

Our Life as Mission

NEWS FROM MARTHA
LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sisters
of
St. Martha



Issue 4
March 2021

“Standing together in undaunted hope”



NEW SIGNS ON BETHANY PROPERTY

When driving or walking on the Bethany Property you will notice that we have added some traffic signs such as stop signs, speed limit and yield to pedestrian.

We ask that you pay attention to these new road signs on Bethany Property. There will be more signage for parking and directional information as we continue through the development of the Bethany Centennial Garden.

As we all get used to the new roads and walkways please remember to give way to those who are walking. The Bethany Centennial Garden site is still a construction zone and therefore not accessible.



As always, we ask that dogs be on a leash at all times throughout the Bethany Property and that you clean up after your dog.

CHARISM STUDY GROUP: A LEARNING CIRCLE

In January 2021, the CSM Leadership Team launched a *Charism Study Group* to explore the meaning of Charism in general and of the Charism of Gospel Hospitality in particular.

We believe that the Charism of Gospel Hospitality is a gift of the Spirit to the Church and the world and is lived out in different lifestyles. It is not only in us or solely our possession but lives in and attracts others all over the world. Our Founding Women received this charism in our founding moment, and we continue to bear witness to it today. We are challenged to be sensitive and responsive to how and where this Spirit is moving today. Our task is also to support and nourish the Charism of Gospel Hospitality wherever it is present in our world, in this way making it more visible and a life-giving choice to the next generation.



MARTHA HOSPITALITY

Relating to life with gratitude and reverence, we respect self, care for Earth and open our hearts and homes to our sisters and brothers. We are especially attentive to those persons with whom we live and work daily.

Charism

['ker,izəm]

noun

The Spirit spreads its gifts and attributes to those men and women that the Spirit calls; those with the capacity to welcome the unexpected, to communicate the breath and to take the road with Christ in services to the Church and suffering humanity.

Source: Gaetane Guillemette, NDPS
The Charism: A Powerful and Fragile Breath

The Charism Study Group is designed to be a learning circle with diverse membership who will read, study, and reflect on topics related to the general idea of Charism with the focus on the Charism of Gospel Hospitality and the ways it is kept alive in the world.

The group is comprised of Sisters of St. Martha, including a PEI Martha, two priests, a Martha Associate, a young married couple, two single women and our Chapter Facilitator, a sister of St. Joseph, who joins us from Albany, NY. We are grateful to the 17 persons who said 'yes' to joining us in this venture!

In 2019, the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD) released a study “*Recent Vocations to Religious Life in Canada*”, first of its kind in this country. Sisters of St. Martha, members of NAVFD, welcome the outcomes of this study.

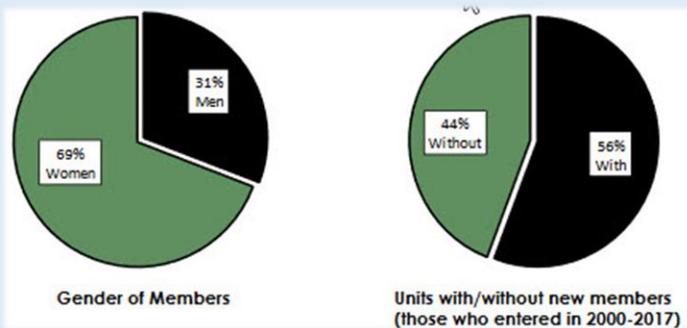


The study, done in conjunction with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) is “a research project geared to providing the Canadian Church with the most up to date picture of new membership to religious communities throughout the country.” NAVFD is “actively engaged in the development of a vibrant action plan to enhance, serve, and support religious vocation ministry across the country.”

The relevant information gathered through this study will serve as an accurate foundation for the development of an effective and comprehensive action plan in support of religious vocation ministry across Canada. It is our hope that the results of our research, made available in our websites, will assist all those engaged in vocation ministry as they attempt to strengthen, expand, and reimagine their work.”

Source: NAVFD website @ <http://navfd.info/>

As a result of this study, NAVFD hosted regional gatherings at which participants engaged in conversation and gained insights about what attracted new members and what we can do to help support a “culture of vocation” across Canada. NAVFD also hosted a webinar which included a newer member who shared her own experience of entering Religious Life at this time.



Follow the link if you are interested in reading this study or for a quick look at some of the key findings:

<http://navfd.info/2019/11/25/navfd-research-project-recent-vocations-to-religious-life-in-canada/>

Take Away from this Study

If you hope to attract new vocations to your institute consider the following:

- Make vocation animation a priority – from the top – and work to instill a “culture of vocation” in institute members
- Be true to the charism of the institute, to community life, and to communal prayer
- Be open to change

DOCUMENTARY "LAUDATO SI +5" BY KEVIN MOYNIHAN

The documentary "*Laudato Si* +5" by Kevin Moynihan marks the 5th Anniversary of the Pope Francis 2015 Encyclical.

Kevin Moynihan, producer of "*Laudato Si - a Canadian Response*", for this 5th anniversary of the Encyclical, has produced a follow-up documentary: "*Laudato Si* +5" that looks at what has been happening on Earth, our common home, through the lenses of environmental issues that have developed in these past five years:

- ◆ Water
- ◆ Global Warming
- ◆ Loss of Biodiversity

The film uses photos of Catholic Sisters in action, among others the one pictured here of Sr. Clotilda McIntyre, CSM and the late Sr. Peggy MacFarlane, CSM in May of 2019 in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, during #FridaysForFuture, a global climate strike movement.

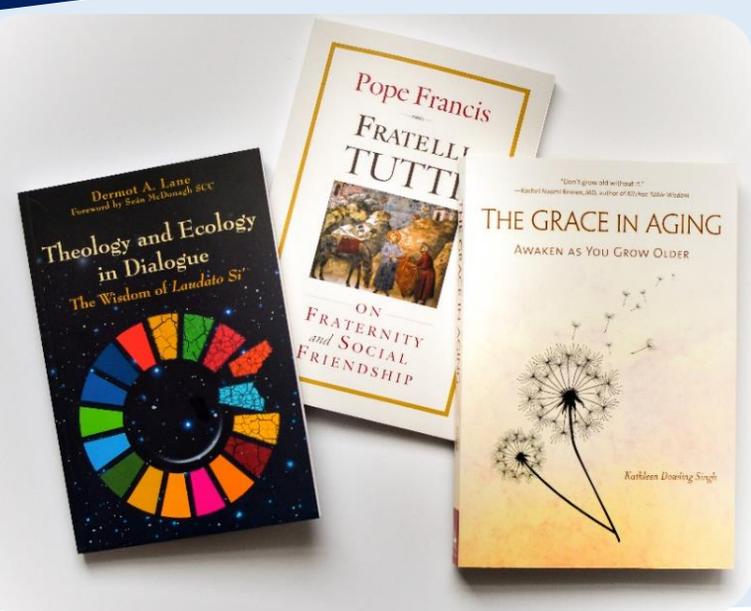
The movie invites us to see, judge, and act, always remembering that the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor are connected.

Watch the 40-min documentary at <http://www.kmproductions.ca/laudato-si--5.html>



Sisters Clotilda McIntyre and the late Peggy MacFarlane

WHAT WE ARE READING



Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of Laudato Si

Dermot Lane

Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship

Pope Francis I

The Grace in Aging: Awaken as You Grow Older

Kathleen Dowling Singh

Offering Hospitality during the pandemic: StFX Wellspring Centre

The walls of the sunbathed former chapel at Wellspring Centre, on the second floor of Morrison Hall at StFX University, are decorated with inspirational stories about the centre from students and Sisters. It is clear from these stories that, for the last 25 years, Wellspring has been offering an oasis experience on campus. Students describe it as a safe, calming, and peaceful space to relax, study and socialize – be with friends and meet new people. Many mention the welcoming kitchenette with cookies and fresh coffee and tea, comfy couches and chesterfields for napping, warm afghan blankets, cozy slippers... a home-like experience created by the Sisters of St. Martha who are running the Centre.



Sisters Catherine Arsenault and Theresa Parker

In the academic year 2020-2021, things are different at Wellspring. The centre is open 9-5 daily, but the afghans and slippers are locked away, kitchenette is not accessible, and socializing cannot really happen with all the COVID-19 protocols and restrictions in place. Yet Wellspring, with its 41 study pods, remains a place of hospitality and welcome. The students cherish their time there – this has not changed even during the pandemic.



Thanks to the efforts of the Marthas, the Wellspring Advisory Committee, and university administrators, the Centre could open in October 2020 – with a new set of rules as dictated by NS Health Authority. The space was rearranged to accommodate social distancing, its capacity lowered, and occupancy monitored through a guestbook to provide contact tracing. It is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized daily, no food or drinks can be served, handwashing protocols are in place, and mask wearing is obligatory at all times.

Sisters Catherine Arsenault and Theresa Parker, who are in charge of the Wellspring Centre during the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure students observe social distancing and wear masks. Both find the lack of kitchenette challenging, as it provided a wonderful space for good conversation where they would be able to chat with students coming for a refill, to warm up their food or snack on the goodies. They miss seeing student faces and the usual social activities of the Centre. None of the after-hours activities such as tutoring, or group meetings are possible this year. Wellspring is much quieter, and, because of that, students focus more on studying separately.

With smaller university enrollment this year, students taking many online courses and living in separate rooms, the Centre sees about 20 students daily, much less than usual, and almost no faculty.

Claya Way-Brackenbury, a StFX student, appreciates the home-like atmosphere of Wellspring Centre where she comes to study almost every day of the week, even though she has her own room in the residence. She has been a regular visitor before the pandemic too and she agrees things are different, mostly in terms of the social aspect of the centre. She understands that Sisters may feel limited in terms of their ability to give to students within COVID-19 guidelines, but, for her, the overall cozy and comfortable vibe is still very much alive at Wellspring, despite the restrictions. Spending time in this comfortable space, gives her perspective and calms her down whenever she feels stressed out. Claya also thoroughly enjoys her interactions with the Sisters, welcoming contact with older people on a campus full of youngsters.

Shauna Graveson, another StFX student, has only discovered Wellspring this year, so she doesn't know what it was before the pandemic. But when she compares it to



Claya Way-Brackenbury studying at Wellspring

other study spaces on campus, she appreciates the relaxed atmosphere where even the strict pandemic rules such as social distancing and mask-wearing, feel more natural than elsewhere. She gets away from the activities of her residence to enjoy the dynamics and comforts of Wellspring.

Despite the challenges of staying open during COVID-19, Sr. Catherine and Sr. Theresa, much like the students, are very happy that Wellspring Centre is open this year.

“The Wellspring is a treasured destination on the StFX campus where students enjoy warm hospitality in a comfortable, calm and safe space where they feel cared for and welcome. StFX students have shown incredible resilience during this global pandemic, however, the Wellspring and the Sisters of St. Martha provide all who enter that friendly support and encouragement that we can all benefit from in difficult times. We are all very grateful for the Sisters’ dedication, service and kindness”.

~ Elizabeth Yeo,
Vice President Students, StFX



Get used to “different”!

Over the last year, I have become aware of a wonderful new series on the life of Jesus called “The Chosen”. Season 1 is complete with eight episodes. Apparently, the plan is for eight seasons! In one of the episodes, Jesus calls Matthew, the hated tax collector, to follow him. Peter questions Jesus on the choice of Matthew as a follower. Peter tells Jesus “*he is different*”. The response from Jesus: “Get used to different”!

I was thinking about that interesting phrase as I was preparing this article for the OLAM newsletter. Most certainly we have had to get used to many different things becoming commonplace throughout this pandemic! We have gotten very accustomed to “different”. Doing things in a different way is not necessarily bad. Sometimes, it enables us to look outside the box, so to speak! At times, it challenges us to use other gifts and resources that we did not even know we had. “Different” can lead to a deeper awareness and discovery of what is possible!



Our Martha Associates continue to move forward and welcome the challenges of “different”! Like most other groups, we have become very used to the lingo of “virtual meetings” and “Zoom”; the necessity of emails and texts, and of course, the mainstay of Alexander Graham Bell, the telephone!! All wonderful forms of technology that has helped us to stay connected in these “different” times!

While not all our Martha associate groups have been able to gather, the **Martha Associate Committee** has been faithful to meet virtually and to continue with the work of the Martha associates as we move forward, together with the Sisters.

The committee is comprised of

- ◆ one Associate from each Associate group (two Associates from the West),
- ◆ the Martha associate director,
- ◆ representation from the Sisters of St. Martha.



“Different” can lead to a deeper awareness and discovery of what is possible!

Our Leadership liaison, Sr. Florence Kennedy, attends the meetings as required. We are very blessed to have three Marthas as members of this committee at present: Sr. Claudette Gallant; Sr. Josephine MacLellan; and Sr. Catherine MacFarlane. Their collective wisdom and ideas help to guide us! We are currently exploring ideas for the Martha Associate Fall Retreat, as well as a very special project... which shall remain a secret at present!!!

Our Martha Associate committee has a wonderful energy about it; a great sense of shared purpose and excitement about where the future can lead us! I like to think of this committee as the “Board of Advisers” for Martha associates, a place where ideas are born, presented, discussed and re-worked before they are ever presented to the Congregation Leadership.



Martha Associates

The one thing that is not “different” is the deep commitment of our Martha associates to live the best lives we can and to share the charism of “Gospel Hospitality” in our everyday lives, with all whom we meet. We especially remember all the Sisters of St. Martha in our daily prayers, and we look forward to the time when we will be able to see you and visit with you in person once again! God Bless you all!

~Julia Townsend, Martha Associate Director

DID YOU KNOW?

CSM FACTS

Sisters of St. Martha have been connected to the Sisters of Charity Federation (SC) since the year 2000. As members, Marthas continue to broaden their horizons and be open to culturally varied experiences.



The invitation to join came from the Sisters of Charity of Halifax in 2000, at the time of the CSM 100th Anniversary. Marthas, who can trace some roots to the Halifax Sisters, were struck how the wording of their own Constitutions mirrors the Vincentian rule the Sisters of Charity follow:

When we learned that the values of humility, simplicity, charity and zeal were those lived by Saint Vincent de Paul, we experienced a resonance in our corporate soul. Our Constitutions speak of "humble, loving service, joyful simplicity, a pioneering spirit enabling us to risk, zeal for the love of God and the sake of the people, with a special concern for the poor".

Excerpt from the 2003 letter by Sr. Mary MacFarlane, Congregation Leader at that time

Saint Martha's maturity, strength, common sense, and concern for others resonates with many aspects of Saint Elizabeth Seton's charism of charity. Marthas bring a particular nuance to this charism - their welcoming Gospel Hospitality.

The Sisters of Charity Federation of North America is a voluntary membership association of 14 congregations (2600 Women Religious), that trace their roots to St. Elizabeth Seton's 1809 foundation of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland, or which follow the rule of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac.

"Impelled by Christ's love and joined together in the mission of Charity, we, the Sisters of Charity Federation, respond to the cries of people living in poverty and on the margins."

Becoming official members in 2003, marked a historic moment in the life of the congregation and a celebration of their connection with the Sisters of Charity of Halifax. Being members has been a wonderful gift to the Marthas, allowing them to become more conscious of various global issues and offering a new world of possibilities for meaningful future collaborations.

The Congregation Leader, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, is a member of the Board of Directors of the SC Federation. Sr. Marion Sheridan is the Congregation NGO Liaison for The Federation UN NGO, headed by Sr. Theresa Kotturan. SCN.



Explore more @

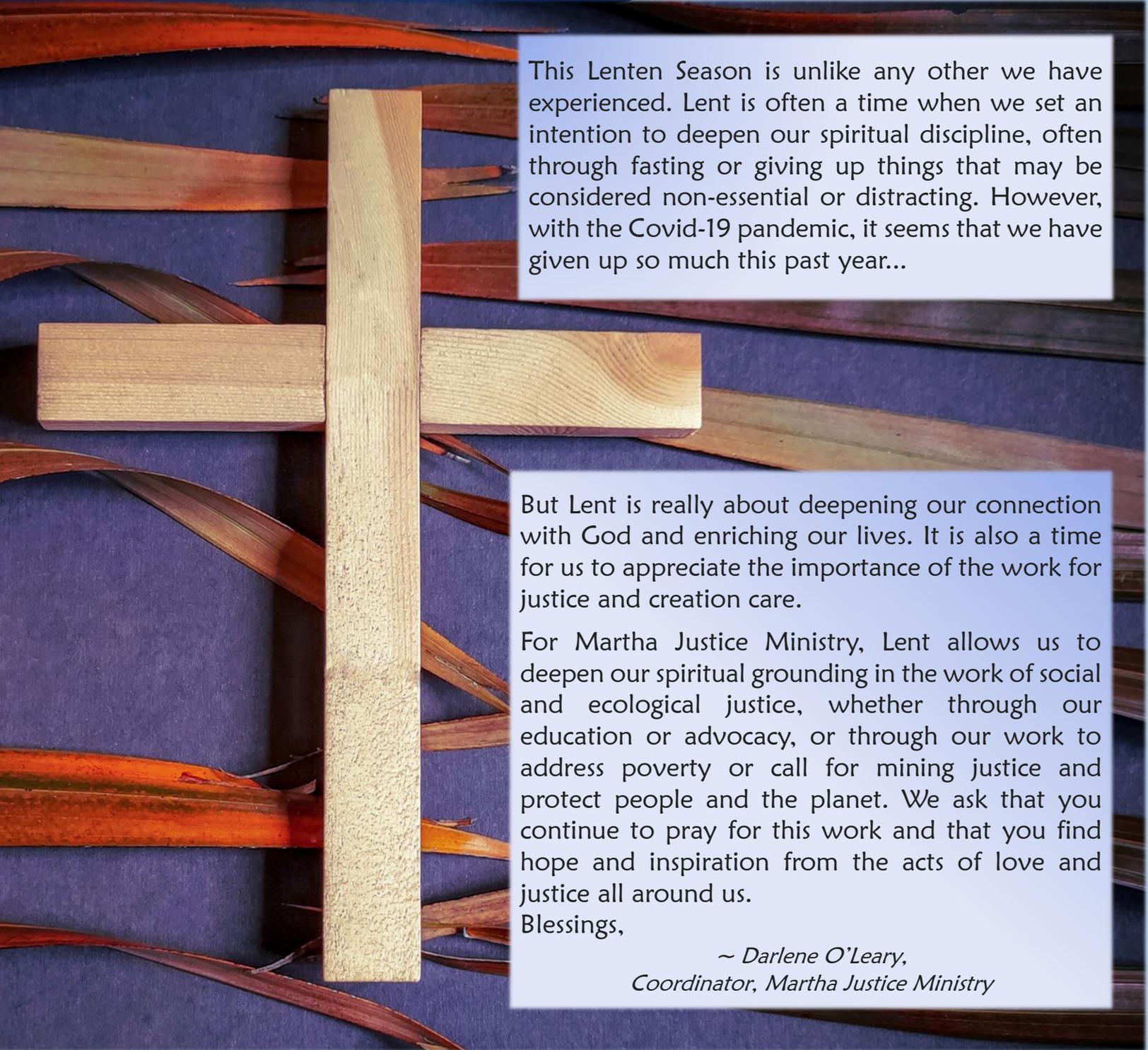
<https://sistersofcharityfederation.org/>



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

A MESSAGE FROM THE MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY

Lent Reflection



This Lenten Season is unlike any other we have experienced. Lent is often a time when we set an intention to deepen our spiritual discipline, often through fasting or giving up things that may be considered non-essential or distracting. However, with the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems that we have given up so much this past year...

But Lent is really about deepening our connection with God and enriching our lives. It is also a time for us to appreciate the importance of the work for justice and creation care.

For Martha Justice Ministry, Lent allows us to deepen our spiritual grounding in the work of social and ecological justice, whether through our education or advocacy, or through our work to address poverty or call for mining justice and protect people and the planet. We ask that you continue to pray for this work and that you find hope and inspiration from the acts of love and justice all around us.

Blessings,

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



*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

FOR THE LOVE OF CREATION

As part of our Lenten commitment this year, Martha Justice Ministry has joined For the Love of Creation's faith-in-action campaign.

For the Love of Creation is a Canadian faith-based initiative for climate justice. Its goal is to bring together faith groups for education and advocacy for a sustainable future for our planet. This year, For the Love of Creation is leading a faith-in-action campaign that will run from Lent until October. It is an expansion of the *Give it up for the Earth* campaign previously led by Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ).

Actions for the campaign include personal commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) along with calling on the federal government to increase GHG emissions reduction targets, commit to investing in a just transition to a green economy, implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and commit to supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the Global South.



**FOR THE LOVE
OF CREATION**

We will be sharing materials and resources to engage people in our community about ways to participate, including through sharing action ideas, personal pledge cards, letter templates to send to MPs, and ways of engaging in Earth Day virtual celebrations.

If you are interested in participating in the faith-in-action campaign, feel free to reach out to Darlene O'Leary at justice@themarthas.com or learn more at <https://fortheloveofcreation.ca/advocacy/campaign/>

*We hope you can make
creation care and ecological
justice an important part of
your Lenten journey!*





*Embracing Our Neighbour
and Our Common Home*

MARTHA NEW GROWERS 2021

This year, the Martha New Growers program will welcome David Matheson and Meghan Johnny as our 2021 New Growers. They will join us on site in April.



Meghan Johnny & David Matheson

David and Meghan have several years of experience working on farms in Nova Scotia and Ontario and in market gardening and CSA programs. Both are eager to build on their experience as they move toward becoming independent farmers. They are looking forward to learning more from our New Growers mentors, David and Jen Greenberg, as they build their knowledge of farm management and contribute their goal of building a just food system.



Meghan and David getting to know the site on a cold February day, guided by David Greenberg

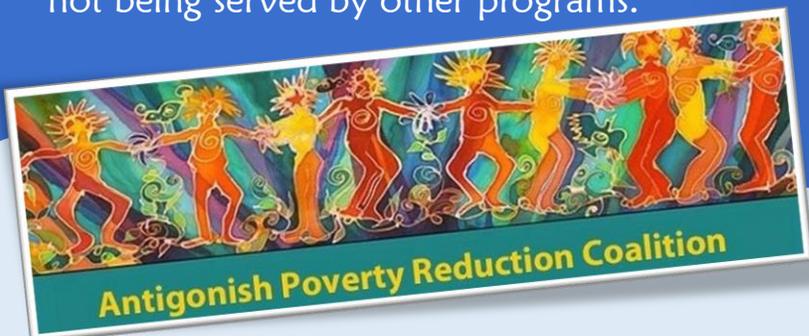


ANTIGONISH POVERTY REDUCTION COALITION UPDATE

Martha Justice Ministry is a long-time active member of the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC), an alliance of diverse groups and community members committed to eradicating poverty in the Town and County of Antigonish.

Sister Marion Sheridan, Colleen Cameron and Lucille Harper initiated the APRC in 2010 to bring together many voices to address poverty in Antigonish.

For years, the APRC has engaged in extensive advocacy with all levels of government for a basic income that would provide income support for those not being served by other programs.



In the past several months, the APRC has worked on a number of initiatives:

- ◆ A submission to the Nova Scotia government with recommendations for the provincial budget. This included recommendations for policy and investments in income support (such as basic income), increased affordable housing, childcare, and a livable wage.
- ◆ APRC has engaged with municipal council members on poverty issues, following up on commitments at an All-Candidates Forum ahead of the municipal elections in October.

Eight priority areas of concern were highlighted, and several independent groups have now emerged in those areas, including Affordable Housing, Antigonish Community Transit, Food Security, and the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund.

TRANSPORTATION ◆ **HOUSING**
FOOD SECURITY ◆ **CHILDCARE**
EDUCATION ◆ **INCOME SECURITY**
HEALTH SERVICES ◆ **RECREATION**

It is such a privilege and inspiration to be involved with the APRC, and we are eager to continue with the great work being done.

- ◆ Recently, the group provided input in a consultation by the federal Ministerial Advisory Council to End Gender-Based Violence as they develop a National Action Plan.
- ◆ APRC has worked on a project proposal to fund a Community Navigator and work on food security through a *Community Cupboards* project offering easy ways to access or drop off food, as the pandemic has had such an impact on food access.



CORE LETTER

Martha Justice Ministry sent a letter to Minister Mary Ng, indicating our serious concerns about the government's decision not to follow recommendations of a Parliamentary e-petition calling for a stronger mandate and investigative power for the office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE). Over 6000 people signed this petition in October 2020!

Read a few excerpts from our letter.

The federal government created the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) in 2018, following a decade of advocacy from faith groups and others after hearing reports of human rights and environmental violations caused by Canadian corporations or their affiliates abroad.

Disappointingly, in December 2020, the minister responsible indicated that **the office would not be given more authority to investigate these abuses.**

Dear Minister Ng,

[...] As you know, organizations from across the country and international partners have for years been reporting on instances of **mistreatment of workers, human rights abuses, sexual violence, and environmental violations** at the hands of Canadian-owned businesses and their subsidiaries across the supply chain and across industries ranging from resource extraction to food and garment production.

The seriousness of these violations led to years of advocacy calling for the Canadian federal government to create a meaningful Ombudsperson Office to address these complaints with independence, with powers to compel evidence, with accountability mechanisms, and with public reporting of findings.

(continued on next page)



The Office of CORE believes “human rights are best realized through collaborative approaches such as information sharing, mediation, and joint fact-finding” and is “committed to making recommendations for remedies that reflect Canada’s commitment to ensuring responsible business conduct.”

Source: CORE website



CORE LETTER *continued*

Our excitement with your government's commitment to creating this office has been dampened by the delay in its operations and in the weakening of its mandate.

[...] Canada has made significant commitments to human rights and environmental protections, particularly through adopting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, being a signatory to and recently tabling legislation for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and through the ratification of a number of human rights conventions and multilateral treaties.

Yet, we lack the basic institutional tools to implement these commitments when it comes to the operations of Canadian corporations globally. This is shameful and seems to reflect not a lack of capacity, but a lack of political will. Further, it is damaging to Canada's reputation globally as a human rights champion when we make these commitments and do not follow through, leaving already vulnerable communities open to further exploitation.

As long-time advocates for an independent, well-resourced Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, we would like to know why the decision has been made to allow this office to remain without the independence, resources, and accountability mechanisms it requires to be effective in fully addressing complaints.

We will continue to advocate for a stronger mandate for the CORE office by reaching out to our local MPs and through ongoing advocacy with networks working to care for the Earth and those impacted by these devastating violations. [...]

Sincerely,
Darlene O'Leary, PhD
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry

MJM also supported a letter sent by Development and Peace and signed by Catholic organizations, calling for the Minister to follow through on the government's commitment for an effective Ombudsperson.



Sisters of St. Martha

45 Bay Street
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, B2G 2G6

Tel: 902-863-3113

www.themarthas.com

csmleadership@themarthas.com

communications@themarthas.com

CSM MISSION

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