



*Sister Marie Michael*  
*Continuing the Mission of Our Pioneer Sisters*

**Sister Marie Michael, Volunteer in Pastoral Care at St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira.**

When I began my ministry as a nurse at St. Joseph's in 1950, there were 41 Sisters serving here; now — since the recent passing of Sister Robert Mary Kosty — I am the only Sister of Saint Joseph ministering here on a regular basis. There have been many changes in my areas of service during the past 61 years — from pediatrics to geriatrics, and now as a Pastoral Care volunteer. Each has added separate beautiful colors to the tapestry of my life and I thank God for each of them. The Pastoral Care Department offers a “ministry of presence” with many opportunities for caring and support of patients, visitors, and hospital staff. These include visiting and praying with the patients and bringing them Holy Communion. We have a program called NODA (no one dies alone) which offers patients without families to have 24 hour presence at the bedside for comfort and support. Attending daily Mass in our hospital chapel with many faith-filled persons offers opportunities to share their concerns. We recite the rosary before the Mass for the needs of our patients. Although our School of Nursing closed in 1988, the Alumni Association is strong and vibrant, and we support their activities in any ways we can. We attend wakes and funerals of the Alumni as well as those of former employees and their families. As a volunteer in the Department of Archives this past year, I have gained a new appreciation for the 104 year history of St. Joseph's. It has also allowed me to savor the memories of my own part in this history. One of our Congregational Maxims exhorts us to “Advance good works until near their completion, and then, when possible, let others complete them and gain all the credit.” These words speak to

me of the recent (2011) merger of St. Joseph's Hospital with the Arnot-Ogden Medical center. It has not been easy to witness all of the changes which are continuing to occur. However, I do believe that our hospital staff and volunteers continue and will continue the mission of our pioneer sisters.



**A Bit of History** St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira, NY was founded in 1908 by a group of seven Sisters of Saint Joseph of Rochester. The story of their early years is one of great poverty and many sacrifices by these pioneers. The 35 bed hospital gradually increased to 295 beds. Regardless of each Sister's area of ministry, each brought her own unique contribution to fulfill the mission set forth by the hospital founders: "to heal in body, mind, and spirit, as Jesus did, all who come to us.