

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

# A HOME FOR THE HEART



A Case for Support for a Renewed Guest House



*Artist's rendering of new Guest House Entrance*

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.



# A Message from the Honorary Chair

February 2023

Dear friends,

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. John's 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 time at the Convent in their discernment for ordained ministry through discernment weekends – 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 program. I am deeply grateful for a community of prayer and a quiet place to call home when, as Primate, I am in Toronto.

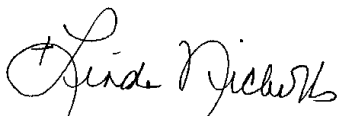
The Guest House is a core ministry of SSJD in the midst of Toronto that serves people from across Canada and occasionally hosts international guests. Yet, like our own homes, its building needs to be maintained and periodically renewed to meet the needs of its guests and the standards required. There 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 projects need your support. If you have visited the Guest House, you know the importance of its ministry. If you have not – please know that thousands of 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; Episcopal Visitor to SSJD



# The Guest House

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.

Jesus said to them, "Come away with me. Let us go alone to a quiet place and rest for a while." (Mark 6.31)

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.

# Welcome To . . .



*A Home for the Journeying Heart*



*A Home for the Listening Heart*



*A Home for the Youthful Heart*



*A Home for the Hungry Heart*



*A Home for the Learning Heart*



*A Home for the Grieving Heart*



*A Home for the Singing Heart*



*A Home for the Creative Heart*



*A Home for the Eucharistic Heart*



*A Home for the Joyful Heart*

# 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:

## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2023

REPAIRS AND RENOVATIONS	COSTS
New energy-efficient and sustainable roof	\$230,000
Replacing the old heating and HVAC systems	\$1,285,000
New fully accessible entrance to Guest House	\$150,000
New user-friendly, energy efficient, and secure windows throughout	\$200,000
Redesigning the shared “stall” washrooms and showers with 3-piece bathrooms	\$2,000,000
New fully accessible ensuite bedrooms and bathrooms	\$300,000
Upgrading bedrooms, including sprinkler, heating, and cooling	\$700,000
Reconstruction of some common rooms	\$100,000
New hypo-allergenic flooring to replace 20-year-old carpets	\$35,000
Increase in costs as of Cost Report C	\$210,000
New IT and phone technology	\$50,000
Doors and locks	\$40,000
<b>TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS</b>	<b>\$5,300,000</b>
<b>Consultant and other fees, moving/storage, furnishings (est.)</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF PROJECT</b>	<b>\$6,300,000</b>

# A Renewed Guest House – Floor One





# A Renewed Guest House – Floor Two



# Cost Summary as of January 1, 2023

<b>COSTS</b>	
Consultants (architect, fundraising, engineering assessment, city fees, moving and storage, furnishings, etc.)	\$1,000,000
Construction costs	\$5,300,000
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>\$6,300,000</b>
<b>SOURCES OF FUNDING ALREADY RECEIVED</b>	
The Sisterhood's contribution from the Founders' Fund	\$2,000,000
<b>Total pledged and received to date</b>	<b>\$2,900,000</b>
<b>STILL TO BE RAISED as of January 1, 2023</b>	<b>\$1,400,000</b>

## Opportunities for Giving

Gifts in all amounts will be deeply appreciated, whether to support the campaign in general, or to fund a specific project (as below). Larger donations may be pledged over a three-year period. Income tax receipts will be issued for all gifts \$10.00 and above.

Furnishing a bedroom	\$5,000
Refurbishing and furnishing an interview room	\$10,000
Refurbishing and furnishing a meeting room	\$15,000
Reconstruction and furnishing of the office	\$25,000
Reconstruction of a bedroom	\$30,000
Reconstruction of a bedroom with ensuite bath	\$45,000
Reconstruction of an accessible bedroom with ensuite bath	\$50,000
The new accessible entrance	\$100,000
The new roof	\$150,000

*\*Cost of bedroom reconstruction includes demolition, HVAC, windows, & proportionate cost of shared 3-piece bathrooms. Cost of bedroom furnishing includes furniture, built-ins, flooring, drapes and blinds.*

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

# 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.

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.



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*

*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.

Our anticipation of the continued health of the community has been strengthened by the response of the many women who attend our July program called Women at a Crossroads, and by those who participate each year in our Companions program – some in person, some online.

The Sisters also actively seek to serve the Church by preaching and teaching in the parishes, serving on diocesan or national committees, teaching and studying at Toronto School of Theology, and in many other ways connecting with those who are seeking a more meaningful life. A new staff position, Director of Operations, provides a good deal of support to free sisters up from administrative duties for direct involvement in our ministries.



# 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

Archbishop Fred Hiltz  
Co-Chair

Sr. Constance Joanna  
Co-Chair



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 <https://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:

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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

Charitable Registration No. BN 11925 4266 RR0001



## THANK YOU!

A HOME FOR THE HEART

