

Companions News

Welcome to the **JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS QUEENSLAND** Quarterly Newsletter

June 2022

Editorial

A Healthy Spiritual Heart

*Grace us with prayerful hearts that listen to your voice
and contemplate your presence in creation.*

(Josephite Companion's Prayer)

This edition of the Josephite Queensland Quarterly Newsletter is issued in the month traditionally associated with the Feast of the Sacred Heart, which will be celebrated on 24 June. This liturgical feastday held great significance and special place in the hearts of both Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods. It is a feastday that brings to mind not only Christ's passion but also His passionate love for all humankind.



Many have tried to define the rich symbolism of the 'heart' over the years:

The heart is the locus of physical and spiritual being, and represents the central wisdom of feeling as opposed to the head-wisdom of reason (Cooper, 82). It is compassion and understanding, life-giving and complex.

In our own context we have seen much attention devoted to the need to actively look after the health of our physical hearts. While we no longer need to use the all-too-familiar Check In app or QR Code for sign-in to various venues, there are apps galore that have been designed to make things easier for us. Smart watches and smart phones have apps that record the steps we have clocked up during the day and keep us on track, as we make choices to maintain a healthier heart. Logos such as the now discontinued *Heart Foundation Tick of Approval* and the *Health Star Rating System* (from a half to five stars) remind us to quickly and easily compare the

(Continued on page 2)

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CONTENTS

Josephite Companions Prayer	2
e-Companioning	3
Housekeeping Snippets	3
Futuring the MacKillop Gate Ministry	4
Qld Leadership Team—Face to Face March Meeting	5
Commitment Ceremony	5
Donations Page	6

**FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
QUARTERLY NEWS PLEASE EMAIL:**

qld.companions@sosj.org.au

MISSION STATEMENT

*As Josephite Companions
We respond to the call to live the charisma
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.*

(pg 4, Josephite Companions Discovery Program)

(Continued from page 1)

nutritional value of similar products. The thinking has already been done for us. We make external choices on a daily basis, aimed at addressing our goal to maintain and look after our health in general and our heart health in particular.

However, how do we actually go about nurturing a healthy spiritual heart that connects us with the Divine and calls us to make personal internal choices that draw us into contemplation?

As Josephite Companions, we pray that our Companioning Spirit will *grace us with prayerful hearts*, in order to acknowledge and listen to that ongoing inner dialogue that reveals God's intentions and inspires us to make generous responses.

We pray also that we may be graced to *contemplate God's presence in creation*.

In our world today, there are very serious concerns about issues around climate change and environmental degradation that sit at the top of the list on global agendas. On a personal, communal and spiritual level, we are each called to make a response of the heart. We sift through facts, statistics and expert opinions on the health of our beloved creation and constantly seek interpretations that might help us to make a bigger contribution to preserving and restoring the life of our planet.

The German mystic, St Hildegard von Bingen, suggested, way back in the 12th Century, that we need to *take back our listening heart, because an interpreted world is not a home... It is a world that is interpreted for us by others*. She adds...

We shall awaken from our dullness and rise vigorously toward justice. If we fall in love with creation, deeper and deeper, we shall respond to its endangerment with passion.

(The Writings of Hildegard of Bingen)

The Judeo-Christian psalms sing of God's power and majesty, often described in the context of God's love and nurturing support for all creation, which is deserving of our gratitude and praise.

On the feast of the Sacred Heart and always, let's ponder on what God's love might really look like and become in our daily lives when we purposely watch and listen with a prayerful spiritual heart.

Created in *the image and likeness of God* (Gen 1:27) and loved unconditionally with *an everlasting love* (Jeremiah 31:3), it would seem that perhaps each of us comes with the Divine Tick of Approval already gently stamped onto our spiritual hearts. No app required!

Wishing you many blessings and much peace

Bernadette Roche

JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS PRAYER

Companioning Spirit, intensify our living of the Josephite charism now as you inspired St Joseph, St Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods.

Grace us with friendship and hospitality as we make community in the ordinariness of our lives.

Grace us with prayerful hearts that listen to your voice and contemplate your presence in creation.

Grace us with service, promoting human dignity and love of neighbour.

Strengthen our commitment to live justly, love tenderly and walk humbly, conscious that we are partaking in your mission.

Companion, encourage and enfold us in the fullness of divine love.

Amen.



e-Companioning

The Queensland Regional Leadership Team gathered in Brisbane in March 2022.

The Strategic Plan 2022-2025, formulated during our meeting, explored various possibilities in terms of establishing ways to connect with each other as Josephite Companions.

It was envisioned that one such possibility might be the establishment of an online space for Josephite Companions to:

- engage in prayer and reflective dialogue about a range of selected texts/articles designed to nurture us on our spiritual journeys
- share and enjoy ideas in friendship and have a chat as Companions with like-minded interests
- explore options for engagement in service to meet needs as they arise in the regional group settings or elsewhere.

It was decided that *e-companioning* might be a good name for our online space using the Teams Meeting platform.



I will lead the facilitation/coordination of this group and I am in the process of establishing the best format and logistics of setting up this process in a user-friendly and secure way.

e-Companioning is not envisaged as a replacement for local meetings for Companions who meet regularly.

Rather, it might take on the shape of becoming a digital book club, with a focus on sharing the values and spirit of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop and Fr Julian Tenison Woods.

I would be keen to receive any expressions of interest, and welcome any ideas, suggestions and comments.

Email: broche@onthenet.com.au

Bernadette Roche

Housekeeping Snippets

Please **remember in your prayers** those of our members who are experiencing ill health and those who have left us for their heavenly reward.



Thank you to all who have supported the Queensland Companions through direct bank deposits or by sending donations to the office. These donations make it possible for the movement to continue to develop and grow.

Thank you to those also who have updated their contact details which enables us to make sure everyone is included and kept up to date.

Using the Sisters of St Joseph Website: www.sosj.org.au

This website is a valuable resource. There is so much information and looking into each of the 8 Headings is like peeling an onion, each step reveals more.

Under **Becoming Involved** you will see **Josephite Companions**. Clicking on that will take you to **JCoLT** (Josephite Companions Leadership Team) News, Newsletters and Documents, Companions Events, Companions Newsletters and Companion Resources. Under **Resources** you will find two pages of Prayer booklets and sheets which you can use for your groups. There is also the inspirational Josephite Companions Contemplative Prayer video prepared by Bernadette Roche. The entire website is well worth investigating in depth.

Up-coming Meetings

Brisbane Southside Companions will meet at the Parish House, Wilkie St, Yeerongpilly at **10am Monday 20 June**. Contact Judy Harris: 0407 028 796.

Brisbane Northside Companions will meet at St Joseph's Convent, 67 Bage Street, Nundah at **10am Saturday 18 June**. Sr Margaret has invited us to share morning tea with the Sisters at 10am before we have our meeting. This is open to all Companions from the area. Please let Marie know if you intend joining us so we can let Sr Margaret know numbers. Contact Marie: 0421 323 063. This group will also meet on **27 August** at the same time and place. If there is a change we will notify those who are on the list.

If group coordinators can give the dates of meetings in their areas they will be included in future newsletters. The **cut-off date for the next newsletter is 20 August**. A short report of your celebrations for the Feast of Mary MacKillop to share with other groups would be appreciated.

Futuring the MacKillop Gate Ministry

Dear Companions in Queensland

The Sisters of St Joseph have news to share about the next chapter in the story of our MacKillop Gate Ministry (The Blue Bags).

This ministry supports prisoners on release from correctional facilities across Queensland. It was the initiative of Sisters Chris Symonds, Margaret Robertson and Michele Shipperley. The ministry has grown and over the years made a huge difference to many prisoners as a tangible expression of care.

The Companions in Queensland have been willing partners and ministry supporters through donations, and in some places creating local arrangements to supply local prisons/parole offices with goods and cards. Companions, Sisters and Schools in our Queensland Region have been generous with offerings of prayer, donations of goods to go in the bags, monetary donations and packing of the blue bags. The first 72 hours after release are vital for re-entry into society and the blue bags provide essential supports such as Transport Cards.

The founding Sisters, with grace and wisdom, have decided the time is right to step away from the active management of the ministry.

We explored the possibilities of finding another Mission-focused organisation to carry on our MacKillop Gate Ministry for prisoners being released.

Conversations with fellow Prison Chaplains and St Vincent de Paul colleagues explored shared understandings of the vulnerability of prisoners and respect for their dignity as people. We can now confirm that St Vincent de Paul, through the Western Diocese in Brisbane, will take on responsibility for the MacKillop Gate Ministry from 1 July 2022.

Our own St Mary MacKillop maxim to **'Never see a need ...'** resonates well with St Vincent de Paul's commitment to **'Give a hand up'**.

As a Region, and for the next five years, we will continue to budget for an annual ministry contribution to be paid to St Vincent de Paul. We will then review our ministry contribution. St Vincent de Paul will also seek necessary funding, as we have done from government and other sources. There will be ongoing opportunities for each of us to continue to contribute to the ministry through St Vincent de Paul.

To explore how you might be involved, please be in touch with the MacKillop Gate Ministry Coordinator:

M: 0456 752 100 E: slswp4074@svdpqld.org.au

Your donations to support the Blue Bags Ministry are welcome and can be banked at:

St Leonard's Prison Conference
BSB: 064786 Account number: 100027611

I commend the ministry to you.

I take this opportunity now to acknowledge and thank Chris, Margaret and Michele for initiating this grassroots ministry which makes a practical positive difference and is an expression of care and connection.

Thank you to all the Companions for supporting the MacKillop Gate Ministry since its beginnings in 2014.

Let's hold in our hearts all prisoners and pray a blessing on the next phase of the MacKillop Gate Ministry in the care of St Vincent de Paul Society as they continue this expression of care and support.

Sr Lyn Stabler rsj Regional Leader, 4/5/2022



Queensland Leadership Team – Face to Face March Meeting

The Planning Committee met at Villa Maria Convent, Fortitude Valley, on the weekend of St Joseph's Day. We were pleased to welcome our observers, Patricia Wallace from Townsville and Robyn Phelan from Allora. We were appreciative of their willingness to participate and share their wisdom over the weekend.

On the Friday night Bernadette Roche from the Gold Coast group, led a reflection comparing the making of jam and the ingredients God provides as nourishment for us so that we can flourish as faith-led Companions.

Saturday, the feast of St Joseph, our planned visit to Nundah to share a liturgy and celebration with the Sisters had to be cancelled as one of the residents tested positive to Covid. Although we were very disappointed at this, it enabled us to spend more time focussing on how we can serve the Queensland Companions in these still Covid affected times.

An outcome of our reflection was for each member of the planning committee to phone local organisers, asking for suggestions as to how we can keep the groups connected. It is hoped that members of the planning committee will be able to visit each group.

On Saturday afternoon Sr Marie Dowling rsj gave us an insight into the life, trials and faith journey of Fr Julian Tenison Woods. Villa Maria is the Convent of the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, a congregation also founded by Fr Julian. It was interesting to hear his story from a slightly different perspective which also gave us the opportunity to consider his spirituality and influence on the Josephite charism and that of the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

On Sunday the weekend ended with Bernadette concluding her inspiring reflection and a Commitment Ceremony to welcome Tanya McNeil as a Companion.

The time spent in prayerful reflection, journaling, brainstorming and discernment was most valuable as we applied what we had discussed regarding our plans for 2022 and 2023 and the role of the planning committee as we move forward. Our hope is to maintain contact with all Companions and work towards sharing insights gained over the weekend.

Ken Theodore



Queensland Leadership Group and observers at the March meeting:
(L to R) Erin Jones, Robyn Phelan, Ken Theodore, Bernadette Roche, Pauline McGuire, Patricia Wallace, Carolyn Grimward

Commitment Ceremony

As a high school student in a country town during the 70s and being taught by nuns, it was not uncommon to consider a vocation to the religious life. I did not enter the convent but trained and worked for Catholic Education all my life. I did keep my strong faith. I moved to the city, visited Rome for further study and became aware of just how many different Orders of Sisters there are. After taking a position of APRE in a school originally established by the Josephites and learning about Mary MacKillop, I was drawn to a Conference which made me aware of the Associates, as the organisation was then known. I am thrilled to have now been able to make my Commitment as a Companion to continue the spirit and traditions of the Sisters of St Joseph in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods. I was fortunate that my Commitment Ceremony was at Villa Maria Convent, a beautiful and spiritual place within a very supportive group of like-minded souls. I am blessed to have met the other Companions who also walk this journey.

Tanya McNeil



L to R: Joan Gilbert, Tanya McNeil, Marie Sellin



DONATION TO THE QUEENSLAND COMPANIONS MOVEMENT

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AMOUNT GIVEN: (PLEASE CIRCLE)

\$20 \$30 \$40 \$50 OTHER \$.....

ALL DONATIONS CAN BE FORWARDED TO:

JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS QUEENSLAND LEADERSHIP TEAM
VILLA MARIA CONVENT
123 WARREN STREET
FORTITUDE VALLEY QLD 4006

EMAIL: qld.companions@sosj.org.au

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Thank you for your donation!

