atlantic Provinces." Sr. Marion Sheridan and I joined virtually and contributed to the presentation. This event was **the first of its kind in Canada** and was a great opportunity to share ideas and learn about effective advocacy to move forward a basic income or guaranteed liveable income in Canada.

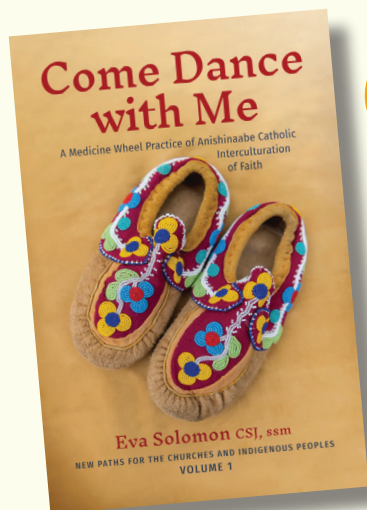
You can find more information about the event at this link: <https://forum2024.ca/>



### **BIG Forum**

*L to R: Elisabeth Kay-Raining Bird (NS); Joanne Tompkins (NS); Natasha Pei (Tamarack, QC); Susanne White (NB); Susan Hartly (PEI); Joshua Smees (NL); and Orpah Cundangan (Tamarack, ON)*

## MJM LIBRARY



### **Sister Eva Solomon, CSJ, SSM** **COME DANCE WITH ME: A MEDICINE WHEEL**

**PRACTICE OF ANISHINAABE CATHOLIC INTERCULTURATION OF FAITH**

This new to the MJM library is a book that is part of the *New Paths for the Churches and Indigenous Peoples* series by Novalis.

**Sister Eva Solomon** is an Ojibwe Elder,

Sacred Pipe Carrier, and Sister of St. Joseph, Sault St. Marie. In her book, which is based on her doctoral thesis, she explores the

intercultural engagement, or dance, of her Christian faith and her Ojibway Anishinaabe community and traditions. Recognizing the enduring legacy of colonialism, Sr. Solomon invites a new vision for the Church for healing and reconciliation. She invites us to dance the path of the medicine wheel, drawing on Ojibwe traditions and practices as a new way of encountering Christ among us. This book offers deep wisdom and vision for living full both Indigenous and Christian "interculturation of faith."





## *Sisters of St. Martha*

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## CSM MISSION STATEMENT

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