



The Eagle

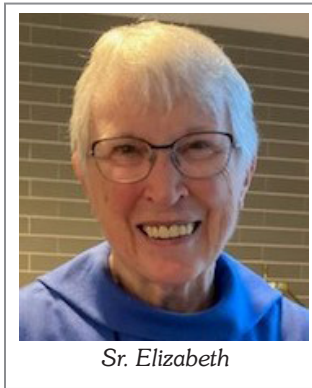
Advent/Christmas 2024

Dear Associates, Oblates and Friends,

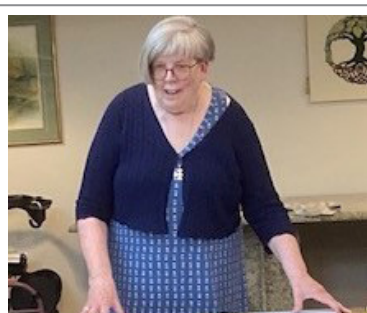
It's hard to believe how much has happened at the convent in the last few months. We had our Annual General Chapter for 9 days at the end of August; each day began with the Eucharist at 8:30 am and ended with Evening Prayer at 5 pm.

We had some very intense discussion on the ministries of our Community led by Sr. Brenda with Fr. Francois Diouf, OSB, the President and Chief Clinical Officer of the Southdown Institute north of Toronto, as a listening ear and facilitator.

We also had an important discussion led by Br. Reginald, OHC, on the governance of the community, the election of a new Reverend Mother and transition planning. My term of office ends on May 6th, 2025. We also had some fun organized by Sr. Brenda and assisted by Sr. Wendy Grace. It was a scavenger hunt which gave us lots of exercise as the clues led us from north side of the convent to the grounds south of St. John's Rehab. It was a beautiful sunny day and we had ice-cream treats as rewards for our "hard work". It was really a lot of fun.



Sr. Elizabeth



The Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith

Chapter was followed by our Long Retreat. Our oblate, the Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith led the retreat this year on the theme, "Christ our Host, Christ our Guest". It was about hospitality, to one another, to our

guests, to the strangers we meet wherever we are. Each session included prayers to use, an icon to focus on (*Visio Divina*) and a scripture passage to reflect on. She also gave us suggestions for "breath

prayers" as a way of becoming more aware of the Spirit or Breath of God already present within us. The retreat ended with a challenge to put together a table-sized puzzle; each "puzzle piece" was a piece of paper coloured by one of us. When finished, it spelled "All are Welcome".



The alto section of the choir

On September 8th, the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, we celebrated our 140th Anniversary of the founding of the Sisterhood. Although it was



Archbishop Colin Johnson

a Sunday when we usually celebrate the Eucharist at 8:00 am, we changed the time to 10:00 am so more people could attend the service. Archbishop Colin Johnson preached and presided, and

our friend, Stephanie Martin, was able to replace Dan Norman on the organ, as he was unable to come at the later time. The Eucharist was followed by brunch in the refectory. It was a wonderful celebration.

The previous day Sr. Elizabeth Ann and I attended the 140th Anniversary of the Order of the Holy Cross which took place at St. Hilda's Church in Toronto.

September/October brought holiday time for several of us, either at our cottage, Bally Croy, where we could enjoy the warm weather and/or the beautiful autumn leaves, or at the convent,

Continued next page

or for one sister, in Detroit. When Sr. Elizabeth Ann and I were at Bally Croy, we invited The Rev. Susan Sheen to preside at a Eucharist in our chapel to which we invited Associates and Oblates in the area and members of Christ Church, Port Sydney which is just across the road from our cottage. The chapel was full to over-flowing. The service was followed by tea and goodies which were enjoyed by everyone. It was such a success that we plan to make it an annual event.

In September there were two CAROA (Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas) events: I attended the meeting of the Superiors of Anglican Religious Orders (Sept. 16 – 20) at the Community of St. John the Baptist in Mendham, NJ and a week later Sr. Brenda and Sr. Florence attended the Formation meeting (Sept 30 – Oct 4) also in Mendham, NJ. All of us enjoyed meeting with members of other CAROA communities and the opportunity to share our joys and concerns.

We learned that Covid is still present among us when three of our sisters came down with Covid one after another. All three are fully recovered.

All the work of the community is back to a normal rhythm following the break for Chapter and the Long Retreat: choir practice, gardening, meetings of Directors, Council, planning fall activities, etc. Sr. Connie was invited to attend the Provincial Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario which met in Sault Ste Marie, Sept 24 – 26. Her main role was as chaplain, but she was also able to tell them about the Sisterhood and the renovations that are taking place.

We enjoyed having many guests join the community for Thanksgiving Dinner on October 14th preceded by the noon Eucharist. On October 19th Sr. Wendy Grace gave a Quiet Day on the theme of Women's Wisdom which was much appreciated by all those who attended. She has also begun a two year course in Spiritual Direction

called Prairie Jubilee which she is really enjoying. Sr. Jocelyn and Sr. Kathryn helped the Rev. Canon Joanne Davies give Lay Anointers' Training in Cobourg. It was a very long day for them but they both enjoyed it.

Sr. Florence has been sharing with a branch of the World Community of Christian Meditation which meets in Toronto. She continues to offer meditation on ZOOM on Sunday evenings. Sr. Connie has been presiding and preaching at several different churches in the diocese. We have had a number of groups using the Conference Room, especially on Saturdays. It's wonderful to host guests in the convent even when the Guest House is closed.

Four sisters attended the Bishop's Company Dinner on October 18th. Unfortunately I was away on holiday, but the sisters who went really enjoyed the speaker, Anthony Morgan, an award-winning science communicator, Ph.D researcher, startup founder and game designer who has hosted dozens of TV programs. He's also co-host of *The Nature of Things* on CBC Television. He's obsessed with changing how people see, think and talk about science in their everyday lives.

Another exciting event is Sr. Anne's new ministry with Sistema Toronto, a social development program, using ensemble-based music education to transform the lives of children. The goal is to build stronger communities by supporting children from marginalized neighbourhoods overcoming poverty, empowering them to grow and thrive as engaged citizens and future leaders. Sr. Anne volunteers as a Teaching Assistant for the String Program.



Sr. Anne plays her violin

October ended with a visit from Bishop Andrew Asbil and his wife, Mary, to celebrate the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude and to join us for supper and community time with the Sisters. It's the first time we have been able to do that since the beginning of Covid.

I would like to wish you all many blessings for Advent and the Christmas season.

Sr. Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, SSJD
Reverend Mother



Caroa members at the 2024 conference

An Advent Reflection

Last year during the Christmas season what stood out for me was the journey of the Magi, and I have pondered this story over this past year for my own Advent journey in 2024. Their journey took them a considerable length of time, through many experiences of mountain tops and valleys and deserts just like my own journey in life. I believe Advent is a journey that lies before us and within us, pointing to a star for which the wise ones from the East are only icons of ourselves. We follow a star and are called to shine like stars for others, to lead both ourselves and others to that Someone whose unconditional and tenacious love can change the world.

The story of the Magi, the wise ones, is so familiar we may not pause to think deeply about it, but if you really stop and think about it, it's kind of an out of the ordinary story, full of adventure and plots, extraordinary signs and colourful people who come from a mysterious place. The Magi were committed to following the star wherever it led them, whatever it meant, no matter what. They were wise, knew evil when they saw it (Herod asking them to return and let him know where the new king was) and quick and smart enough to plan another route to avoid the evil. Their resilience and determination, their commitment and trust in that commitment, all the preparation they did before they set out as they studied and pondered, I believe gave them the gift of discernment. For them and for us that star pointed to the only one who was truly worth our worship, our gifts, and our collective futures. For the Magi and for you and for me, stars can have a message, one that is associated with guidance, enlightenment, and spirituality. They were and are celestial beacons of God's presence that illuminate the darkness, offering hope and inspiration to the Magi and to us. Moreover, those stars I believe offer energy, dreams, and aspirations.

I began to wonder what the story about following a star might mean to me in my ordinary day to day life. There are probably signs of God's presence all around me, but I am sure that I miss some of those signs, and I find it hard to notice signs of God's presence in the daily round of things and in the messes of daily life and of the world. I want to follow God, whatever that looks like and wherever it leads, but I know how often



confusion and distractions get in the way. I also know that sometimes fear holds me back when circumstances lead me into unlikely and out of the way places even when I know that God is present there, and everywhere.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them." (Isaiah 9:2) The Star of Advent calls us to hope in the promise that God is calling us to greater things and will be with us as we live them. Joan Chittister said: "Hope is the recall of good in the past, on which we base our expectation of good in the future, however bad the present. It digs in the rubble of the heart for memory of God's promise to bring good out of evil and joy out of sadness and, on the basis of those memories of the past, take new hope for the future." "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Isaiah 40:31)

Friends, a star is shining in the sky. In a world that is bleak and frustrated and tired and worn out, there is a glimmer of possibility of something new. Unknown. And if we open our lives up to it, if we take one step and then another, and if we invite some friends along with us, if we let that nudge from God work in our lives, it just might change everything, one little step at a time! Hope is a strong gift.

What is your journey going to be like this Advent? "What can I give God, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a Magi, I would do my part; yet what can I give God? Give God my heart." (from Christina Rossetti's hymn, *Common Praise* #122)

Sr. Doreen, SSJD

News of Central & Eastern Associates



Richard Coutinho is admitted as an Associate

Life was rather quiet in the convent as we waited for our building permits and the start of renovations. Finally, they began at the end of July. We expect them to be completed in the summer of 2025 so we will be able once more to welcome Associates and

others to spend time with us. The closure has been very difficult for Associates for whom the convent is their spiritual home, however we know you will all be pleased at the renovations.

In the central region, many people learn about Associates when they visit the convent for a retreat, Quiet Day or a parish event. They may then express a desire to have a connection with the Sisterhood and learn about the Associate vocation and what it offers them. There is a period of discernment of approximately one year while the Discerner and Associate Director get to know one another. The Discerners are taught different kinds of prayer, learn about the monastic life, receive our Eagle newsletter, and can borrow books from the Associate Library; they are also encouraged to visit the convent. At the end of the year the Discerner decides if the connection is leading them into a deeper relationship with God and commits to pursuing the Associate vocation. Usually the Discerner is admitted as an Associate and receives the Associate cross at a Eucharist at the convent. However If the Discerner does not live close to the convent, the admission service can be held at the Discerner's church.

I continue my ministry to Associates and Discerners through email, snail mail, telephone calls and in-person visits. Do call and email us with prayer requests for your families and friends. This can be done by emailing prayersplease@ssjd.ca. I encourage everyone to check out our website www.ssjd.ca for reflections, homilies and news of upcoming events. We had an Advent Quiet Day on December 2, 2023 and the Lenten Quiet Day was

on February 24, 2024. The latter, Praying with Icons, was led by Sr. Wendy Grace. In mid-March Sr. Elizabeth Ann spent time in Sudbury meeting with Associates and friends. After Easter she met with Ottawa Associates and then continued on to Montreal where she conducted a Quiet Day on The Age of the Spirit.

We have had six admissions since the last report:

- **Julia Ford** of Grenville Ferry, NS, November 2023
- **Cathy Clark** of Cold Water, ON on January 12, 2024
- **Chris Silvermoon Cutler** of Smiths Falls, ON on May 10, 2024
- **Richard Countinho** of Toronto, ON on July 20, 2024
- **Kandice Cann** of NB, on Aug 18, 2024
- **Jacob Rowe** of NB on September 22, 2024

Our 2024 Advent Quiet Day will be on November 30, 2024. Associate Nancy Anne Purre will give a journal workshop 'Getting to Know you'. This is an in-person event.

The Epiphany Tea for Associates in the GTA will be held on Saturday, January 11, 2025. We hope many Associates will join us to celebrate the occasion. Invitations will be emailed closer to the date.

Many blessings as you prepare for the return of the Christ Child.

Sr. Helen Claire, SSJD
Director, Central & Eastern Associates



Cathy Clark is admitted as an Associate

Western and Overseas Associate News

With gratitude for the blessings of having the opportunity of working with and for the Western and Overseas Associates on behalf of SSJD, I share some news since the last Advent/Christmas edition 2023.

events so that those of you in distant places can join us – notably the Music and Murder play and our celebration on September 8th giving thanks for our 140th anniversary year.

You will note from this *Eagle* that demolition and construction are underway in the guest house, and we are all looking forward to the progress



Diane Armstrong



Bonny McIntosh



Amy Wong



Diane Persson



Elaine Chatwin

This year there have been six admissions of new Associates!

They are: **Diane Armstrong** on February 11, 2024, from Salt Spring Island, BC; **Carmen Chung** on May 26, 2024, from Hong Kong (photo unavailable); **Bonny McIntosh** on June 8, 2024, from Winnipeg, MB; **Amy Oi Mei Wong** on August 7, 2024, from Hong Kong; **Diane Persson** on September 25, 2024, from Victoria, BC; **Elaine Chatwin** on November 17, 2024, from Langley, BC.

We continue having ZOOM Quiet Days in Advent and Lent. Over the years these have drawn the Associates themselves closer together and many have expressed feelings of being drawn closer to the SSJD community as well. For those without access to ZOOM/ internet I try to send reflections for them. With the more relaxed freedom post-pandemic, many of the different areas or friendship zones have been able to get together for common events such as local quiet mornings or days; ZOOM morning coffee fellowship; gatherings for admissions of new Associates with fellowship afterwards, or some other special event, especially around SSJD special celebrations such as September 8th, our foundation day, or May 6th, St John's Day. You will note in the special anniversaries and statistics page of this *Eagle* that some Associates have died. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. Some Associates were able to gather to give thanks for their life and ministry.

From the convent we have live-streamed several

and then the completion and re-opening of the guest house. Daily we are entertained by big trucks coming and going! Now that autumn is here, that entertainment is accompanied by an ever-changing display of trees in their fall colours.

It is such a privilege to hear from Associates, to keep up with their news. Thank you for keeping in touch. It is also a privilege and honour to hear from the families of some of our elderly Associates who are no longer able to keep in touch. I appreciate this.

Our Oblate, Dorothy Dahil, is the champion! She looks after a great deal of the real organization in keeping information up to date, newsletters emailed, arranging ZOOM quiet days, a lot of communication with the convenors, and some of the Associates, especially those who are ill or in need of prayer and conversation. I am very grateful for all that Dorothy does. The Associates all know her and love and appreciate her as well.

As this *Eagle* comes to you, we are looking forward to Advent and Christmas. As the Magi, icons of you and me, may your journey to Christmas be a search like theirs, following a star to find that someone whose unconditional and tenacious love can change the world. A blessed Advent and Christmas to you.

Sr. Doreen, SSJD
Director, Western & Overseas Associates

Associate Milestones 2023 - 2024

Special Anniversaries

(Calendar Year 2024)

25 years: Rev Lesley Barclay, Rachael Boles, Ven Linda Borden-Taylor, Sarah Clarke, Jenny Collis, Joyce Coreau, Rev Anne Day, Jayne Edgely, Rev Carol Hardie, Rev Dana Johnston, Elizabeth Jolly, Rev Mary Lewis, Jean Meldrum, Dolores Patterson, Jacquie Reimer, Leora Splett, Linda Wagstaff, Canon Anne Wightman

30 years: Audrey Bailey, Margaret Boulter, Rev Michelle Bull, Ven Linda Hill, Elizabeth Roberts, Rev Ann Smith, Margeurite Van Die, Ruth Welham-Umphrey

35 years: Charlotte Davidson, Rene Jamieson, Vanessa Rottner, Magdala Grace Rutherford, Rev Janet Sidey, Ven James Sutton, Catherine Tordoff, Mark Weymouth

40 years: Hilary Fisher, Ruth Padmore, Rev Kay Richardson, Laura Roome, Rev Alexander Thomas, Paula Thomas, Nancy Wigen.

45 years: Rev Dennis Frayne, Lorelette Knowles, Rev Walter Knowles, Sheila Martin, Bp Philip Poole, Rev Daniel Van Alstine, Rev Joan Waters-Garner

50 years: Kathryn Berryhill, Marilyn Jackson, Elizabeth King, Bp Gordon Light, Elizabeth Murray, Rev Bryon Nash, Lynda Nash, Rev E Christine Ross

61 years: Barbara Hicks, Mary Walker

62 years: Rev Joyce Hilton, Vivian Hilton, Ven Peter O'Flynn

64 years: Lois Powell

65 years: Rt Rev Barry Curtis, Rev Canon Thomas James, Rev Canon William Rainey

66 years: Rev Donald Anderson

69 years: Very Rev Duncan Abraham

Deaths

David Sinclair, Leduc, AB (Mar 13, 2010)

Margaret Reid, Lindsay, ON (Jan 10, 1953)

Lillian Porter, Port Rexton, NL (June 18, 1989)

Phyllis Beach, Wilsonville, ON (Jan 21, 1988)

Rev Bruce Cowley, Victoria, BC (Mar 4, 1979)

Constance Anderson, Kelowna, BC (Aug 17, 2013)

Daphne Lynch, Toronto, ON (Feb 16, 2011)

Eileen Beatty, Toronto, ON (Aug 3, 1996)

Rev. Fred Roberts, Hannon, ON (May 30, 1960)

Marjorie Townson, St. Thomas, ON (Feb 13, 1989)

Sally Raymond, Port Hope, ON (Sept 25, 1977)

Fr. Roy Nixon, Brockville, ON (Mar 1, 1956)

Rev Joanne Katon, Miami, FL (Feb 8, 1994)

Margaret Ormrod, Deep River, ON (Feb 22, 1976)

Anne LaRue, Winnipeg Beach, MB (Sept 21, 1989)

Mavis Hristow, Toronto, ON (May 11, 2013)

Judith McPherson, Bridgewater, NS (Nov 1, 1987)

Doris Saunders, Barrie, ON (Oct 20, 1956)

Rev Judy Allen, Brampton, ON (Nov 26, 2005)

Yarn, please



Sister Louise with many of the toques, hats, beanies and ski bands she has made so far this year. These will be distributed to various agencies throughout North York e.g. The Women's Shelter and for the homeless and poor. Please help to support this ministry with donations of balls of medium weight, washable yarn. They will be put to good use. Many thanks!

Sacred Space: A new challenge!



Crane and HVAC systems

In our last issue I talked about the importance of sacred space, and how our renewed Guest House will enable us to continue our ministry of hospitality for many years to come.

In August we were thrilled to announce, in our online publications, that we have met our \$6.3 million goal, having raised even more than that (\$6.4 million). That includes \$2 million from the Sisters' endowment fund.

We were sailing along on a river of joy and thanksgiving until we discovered in October that there was an urgent need to replace the Guest House heating system, which we had planned only to upgrade.

The initial Scope of Work for the renovations included individual HVAC units which guests could control themselves as well as individual controls on the perimeter heating (radiators which are fed by the boiler in cold weather). It was determined that the boiler would be workable for several more years.

During the demolition phase, however, it was discovered that the pipes feeding the radiators were too old and rusted to be able to add valves for individual controls, and the radiators themselves were rusted out in many places and no longer efficient.

At the most recent Owner-Architect-Contractor meeting it was noted that if we are ever going to replace the 68-year-old heating pipes and

radiators, it would have to be now before any further work is done in framing. Additional demolition will be necessary, as will additional asbestos abatement. We have received some indication that this is going to be a very expensive project which will likely involve several hundred thousands of dollars if we go ahead, but we cannot know the actual cost until architectural plans are drawn up for a new heating system and until the contractor has then priced the work.

At this point our Board of Directors has authorized only the expenditure for the architectural plans. Once we have received the actual cost, we will then have to decide whether to go ahead.



HVAC units ready to be installed

However, not to go ahead with the heating system replacement means that the "new" Guest House will not meet two of our major goals: one (which our guests bring up repeatedly) is to give our guests individual control over the heat in their rooms. The other is our need for a more efficient, economical, and environmentally friendly system.

If we decide to go ahead, it will also mean a 2-3 month delay in opening the Guest House (and the additional cost of the contractors for a longer period is part of what drives the cost up).

We will need to make a final decision before the end of the year, and we will keep you posted through our website and email news updates.

We thank you for the amazing generosity that has allowed us to get this far. We would love to hear from you if you think you could help with this additional major expense. If you, or others you know, could consider a further donation, please be in touch with Sr. Connie (cj@ssjd.ca).

**Sr. Constance Joanna, SSJD
Capital Campaign Co-Chair**

What does it mean to be an Oblate of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine?

Our Oblates are Christian women who discern a vocation to make a self-offering to God alongside and in partnership with the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine. This self-offering includes a life of prayer (liturgical, intercessory, and contemplative) and service both to the Sisterhood and to the Oblate's local community. It is a life of contemplative prayer and active service for a woman who has a deep longing to live the monastic life in the world.

After letting the Reverend Mother and/or the Oblate Director know of her desire, a woman receives an application form and becomes a Discerning Oblate for a 1-2 year period. During this time she discerns with her Spiritual Director, a support group, and with the Oblate Director. Her questions about the process are answered by the Oblate Director. She forms her own special Rule of Life, with her promises of prayer and service. She makes a commitment to live a monastic rhythm of life that is an expression of her deepest desires with regard to her relationship with God. It reflects her particular way of living out the gospel in partnership with SSJD, in the tradition of St. Benedict, and rooted in her own baptismal covenant. After the discernment period, if she wishes to continue and is accepted by the Community, she is then invited to make her Initial Promises as an Oblate; she renews these promises each year. After three years, if she still feels called to be an Oblate, she can request to make Life Promises or can choose to make yearly promises.

Our Oblates support one another through prayer and a monthly ZOOM gathering. They also have residential time at the Convent of at least two weeks per year and join the Sisters in our life of worship together and help in our ministry. Some also volunteer at the Convent on a regular basis.

Each Advent our Oblates put together an Advent Booklet of daily reflections for each day. The theme for this year is "Waiting in Silence". These reflections can be sent directly to your email each day. Please check out our website (www.ssjd.ca) to sign up for this offer. If you are not on email this booklet is available in the Convent book room.

The Oblates, as a group, also gather at the Convent every three years for a time together with the Community. This triennial is a joyous

opportunity for Oblates to get to know each other better and to deepen their spiritual life.



Julie Foster, left, renews her Oblate Promises

It was with great pleasure that our Oblate Julie Foster, while on her residential time here at the Convent in September, renewed her Oblate Promises for another year. While with us Julie entered into our rhythm of prayer, worked beside the sisters in the jobs she was given to do, prayed the Daily Offices with us and joined us at the Eucharist. She enjoys being part of a supportive community that prays for each other and sustains each other. When an Oblate is on residential time she gets to know the Sisters and our life a little better and at the same time we get to have a closer relationship with her. Most importantly our mutual relationship with God grows and is enriched.

As Oblates, these women have made a promise to God within the wider community of the Sisterhood that allows them to live in a more intentional and accountable way to themselves, their parish church, the communities in which they live, their family and friends. These women live the life of a monastic in the world, a witness to their baptismal covenant and God.

**Sr. Dorothy Handrigan, SSJD
Oblate Director**

St. John's Rehab Spiritual Care

This past year Sisters Florence, Kathryn, and Brenda have brought their gifts, skills and compassion to patient care through listening, being with, sharing prayers and worship. We all seek to take part in providing whole care of body, mind, and spirit.

We are grateful for the presence of Fiona Strachan, a member of the pastoral care team in her parish and an SSJD associate, who ably visits patients on Tuesday afternoons. We are also grateful to have Joy Alloway, an Oblate, visiting patients one day a week. Sue Omar, a member of the St. John's Rehab (SJR) Volunteer Association, helps me with data input for my administrative work. She gives me the gift of time, to give to patient's needs.

Spiritual Care in St. John's Rehab oversees the Bigwood Patient Library and the Angel Cupboard. Our Angel Cupboard is cared for by Jane Winstanley, an SSJD Associate. We accept book donations of new publications, popular titles, or classic titles. Mysteries and thrillers are in demand, and we are always in need of magazines. Clothing and toiletry donations supply the Angel Cupboard to respond to the needs of patients. If anyone has inquiries about donations, please contact Spiritual Care in the hospital.

Every Sunday, we have our Healing Eucharist in the Chapel. Patients tell us, with tears and smiles, how strengthened and uplifted they are by the worship. The Chapel of Our Lady and Saint John is open 24/7 and has visitors from all faiths, and none, seeking a time of quiet, solace and prayer.

After an absence of three years due to the pandemic, we were able to plan an Ash Wednesday service. The staff told us their time was too limited to attend a service. We decided to offer prayers with the distribution of ashes in the chapel for two hours in the morning and again in the afternoon. This was a hospital reshaping of Ashes-to-go.

The Christmas holiday season was a time of gift giving to all our patients. Accompanied by happy seasonal music we walked around the hospital wearing elvish hats and ringing bells. Patients and families loved this time of joy, fun and giving. They often thanked us with a blessing. In days following we had gifts of sweets and savouries from the



A service in the chapel

Sisterhood for staff, all delivered on a decorated cart. Gratitude abounded and was good for us all. And to further celebrate, we had a Carol Service in the chapel. Patients loved it.

We had five wonderful students earlier in the year for the Advanced Pastoral Care course. All women! This September five new students registered, all men this time! The University of Toronto course will run in St. John's Rehab until the end of April 2025.

I remain, as always, grateful to be the chaplain in St. John's Rehab. As of November 1, my journey of retirement begins. In what I have named a transition time I will be in the hospital part time until April 30, 2025.

The greater story is that my heart and soul have been warmed, inspired, and challenged, all for the good, by my work in St. John's Rehab, most especially by all the wonderful people and relationships. I shall never be the same again. It has been a time of gladness in vocation.

Being with the sisters in ministry has brought me closer to the person God knows me to be. I am writing this report filled full of something far beyond gratitude for the decision the sisters made in 2013, to welcome me as the Chaplain in SJR.

The Rev. Canon Joanne Davies
Priest-Chaplain
Spiritual Care Coordinator
St. John's Rehab Program
at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Companions Year Two

As a new Companions year begins, we have an exciting development to share with you. During the final gathering for last year's program, the cohort unanimously asked the leadership if they could continue on as a group for a second year. The leadership team and I had such fun brainstorming topics and ideas with the Companions and I am pleased to share that the 2024-2025 Companions year is "year two" of last year's cohort. The cohort consists of the same participants as last year (with the exception of one, who has enrolled in graduate studies). This special "year two" focuses on Anglican spirituality and features classes from guest speakers as well as from the Companions themselves. Topics for the year include the Book of Common Prayer, Theology of the Liturgy, Ignatian spirituality, and Anglican Music. The Companions will also learn about Anglican writers and thinkers throughout history up to and including our present time. It promises to be an exciting year!

Let me re-introduce you to this year's Companions cohort:



Dawn



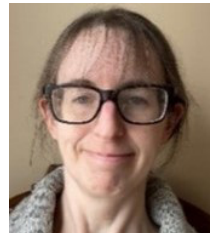
Elizabeth



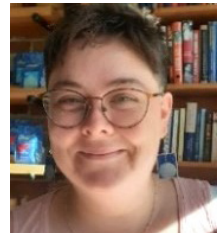
Gwedhen



Judith



Kate



Magdalena

Dawn has an early background in the United Church and has more recently been drawn to Anglicanism. Her home church now is St Paul's Bloor Street, Toronto. She is eager and thirsty to learn, and first experienced the Sisterhood's welcome and the opportunity for spiritual growth here through a personal retreat five years ago.

Elizabeth is a wife, grandmother and retired nurse from Ontario, and now living in Nova Scotia. She and her husband worked with CUSO, living in Nigeria for two years. She appreciates travel, the arts and quality time with family and friends. In her retirement, Elizabeth likes to read scripture, pray and journal.

Gwedhen I have had a long connection with the Sisterhood, enjoying many times of retreat and discernment. Through my association with them, I have discovered myself to be a contemplative. I am hoping to discern becoming an oblate over the next year. I live in Peterborough County in Ontario, Canada, with my mother, being a care giver and companion to her. I enjoy reading, studying, contemplating and meditating. I also like to cook, dance, and listen to music. This is my second year as a Companion, and, having learnt much from my first year, I hope to continue learning about my God, the Church. and myself.

Judith After a joyful 10 months as Companion-in-residence at the Convent last year, Judith describes her introduction to monastic Community life as a most powerful, life-changing adventure. Now back at home in rural Nova Scotia, she'll continue Companions on-line this fall. Judith is deeply committed to her faith, having served for decades in multiple leadership roles in her United Church and Pastoral Charge and as church musician. A self-described life-long learner, she plans to enjoy a dive into theological study after retiring recently from a long career in writing and research centred on arts, heritage, and culture.

Kate is a rural family doctor, doing both hospital work and primary care in a very small community on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. She is a practising Anglican with a lifelong fondness for liturgical worship and a newfound interest in contemplative prayer.

Magdalena is a voracious reader, and has experience studying and teaching in English, French, and German abroad. Growing up on a hobby farm in Eastern Ontario instilled a love of animals, and now she has a Newfoundland-St Bernard puppy.

If you feel so inclined, we would appreciate your prayers as the Companions embark on this new adventure! With thanks,

Shannon Epp, Companions Coordinator

The Companions Program

September 2025 – July 2026

The **residential Companions** program is an immersive opportunity to experience a contemporary monastic community rooted in the Benedictine tradition. It is open to women aged 21 and up regardless of Christian denomination.

Companions live, work, and pray alongside the sisters, learning from them but also sharing each companion's own gifts with the sisters and their ministries. They will:

- Learn to cultivate peaceful and creative ways of living in a diverse intentional community
- Appreciate silence and solitude as well as community and service for a healthy life
- Put down deep roots of spiritual intimacy with God and each other
- Develop a personal path to ongoing spiritual growth
- Discern individual gifts and vocations.



**Application start and end
(both programs):**

Opens January 1, 2025 –
Closes May 15, 2025



Open to women of all Christian expressions, **Companions Online** is an opportunity to become “monastics in the world,” living a Benedictine rhythm of prayer, work, study, and recreation. Online Companions learn to develop practices that support and nurture their spiritual life from the comfort of their homes.

They meet regularly for classes and discussion groups, and commit to times of personal prayer at home. They share in book studies, participate in online worship and screen films relevant to spiritual growth and self-understanding. Online Companions also develop spiritual disciplines that follow the liturgical year.

Cost:

Residential Companions: sugg. \$100.00/month.

Companions Online: sugg. \$50.00/month.

If cost is a hindrance, assistance is available.

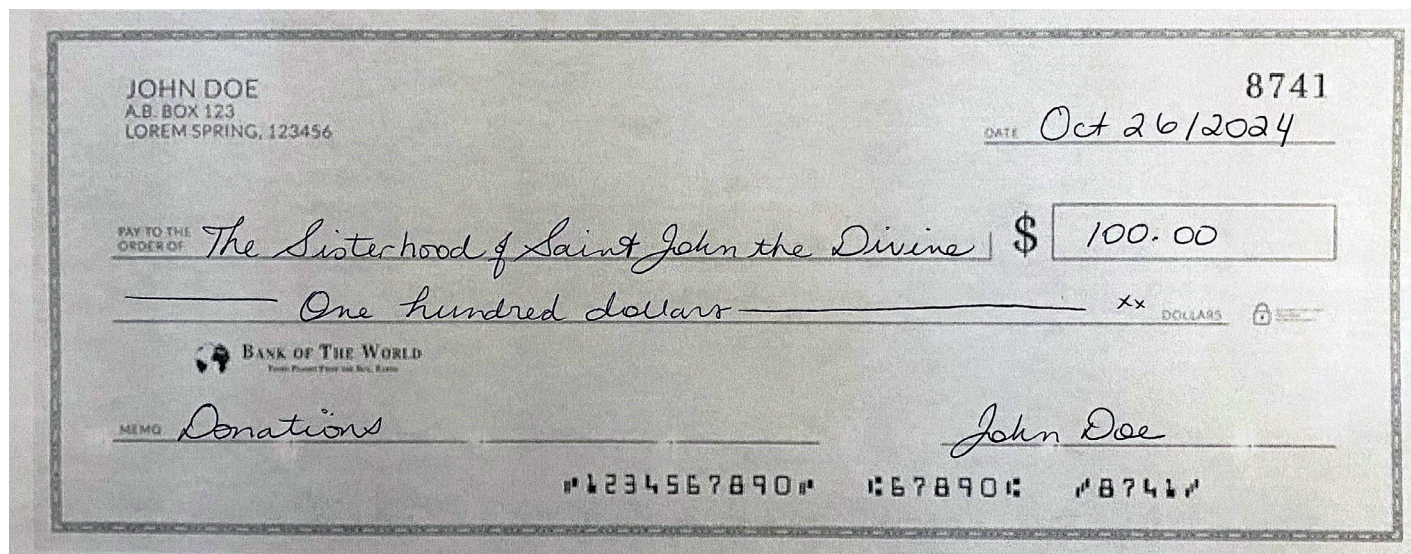
To learn more about either program, or to apply, email

Shannon Epp, Program Coordinator, at
companions@ssjd.ca, or phone St. John's Convent:
416-226-2201, ext. 342

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

Note from the Fundraising Office

Thank you for supporting us and our ministries. Please remember to use the Sisterhood's full name when writing cheques or e-transfers: **The Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine**. The banks are becoming strict about how cheques are written.





Christmas Greetings from the Sisters



Front row: Sisters Jocelyn, Sarah Jean, Wilma, Beryl and Jessica

Back row: Sisters Florence, Doreen, Dorothy, Kathryn, Anne, Elizabeth (Rev Mother)
Helen Claire, Louise, Wendy Grace, Brenda, Margaret Ruth, Elizabeth Ann



The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

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