

Mission Messages

A publication of the **St. Joseph Worker Program of Orange**

Spring 2023



Interconnected Journeys

Have you seen the film *Gravity* or pondered the solitary, courageous voyages of astronauts? Catalyzed by the wonders of space odysseys, St. Joseph Workers discussed the wonders of their own personal voyages. In this program, as in life, the women make their own journeys. They have the support of communities along the way and choose their path to walk alone or with a companion.

In the depths and stillness of space, a gaze upon the blue Earth reminds astronauts of their missions connecting them to all of humanity. Likewise, St. Joseph Workers are united in the Sisters' mission: caring for one another and all of creation. The women left homes to come to a new space that constantly reshapes understanding of service, community and love. Heading into the unknown, the Workers reflected on the names of the Mars rovers - Sojourner, Spirit, Opportunity, Curiosity, and Perseverance - considering their purposeful missions into space as mirrors to their own bold journeys this year.

You're Invited

We invite women aged 21-35 to become St. Joseph Workers from August to June.

Mission

Empowering women to respond to the needs of the times in the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Vision

We create a year-long service opportunity for women in preparation for a life-long commitment to social change and personal transformation. Individual growth and development is built on the values of leadership, spirituality, social justice and intentional community grounded in living simply and sustainably.

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A Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange



“To trust is to step into the unknown, to allow others to hold pieces of ourselves, to believe in the good, even when we do not know what the good will be. Trust is our self-assurance, the foundation of our relationships, the core of each of our sense of the divine in our universe.”

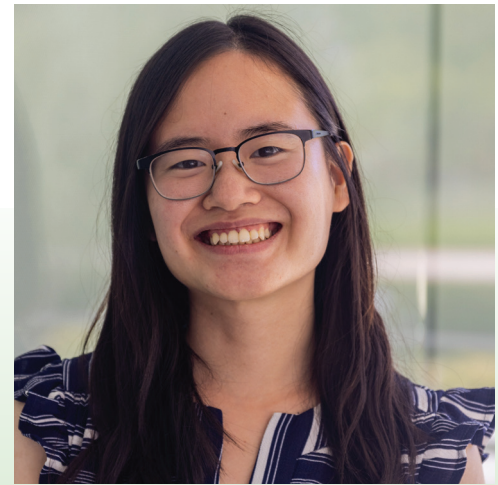
Lucia: Curiosity

As a Mars rover, Curiosity’s mission was to explore whether the planet ever had the conditions to support life forms. Its journey around Mars led to the discovery of a lake which could support microbial life, which led other rovers on a mission to discover actual signs of past life.

My journey is like Curiosity’s. My encounters over the past months were mostly initiated with a spark of interest towards the person in front of me whom I met through service work, community or the larger world. The spark created a connection that allowed me to walk into the heart of the person and receive a glimpse of their life experiences. This allowed me to better meet each person’s needs at the present moment and offer directions for the future.

We are the product of our unique journeys. Despite its diversity, my encounters do not enable me to comprehend all human experiences. Yet they have challenged me to open my heart to be more curious towards the people I am with at the moment. I will never cease to be awed by each human presence and their experiences.

Lucia Chang is serving at Mission Hospital’s affiliated Family Resource Centers.



Victoria: Spirit



The Spirit Mars rover exceeded its 90-day mission by six years. Aptly named, the spirit is an essence that lies deep within, often exceeding our expectation of what is possible.

In my journey far from home, I soon realized, as I imagine the astronauts do when looking back at Earth, that the labor of my voyage was much larger than myself. I began to form deep connections with those I serve and live with.

Like the Spirit Mars rover, I discovered evidence of living water that fills the thirst in my heart. Under spiritual direction, I drew closer to Jesus. In modeling Him, I learned that just my calm presence and listening to the vulnerability of others in mental health work and beyond has made a mutual imprint on my heart and the hearts of others.

When I imagine Jesus in the Ignatian tradition, I see a withering, frail face with dirt stains, bruising and... a beaming smile. In that smile, I’m reminded that it is our spirit which cannot be broken without consent.

Victoria Berges is serving at St. Jude Medical Center.

Margaret: Opportunity

One of the Mars rovers that was sent into space was named Opportunity. In some ways, the rover's movements on Mars - the patient collection of information and somewhat slow rolling over unfamiliar territory - are similar to my movements this year. I knew I was coming into unfamiliar territory and that creating my niche here would take time, but I was willing to take the leap because of the relationships and skills I was going to build.

One of the skills that I really wanted to develop this year is communication. Communication can be thought of as the opportunity to talk and, perhaps more importantly, the opportunity to listen. At first, I wanted to develop this skill because I knew it would serve me well as a doctor. However, I've been reminded that listening is not only something we can do for others, it is something that opens us up to so much more of our beautiful world and the love and peace and joy that we can feel in it.

Margaret Cicchiello is serving at La Amistad Clinic in Orange.



Lena: Perseverance

Life has twists and turns we may not have expected to come. The key is to show resilience. No matter how many times you may fall, you have to get back up. This is called perseverance.

Every day, our most vulnerable community members, those who have recently been incarcerated, walk through the doors of Project Kinship looking for support and services to help meet their needs. They are provided direct partnership and guidance from a team of clinicians, substance use counselors and case managers.

Clinical and holistic treatment optimizes care and delivery of support to clients. Their perseverance is incredible to watch and share in their progress and growth.

Lena Rodriguez is serving at Project Kinship.



Sarah: Sojourner

Sojourner, a temporary resident. In this year of transitions, temporarily launched from one coast to another, I have been forced to acknowledge the challenges of transience. In my relationships, I will not physically be with these communities much longer. In my justice work, the issues I advocate for have been here long before I started my service year, and they will remain after I am gone.

I face these challenges by focusing on the lessons I will take with me as my journey continues. Having shared the joy and pain of a year of service with four amazing women, I know that community, connection, and love transcend any physical space. In the Justice Center, I have learned each day that the value of all service, but especially justice work, lies in the care for one's neighbor, not necessarily the outcome of a particular project.

Most importantly, knowing I will soon relocate again, I treasure each moment of this year. Whether a philosophical discussion over community dinner, a night spent stargazing, a Sunday Brunch at Regina Residence, or a sign language lesson with residents of L'Arche, I am grateful to have found love in this temporary home.

Sarah White is serving at the St. Joseph Justice Center.



Making Peace With the Unknown

Missions are an exciting opportunity for discovery and exploration. Adventures into the unknown challenge workers to open hearts and be more curious towards their neighbor. Spirits soar when the women realize the labor of the voyage is so much larger than themselves. They relish the opportunity to listen and be open to the love and peace that surrounds them.. They persevere through trials and tribulation and share their stories of growth.

We are all sojourners, temporary residents on this blue marble in the vastness of space. Part of growing into

ourselves and in our work means making our peace with the unknown and the unfinished. We come to realize that we are working together and that new voyagers will arrive to pick up where we leave off when it's time for us to start our next adventure into the unknown. We stand on the shoulders of the Sisters and St. Joseph Workers who have come before us "And my shoulders will be there to hold the ones who follow me." (Joyce Johnson Rouse)

How comfortable are you with the unknown? How are you building bridges and connecting communities?



With Gratitude

We are truly humbled by the L'Arche Wavecrest Founder Vision Award to the SJWP in December. Cofounders Karen Carr and Sr. Karin Nuernberg, CSJ commissioned us to bring the light to our world of service. We are inspired and committed to deepening relationship with L'Arche.

Help Us to Help the Dear Neighbor

Thank you for the many ways you support the St. Joseph the Worker Program – your presence, prayers and contributions - spreading the news and sharing your resources! This year we need your support to sponsor a worker at Project Kinship and support their good works transforming the lives of those in need. We welcome any amount to help us cover the \$18,000 annual expenses for one St. Joseph Worker: room and board, medical insurance, transportation, monthly stipend for personal needs, domestic violence advocate certification, empowerment training and retreats.

Please consider a gift. Donations are graciously and gratefully accepted:

- Online at sjworange.org
- Checks to St. Joseph Worker Program may be mailed to 440 S Batavia St, Orange, CA 92868