



GREETINGS TO YOU ALL FROM MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY

Greetings to you all!

The season of Lent is well underway, a time that offers opportunities for rich spiritual deepening and reflection. It can be a personal journey of faith reflection on Jesus' time in the wilderness and connecting our lives with Jesus' struggles. It can also be a season

that lends itself well to the work of social and ecological justice, solidarity with those

most marginalized, and support for the work of reconciliation with Indigenous communities. Jesus' journey, after all, was a journey of justice grounded in the love of God and all creation.

I hope that you find some inspiration in the work that we share in this issue of Standing4Justice and that it offers you a way of connecting more deeply in the journey of justice through the Lenten Season.

Peace and Blessings,

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





MJM LENTEN BOOK STUDY

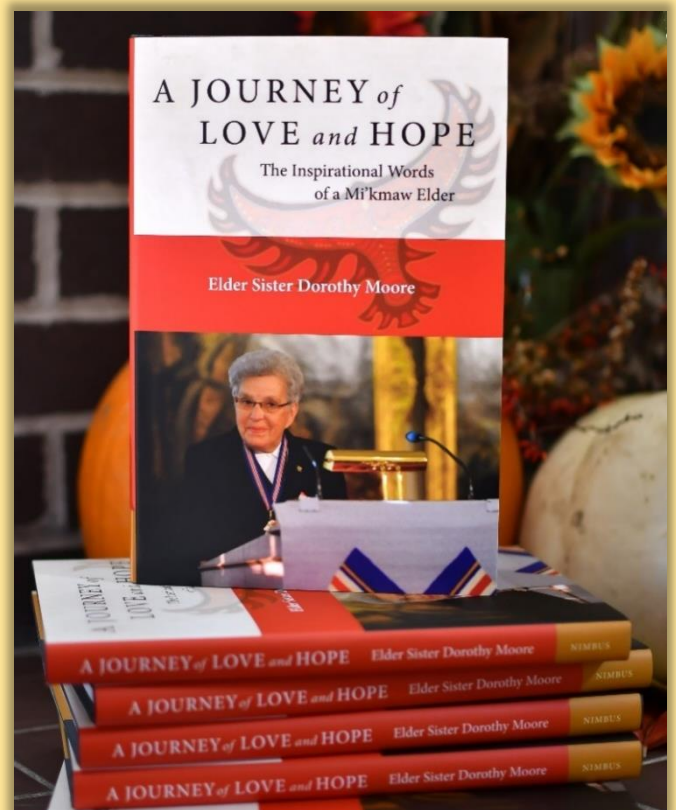
As part of our Lenten journey, Martha Justice Ministry held a Lenten book study throughout the month of March, facilitated by Sister Donna Brady and Darlene O’Leary. The study focussed on the new book by Elder Sister Dorothy Moore, *A Journey of Love and Hope: The Inspirational Words of a Mi’kmaw Elder*.

Sister Dorothy, a Mi’kmaw Elder and a Sister of St. Martha of Antigonish, has committed her life to Mi’kmaw education, preserving the Mi’kmaw language, and building bridges of respect between Indigenous and Settler cultures.

This book brings together the story of Sister Dorothy’s remarkable life and work, through the presentations she has given through the years on Mi’kmaw language and culture, education, spirituality, prayers, and experiences of racism.

With about 20 participants, our sessions began on March 5 with a viewing of a documentary about Sister Dorothy that shares personal stories of her journey as a Mi’kmaw leader and educator and a Sister of St. Martha. Family members, fellow educators, Mi’kmaw leaders, and Sisters of St. Martha shared their funny and touching stories and their deep admiration for Sister Dorothy in the film. It was a great way to enter into the study of her book, which continued through each Sunday in March.

We were grateful to have Sister Dorothy join us for part of our last session, and she graciously responded to the questions



and reflections shared by participants. We all ended our study feeling enriched by the experience of shared learning and opening of our hearts to Sister Dorothy’s story and work for reconciliation.

We encourage you to pick up a copy of Sister Dorothy’s book. Copies are available or can be ordered locally at the Curious Cat Tea & Books on Main Street in Antigonish.



UN COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

This February, Darlene O’Leary and Sister Marion Sheridan were able to participate in the Commission for Social Development (CSocD61) at the UN in New York.

The theme for CSocD61 was *“Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”*

Martha Justice Ministry and the Sisters of Charity Federation were among the 1000 international organizations and individuals to sign the NGO Committee [Civil Society Declaration](#), offering recommendations and calls to action on the theme.

It was wonderful to have this introduction to the Commission, starting with a Civil Society Orientation and Networking Session on February 5th. Darlene and Sr. Marion attended high-level panels, side events, and civil society briefings throughout the week. Also, on February 10th, they participated in the day-long [Civil Society Forum](#), which offered several interesting panel discussions on the theme and called for a new World Social Summit in 2025 to build on the progress of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and develop a renewed social contract with social protections to ensure no one is left behind. The importance of engagement with civil society on the theme was very clear, particularly relating to issues involving youth and persons with disabilities.



“It was my first opportunity to attend the Commission in person as the Marthas’ UN NGO Liaison with the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO. It was a wonderful experience of learning and connecting.”

~Darlene O’Leary



Sr. Jean Quinn during
NGO Civil Society Orientation



UN COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT *continued*

Sr. Marion and Darlene also had a chance to meet with Sisters of Charity Federation NGO Representative Jimmy Walters, and outgoing representative Sister Teresa Kotturan, along with many other civil society representatives.

They felt very blessed to stay with the CND Sisters, who were gracious and welcoming hosts. It was a very rich and full week at the Commission.



Sr. Teresa Kotturan and Darlene O'Leary



Sisters of Charity Federation NGO Representative Jimmy Walters with Darlene O'Leary



To learn more about Civil Society Forum [click here!](#)



COP15 TAKEAWAYS

In December, Darlene O’Leary had the great opportunity to participate in the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal.

This conference was a chance for states that have signed on to this UN Convention to come together, along with civil society organizations, to develop and commit to a plan to protect the biodiversity of this planet. As the outcome of the conference, over 180 countries agreed to what is being called the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), a plan that sets out commitments to protect land, water, and diverse species from now to 2030.

The protection of biodiversity is essential for the flourishing of all life, including humans, as we are all part of the sacred web of life. As the [World Wildlife Fund](#)



[Living Planet Report 2022](#) states, monitored wildlife populations around the world have declined an average of 69% since 1970. This decline ranges from plants to birds, reptiles, and mammals. Currently, one million plants and animals are threatened with extinction. So, the urgent need to halt damage and restore nature over the next decade means that countries had to commit to a strong framework for action.



Multifaith Coalition with the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Elisabeth Mrema

At COP15, while countries were negotiating this plan, civil society organizations were able to have a voice in a number of ways. Martha Justice Ministry was there as part of the Society of St. Coloumban Delegation that was a key organizer of the Multifaith Coalition at the event. The Coalition submitted a [recommendation document](#) ahead of the event that Martha Justice Ministry and other faith groups signed. The group had a

Read more here: <https://www.biodiversity.faith/policy>



COP15 TAKEAWAYS *continued*

Faith Pavilion at the event where they were able to gather for workshops, prayer, and conversation. They also met with the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Elisabeth Mrema, to discuss the importance of the role of faith communities in working to protect biodiversity and provide support and advocacy for governments to act.



Darlene with Laudato Si' Movement members. L to R: Agnes Richard (MLSM Canada), Darlene, Caroline Kiiru (LSM Kenya), and Anna Johnson (LSM US)

Darlene also participated in a **March for Human Rights and Biodiversity** with faith communities involved in COP15, including the Laudato Si' Movement, Centre Oblat, Development and Peace, and the Archdiocese of Montreal. It was a very cold day for the march, but hundreds of people came together in a spirit of care for creation.

Find more information and links to reporting and reflections on COP15 on [Darlene's blog](#).

Following on COP15, further actions will be taken by faith networks that MJM is part of, including **reaching out to Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault** to ensure Canada follows through on our COP15 commitments.

As well, Darlene will be sharing the important experiences and outcomes of COP15. She had an opportunity to present on COP15 with the Sisters at Parkland Antigonish in January and at a Religious Studies class at St. Francis Xavier University in March.



Although the conference is over, the work to protect biodiversity and implement the Global Biodiversity Framework will continue, and Martha Justice Ministry will be part of it locally, nationally, and globally.



JEM WEBINAR

On March 4th, Joint Ecological Ministry (JEM) hosted a webinar called “What Next? Religious Acting on Biodiversity and Climate Change”.



This webinar was a follow up from the engagement of religious congregations and faith communities in the November conference on climate change in Egypt (COP27) and the December conference on biological diversity in Montreal (COP15). It was moderated by Centre Oblate executive director, Joe Gunn, and included a prayerful reflection by Sister Joan Atkinson, CSJ, an introduction to the discussion by Sister Sue Wilson, CSJ, and presentations by two speakers: Tzephora Berman from the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative](#), and Louise Romain from [Stop Ecocide](#). The speakers shared about their initiatives and actions that participants can take to support them.

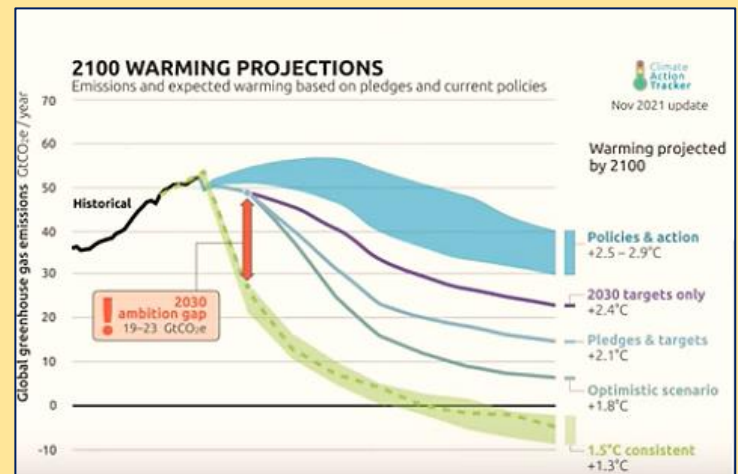


[Stop Ecocide](#) calls for a recognition in international law of the crime of ecocide, destroying ecosystems and species.

Both speakers shared on the support they have received from faith communities, including an endorsement of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty by Cardinal Czerny, head of the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development.



[The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative](#) calls for an end to fossil fuel production and a just transition to a green economy that will support workers and communities.



[CLICK HERE](#)
to see the recording of this webinar!



MARTHA NEW GROWERS UPDATE

Yet another season of Martha New Growers Program begins! On March 20th, Sisters of St. Martha re-signed last year's four New Growers: Meghan Johnny, David Matheson, Danielle Speck, and Clayton MacLeod to allow them to continue their growth as small-scale organic market gardeners.

Before the official signing, the four Growers, their mentor David Greenberg, Sr. Florence Kennedy and Darlene O'Leary took the time to look at the infrastructure (the barn and the greenhouse) and discussed possible improvements for this season as well as future needs to enhance the site and ensure the ongoing success of the program.

Martha New Growers Program, which this year celebrates its 10th anniversary, is intended to teach young people all the basic steps of organic gardening: crop planning, soil preparation, planting and maintaining crops, storage, and finally, marketing and selling – all through hands-on experience. Since 2013, seventeen young people participated in the program, gaining experience and confidence in running a small-scale farm business.



New Growers 2023 signing. L to R: Sr. Florence Kennedy, Darlene O'Leary, Sr. Joanne O'Regan, Meghan Johnny, David Matheson, Clayton MacLeod, and Danielle Speck. Seated: David Greenberg and Sr. Brendalee Boisvert.

[Click here](#)
to learn more
about Martha
New Growers
Program!



DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE SOLIDARITY VISITOR

Martha Justice Ministry co-hosted an event on March 21st to welcome this year's Development and Peace Solidarity Visitor to Antigonish.

Ramy Chan is the executive director of the Youth Resource Development Program in Cambodia, a D&P partner organization. She spoke to the group gathered about the work of her organization empowering youth, teaching critical thinking, and encouraging civic engagement. Atlantic region D&P animator, Adah Ogbe, introduced this year's Share Lent campaign, [Stand for the Land](#), which highlights the importance of protecting the land and land defenders.

Ramy and Adah were in Antigonish as part of their Atlantic-wide visits. They were grateful to the Marthas for hosting them at Parkland overnight, and the local D&P Diocesan Council is very appreciative of the congregation's support for this visit.



[Click here](#) to learn more about Ramy and other Solidarity Visitors!

NEW BLOG!

Learn more about Martha Justice Ministry projects in Darlene's new blog!

Darlene O'Leary, Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator, often works on collaborative campaigns with various like-minded organizations advocating for social and ecological justice issues. She represents the congregation at national or international conferences such as COP-15 and participates in public events related to social and ecological justice. In her role as SC Federation UN Liaison, she regularly attends UN meetings.



We invite anyone who is interested in staying informed and updated during events and campaigns that are important to the Congregation to read [this blog!](#) Darlene will keep you in the loop!