

JCoLT newsflash

November 2024



Looking to Our Future

Companioning each other with a Josephite Heart

Fellow Companions,

One of Mary MacKillop's sayings included 'seeing a need and doing something about it.' Life is continually changing and that has indeed been true for our Companions. The world is a very different place to what it was back in 1980 when the then Josephite Associates came into being.

The Companion Movement has developed over time, necessitating the need to formalise the structure to allow autonomy and sustainability into the future. Foundational roots continue to keep our Movement solid and issues emerging on this journey are needing to be addressed by JCoLT to ensure the movement is viable.

The Sisters also are needing to adapt to a changing world and to the reality of their situation. As the number of Sisters in active ministry lessens, they, too, are working towards ensuring that Mary MacKillop's legacy lives on in different ways. For them, this has meant engaging in different ways with other personnel, enabling ministries to continue and to grow.

JCoLT, the body entrusted with the leadership of our Companions, is working with the Congregational Leadership Team to ensure that the many different aspects of being an organisation today are in place. We operate under the 'Josephite' name, and therefore have a responsibility to ensure that all who are involved act with integrity and compassion. This includes ensuring all our practices measure up to societal and legal expectations in today's world. These areas include but are not limited to privacy, copyright, financial and safeguarding responsibilities.

We recognise that the formalising of what in the past was just a natural part of parish / community life may seem overwhelming for some. As a leadership team, we will work to support all at Regional and local levels by keeping you informed of the necessary requirements and changes. We also recognise we have a duty of care to our fellow Companions to ensure we are operating a reliable, safe and authentic organisation.

Through all of this, we believe that the inspiration of Mary MacKillop is very relevant to today's world and growing our Companions is vital to this legacy. Our core focus remains to keep *'responding to the call to live the charism of Mary and Julian in our daily lives in our own unique way...to make a difference ...and so further the Reign of God in our world.'* Mission Statement

May we walk together through Friendship, Prayer and Service remembering *'God carries us through the storms.'* Mary MacKillop 1871

JCoLT Pauline McGuire, Mary Hemmings, Anne-Marie Wilkinson, Antoinette Mangion, Helen Dougherty, Helen Brown, Bernadette Roche, Clare Conaglen rsj



“I believe my daughter Annie was called by God to be a companion and helper to many people”
Flora MacKillop

It was wonderful to be able to share some of my research on Annie MacKillop at the last webinar JCoLT held to celebrate our Companions Day. After spending a little time exploring the painting by Brain Dunlop of Mary MacKillop & Annie that we had used on the flyer, I focused on how Annie had been a companion to Mary, her family and the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

With the death of baby Alick in 1857 (the year before Annie was born) and the birth of three siblings after her, Annie ended up being the ‘middle’ child with three older siblings and three younger ones. And in the end, she was to outlive all her MacKillop siblings.

A tribute written after her death said... “A notable link with the past was snapped when, on the first Friday of 1929, Miss Annie MacKillop passed away in her 82nd year. To a mind acquainted with the Catholic history of this continent, ... it might well seem that far too little notice has been taken of the event, and that far too commonplace a farewell was given on the departure from earth of one who must ever be remembered in connection with Australasian Catholic history. ... as on account of the strong light reflected on her by the leading personalities and doings that went to the building up of the Institute of St. Joseph.

...she had much of the clear common sense that distinguished Mother Mary, and something of the impressionable and impulsive character of her Jesuit brother. She was more humorous and light-hearted than either, having a keen eye for the oddities of life and a great capacity for amusing others. She was, an agreeable musician; could invent games, and write a letter that could extort a smile from the most gloomy and depressed souls.”

1st published in the Melbourne Advocate Jan 1929. Reprinted in the Freeman’s Journal (Sydney) Thur 31 Jan 1929. - see link: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/118092354> Also found (edited version) in The Garland of St Joseph – 1 May 1929

With her family Annie was the entertainer, communicator and carer. In her own letters Annie said that many an evening she sat at the piano playing whilst her family tried out the latest dancers. She was also known to encourage her siblings as they played tricks on their big sister Mary. Annie was a keen letter writer, and these were often filled with news of what other members of the family were doing. She was also physically present for them, travelling many miles especially if support was needed and this included being at their bedside when they died.

Mary encouraged Annie to get her teaching certificate at a young age (15yrs) so she could join her as an assistant teacher in Portland in 1863. And it was to there that Fr Woods in 1865 requested Mary ‘send Annie’ to Penola as the regular teacher had married and there was no replacement. Annie made her way to Penola on her own and remained there working once Mary & Lexi arrived in 1866. Lexi took the little girls, Annie took Jnr boys in a backroom of the cottage and gave music lessons, took the choir & played music for the religious education sessions, whilst Mary had the older children. Annie said Fr Woods and Mary tried to encourage her to join the order but she did not believe she was pious enough for convent life. However, she spent much time in convents all over the country helping out as new schools were opened. She would give piano lessons to help raise funds. Mary even sent her to North Adelaide in 1897 to train some of the young sisters in how to teach music. Annie not only assisted and supported Mary in her work and mission, but she was her close companion which included travelling to New Zealand with her and she was often Mary’s carer in times of ill health.

Her assistance and companionship of the Sisters of St Joseph continued even after Mary's death in 1909, until her own death on the 14 Jan 1929, at St Joseph's Home in Carlton, Victoria, where she was living with the Sisters.

Long after her death the front room was still referred to as 'Annie's room'. Apart from her name, birth & death dates on her headstone it simply says;

'Sister of Mary MacKillop. Friend of the Sisters of St Joseph'.

Annie truly shared the Josephite charism.



New Companions Group in Brazil

On 1 September 2024 the newest group of Companions gathered in Sr Helen Caughley's house in Nova Esperança, Salvador, Brazil. They very proudly hold their Formation books translated into Portuguese. They loved learning about the Josephite charism and exploring what Prayer, Friendship and Service means for them.



The newest group of Companions with Helen Caughley in Nova Esperança, Salvador, Brazil



Clare Conaglen with Helen Caughley & three Companions

Renewal

The group of Companions in Motupe, Lima, Peru renewed their commitments as Companions on 21 September accompanied by Sr Mary Dwyer



e-Companioning

Recently, four new Josephite Companions registered to join the current e-Companioning online sessions, as a result of our discussion during the Josephite Companions Day Webinar, held on Saturday 31 September.

All are welcome to join these e-Companioning online sessions to:

- engage in prayer and reflective dialogue
- share and enjoy ideas in friendship
- explore options for engagement and service.

As mentioned in previous newsletters, the values and spirit of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop and Fr Julian Tenison Woods would generally underpin our discussions in the context of our living as Josephite Companions.

One of the valuable outcomes from the e-Companioning initiative has been the fact that the connections that are made go way beyond the actual 50-minute live sessions online. An ongoing personal sense of belonging and identity, in a welcoming and inclusive context, is often quickly established.

New Zealand Josephite Companions, have commenced gathering for e-Companioning sessions, hosted by Catherine Birt and Helen Dougherty, from the New Zealand Companions Leadership Team. This is exciting news.

It is anticipated that some other regions might embrace additional opportunities for e-Companioning down the track, providing greater flexibility and availability around suitable times and dates for attendance. For example people situated in Queensland and China have joined some of the New Zealand meetings.

Queensland Meetings are monthly on Monday Evenings from 6.30 pm -7.30pm (AEST Time (Queensland)). New Zealand Meetings are monthly on Thursday Evenings from 7:30-8:30 (NZ Time).

If you require more information or you are interested in joining an e-Companioning group, you will need to register for the Zoom Meeting by forwarding your name and email address to:

Bernadette Roche (host of the Queensland Meeting) at broche@onthenet.com.au

Catherine Birt (host of the New Zealand Meeting) at crbirt@gmail.com