



## **A CASE FOR SUPPORT**

*for a Renewed Guest House*

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The Anglican Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

# A HOME FOR THE HEART

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13.2)

We acknowledge that St. John's Convent and Guest House occupy traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, Haudenosaunee and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit, and is governed by Treaty 13. We give thanks to our indigenous siblings for their stewardship of the land and pray that we may follow their example.







## Office of the Primate

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Dear friends,

January 2023

Occasionally a magazine will highlight special places in a city that are hidden or little known. One such place in Toronto is the convent and guest house of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine! It is tucked into property adjacent to St. Johns' Rehabilitation Hospital, hidden from view from the street, in the heart of a residential neighbourhood – an oasis for those who are spiritually hungry or in need of rest and prayer. In quiet faithfulness the convent and guest house offer a refuge for the weary, congregational retreats, and gatherings of Christians and others needing to reflect in a space that nurtures heart, mind and spirit – a "Home for the Heart."

Many clergy recall times at the convent in their discernment for ordained ministry through an ACPO weekend – or their ordination retreat or a few days of blissful quiet to pray. Lay women discerning their vocation have found affirmation and renewal as Companions or through the Crossroads engagement. I am deeply grateful for a community of prayer and a quiet place to call home when, as Primate, I am in Toronto.

The Guest House is a core ministry of SSJD in the midst of Toronto that serves people from across Canada and occasionally hosts international guests. Yet, like our own homes, its building needs to be maintained and periodically renewed to meet the needs of its guests and the standards required. There is an urgent need to replace the roof, the windows, and the heating/cooling system with more environmentally friendly systems, as well as to upgrade and in some cases reconstruct bedrooms, bathrooms, and meeting rooms, including new flooring. One of the most crucial reconstruction projects is a new accessible entrance into the Guest House.

These extraordinary repairs need your support. If you have visited the guest house you know the importance of its ministry. If you have not – please know that many, many guests have been served and the ministry of a quiet space for reflection amidst a community of prayer as a guest is a gift to the world.

I invite you to participate in furthering the Sisters' mission of hospitality. Please read the accompanying information and consider whether you can join in supporting the needs outlined. Donate personally. Invite your parish to consider a gift. Encourage friends and colleagues to donate.

The Convent and the Guest House are a unique gift to the church and the world, especially in a time when we need places of refuge, rest and renewal in order to face the uncertainties of our times. Please help sustain a 'Home for the Heart' at the Convent.

Yours in Christ,

The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls  
Archbishop & Primate

# THE GUEST HOUSE

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There are more than enough luxury hotels and spas, enough things to do and places to go, in our mobile, consumer-oriented Western world. Our life journey can become cluttered and chaotic, and those places don't quite hit the mark in terms of spiritual respite. Like Jesus, who sometimes stepped back and slipped away from the crowds and even from his disciples, we are invited to stop, rest, become still, and listen.



The Guest House at St. John's Convent offers a sacred place where people can come and find a place of rest and renewal, and open their hearts to the peace, love, and guidance of God. The Guest House is not an ordinary building but a spiritual home for people of all faiths and none, as well as members of the Anglican Communion from across Canada and beyond. Many have found peace and solace within these walls. It is simply a loving place for personal growth and inner light.

The hospitality offered in the Guest House is powerful in its very simplicity. Reflect – refresh – reconnect are words often mentioned by guests, precisely the gifts that the Sisters offer their guests whether in a day or overnight stay on their own private retreat – or in one of the many group retreats and workshops offered by the Sisters.

The Guest House is also open to family members of patients at St. John Rehab, hospital staff overnight during storms, refugee families, and others who need temporary accommodation. The Sisters also offer meeting/retreat space for groups of all faiths and denominations.

The Sisters host gatherings of people from local Anglican parishes and from many other denominations. They also offer workshops and retreats open to all in the "Food for the Soul" program. For the last several years they have expanded their retreats to hybrid and online formats so that spiritual seekers may attend online as well as in person – offering the Sisters and participants opportunities to meet many new friends in faith from across Canada and beyond.





The Youthful Heart



The Learning Heart



The Hungry



The Joyful Heart



The Eucharistic Heart



The Listening Heart



The Creative Heart



The Singing Heart



The Journeying Heart



Youthful & Learning

# OUR NEED

We have a life to share, and we look forward to continuing this ministry of hospitality and retreats for many years and future generations. But a Home for the Heart also requires a well-maintained and comfortable but simple physical building. The Guest House was constructed in 1956 and only partially updated in 2004 when the new Convent was built.

While the building has received loving care over the years, it also needs renewing. The Sisters had considered replacing the Guest House with a brand-new building, but desiring to minimize costs and to conserve the sound, well-built building envelope, they decided instead on renovation. In order to ensure it remains a place of hospitality for many years, the Sisters of St. John the Divine request your help for the renewal of this comfortable, homey building:

Replacing the roof, using energy-efficient, sustainable materials.	\$150,000
Replacing the old boiler and inefficient radiators with an ecologically balanced heating and cooling system. Includes replacing old ductwork and rooftop HVAC systems.	\$750,000
Redesigning the awkward entrance to the Guest House with a fully accessible entry way, including a pergola to mirror the Convent's main front entrance.	\$100,000
Replacing the double-hung windows with casement windows for easier use, better ventilation, better insulation in both cold and hot weather, and better security on the main floor.	\$175,000
Redesigning the shared washrooms and shower rooms with fully contained 3-piece bathrooms.	\$1,710,000
Upgrading accessible bedrooms and bathrooms and creating an additional new accessible bedroom/bathroom.	\$300,000
Replacing the current space-guzzling bedroom closets and large dressers with smaller and simpler furniture to maximize the simplicity and spaciousness of guest bedrooms.	\$150,000
Reconfiguring some other rooms to provide for more efficient use of space throughout the Guest House. Includes new flooring.	\$135,000
Replace 20-year-old carpeting in the halls with more modern, easier to clean and hypoallergenic flooring.	\$30,000
<b>TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS</b>	<b>\$3,500,000</b>





# A RENEWED GUEST HOUSE: FLOOR TWO





# COST SUMMARY

The following costs are the best estimates available at this time:

COSTS	
Consultants (architect, fundraising, engineering assessment, city fees, etc.)	\$500,000
Construction costs	\$3,500,000
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>\$4,000,000</b>
SOURCES OF FUNDING ALREADY RECEIVED	
The Sisterhood's contribution from their Founders' Fund	\$1,000,000
Other Gifts	\$300,000
Total received to date	\$1,300,000
<b>STILL TO BE RAISED as of January 1, 2023</b>	<b>\$2,700,000</b>

## GIFT OPPORTUNITIES

Gifts in all amounts, whether to fund a specific project or to support the campaign in general, will be deeply appreciated. Income tax receipts will be issued for all donations \$10.00 and above.

OPPORTUNITIES	GIFT AMOUNT
<b>Furnish a bedroom</b>	<b>\$ 5,000</b>
<b>Renovate and furnish a spiritual direction room</b>	<b>\$ 10,000</b>
<b>Renovate and furnish a meeting room</b>	<b>\$ 18,000</b>
<b>Reconstruct and furnish the office</b>	<b>\$ 25,000</b>
<b>Reconstruction of a single bedroom</b>	<b>\$ 30,000</b>
<b>Reconstruct a double bedroom with ensuite bath</b>	<b>\$ 35,000</b>
<b>Construct an accessible bedroom with ensuite bathroom</b>	<b>\$ 45,000</b>
<b>Accessible entrance to the Guest House</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>
<b>Replace the roof</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>

\*Cost of bedrooms includes demolition, HVAC, flooring, windows, & proportionate cost of bathrooms.

***Other opportunities are available, and we would be glad to talk with you about them.***

**Note:** Each restricted contribution towards a program or project will be used as designated with the understanding that when there is no longer a need for funding for the program or project, or when the project cannot be completed for any reason determined by the Sisterhood's Board of Directors, the restricted contributions will be used where needed most.

# THE SISTERHOOD OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine sprang to life in September 1884, when a Canadian widow, Hannah Grier Coome, made her vows to the Bishop of Toronto, along with two other novices. This vibrant religious community over its long history has ministered across Canada in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia.

In 1885, just a year after our founding, the first five Sisters had opened a hospital, a home for the aged, and a mission house, all in support of urban Toronto's most vulnerable people. These expressions of hospitality expanded over the next 138 years to include schools, an orphanage, two homes for those with intellectual disabilities, and always opportunities for guests and groups to come to the Guest House for retreat and quiet.

Our life and work continue to draw the engaged interest of many people of all ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and religions across Canada and beyond. We have been blessed with new members, retreatants, and affiliates on a regular basis, and see our mission and vision renewed as we engage fully, connecting in new ways.



*Welcome all guests as Christ himself.  
(The Rule of St. Benedict)*



*Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby meeting with former Primate  
Archbishop Fred Hiltz at St. John's Convent Guest House*

Today, we continue to reach out in teaching, healing, caring, and loving the people God brings to us. We provide active hospitality, retreats, spiritual direction, and outreach into the community. We also continue to provide spiritual care to patients, staff, and students at St John's Rehab, founded by the Sisterhood in 1936 and now part of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

***Prior to the global pandemic we welcomed over 2,500 guests annually, and we are now delighted to have our Guest House open again.***



Future development of our ministry depends on a vibrant community of Sisters committed to serving those to whom God calls us. We are enthusiastic about the development of our community even with the challenges faced by the church itself in terms of declining membership. Life in a religious order is a welcome alternative to women seeking a life of prayer and service in the midst of a self-focused and materialistic culture.

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# ALL THE COURTESY OF LOVE

Dear Friend of The Sisters,

Thank you for taking time to read the Case for Support for renewing our Guest House.

“All guests who present themselves”, wrote St. Benedict, “are to be welcomed as Christ himself ... they are to be met and treated with all the courtesy of love.” For us a vitally important expression of that courtesy is the provision of a comfortable “home for the heart”. Such comfort requires us to tend to on-going capital repairs like replacement of roofs, boilers, HVAC systems and windows. In this work we are committed to principles of efficiency and eco-friendliness. Such comfort also requires us to do upgrading with respect to bedrooms, washrooms, and meeting spaces. In this work we are committed to principles of simplicity and spaciousness. The re-design of the Guest House Entrance and Office is intended to reflect the openness of our hearts in receiving our guests, helping them to settle in, and prayerfully accompanying them throughout their stay.

This “Home for the Heart” is now the only major Anglican Retreat House in Canada and it deserves all the loving care which the Case for Support addresses. The Sisterhood has made its own gift of \$1,000,000 from their Founders’ Fund. Members of the Campaign Committee have made their gifts or pledges over a three-year period. And now we are asking you to consider a gift or pledge.

Your generous support of a renewed Guest House will enable the Sisters to continue their ministry of gracious monastic hospitality with “all the courtesy of love” for many years to come.

With sincere gratitude,

  
Sr. Elizabeth, Reverend Mother, Sr. Constance Joanna and Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Co-Chairs

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. (The Book of Alternative Services, from Ephesians 3.20)



# PLEASE PRAY WITH US

We bow our knees before God our Creator,  
from whom every family in heaven and on  
earth takes its name.

We pray that, according to the riches of God's  
glory,  
you may be strengthened in your inner being  
with power through his Spirit,  
and that Christ may dwell in your hearts  
through faith,  
as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

We pray that you may have the power to  
comprehend, with all the saints,  
what is the breadth and length and height and  
depth,  
and to know the love of Christ that surpasses  
knowledge,  
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of  
God. (Ephesians 3.14-20)



Continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in  
the prayers.

From the Baptismal Covenant, Book of Alternative Services, p. 159, quoted from Acts 2.42

# COMMENTS FROM OUR GUESTS



"It has been a time of rest, peace, and renewal, a time to rest in God and re-discover joy. Thank you for your welcome, your love, and your prayers. God works through you in so many ways." (a retreat participant)

"Thank you for such a wonderful place. I was able to gather what I needed and find peace within me." (member of a visiting youth group)

"I cannot find enough superlatives to describe the excellence of this retreat environment. Grateful for all the care and sensitivity that has gone into the creation of all this!?" (a retreat guest)

"A warm thank you for the wonderful hospitality and welcome we received from you, last Saturday. Our team of Sunday School teachers enjoyed a very special day of rest, reflection, and spiritual refreshment." (a parish Sunday School teacher)

"This facility was the most loving, accepting non-judgmental religious facility I have spent time in." (a weekend guest)

"Thank you for welcoming me to the Guest House. The warm, generous and accepting hospitality was present in the spirit of quietness and attention to detail. It was a real blessing! (a retreat guest)"

# HOW TO GIVE

You may give directly with cheque, cash, credit/debit card, and other ways. Please go to our website at [www.ssjd.ca/support-us/donate/](http://www.ssjd.ca/support-us/donate/) for more information. Be sure that your donation is clearly designated for "A Home for the Heart Campaign."

To contact us:

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine  
Attention: Fundraising Office  
Sister Doreen McGuff  
233 Cummer Avenue  
Toronto, ON M2M 2E8

You may also email or phone Sister Doreen or another sister in the Fundraising office:

[fundrasing@ssjd.ca](mailto:fundrasing@ssjd.ca)  
416-226-2201 ext. 303



# THANK YOU!



the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine  
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