

Historical Highlight #5 - The London Associates' Program

An Associate is a layperson who has made a commitment to the charism of a religious community. Both Associates and Sisters are called to the same mission and charism, yet they are distinctly different. Where Sisters take perpetual vows to live out the charism in religious community, Associates hold individual vocations to live out the charism, but do not take vows.



On July 9th, 1987, the Sisters of St. Joseph in London approved the movement towards having an Associates Program complete with a candidate process and formal training process. The program began on April 4th, 1989, in London, Ontario. The Associates Program was originally founded by Sister Doreen Kraemer (top image) who left her position on June 30, 2010, and the program was later administered by Sister Janet Zadorsky.



After Sister Janet Zadorsky (bottom image) ended her involvement with administering the Associates Program in April 2017, two associates were given stipends by the Associates to serve as mentors for two years, during a bridging stage. One of the mentors, Ann Steadman, retired on April 30, 2018, and the other, Mary Shamley, retired on October 31, 2019. They prepared a document, "Midwives to Our Future," and after this, the Associate program evolved away from the Sisters being directly involved. The program is now autonomous but still connected through a Congregational liaison, but the Associates make their own decisions.

The Associates Program currently (as of 2022) has an Associate Leadership Circle with a representative from each of the areas: London, Sarnia, Windsor-Chatham, Simcoe-Woodstock, and Zaña, Peru. There are Animators for each region who assist with spiritual development. There is a Core Team who look after business matters, including event planning. Together, these form the Joint Animating and Core Team. Every leader has a term of two to three years. There is also a congregational liaison who provides a communication channel between the Associates and the Congregational Leadership Circle. Members are recruited by means of a "seekers" process and are provided with instruction and allowed to discern their commitment over a two-year period, at the end of which there is a "charism connection" ceremony, and they are given a pin and sign an agreement. There are two annual events held: a retreat, and the Annual General Gathering. As well, there is a representative who attends Federation meetings of Associates from Hamilton, London, Peterborough, Pembroke, Toronto, and Sault Ste. Marie.

For more information on the records in the consolidated archives related to the Associates Program, please visit: <https://www.archeion.ca/sisters-of-st-joseph-london>

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