



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council

In the Loop

March 2025

From the Chair:

“Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring.” St. Catherine of Sienna

As I sit to write this note we are freshly embarked on the season of Lent. We all know, and are reminded on Ash Wednesday, this is a season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Those three pillars of Lenten observance have been with us for millennia. Over the past few decades, we seem to have added a fourth pillar; instead of or in addition to giving something up, we should consider adding something to our lives; preferably something that may take us out of our comfort zones like engaging in additional corporal works of mercy.

As Vincentians, we are no strangers to the corporal works of mercy. For those who may be long past their last catechism lesson, I’ll remind you that those are charitable actions that address the physical needs of others, including feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and burying the dead. With the likely exception of the last one, Vincentians are or should be constantly engaged in these activities. Our home visits are exemplars of the corporal works of mercy so, in many ways, your Lenten observance may not be much different than your ordinary life. Given that circumstance, it may be more of a challenge for Vincentians to find ways to improve or increase our corporal works of mercy but I’m reminded of an admonition from a, perhaps unlikely, source - tennis great Arther Ashe who wrote, “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”

One of the most important functions of the Greater Toronto Central Council is assisting our Particular Councils, Conferences and Vincentians in the field. Louise and her staff take dozens of calls every week, sometimes every day from Vincentians seeking help or clarity on a wide range of issues. Some of the thorniest ones make their way to the Board for discussion and resolution. Attempting to address the most pressing and potentially problematic of those issues can be a challenge because many of them involve the allocation of scarce resources. So, we have to take Mr. Ashe’s advice to heart: start where we are, use what we have and do what we can.

Over the past few years, we’ve had some misfires but we’ve also had some successes. We’ve improved our handbook for Presidents and conducted a number of seminars to help clarify that role. We’ve developed some additional policies to help people navigate some of the more complex issues faced by Conferences. We’ve completely revamped our website and I hope everyone who reads this has taken a few minutes to explore it at www.ssvptoronto.ca. We’ve developed “portals” for each of our Particular Councils and their associated Conferences in an effort to make important documents easier to find and access and share. We will shortly be circulating an important new look at the issue of Equity of Service and we will be providing an updated Finance Policy as well as a fresh restatement of our policy on Vulnerable Sector Checks. And, the development that may have the greatest impact on individual Conferences will be more robust support for Conference Treasurers, recognizing that this is one of most challenging positions to fill in the Society. One might say, coming to fruition as they are in this Lenten season, these are among TCC’s corporal works of mercy

Of course, nothing we as a Board do and no amount of policies or technology can replace the critical day to day outreach you provide to our Neighbours in Need. Our hope is that these things will provide practical guidance and assistance on some of the most difficult issues we face. Mindful of the powerful words of St. Francis of Assisi that “men lose all the material things they leave behind them in this world, but they carry with them the reward of their charity and the alms they give.” I wish you all a good and blessed Lent.

Learning Sessions and Important Dates

Spirituality Sessions:

Book Study: ‘Fratelli Tutti’ by Pope Francis (2020) - continuing

Join us as we work through, reflect and discuss Fratelli Tutti on the last Monday of the month, January through April, from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm. **Mondays, March 31st and April 28th, 2025 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm**

Fratelli Tutti available for sale or free on the Vatican Website:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.pdf

[Click here to join](#) Meeting ID: 232 445 962 026 Passcode: z2rb7xH3

To join by phone, dial 437-703-4669 Phone Meeting ID: 933 461 485#

Orientation for New Members:

Please save the date – **Monday, April 14, 2025, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm**, for the Orientation Session for New Members. New members will be asked to complete a self-study module prior to the session. The module will be sent to members in advance. [Click here to register for the session](#)

Planned Giving Session:

Join our virtual session on **Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 7:00pm – 8:00 pm**, and please extend an invitation to a friend, acquaintance or donor who has expressed interest in supporting the Society. An overview of ways to support the Society now, and into the future will be introduced during this one-hour presentation.

[Click here to join](#) Meeting ID: 241 801 409 990 Passcode: My2oJ3aa

To join by phone, dial 437-703-4669 Phone Meeting ID: 478 404 32#

Marygrove Camp Rake-a-Thon:

Plan to join us on **Saturday, May 3, 2025** at beautiful Marygrove, a day to help clean up the camp for the children, see beautiful Marygrove, and meet with other Vincentians, friends and residents. Information is in your Camp Registration package – see you then! Students requiring service hours may bring their forms for signature.

From the desk of Head Office

Sharing what other Vincentians are asking through info@ssvptoronto.ca; hopefully this information will assist you in your efforts.

- Camp **registration packages** were sent to your parish, c/o of the Society, at the end of February. There is no deadline for registration, campers are registered on a first come, first served basis.
Registering Campers – a tip: Most conferences choose a camp coordinator to manage the sign-ups ensuring families have access to this wonderful opportunity. The camps are a long standing tradition of the Society; they help our families in ways beyond a food gift card. The children enjoy a wonderful experience in a new environment, they are fed well, get plenty of outdoor adventure, are provided with personal needs items, and some move on to being employed at the camp. Can you imagine teenagers stating “I loved it so much, I want to give back” – inspirational! Please help us bring this experience to your families – see further information below.
- Do all members need **Vulnerable Sector Checks**? Yes, all members of the Society must complete a Vulnerable Sector Check; please visit the website, members tab - screening for new member’s information which include requirements for each police jurisdiction.

- The Engagement Committee issued a short survey to Conference Presidents seeking feedback on the **World Day of the Poor** campaign, please help us improve support of this outreach by providing your input.
- **Overview of Refugee services in the GTA and Navigating Social Resources.** Please visit the members section of our website for information reviewing Refugee Services and an overview of general resources.
- The **Head Office** continues to be open from Monday through Thursday, 8:00 am until 2:00 pm, our office is not open on Friday. Like any other place of business, our lines can ring off the hook, or be wide open. Please feel free to follow-up with an email if you are unable to get through. Our hours reflect the times in most demand of our services; we are being responsible with our allocation of resources, and thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

From the Engagement Committee

Your Input - What Will Make a Difference

In June 2024, an online survey was conducted among Vincentians, Conference Presidents, and Particular Council (PC) Presidents in Greater Toronto Central Council (GTCC), to assess engagement among our Vincentian volunteers with the Society, identify barriers preventing higher engagement, and evaluate the use of communication, resources.

Response rates were:

PC Presidents: 6 out of 11 (54%)	Conference Presidents: 66 out of 114 (57%)
Vincentians: 217 out of 1400 (15%)	Almost all Conferences were represented: 99 out of 114

Survey results indicated that there is room for higher levels of engagement among Vincentians. For instance, there was a low rate of response to the survey; one-third of Vincentians responding state they do not make home visits regularly; and 23% of Vincentians rarely attend Conference meetings.

At the same time, a large majority of Vincentians (80%) indicated that they are satisfied with their current role and level of involvement. Vincentians mainly join for altruistic reasons. They indicated that low membership is the main challenge facing Vincentians, negatively impacting workloads.

Based on the survey results, it became apparent that improvement in these five areas could make a difference:

1. **Recruitment:** Recruit new Vincentians and ensure an effective orientation
2. **Leadership:** Identify Vincentians who can take on leadership roles and succeed our current leaders
3. **Donations:** Sustain and increase our donations
4. **Meetings:** Improve our meetings so they are important and worth attending
5. **Resources:** Ensure Vincentians are aware of current resources and materials available to help them serve Neighbours in Need better; identify where there might be gaps.

To further delve into each of these topics, visioning sessions were conducted in January, where close to 30 Vincentians shared their insights on each topic and suggested constructive ways that we could make progress. Right now, the Engagement Committee is reviewing the output from those sessions, determining actions that can be taken short-term, and actions that will take more time to implement.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the survey and the visioning sessions. The Engagement Committee has started to work on prioritizing the actions you told us will make a difference to you in the important of our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. We will keep you updated on progress.

For 170 years, the volunteers and staff of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have been helping those in need in their homes and ours. Our diverse outreach addresses food insecurity in our local communities, and includes professionally run shelters, recovery programs, summer camps and much more and much more.

Join Our Board and Make a Difference! Please share with potential candidates!

Are you, or someone you know, passionate about making a positive impact in the Greater Toronto community? The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council is seeking dedicated individuals to join our Board of Directors and help shape the future of our organization.

About Us: The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council invites interested persons to apply to the corporation's Board of Directors. The Society serves persons in need through two streams: a coordinated 1,400-member volunteer outreach responding to immediate needs of persons in the community experiencing food insecurity and other challenges, and through longer term staffed programs including emergency, transitional, supportive housing, subsidized summer camps for children and additional support services. The annual operating budget is 10 million dollars with a significant portion received from government and other funders. To learn about the Society, we invite you to visit our website: www.ssvptoronto.ca

The Board of Directors is comprised of volunteers from the community who are elected to a 3- year term of office. The Board is seeking candidates with expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Business Management, Public Affairs & Communications,
- Government and Funder Contracts and Compliance, Finance, Accounting, Risk Management,
- Legal Expertise, Diversity Issues, Human Resource Management,
- Construction & Project Management, Information Technology

Commitment:

- ✓ Prepare for, and actively participate in monthly Board meetings, special events, and perform follow-up tasks.
- ✓ Actively serve in the Society to advise and work with other board members on new initiatives, advocacy & outreach, governance, succession planning, marketing & communications
- ✓ Advocate for our needs in the community and among your colleagues and peers.
- ✓ All Board Members must submit to a Vulnerable Sector Screening Police Check

We Encourage Applicants from Diverse Backgrounds

How to Apply: [Download Application/Nomination Form](#)

Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam

Welcoming children from your community

Registration is underway for the Society's children's camps. The Greater Toronto Central Council has operated summer camps for children since the 1940's, first with weekend camp outings in Pickering for single parent-led families, and then to the established Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam programs.

GTCC has operated Marygrove Camp for girls since 1962. Camp Ozanam for boys was established by GTCC in 2015 when Columbus Boy's Camp ceased operations. Vincentians have always registered children for both camping programs recognizing the value of a camping experience for children from families who would otherwise not be able to provide this opportunity. The camps are operated by the Society and supported by the Archdiocese, we are the camping outreach for the youth of this Archdiocese.

Vincentians have always embraced the opportunity to connect families with this experience. Sadly, some Conferences do not make this experience available to the families they serve, while others ensure every potential registrant is giving the opportunity to attend. Please assist your families in accessing this wonderful opportunity, the experience helps the whole family, both with immediate need, and with lifelong impact for the children.

We are experienced camp operators; the Society has been operating camps for over 60 years. **Registration material has been sent to your parish.**

Each camper's holiday is fully subsidized through the generous support of Parishioners and in the case of Camp Ozanam, through the Archdiocesan ShareLife Campaign in partnership with Catholic Charities.