

News in Brief

E-news April 2020 | Issue 24

Covid-19 Special



MEMBRE DE LA SOCIETE
DE SAINT-VINCENT DE PAUL



Welcome to our latest e-news, which is filled with stories from around the country from hard-working volunteers and staff who are helping people in a practical way every-day. If you have a story you would like us to share, please email it to us at: national@svdp.org.nz

Rest in peace David Williams

David joined the Society in the early 1960s at his local church Good Shepherd in Nottingham. He served on National Council, first as President of the National Youth Committee and then as President of first Nottingham Central Council then Shrewsbury Central Council and finally as Vice President of England & Wales under Jim O'Connor in 1997. He served as International Vice President of International Council General under two different President General.

He leaves a wife, Henriette and four children Nicole, Richard, Paul and Colette.

David was the main author of the prayers in the Society's prayer book, used in England & Wales & many other English speaking countries. His book "The Mind and Heart of a Vincentian" is still widely read and John Battle a minister in Tony Blair's government described it as his favourite book when looking for Christian inspiration. David was working on updating it at the time of his untimely death.

Please remember David and his family in your prayers. We trust he is now in the arms of our loving Saviour Jesus Christ.

May he rest in peace.



Kapi Mana

When the Covid 19 Lockdown came into effect we were ready to go, expecting a sharp increase in request for food parcels. There was a bit of a rush at the start, particularly in the Porirua area.

After the first week the demand dropped down throughout the Area to about normal. However, we now seeing a gradual rise in requests and we are expecting more when the wage subsidy runs out and people are facing job redundancies.

Reports from the community here have indicated that some places seem to be awash in food parcels which may have been responsible for lower than expected request numbers. I believe also that the Government has been handing double the usual number of food vouchers.

Some of our usual suppliers of food have closed due to the Covid regulations but donations from the Parish communities have filled any gaps up to date.

One of the bigger problems we have to face is the over 70's. Many of the members doing food parcel preparation and delivery are over 70 and some of the "younger" ones are in the same bubble which makes it more difficult.

However, there have been many wonderful people volunteering to help.

Overall there has been more than wonderful support from the parish communities for which we are very grateful.



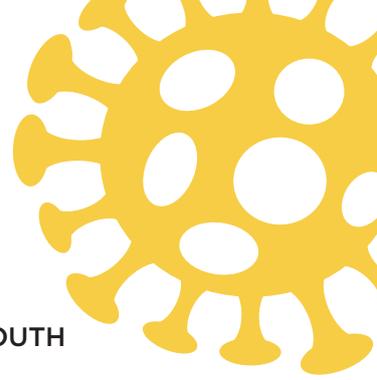
We are only at the beginning of what I believe is going to be a long haul.

Fr Ray helps with the distribution of bread between Otaki and Levin and takes the bread back to his community in Levin who share it with those that need it.

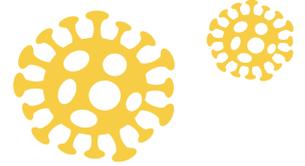
Unite
against
COVID-19

The Covid Epidemic

ST VINCENT DE PAUL NEW PLYMOUTH



The COVID epidemic crept up on us from the start of 2020. At first the epidemic seemed sly and stealthy. It was all overseas, happening to people abroad and only vaguely connected to us.



Then the epidemic hit us like a freight train. Health and safety took front and centre stage as we grappled with the realities of staying connected and continuing to help the impoverished in our community.

On a practical level the story went something like this:

When the schools went back and our volunteer base was once again available to us, we re-started our weekly Community Meals. COVID was already making headlines in China and other Asian countries. We knew we had to be careful, paying particular attention to Health and Safety with the food preparation and presentation. Gloves, hand washing, soap and clean towels were our first focus and our diners were asked to wash their hands before entering the dining room. Mavis did a great job on the door. We met no resistance to the strictly enforced regime.

For the first week or two the Whare Kai (our co-operative cooking “classes” with the Mums of young families) things ran as normal. For Mums trying to hold families together on the barest of means an epidemic in a far way place holds only a modicum of interest.

On the furniture front, our store of furniture was looking bare in February. After a major effort to increase stock, the sheds were looking full again, to the point where we needed to have a “sort out” in order to fit more in to the shed. We were looking forward to some big deliveries in response to requests from our clients.

That all changed once the first case arrived in NZ.

When you are doing something on a weekly basis, there’s not much time to change things when your activity involves 60 or so volunteers and even more clients. – But change we did – and our clients were grateful for the changes, fully understanding the need to do so and afraid for their own safety and that of their families.

With the Community Meals, at first we asked the cooks to supply food as usual. We plated up the food onto biodegradable plates, wrapped the meals and opened the doors, admitting the diners one at a time and giving them a meal to take away. To our surprise the diner numbers had decreased by more than half (from around 40 down to 17). It seemed that already the word was out on the street and people were staying at home.

By the next week, the church had banned gatherings and the hall became unavailable. We decided to wrap up meals again and serve them from our van. Before that could happen, we were in lockdown,

With the Whare Kai, we delivered the meal ingredients and the recipes to the Mums, so that they could cook them up in their own houses. That worked well for two weeks.

And then came the lock down.

Like many SVdP Conferences, most of our members and volunteers are over 70. This has severely curtailed what we can accomplish. Despite this, we have managed to accomplish some “helping” activities by using members of our volunteer team who are under 70.

We’ve had furniture delivered to people in need. One of our volunteers (a Dad, with the help of his teenage sons) has been able to do this. They are, of course, all in the same bubble.

Another under 70 volunteer delivered frozen food from SVdP freezers to our local Foodbank. With the help of Civil Defence, the Foodbank has made food deliveries to people we know, who are in need.

We have arranged transport to hospital for a person who needed urgent treatment.

We also text all those we have helped to check that they are OK and offer advice where help can be provided.

We had our monthly meeting via Zoom, and have our next Area meeting planned using the same technology.

When all this over it will have changed the world, and many of those changes will have been for good. We have to “go with the change”, welcome it even.

The history and longevity of St Vincent de Paul as an organisation should inspire us with hope. We are one of the longer lived social agencies. Let’s pray for inspiration, courage and resilience as we face whatever comes next in this unfolding drama.

Western Bay

St Vincent de Paul in Western Bay have hit the ground running since the first week in lock-down, helping 50 families a day and giving away over a ton of food a week and rehomed 10 families.

Conference members over 70 who are self-isolating at home are connecting with clients and volunteers by phone regularly.



Non-contact delivery of essential items are hot on the list at the moment. They have been incredibly humbled by parishioners in the community who are offering support and stepping up to help out. We are keeping our faith strong and supporting one another.

Christchurch

Christchurch Area Council made the decision to shut down their food bank as soon as the Government advised us to lock down. Although we considered it likely that we could operate under essential social service provider status, our concern was for the health and safety of our Vincentians, many of whom are 70 plus years of age. We quickly developed a desktop voucher system so that we could issue Supermarket Vouchers to our welfare applicants, by sending them a voucher to their phone or computer. This has worked very well. Our Vincentians still respond to our welfare applicants, and assess their need, then this is sent to our welfare administrator who issues the vouchers.

So far, we have issued 278 vouchers to the value of \$15,000 average value around \$62 each.

As this system progressed, we could see that our Supermarket voucher system was not able to help the housebound. To help these clients, we trained one of our staff members to put together a food parcel from our stocks, that could be dropped inside the property without contact with the person. This procedure ensured that a protocol of strict hygiene is followed to keep our staff member safe as well as those he is delivering to. In the past 2 weeks we have delivered 30 food parcels to the housebound.

We have all heard the words. "The Lord will provide" Well when we began the voucher system, we knew that it was going to drain our finances. So we started a "Give a Little" page for donations. So far we have received \$14,000 in donations.....The Lord has indeed provided!

Richmond & Stoke help Vanuatu orchard workers

The Society in Richmond, Nelson were advised that 60 orchard workers from Vanuatu were suffering in the colder autumn weather as they did not have suitable clothing and Level 4 lockdown prevented them travelling off the orchards.

On learning of this Richmond President, Ray Firth, asked shop manager, Tania, to find suitable clothing including jackets, tops and socks. This was a great team effort with Trish in Nelson and Sue in our Stoke shop also filling boxes of clothing delivered and given to the orchard workers.



Picton

The Vinnies shop has been closed due to Covid-19 however we have been called upon a few times as many people were in dire situations for warm clothing bedding, accommodation and food. We have coordinated our work alongside other agencies such as foodbank.

There has been a real need for warm clothing for people due to colder weather. At level 3 we will be working behind the scenes providing essential items for people in the community who are struggling providing warm clothing, bedding, curtains, school supplies and food parcels.

People will not be able to enter the shop as our first priority is to keep everyone safe but they will have to contact us by phone and organise by prior arrangement so all items will be available following a contactless protocol. All items will be free of charge but those who wish to make a donation for items can do so at a later date when the levels have dropped.

We are very much looking forward to getting back to normal soon and catching up with everyone.



Ashburton

On the day before the shut down for businesses, we had a phone call from the local Domino's Pizza business asking if we would like some pizzas at the end of the day. He thought there would be a couple of dozen or so.

However, he spent the rest of the day baking for St Vincent de Paul and donated 109 small pizzas, 25 large pizzas and 68 garlic breads. These were put in the freezer at the food bank.

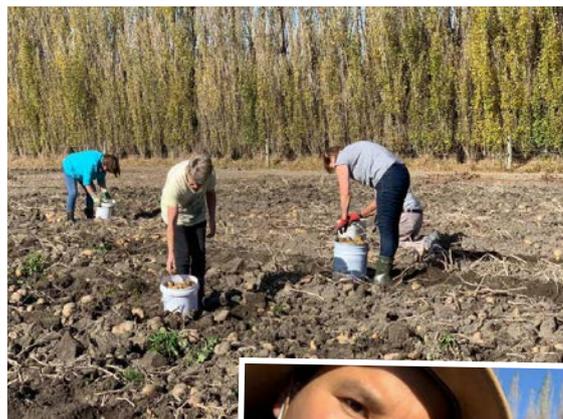
A local farmer who grew a paddock of potatoes for Talley's frozen Foods, allowed St Vincent de Paul members to bag up 3 truck loads of potatoes from the end of a paddock that hadn't been harvested.

A working bee was held for members who were under 70 years of age and the job was done within 3 hours. Everyone in the community is so supportive of the food bank.

We are currently operating with only one person entering the food bank and doing the delivering to those in need. Parcels are left at the door in bags provided by St Vincent de Paul. Fortunately we haven't been overwhelmed with requests yet.

A homeless man was put up in the local Holiday Park and his board paid by St Vincent de Paul. He is now under the care of Ministry of Social Development and looking for a place to rent in town.

A farmer donated a heifer, all cut up and packaged. People have been very generous.



Above: Members picking potatoes. Right: Our assistant priest Fr Huynh Tran helping out with the potato picking.



Auckland

Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a steep surge in requests arising from families needing food support.

The Vinnies Covid-19 Response team have heard and seen first-hand some of the extreme impoverished situations that people are facing since the Covid-19 Lockdown. The response team have connected with hundreds of vulnerable, struggling families and individuals over the past two weeks. One in particular shared:

"It was a real eye opener dropping off food to a tent in the middle of a deserted car lot... I dropped off 3 parcels to one address, I was confused and thinking someone was trying to take advantage of the free food. Boy was I wrong! I was really wrong. One foodbox went to the basement where the grandmother was isolating with a teenager, one to the back shed where a older siblings teenagers and babies were, and the last to the carport tent where the dad was. It was cold, there was not enough blankets and beds. They had a makeshift cooking arrangement outside that did not look safe. They were all trying to isolate and were quite stressed because nappies and formula had run out and their wasn't enough food. Thank God their neighbour who had phone credit rang on their behalf..."



NOTE: these families have since been referred to Social services to be housed and they are being moved into more suitable accommodation. The Society response team will continue to support them with food and other resources and communicate with them regularly.

Hamilton

We applied early for and received, essential service status on the 28th March 2020. Our services are advertised via Facebook, our Website & word-of-mouth. We currently provide 50 food parcels per day which include ready-prepared meals, grocery items, fruit & fresh mince (5 tons donated by Greenlea Meats).

Contactless distribution is achieved through strict adherence to an approved format:

- Clients phone for assistance, providing all contact details.
- Details received are checked for veracity and applicant given a time to collect. We also deliver where there is no alternative.

Our Winter Warmer clothing project is also operating but already struggling to fulfill demand.

Wonderful assistance, with very generous donations of food & money, has been provided by our long-standing supporters, especially companies & corporations who have been steadfast for many years and our volunteers, as always, have been ready willing & able to “take up the cudgel” and join us to help beat the new foe.



“I picked up the food parcel yesterday and was blown away by the amount and variety of food you provided. Thank you so much. Really helpful.”

“Thank you very much for our food parcel today, when I saw meat I almost cried, we haven’t had meat for 3 days, so from the bottom of our hearts thank you from me and my children.”

“From me and my 6 children we want to say thank you so much Vinnies for our amazing food parcel. It’s what we needed during this hard time, I’m so grateful, thank you.”

Dunedin

For the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Dunedin the Covid-19 level-4 lockdown has meant a shift in focus as visiting is no longer an option but the phone lines have been running hot. We’ve been keeping in contact with people over the phone, keeping those important connections up and ensuring people know that we’re thinking of them even though we can’t visit.

Our foodbank has been running throughout, being an essential service, with referrals coming in through community agencies and self-referrals via phone, Facebook and email, and food parcels are being delivered to people’s gates. Three of our staff are keeping our foodbank operational, going in to the centre on different days to avoid contact with each other. Our budgeting service is also still operating, but over the phone.

We expect demand to increase in the next few weeks as we see the consequences of business closures and job losses in the community but are heartened by the many offers of support we have received from the Dunedin community.



Wellington

CORPORATE CABS

Corporate Cabs are supporting Vinnies Wellington by volunteering their time and vehicles to delivery essential parcels. This has meant the Society has a larger capacity of deliveries enabling them to support over 150 people and families each week.



SUPPORTING REFEREED CLIENTS FROM 20+ EXTERNAL AGENCIES:

- Wellington City Council
- Wellington City Mission
- Berhampore Community Centre Birthright
- Capital Care Medical
- CCDHB
- City Housing
- Community Connections
- Department of Corrections
- Free Store
- Kainga Ora
- Korowai aroha trust
- Laura Fergusson Trust
- Oranga Tamariki
- Plunket
- Red Cross Trauma Recovery
- Newtown Union Health
- Strengthening Families
- Taeaomanino Trust
- Te Waka Whaiora
- Wellington Night Shelter
- Youth Services (MSD)

23 MARCH - 22 APRIL 2020 STATISTICS

TOTAL PEOPLE & FAMILIES SUPPORTED

327 This number is made up of:
 Adults: **582**
 Children: **373**

WINTER PARCELS

37

(excluding clothing, bedding, heating and cookware)

BABY PARCELS

40

(excluding parcels delivered to Wellington hospital in preparation for Level 4)

TOTAL PARCELS

509

Spent: **\$41,073.46**
 Donated: **\$22,383.00**



Napier

The 'Food bank' at Sacred heart college run by the young Vinnies group has been extremely busy supplying food and assistance to those in need.

There is enormous need in the area and the Vinnies are assisting families, the elderly and those living on their own.



Twinning Report

We have received reports from our Twins as to how their lives have been affected by Covid-19. These are included in this report.

TONGA

We have recently provided laboratory equipment, biology and general science, to the Apifoou College in Tonga that was severely damaged by cyclone Gita 2 years ago. We have in recent days forwarded funding to assist in the making of masks by students.



We are also investigating, if needed, the shipping of masks and gloves to our island Twins.

Cyclone George caused significant property damage in both Vanuatu and Fiji, Australian twin countries, and in Tonga, the main island Tongatapu and the neighbouring island Eau suffered crop damage, flooding and some property damage. We are continuing to communicate with the Tongan National Council as to what the best assistance will be.



Once we are able to operate again we will be formulating a plan to collate clothing shipments for initially Tonga.

SRI LANKA

Communication with Sri Lanka has been affected by the lock down. We can report that they are continuing to distribute funding as and where needed. They have also completed the village toilet project in the Chilaw Council area.

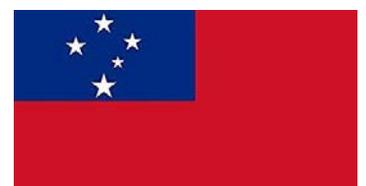


SAMOA

Samoa as reported last year has been in receipt of goods sent from the Kapi-Mana area.

Samoa was in a soft lockdown for 4 weeks during which time there no public transport. Schools, churches, hotels, restaurants and bars were closed and gatherings of over 5 people banned. Seaports and airports were also closed down.

In Week 5 there has been a little relaxation in the lockdown but many people are now left unemployed. SVdP Samoa is distributing food parcels to the unemployed and hopes to continue doing so until the economy recovers. The good news from all of this is that Samoa has managed to remain Convid10-free!



TONGA



I live with my wife at our home in Tonga. Our children, grandchildren, and relatives mostly live in New Zealand, Australia and USA. We contacted them every day through Messenger (live and text). This is our brief story.

The onset of the C-virus has certainly changed the social, government and economic landscape of our island nation. While we have no cases, yet it felt like we have with isolation, lockdown and curfew over the last four weeks. Our international borders are closed to air travel, but cargo ships are allowed with restrictions. It's like the 60's with very few cars on the road.

Medically, we are not yet prepared with PPE, face masks, ventilators, hospital beds or enough isolation places, or identified areas for mass burial if it comes to that in the future. I hope not. I am lucky in a way to have heard from survivors of the 1918 Pandemic of the mass burial stories and horse drawn carts that moves through the neighbours to collect the dead bodies.

Those that do not pray regularly are now practicing it every day, absentees' fathers and mothers are now staying at home and get to know their families better, first time in my life to participate in a church service via live streaming,



Empty main streets during lock down in Nukualofa



Check points in Nukualofa during lockdown.



Tropical Cyclone Harold - a flooded street in Tonga.



Tropical Cyclone Herold during King tide flooded the beachfront roads and villages in these areas.

TC Herold have complicated our preparation a little, but we will recover quickly to concentrate on the C-virus. We can get updates of the Pandemic via the local and international radio broadcasting services, tv networks, the internet and social media.

The lockdown allows me to concentrate on my moment of prayers everyday which includes my family, frontline services around the world, those who have passed away from the Pandemic and those who are still suffering, our government and leaders, SVDP and charity organizations, Pope and the church and especially the poor, hungry, sick, etc.

My wife suffers from high blood pressure, diabetes, and quietly we are worried what will happen if she gets the C-virus. She has only been out once over the last three weeks and sit inside the car for fear of the C-virus.

SRI LANKA



The current global health crisis owing to Covid-19 has affected the normal life of people all over the world.

Here in Sri Lanka with an island-wide curfew from the 18th March 2020 most of our daily wage earners, fishermen, farmers, domestic workers and others are unable to carry out their day to day work. Whilst there are many challenges being faced such as the age of most of our members delivering services place them in high risk, they work with commitment and compassion extending a hand to most vulnerable people all over the country by responding to their specific needs.

Through our Conferences in local areas the Society is doing everything possible to help people who need support and engage with those seeking help for the first time in these circumstances.

Our Vincentians along with the Priests visits homes and distribute dry rations, milk powder for children and medication. Wherever necessary financial assistance is granted as well.

The challenge for us in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic is how we might continue to assist the many people who will continue to seek assistance and financial support for many months ahead.

We hope and pray that everything returns to normalcy soon.



NEWS IN BRIEF

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We'd love to read your stories:

If you have any news items that you would like us to put in our next 'News in Brief' e-newsletter, please send us a short article and a photo (if you have one) to:

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