

The Vincentimes

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ONRC Call for Volunteer Board of Directors

On September 26, the ONRC members approved a new governance model that will lead the Society into an exciting future. As such, the ONRC Nominating Committee is reaching out to all SSVP Ontario members to consider running for one of nine positions on this new Board of Directors. We are seeking candidates from diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds. We are looking for people with experience and skillsets that they will put at the service of conferences and councils as they carry out the work of the Society spiritually and materially.

The initial board will be made up of staggered terms of 1, 2, 3, and 4 years. After this first cycle, terms will be four years. This allows for continuity of philosophy and planning in years to come.

The purpose for the ONRC is to promote and further the work of the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, throughout the province of Ontario and elsewhere in Canada when invited, in its mission "To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy."

Work of the Board is:

- To support that work through the conduct of research, education, conferences, and advocacy on the causes and determinants of poverty and hardship.
- To assist individual councils and conferences in their various charitable activities through the provision of financial, technological, legal and training resources and such other forms of support as they may require.
- To work and collaborate with other like-minded organizations on similar charitable activities for the benefit of those in need throughout the province of Ontario and elsewhere in Canada, when invited.

All Vincentians are eligible to apply and there is room for some non-Vincentians who have something valuable to offer. Please check out the website to see if you might be a candidate that can help lead the ONRC. We welcome all enquiries.

For complete information about the new governance model and revised by-laws, go to the ONRC website at: <https://members.ssvp.on.ca/en/president/pdf/Revised-Articles-of-Incorporation-and-By-laws-Sept-2020.pdf>. The Nomination package and form can be found at <https://members.ssvp.on.ca/en/forms.php?item=1>.



A Diversity Alliance

The idea of diversity is one that should appeal to most of us. When we have a life which includes various and diverse activities, it can add so much to our own personal growth. We may learn a new language, or a new craft or hobby. Perhaps learning a new sporting activity. Even at work it can get rather tiring doing the same job every day but when we have the opportunity to learn and work at other duties or a different location it can add a new dimension to our work day. Of course, many of us are now adapting to working from home during this Covid 19 pandemic time.

Diversity also extends to human beings and how we can experience and grow from being part of a diverse racial and cultural society. By learning all we can about the history, culture and faith traditions of other ethnic groups, we will enhance our ability to fully enjoy what God undoubtedly had planned for us.

However, this inclusion of diversity in our lives is much more than attending an event that is multi-racial. It is more than saying you have friends or work with someone from a racialized group. While Canada is becoming a nation of many ethnic and racial backgrounds, we must also realize that it does present some challenges. Do we ever act against racism by our own words and actions? Our failure to act and advocate against racism does not make us racists but it does mean we are failing. Consider this excerpt from the book *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo "Exclusion by those at the table doesn't depend on willful intent; we don't have to intend to exclude for the results of our actions to be exclusion".

In today's world we continue to face challenges to the concept of diversity. We read about black lives matter, residential schools, white privilege and systemic racism. Do we actively advocate for systemic changes in the laws and actions that allow racism to even exist?

If we consider Catholic social teachings and the principle of Common Good for all human beings, we can see how God has given us the opportunity to truly become his children by embracing one another, regardless of race, creed, colour or religion. Diversity should be celebrated by all.

Let us join in a diversity alliance that is inclusive of all racialized persons and fulfills what God has given us all.

Jim Paddon, Chair

National Social Justice Committee



Adapting in Light of the Pandemic

I have heard how many Conferences and Councils have adapted in light of the pandemic to continue serving people in need with protective measures in place including:

- Food card drop offs or arranging appointments to have food cards picked up at the parish.
- Sending digital gift cards.
- Wellness calls checking in on people served and sharing available resources, as needed.
- Serving bagged lunches or take out hot meals in place of community meals.
- Youth in London doing the "On the Street" program offering hygiene products to the homeless.
- Virtual meetings to stay connected with members of your Conference/Council.

Stores re-opened safely during the summer months and continue to help people in their communities following government guidelines with proper protocols in place.

While the pandemic has brought about many challenges, it is also an opportunity for us to reflect and look at how we are serving our friends in need, and what we need to do to be able to continue helping them in the future.

A sincere thank you to all our members across Ontario for all that you do to carry out our mission of serving people in need and helping in all possible ways.

*Linda Dollard, President
Ontario Regional Council*

Stretch Forth Your Hand to the Poor - A Rural Response

In March of 2020, the world stopped just for a brief moment until everyone caught their breath and started to think. What can we do? How can we help? What are our next steps to continue our ministry as Vincentians?

Our Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul in the rural community of Strathroy started by putting one foot in front of the other and flying by the seat of our pants so to speak. Our comfortable routine of providing one meal a month was not possible since we used our parish center and that was suddenly locked to all traffic. All the other churches closed their doors. No one was feeding the poor. The only solution was a take-out bag lunch for the people we had been feeding all along. We knew they were hungry and had no source of funds.

"What is suffering? Suffering is hungry, hungry for anything"¹. Hunger for food for the body and hunger for spiritual food for the soul. Surely the year of 2020 has pushed that thought to the limit and beyond.

Our President begged and proposed a Covid-19 safe plan to get access to the family center kitchen which has a direct route to the outside and thus started the course of action that we continue. We could do it. Keep it simple. Keep it fresh.

Lunches were prepared on a weekly basis and they came. Those that needed food. Those that wanted to connect. Those that were bereft of funds.

A very valuable person joined our team of volunteers. Father Steve (then seminarian Steve) offered his help and came every week to greet the people, smile, chat and offer blessings to them. They looked forward to seeing him and our food for the body and the Soul was taking shape. He even drove meals and breakfast bags to a family 20 km away because he knew they needed help desperately.

People of the parish offered to make muffins and cookies, donated turkeys, and CWL ladies prepared breakfast bags for the children of those who came. A private donor gave enough money to buy 100 McDonalds gift cards to provide an additional meal. Volunteer help has come from another church. In the words of a Mother/Daughter team who have provided delicious desserts, helped when we were short handed, and brought fresh produce from the farm, "We are all doing what Jesus told us to... He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none, and he who has food let him do likewise. Luke 3:11." The people that we are helping are not just our brothers in Christ, but our neighbours, someone who is struggling right down the street, or someone we see in our daily living. Rural help is special because what

comes from the hands of those giving is often used the same day, for example peas that were harvested that morning from the field were used in the stew that was being prepared.

Each week we look forward to meeting and having fun and feeding those that need our help. Rain or shine, hot or cold, we are there and so are the people.

Our quest was not without conflict. Some members of the Conference felt strongly that another pathway should be followed, and this dissonance still exists. While we give out grocery cards for people to buy food, some had no place to prep it so no one method is enough. There must be more to meet the needs of those living in poverty. Our community is growing

and so is the population of those less fortunate who find the smaller community a safer haven than streets of the urban neighbor.

Our President is adamant that it is well past time to have a soup kitchen that functions 5 days a week. This is a massive project for a small conference as expertise in all aspects of making this happen are not readily available to us. Perhaps in the next 5 years it will become a reality.

(1) Roberts, Gregory David, Shantaram, Scribe publications, Australia/New Zealand, 2004

Gwen Waeijen, President, and Karen Allen, member Conference All Saints, Strathroy



**SOCIETY OF
SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
ONTARIO REGIONAL
COUNCIL**



Visit us on the web
www.ssvp.on.ca

Email: info@ssvp.on.ca

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Mission:

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

Values:

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we:

- See Christ in anyone who suffers;
- Come together as a family;
- Have personal contact with the poor;
- Help in all possible ways.

Notice of Passings

*We would like to recognize and remember the following Vincentians who have passed.
They blessed so many with their lives.*

January 24, 2020 - Tom Kelly, St. Joseph's Conference, Bowmanville

July 5, 2020 - Patricia Rowe, St. Joseph's Conference, Bowmanville

July 6, 2020 - Rene Sabourin, St. Joseph Conference, Bracebridge

July 7, 2020 - Larry Mungham, founding member of St. Columbkille Conference, Pembroke

August 12, 2020 - Sheridan Beaton, St. Joseph's Conference, Bowmanville

August 20, 2020 - Lillian Balazs, St. Basil Conference, Brantford

September 5, 2020 - John Gilbert, St. Catharines Central Council

September 22, 2020 - Michael Downing, St. Patrick Conference, London

October 9, 2020 - David Schneider, Brantford SSVP Store

October 12, 2020 - Tim Brennan, St. Justin's Conference

Upcoming Dates

November 30, 2020 – deadline date for nominee submissions

January 15, 2021 – deadline for newsletter submissions (please note: we cannot guarantee all submissions will make the next issue, but will do our best to include in upcoming issues)

April 17, 2021 – ONRC meeting