



# The Eagle

Summer 2022

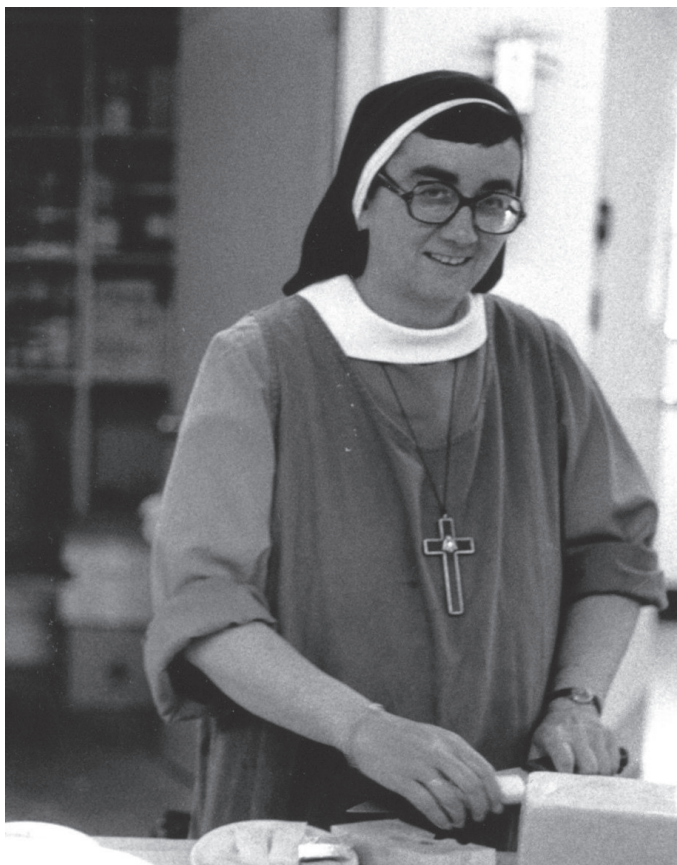
**Dear Associates, Oblates and Friends,**



*Sr. Elizabeth*

I am writing this letter on Canada Day; in a couple of hours we will be enjoying a barbecue with 10 brothers and sisters from other communities. I hope we will be able to sit outside in our beautiful gardens which are full of flowers and flowering shrubs.

We had a wonderful celebration of Easter. Fr. David Brinton, Oratory of the Good Shepherd, was with us for all the major services of Holy Week, preaching and presiding.



*Sr. Doreen working in the kitchen*

On May 1<sup>st</sup> we had a beautiful Celtic Eucharist to celebrate Sr. Doreen's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Life Profession. This was followed by a Talking Breakfast and special foods at both breakfast and dinner. (See the separate article on p. 5)

In May, Sr. Elizabeth Ann and I were supposed to travel to Wisconsin for the Leaders' Conference of the Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas (CAROA), but like so many events during the past two years, it was cancelled because of Covid, so we met on Zoom instead. I really missed the opportunity to talk to other superiors in person. We meet once a month on Zoom which has been extremely helpful as we're able to give support to one another, but it's not the same as meeting in person.

May also saw the end of our first Online Companions Program. We were sorry to say good-bye to these women we'd been meeting with for eleven months. We're still in contact with some of them. One has become a volunteer at our reception desk so we see her smiling face every week. Those of us leading the program learned a great deal about what worked well and what didn't. We have already received many enquiries for 2022-2023 and have accepted six with a total possible of eight. They come from the west coast of British Columbia to Sackville, New Brunswick in the east and cover a wide age range. At least one will be living at the convent, possibly two, so it looks like another exciting year with the Companions.

With the opening of the Guest House in March, things are beginning to seem more normal although the adage, "All things change with or without notice" still holds true. Many individuals have come to the Guest House and one large group. They all seem to enjoy our beautiful grounds and some even offer to help with weeding.

We again have a supply of Amnesty bears; the proceeds from the bears go directly to Amnesty International. Several Associates, sisters and friends

*Continued on page 2*



*Amnesty Bears*

of the Sisterhood make the bears or “bearskins”, sew them together and stuff them. We’re also selling hand-made prayer shawls, angels, rosaries, labyrinths and cards as well as books for spiritual reading.

On July first we were able to have a barbecue for members of the Anglican Religious Orders and for the Xavière Sisters whom we have come to know well. We were also joined by a patient at St. John’s Rehab, his wife and son. Several of our sisters



*Sister Elizabeth admits Brenda Hamilton as an Associate*

have been able to return to their ministry at St. John’s. Their therapy pool also reopened and a few of the sisters exercise there on Monday mornings and Thursday evenings. It’s a wonderful form of exercise especially for those who have arthritis.

Among the in-person events that were cancelled was the Oblate Triennial. We were disappointed not to see the Oblates in person but everything went well on Zoom. We even managed to receive Debra Johnston’s Initial Promises on Zoom while also Livestreaming the Eucharist for the Oblates.

We had a Taizé Evening Prayer one night and a Holden Evening Prayer another evening.

Later in the month we admitted Brenda Hamilton as an Associate while she was here for an Individually Directed Retreat. All these events have helped life to return if not to normal, at least to a “new normal”, whatever that may be.

Our gardens are beautiful and several sisters are involved in planting and weeding and watering



*Our gardens are beautiful this year*

the gardens throughout the spring, summer and fall. There’s never a lack of work to do, but I for one really enjoy it. We seem to have a pair of cardinals who call the gardens home, along with a song sparrow, a red-tailed hawk and lots of robins, house sparrows, crows, etc. I enjoy listening to their songs in the early morning when I’m working in the garden.

As many of you know, we hired M&M International to do a feasibility study for us to see if we can raise \$5.2 or \$5.5 million dollars to totally renovate or rebuild the guest house. Many individual people have been interviewed and over 70 people took part in online forums. We appreciate all of you who were interviewed or who filled out questionnaires online. We hope to have a report back from M&M in August so that we can discuss it at Chapter and decide how to move forward.

We look forward to welcoming you in the Fall.

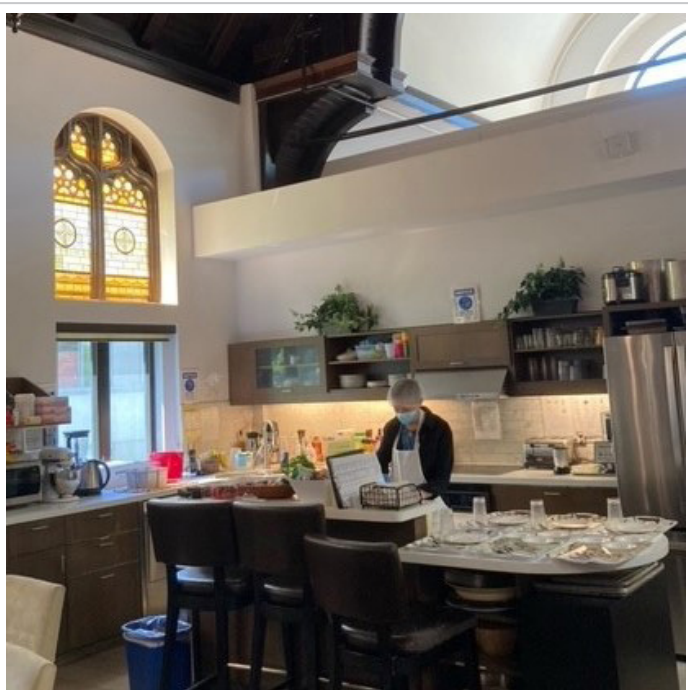
**Sister Elizabeth, SSJD  
Reverend Mother**



## My work with Kensington Hospice

Once a week for the past few years (when Covid restrictions have allowed), I have made the trip from my suburban convent to Kensington Hospice in downtown Toronto where I volunteer.

Becoming a volunteer with Kensington Hospice offered me an opportunity to be part of a wider compassionate community and to return to hospice-focused ministry. What I discovered is an expert team of health care professionals and volunteers who embody hospice palliative care at its best by supporting individuals and their family during the end-of-life journey.



*Sr. Kathryn working in the kitchen at Kensington Hospice*

After the application, interview, and screening process, I began Hospice Palliative Care Ontario training that involves a 35-hour intensive, advanced 13 module program that prepares volunteers to be front-line client-care providers. Once complete I had site-specific training, shadow shifts, and ongoing orientation sessions to explain the Kensington policies and procedures. Due to the pandemic only essential volunteer roles were available, one being in the kitchen at the hospice. I then underwent Foodsafe training to be ready for that role.

Kensington Hospice was built in 2011 to give those with terminal illness and their loved ones a better choice for end-of-life care. They do this

within a warm and inviting home-like space located in a beautiful historical building on a tree-lined street in Toronto. The warm and inviting residence is designed to respond to the needs of each resident and their family facing life-limiting illness and bereavement.

The hospice has an intriguing link to SSJD as it is on the site of the chapel of St. John the Divine built in 1888. Original architectural elements of the chapel, such as the building's large wooden beams and stained glass can still be seen today.

For many years, Kensington Health leadership lobbied the government for better access to hospice care. In 2011, Kensington Health and the Kensington Foundation made the decision to open a hospice without government funding. Generous donors and the local community gave the magnificent chapel a new purpose. The Kensington Hospice was created, taking full advantage of the existing architectural elements and history of helping those in need.

Kensington Health is globally recognized for excellence in end-of-life care. They have helped more than 1,000 people and their loved ones face death with dignity. They accomplish this by providing specialized symptom management, holistic care, and local supports, offering an unmatched suite of services under one roof, including bespoke clinical care and psychosocial supports for residents and their loved ones. Kensington Hospice also fills an essential health care gap by keeping hospitals free for urgent-care needs, easing the burden on the health care system, and offering greater access to services for the local community.

At Kensington Health, volunteers are an integral part of Kensington's culture and play an important role in the lives of people they support. Each volunteer plays an essential role in enhancing the health care experience for every person in the Kensington community. Kensington's volunteer program encompasses their hospice, the long-term care home and their community care and ambulatory services. At present they have about 180 volunteers supporting and working alongside the teams of professionals.

*Continued on page 4*

To meet growing needs, Kensington Hospice is currently expanding to create nine additional beds and a new space for a five-day community day-hospice program. When completed, the 19-bed Kensington Hospice will have nearly doubled in capacity with more areas for families to gather, increased therapy space, enhanced kitchen operations and both indoor and outdoor lounge and garden space for residents and their loved ones.

My work with Kensington Hospice has offered many meaningful connections with the people who make up the Kensington Hospice teams, board members, the residents, and their families. While SSJD has a shared past in the history of the hospice building, the heart and soul of Kensington Hospice is in their offering a loving and supportive home for those facing end of life and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of their work.

**Sr. Kathryn, SSJD**

For more information please visit:  
[kensingtonhealth.org/hospice](http://kensingtonhealth.org/hospice)

---

### **Oblate Gathering May 2022**

Every three years the Oblates of SSJD meet in person at the convent for a gathering. Given the pandemic, this was not possible in May 2022. So, we gathered on Zoom! The biggest challenge was scheduling over four time zones, as Oblates are located from coast to coast in both Canada and the United States.

We met over a four-day period, Wednesday to Saturday, beginning each day with a Celtic Morning prayer service led by an Oblate. Over this time, there were four addresses to those gathered:

- Barbara Sheppard, an Oblate, spoke to the group on “The Mysticism of the Earth”. Barbara explained that the topic emerges from the field of Eco-Spirituality, with Teilhard de Chardin (a Jesuit and paleontologist-geologist) and Thomas Berry (a Passionist Father and cultural historian), who were published in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. She explained how mind and matter are intimately connected and argued how Earth is a living, spiritual being with consciousness and soul.
- Joanne Davies, an Oblate, shared her many years of experience in spiritual care in multi-faith hospital environments. When a non-Christian staff member or family member of a patient speaks of a need for prayer, Joanne finds that providing them with a welcoming and appropriate prayer space (including the Chapel if acceptable), as part of her response of respect for their partic-

ular needs, ensures they feel heard regarding the importance of God in their healing journey.

- Yvonne Jensen, an Oblate, also shared her many years of experience as a chaplain providing spiritual care in a psychiatric multi-faith hospital environment. She found that though rituals, stories and language differed, when confronted by suffering, many patients, families and staff sought comfort and healing in relating to the deep “mystery” we call God.
- The third and final talk by Sr. Constance Joanna Gefvert addressed the evolution of music within the Sisterhood. She indicated the long connection between music and liturgy, traced the development of church and monastic music, and outlined the expansion of music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through both traditional monastic communities as well as new communities (e.g. Iona, Taizé). She also noted the influence of the music written and/or arranged by many of the Sisters in recent years.

One day was a retreat day with an introductory address by Sr. Doreen McGuff. She indicated that there were two sections to the reflection she offered. The first part was a reflection on being Oblates and the second part offered her own opinion about the meaning of the Oblate/Sister common call. She stressed the importance of contemplation but reminded us that we must become

*Continued on page 5*



“contemplative activists”. Again, she prompted us that “we are not called to be people who say prayers, or practice forms of prayer; we are called to be people of prayer – our life a prayer for ourselves, for God, for each other, and for the world.” On two separate evenings, we shared a Holden and a Taizé Evening Prayer with the Sisters through livestreaming. On the final Saturday, we shared the livestreamed Eucharist with the Sisters, and witnessed the taking and renewing of Oblate Promises through the technology of Zoom during this ser-

vice. What a blessing that was for all of us. Technology has been a wonderful support to us for a triennial like no other we have ever held. It provided a way to be together in a time when in-person gatherings are still not a risk-free option. Though we missed the intimacy that comes from being in-person with each other and the Sisters, we were grateful for Zoom technology. Although our hope is to meet in person in 2025, we will still provide the Zoom option for those unable to physically travel to the convent.

**Sandi Patterson, Oblate**

## Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sr. Doreen’s Life Profession

On May 1, 2022 the sisters of SSJD celebrated both the Feast of St. Philip and St. James and, more importantly, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sr. Doreen’s Life Profession. We celebrated the 8 a.m. Eucharist with a liturgy adapted from the Iona Community – one of Sr. Doreen’s beloved Celtic liturgies. Sr. Connie was the presider and homilist. After the Eucharist we repaired to the refectory for a special breakfast which included poached eggs, English muffins, ham and hollandaise sauce for ‘make your own’ Eggs Benedict. We also had a special menu at dinner, and cake later in the evening.

What path did Sr. Doreen take to reach her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary? At the age of 8 a little girl called Doreen McGuff was enchanted by a visitor to her Anglican Sunday School class. Later in life she would discover the visitor was an SSJD sister but at the time all Doreen knew was that the visitor shone with the love of God and the joy of giving her whole life to God. Doreen ran home and told her parents that she knew what she wanted to be – somebody who gave her whole life to God. That little girl felt the pull of God’s tenacious love and was determined to respond to it. The years between that initial call and finally entering SSJD were filled with a busy family life with her parents and siblings, confirmation, Sunday School teaching, Girl Guides, Rangers, University, as well as the musical influences of Elvis, Peter, Paul and Mary, Donovan, and Pete Seeger. Any sister will tell you that Elvis takes first place, hands down. Another passion Sr. Doreen has is for baseball, particularly



*Sister Doreen enjoying the newspaper*

the Toronto Blue Jays. Sr. Doreen’s birth sister and brother-in-law, Bev and John, gave her a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary gift—two tickets to a Blue Jays game this summer. The Jays did not win; however it was sheer delight for Sr. Doreen to see the Jays in person, not on TV.

On October 28, 1965, the now 22-year-old Doreen was admitted as a postulant to the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine and made her Life Profession of vows on May 1, 1972. During her time in community Sr. Doreen has continued to

*Continued on page 6*

*Sr. Doreen, continued from page 5*

respond to that tenacious love which has drawn, held and sustained her. She has worked in branch houses in Edmonton and Victoria, as well as at Qu'Appelle Diocesan School in Regina, St. John's Rehab and Cana Place in Toronto. Over the years she has held almost every position at the convent from postulant in Housekeeping to Assistant to the Reverend Mother.

The festivities continued in the evening of May 1, 2022 as the sisters threw a party for Sr. Doreen in the Community Room. There was a special cake, a variety of goodies, and a toast was given by Sr. Wilma and Sr. Beryl. We had a lot of laughs together especially when Sr. Wilma shared an anecdote from her branch house time with Sr. Doreen. Sr. Wilma and Sr. Doreen were seated in the chapel in such a way that they could see city traffic from the window. An articulated bus went by and Sr. Doreen, briefly forgetting where she was, exclaimed aloud how much she liked the articulated buses!

I asked Sr. Doreen what she would say to a young woman who came to her convinced of a religious vocation. First, she said, she would listen. Then she would say, "This has to be because something in you is saying this is what God wants, something is missing in my life and this is where God wants me to find it." And then she would ask, "Are you willing?"

This is what Sr. Doreen said to her sisters this May as we celebrated her 'yes' to God's call and as she remembered that little girl who wanted to give her whole life to God:

"The celebration of my 50<sup>th</sup> life profession anniversary this year on May 1, 2022 was an opportunity to share my joy and thanksgiving for all that God has gifted me with during my years in community. For my life together with my sisters in community and for the many people who have crossed my path – contributed to and encouraged me along the way. A huge thank you to God for the unconditional and tenacious love that has drawn me close to God's heart, and is fulfilling my dream as a little girl – to give my whole life to God."

**Sr. Wendy Grace, SSJD**



*Sr. Doreen and her beloved pansies*

### **Volunteers for reception**

**A**s our Guest House reopens, we could use your help at our reception desk! You'll greet visitors, answer the phone, receive mail and packages, and generally be a smiling face for SSJD.

Some light secretarial work might be in the mix. Hours are available Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., and times are negotiable.

We're right on the 42 bus line and you're welcome to join us for the noon Eucharist and dinner on your shift. We'll also supply all the coffee you care to drink!

We request you be vaccinated (at least twice) against Covid and wear a mask while working.

Interested?

Please email [volunteers@ssjd.ca](mailto:volunteers@ssjd.ca) for an application. We look forward to having you join us!





## **CONSIDER A DONATION TO THE SISTERHOOD OF SAINT JOHN THE DIVINE**

A wonderful way to link your life with our ministry and mission is by supporting the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine through your charitable donations. You can make a one-time donation, several donations throughout the year, or even becoming a monthly donor.

We are often asked to explain the different ways you can become a donor and we have gathered them below in a handy list.

### **To make a donation to the Sisterhood:**

1. By e-transfer, which sends money directly from your bank to our bank using our name, The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, at the email [accounting@ssjd.ca](mailto:accounting@ssjd.ca). It is important to note in the Message space that it is a Donation as people use e-transfers for payment purposes also. You do not need a security question.
2. By cheque sent in by mail.
3. By credit card. The safest way is to phone us rather than using email, and give us your credit card number, expiry date, and CVV.
4. By the PayPal program through the internet. There is a fee for this service.
5. By the Canada Helps program through the internet. They issue their own receipts. There is a fee for this service.
6. By a transfer of shares or gift in kind. You need to let us know by email or phone that you wish to do this, and we will send the Sisterhood's forms that enable this type of donation. There is a significant advantage in tax exemptions.

### **To become a regular monthly donor (we issue year-end receipts for monthly donations):**

1. Use the program PAR (pre-authorized remittance program), a monthly automatic deduction from your bank account. PAR is administered for us by the United Church of Canada, a donation program with low administration costs, and is easy to start, adjust or cancel at any time. If you wish to use this program, you need to let us know by email or phone and we will send you the forms.
2. Send post-dated cheques by mail.
3. Use your credit card. The safest way is to phone us rather than using email, and give us your credit card number, expiry date, and CVV, and we will set up a monthly recurring donation through Payfirma (a secure merchant service program).
4. Use the PayPal program which you set up yourself as a recurring (monthly) donation.
5. Use Canada Helps which you set up yourself as a recurring (monthly) donation. Canada Helps issues its own receipt.



If you would like more information or would like to talk to someone in the Fundraising Office please call 416-226-2201 ext. 303 or email [fundraising@ssjd.ca](mailto:fundraising@ssjd.ca)

## Companions ONLINE

As summer settles in and people gather with family and friends, my thoughts turn to the past eleven months and to the women who were part of the initial Companions Online program. As you may know, the Companions Online program is an initiative born out of the pandemic. As Covid unfolded and it became impossible to offer the residential or “in-person” Companions program, the Companions leadership team developed an online version of the Companions program. The 2021-2022 Companions Online year has now ended, and what a year it has been!



This was a year full of growth and friendship and learning. Seven women living in various parts of the world embarked on an adventure that deepened their faith and fostered new connections. They came from Canada, the US and Panama, united through the wonder of the internet, a deep love of God and a desire to explore community in a virtual setting. Among us were grandmothers, lay ministers, a recently retired dietitian, mothers, young professionals, a newly ordained priest and an archivist.

They came from various denominational backgrounds and enriched our gatherings with their perspectives, fostering new growth. Together we learned how to be community in an online environment. We learned that yes, it is possible to form meaningful relationships within the online “Zoom Room.” We laughed and thought deeply. We grew and supported each other during difficult seasons. We broadened our faith practices. It was a rich, adventurous year.

Thank you, ladies of the 2021-2022 Companions Online cohort. Thank you, leadership team. May Christ, the Way rise up to meet you as you continue along the journey. May the Maker of the sun and moon and all the stars guide your steps. Until we meet again.

**Shannon Frank-Epp, Companions Coordinator**

## The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

[www.ssjd.ca](http://www.ssjd.ca)

### St. John's Convent

233 Cummer Ave., Toronto, ON M2M 2E8

416-226-2201 FAX: 416-226-2131

email: [convent@ssjd.ca](mailto:convent@ssjd.ca)



*The Eagle* is published three times a year by the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, St. John's Convent, Toronto, ON M2M 2E8. An annual donation of \$10 to help cover the cost would be greatly appreciated. Please let us know promptly of any changes of address. The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine is a registered Canadian charity.