

# MARTHA ASSOCIATES *Sycamore* 2024

## *A Message from The Martha Associate Director*



Martha Associates at Chapter ~ April 2024.

How many times have you heard someone say: **“It has been such a busy year?”** I am betting you could not count the number of times; everyone always seems to be **SO** busy!!! And yet, I find myself in that exact spot, so please forgive the cliché and allow me to share some of this “busy” year with you!

1. Certainly an important event which occurred this year was the **Sisters’ 20th General Chapter**. Preparing for the Chapter is quite an involved process. The Sisters meet, plan, pray and discern where God is calling them long before the Chapter begins. At the time of Chapter, the Sisters gather together to discuss central aspects of their way of life, make decisions and elect a new Leadership. Five Associates were invited to attend the Chapter from April 15 – April 20, 2024: Kathy Gillis and Annella Wehlage (Lethbridge); Gary Rankin, (Trenton); Dale Romeo, (Sydney Mines); and myself, Julia Townsend (Sydney). The theme of the Chapter was:

**“Graced With Courage to Welcome and Help Shape the Emerging Future”**

**Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ**, facilitator for the Chapter, suggested that the Chapter is a kind of **“Mystery Story”**, a page turner...what will happen next? How do the Marthas continue to live in the fullness of their charism? What is the future? How do the Marthas live today for tomorrow? The ending of the

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## A Message from The Martha Associate Director



Sr. Theresa Parker with Julia Townsend. September 7th, 2024.

mystery is unknown, but for sure, it is immersed in the mystery of God. The Marthas move forward with their eyes open and their hearts full of hope for the emerging future.

It was an immense privilege for our Associates to be included in this sacred time of the Marthas' General Chapter. We, too, as Martha Associates are immersed in the mystery of God, praying, listening and sharing with each other our direction into the future. How do we continue forward as **Carriers of the Charism? As people of Gospel Hospitality?**

2. The **Martha Associates Retreats** are always a special (and busy!) event time for Associates. The planning of the Retreat starts within the heart of the **Martha Associate Committee** where ideas are born and shared! We discuss possible topics, themes or issues which will be of interest to Associates and assist Associates along the road of spiritual growth as **Charism Carriers**. The ideas then need to be followed up with a formal request to a speaker. Once secured, the work of booking, planning, gathering of information and materials, sending emails, making phone calls, and arranging ZOOM meetings begins.

This year we have been blessed to have **Sr. Theresa Parker CSM** as the speaker and facilitator for our retreats (September 2024). It was wonderful to spend time with Sr. Theresa before and during the retreats. It was also very special to spend time with so many of our Associates and Sisters during the Retreats. A summary of Sr. Theresa's reflections can be found later in this issue of the **SYCAMORE**.

3. I have been blessed to visit with most of our Associates over 2024, whether at a special gathering in your meeting places or at Retreat times. I am looking forward to my visit with our new Antigonish group in October, 2024. Thank you all for your warm hospitality during each and every visit!!

4. The year 2024 marks a change in the CSM Leadership team and signals a change of Martha Associate Liaison for us. Sr. Jovita MacPherson CSM is our new Martha Associate Liaison with the Leadership. I am delighted to welcome Sr. Jovita on behalf of our Associates and look forward to working with her!

5. I have several projects on the go which need completion, such as the revision of the **Martha Associate Handbook**. With the help of the Martha Associate Committee, I hope to have the revision finished in the new year, and ready to present to the Leadership for review and approval.

6. The year 2024 also marks a special year in my own married life. My Husband, Allan, and I, celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary with an amazing trip to London, England! It was a dream trip for me, not so much for Allan, but it is fair to say that we both enjoyed it very much! And while we did not get to meet the King, we did get to have tea at Kensington Palace!! A highlight for sure!!

Over the coming year, 2025, I hope to be able to bring some of the ideas presented at the Sisters' Chapter to our Associate groups, along with the new Direction Statement when it is fully completed.

I look forward to the upcoming year with renewed energy and excitement to see where the mystery of God will lead our Martha Associates!

*Thank you to all Sisters of St. Martha and to all Martha Associates for your love and support in my work as Martha Associate Director!*

God Bless,  
Julia Townsend  
October 9, 2024



Allan & Julia Townsend - London, England. May 2024.

## Six New Martha Associates Welcomed

# ~WELCOME~

As Director of Martha Associates, I am pleased to introduce our six newest Associates whom I received and welcomed on behalf of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha!

Our first new Associate, received on November 12, 2023, was **Patricia (Pat) Ryba**. Pat is an Associate in the Sydney / Glace Bay group. She was received in the presence of our Sydney / Glace Bay Associate Group, and in the presence of two Sisters of St. Martha, Sr. Josephine MacLellan CSM and Sr. Catherine MacFarlane CSM.

On January 23, 2024, three new Associates were received in the Sydney Mines (St. Clare) Martha Associate group.

In the presence of the group, as well as Sr. Franklyn Ferguson CSM, **Jean Brennick; Doreen Lewis and David Lewis** were received as Martha Associates.

On October 6, 2024, two new Associates were received in our Sydney / Glace Bay group. **Arlene and Gary Fancey** were received in the presence of fellow Associates.

A time of joy and hospitality followed each reception. Congratulations to our newest Martha Associates! Blessings on each one as they continue to live the charism of Gospel Hospitality!



New Associates David Lewis, Doreen Lewis and Jean Brennick, January 23, 2024.



New Martha Associates, Arlene and Gary Fancey, October 6, 2024.



Sr. Josephine MacLellan, Patricia Ryba & Sr. Catherine MacFarlane, Nov. 12, 2023.

**“At the UN, and in any advocacy or systemic change work, we don’t often see the fruit of our labor. It could take generations for the soil to become fertile enough for new life to form. However, we all play a role in the process in preparing a future that is not our own.”**

*Dr. Jimmy Walters, UN NGO Representative for the Sisters of Charity Federation*

# Martha Justice Ministry Coordinator and Marthas UN NGO Liason

June 2024

Dear Associates,  
It is so good to be able to share with you our justice work through Martha Justice Ministry and the Sisters of Charity Federation UN NGO! It has been another very full and enriching year! I'll share a few highlights of what we've been doing.

Our **Basic Income NOW Atlantic Canada** group was active this year with educational meetings, developing resources, and engaging with our communities to support a basic income guarantee (BIG, or guaranteed livable income, as it is also known). Our group includes basic income supporters from each of the Atlantic provinces and was initiated by the Marthas and the Tamarack Institute. This year, we worked on a "**municipal toolkit**" that provides resources for communities to approach municipalities and other officials and organizations to support basic income. We also participated in a national **BIG Forum** in Ottawa in May, where we led a workshop on the work of our coalition. We are now focussed on initiatives to support a PEI basic income program and to support legislation for a basic income national framework. For more information, and to sign our consensus statement, you can go to: <https://www.big-ns.org/atlantic-canada-basic-income-now>

As a member of the planning committee for **Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Atlantic**, I had the opportunity this April to meet with the Atlantic Episcopal Conference to discuss the importance of work for creation care in dioceses. This meeting followed a letter sent by the JPIC Atlantic group last year, requesting the meeting. It was a chance for us to share our deep concern for our common home, as the impacts of the climate emergency are becoming more deadly. We shared our hope that Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and his recent update, *Laudate Deum*, be part of education programs in Atlantic dioceses. And we highlighted some of the work and campaigns that we are actively engaged in connected with climate and ecological justice, social justice, and reconciliation. We were happy to have a chance to share these concerns and priorities with the Atlantic bishops, and we hope there will be continued discussion and engagement on these issues across our dioceses.

The **New Growers Program** has been running for 10 years, and this year we saw the need for a bit of a transition, as some of the land needs to rest and we look at what's next for the program. We are so lucky to now have David Matheson, a program participant, as our Onsite Manager for the program. This allows our program mentor, David Greenberg, to work with David M on a new farming method they are testing.



Darlene O'Leary  
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry  
Marthas' NGO Liason

In the meantime, David M and Meghan Johnny are continuing to farm as New Growers, contributing to the Lochaber Growers community food boxes. They are also offering gardening workshops throughout the season (the first Saturdays of June, July, August, and October). These workshops walk through some of their gardening techniques and tips at various stages of growing. It's exciting to see this new direction for the program, as we explore new ways to support young farmers, connect with the earth, and support local food security.

I continue to be very grateful for my role as the **UN NGO Liaison** for the Marthas. This year, I've participated in regular meetings with Liaisons from the Sisters of Charity Federation members in the US and Canada. We have shared the initiatives and activities taking place at the UN through the Federation Representative, Jimmy Walters and his wonderful and informative newsletters. Some of the important issues being shared include actions in support of those impacted by the war in Gaza and the violence in Haiti, initiatives on homelessness, and highlights from events and commissions that have taken place this year at the UN Headquarters in New York.

I had hoped to attend in person the **Commission for Social Development** at the UN in February, along with our Martha Justice Ministry Core Group member, Joanne Tompkins. However, we were caught in the snowstorm that left us unable to travel. We did join virtually, as much as possible, and were happy to take part in the **Civil Society Forum**, a day-long event focussed on the theme of social justice and poverty eradication. We were reminded at this event of the importance of the voice of civil society in these discussions with state representatives in pushing for a justice response to challenges facing our world. We were reminded, too, of the urgency to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030's call to "leave no one behind." As we move quickly to 2030, we know Canada and the rest of the world are not on track to meet these goals. So, the importance of our shared voice and engaged global citizenship is all the more urgent.

There were many more wonderful activities and community engagements this year that I've shared in

our Standing4Justice section of the Marthas' **Our Lives as Mission** newsletter.

While the work of social and ecological justice, peace, and reconciliation is challenging, it is a true gift to be part of this work with wonderful, committed people of faith. The Marthas and the wonderful people we work with are showing the world what it means to live out Gospel Hospitality through the work of justice. It is a gift to be part of this journey.

You are most welcome to drop by or give me a call if you'd like to hear more!

As always, your prayers and support are deeply appreciated!

Peace and blessings,  
Darlene O'Leary  
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry

**Marthas NGO Liaison**

## Celebrating 90 Years of Life

### Sr. Catherine MacFarlane CSM

The Sydney /Glace Bay Martha Associates surprised Sr. Catherine MacFarlane CSM on the occasion of her 90th Birthday (January 22, 2024)! Thank you, Sr. Catherine, for blessing us with your presence, your wisdom and your humor! God Bless!!

◀ Sr. Catherine MacFarlane CSM



Michelle, Mike and Sr. Catherine, Jan 14, 2024



Sydney and Glace Bay associates with Sr. Catherine, January 14, 2024



The **ARCAN (Atlantic Religious Congregations and Associates)** Steering Committee is thriving as a wonderful source of information and networking! We continue to meet twice a year via ZOOM. I am currently also serving a three-year term on the ARCAN Executive committee, along with Anne Bown, a Mercy Associate from St. John's Nfld and Dianne MacAskill, CND Associate and Coordinator from Sydney, NS.

Since our last **SYCAMORE 2023**, the ARCAN Steering Committee has met twice. First, in **October 20-21, 2023**. Our special guest speaker was **Darlene O'Leary, Coordinator of Martha Justice Ministry for the Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish, NS**. Darlene gave us an excellent presentation on : **"A Basic Livable Income and other (Local – Global) Social Issues in Support of the UN Sustainable Goals"** We are pleased to be able to offer an educational / spiritual session to all ARCAN members on the Saturday morning of the weekend when ARCAN meets. It provides a means for us to learn about each other, and about issues that we face in our ever-changing world.

Our next Steering Committee meeting was held **April 12 – 13, 2024**. During this meeting, it was suggested that we might try to invite some Associates who are not on the Steering Committee to participate on the ARCAN newsletter committee. So far, we have not been successful, but we are leaving the door open to the possibility of expanding beyond the Steering Committee to the general ARCAN membership for assistance with

such projects as the newsletter. Please let me know if you are interested! We have so many gifts to share among us all!!

Our special guest speaker on Saturday morning, April 13, 2024, was **Sr. Elizabeth Davis RSM**. As always, Sr. Elizabeth was wonderful! **She spoke about her experience as a voting Delegate at the Synod in Rome, in October 2023**. She will be returning to Rome once again this Fall, 2024. We will all be eager to hear of her travels and experiences upon return!!

It was also lovely that **Kathy Gillis and Annella Wehlage**, Martha Associates and coordinators from Lethbridge, Alta, were in Nova Scotia to attend the Sisters of St. Martha Chapter in April, and so, they were able to attend the Saturday morning session on ZOOM with me, right at my own kitchen table!! It was very special!!

The other project put forward by ARCAN was to plan an additional educational / spiritual session to help get us through the long Winter months! Our first offering was held **Saturday, February 24, 2024**, from 12:30 to 2:30 AST. Our guest was **Gary Fancey**, a journeyer with the Martha Associates, and an experienced Spiritual Director in the Ignatian tradition. Gary spoke to us about Spiritual Direction in a general way. It was an enlightening presentation. We were very happy to have 26 attendees for this first attempt at something new!! Future additional sessions are in the planning stages.

Further information on ARCAN can be found in the ARCAN newsletter, posted to the Associate page of the Martha web site: [www.themarthas.com](http://www.themarthas.com)

God Bless,

Julia Townsend

In June 2023, Debbie Castle and I were honored to be engaged by the Sisters of St. Martha as facilitators for the new Charism Ministry. This position arose from a recommendation by the Charism Study Group, which ran from January 2021 to November 2022. The group suggested hiring someone, or a team, to help the Congregation in "setting their Charism free" and to envision a future form of Gospel hospitality. Our task was to advance the reflections of the study group for further discernment by the congregation.

Our first assignment involved examining the reflections submitted by the Charism Study Group participants. We identified key points and recurring themes, generating ideas from them, akin to gathering seeds.

**We collected seven key "seeds":**

1. **Crafting language for wider use**
2. **Collaboration-Living for we and transforming the self**
3. **Making Charism more visible**
4. **Creating welcoming spaces**
5. **Creating a world reset**
6. **Responding to the cry of the times**
7. **Utilizing social media**

For each seed, we proposed three ideas. Collaboration and building upon the Marthas' existing initiatives was a significant focus in generating these ideas.

In October, we presented our work to the Council, and in January, we delivered a revised version of these reflections and ideas to the Congregation at the Martha Gathering. The Sisters appreciated the simplicity, clarity, and creativity of the possibilities derived from the study group's work.

At the Martha Gathering, Debbie encouraged the Sisters to see our presentation as a buffet of ideas—some would be instantly appealing, others might not be, allowing them to pick, choose, combine, and experiment.



Marielle Assad

I was apprehensive that our presentation might be overwhelming. However, the reaction was profoundly moving; **many Sisters expressed their excitement for what can be done to keep the Charism alive and their hope in the future.**

As the Charism Ministry continues to take shape, our hope is to engage with and work alongside Martha Associates to implement some of our ideas. This summer, we are excited to launch two of our projects: Pieces of Bethany and Charism Conversations. Information to follow soon!

Alongside my work with the Charism Ministry, I also oversee the Bethany Hermitages. **It has been a privilege to work alongside this special group of women in this important time in their history.**

For further information or to get in touch, please email: [charism@themarthas.com](mailto:charism@themarthas.com).

**"Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. Yet, we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what (God) desired when (God) created it and correspond with (God's) plan for peace, beauty and fullness"**

*(Pope Francis, Laudato Si', Pg. 36)*

**"I place trust in God, my creator, in all things; I love God with all my heart"**

*- Pope Francis*

## Pieces Of Bethany: An Invitation To Share

As we approach the 125th anniversary of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha, we have a unique opportunity to celebrate and reflect upon the rich history and enduring impact of the Congregation.

The Sisters of St. Martha have been a cornerstone of the Antigonish community, contributing tirelessly to St. Francis Xavier University, founding St. Martha's Hospital, and championing affordable housing, education, justice, and social work. **In 2019, the deconstruction of the Bethany Motherhouse dispersed various objects throughout our community and beyond, each carrying its own unique story.**

These objects, now housed in new locations, have taken on new values, meanings, and significance. To commemorate this milestone anniversary, we are initiating the **"Pieces of Bethany"** project, an exhibit that will bring these stories together and celebrate the enduring impact of the Bethany Motherhouse.

Our goal is to gather these stories and photographs for an exhibit celebrating the Congregation's 125th anniversary in 2025. We aim to collect narratives and images of 125 objects from Bethany, capturing the essence of the Sisters of St. Martha through the eyes of the people whose lives they touched. We invite you to share the story of any object you obtained from the deconstruction of the Bethany Motherhouse. Whether it's a piece of furniture, a



◀ Suncatcher made with stained glass from Bethany Chapel. The teardrop motif is based on Revelation 21:4

small keepsake, a photograph, or a piece of stained glass each item holds a piece of our shared history. We are interested in learning where these objects ended up, why they were cherished, and what purpose they serve today. Your story will become an integral part of our exhibit, either through the display of the objects themselves or through photographs and accompanying narratives.

**If you have an object from Bethany and a story to share, we would be honored to include it in our "Pieces of Bethany" project. Your contribution will help preserve and celebrate the gift of presence of the Sisters of St. Martha, showcasing the profound impact they have had on our community.**

If you have any questions or need further information, feel free to reach out to **Marielle Assad**, a staff member working in Charism Ministry with the Sisters of St. Martha and a member of the 125th Anniversary committee. She can be reached at **(902) 968-1496** or **charism@themarthas.com**.

Thank you for being a part of this important project. Together, we can weave a tapestry of stories that celebrates our shared heritage and the enduring spirit of the Sisters of St. Martha.

**"Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment."**

*(Pope Francis, Laudato Si', Pg 97)*

## Mass For Shut Ins



Mass For Shut Ins. April 6, 2024.

On April 6, 2024, Sr. Franklyn Ferguson and Sr. Josephine Maclellan joined the Martha Associates on Mass for Shut Ins. This has become a regular event in the East for Sisters and Associates. We feel blessed to participate in this beautiful Ministry!

The home for Mass for Shut Ins is currently St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church in Sydney, NS. The presider for this Mass was Fr. Bill Burke, Pastor at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys. Our Music was led by Mike Finigan (Sydney / Glace Bay Associates); Lectors were Gary Rankin (Trenton Associates) and Sr. Josephine Maclellan CSM.

This year, a time of Hospitality was shared by everyone present following the Mass with muffins, tea, coffee and warm conversation!

Thank you to the CTV Crew and all the volunteers who bring Mass for Shut Ins to so many in our community and across our country and beyond!! Special thanks to our own Anne and Terry Campbell who have been volunteers for many years! Such a wonderful way to share Gospel Hospitality!!!

**"A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion, and concern for our fellow human beings."**

*(Pope Francis, Laudato Si', Pg. 62)*

## Martha Associate Retreats

SEPTEMBER 7, 2024, ANTIGONISH, NS  
SEPTEMBER 13 – 15, 2024, LETHBRIDGE, ALTA

**THEME: “Rooted in the Living God, We Live Our Lives as Mission”**

Our annual September retreat was a great way to begin our Martha Associate Year! Our speaker and retreat Director was **Sr. Theresa Parker CSM**. Sr. Theresa lead us prayerfully and gently into reflection and discussion.

Sr. Theresa presented the theme in two separate talks: **“Rooted in the Living God”** and **“We Live Our Lives as Mission”**.

In talk #1, Sr. Theresa spoke about the many ways that God gets our attention. One example was how God used the burning bush to get the attention of Moses in the Old Testament. She highlighted that in life, there are many “burning bushes” where we can experience the Living God. **God loves us, God initiates, God calls, and God gets our attention!** Sr. Theresa invited us to reflect upon our roots, our story of faith and how it came to be “rooted” in us from our earliest experiences with our families and communities. **What or who influenced us along the way of our faith development?**

In talk #2, Sr. Theresa spoke about mission and how we choose to live our lives. **As Christians, we are baptized or “plunged” into our mission through the call of our baptism.** In the mystery of the Sacrament of Baptism, we share in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We are called to “go forth” and share the message of Jesus in the way we live our lives. At the time of our baptism, we are anointed to be Priest, Prophet and King / Queen.

Our commitment to our roles as **priestly people happens in our everyday lives.** Jesus, in his public life, drew others through table fellowship, through invitation of “Come follow me”, through miracles, parables and through His relationship with God. He taught His followers to be unafraid, to risk, to go forward: **“I will be with you”**. Sr. challenged us: **How do we do this today?**



Sr. Theresa Parker. September 7, 2024.

**What is our role as prophets?** We reflect on the prophets of the Old Testament. They were not “Fortune tellers”, but they reflected the truth in their times as a way to offer hope. **What do we see that calls us to witness, to speak the truth? To offer hope? To share concern, or love?**

**And as a King / Queen,** we are called to lead others through word and deed. Today we call it a challenge to “Walk the Talk”. **How can we help to build the kingdom of God here on earth?**

At the end of our day, Sr. Theresa invited all Associates and Sisters present at the retreats to come forward and to wash our hands in a small bowl of water that she had resting on her prayer table. This simple ritual provided us with a way to recall our Baptism and to give thanks for the many ways God has graced us in our lives.

**Thank you, Sr. Theresa Parker, for sharing your gifts of wisdom and faith with all of us!!**

## Rooted in the Living God, We Live Our Lives as Mission



Boyd and Sharon Dunn. September 14, 2024.



Barry MacKenzie. September 7, 2024.



Western Retreat ~ September 13, 2024.



Eastern Retreat ~ September 7, 2024.

# Experiencing the CSM Chapter, April 2024

## Associates - Charism Partners

### Together Experiencing and Celebrating Our Interconnectedness

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

This was my first trip to Nova Scotia. What a beautiful part of our amazing country! Julia and Allan Townsend treated us like royalty as they chauffeured us on a rainy, site-seeing adventure, fed us abundantly and introduced us to family and friends. We were blessed to also attend the Sydney Associates faith gathering, meeting fellow Associates I had only seen on Zoom or saw as names on a list in an email. The reception by all was warmly felt and now the miles apart, somehow feel less. **A special thank you, to you, our new Cape Breton friends. You made our 3-day stay in Sydney spirited, faith-filled, fun and very special.**



Kathy and Annella with a special tree from the Lethbridge Associates, April 2024

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

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

Before I speak more directly to the Chapter experience itself, I want to share how meaningful and powerful it was for me to be reunited with the Sisters. Being present, especially during the first mass, brought me to tears. Singing, praying and celebrating Eucharist together offered me the privilege to be back within a familiar community whom I have so dearly missed. Going to Bethany gave me an opportunity to visit with Sisters who I had worked with at St. Michael's Hospital in Lethbridge; to chat with Sisters who had attended St. Martha's Parish; and to reunite with Sisters who had been anchors for our Lethbridge Martha Associates, both at St. Monica's Convent and the Martha Retreat Centre. I also prayed and share memories at the graveside of Sister Delores Sogz. She was the Martha who invited me to join the Associates 27 years ago. May she rest in peace.

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

The community of Antigonish easily communicated its experience with the Martha's gospel hospitality. When I walked the grounds and trails of Bethany I could feel the spirit of the Marthas who had walked, prayed and



Annella, Julia and Kathy, Chapter, 2024

meditated, opening their hearts and lives to Jesus. The community members I met, on those walks, shared their gratitude for being given an open invitation to enjoy the Centennial Garden, the labyrinth, and trails on the vast grounds of Bethany. When browsing and purchasing souvenirs in the shops uptown, shopkeepers readily shared how they knew the Sisters and expressed their gratitude for the generosity and support they have received. I am sure the smile on my face was wide as I listened to, and heard, the community speak of their respect and love for the Sisters. It was a strong reminder of how my community, Lethbridge, was also cared for, shaped and supported by the Sisters for 90 years.

As I mentioned earlier, there were five Associates invited to attend five days of Chapter. This opportunity provided us with dedicated time to get to know each other; to share experiences from our respective Associate groups; to explore the deeper meaning of being a Martha Associate; and to share abundant laughter. The conversations motivated me to remember to create and hold space for others; to continue building relationships and friendships; and to be bold and radical while believing and trusting in the Holy Spirit. Those days offered time to explore and witness what it means to be a committed and engaged Martha Associate. Those encounters inspired my desire and passion to continue to forge forward with fellow Associates as we aspire to be **"graced with courage to welcome and shape the emerging future"**.

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

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

### The topics ranged from:

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

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

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

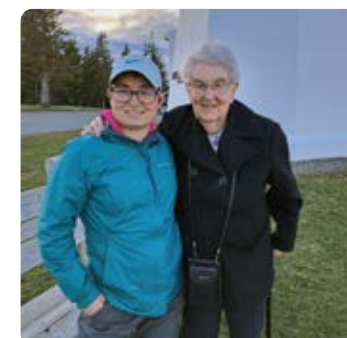
With much peace, love and gratitude,  
Kathy Gillis,  
Martha Associate, Lethbridge, AB



Associate gang April 2024

WISDOM

COURAGE



CSM LEADERSHIP FOR 2024 – 2029

Sr. Josephine Maclellan, Councilor; Sr. Claudette Gallant, Councilor; Sr. BrendaLee Boisvert, Congregation Leader; Sr. Donna Brady, Assistant Congregation Leader; Sr. Jovita MacPherson, Councilor

Martha Associates congratulate the new CSM Leadership. Blessings on you as you work into the emerging future.

Graced with courage to welcome and help shape the emerging future

Graced with courage to welcome and help shape the emerging future

PIONEERING SPIRIT

UNDAUNTED HOPE



## Building new Friendships with Past Friends of the Sisters of St. Martha

Amazing opportunities can come when one least expects it, and on All Souls Day 2023, I was given such an opportunity. After we (Lethbridge Associates) completed our prayers and closed our graveside visitation with the **Sisters of St. Martha**, we were drawn to visit the resting place of the **Sisters of the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJs)**. The Marthas and the FCJs are buried in very close proximity to each other.

The Sisters of St. Martha and the Sisters of the Faithful Companions of Jesus served in various ministries in Lethbridge between the years of 1930 (when the first Martha arrived) until 2002. The FCJs were missioned in Lethbridge from 1890 until 2002. It is my understanding that several of the Martha and FCJ Sisters taught together in the Holy Spirit School Division. Several of our Associates knew Sisters from the FCJ congregation, and as we gathered, stories were shared. It was a very special way to be in communion, that sacred morning, with all the Sisters who are buried at St. Patrick's Cemetery.

After leaving the cemetery, the Spirit nudged me to explore these relationships further. Although, there are no longer any Sisters of the Faithful Companions of Jesus living in Lethbridge they do have a retreat centre in Calgary. I wonder, how many Sisters are there? Do they have Associates in Lethbridge? Does the congregation need any support with caring for the Sisters tombstones? These questions, and more, kept coming into my mind. I knew, all I needed to do was make a phone call which is exactly what I did.

The result of one phone call quickly became a very wonderful blessing. **Within a week, Sister Mary Kelly and Sister Paula Mullen came from Calgary down to Lethbridge.** Annella Wehlage, her nephew Warren, and myself met the Sisters at the Martha Retreat Centre where they planned to stay for a few days. We went to the cemetery together. It was such a privilege to witness Sisters Mary and Paula remembering and sharing stories about their fellow Sisters. They were so grateful for my phone call. I had no idea how one phone call could make such a difference for them and for me. Upon concluding our visit at the cemetery we returned to the Martha Retreat Centre for tea.

On our return, Father Tim Boyle, who also knows the Sisters, and Diana Sim, executive director of the Centre were waiting for us. Sister Paula shared stories about her time living and teaching in Lethbridge (1971-1978). She remembered many of the Sisters of St. Martha and shared stories of working with Sister Dorothy Moore.

Sister Paula was happy when I quickly shared a copy of Sister Dorothy's book with her. Which she read that very weekend while staying at the Centre.

For many years both of these Sisters lived outside Canada and recently returned to Calgary. Sister Mary served in Romania working in a nursing school which she described as a 'great experience'. She was also missioned in Ireland where she taught English to new arrivals to that country. Sister Paula served in Argentina where she worked to protect women and children from the threat of human trafficking. Sister Paula is currently engaged with the Indigenous community leaders, from southern Alberta, addressing human trafficking concerns. Both Sisters are expecting to remain in Calgary and are very grateful to be "home". I cannot tell you how quickly we felt like old friends under new circumstances. It was such a wonderful encounter which ended with promises to stay connected.

I am hopeful that in the near future we will be inviting Sister Paula and Sister Mary to come back to Lethbridge to share their missionary stories with all the Associates. I am so grateful that I listened to the nudge from the Spirit and made that phone call. God continues to work in mysterious ways.

Respectfully written by Kathy Gillis

March 10, 2024



Visit with FCJ's - November 11th, 2023

## Deacon David Lewis Reflects On Being A Martha Associate

My name is Deacon David Lewis from Holy Family Parish in Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia. I have been ordained as a permanent Deacon for almost 5 years. Growing up in a family of 14 children, we had to make many sacrifices for the sake and love of others. Despite the challenges of raising a large family, my parents were very community oriented and active in our faith when I was growing up. Each year at Christmas, my father would take several of the children to the Orphanage, bringing baked goods and gifts for the orphans. The Sister at the Orphanage would often say to my father: **"You don't really need to come here; it looks like you have an Orphanage of your own."** Making the sacrifice of bringing goods to the orphaned children was my parents' way of living Gospel Hospitality. This was a way of life that was passed down to me and my siblings.

Throughout my adult life, I have given much service to my community, family, Church and the needy. I say "needy" instead of "poor", because the poor sometimes get confused with those who are less wealthy, but the needy takes in everyone.

In my Ministry, I am involved with the Church community as well as the community at large. My ministries include:

- **Helping feed those in the community who need meals**
- **Visiting the lonely**
- **Being present to those who are marginalized**
- **Offering spiritual guidance for those who are seeking God**

Over the last two years I have journeyed with a group of Associates of the Sisters of St. Martha. Martha Associates carry the Martha Charism of Gospel Hospitality to their workplaces and within their families and communities. After much discernment, I have also become an Associate of the Sisters of St. Martha. Through this experience with the Associates and the Sisters, I have strengthened my call and response to live with Gospel Hospitality!

Through my experience of being the first Deacon to become a Martha Associate, I have learned three important things:

1. **Gospel Hospitality fosters selflessness! It is focused on others and requires sacrifice. Gospel Hospitality is a tool that God uses to root out self-centeredness in us.**
2. **Gospel Hospitality provides a place of refuge. Our world is very broken, and increasingly so. We create open places shaped for us by the scriptures, safe places in an unsafe wilderness.**
3. **Gospel Hospitality deepens fellowship. It creates time separate from the rush of daily life to come together for a couple of hours, talking and sharing – to know and be known!**

One of the best gifts we can give to others is the gift of ourselves; being present to those who are calling out to us from the wilderness in many ways. We must look and see those who are searching for help, some are obvious, and others are more difficult to recognize. Reach out and support others who are seeking to deepen their relationship with God, with others, with the Universe....all in right relationship!

**Deacon David Lewis**



Deacon David Lewis, Sydney Mines Associate.

**Martha Associates**

**Martha Place, Parkland, Antigonish**

At our Chapter, five years ago, discussion brought us to recall that there was an Associate Community which had its origin at our former motherhouse, Bethany. As time passed aging, illness and various circumstances saw this wonderful community change until it was no longer. The question came up: **“Are we ready to form a new Associate Community now that we were well settled in our new home?”** After much thought, I took a small sticky note and wrote: **“I am ready”**. Then the world took various odd turns and delays caused us to take a recess; Covid and its multiple restrictions was a main player. We are here now, started and going well!

In October, 2023, a group of men and women came to Martha Place for a **“Come and See”** evening. Julia Townsend, Sister Brendalee Boisvert, and myself enjoyed meeting everyone and participating in the evening. We invited all, who after personal discernment, would like to come to the next gathering. We chose Sunday evening as it seemed the most convenient time for everyone. We welcomed Sister Stella Chafe who, in her past, had shared in Associate Gatherings in western Canada. Sr. Stella was delighted to join the Martha Community with our journeyers. We were three of the Martha Community: **Sister Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader who will be present as often as can, Sister Stella and myself, Sr. Sandra Cooke.**

In November, we continued our discussion and input on “becoming and being an Associate Journeyer”. Sister Brendalee provided input and we entertained questions and discussion. **Sister Loretta Gillis also joined our community. Now we were four of the Martha Community.**

In December we moved into the history, liturgical and theological meaning of Advent. The personal sharing brought many interesting memories. We found that most of us, through our young home lives and later in our present family lives celebrate very similar Advents preparing for Christmas!

In January, **Sister Dorothy Moore** was our special guest. We viewed the documentary: **Sister Dorothy Moore, A Life of Courage, Determination and Love.** The documentary spans Sister Dorothy’s life from her home life through life in a Residential School, becoming a Sister of St. Martha and through her many endeavors in working to preserve her language. The documentary was received with gratitude. Sister Dorothy then spoke freely about her life and education growing up as a Mi’kmaq person in her native Memento (Membertou). It was a special evening for all present.



**Julie Dzaich and Sr. Sandra Cooke, September 2023**

February brought us to Lent and we continued to learn, share and move toward Easter. In March we had a presentation on the History of the Congregation. As April approached Sister Brendalee shared about our upcoming Chapter of the Sisters of St. Martha. This was very interesting as the preparation for the Chapter was already very evident in our lives.

We had planned to have Darlene O’Leary, Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry earlier in the year, but along came Covid, whom we had thought disappeared but returned! We enjoyed another very informative evening, with questions and discussion.

We closed our year with a Year-End-Review.

Despite the very positive review, **our lives were touched with sorrow and sadness with the untimely death of Sister Stella Chafe.** Sister Stella was a very faithful companion on the journey. She enjoyed coming, sharing and meeting folks she knew and getting to know new journeyers. Sister became ill, went to the hospital, where after several days, she became seriously ill. Several of the sisters visited her on those last days. She embraced her death with love, support and care. Sister Brendalee, our Congregation Leader, and some sister companions walked with her as she entered more deeply into the welcoming love of our God. She will be greatly missed, not only by her family, Sister companions, but also by our Martha Associate journeyers. Sister Stella, a woman of undaunted hope, deep faith and gifted with the grace of being a woman who was a true star for Gospel Hospitality, your memory will be a blessing for us.

Although the summer is moving along all too fast, we will begin anew when summer fades and a new season is welcomed.

Sister Sandra Cooke,  
Coordinator

It was a different year for some of us with the Martha Associates this past season. Having to postpone a few meetings and some of us having to miss even more. But, that’s the way it goes some years.

We kicked off with the retreat in September with plenty of Martha Associates from Sydney to Trenton, which was wonderful. Always it is a good weekend and a nice trip to Antigonish for those of us who can make it.

Then we found ourselves up to our eyeballs with OTHER STUFF in October and decided to postpone our meeting until November 12.

Sunday, November 12, 2023 was our first meeting (aside from the September retreat) for the 2023/24 season, and we had a great turn-out, with several new faces among us, with the reception of **a new Associate (Pat Ryba)** and with a guest speaker.

**Winnie Odo from Development and Peace** gave a talk on the work that D&P does in the community and in the world. Winnie gave a great talk and tugged at a few heartstrings and tear-ducts, and opened our eyes to the injustice that wealthy and powerful companies - many from Canada—perpetrate on the poor in foreign countries, in particular Honduras, usurping land, poisoning water, destroying protected parkland and farming land while building mines. Arresting and jailing and killing people who speak out against the owners. Development and Peace chapters collect signatures and petitions to be sent to our government and abroad, and collect donations to help restore damages left by these companies. It was hard to not feel outraged while listening to the stories Winnie related.

Next, we received Patricia Ryba into the Martha Associates officially, after Pat had been journeying with us for some time. At least a year; things get fuzzy looking back through the Covid times.

Then we met for our Christmas meeting / Dinner on Sunday, December 10 at Bethel. Sr. Catherine and Sr. Josie led the meeting for a good part offering a reflection for small group discussion and then as a whole group.

We met again on January 15 and Julia led us in a meditation and reflection, and then we celebrated **Sr. Catherine MacFarlane’s goth birthday.**



**Sydney /Glace Bay Group. June, 2024**

**Just before our February meeting we had a 170 cm (5 ½ foot) snowfall that put the municipality in a state of emergency and pretty much everything was closed for a week, and so were we.**

Our next gathering was March 10, 2024. Julia showed a video selection from a favorite series: “The Chosen”. The clip recreated the story of the raising of Jairus’s daughter and the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. The stories were powerful and filled with the love and mercy of Jesus. The group spent some time sharing about how and what touched them from the video.

The April gathering was held on the 14th. The group welcomed a special guest, **Shirley Boutilier, Solid Waste Reduction Manager for the CBRM.** This Lady was also familiar with the work of the Sisters of St. Martha, and knew about the award the Sisters received for the manner in which they managed the deconstruction of their Motherhouse, with only a small percentage of waste going to the landfill. Shirley was delighted to speak with our group. Who would believe that a talk on waste reduction would be so interesting? However, it was!!! Shirley is an amazing source of information and education on managing waste, and recycling. **Her passion for helping the earth stimulated our enthusiasm to do better!!**

Unfortunately, our May gathering had to be canceled due to scheduling issues.

We all met again in June. Great turn out. It was a happy and sad occasion, as we all came together to eat, but then we had to say goodbye to our two Marthas, **Sr. Josie and Sr. Catherine, who are leaving to take up residence in Antigonish.**

Such is life. You get to know and love people and then they move on and you’re stuck with a pocketful of great memories and an aching in the heart. We will miss Josie and Catherine a lot. And their reflections. But they gave us one more before they left and got us all thinking.

And we had our potluck... quite a meal it was. And we said goodbye until September.

Mike Finigan



**Sr. Dorothy Moore & Mike Finigan  
September, 2023**

Hello from all of us Lethbridge Associates! How quickly the time passes, and here we are again at the end of another year's faith journey. As always, each of our gatherings this past year presented us with opportunities to learn, reflect, pray and consider the ways we are being challenged to live out and share "Gospel Hospitality" in the unique way each of us is called to do so.



Lethbridge Associates and Sisters, September 2023

Our Martha year began with a beautiful retreat on a sunny September weekend. Julia Townsend introduced the retreat, led by **Sister Brendalee Boisvert, themed on the Gospel of Mark, (Mk 14:3-9) entitled Faithful to the Journey: Walking Together in Communion; Pouring Out Our Lives.** Our weekend together set the tone for the months to come, as each one of our gatherings recalled and reflected a facet of our retreat. We are deeply grateful to Sister Brendalee for her many hours of prayerful preparation, and for making the trip to Lethbridge to lead us in retreat. She shared with us her wisdom, inspiration and hope, and anointed each of us with precious oil; a reminder of God's extravagant love for us, as well as a challenge to pour out our own lives for others. As always, we were delighted to spend time with both Sister Brendalee and Julia, and we thank them both for ensuring the personal connection with Western Associates is alive and well!

In October we were blessed with **Father Tim Boyle's** presentation on his ministry to the people of Gameti, NWT, a fly-in community situated between Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes. Father Tim shared with us the trials and challenges of life in Gameti, but also the deep sense of community and unshakeable faith of its inhabitants, their stewardship of the land they depend on, and their abundant spirit of generosity. The example they set of living simply, in gratitude for life itself and for each member of the community, reminds us of our own call to stewardship, to acknowledge and share the gifts of our collective home with each other.

Our November meeting was focused on the **story of Elder Sister Dorothy Moore.** We watched the documentary prepared for the launch of her book, "**A Journey of Love and Hope: The Inspirational Words of a Mi'kmaw Elder.**" We reflected on her extraordinary life story and its implications for our own life story as Martha Associates

and as Canadians who share a troubled history with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Lethbridge is situated on the eastern edge of the largest reserve in Canada, the Blood Reserve. Sister Dorothy's words gave us much to reflect on as we considered how we walk with our own Southern Alberta First Nations neighbours. Several of our Associates spoke of their own efforts and experiences with various Lethbridge organisations seeking to deepen and broaden relationships with the Indigenous community.

Members of our group met at St. Patrick's Cemetery on All Souls Day to honour the memory of several Sisters of St. Martha who served the Lethbridge community in health care many years ago. In addition to our prayer service that day, we had a chance to tend to their headstones. We gathered again at the cemetery this past June, this time in the company of **FCJ Sisters Paula Mullen and Mary Kelly to tend headstones and remember beloved Sisters of both orders who committed their lives to serve others.**

December saw us celebrating Christmas, beginning with a beautiful prayer service in our chapel, followed by a delicious potluck dinner accompanied by fellowship and laughter. Our evening continued with our usual gift exchange and gift "theft" merriment, and we concluded with carol singing accompanied by our own Ina Boyden at the piano. January began on a very sad note for all of us, as we lost our **beautiful Joan Magliocco** to cancer. Joan and Romano began their journey as Martha Associates many years ago and maintained a deep connection to the community of the Sisters of St. Martha in Lethbridge. We miss Joan's sense of humour and infectious laugh, the delightful Irish lilt in her voice and her deep faith that she so willingly shared with our group. Many of our Associates participated in her prayer vigil and funeral



Romano and Joan, May 2023

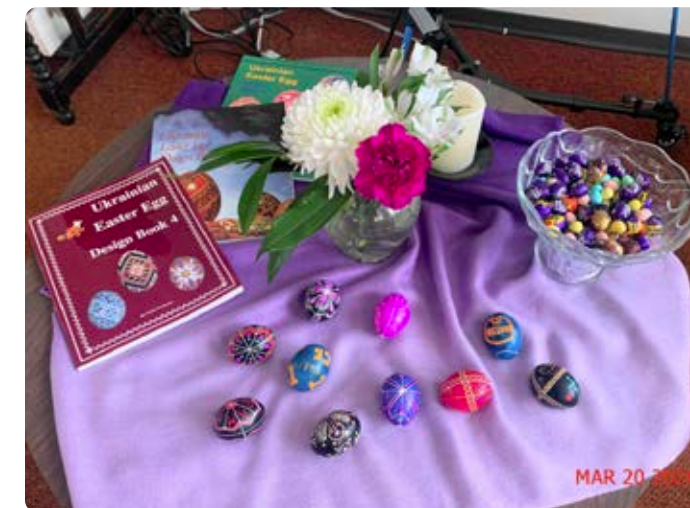
Mass, and we spent some time at the January meeting sharing with each our best and funniest memories of Joan. We look forward to welcoming Romano back to our gatherings in the future.

Dr. Mark Nixon presented an overview of the Martha Justice Ministry in action in our local Catholic high school. Mark is a retired teacher and has retained ties with Catholic Central High School in Lethbridge. He has worked closely with Sisters Marion Sheridan and Joanne O'Regan, both of whom spent time in Lethbridge last year to share their Social Justice Ministry work with the students. Mark gave us an update on how the school

has incorporated and is extending their own social justice ministry with activities throughout the year. We are grateful to Mark for his ongoing efforts to instill the values of Gospel hospitality in our young people.

In February we watched one of Father Tim Boyle's presentations from his "**Enlarge the Tent**" series, picking up on the theme from the Synod preparation. Father Tim's talks were presented at St. Martha's Church, Lethbridge, and recorded on the St. Martha YouTube channel. The session we viewed is entitled "**A petrified Church...how did we get here?**" Kathy prepared a list of reflection questions to consider after the talk, and these led to fruitful sharing in small groups and in the large group. We compared approaches to our faith journey formed in our youth and adult lives; the differences and similarities in our faith backgrounds, and how those elements shape us today. As a result of our deep engagement in this session, our Associate group will incorporate more of Father Tim's presentations in future gatherings.

March saw us all participating in the fun of trying our hand at authentic Ukrainian Easter traditions, thanks to Irena Olas of the Martha Retreat Centre who grew up in Ukraine and immigrated to Canada recently. Irena explained the significance of both Pysanka and Krashanky, two types of Ukrainian Easter eggs. Pysanka is characterised by symbols applied to the egg with a stylus dipped in wax before a succession of dye baths, while the Krashanky eggs are wrapped in natural leaves before the dye bath. As we worked, Irena shared with us her family's faith traditions and Easter celebration rituals. We are grateful to Irena for guiding us through the decoration process, and we pray for peace in her beloved homeland.



Ukrainian Easter Eggs

April's gathering featured a presentation by our Associates Harry and Irene, who led us through an examination and discussion of the pastoral document, **Laudate Deum**, released by Pope Francis in 2023. It is a document of substantial significance in that it underscores Pope Francis' commitment to multilateral action in the fight against climate change, and his call "to all people

of good will" to address the climate crisis. The release of this document coincided with the commencement of the Synod on Synodality, emphasising listening, accompaniment and discernment in the life of the Catholic Church. After listening to an overview of Pope Francis' exhortation, small groups were formed, each delving more deeply into an aspect of the document for discussion and shared insights. Thank you, Harry and Irene, for helping us to gain a deeper understanding of **Laudate Deum** and its challenges to us as we continue to find ways to walk together in communion as people of God.

We wrapped up our Martha year in May with a BBQ/potluck complete with the usual fellowship and fun. Kathy and Annella also gave us a wonderful account of their special time in Antigonish at the Sisters of St. Martha Chapter, held in April. We enjoyed their slide presentation as well as the amusing anecdotes of their trip. There were many possible focus points for future gatherings arising from their presentation.

We are all so grateful to our fearless leader, **Kathy Gillis**, for her tireless efforts on behalf of our Associate group. Kathy keeps us informed of upcoming gatherings and events, sends out reminders and is always there to keep us on track at our meetings with her remarkable efficiency and indomitable good cheer. **Kathy, we appreciate you and we're blessed to be walking this journey of faith with you!**

From all of us in the west to all of our Associates in the east, we wish you a blessed and happy summer. May we all continue to walk together in communion as people of God, sharing Gospel hospitality with whomever we meet on our path; may we always be willing to pour out ourselves in love for others, and may we embody the undaunted hope exemplified in our beloved Sisters of St. Martha.

Yours in St. Martha,  
Mary Anne Wensveen  
On behalf of the Lethbridge Martha Associates



Mary Ann Wensveen and Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, September 2023

**ST. CLARE ASSOCIATE GROUP  
SYDNEY MINES, NS  
2023 – 2024**

Another year for the Martha Associates has come and gone! All of our group would like to **thank Sr. Claudette and Sr. Franklyn for their friendship and kindness, providing us with their lovely home for our monthly gatherings.**

The year began for us in September 2023 – our yearly retreat in Bethany (Martha Place). Sr. Brendalee Boisvert was our presenter. **Her topic was: “The Woman with the Alabaster Jar”**, a lesson about loving God and others. This is always an event we look forward to. A time to meet and share a meal, a time to listen, a time to pray and a time to learn.

Our October meeting began with a prayer and a check-in to see how everyone was doing. Many of us who attended the retreat took time to share our experience about what part of the retreat was most meaningful to us. Norma Blinkhorn also gave a report on Synodality which was very interesting. We closed with prayer. All enjoyed a cup of tea and some lunch!

Unfortunately, our meetings for November and December were canceled due to illness, the weather and the inability to choose a date for our gathering.

In January, we gathered for our Christmas meal. A special welcome to our Director, Julia Townsend and fellow Associates. **Three new Associates were received on that evening: David and Doreen Lewis and Jean Brennick.** We enjoyed a delicious dinner of Chinese food, a time of being together, sharing friendship and camaraderie.

Our February meeting opened with prayer: “Prayer for the Earth”, written by Pope Francis. All Associates, and new journeyers were welcomed. Our topic centered on the Sisters of St. Martha, and when they first arrived in Antigonish. At that time, the Sisters worked very hard! Some of the Sisters were teachers, some were nurses while some of the Sisters were able to teach others about growing their own food! Some of the Sisters also worked at the University. The Sisters were active in building schools and hospitals. The Sisters were (and still are) a great inspiration to many people. A card and monetary gift were presented to Sr. Claudette and Sr. Franklyn on behalf of our Associate group in thanksgiving for all they do for us!

In March, Norma showed an interesting film by Fr. Timothy Radcliffe. In his first talk, Fr. Radcliffe spoke about people that are afraid of “the journey” and what lies ahead. In the second talk, Fr. Radcliffe identified a different point of tension within the life of the Church; different understandings of what we think the Catholic Church should be. Norma summarized some points that are upsetting to many people: the role of women in our church, homosexuality; treatment of divorced Catholics. A discussion on the Church synod followed.



Mary Hall and Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, September 2023.

Very Interesting.

In April, we gathered all our ideas that were expressed during our Synod discussions, put them in writing, and sent them off to the Bishop.

Everyone was welcomed at our May meeting. A prayer of thanksgiving was shared. We prayed for individuals and also for our own needs. Sr. Franklyn presented information of the Sisters' Chapter which was held in April 2024. She explained the process that the Sisters follow as they make their plans for the next 5 years. The plans are reviewed and assessed as the Sisters proceed and make changes as necessary.

Our Last meeting in June was held at St. Clare Convent. A beautiful memorial service was held for all deceased Associates and Sisters. This was followed by a delicious pot luck. **In the past year, we have lost one longtime Associate, Gerald Edwards. Also, we welcomed 3 new Associates and 4 new journeyers.** We are grateful for all we have learned about the Synod, and about many issues that are troubling our world today. All in all, we had a very productive year! We left on a happy note, wishing everyone a happy and healthy summer.

See you all in September!  
Brenda Blinkhorn and Mary Hall



Brenda Blinkhorn and Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, September 2023.

**TRENTON MARTHA ASSOCIATES**

2023 – 2024

The Trenton Martha Associates remain a faithful and committed group of Associates. They meet the last Sunday of every month from October until May at St. John the Baptist Church in New Glasgow, NS. The group is coordinated by Gary Rankin and Joy MacIntosh. I had the pleasure of meeting with the group on April 7, 2024. Sr. Mary MacMahon was also present, as she often is with the Trenton group. As always, I was welcomed with smiles and the warmth of hospitality that Martha Associates (and Marthas) emanate! It was a time to check in with the group and to share a bit of our stories together. I was able, with the help of Sr. Mary, to highlight some of the upcoming events for the Sisters' Chapter that was held in April, 2024. We discussed the upcoming retreats and plans for a “Come and See” in Trenton, hopefully in the Spring of 2025. After some meditation time and discussion, we enjoyed a time of tea and fellowship.

The Trenton Associates were saddened to have lost a member of the Trenton group in September. Sarah Francis passed away on September 18, 2024. May Sarah rest in the peace of our Lord.

Julia Townsend



Trenton Martha Associates 2024

**More  
Milestone  
Birthdays!**



**Celebrating Milestone Birthdays  
in 2024**

**George Crisfield  
(seated)  
Was 90 on June 26th**

**Harry Mueller  
(left)  
Was 70 on May 24**

**Brian Wright  
(right)  
Was 80 on February 24**

**“God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone.”**

**(St. John Paul II, Laudato Si', Pg 64)**



*Sisters of St. Martha  
& Associates Memories*

Deane Tom     Deane Julie     Sharon Bean  
Margie     Stella     Loretta  
Carolene     Joann     Yvonne  
George Ann     Mary Kay     Stephanie  
Elen     Fuller Tim     Kereni Peter

## Sister Mary Gouthro's Alberta Story and The Creation of the "Heaven Breaks Forth on the Earth" CD

**Sister Mary Gouthro** came from Antigonish, Nova Scotia, to Lethbridge in 1969. At that time, the Martha Retreat Centre was known as the Martha Education Centre. Sister Mary resided in Lethbridge from September 1, 1969, to September 1, 1972, where she taught music at Catholic Central High School. She also taught music part-time at St. Mary's and St. Patrick's elementary schools. She loved teaching and growing the musical gifts and talents of others.

While in Lethbridge, Sister Mary directed a women's choir called, The Singing Bells. **The Singing Bells** often competed in music festivals. In the early 1970's, another local choir called, The Ann Campbell Singers, was known as 'the choir to beat'. Sister Mary shared that one of the main highlights of The Singing Bells choir was when they tied The Ann Campbell Singers at the 1971 music festival. This remains a fond Lethbridge memory for her.

Sister Mary returned to Nova Scotia in September 1972 to continue teaching music. On September 1, 2001, she returned west to live in Calgary where she stayed until September 1, 2009. She worked as a pastoral director at St. Thomas More Parish. From September 1, 2004, and September 1, 2005, she was the **director for the Calgary Martha Associates**. She enjoyed being a part of this faith sharing group.

Along with her role as pastoral director, Sister Mary also served as the choir director. She recalled how 'magnificently talented' the voices of the choir were but that they did not have a piano to support their music ministry. The need for a piano meant a need to fund raise. **The choir decided to record their own CD** which could be sold with all proceeds going toward purchasing a Baby Grand Piano. Barb Learmont, who is a Calgary Martha Associate and who sang in the choir, recalled that the main challenge while making the CD, "**was the need to pause for the airplanes as they flew over the church.**" In 2006, the end result of this teams dedication and shared talents was the creation of, "**Heaven Breaks Forth on the Earth**" CD. **Sister Mary composed the hymn, 'I Long for You O God' and Barb designed the CD cover. The proceeds from their fundraiser, did indeed, enable them to purchase the piano and more.**

In November 2023, Barb generously donated the remaining CDs to the Martha Retreat Centre in Lethbridge. Barb wished for others to have access to this wonderful Christmas CD as well as saw how

the proceeds from donations made could serve as a fundraiser for the Centre. Barb's wish became a reality as the CD is now with many new family and friends and the donations have been beneficial to the Centre.

Through this story, an additional gift to the Centre's Board, staff and friends, was our opportunity and privilege to meet Sister Mary. Some folks recalled knowing Sister Mary when she was in Lethbridge, however, most of us met Sister Mary, for the first time, through this story. All stories shared about the Sisters of St. Martha sit snugly in our hearts. I sincerely thank Barb for having the idea and sharing the CDs with the Centre. I also sincerely thank, Sister Mary for sharing her 'western' Martha story with me. It is very clear that many young and old singers and musicians were blessed by your generous gospel hospitality and shared musical talents.

Story written by Kathy Gillis (Lethbridge Martha Associate and on the Board of the Martha Retreat Centre Society) with input from Sister Mary Gouthro, Sister Florence Kennedy and Barbara Learmont

February 21, 2024



Sister Mary Gouthro 2024

**"For me to be a saint means for me to be myself"**

(Thomas Merton)



## A Moment To Remember

Let us remember, our Sisters of St. Martha, our Associates, family members

and friends

who have died and are very much present to us.

We hold them in our hearts and remember how they have been

a pocket of hope for us

through their beliefs, smiles, attitudes and presence.

# Chapter Refrain

The future is emerging  
God graces us with courage  
To welcome and help shape it  
As we discern God's plan.  
Our hearts are open to listen  
As we join in prayer together  
To walk the way that God reveals.

It's a new Martha Day

To love the world.

(Repeat last two lines)

*Composed by Sr. Mary Gouthro*

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The Martha Website is: [www.themarthas.com](http://www.themarthas.com)

Any Associate group who has news items or pictures that speak of the life of your faith community please email material to Julia Townsend at [julia.townsend@themarthas.com](mailto:julia.townsend@themarthas.com)

Submitted items may appear on the website or in our newsletter.  
Please help keep our new website current.