

Our Life as Mission

NEWS FROM MARTHA
LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sisters of
St. Martha

Issue 9
December 2022



"Standing together in undaunted hope"

DEPTH

*I thank you Lord this bright new day
That pain will go, and hope will stay.*

*The future unfolds as it should
Challenge abounds as it would.*

*Oh, to be ready for what entails
Without deep faith nothing prevails.*

The greening grass outside shows life

Rising forth in peace, not strife.

*Our vision now can light the way
Behold the new for what to pray.*

*Hope eternal is God's great gift
From deep within enrichment lift.*

*Divine Love now sustains us all.
My prayer today: God bless us all.*

~ Sister Madeline Connolly



This poem, written in 2020 during the early days of the pandemic by the late Sr. Madeline Connolly, invites us to go deeper, to accept hope as God's great gift. May these words guide us in our Advent waiting, as we join our prayers with the communion of saints for Peace for all Creation.

CELEBRATING ADVENT



CONGREGATION RETREAT & GATHERING

Recently, Sisters of St. Martha held two Congregation gatherings, both with a focus of deepening and broadening our understanding of what Charism means in general. This gift of the Spirit, specifically what we name as our Congregation Charism, is Gospel Hospitality.



Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ

The first gathering was a retreat held in October 2022, led by Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ. With the theme *Hospitality of the Heart*, she invited us to reflect on this gift of the Spirit, in three movements:

4. **Creating Space**
 - a. Becoming who we say we are
 - b. Hospitality and Wholeness
 - c. The Heart of Identity
5. **Unfolding Possibilities**
6. **Hospitality as Hope**

This time together provided Sisters an opportunity to pause and reflect, as individuals and as a community, on where the Spirit is leading us, where God is active in our lives. The retreat served as a spiritual foundation for us as we prepared for a Martha Gathering a couple of weekends later in November.



The theme for Martha Gathering in November was *Charism Unfolding: Celebrate and Set it Free*. One of the focal points of this Gathering was to hear from the Charism Study Group that has been meeting for the past 2 years, to help us broaden and deepen our understanding of where Charism lives in the church and the world. The study group brought together 16 people: our own sisters, a PEI Martha, 2 diocesan priests, a married couple, two single folks, and the director of Martha Associates. We read, listened, and shared around articles, webinars and scripture concerning 3 themes:

1. **Culture of Vocation**
2. **Charism**
3. **Gospel Hospitality**

The sharing and conversation with this group was rich, insightful, and challenging. It helps us realize part of our Direction Statement of 2019 in which we say, “*we broaden circles of Gospel Hospitality.*” We are grateful for the dedication and commitment of those who are part of this Study Group. Our task as a Congregation is to continue the conversation and find ways to put into action some of our learnings.

*We continue to live this gift of the Spirit,
the Charism of Gospel Hospitality,
as we move forward
STANDING IN UNDAUNTED HOPE!*



BETHANY TREE WALK: ARBORETUM OPENING

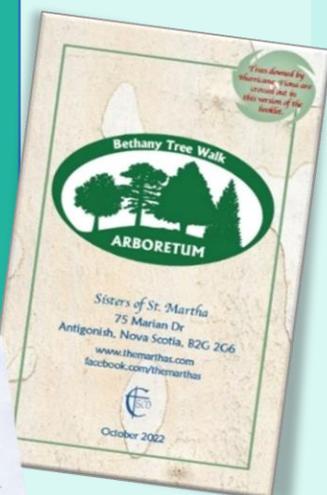
Five years after the blessing and dedication of Bethany Arboretum, the Marthas opened Phase II of the project: Bethany Tree Walk with 50 trees for public enjoyment.

When the Arboretum was opened in 2017, it consisted of 25 designated trees, Phase I of an ongoing project. The plan for Phase II was put on hold while Bethany Motherhouse was deconstructed, and the Bethany Centennial Garden was created. A small committee had been working continually to expand the Arboretum and, on September 21st, 2022, an official opening ceremony introduced the public to the new Bethany Tree Walk incorporating the original trees with 25 new ones. 50 different trees to befriend and marvel at in their beauty and diversity!



Sr. Donna Brady during the official opening

To do Bethany Tree Walk, go to the Arboretum Information Booth, pick up a booklet (to be returned at the end of your walk) or a [pamphlet](#) and follow the suggested route, learning about each tree along the way.



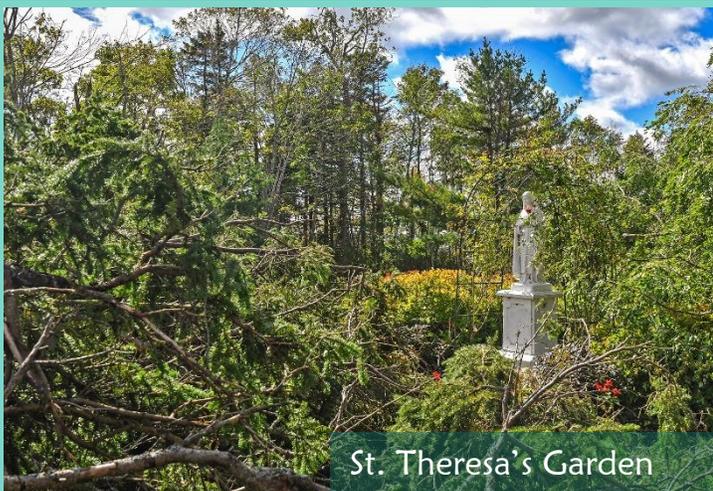
Alternatively, scan the QR code at the Arboretum Information Booth to access an online map on your phone – you'll find location and information on all of the Arboretum trees.

An Arboretum photo gallery on Martha website can be viewed [here](#).



On September 23rd, Hurricane Fiona uprooted 3 of the Arboretum trees and damaged a few more. Suffice to say – this project will be ever ongoing! The Committee envisions adding even more trees in the future! You can find the most up-to-date information on the route and trees at the Arboretum Information Booth on Bethany Grounds (follow the signs from the parking lot) or [online](#).

FIONA DIDN'T TAKE THE STATUES: A REFLECTION



St. Theresa's Garden

As I walked amidst the mess that Fiona left in her wake, through St. Theresa's Garden and Sacred Heart Grove, located on Bethany Property, I felt compelled to write a reflection. I can only imagine what a full-on hurricane would do. I have a deeper sense of empathy for those who have been devastated by these storms.

What compelled me was the fact that not a single statue was touched amidst all the destruction. Surrounded by huge trees lying on their sides, their massive roots exposed leaving equally massive holes, branches strewn all over, St. Therese of Lisieux, Our Lady of Fatima shrine, complete with children and lambs, as well as the Sacred Heart of Jesus, were still standing there, with barely a leaf on them. In Sacred Heart Grove, a Wishing Well once stood opposite the statue of the Sacred Heart. It was flattened, completely destroyed. And there stood the Sacred Heart of Jesus, untouched, his faithful companions with their leafy arms, and sturdy trunks who stood next to him for decades lying down, some still clinging to their neighbours who tried to hold them up, but not for much longer.

What was this saying to me? I reflected on the exposed roots, literally ripped out of the ground, pondered how much deeper I thought they would be. I recalled that I once

learned that trees communicate to one another through their root systems, creating a vibrant, alive, underground community that supports and protects one another. I grieve with them on the loss of these companions. If we believe that this is *Our Common Home* as Pope Francis does in *Laudato Si*, then we have experienced a great deal of loss at the hands of Fiona. Think of the loss of home for the birds, the bugs, the squirrels, and chipmunks, among others.

The rootedness of these statues is very different, they are not planted into the earth as the trees are. Yet they represent a rootedness that grounds my soul to something bigger than me. We are more than stewards of creation; we are part of an integral ecology that includes our social, cultural, and economic needs as well as the environment. These statues represent that part of an integral ecology that speaks to our spiritual needs. The steadfastness that kept them standing must be part of what gives us the resilience to withstand the losses, traumas, and hurts that are part of our life's journey. Perhaps these stalwarts of resilience are still standing to draw our attention to the fact that these climate events will keep happening. They stand to signal to us that we must change the way we live our relationship with all Creation. They stand to



Seabright shrine survived as well ...

remind us that they were once lovingly sheltered and are now exposed to the next storm. Some call these events an act of God. Poor God. We blame God like a petulant child rather than accept responsibility for our own actions that have led to the climate crisis.

The landscape of our property has changed, it is devastating to see. Yet in the aftermath I am grateful to these trees whose absence continues to teach me about the gift of community, and to these statues who teach me resilience and call me to action. I have always loved the poem by Joyce Kilmer. It has come to my mind often these days. I offer it in remembrance and in gratitude of our trees.

~Sr. Joanne O'Regan, CSM

TREES

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.*

*A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;*

*A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;*

*A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;*

*Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.*

*Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

~[JOYCE KILMER](#)



The iconic tree-lined path to St. Theresa's Garden as it was before Fiona

ATRI AND THE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES



The annual conference for Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutes (ATRI) was held for the first time since 2019. Hosted in Moncton, NB on September 23-26th, the theme was *Tides of Change*.

The keynote speaker, Fr. David B. Couturier, DMin., Lic. Psych., a member of the Fransican Capuchin Friars, led the participants through 3 presentations: *Changing Tides of Trust; Remember the Poor; and Lifting Hope, Caring Encounters*. The Marthas were represented by 7 people: members of CSM Leadership, Finance Department and others.

ATRI provides a great opportunity for members of religious institutes and staff to come together for professional development, collaboration, and relationship building. The Martha value of stewardship provides the foundation for participation.

Our value of STEWARDSHIP is expressed in sound planning and management of our resources.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER AND CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY BURSARIES

On October 5th, 2022, Sisters of St. Martha attended a joint announcement by St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) and Cape Breton University (CBU) of the *Sisters of St. Martha Indigenous (Mi'kmaw) Education Scholarship in honour of Sr. Dorothy Moore* and *Indigenous (Mi'kmaw) Nursing Scholarship in honour of Sr. Veronica Matthews*.

As part of our deep commitment to walking the path of Truth & Reconciliation with the guidance of the Mi'kmaw communities among whom we worked and lived for all our 122-years of existence as a Congregation, Sisters of St. Martha donated \$250,000 to each StFX and CBU. With matching private donations, the gift will allow for the creation of four \$10,000 scholarships for first-year students each year: two in the field of nursing and two in the field of education. They will be available to Mi'kmaw youth in Eastern Nova Scotia who are registered at one of the two universities.

These scholarships were created to acknowledge and honour Sisters Veronica Matthews and Dorothy Moore, both Mi'kmaw Elders and women of passion for their culture. True trailblazers, they are



Sisters Veronica and Dorothy during an announcement event hosted by StFX

known for their achievements in health care and education and their commitment to the communities where they have ministered.

It is our hope that the bursaries will improve access to education for Indigenous students and offer support to a new generation of leaders in both fields.

SR. DOROTHY MOORE: BOOK & DOCUMENTARY

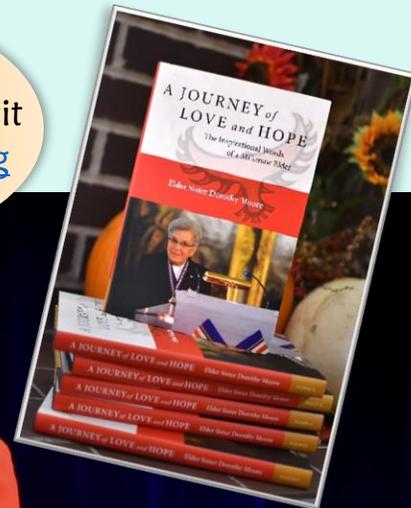
This Fall was a very special one for Sr. Dorothy Moore, 89. On September 17th, a documentary film “*Sister Dorothy Moore: A Life of Courage, Determination, and Love*” was shown in Halifax, NS and online as part of the Atlantic International Film Festival. On October 13th, an official launch of her book entitled “*A Journey of Love and Hope. The Inspirational Words of a Mi’kmaq Elder*” took place in Membertou, NS.

Both, the film and the book, are part of a larger project led by Dr. Mary Jane Harkins of the Faculty of Education at Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax, NS. The documentary directed by Dr. Harkins is a series of interviews with Sr. Dorothy and people close to her, interspersed with personal photos. The life story being told is indeed full of courage, determination, and love. Sr. Dorothy, a Mi’kmaq girl from Membertou, NS, despite difficult experiences in residential school, received an education, entered a Roman Catholic Order and has been working tirelessly

throughout her life to preserve the Mi’kmaq language and culture in schools and universities.

An educational leader and advocate for the rights of the Mi’kmaq, Sr. Dorothy gave many presentations and speeches over the years. Her book “*A Journey of Love and Hope*” brings them together and orders them thematically: culture and language, spirituality, racism, education, and prayers and ceremonies.

To learn more about the book visit [Nimbus Publishing web page](#)



Congratulations!

Sister Dorothy Moore with Dr. Mary Jane Harkins at the official book launch at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre in Sydney, NS.

Sr. Brendalee Boisvert and about 700 other leaders of Congregations of Catholic Sisters attended the August 2022 Assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in St. Louis, Missouri. The theme was *Mystical Wisdom: Following Spirit's Beckoning*. It was a privilege to meet, share, and connect with sisters across the world.

The meeting was designed to provide leaders with information and encouragement to assist them in guiding their congregations as they face the challenges of living consecrated life at this time and into the future. Theologians Sr. Constance FitzGerald, OCD and Dr. M. Shawn Copeland helped participants explore the mystical wisdom needed for these challenging times. They set their observations within the context of current major world shifts and movements: the failures of globalization, the mass migrations, the increase of violence, the pandemic, and the findings of the James Webb telescope providing a cosmic vision of unimaginable magnitude. The conversation focused on the relationship between the loss of place experienced worldwide and within

the lives of Women Religious and the transformation of consciousness that is happening every day. The LCWR President Sr. Jane Herb, IHM, spoke to these new realities in our world and Church. She encouraged members to journey together and to wonder who might be invited into our cells... as we shape the future of Religious Life. She encouraged leaders to look ahead with both their heads and hearts; to be nimble and to risk as we move forward. **We are called to trust in the mystery as God calls us from the future.**



UISG CONFERENCE

Sr. Brendalee Boisvert met this October in Montreal with the members of the Canadian Anglophone Constellation of the UISG (International Union of Superiors General). The 24 Congregation Leaders from across Canada usually come together each year to pray and share on activities/projects of each Congregation. This year the theme was *Embracing our Future Together: In Communion and Solidarity*.



These meetings are very helpful in creating a space for leaders to share questions around Canon Law regarding their Constitutions, and to talk about transformative Governance structures. Fr. Alain Ambeault, the Executive Director of Canadian Religious of Canada (CRC), shared about the progress of some

Congregations around collaborative projects and the work of designing different governance structures.

"We need to be forward thinking about how to govern as members are aging and fewer are entering. Some of the Canadian congregations have communities in USA and other parts of the world. I always feel that it puts a global face on leadership and challenges each of us to reflect together on how God is calling the Canadian Church, women religious in particular, to move creatively into the future."

~Sr. Brendalee Boisvert

CLOSURE OF ST. MARY'S CONVENT IN INVERNESS, CAPE BRETON



On Sunday, September 18th, the community of Inverness, Cape Breton, celebrated the 97 years of Martha presence as the St. Mary's Convent had closed its doors and the last Sisters had left town in the summer of 2022.



The celebration began with the farewell *Mass of Thanksgiving* at the Stella Maris Parish in Inverness. Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, who presided the Mass, thanked the Marthas in his homily for their support in the Diocese. Several priests who served in Inverness and surrounding parishes participated as well. During her speech, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert told a history of the Martha presence in the area. The 18 Sisters in attendance offered a blessing in song to about 200 people gathered.



CLOSURE OF ST. MARY'S CONVENT IN INVERNESS *continued*



Following the Mass, all were welcome to join the reception at the Inverness Fire Hall organized by two parishes, Stella Maris (Inverness) and St. Margaret of Scotland (Broad Cove) with a lovely meal prepared by the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Inverness Fire Department, live piano and fiddle music, and Gaelic song singing. The well-attended social gathering was also an opportunity to hear wonderful memories of the Marthas. The storytelling began with a speech by Claire MacQuarrie who shared workplace stories of the Sisters from the times she worked at the Inverness hospital, a few others followed. Five Sisters whose ministry work connected them to Inverness spoke as well: Sr. Claudette Gallant, Sr. Franklyn Ferguson, Sr. Lillian Gaudet, Sr. Lucy MacNeil and Sr. Florence Kennedy, born in the area.



Marthas receive a gift: a picture of the place where they lived and worked for many years: first St. Mary's Hospital in Inverness

After many heartfelt memories were shared, Marthas sang a farewell song and final goodbyes were said, with much more than just a tinge of sadness.



A hall full of friends of the Congregation

A memorable display full of photographs and newspaper cuttings documenting Martha presence in the Inverness area was available to enjoy at the Fire Hall. A guestbook was there to sign. It will be gifted to the Marthas as a memory of this special occasion.

Did you know?
CSM FACTS

The Sisters of St. Martha first came to Inverness in 1925. In 1924-5, the people of the coal mining town of Inverness and

surrounding areas in Cape Breton, NS, built a community hospital and petitioned the Marthas “to take charge”. Mother M. Stanislaus and the Council agreed unanimously to the request, sent by Father Kyte, under the direction of Rev. Alex MacDonald.



The “Inverness Brigade”: Sisters of St. Martha, staff at St. Mary’s Hospital in Inverness, Palm Sunday, 1936. Seated: Sr. Mary Philip Neri MacDonald, Mother Mary Stanislaus MacDonald, Sr. Mary de Chantal Maclean. Standing: Sr. Antonia Flynn, Sr. Mary Albert Gleason, and Sr. Mary James Campbell.

During the 97 years of CSM presence in Inverness, Sisters served in health care in St. Mary’s Hospital and the Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital. St. Mary’s Hospital staff was first managed by the “Inverness Brigade” of Marthas (photo above), headed by a Sister Superintendent. Initially, cash-strapped families contributed crops and produce to support the institution.

In the late 1970s, Marthas began working in Team Ministry, offering pastoral education, pastoral visiting, education in schools, and music ministry. Committed to the ministry of prayer, Marthas visited the sick and shut-ins, especially those living in Inverary Manor; they attended the wakes and funerals of many parishioners. Some Sisters were involved in housing projects,

**97 YEARS IN INVERNESS:
1925-2022**

counselling and serving on liturgical committees. These highlight a few of the areas of Martha presence in Inverness. The ministry carried on till this year with Sr. Lucy MacNeil and Sr. Stella Chafe who responded to being in mission and continued working within the limits and challenges of COVID-19.

CSM records show that many Sisters entered the Congregation from Stella Maris Parish, Inverness, and St. Margaret of Scotland Parish, Broad Cove, a testimony to the deep faith of the Catholics of the region. These friends and community members have opened their homes to the Marthas, shared their family stories and have kept a watchful eye on them for almost 10 decades. They will always hold a special place in our Community Prayer, and indeed, in our Common Martha Heart!



Some Sisters working in Inverness in the late 1980s. Standing: Sr. Elizabeth Fraser, Sr. Alexius MacLellan, Sr. Michelle MacDougall and Father Stanley MacDonald. Seated: Sr. Sandra White and Sr. Franklyn Ferguson.

97 YEARS IN INVERNESS: 1925-2022

Altogether, 93 Sisters were sent to live and serve in St. Mary's Hospital and 24 Sisters to live and serve in many different capacities from St. Mary's Convent. A few of those Sisters were able to attend the September closing celebrations in Inverness and share their memories.



In the years 1981-1990, **Sr. Franklyn Ferguson** worked as a medical social worker at the Inverness Consolidated Hospital and as a counsellor with Family Services of Eastern NS. She specialized in

working with families of alcoholics and ran many support groups designed to help people live a healthier lifestyle. She remembers other great groups run by the Team such as the single parent group or *Mothers helping Mothers* as well as some fun events, for example *Mothers Weekend* in Mabou, designed to pamper new mothers!

One of the key images that stay in my mind is when we borrowed a school bus and filled it with children, mothers, single parents (...). We landed in Antigonish [at Bethany] and had lots of fun, games, and food, the children were able to play around. All I can remember from the drive up and back is singing, telling stories, and laughing. These were memorable experiences that some children never had before and would remember. I really appreciated being here, I loved living and working here, I carry a lot of wonderful memories!

Sr. Alexius MacLellan spent 21 years in Inverness, she was a nurse from 1973-80 and continued in pastoral care in 2000-2014. Unable to attend the closing ceremony, she passed on greetings to all friends in Inverness area:



*Dear friends,
I send warm greetings and abundant blessings on this very special occasion. I want to say thank you to each of you for your gracious hospitality, multiple kindnesses, care, and concern. helpfulness to me during my time with you at St. Mary's Hospital, Inverness Consolidated Hospital and at St. Mary's Convent touch my heart deeply. I will never forget you. ~ Sr. Alexius*

Sr. Claudette Gallant

was missioned in Inverness in 1978-85 and was part of the Inverness Parish Team. She was 37 then and full of energy, ready to work on any project.



It was a wonderful time in the Church because Vatican II had just happened, so we could do all kinds of innovative things within the parish. We had Christopher Course, we had RCIA, we had Family Days for children for First Communion and Confirmation. We had Baptism Sessions: we visited every home in which the child was baptised. (...) I can't tell you how much I enjoyed myself being here! Besides that, I was the director of the pre-marriage program in this pastoral section. (...). I was here with Father Stanley (...), he and I used to meet once a week and, every time we met, he had 3 or 4 different projects for me and I used to say to him "You know Stan, I'll look at 2 of those". It was absolutely great! (...)

97 YEARS IN INVERNESS: 1925-2022



Sr. Florence Kennedy, never served in Inverness, but was born in the area. She believes that her vocation was fostered and nourished by the connections she made during her teenage years with the Sisters living in town.

My first introduction to the Marthas was in the late 1970's when I was asked if I would play mandolin in the choir. With some trepidation I said yes. It was the beginning of saying many yeses as I got to know the sisters. (...) The more time I spent with the sisters in Inverness, I became aware of how welcoming and respectful they were to everyone they encountered. Whether it be at the convent for a cup of tea and a visit, or meeting someone at the store or at the church they listened and had time for people. These two values: welcoming and respect empowered people including myself.

When the sisters invited you to take part in liturgy, such as being lector or Eucharistic Minister, or to participate in a program they were offering in the parish such as the Christopher Course, or Genesis II or an event such as a Family Day, it was hard to say no. They had a knack of engaging and involving people. This resulted in developing the diverse gifts of people and, at the same time, their interaction enriched and strengthened community.

I was inspired by how much the sisters cared about the people they served. I learned the importance of the common good. I desired to be like them.

The sisters had a spirit of simplicity. They enjoyed doing ordinary things like picking berries, preserving jams and pickles, baking biscuits, having a cup of tea, chatting, having a sing song, or a good laugh over some funny thing that happened in the day. It was their ordinary 'earthy spirit' that appealed to me.



Sr. Lillian Gaudet was missioned to Cape Breton 40 years ago. She spent four memorable years as choir director in Inverness and Broad Cove. At the closing reception, she remembered with great

appreciation people who helped her share her love of music in the already very musically inclined parishes.

We all know that corporate worship is important for Christian life but please keep in mind that we can also worship in music, it can help us connect with the Creator, as the old saying says: "whoever sings, prays twice". So, I say turn up the volume and sing praises to our God, raising high the name of Jesus and exalting the spirit of God.

I'll leave this message from Psalm 1:04 with you: "I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being"

Thank you everyone, I really enjoyed my 4 years here!!"



VOICES FROM THE MINISTRIES

Sisters Lucy MacNeil and Stella Chafe are the last Marthas to minister in Inverness. They were missioned there after they had already retired from their professional teaching careers. Sisters of St. Martha service in Inverness evolved over the years and their final ministry was what they call ‘the ministry of presence’ – being there for the people whenever they were needed.



Sr. Lucy



Sr. Stella

“I must say that it was a gift from heaven to me to come down here”, says Sr. Stella, *“people were so open to me, so welcoming!”*. A few months before the pandemic, in November 2019, she came to St. Mary’s Convent to live with Sr. Lucy who had settled there 7 years prior. Sr. Stella credits the warm welcome of the Inverness people to the years of Sr. Lucy’s service, but Sister Lucy is first to say that she has just continued the good work of many other Marthas who had served before her. They both are adamant in their sentiment that the Inverness ministry story is not about them or any one person in particular but encompasses 97 years of hard work and devotion of all the Sisters who ministered in the area in the spirit of Gospel Hospitality. From different types of

hospital work, through Parish Ministry Team endeavors, to the latest ministry, the Marthas have been around throughout many people’s lifetime and have touched the lives of countless locals. In recent years, the ministry has evolved into what Sisters Lucy and Stella call “ministry of presence”. By frequenting services in both Catholic and United churches, they got to know people from the community and their families so, naturally, they would find out when somebody died, got sick, or was looking for support. They also remember long chats with the locals on their daily walks around the coastal town and their encounters with the Co-op staff and customers when shopping. They both reached out to people and made themselves available and present to those



St. Mary's Convent, Inverness, 1999

who needed checking in, a listening ear, or a prayer. Twice a week, Sisters went to The Inverary Manor, a long-term care facility in Inverness, to provide companionship to the residents. Those visits are one of their many favorite memories from Inverness and something they will both miss a lot:

How happy the residents are to see us! You get to know them personally, and there is a number of them that have died, and we'd go to the wakes...

But it's just the joy that you see in their faces when you go.

~Sr. Stella

We used to go see her [a resident in the Manor] all the time. One day I went in, and she gave me a bracelet and said "Dear Sister Lucy, I want you to have this, my daughter sent it home from Calgary and she said to give it to you because you're just like a mother to me". And she was 94!!!!

~Sr. Lucy

During their years in Inverness, Sisters also attended wakes, visited or called people, and helped in many other small but meaningful ways. St. Mary's Convent

opened about 40 years ago and had always been very much an open house where people could and would drop in for tea & cookies and a friendly chat. During the pandemic lockdowns, the phone calls substituted the visits. Over the years, there were regulars from the community dropping in, members of the local clergy visiting on a weekly basis, and many visitors from away. Making guests comfortable and getting to know people for who they really are is something Sisters Stella and Lucy have enjoyed a lot. Inviting people for freshly baked goods and nice conversation is natural to them. Both have always treated everyone, regardless their faith or current life situation, with respect and care. In return, the community cared for them. When Sister Lucy was in Inverness by herself for over a year, the people looked after her, a local priest, Father Dan MacDonald, called every morning to make sure she was alright. Several parishioners expressed their sadness upon learning that Sisters Lucy and Stella would be leaving Inverness. For

VOICES FROM THE MINISTRIES *continued*

many, Marthas were there all their lives, serving the community. Simply put, their presence mattered:

“We didn’t feel like we did a whole lot. But we were there for them. [...] You don’t realize that it’s such a natural thing with us [Marthas]. And yet it means so much to the people”
~Sr. Stella

For both Sisters, the Inverness ministry fit very well with their personalities. Both had been teachers with experience in leadership and helping people thrive was the essence of their careers. Going further back in time, becoming a Martha and following the Martha way of life was natural for both.



Sr. Lucy, 1964

Sister Lucy MacNeil, 89, was born in Dominion, Cape Breton, the eighth in the family of 12 children. As a child, she knew the Marthas who were social workers in her parish, and she

often visited St. Charles Convent for choir practice. She remembers the happy Sisters who lived there and the feeling of being always welcome in their house. Sr. Lucy entered the Congregation at 21 years old, a year after high school. She studied in Normal College in Truro and went on to teaching Grade Primary class in 1955. She taught for 41 years in many different schools around Nova Scotia and in Kamloops, BC and assures she loved every day of it! To this day, when she sees a school bus passing by in the morning, she misses being at school, greeting the

children. Patience, compassion, and being an excellent listener earned her the trust of the 5-year-olds and proved excellent qualities in all her other assignments, including working on the Bethany Leadership Team, being a local treasurer in several communities, and, later on, in her work with the people of the Inverness area.

Sister Stella Chafe, 85, had also known the Marthas since she was a child. Born in Antigonish and raised in Canso, NS, she used to go over to the Martha convent in town for choir practice, music lessons,



Sr. Stella in Novitiate

and Holy Mass in a chapel. *“It didn’t matter what time of the day we went; they were always so welcoming. They taught crafts there, so there were people in and out at all times”*, she reminisces. A true life-transforming experience for Sr. Stella was her two years in St. Joseph Convent School in Mabou, NS, a boarding facility led then by the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame. Combining “school and religion” was new and appealing and it fostered her desire to go into religious life and carry on some of the work that religious did. She was attracted to the Sisters of St. Martha whom she admired for their *“earthiness and getting down where the people were”*. Her experience in boarding school, with its highly structured daily routine of study, work, and prayer, prepared her for the new life in the Martha Novitiate. She also met

there life-long friends who became fellow Marthas!

After making profession and completing her studies, Sr. Stella began teaching in Cape Breton and her niche became older kids; she had a good rapport with the students who knew she was just, but firm. If there were any issues, she always talked things through, gave students a choice, making sure they understood the consequences. Very soon, she was asked to work as administrator in addition to teaching, and she was Vice Principal and Principal of many schools she worked at in Nova Scotia and Alberta. She was a good administrator because she understood teachers' needs in the classroom and was always able to listen to them with an open

mind. Upon retiring from teaching, she did 3 terms in CSM Leadership, was a treasurer and a local superior in some of the convents and in Martha Retreat Centre in Lethbridge. Throughout her career, she valued being frank, respectful towards others and, above all, open to people and ideas. She brought these qualities into her Inverness ministry.

Sr. Lucy and Sr. Stella live simply, with no frills, following Martha Values. They care for the environment, for each other and those in need, living Gospel Hospitality every day through their actions.

Farewell, Inverness!

Our love for all of you is best expressed in the words from St. Paul to the Philippians (3:1); "I thank my God each time I think of you. When I pray for you, I pray with love."

Thank you! God bless you all!

~Sr. Lucy MacNeil, fragment of the speech at the closing reception, Sept 18, 2022





Here we are in December again and Advent has just started! It feels like I just put my Christmas tree away yesterday and soon I will be putting it up again!! Incredible! It seems like the perfect time, however, to provide an update on the Martha Associates!

I am delighted to report that our annual **Martha Associate Retreat**, in both the East and the West, was able to be held in person this year, 2022! This has not been possible since 2019. We were so grateful to be able to come together again, to hug each other, and to sit across from each other, smiling and chatting, to share a meal, and to listen and learn together.



Our Retreat topic was: *“Walking Together in Hope and Prayer: Synodality and the People of God”*. Our retreat presenter was Dr. Moira McQueen, Director of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute and a Professor of Moral Theology at the Toronto School of Theology. Dr. McQueen gave two presentations: the first on the history and purpose of synods while the second presentation focused on the Spirituality of the synod. In focusing on Spirituality, it was clear that we must listen intently; and foster a deep prayer life so we may discern the calling of the Holy Spirit. We felt blessed and grateful to have Dr. McQueen with us, in both the East and the West.

In the East, the Associates gathered at Martha Place on September 10, 2022. A total of 28 Associates and 7 Sisters of St. Martha met in the Multipurpose Room at Martha Place. Several of the Marthas watched and listened to the presentations in the comfort of their rooms. The highlight of this day for our Associates was the “Meet and Greet” with the Sisters! There was such an atmosphere of joy as several of the Marthas came to visit with us. Another special moment in the day was when the Associates stood together, and with hands over their hearts, renewed their commitments to be Martha Associates. Our day began and ended with music and prayer led by Mike Finigan of the Sydney Martha Associates.



Mike Finigan



Above: East Martha Associate Retreat Day in Antigonish on September 10th, 2022

Below: West Martha Associate Retreat Day in Lethbridge on September 23-25, 2022





In the West, our Martha Associates gathered for their retreat weekend on September 23 – 25, 2022 at the Martha Retreat Center in Lethbridge. A total of 14 Associates, plus 5 Associates who joined us via ZOOM, along with 2 Sisters of St. Martha and the Executive Director of the Martha Retreat Center gathered for the retreat. As in the east, the Western Associates were delighted to come together in person to share hugs, stories and to break bread together! Since the retreat was able to be spread across three days, the associates and sisters were able to spend a bit more time in reflection and sharing. The western group was thrilled to have Sr. Theresa Parker and Sr. Josephine MacLellan join them for the retreat days.



Boyd and Sharon Dunn with Linda Pedersen, September 25

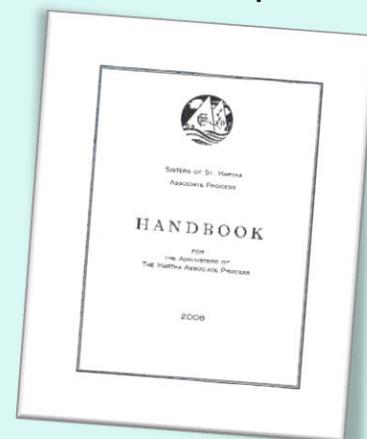
An extra special event that occurred during the weekend was the reception of three new Martha associates. Boyd and Sharon Dunn, as well as Linda Pedersen were received on Sunday, September 25th, 2022.

This was coupled with a communal renewal of commitments to the Martha Associates by all associates present, including our ZOOM participants. It was a truly blessed and joyous weekend!

Since the completion of the 2022 retreat, our Martha Associates Groups have begun their usual gatherings at home. For the most part, the groups are meeting in person, but a few associates are still more comfortable to meet via ZOOM and this is made available where possible.

The **Martha Associate Committee** has met for the first time since the Spring (although we frequently use email between meetings). Our recent meeting was on Thursday, October 27, 2022. One of our projects that we have been working on and will be continuing for some time, is a revision of the Martha Associate handbook. The Committee has had several discussions about formation of Martha associates, and we realized that we did not have a document to reflect that process in the handbook. Over the last year, we have worked on preparing a Formation document. After much discussion and sharing, and several working drafts, we have submitted a final document for review and approval by the CSM Leadership.

We are hopeful it might be completed and approved by the first of the new year.



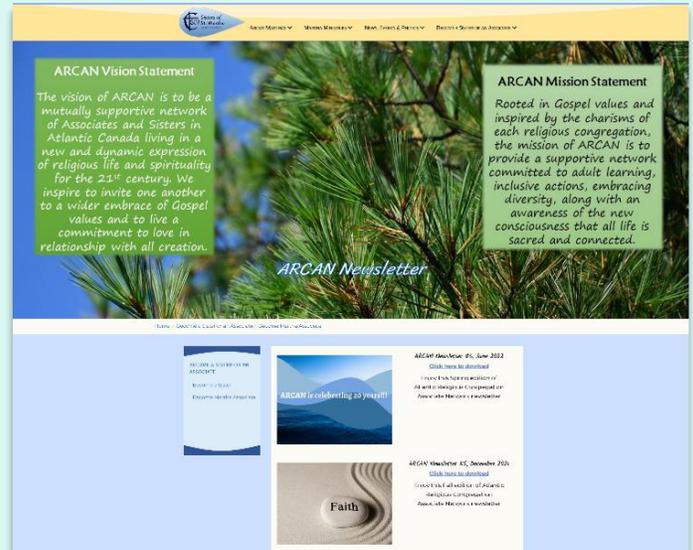


The ARCAN group (Atlantic Religious Congregations and Associates Network) has been celebrating its 20th Anniversary this year. To mark this special anniversary, several events and projects were planned:

- Celebration Mass was held in Charlottetown, PEI on May 9th, 2022
- Anniversary bookmarks were printed and distributed to all sisters and associates of our 8 member Congregations.
- ZOOM gathering to reflect the history and evolution of ARCAN was held June 7th, 2022
- Twenty ideas for Social Justice actions were compiled and sent to all ARCAN Members.
- Final event: A ZOOM presentation given by Dr. Beverly Musgrave on *Spirituality and Aging* was held Saturday, November 19, 2022 from 10:00 am to 12:00 AST. A ZOOM link was shared with all ARCAN Members.

ARCAN has been working diligently to increase its' profile among all members. The Steering Committee meets twice a year. For the last 3 years, the committee has invited all ARCAN members to participate in a spiritual presentation on the Saturday morning of our meetings.

This has been a wonderful addition and allows members of ARCAN to participate via a ZOOM link. As well, we have an active ad hoc newsletter committee, and a rotating executive committee. The [ARCAN newsletters](#) can be viewed on the associate section of the Martha website.



ARCAN has grown into a vibrant group, rich in the sharing of ideas and support for each other. It is a blessing to be members of ARCAN.

In the future, Martha Associates will be exploring ways that we can contribute to the ongoing legacy of the Martha charism of Gospel Hospitality. **How do we help the charism to live on?** What does that mean for Associates? Whatever the answer is, one thing is for sure, God is in the middle of it all! With constant prayer and trust in our God, the way will be lit, the pathway shall be revealed.

God Bless,

*~Julia Townsend
Director Martha Associates*



GREETINGS TO YOU ALL FROM MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY



Greetings to you all! The cold is now settling in, though we have experienced an unusually warm start to November. While it was nice to delay the cold weather, it is very unsettling, knowing that this is part of the larger cycle of

the warming of our planet caused by human activity. We know the chaos and damage that this causes as we and our neighbours are still recovering from post-tropical storm Fiona. I had a chance to see the damage in PEI in late October, over a month after the storm. It is heartbreaking

knowing that some of the damage done will take generations to recover if it does at all. Still, we have much to be grateful for, and we remain actively hopeful, especially as we continue to find inspiration from so many groups doing good work!

In this edition of Standing4Justice, we'll let you know about the wonderful activities and events that we've been part of over the past few months, as well as those we look forward to.

We ask for your continued prayers and support as we share in the good work of our friends and colleagues in our community, region, country, and beyond – work for social and ecological justice at an urgent time! Peace and Blessings,

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





UN NGO LIAISON: DARLENE IN HER NEW ROLE

In October, Darlene O’Leary and Sister Marion Sheridan were able to travel to New Jersey and New York for a gathering of the UN NGO Liaisons for the Sisters of Charity Federation.

This was the first opportunity for Darlene to meet many of the NGO Liaisons in person and to meet the outgoing UN NGO Representative, Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN, as well as the incoming Representative, starting in January 2023, Dr. James (Jimmy) Walters. It was great to see the new UN NGO office, across from the UN in New York. We also had a chance to have a tour of the UN, where we walked through the many exhibits on display marking the important history of the institution. We visited the Security Council and General Assembly meeting rooms. And we even saw the UN Secretary General walk by our group as we started our tour!

Our trip also included a meeting of the NGO Liaisons with Sister Teresa and Jimmy, which helped us get to know each other a bit better and see how we will move forward with the NGO work. We ended our gathering with a celebration dinner marking the wonderful work that Sister Teresa has done as our UN NGO Representative for the past 8 years. We also celebrated some of the outgoing NGO Liaisons, including Sister Marion Sheridan. It was a great time together and there is much to look forward to in our ongoing work with the UN NGO!



Sr. Marion Sheridan with
Darlene O’Leary



AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPENING: SISTER MARION HONOURED

On September 13, we had the great pleasure of attending the opening of the common room at the new Appleseed Drive affordable housing location in Antigonish.

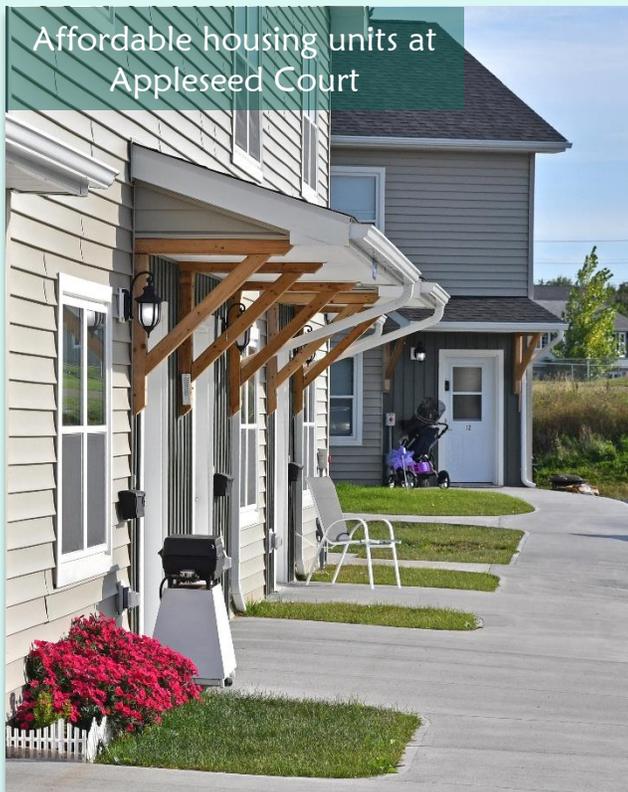
It was a particularly special event as it marked the dedication of the common room to Sister Marion Sheridan, who has spent many years working with the Affordable Housing Society of Antigonish (AAHS).

We had an opportunity to hear from members of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society, from community members, and from Sister Marion herself, who saw this as a recognition for the Marthas whose dedication to serving the needs of the community has allowed for important projects like affordable housing to be realized.

A lovely photo of Sister Marion now hangs in the room marking the dedication. It will be a shared space that the tenants will enjoy for years to come!



We, like all who are connected to the AAHS, were heartbroken at the loss of Rachel MacFarlane, the chair of the Board of Directors for the Society. Rachel exemplified hospitality in her determination to create a home for all, and that no one was left behind. May her enduring legacy be in the continuation of Antigonish Affordable Housing Society through the support of volunteers and contributions to the *Rachel MacFarlane Memorial Fund*.



Affordable housing units at
Appleseed Court



Rachel MacFarlane



JPIC ATLANTIC GATHERING

On October 3-5, we were happy to be able to gather in person at Villa Madonna in Rothesay, NB, for our first in-person JPIC Atlantic event in three years!

Sister Donna Brady and Darlene O’Leary attended the JPIC event in person, and Sister Marion Sheridan was able to participate in part by Zoom. JPIC is a Network of members of the Canadian Religious Conference in Atlantic Canada working for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

The gathering was facilitated by Sabrina di Mateo from the Canadian Religious Conference. We began with prayer and reflection on the social and ecological challenges we have faced over the past few years. We were joined the next day by David Perley, a member of Tobique First Nation and retired director of the Mi’kmaw-Wolastoqey Centre at UNB. He led us in a wonderful presentation called “*A Season of Reconciliation*” as well as a powerful talking circle.

We also had the chance to hear from Kyla

Lohnes, a MA graduate, who shared her research findings on faith communities engaging in climate action – its challenges and opportunities.



We then had time to share some of the programs and projects that our communities have initiated, including on reconciliation, climate action, and poverty eradication. We ended our gathering discussing options for further collaboration, a shared action from our gathering, and future thinking on what might be next for JPIC Atlantic. It was a truly rich time together!

NEW GROWERS UPDATE

This year’s New Growers - Meghan, David, Danielle, and Clayton - have been enjoying a surprisingly mild late growing season.

Luckily, they did not experience much damage to their crops or the hoop houses during Fiona, which is quite miraculous! They are continuing into the winter with growing microgreens, so they are extending their time with us. We had an opportunity to celebrate their great achievements at a Harvest Meal on December 6th.





MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY CORE GROUP GOES WEST!

In the works for a couple of years, and delayed due to the pandemic, at long last, Sr. Marion Sheridan and Sr. Joanne O'Regan joined Mark Nixon, Martha Justice Ministry Core Group western representative, in Lethbridge for a few days in September.

We were invited to join the Grade 11 Religion class at Catholic Central High, Campus West, for two sessions around the theme *Bearing Witness*. Mark started off our time with a reflection on the Medicine Wheel and used it as a framework for our time together. Sr. Joanne offered a journey through the evolution of Catholic Social Teaching and Sr. Marion presented an overview of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the work that Youth at the UN have done and continue to do. We each found the students to be engaged, interested and willing to enter into the process with us.

That evening we gathered at Martha Retreat Centre and shared our presentations with folks who work in Education. It was a wonderful opportunity for conversation, sharing and learning together.

Marthas' relationship with "the West" goes back to 1929 when they first set out on Mission to Western Canada, in Lethbridge, Alberta. While there are no Sisters living in Lethbridge at this time, we maintain strong connections through our support of [Martha Retreat Centre Society](#), who operate the Centre, and through Mark Nixon.

It so happened that this was the day before the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which provided us with the opportunity to honour those who are survivors of residential schools, and those who did not survive. We were blessed to be able to help share in a small way to educating ourselves, engaging in hard and essential conversations, and sharing our hopes for moving toward reconciliation.

OPPORTUNITY!

We would like to form a subcommittee of our Martha Justice Ministry Core Group in Western Canada.

Do you live in Lethbridge area?

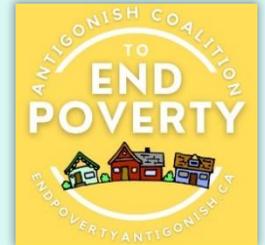
Are you interested in being part of our Martha Justice Ministry?

If you do, please contact Mark Nixon, who is our Western representative on our Core Group, at mark.nixon53@gmail.com



ANTIGONISH COALITION TO END THE POVERTY WORKSHOP

October 17th is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, and each year, the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty marks this occasion with a public event.



This year, the coalition organized a “Lunch & Learn” event at the Antigonish People’s Place library featuring Catherine Hart from Engage Nova Scotia. Catherine gave a presentation on “Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in Nova Scotia”. It was a great opportunity to share with participants how we think Nova Scotia and our community are doing in relation to our commitment to “leave no one behind”. Colleen Cameron moderated the workshop, and Wyanne

Sandler spoke about the importance of the work of the coalition, including the opening of a new community fridge and pantry at the Farmers’ Market. Darlene spoke about the Chew on This! campaign, calling for federal action to address food insecurity across Canada. The event was well attended and was a great opportunity to share lunch and learn together!

SEASON OF CREATION EVENT

On Sunday, October 2nd, we had our annual Season of Creation prayer celebration at the Bethany Resource Centre Gathering Room.

The Season of Creation is marked each year from September 1 to October 4 (the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi) as a time to celebrate, pray, and advocate for our common home.

This year’s gathering was particularly reflective, as we were still recovering from the damage of post-tropical storm Fiona. We shared our grief at the loss of beautiful trees and the hardship experienced by so many across the region following this storm. We also shared our gratitude for the Earth in all its diversity and for those protecting our planet, particularly Indigenous peoples.

It was good to take time in prayer, contemplation, and love for creation as we continue in our work for social and ecological justice.





BASIC INCOME ATLANTIC WEBINAR AND SUMMIT

On Wednesday, November 9, the Basic Income Now Atlantic Canada group held our Basic Income Atlantic Summit!



Our planning committee, which includes Sr. Marion Sheridan and Darlene O'Leary, worked hard for the past several months planning this virtual summit to bring together political representatives from all Atlantic provinces to discuss the basic income we want to see in place.

We held a webinar in September to share our proposed agenda for the summit with coalition members. Invitations were sent to elected and appointed officials at all levels of government, including Indigenous leaders.

The summit included video statements from Halifax Mayor Mike Savage, Minister and Central Nova MP Sean Fraser, as well as a video statement from Wayne McNaughton, a person with lived experience of poverty. We had a presentation by Mandy Kay-Raining Bird from Basic Income Nova Scotia on the coalition's vision for basic income. Former MP Wayne Easter spoke on the PEI demonstration project being explored as the first province-wide basic income program.

We then had a panel on jurisdictional challenges and opportunities moderated by Sheila Regehr (Basic Income Network Canada) that included Lennox Island First

Watch Summit recordings and videos [here!](#)



Nation Chief Darlene Bernard (PEI), Halifax City Councillor Wayne Mason, PEI MP Sean Casey, Leader of the NB Green Party David Coon, NL Minister John Abbott, PEI MLA Trish Altass, and Senator Kim Pate.

It was quite an interesting event, and it provided our group with helpful information to move forward in our efforts to see a basic income program in Atlantic Canada.

Poverty is a policy choice & we can choose differently

A regular payment, made to people who need it, and distributed with minimal bureaucracy. A BIG is an essential component of a just society but must not replace the social supports and services that currently exist, and which, in many cases, should be strengthened.

Myth 1:
People won't work.
Not true!
Finland pilot study → employment increased slightly (Allas et al., 2020)
Less oversight → more people find permanent work (Verlaet et al., 2020)

Because the benefit declines gradually with paid work, it incentivizes employment
↓
Research from the Mincome pilot showed employment changed little
Continue school | Provide care for family members
(Segal, Forget, & Banting, 2020)



COP27 / COP15

Two important international conferences are taking place this fall – one is the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP27), which took place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt (November 6-18) and the other is the UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP15) happening in Montreal (December 7-19). These conferences are meant to be opportunities for countries to show progress on their commitments to address the climate crisis and to protect our planet.

COP27



The final agreement from COP27 took steps forward, including the creation of a “loss and damage” fund to help poorer countries responding to the impacts of the climate crisis. However, the conference did not see a strengthening of ambition by countries to reduce emissions. Given the urgent need for significant reductions, the fear now is that the goal of keeping global temperature rise to no more than 1.5C might soon be out of reach.

For the Love of Creation/Kairos Canada sent a delegation of youth, Indigenous representatives, and global partners to COP27 to amplify the voices of those most impacted and to offer perspectives on the path forward.

To learn more about the delegates and their experiences at COP27, click [here](#)

For more on the outcomes of COP27 see the [Global Sisters Report articles](#)

COP15



Darlene is taking part in a delegation to COP15 in Montreal, bringing the hopes of the Marthas to this global call to protect all of creation:

- We will be calling for the federal government to recognize the connection between biodiversity loss and the climate crisis.
- We want urgent action to protect species and habitats, knowing that our wellbeing is deeply interconnected.

For more information, check Sisters of St. Martha Facebook page.

For information about COP15, go to the [UN Biodiversity website](#)

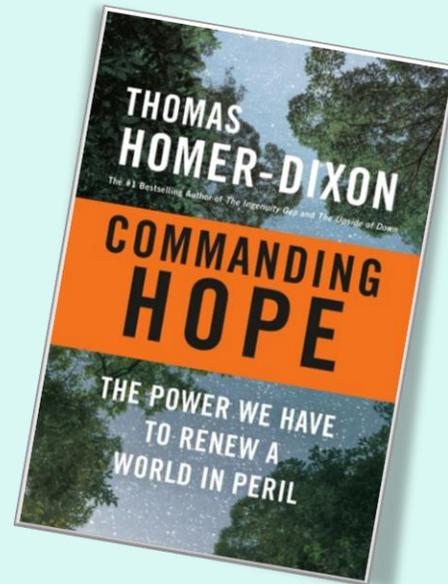
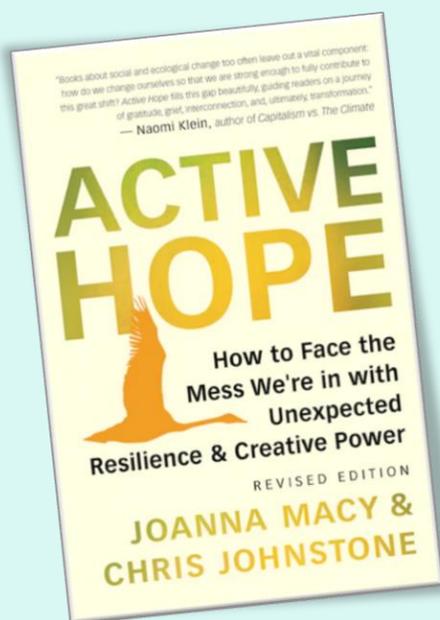


RECOMMENDED BOOKS

ACTIVE HOPE: HOW TO FACE THE MESS WE'RE IN WITH UNEXPECTED RESILIENCE AND CREATIVE POWER (REVISED EDITION).

Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone

Active Hope is a wonderfully pragmatic book that recognizes that the reality of what our planet is facing – namely the growing climate crisis and its many related impacts, like biodiversity loss and mass migration – are painful and often overwhelming. But, as the book outlines, we can reframe our view in a way that allows us to honour that pain and still be hopeful and ready to act, using a foundation of gratitude. Building on the “Spiral of the work that reconnects” the authors guide the reader through the process of active hope – leaving us feeling that we can fully face these challenges and remain hopeful and motivated to continue our efforts to care for creation.



COMMANDING HOPE: THE POWER WE HAVE TO RENEW A WORLD IN PERIL

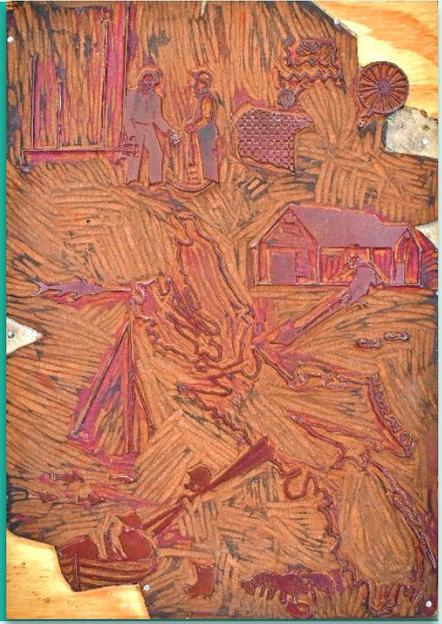
Thomas Homer-Dixon

Still on the theme of hope, a new book by Thomas Homer-Dixon similarly puts forward an argument that brings us to face the hard reality of multiple crises facing our world, but to do so with the worldview and tools offering “commanding hope.” He refers throughout the book to the example of a lone mother who took on global nuclear testing and created a movement to end it. Stephanie May, a housewife from Connecticut, had the power of commanding hope – which she passed on to her daughter, Green Party leader Elizabeth May. The book offers well researched observations for social change, along with personal stories that help illustrate the power we still have in the face of major challenges.

For the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Charity Federation, the archivists of the member congregations were invited to select items from their collections for an online exhibit “A History of the Sisters of Charity Federation Communities in Objects”. Sisters of St. Martha archivists also contributed to the project which can be seen [online](#). We liked the idea of telling a story through objects and decided to start a new column in which we showcase items from our archives and tell their stories! This first one was part of the Federation project.



These two linocut blocks were hand-carved by Sister Irene Doyle in 1940. They feature thematic representations of Nova Scotian production of the era: fishing, agriculture, handicrafts, mining, and industry. The blocks were used to print an array of material, including sharkskin drapery, posters, and notably the covers for the pamphlet - *The Antigonish Way* - an illustrated history, based on a series of radio broadcasts, of the Antigonish Movement and its guiding principles.



In the early 20th century, the Antigonish Diocese experienced the dramatic decline of its resource-based economy and extensive poverty. Diocesan clergy, Dr. Moses Coady and Father Jimmy Tompkins, advocated for adult education as a means of improving these social and economic concerns. This became

commonly known as the Antigonish Movement and took the form of study clubs that would identify a community’s unique strengths and weaknesses, and then formulate collaborative solutions, such as cooperatives and credit unions. In 1928, Saint Francis Xavier University established the **Extension Department**, led by Dr. Coady, to teach and implement the methods of the Movement in the wider community.

Marthas were tasked with heading the Women’s Division of the Department, dedicated to encouraging women’s involvement in the Antigonish Movement. Sr. Irene Doyle, a talented artist, oversaw the Handicrafts Section which promoted traditional crafts such as weaving, knitting and other textile work, woodworking, canning, leatherwork, pottery, and printmaking. Sisters also supplied book-keeping services, established lending libraries, arranged study clubs, classes, and

conferences, and aided in the production and distribution of Extension literature, such as the pamphlet, *The Antigonish Way*. It was one of many instructional publications offered to communities around the world that sought cooperative solutions to reduce poverty and strengthen local economies. Sister Irene Doyle’s block prints – a handicraft that illustrated Nova Scotian production and self-sufficiency, were perfectly suited for the cover.



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CSM MISSION

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