

# NEWSLETTER

FALL - 2023



## **The Year That Was, The Year To Come...**

*By Lise Schmidt, Martha Retreat Centre Board President*

Dear Friends of the Centre,

We've had much to celebrate over the course of this year. Our programs continue to thrive and to grow reaching more participants with a variety of opportunities. Our Peace At Lunch (P.A.L.) program served a record of 419 lunches. Our four Music on the Grounds events welcomed many new visitors and were supported by many donors. The Contemplative Food Garden not only took shape, but it also provided the Centre with vegetables which were used during retreats and programs! We had another wonderful visit from the following Sisters of St. Martha – Sister

Brendalee Boisvert, Sister Catherine MacFarlane, and Sister Joanne O'Regan. All three sisters were thrilled to see the vibrancy of the Centre, both on the grounds and within the building.

We were also fortunate to have our Executive Director, Diana Sim, work alongside a consultant to help guide our discussions as we continue to move the Centre forward in so many ways. we were able to host several focus groups to help refine our planning.



We continue to be blessed with financial support from the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha to help with Operational Sustainability. The truth is, this funding from the Congregation will not last forever as they prioritize their ministry and mission, thus the need for the Board to continue with the transitional phase over the next couple of years. Becoming financially sustainable is a priority for the Society.

We're excited for the transition period that continues to unfold and what this will bring to the Centre over the coming years. We invite you to continue to walk this path with us and to consider how you would like to become involved.

*Wishing you,  
on behalf of the Sisters of St. Martha,  
the Board of Directors,  
and the staff of the Martha Retreat Centre,  
many blessings, good health, and much joy.*



## Three of the Sisters shared their hope for the Centre's future.

**"For me...**it is inspiring for me to witness the creativity and commitment of the members of the Martha Retreat Centre Society Board and its Executive Director, as they meet the various realities of developing Martha Retreat Centre. How can anyone forget "Covid Times!" when it was difficult to welcome retreatants, visitors, patrons? At that time a labyrinth was developed on the Centre's grounds, benches were sold, and wonderful friends and patrons met the challenge of buying them, so the beautiful grounds of the Centre became more accessible. Now, P.A.L. (Peace At Lunch) and Music on the Grounds are annual events.



-Sister Theresa Parker  
(2009-2019 as Director and Program Coordinator)  
(She continues to serve on the Board of Directors)



-Sister Claire MacNeil  
(2003-2008 as Director)

**"For me...**being at Martha Retreat Centre was a wonderful experience of seeing people grow. Providing a setting where people came to listen to God. My hope is that Martha Retreat Centre can continue being a setting where people can grow and tell others about the opportunity, to spend quality time with God and to spread the good news."

**"For me...**I valued working at Martha Retreat Centre because so many people from all different faiths came looking for a place to pray and be quiet. We were able to provide this quiet. We were able to assist them with this dimension in their lives that they could not find elsewhere. Now as we look to the future my hope is that this dimension of finding a quiet space with assistance in prayer for the different faiths will be continued."



-Sister Loretta Gillis  
(2008-2013 as Director)

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## What Others Are Saying About Us

*"The Martha Retreat Centre is a very, very special place for our work in silence. Your gracious hospitality, wonderful accommodations and food made our stay very special."*

*"I have felt so welcome here - you are all so kind and gracious. It is a treasure to have this retreat centre, which is so imbued with love. You've all contributed to our experience of silence."*

*"We have recently held a 5- day Silent Meditation Retreat at the Martha Retreat Centre. We are so happy that we have discovered this gem of a place.*

*The stillness and peace of the Centre was tangible on entering the building and was the perfect setting for our retreat. Staff at the Retreat Centre were so hospitable and welcoming and totally respectful of our silence. The guest rooms are very comfortable and perfect for quiet reflection and meditation with views out over the coulee, and the gathering room worked really well for our meditations together. During the five days we were provided with wonderful nourishing food that was thoughtfully prepared for us!*

*We are very grateful for our time and definitely hope to stay with the Martha Retreat Centre when it is time to host a Silent Retreat again."*

## Did You Know?

**Centering Prayer** is a meditative prayer of surrender. It is a prayer which develops through persistent self-emptying, a deep relationship with God. We believe in the indwelling Spirit of God and consent to God's presence and action within. In Centering Prayer we let go of our words, thoughts, and emotions to let God take control. God knows what is in our hearts and what we need even before we do ourselves.

*Guidelines for Centering Prayer:*

1. Choose a word as a symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. (eg. love, peace, Jesus, listen, simplicity, etc).
2. Sit comfortably with eyes closed and briefly and silently introduce your "sacred word".
3. When engaged with thoughts return ever so gently to the sacred word. Thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections.
4. At the end of the prayer remain in silence for some moments until you feel ready to come back to awareness of your room

*Every Tuesday at 1:30 pm Centering Prayer is held in the Martha Retreat Centre. All are welcome!*

## Together We Grow

by Executive Director, Diana Sim



My first summer I visualized a vegetable garden, this summer we made it happen. Over 110 people invested their time, skills and financial

support to bring the garden to life. To witness this space transform from dried up grass to become an area of action and productivity has inspired me as I reflect on the vision for the future of Martha Retreat Centre. From the beginnings of the Society in 2018 to today, the Centre has continued to transform as we foster and celebrate spiritual well-being.

It is stimulating to watch the Centre evolve and grow. I encourage you to read 1 Corinthians 12. My focus is on verse 20, "But now are they many members, yet but one body".

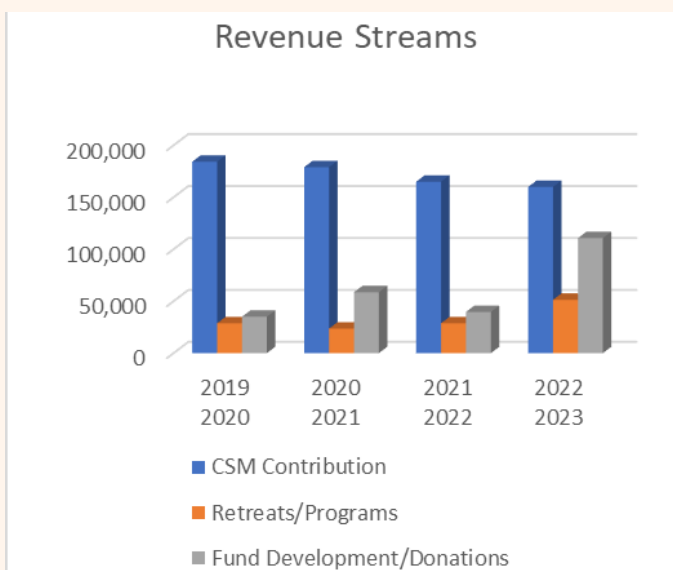
*"It is the hope and dream of the Sisters of St. Martha that Martha Retreat Centre continues to thrive and grow in the years to come. The need has never been greater to have resources available to promote the spiritual in our lives.*

*To have this sacred place of welcome – to be able to go aside and connect with nature, other seekers and the Divine is a treasure worth keeping." (read full letter on our website newsletter tab)*



Sister Brendalee Boisvert,  
Congregation Leader, sisters  
of St. Martha, Antigonish, NS

Looking towards creating the space for the future of the Centre, I look back at the growth that has taken place. I have developed a chart to help generate a picture of our growth since 2019. The financial support from Congregation of the sisters of St Martha (CSM) has decreased and the revenue through donations and retreats and programs has increased.



The Centre is one building, however the vibrancy of the life of the Centre is with each of you. Together, we grow! Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha, Volunteers, Board, Martha Associates, Facilitators, Participants, Staff, Contractors all have had a unique role in bringing the Centre to today. As we move forward consider how you would like to be invested in the future of Martha Retreat Centre.

We were privileged to have the leader of the Congregation of the Sisters of St Martha join us for the annual Martha Associates retreat in September. Sister Brendalee shared a letter from the Congregation with us, here is one quote:

### There are so many opportunities and possibilities to grow together!

- We invite you to consider becoming a **monthly donor**. Perhaps an annual donor. There are several ways to donate, check out the Supporting Page on the website.
- Become a **volunteer** and join a team of one of the 7 volunteer teams. Check out the Team Descriptions on our website and contact us for more details.
- Share your **time, skills or resources..** Become a part of the Centre by contributing to one of the following projects:

- \_\_ Operate the Centre for 1 day (\$900)
- \_\_ Replace windows (\$1,500/window)
- \_\_ Fix/Replace Carpet (\$10,000)
- \_\_ Painting, interior (\$10,000)
- \_\_ Replace Boilers (\$30,000)
- \_\_ Air Conditioning for Accommodations (\$26,000 - \$1,300/room)
- \_\_ General Fund (Operations)

The growth is encouraging. Excitement expands as we focus our eyes on the goal of serving people in our community. Together, we are building upon the ministry of the legacy of the Sisters of St. Martha in Lethbridge. The Sisters ministered for over 90 years

within the Lethbridge community. Their hope is to see the vibrancy of the Centre continue to meet the needs of the people. As Sister Brendalee invited in her letter, will you invest in creating space for our future?

*Let's grow together!*

## MARTHA RETREAT CENTRE - EXCITING NEWS

- **A Night of Beauty with Bridge Brass Quintet** will be held again this year at the Centre on December 8th, at 6:00 pm. Join us for social event, visit with your friends and enjoy great entertainment. Register for the event on our website. Cost: \$50/per ticket.



- The building of **Contemplative/Food Garden** has progressed during summer and fall. We had a chance to finish building a shed as well as cook meals for our guests from fresh organic vegetables.



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- One of the new Teams to develop is the **Gardening Team**. With the Contemplative Food Garden almost complete, the volunteer team will coordinate activities for the upcoming growing season. If you are interested in chairing this Team, contact Diana to learn more. [director@martharetreatcentre.ca](mailto:director@martharetreatcentre.ca)
- **Fund Development Team** needs volunteers. Do you like organizing and helping with fundraising activities, planning donation campaigns and events? Are you a creative thinker? Email or call us for more details.
- Join **Prayer Team** - in communion through prayer to nourish the wellbeing of those who seek spiritual strength as they are invited to experience the mission of the Centre. Email with interest, first meeting will be scheduled.
- There are many opportunities how you can be involved with the Centre. Check our website and learn about all volunteer teams. Call or email us if you have questions or would like to be involved.



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☐ I would like to donate monthly to the Centre, send me more information on the Customer Automated Fund Transfer process.

☐ I would like to increase my monthly donation to the Centre by \$\_\_\_\_\_, send me the paperwork I need to complete to make this happen.

☐ I am sending my yearend donation of \_\_\_\_\_ to the Centre. (Cash, Cheque, e-transfer to [director@martharetreatcentre.ca](mailto:director@martharetreatcentre.ca))

☐ I make a faith pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ by date \_\_\_\_\_ as an expression of faith and a personal response to God's generosity. (Trust God for your pledge and track the ways He gives through you.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_