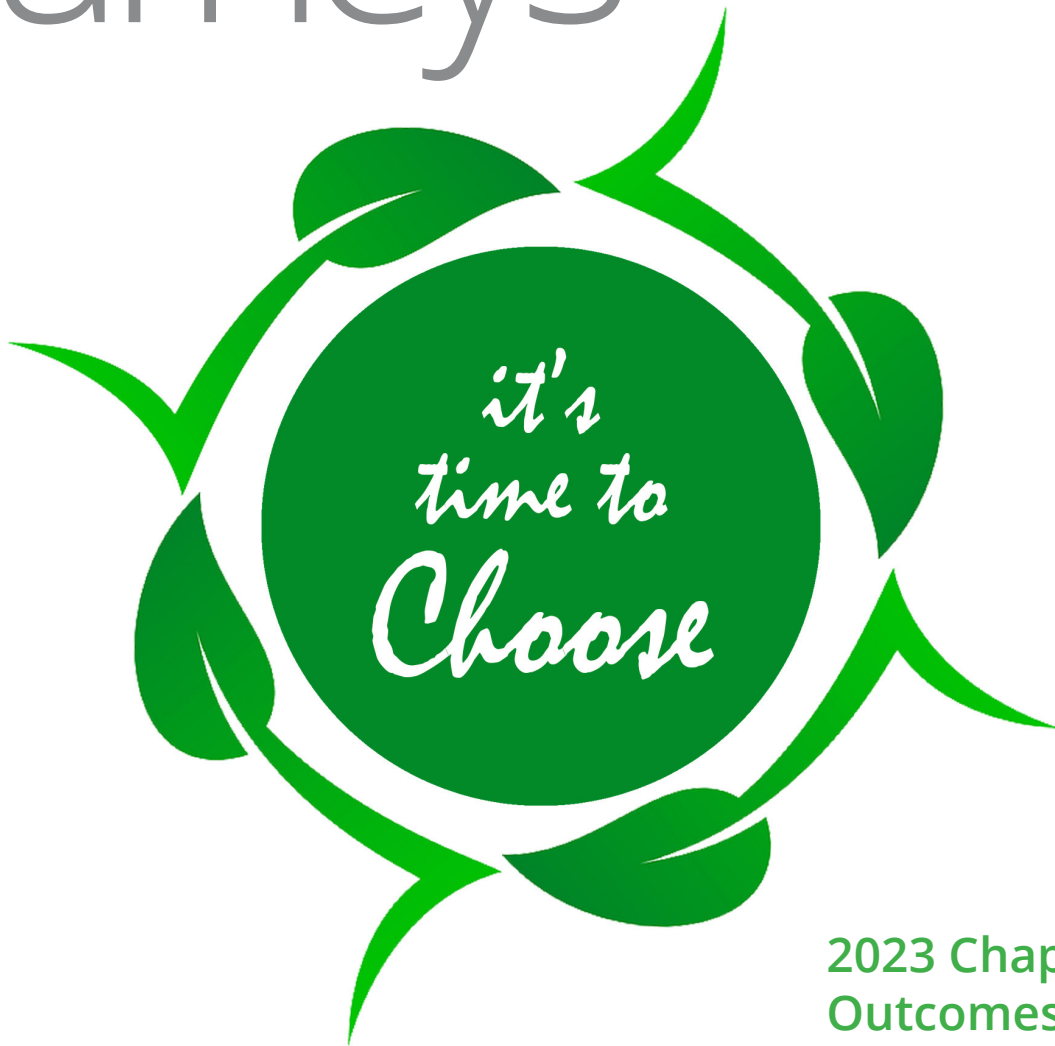


petite Sisters of St. Joseph
of Northwestern Pennsylvania
journeys



2023 Chapter
Outcomes

a message from leadership



Newly elected SSJ Leadership (l-r): Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ, Councilor;
Carol Morehouse, SSJ, Secretary; Mary Drexler, SSJ, President;
Phyllis McCracken, SSJ, Treasurer; Phyllis DiFuccia, SSJ, Councilor.

The theme of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Assembly this year was ***“Drawn by Sacred Mystery: A Journey into Hope.”*** That captures the essence of our 2023 Chapter. As the family of Joseph—Sisters, Agrégées and Associates—we spent a year discerning what might be most important at this moment in our history.

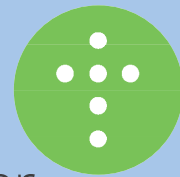
With a major transformation occurring in religious life, the topics of Charism/Mission and Leadership/Governance captured our attention. The Directional Statements are the result of much energy and excitement during our reflective discussions. Both statements are expressions of hope as we look toward moving beyond our comfort zones and finding ways for greater inclusion of the whole family.

Now we must take the next step into this journey, as Sacred Mystery reveals how we will truly live what we have written.

Sr. Mary
Sister Mary

Phyllis
Sister Phyllis

Sister Carol
Sister Carol



we
remember

Deceased Sisters

James Francis Mulligan, SSJ
February 26, 2023

Teresa Marie Bohren, SSJ
May 18, 2023

Deceased Associates

Carol Bocan
February 1, 2023

Patricia McLaughlin
April 8, 2023

Tom Lyons
April 13, 2023

Paul Mercier
June 16, 2023

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Phyllis McCracken, SSJ, Treasurer
Carol Morehouse, SSJ, Secretary
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We Have Chosen

by Rosemary O'Brien, SSJ, and Stephanie Hall, SSJ Associate

Fundamental to a Sister of St. Joseph are openness to change, willingness to respond, and a desire to move toward closer union with God and neighbor. These qualities are vital to the communal discernment process that is a long-standing part of our history—Chapter. During Chapter, we consider our Constitutions through the lens of current realities. We rely on prayer, contemplative listening, and conversation as we set direction for the future in our Chapter of Affairs and determine Leadership in our Chapter of Elections. We look at our deepest meanings and decisions we must make to continue furthering our mission of unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God. Decisions made at Chapter establish legal precedent, and Leadership is mandated to ensure that we remain focused on the directives.

Communal discernment requires a commitment to personal prayer and reflection. It is peaceful and respectful but not always easy, as it involves moving from “I” to “we” for the greater good of the whole. Everyone has an equal voice and the opportunity to speak one’s truth directly to others. Faith and an attitude of holy indifference – detachment to any preferences when considering where God calls us – are critical. It’s never about winning, losing, politics, lobbying, or pressure. We discover how God calls us to live our mission and charism in today’s reality.

Charism/Mission Directional Statement

Conscious of the Holy Spirit’s presence, we commit to live more fully the Gospel message; to further develop wholesome relationships among and beyond ourselves; to move beyond our comfort zones; to live the charism so that others may experience the love of God at this moment in our history.

In January 2022, we began preparation for our 2023 Chapter. A planning committee, working closely with facilitators Mary Dacey, SSJ, Philadelphia, and Pat Kozak, CSJ, Cleveland, established the theme, *It’s Time to Choose*, to inspire and guide our deliberations. It emphasizes a sense of urgency and attentiveness to the emerging future. *Choose Life, Choose Discipleship, Choose Relevance, and Choose Passion*, reflect our desire to live passionately as faithful disciples called to live in this moment

of our history while always moving toward profound love of God and neighbor without distinction.

Full participation was encouraged, and those who could, participated as Chapter delegates. Other participation included commitments to small group sharing, prayer, and reflection. Agrégées and Associates took part as observers with voice.

Pre-chapter small group gatherings were held to identify areas to explore during Chapter. We asked ourselves: What deep conversations is God calling us to have now? This narrowed our focus and determined the topics for our Chapter of Affairs: Charism/Mission and Governance/Leadership.

Discussions throughout Chapter were thoughtful, visionary, and enlivening. Two unanimously accepted directional statements emerged with the guidance of our facilitators and the movement of the Holy Spirit. The Charism/Mission statement reaffirms our commitment to the Gospel message while deepening



SSJ Leadership welcomed Mary Dacey, SSJ, Chapter facilitator, and Mary Hughes, OP, presenter, for a pre-Chapter meeting. Pictured (l-r) Carol Morehouse, SSJ, Mary Drexler, SSJ, Mary Dacey, SSJ, Mary Hughes, OP, and Phyllis McCracken, SSJ.

Governance/ Leadership Directional Statement

Conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence and believing that governance is an expression of our mission, we commit to exploring and creating a governance model which may include Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées. We commit to sharing responsibility, and communicating with trust, compassion, and acceptance.

the importance of our relationships with others, especially beyond what is comfortable. We recognize that expanding our alliances and strengthening our partnerships are important elements in keeping the mission alive. And it reminds us that living the SSJ charism at this uncertain moment in history serves as a witness to others of God's faithfulness. The Governance/Leadership statement reflects our present reality and understanding of the need to explore creative alternatives and expand our circle of relationships to ensure the SSJ mission continues.

A Chapter of Elections followed the Chapter of Affairs to determine Leadership for the next four years (2023-2027). Delegates nominated Sisters they believe have the qualities needed at this time. The nominees



participated in personal and communal discernment weekends to explore their call to Leadership. All Sisters were invited to attend the communal discernment; only delegates voted. As the discernment unfolded, some nominees withdrew while others who continued to feel called to Leadership remained. Ultimately, the delegates chose Sisters Mary Drexler, Carol Morehouse, and Phyllis McCracken, all elected for a second term, and Sisters Phyllis DiFuccia and Clare Marie Beichner as Councilors.



Sisters, Agrégées and Associates participate in the Chapter process with facilitator Pat Kozak, CSJ, looking on (and in inset photo).

This period of prayer, discernment, dialogue, discussion, and sharing accomplished what was intended. We have direction for the future and leaders who are called to guide us on this journey. We continue to venture into uncharted territory, recognizing that as the world continues to change, so must we to continue responding to the needs of the dear neighbor.



Holding fast to traditions is important to the Sisters of St. Joseph, our donors, and the neighbors we serve. St. Paul reminds us to be followers of Christ. In three short months, we will follow Christ's example of loving our neighbor as we continue our unwavering tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph 35th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner.

Guests line up outside the Marketplace Grill for one of the early dinners.

We Are Followers of Christ

Our first Thanksgiving dinner was in 1988. Generous gifts and in-kind donations were given and surplus funds were shared throughout the year for emergency situations and assistance for individuals and organizations. In 2012, opportunities to support like-minded, local organizations were possible because of the continued donations for food and supplies. In 2021, all food and supplies were generously donated. This made it doable to fund more nonprofits in support of their missions. In 2022, 55 organizations were presented with \$66,600.

Our greatest tradition is the difference we make together, and, like Jesus, nourishing our neighbor—both body and soul—with dignity and respect.

Watch for our Thanksgiving Dinner Fund appeal. Your tradition of giving is changing the world.



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Ministry News and Happenings

SSJ Neighborhood Network had a successful Farmer's Market season with an average of 400+ people buying fresh produce each week from more than 10 farmers--more than 1800 customers in July! We are grateful and proud of the work of our teen garden workers and garden coaches. Thank you to all who support this vital ministry.



St. Patrick's Haven (Erie) reopened its doors on July 19 following last September's fire. It was a long journey which would have not happened without the support of the entire community. We are grateful to reopen before the cold weather begins. Thank you.



Saint Mary's Home of Erie residents enjoyed an exciting summer and created wonderful memories with picnics, trips to SeaWolves games, Waldameer, ice cream outings, and special entertainment. Interested in volunteering? Contact LeeAnne at (814) 836-5358.



St. James Haven (Meadville) has served the needs of homeless men 365 days/year for over 25 years. St. James Haven was chosen as the Small Non-Profit of 2023 by the Meadville-Western Crawford County Chamber of Commerce. St. James Haven provides monthly community dinners by donation.

