

JCoLT newsflash

March 2024



Dear Companions,

In January our JCoLT members gathered at Mary MacKillop Place for our annual face to face meeting.

As a leadership team we have reflected on how we remain relevant and sustainable and also strengthen our relationship with the Sisters. We are very aware of our responsibilities as a face of the Josephite charism and of the way that we work to remain grounded in the Gospel and maintain a Josephite heart.

Just as the Sisters are undergoing changes, so, too, are we as Companions. This has involved discussion that began 12 months ago with the Congregational Leadership Team and the General Manager of the Sisters of St Joseph and is ongoing. This involves looking at how we function to ensure that we are conforming to the expectations of the Congregation in this world of accountability and compliance.

In light of adapting to circumstances to be relevant in today's world we now have an established E-Companions group. This is comprised presently of Qld Companions gathering online for reflection and discussion, many of whom are living in isolated places, yet remaining Companions in their area. E-Companionship will allow people from different states (and even countries) to gather and share faith and life regularly.

Two webinars (online gatherings) are planned for 2024: one Companion Leaders' on May 25th and another to celebrate our Companions' Day on August 31st, with a focus on our adopted Companion, Annie MacKillop. Hopefully many can be involved in these events. (See attached flyers)

Succession planning is also in place so that we can continue to nurture 'new life' on JCoLT and enable others to be involved in leading this great Josephite Companion movement. Mary Hemmings has stepped back from being Chairperson of JCoLT after many years in this role but will remain on the Team during this time of transition. Pauline McGuire has graciously accepted the responsibility of Chairperson.

We also warmly welcome Bernadette Roche (QLD) to our JCoLT team; see her bio in this newsletter.

May this Lenten season be a time of reflection and growth and wishing you and your families many blessings in the Easter season.

Pauline McGuire Chairperson of JCoLT

On behalf of JCoLT members: Mary Hemmings, Anne-Marie Wilkinson, Helen Dougherty, Helen Brown, Antoinette Mangion, Bernadette Roche, Clare Conaglen rsj

Walking the Journey like Annie MacKillop

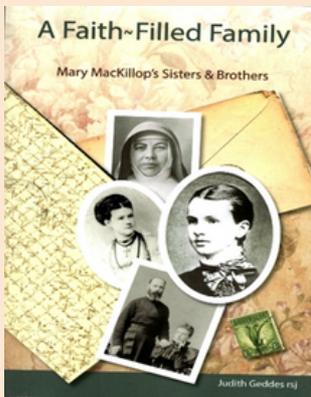
Born 5th September 1848

Died 14th January 1929

Today we recognize Annie MacKillop as the first and most loyal Josephite Companion.

In her book "A Faith-filled Family" Sister Judith Geddes rsj writes "I think she saw service as her calling from God, and she put her heart into assisting where the Sisters needed her." In the text she uses the voice of Saint Mary to describe her sister Annie who was the fourth child and third daughter in the MacKillop family.

In the same book the voice of Flora MacKillop, Annie's mother, expressed the opinion that Annie was the first Companion to the Josephite Movement. She says: "I believe my daughter Annie was called by God to be a companion and helper to many people."



Sister Judith in her Epilogue writing about her research says: "Annie was, I think, the most complex character; a woman fiercely loyal to Mary in her work, yet something of a free spirit who lived in many different places from the splendor of the beautiful Kolor.... to the humblest of many Josephite houses where she taught music to help raise funds for newly established schools."

Annie did not become a nun. She "is a great role model for single women. In a Victorian era typified by conservatism, social strictures and limitations, she remained free, travelled widely and mixed with people of all social classes yet remained always in contact with her family and the Sisters of Saint Joseph who adopted her as part of Mother Mary's family."

Alexander MacKillop thought his daughter Annie was very like him. "She loved to travel and meet people in various walks of life. She went out of her way to help others and was a great letter writer. My writings occasionally got me into trouble and Annie too was quite outspoken and unafraid to express her opinion. She was a daughter after my own heart."

"Nevertheless, (says the author) it was Annie who became Mary's life-long friend, support and confidante, deeply involved in Mary's mission, even though she never became a vowed Sister of St. Joseph." It was Annie who accompanied Mary and one other Josephite Sister to New Zealand in 1902 to have treatment in the hot springs at Rotorua. Sister Winifred was required for duties elsewhere, so Annie was left in sole charge of the invalided Mary.

Annie was the last of the family to die and she wrote down her memoirs and collected letters as she knew the life of her sister Mary would be considered special.

So, what does this mean for Josephite Companions today? If we have a look at our Mission Statement, we can see what Annie exemplifies for us:

As Josephite Companions
we respond to the call to live the charism
of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods
in our daily lives in our own unique way.

We support one another by
Friendship, Prayer and Service
to make a difference in our local area
and so further the Reign of God in our world.



*Annie's story shows us how to use joy, fun and humor in our life as we attempt to listen and respond to the call each of us has for Fellowship. She and her sister Lexie often played pranks on Mary.

*Annie's love, respect and devotion for her family meant she was always conscious of the trials and tribulations going on around her, so she was open to Service when required.

*As an educator Annie cared deeply about improving the conditions of those less fortunate than herself. She was responsible for starting the Penola school before Mary was able to get there. She saw a need and did something about it.

*Annie was an accomplished musician and used this talent to bring much joy into the social circles she moved in. She also used it to provide an income to support the Josephite convents and schools where she often stayed. We can take Annie's example of care and devotion for her sister and the Josephite Sisters as a guide for us to be aware of their needs and works to give support.

*We can see from Annie's life that we can be part of the spiritual life of the Josephite Sisters walking with them to spread the Good News and the charism of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop in Prayer. She shows us how to embrace a religious dimension in our spiritual life outside the vowed religious way.

A Faith- Filled Family -Mary MacKillop's Sisters and Brothers By: Sister Judith Geddes rsj
Many thanks to Lorraine Kirkaldy for her preparation of this article.

Photos: Public domain

Who are we?

Recently retired from a teaching career that has spanned over 40 years, I have taught in a wide range of educational settings in the Catholic Education system, in the Toowoomba Diocese and The Archdiocese of Brisbane.

I have two beautiful children and a delightful granddaughter. In addition to teaching, over the years I have served as a Justice of the Peace and obtained a Master of Arts (Leadership), B.Ed., Grad. Dip. RE, TAE40116 Cert IV in Training and Assessment, Diploma in Teaching (3 years) and qualifications as a Celebrant (Cert IV- CHC 41015). Currently, as a Trainer and Assessor, with IFE, I mentor teachers undertaking studies in the Diploma of Christian Ministry and Theology course.

I have been a Josephite Companion for over 30 years. My journey to explore and live out my baptismal call, both personally and within the communal context, has always been grounded and inspired by the Gospel values that inform the Josephite Charism. The faithfulness of Joseph and the spirituality of both Mary MacKillop and Julian Tension Woods help guide my responses as a Companion, daily.

As a member of the Queensland Companions Team, I host a monthly e-Companioning Zoom session, enabling Companions from near and far, to come together and connect online for Prayer Friendship and discussions around Service to others.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be welcomed as a new member of the Josephite Companions Leadership Team and I look forward to being part of such an insightful, caring, active and generous group of people, working hard towards keeping the Companions Movement alive and well!



JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS 2024 LEADERS WEBINAR



SAVE THE DATE



JCOLT WILL BE HOLDING A WEBINAR FOR
LEADERS AND POTENTIAL LEADERS:
MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW
AEDT 12.30AM, AEST 11.30AM, SA 11.00AM,
WA 9.30AM, NZ 1.30PM, TIMOR LESTE 10.30AM,
PERU 24 MAY 2024 8.30PM

JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS DAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2024



WEBINAR



In 2023 on September 5th JCoLT established
'Companion's Day'

**Saturday 31st August 2024, JCoLT will host a webinar
to celebrate this annual event.**

AEST 11.30AM, SA 11.00AM,
WA 9.30AM, NZ 1.30PM, TIMOR LESTE 10.30AM,
PERU 30 AUGUST 2024 8.30PM



Resources:

<https://www.sosj.org.au/become-involved/josephite-companions/>

Here is a link to some wonderful resources on the website from Companions groups across Australia and New Zealand. You can also connect and be inspired by seeing what other regions are doing.