

The Vincentimes

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Spring 2015

Celebrating 150 Years!

Our Lady of London Conference at St. Peter's Cathedral, London
Celebrates Its 150th Anniversary
~ 1863 – 2013 ~

At a time in history when emancipation was an issue in the United States, when the Houses of Parliament in Canada had recently been destroyed by fire, when the Fathers of Confederation gathered at the Charlottetown Conference to consider plans for the formation of a nation called Canada, and Edison had just invented the light bulb, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul looked to the international office in Paris to have their first London group of conference officially dedicated to the poor and formally designated as a conference. Imagine! Research indicates that the first conference of the Society in London was functioning prior to Confederation

and the building of our present Cathedral!

Our founding date was discovered when a questionnaire requesting the date of aggregation (founding) was sent from Ontario Regional in November 2013. It was then that we discovered our conference was founded in 1863 thereby establishing our conference's age as 150 years old. It also determined that the date of any celebration of this milestone had to be moved forward to 2014.

Plans to celebrate the anniversary began at the next meeting!

And so, the event held on Sunday,

October 5 at the 12:30 Mass was such a celebratory occasion. It began with mass celebrated by Fr. Mockler, the homily, commissioning ceremony and blessing offered by Deacon Len and finished with a reception prepared by our Vincentians. Our mass was offered in thanksgiving for the support of parishioners, both past and present and dedicated to the poor whom we serve.

~ Stella Mikitiuk
Our Lady of London at St Peter's Cathedral

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We Just Went On Google

Last PA Day three teenagers turned up to our Friday Vinnie's Lunch offering to help.

They came from a town 30km away. They were great workers. On asking how they would know about our free lunch for the needy, they answered "We just went on Google looking for a soup kitchen we could volunteer at." Wow! Our humble free lunch is on Google!

Many of the over 150 people who have filled in the 'Offering to Help' form on our website have found us through Google.

All this raises the question: Is all the

information about your Conference or Council that is on our website correct? If not, please let us know.

Also if your Conference or Council has its own website, is it constantly being updated with accurate information?

If you have information on other community forms is it always accurate?

Modern technology allows us to always have accurate information available but it is up to everyone to ensure it is always correct.

~ Geraldine Campbell

Thank you, but not good enough...

On June 1, 2014 the minimum wage in Ontario was increased from \$10.25 to \$11.00 per hour.

In October, the Ontario Government tied the minimum wage to the rate of inflation which amounted to 22 cents when calculated at the current rate of 2%.

While the latest Poverty Reduction Strategy does include a number of proposals that would improve life for many people in modest ways, we should not be complacent simply because something is happening.

When on average a two-bedroom apartment rents for \$ 1,200 per month; it takes 109 hours at minimum wage to pay the rent. It is es-

timated that the cost for healthy food for two adults and one child cost approximately \$600 per month which takes 54 hours. Even while that same family receives \$630 per month from Federal and Provincial benefits and tax credits, there is never anything left for savings and emergencies. Every day is a crisis.

Many people, especially newcomers, work for slightly less than minimum wage.

Typically these people do not get paid overtime nor do they receive any benefits that others take for granted. But they pay the same price for their apartment and food that everybody else does.

You may ask yourselves, "How do they do that?"

Simple: they work 60 hours per week if the job is still available.

Charity doesn't cut it, only justice does.

Keep talking about social justice, equality, and a living wage.

Some day everyone will benefit!

~ Eddie Alkemade,
Systemic Change Committee

SSVP Run Tax Clinic

2014 saw the second March tax clinic for the poor in Kingsville -- the first done completely by our own volunteers. We filed taxes for over 80 persons earning less than \$30,000 most of whom we had never met. We were shocked to find couples living on less than \$16,000! We found that we saved these people living on the edge from \$70 to over \$100 with this service, via the free online tax program offered by CRA.

Our small town had no such ser-

vice for the poor when we started in 2013, partnering with the South Essex Community Council, filing 60 returns with their supervision, but with volunteers provided by the Society.

We encourage any conference in small towns or in poorer neighbourhoods to try doing this work. The CRA even has a Community Volunteer Income Tax Preparation program to help you (also available online). It's amazing what a few

hours, a couple of laptops and a dozen volunteers can do.

If a conference is not able to offer such a service, it might consider at least encouraging their clients to file a return so as to receive all their Trillium Benefits monthly and GST refunds quarterly. Many of the people our conference serves are afraid of government and miss out on this extra income.

~ Catherine St Pierre,
St John de Brebeuf, Kingsville

Young Vincentians Fun-Raising

The congregation was certainly supportive of the development of the youth group, who raised \$700 for World Vision for their first project. Nine young people have signed up to continue to find ways to serve Christ in the poor.

Operating from the church, rather than the school, there's hope that it will attract youth and their families

to come to church. The youth will gather after the 9am mass, to talk about why they are interested in getting involved and what they hope to achieve as Young Vincentians.

~ Elske de Visch Eybergen,
Youth Coordinator, Holy Rosary,
Burlington



Holy Rosary's Young Vincentians hold a fundraiser for their first project

Twinning: Challenges and Rewards

The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries spur conferences and councils to assist others with less resources. The link between two Conferences or Councils consisting of sharing prayers, a profound friendship through communication and material resources constitute 'twinning'.

There are challenges in maintaining a productive twinning relationship. Language is a challenge. Most of the nine Designated Twinning Countries are Spanish speaking countries. Correspondence should be conducted in the language of the receiving country out of respect for the twinning partner, and most re-

cipient Conferences do not have access to translators. Spanish translators can be found within your community or university.

Difficulties in getting responses from the twinning partner. Twins from developing countries may not have access to the Internet at all times or have a different understanding of regular correspondence (at least twice a year). Be patient, insist on a reply before sending more funds; a quick telephone call or a letter may resolve the communication issue. If the difficulty persists, please send a message to the Chair, National Twinning.

Twinning is truly a rewarding experience. Members' spirituality deepen with the sharing of prayers/masses with partners. By this wholesome giving experience, members contribute to the alleviation of misery and hunger in an emerging economy and are witnesses to Christian charity. Twinning also open a window on the culture and people of a foreign country; Vincentians develop an appreciation of the living conditions and injustices affecting them.

~ Clermont Fortin,
Chair, National Twinning Program

Changing with Change: Divine Mercy Conference

Divine Mercy was originally set up in 2004 as a Food Bank (special work) of Windsor-Essex Central Council, until the destruction of their building by fire in March 2009. Under the direction of then Ontario President John Staley, Divine Mercy was aggregated in June of that year. As a Food Bank/ Drop-In Centre, we provided for the needs of our area from a former school. Home visitations were used only in cases of urgent need. In 2006, our first year of complete statistics, we served 2,980 adults and 2,313 children. In 2013 our last

complete year, we served 6,060 adults and 3,381 children – our numbers rise continually.

On July 31, 2014, we were forced to close our doors when the school was sold. In the last five months, we have investigated purchase/ lease of buildings, both locally and from the city of Windsor. Unfortunately property taxes are high here and we have not located an affordable site to operate our food bank from. We did, however, run our Christmas program, four days of serving 53 families with 130 children, from our storage location (with the permis-

sion of the school board).

As Windsor has the second highest unemployment rate in all of Canada, the needs here are great and while we have been closed, the overworked conferences surrounding our former location have increased 5-7 families weekly. We hope to be able to open again soon near the downtown core and once more meet the needs of the poor in our community.

~ Teresa Lori,
Divine Mercy, Windsor

Notice of Passings

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

Nov. 29, 2014: Doug Vernem, St Raphael, Burlington

Dec. 29, 2014: John Joseph (Jack) Seifred, Church of Our Lady Im-

maculate, Guelph

Jan. 7, 2015: Gordon Burns, St George, London

Feb. 13, 2015: Grant McAuley, St Agnes, Chatham

**SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT
DE PAUL - ONTARIO
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Visit us on the web

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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.

Announcements

Congratulations to our two new Conferences: Visitation (Essex East Particular Council, Windsor) and St Dismas (Kingston-St Lawrence Particular Council).

Our new Particular Council, Kingston-St Lawrence, will consist of Belleville, Brockville, Napanee, Trenton, and Kingston. Their new President is Don Slaunwhite.

Camp Vincent (operated by Kent Deanery Particular Council) welcomes Kerri L. Wright as their new Camp Administrator. Many thanks and best wishes to out-going camp administrator Collin Girard.

Key websites you should regularly check are:
www.ssvp.on.ca For all the information about ONRC activities

www.ssvp.ca For all the information about National activities

www.famvin.org A great site to inspire you on the activities of our Vincentian family

We would like to note that due to article size, we were not able to include many photos/images in this issue.

Upcoming Dates

February 28, 2015 — Particular Council Annual Reports due

March 15, 2015 — Central Council Annual Reports due

April 10-11, 2015 — Ontario Regional Council Spring Meeting in Windsor

April 15, 2015 — 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)

June 24-28, 2015 — National AGA in Hamilton, ON

September 11-12, 2015 — Ontario Regional Council AGA Meeting in Chatham. Hosted by St Joseph-St Ursula Conference