



Sisters of Providence
of St. Vincent de Paul
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PROVIDENCE PAGES

Fall 2016



A transformation in the works

This illustration depicts the community feeling intended for the village of services being planned for the Motherhouse grounds at 1200 Princess Street in Kingston.

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Change and Sister Margo Shafer



Music fills Sister Rita Gleason



Sister Pat Amyot shores up



The summer drought



The Vimy Trap



Maryvale Abbey, then and now

Vision Statement

A world where the vulnerable experience compassion, justice and peace.

Mission Statement

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul are a congregation of vowed women religious called to be channels of God's Providence.

Rooted in the mission of Jesus, we empower the vulnerable through compassionate service, advocacy and networking. Sharing our spiritual, human and financial resources, we promote justice and peace for all creation.



Sisters of Providence
of St. Vincent de Paul

Errata. In her enthusiasm to add detail, the editor created two errors in the final paragraph of last issue's look at the rich history of music as a ministry of the Sisters of Providence. (Summer 2016: From private students that paid for missions to choirs and bands, Sisters taught them all). It was Mary Theresa O'Brien who was the Sister who "continued teaching music at St. Gregory's Convent in Picton until 1997." And, while it is true that music is still being taught at Providence Motherhouse today by Sister Marie Dundon, she is not the Congregation's only active music teacher. In this issue, we bring you the faith-and-music path of Sister Rita Gleason of Edmonton. You'll find it on page 7.

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Providence Village dream begins to take shape

Providence Village is a dream that is coming to life. The Sisters of Providence have shared their vision to transform their Motherhouse property in the centre of Kingston into a neighbourhood community. There has been tremendous support for the idea and numerous organizations and services are exploring the possibilities such a village creates.

These include long-term care, hospice and the Kingston YMCA. Providence Care, which operates the Providence Manor long-term care home currently in downtown Kingston, as well as hospital and community programs, is a committed partner and is working with the Sisters to transform the vision into reality.

The first puzzle piece dropped into place in late November when it was announced that housing developer Homestead Holdings

had purchased four acres of the 30-acre grounds of the property at 1200 Princess Street. The plan developed for Providence Village identified housing as a key need of the Kingston region. The sale commits Homestead to three apartment buildings that will add approximately 400 new units to the Kingston market. One of the buildings will cater specifically to seniors and will include 60 units designated as affordable housing units. Space within the buildings will be allocated to accommodate onsite programming, such as supports for seniors living in their own homes.

With a housing agreement in place, what are the other pieces moving ahead? Providence Village plans include transforming the Motherhouse building into offices, meeting spaces and a hive of activity for Providence Care and a number of other organizations.

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Housing the first element to fit into place

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The Sisters will continue to live in the building, consolidating over time in the Marian wing. With them will be members of the Congregation for Notre Dame and the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph, who already live at the Motherhouse.

This is the picture that has emerged from more than a year of planning by the Sisters of Providence, Providence Care and the consultants who have worked with them on a master plan and master program for Providence Village.

The Providence Village idea was approved at the 2015 congregational chapter (meeting). A key component of the plan is the long-term care home.

Providence Manor needs a new locale and the Motherhouse site would be ideal. Providence Care is working through the required approval process with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and hopes to be moving forward with construction in the next few years.

“Our work over the past year and a half has been to do a study of what the local needs are here in Kingston,” said Sister Sandra Shannon, General Superior of the Sisters of Providence. “From that point, we looked at our property and considered how we might accommodate several organizations and uses on the site.”

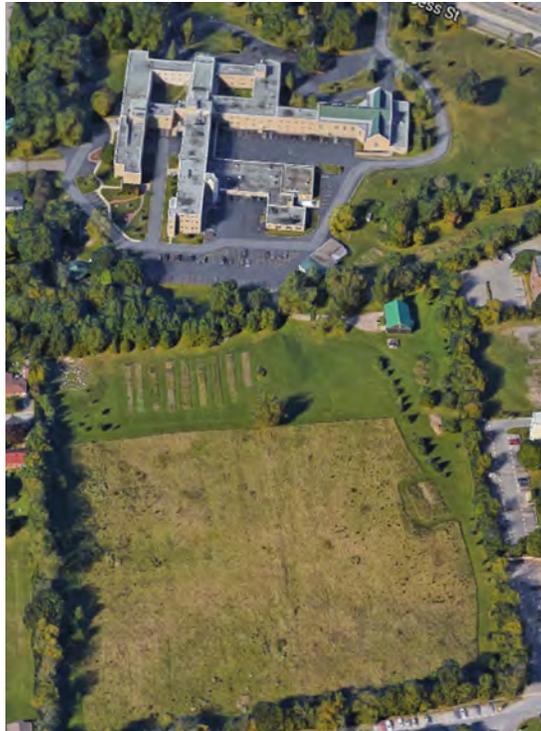
“We have had some exciting initial conversations with organizations that meet needs of different people in our community – whether they are seniors, families, people looking for work or people in their last

stage of life,” says Cathy Szabo, President & CEO at Providence Care and member of the Providence Village Steering Committee. “Our vision statement is to develop ‘A neighbourhood of people helping people, inspiring hope, fulfilment and care for the earth.’ Working with our partners we know we are headed in the right direction.”

Providence Care is committed to the vision for Providence Village, and we’re excited to be planning to redevelop our long-term care home, Providence Manor, on the property,” Szabo adds.

The values used by the steering committee are compassion, respect and integrity. The five guiding principles of Providence Village are to: uphold a spirit of humility, simplicity and charity; demonstrate responsible stewardship of resources; create opportunities to connect, innovate and collaborate; be open, welcoming and supportive; and foster holistic life and wellness.

Although some components will be built sooner, the development plan for Providence Village stretches out over seven to ten years.



Motherhouse grounds by satellite. Map data: Google Imagery 2016



Leaving a ministry close to my heart

As the Congregation moves forward in our plans for the future, I have been asked to replace a Sister who is going on a well-deserved sabbatical. I will be taking on the sacristy and hospitality duties that Sister Catherine Casey so generously has done for many years.

To do so, I will be leaving a ministry I have been part of from the beginning. I was one of the first board

members who formed the charity *The Meeting Place Centre for Growth & Healing*. The goal of the Meeting Place Centre is to provide mental health support for people on low incomes who are

dealing with the effects of emotional trauma or abuse. We became incorporated with charitable status in 2003.

In the beginning it was very slow and difficult as we were such a small charity. We struggled to find enough finances to keep us going but we had faith and hope that the Lord would provide for our need. The charity was

Toronto-based at the start, but served people in Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, Peterborough and Toronto. We were told we were too widespread when we applied for government grants, so we centralized.



Sister Margo Shafer (left) with the executive director of The Meeting Place Marie-Louise Bechthold at a fundraising event

In December of 2006, executive director Marie-Louise Bechthold and her partner Karyn Gilchrist bought Still Point retreat centre in Huntsville, from renowned facilitator Marge Denis. Over the next year, the charity and I moved to Huntsville too.

With limited resources, it was a learning curve to support

clients with mental health challenges. In the beginning we did not have a timeframe for counseling. The more apparent the demand became, the more we realized we needed guidelines. We knew short-term counselling was not enough so we put in place weekly sessions for the first year and bi-weekly sessions for the second, as long as we had the funds to provide the service. It has proven to be a good method.

I am often the first contact for anyone wanting counselling. I spend a lot of time on the phone. It is amazing how many times I have just

listened to clients when I call to remind them of their therapy appointments. I believe that is part of my ministry. Sometimes it matters just to have a friendly voice that helps when it's a rough day.

I think of Mary, who used our services until her timeframe ended. Unfortunately, her

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Praying for grace in the midst of change

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mental health challenges were great and she did not have the support of family and friends – I still keep in contact with her so she knows she is not alone. Many times I help by just being there for her, listening to her on the phone so she can talk about what is bothering her, instead of bottling up and becoming sick.

I was a little heartbroken about telling her that I am moving to Kingston, as I knew she was going to feel abandoned and alone. I also knew that she needed time to process the news and be able to say goodbye.

I spent a September afternoon with Mary in the hopes of telling her that I am leaving Huntsville, but I didn't get a chance. Her troubles were too big that day. We spent the afternoon talking through her concerns. In the end, I called her when I returned to Huntsville, and gave her the news that way. I will still keep in contact with her but it will not be as easy to be there for her from a distance.

I have done all the behind-the-scene operations in my own quiet way – calling clients, mailing our application forms, collecting auction items, sending out fundraising letters and reports to doctors. All the data entry fell to me, such as cataloguing donations, preparing income tax receipts and getting the financial information ready for the accountant. As part of my

ministry, I also prepared the food and material for our monthly retreat for women.

I have given my all, to the best of my ability, to support this work. The hardest thing for me was knowing that I could only do so much. The

best I could do for the clients was to listen to them and pray for them daily.

I am sad and sorry to be leaving this ministry and the small community of friends that have been a part of my life for the past nine years. I will also be leaving my small cell-group of Sisters in the Toronto area. It has not been easy to get together because

of the distance between us but we always manage to keep connected by phone or email. I will miss Sisters Joanne, Elaine and Karen and I thank them for all their love, support and prayers. I am grateful to my Congregation for allowing me to do this ministry for the last 14 years and who for supporting me in this work.

I ask God to give me the grace and strength I need to be open to returning to the Motherhouse in Kingston and all the changes expected with our land. I do not find change easy, but I also know that I have a loving community that will help me to make the transition and support me in my efforts to grieve and move forward.

■ *Sister Margo Shafer*



Called the Toronto group, these Sisters live from Huntsville to Pickering. From left, Sisters Elaine Hogan, Karen Bennett, Margo Shafer and Joanne Colligan

Sister Rita's only worry was giving up music

Sister Rita Gleason knew that she was called by God. She had no doubt that religious life was for her. But she had one hesitation. To enter a congregation would surely mean giving up her beloved piano. She knew sacrifice was involved and that would be hers. So imagine her delight when, only two weeks after she entered the initial postulancy (candidate) stage, the Sisters of Providence approached her and asked if she wanted to continue with her music. Her answer was a resounding “yes” that has defined her life. Fifty-six years later, she’s still playing, still teaching and still using her music to commune with her Lord.

Sister Rita was 17 and playing out of the Grade 9 repertory book of Canada’s Royal Conservatory of Music. That is considered an advanced level – the music she played during her recreation times on Thursday and Sunday was complex and interesting. The problem was, to move forward with music, she first had to move back a few steps. Just like any subject in school, music levels require completing exams, and she hadn’t taken any. “I was uptight over exams,” she says, so had

just moved forward without them. Because she hadn’t prepared for exams, she hadn’t had rigorous training in piano technique – all those scales and chords and arpeggios. She didn’t know her music theory too well either. She was taken in hand by Sister Mary Jane. When Sister was finished with Rita, she got Kingston’s best mark on her Grade 8 piano exam. Sister had to “unteach” her, Sister Rita says now, with a rueful look. She was so strict that Sister Rita cried after lessons. Just the same, it was worth it. “I am so grateful to the Congregation that they gave me my music.”

After the triumph of her Grade 8 exam, Sister Rita, who had taken the religious name of Sister Maureen, was sent to Brantford, where a Mrs. Virginia Blaha taught her the nuts and bolts she needed. Many in Sister Rita’s family are musical but they rely on a good ear and can learn music by hearing it. She had to learn to read it well, write it and understand it.

By her early 20s, she was a full member of the Congregation and ready to get her piano teaching certificate. She was again in Kingston
continued on next page



The musicians walked for miles to see her

continued from previous page and had begun to teach music herself, as she prepared. "I took to teaching," she says. That was a welcome surprise. The reason she chose the Sisters of Providence in the first place was that the Sisters took on many roles, not just as teachers, which she didn't think she'd enjoy. She had expected to be an office worker. But, of course, that was before music was offered.

Providence Manor was her favourite spot to teach and she built up to about 50 students. That was a great number, but a real pain when Vatican II came along and restrictions on Sisters' dress were relaxed. She chuckles: It wasn't as if she walked into a classroom and all the students saw at once that she was in a shortened habit and that her hair showed. Instead, she experienced each students' surprise, one by one. She also had to tell each student that she had reverted back to her original given name and have them absorb that. By the end of the week, she was bracing herself every time a student arrived!

The community of Sisters at Providence Manor was a help because they could laugh. They gave each other home perms. Together they got used to the new clothes and the new names. And they enjoyed each other's stories – of veils that wouldn't stay on and got lost in the soup,



With students in Belleville



Teaching guitar in Guatemala

and so on.

By the 1970s, she was on the move, spending a few years at a time at the convents in Tweed, Belleville and Arnprior, Ontario, teaching music. In Tweed she was in charge of music at the parish as well.

From 1985-87, she became the congregation's vocation director and that was the first time that music didn't play a part of her working life. She expected things would be the same when she accepted a posting to the Sisters' mission in Guatemala. Surely she wouldn't be involved in music? Wrong she was. Not only did she play music, she taught as well – in Spanish. This time, she taught not only the organ but the guitar, which she had picked up on her own.

Another unexpected turn in Guatemala was that other musicians sought her out – she became a destination, someone worth travelling to. Groups of young men from the towns – the *pueblos* – would walk for miles to learn from her – how to tune their guitars properly and about

the timing of the music they played in their chapels. One fellow brought an accordion and Sister Rita learned that too, so she could help him. One of the visiting priests showed her how to use the buttons so she transferred the knowledge that she had just picked up herself.



“They came because of their faith,” she reflects, and together they would play and sing the hymns they wanted to know.

She was in Guatemala for five years, teaching music in school for grades 1-6. “The kids loved the music,” she says. “They gave me big hugs.”

Returning to Canada was a culture shock. It helped that she spent two years completing a Master of Arts in Ministry and Spirituality at Regis College of the University of Toronto. That moved her into parish work. She was north of Edmonton, now, in the suburb of Fort Saskatchewan, and she was frustrated. The role was limiting. She was told to “be a presence,” but not given a real place in the parish. She looked for something else, and it found her. She took on a job as chaplain at the University of Alberta Hospital.

“I felt at home right off the bat,” she says. Again, she expected that music wouldn’t be part of her working life. But when she went to work at St. Joseph’s Auxiliary in Edmonton, a hospital the Sisters of Providence had founded, that changed. The CEO wanted to start a staff choir. Who better to lead it? Sister Rita says that not only was it good for staff morale – everyone enjoyed choir practice – it was useful. The choir sang at memorial services for patients and there were at least four a year.

Sister Rita retired from the hospital in 2009. She goes back to St. Joe’s every month to play at Mass and at a happy hour. She works on it. “I still like to learn new music, to figure it out,

to go to workshops.”

For Sister Rita, music and spirituality are entwined. Music “fills my soul,” she says, adding, “It’s so nourishing and so much a part of me. Making music, I feel the presence of God.” That was enhanced during a recent



This 1968 picture marks the end of an era. The music studios at Providence Manor were closing. Sister Rita went on to Tweed. Her mentor and colleague, Sister Mary Sheila, moved to Montreal to be the superior of St. Malachy’s Convent.

discernment about whether to return to teaching after a break. She decided that she had to: “It is in me all the time.” She returned to teaching with a renewed spirit. “I am enjoying it 10 times more than ever. I love it.” In fact, teaching in her apartment hasn’t felt like enough, so she has begun teaching at a music store, and has another five students there. She gets great feedback from her students who say she’s awesome, but

that’s not the point for Sister Rita. “Teaching music, I am sharing who I am,” she says. “Through music, my spirit continues to grow.”

She returns to words spoken at the funeral liturgy of her friend and mentor, Sister Mary Sheila, with whom she taught at Providence Manor back in the 1960s:

“Our music teachers have the great privilege of instructing this universal language, a source of much joy. Through their work, they give to their students an appreciation of the finer things of life and elevate these to a spiritual dimension. Sister Mary Sheila lives on in her pupils and their accomplishments and in Christ.

“I can only hope for the same,” Sister Rita says.

■ Louise Slobodian



Providence and the Madawaska shoreline

A year ago, Denice Wilkins enjoyed a personal retreat at Stillpoint House of Prayer in the Calabogie area of Ontario. She's a retired environmental educator and naturalist who was looking to spend time in quiet contemplation and mindfulness. While she was there she noticed the many things

Stillpoint was already doing to care for the environment. With this as encouragement, she wrote Stillpoint a letter with ideas for how they might expand on their care for creation. This is the story of how one of those recommendations was followed-up this fall.

Stillpoint sits on the Madawaska River in a picturesque area of the Ottawa Valley. There are five guest rooms. It is a place of silence, in a homelike setting. Two Sisters run the place. Sister Betty Berrigan, Stillpoint's director, is a Sister of St. Joseph in Canada and her Congregation owns Stillpoint. Providence Sister Pat Amyot has been there for four years, working alongside Sister Betty to do everything from offering spiritual direction to cleaning up after meals. It's Sister Pat's job to take care of the gardens, and it's a job she loves.

Both Sisters embraced the recommendations that Denice left them. Among many things, she had suggested reducing the size of the lawn, planting native trees and mowing only trails, as well as leaving brush piles for wildlife

habitat. In addition, she offered to connect Stillpoint to Watersheds Canada, a non-profit organization that works to restore shoreline habitats. Watersheds wrote a funding proposal and the federal Department of



Fisheries and Oceans granted Stillpoint the funds to do a shoreline planting. Stillpoint's contribution was in-kind volunteer help.

Lots of preparation went into the planting days. Watersheds brought the trees, shrubs and wildflowers, along with staff, and laid out where everything should go. Stillpoint brought

the people: One of the cooks and her brother, Sister Betty's niece and four of Sister Pat's siblings, along with Sister Pat herself. It just so happened to rain. Hard. Nevertheless, 12 people planted over 400 trees and shrubs the first day – laying them out, digging the holes, patting them down. The next day, an October Friday, it rained even harder. Sister Pat had to peel off soggy layers just to eat. But she and the cook, Jasmine, planted 400 wildflowers. Everything was mulched. With the

downpour, no watering was required, at least! Watersheds, who cleaned everything up tickety-boo, said they had never seen a more efficient and skilled planting group and that it went faster than they ever could have imagined.

What will this planting do? A multitude of things! As part of the Ontario hydro-electricity



system, the Madawaska River has dams and generating stations along its length, all controlled in Toronto. Water levels can rise or fall a foot at a time. Those changing levels create extra erosion that the planting will help to protect. The roots will secure the soil, stabilizing the shoreline.

The planting will also provide a healthy and beautiful natural habitat for wildlife from frogs to butterflies to songbirds. And it will contribute to improved water quality in the river by filtering runoff. With all the planting there will now be less lawn to mow which will save money and spew less pollution and carbon into the

atmosphere. An added bonus of interrupting the lawn before it reaches the shore is that geese will not be enticed to come up on the property and leave behind their offerings.

When Sister Betty Berrigan wrote up the project for her St. Joseph Congregation, she said that the important care of the shoreline let Stillpoint “attend, in a concrete way, to our Chapter mandate.” Their 2016 congregational meeting (Chapter) focus was: “Our work is to sustain a covenant with each other and with the common good ... relationships within the Congregation – relationships with Earth.”



Sister Pat Amyot feels the same way, that the work reflects the Sisters of Providence 2015 Mission Statement: “...Sharing our spiritual, human and financial resources, we promote justice and peace for all creation.”

Sister Pat sees the hand of Providence in the whole project. In prayer, the image of a flowing river – perhaps like the Madawaska – has come to *continued on page 13*



Above, St. Joseph Sister Betty Berrigan (left) listens to Providence Sister Pat Amyot describe how the planting of wildflowers will strengthen the shoreline. Top right, it was a hard slog to dig holes for 400 shrubs and trees. Left page, removing the sod, in the rain, was a heavy part of the job.

Looking back at a dry hot summer of drought

“In Kingston, weather stations in and around the city had never recorded an April and May as dry as they’ve seen this year, going back to at least 1960. The rain that fell over the city during those two months of 2016 was less than a quarter of the normal amount,” announced Scott Sutherland, meteorologist for the Weather Network.

This situation continued through July and August, accompanied by record heat, including heat at night, and warm, drying winds. The first cut of hay for farmers locally was not good, and there was no second cut – the grass simply could not grow back. In order to feed livestock farmers have had to buy hay from elsewhere.

At the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary, all staff experienced heat exhaustion to some degree this year despite precautions. On top of our own feelings of illness, it was very stressful for everyone to see our beloved plants suffer. Climate change is an unpleasant reality.

The drought meant that some crops have not provided seed this year. This is mostly because the pollen of some crops is very sensitive to temperature, especially night-time temperatures. Since we experienced hot winds for many days and nights, pollen died and, therefore, flowers aborted. No pollen made

for no flowers, made for no fruit. Some crops rebounded, but even for those that produced fruit, it was too late to produce ripe seed.

However, as usual, some crops did better than others. Our peppers and leeks stayed very healthy. We were able to strategically water some crops to get a good seed crop, such as the White Icicle radish. We were also able to do a lot of “mulching” this year, which means



covering the soil with straw, leaves and wood chips to keep moisture from evaporating. Mulch was key this year for keeping the small amount of water we got in the root zones of plants. This was partly because of staffing: three gardeners were on staff to take shifts and provide optimal care, despite the climate. Overwintered biennial turnip and rutabagas went to seed so early they missed most of the drought, so they worked

well.

Seeds we have managed to harvest, and first year biennial crops that made it through the season, will be super-hardy and will have gained a memory of how to produce fruit and seed in the midst of severe drought and heat. Many members of the public told me this year that even watering their crops did not help very much. That didn’t surprise me as most veg varieties commonly purchased are not grown for seed during heat stress and drought.

dry and hot and hot and dry and dry and hot

Those plants just gave up while many of ours kept on going, some doing even better than the weeds! The few tours I gave of the gardens this year very much impressed our guests.

Tomatoes and beans would have been fine through the drought, but both experienced very high levels of predation from rabbits and groundhogs (and squirrels and chipmunks). These poor creatures were just after a bit



of juice – even a small amount of moisture and nutrients. Unfortunately, this meant that the fruit then rotted without ripening. I brought my dog a few times to try and scare off the critters (she would never actually catch anything), and Sister Alda Brady and the maintenance staff did live-trap and remove several groundhogs. But far more damage was done this year despite chicken-wire fencing and other measures.

Pope Francis encourages us to see climate change as a moral crisis, as well as an ecological one. “The pope is saying to the world that climate change brings moral change,” said Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-director of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology. “The health of both people and the planet will require a transformation toward care for creation and concern for future generations.”

■ *Gardener Cate Henderson*

Ecology: ‘All we have to do is our part’

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her. The river has a strong undertow, pushing together the many channels of Providence. Those channels include Stillpoint’s guest, Denice the environmentalist; Watersheds.ca and the government ministry who responded; Sister Betty and the CSJ Congregation; the volunteers; and Sister Pat herself and her Providence Congregation.

To Sister Pat, Providence did the arranging – all that was required was a yes. That yes brought not only the gift of a wonderful project, but personal health as well. “It is amazing how we are renewed by the environment,” says the gardener, composter and seed-saver. “All we have to do is our part.”

■ *Louise Slobodian*



Photo: Prawr/Flickr



A challenge to the myth of nationhood: Vimy

Back in the mid-1950s, Uncle Eberts offered me the gift of a lifetime. At least for a five year old boy.

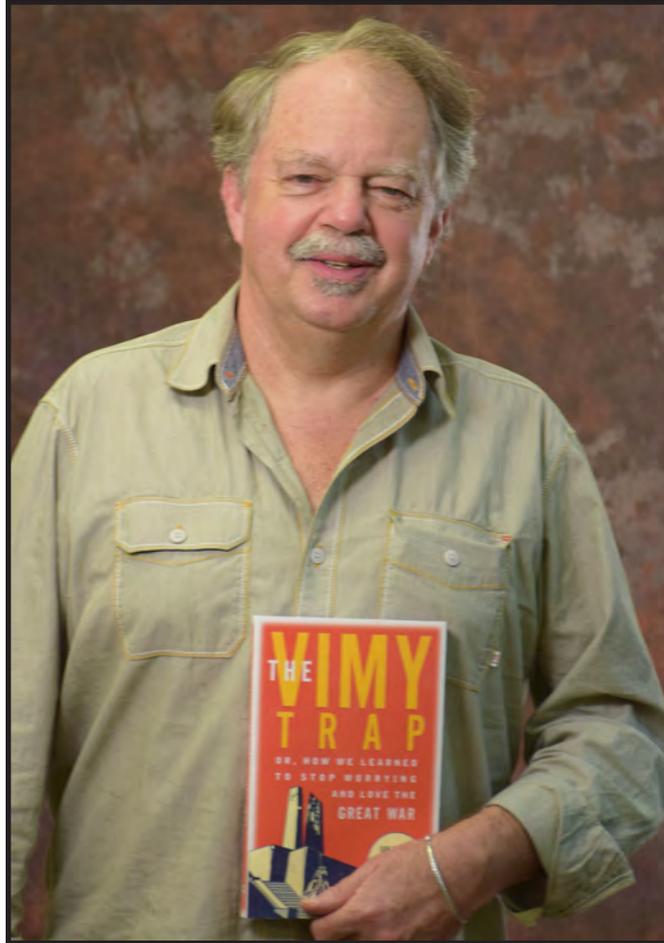
He got me a ride on a big yellow bulldozer that he'd hired to do some road work. We lived next door to Eberts Macintyre on the Gatineau, just south of Wakefield. He was my grandfather's brother-in-law, my honorary uncle.

Aside from the bulldozer adventure, Uncle Eberts was impressive because he was a very energetic senior, quite deaf, with a metal plate in his head. He suffered his injuries in World War I. The story of the metal plate was, for a young boy, nearly as impressive as the bulldozer. Uncle Eberts was a swell fellow.

He was also the author of an early book on the battle of Vimy Ridge. He wrote *Canada at Vimy* in 1967 at age 82. Uncle Eberts reflected on the Great War, his experiences and that ghastly conflict's legacy.

I was, needless to say, glad to re-read the book when historian Ian McKay and I

were working on our own look back at the Great War. Uncle Eberts was certainly a patriotic military man: He didn't hesitate to write,



on the occasion of Canada's centennial year, that Vimy was "a glorious tribute to our past."

But he also scrutinized the war with the wry eye of someone who'd had a close-up view. He was unusual amongst war writers in

pointing out that, among an estimated 750,000 "young men who shed their blood on that historic hill," a large number were German. That

gruesome statistic inspired him as "a mournful reminder of the utter futility of war," a phrase that twenty-first-century martial nationalists consistently avoid. Uncle Eberts used it without self-consciousness.

Even the timing of Vimy raised doubts in his mind. On the eve of battle, he writes, "It was nauseating to contemplate the horrors that the representatives of two Christian nations would inflict on each other at this time of the Easter festival, each side believing that he was in the right."

Of course, our new book with its suggestive title differs from *Canada at Vimy*. We weren't there, so we took a different approach. Uncle Eberts had his diaries and his memory. We had access to hundreds of manuscripts and printed records about the war. And, more broadly,



was not the birth of Canada

about how the war – and wars in general – are remembered and commemorated. We hope that *The Vimy Trap* shows just how complex our sense of Canada's past can be.

We also hope that it proves just how sadly simplistic and just plain wrong the Big Bang theory of Canada's origins in fact is. While I have a *Vimy: Birth of a Nation* cap from the Legion, it's a misplaced claim

that we challenge in *The Vimy Trap*.

Archaic, romanticized talk of Great War valour and glory remains with us. So does the strutting patriotism of those who still speak with a glib enthusiasm of wars that they did not directly experience, and the likes of which they themselves will most probably never suffer. Our book seeks to understand how the tragedy

has been remembered and how that memory has changed – and been changed – as men like Eberts Macintyre have long passed from the scene. We seek to remember the war in realistic, compassionate ways, and to the resolve that such dark and painful days will never again be experienced.

■ *Jamie Swift*

Climate conversations

This fall, the Canadian Religious Congress funded a speaking tour by "Quebec's David Suzuki," Steven Guilbeault, the co-founder of Montreal-based Équiterre.

■ In Kingston

Integrity of Creation staffer Bridget Doherty coordinated two events on November 1. At Queens University's School of Policy Studies, Steven Guilbeault spoke to students, Sisters and local advocates about the building of social movements.

The second presentation focused on the Ontario Cap and Trade carbon pricing system being introduced next year. Lisa Asbreuk, senior partner at Cunningham and Swan law firm, and Shari Hughson, Director of Queen's University Masters Program of Entrepreneurship & Innovation joined Steven Guilbeault at the Queen's School of Business.



Photo: Apraham Niziblian/CRC

■ In Edmonton

On November 30, at a presentation organized by Development and Peace, Sister Jeannette Filthaut responded to Steven Guilbeault as part of a panel on the global challenge of ecological justice. She was ready because she had facilitated a day-long symposium on the climate change encyclical *Laudato Si'* at the end of October. The speakers at that event included Edmonton Archbishop Richard Smith; Alberta Minister of the Environment Shannon Phillips; Pembina Institute's Andrew Read; and Nakota Sioux Chief Tony Alexis.



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FEAST DAY



Renewal of vows, 2016



Maryvale Abbey, then and now

This July I immersed myself in the Sisters' past, researching and writing the history of the Sisters of Providence as teachers at St. Margaret's School and Maryvale Abbey in Glen Nevis, Ontario. Around that same time my husband and I decided to go to the Glengarry Highland Games

in Maxville and stay the night in the area. I soon realized we could conveniently stay at Maryvale Abbey, which is now a bed and breakfast called the Abbey Inn. In my job as Providence archivist, I spend so much

time focused on the Sisters' history that I love seeing the actual places they lived and served.

At the eleventh hour we booked the last available room and soon we were on our way to stay at the inn. (I'm in the photo in front of the building.) The current owners have done a lot of restoration work and I enjoyed seeing the Great Room, which was originally the chapel, and eating breakfast in what was once the school's refectory. Things have changed in the 66 years since the Sisters of Providence left the abbey, but it was really special to walk up the steps of the building I've seen in so many photographs, and to spend a night in the place I've read so much about.

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul arrived in Glen Nevis on September 2,

1912. They had been asked to take over the new St. Margaret's Separate School and to establish a high school in Glen Nevis. When they first arrived, the sexton's house became their temporary convent and classes were held in the parish hall. A few boarders lived in the temporary convent with them.

Construction of St. Margaret's school began in October 1912 and the building opened in January 1913. Once the elementary school was built, plans for the high school and convent were soon underway. The cornerstone

of Maryvale Abbey was laid on June 22, 1913. The boarders and Sisters moved into the completed basement of Maryvale Abbey in November 1913, while the rest of the building was still under construction. Maryvale Abbey officially opened on June 10, 1914 as a convent for the Sisters, home for the boarders and school for the boarding and day students. During the school year of 1913-1914, enrolment increased and more Sisters were sent to staff the Abbey, including a newly appointed Mistress of Boarders.

continued on next page

www.providence.ca/glen-nevis



A school, a convent ... an inn!

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Maryvale Abbey was not only a high school for students in the area, but also educated many Sisters of Providence. After a Sister had made first profession she was often sent to Maryvale Abbey to finish her high school education before being sent on to Normal School for teacher training or to Nurses Training School.

Outdoor adventures, especially in the snowy winters, seem to be a common memory of Maryvale Abbey. One such tale is a reminiscence by Sr. Mary Clarissa Whalen: “After an icy rain, I told Sr. Mary Lucy McNicholl that I would love to slide down the path of glare ice in the woods, on a bag of straw. Now Sister, whom I considered a very old nun (at the age of about 50) mentioned my idea to Archie, the faithful caretaker, and he produced two bags of straw and hid them under a juniper at the edge of the woods. Sunday afternoon Sister and I made our way to the icy path and had a great time on our slippery slide. All the while, I was chuckling to myself at the thought of the “old” nun joining me in such an amusement.”



Maryvale Abbey boarders in winter

The Sisters of Providence withdrew from Glen Nevis in 1950 due to low student enrolment and the desire for bilingual education. The Sisters of the Holy Cross purchased Maryvale Abbey and ran it as a bilingual high school until it closed in 1965. The abbey then housed a nursing home and then a retirement home, before becoming an inn and centre for the arts in 2003. In all, 130 Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul lived, served or studied at Maryvale Abbey over the course of 38 years.

■ *Veronica Stienburg*

St. Mary's of the Lake time capsule found

For 50 years, a time capsule was buried beneath the cornerstone of a wing of St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital in Kingston. But when the stone was moved during repairs this fall, a slim tarnished box was found. It was a time capsule placed in 1956 when the hospital wing was built.

The Sisters of Providence ran the hospital at that time and likely placed the box. Now the hospital is part of Providence Care, though the buildings will be turned back to the Sisters of Providence next year after the completion of a new Providence Care hospital in Kingston.



www.providence.ca/capsule





A time of growth

There's a sort of boom happening. The Providence Associates are welcoming inquirers regularly these days — there are eight inquirers presently.

So how lovely to have some women move through the formation process and embrace a commitment to the mission of the Sisters of Providence (above.)

On September 10, Margo Schwerdtfeger and Valerie Kelly (inset, left and right) became full Providence Associates.

Pictured below left are the Camrose Associates from this summer, and, below right, a gathering of Associates in September who met in Kingston for the commitment ceremony and annual meeting.



Dianne Dutcher, Providence Associate

For 37 and a half years, Dianne Dutcher worked at Providence Manor, the long-term care home founded by the Sisters of Providence in their foundation building in Kingston. For most of that time she was the director of nursing. In her last years there, she became the manager of volunteer services. It was at Providence Manor that she met the Sisters and came to embrace their mission. She became a Providence Associate in 1997.

Diane was born June 24, 1945 and died October 18, 2016. She had two children, though one predeceased her; and five grandchildren she adored.

Associate Marie McCartney reflects on Dianne:

“Dianne was a great friend and mentor – a totally selfless person. She lived her life ‘trusting in providence and walking in hope.’ In the past six months or so, Dianne had been praying the novena to Émilie Gamelin. Dianne felt a great closeness to Émilie. During the last weeks of Dianne’s time at St. Mary’s of the Lake,

where she was in palliative care, she talked about the trip she, with a group of Associates, made to the Gamelin Centre in Montreal. This trip took place quite a number of years ago; however, Dianne had photos of the trip in her room at St. Mary’s.

“Dianne’s unwavering faith was very inspiring to others as we watched Dianne live out her life trusting totally in Divine Providence.”

In an article written in 1997 about her journey to become a Providence Associate, it is clear that Dianne already had that trust and knew how to apply it, working with residents and their families:

“We see a lot of suffering, but we also see how people become more compassionate. Someone needs something and Providence happens,” she wrote at the time. “Trusting in Providence, I’ve learned to do that. I’m not fearful. Somehow we are able to manage it all with the Lord’s help.”



Magdalena Atjún Zárate, Providence Associate

Magdalena Atjun was born on May 27 but the year was not recorded. She died in August in her home in Momostenago, Guatemala, surrounded by family and by her Providence Associate companions. Magdalena became an Associate in 1992, when the Sisters of Providence were still in mission in Guatemala. She had four children and, when her details were first recorded in 1994, 15 grandchildren. That’s 22 years ago so you have to imagine that there’s been another generation since then. Magdalena was widowed young. She took care of her family, was active in her faith, and participated in activities of both her barrio neighbourhood and church as health allowed. Her Canadian prayer partner was Sister Karen Bennett.



Suna Smith, Providence Associate

Born in Turkey on April 23, 1936, Suna Smith left this world on July 8 in Camrose Alberta, where she had lived for more than half of her 80 years. An accomplished psychiatrist and professional woman, Suna held her family dear and met her first great-grandchild just hours before she died. Suna joined the Providence Associates in 2000. The following remembrance of her was written by Camrose Providence Associate Miriam Hanoski.

Doctor Suna Smith was a very fun-loving, generous and flamboyant personality. When I first met her, I was a little wary of entering in to a relationship with her (I see myself as a rather quiet person). But we became fast friends when she joined our RCIA program in Camrose as a sponsor, and later, became part of our team as a presenter.

She was comfortable in any situation we soon learned, when Suna, Sister Bernadine Bokenfohr and I traveled to El Progresso, Peru to visit the Sisters of Providence mission.

Sister Bernadine's sister, Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr, acted as our translator and sightseeing guide. We had been touring around on a cold and rainy day. After a long and tiring bus ride, we arrived back at our hotel, chilled to the bone. Suna announced that a hot toddy would warm us right up, but the bartender had no idea how to make one. She said, "Step aside!

I'll show you how!," and proceeded to teach him how to make his first hot toddy.

Her generosity knew no bounds. While visiting the local high school in El Progresso, Suna was shocked to learn they had no microscopes. She immediately made arrangements to go into Lima with a teacher, to purchase a new microscope.

On another occasion, this time in Canada, when a new parish priest arrived from the Philippines in September, unaccustomed to our cold climate, Suna took him shopping. She completely outfitted him with warm clothing and warm winter boots.

At home, she was always exceptionally good to her nurses in the psychiatry department at St. Mary's Hospital. She encouraged them to take upgrading at every opportunity and involved them in arranging regular potlucks and parties for her patients.

Every year Suna would provide the baking ingredients for her patients to bake goodies, for the fundraising bake sale for the mission in Peru. The bake sale was always held at the hospital and Suna was our best advertising advocate.

Knowing Suna always meant unexpected adventures and surprises. She loved life and we will miss her dearly.



Legacy Day in Camrose

Sister Jeannette Filthaut addressed staff at St. Mary's Hospital on November 25 as part of their annual prayer service. Legacy Day honours the founding Sisters and their values of compassion and dedication, which are shared by staff today. Her talk is available online.



www.providence.ca/legacy2016



Sister Monica Laton

Monica and her twin sister Veronica were born on April 6, 1919 in Queensboro, Ontario, the last two of seven children of Agnes Genereaux and Alexander Laton.

In 1940 she graduated as a Registered Nurse from St. Vincent de Paul Hospital in Brockville. She then did private duty nursing in Brockville until 1946 and then joined the staff at St. Vincent de Paul Hospital where she remained until she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul on August 15, 1950.

Following her First Profession of Vows, she returned to nursing at several locations in turn. She began at St. Mary's Hospital in Montreal and continued at St. Francis Hospital, Smiths Falls; Providence Hospital and St. Anthony's Home in Moose Jaw; St. Vincent de Paul Hospital, Brockville and finally at the Motherhouse infirmary. In Moose Jaw, she also served as superior for both the Sisters and for the Infirmary. She held the position of Director of Nursing in many of the hospitals and healthcare institutions where she served. In 1960-61 she studied Hospital Nursing Service Administration and, in 1971, Rehabilitation Nursing at the

University of Saskatchewan. During her nursing career she earned the love and respect of doctors, all staff and patients alike. From 1977-1981 she was the director of a home for girls with emotional and social difficulties.

That was in Kingston. For the next two years she was assigned to St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital and then returned to the home for girls until she retired. During her years in Kingston she also tended to her disabled sister who was a patient at St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital for many years. She will be remembered for her wittiness, her joyful spirit and her compassionate caring of all with whom she lived and worked.



Sister Monica was called home peacefully to her loving God on Friday, October 7, 2016.

The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse on October 12, 2016, was presided over by Friar Ed Debono, OFM Conv., who also delivered the homily. The Rite of Committal was at St. Mary's Cemetery, Kingston.

■ *Sister Barbara Thiffault, General Secretary*

The Barque of Providence



“As the still serenity of the Lake resumed, a figure familiar to my mind’s eye made way toward Jesus and I. The wind tossed veil still not revealing a face was gently folded back by strong workworn hands. The figure sat across from me and smiled. Here, to my disbelief, I found myself in the company of Jesus and Catherine McKinley! She held a long deep look upon me before she spoke... “



Read Sister Catherine Casey's full reflection and poem at www.providence.ca/barque



Spiritual blessings to take in this winter

WHO SAID THAT? WINTER READING SERIES:

“In God’s Holy Light: Wisdom from the Desert Monastics” by Joan Chittister

Thurs., Jan 19, Feb 2 & 16, Mar 2
1:30-3:30pm
Helen Russell, csj
Cost \$30/series
Register by Tue Jan 3

(Bring your own book)
A few books are available \$20

In her usual forthright manner, Joan Chittister uses the teachings of the Desert Monastics to shed light on current topics of spirituality such as perfection, simplicity and spiritual integrity. This book, composed of 35 short chapters, will provide the reader with 35 gems of wisdom to promote understanding and the practice of authentic spirituality. Because Chittister is a Benedictine woman of great experience, the four sessions will provide the attendees with a wonderful opportunity to share wisdom, to pray and to reflect on one’s personal response to the spiritual life.

JANUARY PREACHED RETREAT:
God’s love sets us free

Jan 23, 6:30pm – Jan 28, 1pm
Deacon Bill Gervais
Cost \$360
Register by Mon Jan 9

Participants of this five-day preached retreat will be guided on a journey that leads to their true selves, that part of us where we encounter the unconditional love of God and discover what St. Paul describes in his letter to the Romans: “the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21)

LENTEEN GUIDED RETREAT
Renewing our Discipleship

Fri Mar 10, 7pm – Sun Mar 12, 1pm
Fr. Jack Lynch, SFM
Cost \$165
Register by Fri Feb 24

The focus of the retreat will be on the quality of discipleship that Jesus asks of his disciples based on the gospel texts for the Sundays of Lent 2017. In turn, we will consider a generous response and contribution to God’s mission.

Directed retreat also available

DAY OF REFLECTION

Lent: A time for renewal and hope

Mon Mar 20, 9-3pm
Deacon Bill Gervais
Cost \$25
Register by Mon Mar 6

Lent offers us all a very special opportunity to grow in our relationship with God and to deepen our commitment to a way of life, rooted in our baptism.

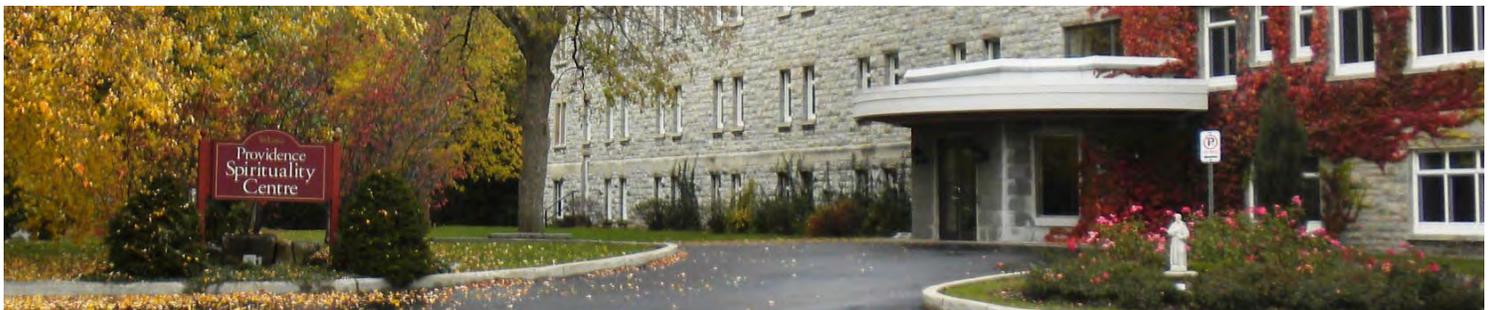
This Lenten Day of Reflection will provide an opportunity to pray more deeply, consider how to deal with temptations in our life and allow us to stand at the Cross of Christ where Jesus is saying something to and about us and the consequences of obedience even unto the Cross.

HOLY WEEK DIRECTED RETREAT
Sun Apr 9, 6:30pm – Apr 16, 1pm
Cost \$495

OR

Thu Apr 13, 2pm – Apr 16, 1pm
Cost \$225

Register by Mon Mar 27
PSC Team



LITURGY SCHEDULE

Be the peace you seek

INCARNATIONAL CYCLE 2016–2017: ADVENT • CHRISTMAS • EPIPHANY

November	26*	Saturday	6:30 pm	Evening Prayer
	27	Sunday	10 am	1st Sunday of Advent
December	4	Sunday	10 am	2nd Sunday of Advent
	6	Tuesday	6:30 pm	Sacrament of Reconciliation
	11	Sunday	10 am	3rd Sunday of Advent
			2 pm	Cantabile Choirs
	18	Sunday	10 am	4th Sunday of Advent
	24	Saturday	7 pm	Christmas Eve Liturgy Followed by Refreshments
	25	Sunday	10 am	Nativity of the Lord
January	1	Sunday	10 am	Mary, Mother of God
	8	Sunday	10 am	Epiphany of the Lord
		Day of Eucharistic Devotion	11 am — 2 pm 2 pm*	Solemn Exposition and Adoration Communal Eucharistic Devotions concluding with Benediction

** Incense will be used in these celebrations*

