

News in Brief

E-news November 2025 | Issue 38

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 to share, please email: national@svdp.org.nz



MEMBRE DE LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE SAINT-VINCENT DE PAUL



MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

The Good Samaritan story must be the most well-known parable from the New Testament, indeed from the whole Bible, and the command from Jesus “Go and do likewise” still applies today, some two thousand and twenty years later.

Jesus himself, put it into practise when he cured the lepers, the lame, the sick, that is the marginalised of society. He didn't just talk about loving God, he showed it in very practical ways. He helps them “personally” and they “experience love”, probably for the very first time. Can you imagine what it must have done for their self-esteem?

And it wasn't just the economically poor he helped. Remember the grieving widow going out to bury her only son, and the Temple official whose daughter was seriously ill? No judgements were made, no sermons were preached – just simple practical and personal help, all done out of love.

As the Scriptures tell us, we are made in the image and likeness of God, so when we love (assist) or neighbour, we are loving God.

We are privileged to have Frederic's Way to help us put into practice. In his time, he practised it by simple visits to the needy with simple practical help. The BIG challenge for us now in OUR time, is to find new ways of doing exactly the same thing.

As the Good Samaritan tells “go and do likewise” in a 2025 world. Be different!

Every blessing,

Gerry Stevens
– National President



POPE LEO URGES LOVE FOR THE POOR

At its heart, Pope Leo XIV 's first Apostolic Exhortation, *Dilexi te*, is a call to Christ's disciples “to recognise him in the poor and the suffering.”

Dilexi te, which means ‘I have loved you’ (from Rev 3), sees the love of Christ as incarnated in love for the poor, in caring for the sick, opposing slavery, defending women who experience exclusion and violence, accompanying

migrants, charitable giving and working for equality.

Dilexi te builds on the teaching of Pope Francis' final encyclical – *Dilexit Nos*, on the Sacred Heart of Jesus – highlighting the “close connection” between the love of God and love for the poor.

Pope Leo's Exhortation calls on us to recognise the many “faces of the poor

and of poverty”, including “the poverty of those who lack material means of subsistence” or “who are socially marginalised and lack the means to give voice to their dignity and abilities”.

He also notes the existence of moral, spiritual, and cultural poverty; the poverty of “those who have no rights, no space, no freedom”.

Pope Leo warns of the emergence of new, sometimes “more subtle and dangerous” forms of poverty, and decries economic “rules” that increase wealth for a few but also increase inequality. “I can only state once more that inequality ‘is the root of social ills,’” says Pope Leo.

The Pope welcomes the fact that “the United Nations has made the eradication of poverty one of its millennium goals” but he says there is a long way to go in an era in which the “dictatorship of an economy that kills” continues to prevail. The wealth of the few continues to grow “exponentially” while the gap between rich and poor increases; and “ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation” remain widespread,” says the Pope.

The Pope goes on to comment on the continued existence of a “throwaway culture”, sometimes “well disguised”, that “tolerates with indifference that millions of people die of hunger or survive in conditions unfit for human beings”.



“We Christians must not abandon almsgiving. It can be done in different ways, and surely more effectively, but it must continue to be done.”

– Pope Leo XIV

FOCUS ON OCEANIA

A highlight of the November National Council Meeting in Wellington was a keynote address by Paul Trezise, International Territorial Vice President for Oceania.

A very interesting overview of the work and structure of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Oceania was presented by Paul Trezise at the National Council Meeting in Wellington in November. Paul is the International Territorial Vice President (ITVP) for Oceania, one of 13 zones around the world.

Each zone has a team. The Oceania team currently has two New Zealanders in it – Keith Norton (coordinator) and Arthur Schultze (twinning responsibilities). In his keynote address Paul talked about the strengths of the Oceania region, the opportunities for growth and the challenges the region faces.



Paul’s talk was very well-received by those present. He spoke of the vision of the Founder Frédéric Ozanam, the origins of the Society and its vibrant growth. Paul also referenced the letters of Frédéric, who was a prolific and eloquent letter writer to family, friends and Society members.

Resources to assist with Refounding

A number of resources have been created to support Conferences as they engage in the Refounding process.

“As Conferences and individuals, we have to recapture the inspiration and dynamism of those who founded the Society,” says National President, Gerry Stevens. “Our goal is to re-awaken the spirit that inspired Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his companions in their radical service of others.”

These resources have been developed to provide practical help and guidance for Conferences. Says Gerry: “Refounding is an ongoing process. I urge Conferences to make regular use of these resources to motivate Members and keep the momentum going.”



<https://members.svdp.org.nz/refounding-resources>

Email national@svdp.org.nz if you need the log in details for the members site.

Turning Point – A Guide to Refounding the Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand.

This is an essential guide to Refounding intended for all Conferences and members. Please make sure all Members have a copy. It explains what Refounding is all about and includes guidelines for implementation. Print copies have been sent to all Conferences and the resource is also available on the **Members section** of the SVdP website under ‘Refounding Resources’.



Refounding – The National President’s view

A new video resource has been developed which presents National President Gerry Stevens’ vision for Refounding.

The 20-minute video is an excellent resource for use at Conference meetings to build a shared understanding of Refounding among Members. Please use the video in your local Conferences, as the basis for group discussion and reflection.

In the video, Gerry talks about the urgent need for the Society to re-awaken the spirit that ignited the faith of the founding group.



Gerry’s Refounding talk is available on the members site or direct link below:

» [Watch on YouTube](#)

Refounding – A Guide for Conference Presidents

Conference Presidents play a pivotal role in guiding the Refounding process in their Conference. This resource has been created to help Presidents lead their Conferences effectively. It provides suggestions for a successful rollout of Refounding, tips for making meetings engaging and motivating, and ideas for the induction of new members. Available on the **Members section** of the SVdP website under ‘Refounding Resources’.



Resources to assist with Refounding

Reflecting on the Good Samaritan Parable

The Good Samaritan parable is a founding story for the St Vincent de Paul Society. It goes to the heart of the Vincentian vocation. This resource provides reflections on the parable which can be used at Conference meetings or members can use in personal prayer. Available on the [Members section](#) of the SVdP website under 'Refounding Resources'.



Frédéric Ozanam – A life of faith, friendship and service

To engage in Refounding, we need to get to know our founder. How much do you know about Frédéric Ozanam? What ignited his passion for serving those in need? Can we be inspired by his example? This resource is a summary of his life and how he put his faith into practice. Available on the [Members section](#) of the SVdP website under 'Refounding Resources'.

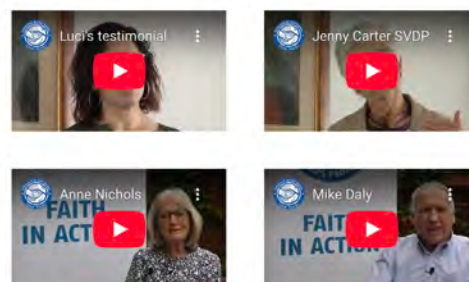


Short promotional videos

Why be a Vincentian? What is it like? What difference does it make to my life?

These questions are answered in a series of short videos featuring Canterbury Vincentians. You can find these testimonial clips on the [Members' section](#) of the website under 'Refounding Resources' or in the 'Conferences & Councils' dropdown menu. They have been produced by SVdP Canterbury and are a great resource for promoting the Society to prospective new Members.

You might also think about doing short videos with your own Members to promote the Society in your parishes and communities.

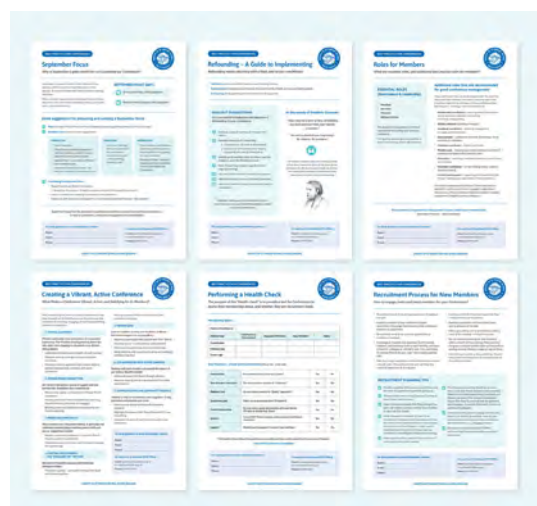


Best Practice Guides

A series of Best Practice Guides have been developed by Mike Daly from Canterbury and National VP. These very helpful resources provide advice and tips for energising our Conferences. Topics are:

- Recruitment Process for New Members
- September – a Focus for Promotions
- Roles for Members
- Refounding – a Guide to Implementing
- Performing a Health Check
- Creating a Vibrant, Active Conference

Available on the [Members section](#) of the SVdP website under 'Refounding Resources'.



How to recruit members for your Conferences



Refunding requires a strong focus on recruiting new Members to the Society and retaining them. Our future depends on this. Here are some ideas to boost your recruiting efforts.

- Recruitment needs to be an ongoing process throughout the year.
- Appoint a member of your Conference to lead recruitment. Encourage them to enlist other Conference members to assist them.
- Recruitment needs to be a regular agenda item at Conference meetings.
- Encourage a “shoulder tap” approach by the existing members, and challenge them to each identify, and invite a friend or colleague or relative to join. This could begin by inviting them to be your “pair” when making welfare calls.
- Plan for a major promotion and recruitment drive at least once per year. This could coincide with our feast day month of September, or during Lent.
- Involve your Parish Priest and Leadership Team in the planning (see tips below).
- Develop a promotion and recruitment plan well in advance of the date (see tips below).
- Follow up a phone call to all attendees within a week of the meeting inviting them to join.
- Run an induction meeting for new members within a month of them joining. Make sure they are given a role and pair them with an existing member to help them feel comfortable.
- Give the new member a role, a job to do. This will ensure they feel valued and an important part of the Conference team.

RECRUITMENT PLANNING TIPS

- ✓ Provide newsletter information about Vinnies.
- ✓ Invite them to bring food and clothing to Mass for our welfare needs.
- ✓ Have a Vincentian speak after Mass, telling of our work, our mission, and our need for new members to carry out the mission.
- ✓ Invite prospective members to come to an introduction evening to learn more about Vinnies, the work, and our special character. Have existing members in the church foyer to collect names emails and phone numbers of those that are interested in attending this introduction meeting.
- ✓ Make contact within a week of this collection of names, and invite to the meeting.
- ✓ The introductory meeting should be no more than 1 hour and should include a well-presented PowerPoint or video about being Vincentian, our mission, and our work. Ensure that there is plenty of time for questions and discussion. Finish with tea and coffee.
- ✓ Embrace diversity. Look to engage with the wide diversity of cultural groups that make up your parish community and proactively remove any perceived barriers, e.g. language, shyness.
- ✓ Take steps to ensure the work of SVdP is visible and well understood within your parish community.

A Vibrant Faith Community

This is the first in a series of stories about flourishing Conferences around the country. Our Refounding efforts can be greatly boosted by what we learn from other Conferences.

A steady influx of retirees and purposeful leadership is building a vibrant St Vincent de Paul Conference on the Kāpiti coast, 50 kilometres north of Wellington.

Peter Ryan, a retired teacher, joined the Vinnies five years ago as a result of a personal invitation. Within six months he found himself President of the Our Lady of Kāpiti Conference.

"I'd just retired and Covid isolation had just finished. I was walking down our street, and a Vinnies meeting had wound up in a home nearby. One of the members, Tony O' Connor, came across and said to me, why don't you join Vinnies? And I said, all right, I will. So it was a personal invitation that got me involved.

"The Conference was quite small and inward-looking when I joined. There would have been six-to-eight regular attendees."

Peter quickly found himself responsible for housing and negotiating with the parish for a storage facility for Vinnies. Before he knew it, he was boosted into a leadership position.

Fast forward five years and Peter finds himself leading a flourishing Conference of more than 30 members, with at least 20 regular meeting attendees. The Conference meets on the first and third Mondays of each month (except January), with a cuppa provided beforehand for people to get to know each other better. Meetings usually last about two hours.

The meeting begins with 20-30 minutes of prayer and reflection, led by members on a voluntary basis.

"This ensures that prayer and reflection are at the heart of our Conference," says Peter. "We want to



Peter Ryan speaking at the National Council Meeting of the Society on November 8.

nourish a strong faith-sharing culture that extends beyond the time set aside for reflection."

Peter believes that the prayer and reflection have been critical to strengthening the Conference.

"People volunteer to prepare the reflection. This morning's reflection was based on quotes from Pope Francis and Francis of Assisi. The quotes were stunning and about 10 members spoke up and shared what was on their heart. A real atmosphere of trust is built up around that."

Peter says that one of the keys to success is the collaborative spirit that underpins all the work they

"One of the keys to success is the collaborative spirit that underpins all the work they do."

— PETER RYAN

A Vibrant Faith Community

do. People work in pairs and matters that arise in dealing with companions are not private to them.

“We call the people we work with companions because we see ourselves as walking together with them.

“We have visitation reports at our meetings which is a sort of peer supervision. Names are not necessarily used but there is a discernment process that builds confidence and makes for a more objective outcome. We want to make sure that we are not becoming co-dependent with the people we may have been working with for many years.”

The Conference is deliberate in its efforts to recruit new members. Peter speaks about the work of the Vinnies at parish Masses and invites parishioners to join. There’s always an article about the work of the Society in the quarterly parish magazine. Shoulder-tapping people and personally inviting them to come along is a proven recruitment strategy and sometimes people just turn up at a meeting, he says.

A good induction process is vital, says Peter, to make new members feel welcome and productive.

“When I joined, it could take up to a year for new members to get up to speed. It seemed newcomers should learn how things operated by osmosis. I thought that’s a waste of time.

“When I first became President, I made a habit of inviting a new member to have a coffee with me to find out their strengths and what work would suit them best. Now one of the admin group will take them out for a coffee, have a talk, assign them a buddy. The buddy takes them to our pātaka kai, shows them all the different procedures and invites them to go with them to visit a companion to see how things actually go. They are invited along to some of the less threatening activities and a few months on we check in on how they are doing.”

Peter acknowledges that their Conference has benefitted from being located in a retirement area.

“A lot of people come here with really good life experience, and deep faith, and want to do something with their retirement. They’re still of an age when they can do that. For example, we have someone who was a senior social worker and retired to Waikanae, and

she now does all our supervision. If anyone in our Conference has a particularly thorny issue they don’t want to share with everyone, they can go to her and she will help them with that.

“She brings a new level of professionalism which helps people avoid getting snarled up in other people’s problems. She has her own supervisor, outside the Conference, and so do I.”

The most valuable thing about the Refounding project currently underway is its emphasis on making Conferences intentional faith communities, says Peter.

“The image that I’ve come up with lately is the bucket fountain in Cuba Street. God’s love fills me and there’s enough for me to overflow into a bigger bucket. The water splashes around and then a bigger bucket gets filled. It tips and gets filled again, and on and on it goes. God’s love is spread around like that.

“The image of the bucket overflowing fits into the idea of refounding. Refounding is about purifying your intentions. It’s not about being seen to be a ‘do-good’ organisation and having some sort of public profile and all that sort of thing.



Wellington Bucket Fountain

A Vibrant Faith Community

“No, it’s about gratitude, about knowing I have been blessed in my life and I’m in a position where the bucket can simply overflow into the next bucket.”

“If our Conference is an intentional faith community, more and more people want to be there. We have found that people are not rushing away. Many members come and have a coffee beforehand. We’re happy to give up the morning because we like being there and we like the meetings. People leave early if they have to.”

The Kāpiti Conference is a busy operation. Works include delivering food parcels, home visitation, supporting clients of the Cancer Society, delivering and collecting second-hand furniture, assisting the homeless and rough sleepers, helping refugees in the settlement process, helping families in need with school expenses.

The Conference has a small admin group which shares the tasks of running things. The scale of the operation in Kāpiti means some people, not least the President, are carrying heavy workloads.

“We are conscious of the need to find ways to reduce workloads on some people who have key responsibilities,” says Peter.

“One thing we have done is to have an understudy for everybody so we are covered if people are away. Our members are retired and most of us have grandchildren so people may be away from time to time. The whole organisation shouldn’t fall over because someone’s away. I think that’s really important. There’s always back-up.”

Peter has been a very committed President, devoting many hours to the role every week. What has he received in return?

“Basically the company and friendship of the people involved in the Conference. What has evolved between Conference members is mutual respect. I respect you, and to some extent I hold you in awe. I sense that coming back as well.”



Members of Our Lady of Kāpiti Conference discussing the qualities of a Refounded Conference and evaluating how their Conference measures up.

“If our Conference is an intentional faith community, more and more people want to be there. We have found that people are not rushing away.”

– PETER RYAN



“In my life I want to become better and do a little good.”

– FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM

REFOUNDING 2025

MEET EDMUND CUEVAS

Our National Health & Safety, Wellbeing and Safeguarding (HSWS) Advisor



We are delighted to introduce Edmund Cuevas, recently appointed as our National Health & Safety, Wellbeing and Safeguarding (HSWS) Advisor.

In this role, Edmund provides national leadership, coordination, and professional advice to help embed a strong culture of care, safety, and wellbeing across the Society. He oversees the implementation of the Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) and the HSWS Strategy, ensuring that everyone involved in our mission i.e., members, staff, volunteers, and the communities we serve, can work and connect safely, with dignity and confidence.

Recently, Edmund has visited several SVDP locations and Shops around the motu and has been encouraged by what he's seen.

"It's been inspiring to meet so many passionate volunteers and staff who are deeply committed to serving their communities," he says. "Seeing the commitment and dedication firsthand gives me great confidence in how the Society's mission is lived out every day."

"Health and safety aren't just about compliance; it's about compassion, manaakitanga, and creating a culture where everyone can thrive and feel safe, both those who serve and those we serve."



Edmund Cuevas

– National HSWS Advisor

OUR HSWS PRINCIPLES

A key part of Edmund's early work has been the development of the Society's Health & Safety, Wellbeing and Safeguarding Strategy. Part of it is the HSWS Principles, which reflect our shared values and commitment to creating safe, supportive environments for all i.e.:

- The dignity, safety and wellbeing of people are paramount.
- Safeguarding and safety apply equally to members, staff, volunteers, visitors, and the vulnerable people and communities we serve.
- Everyone has the right to speak up, be heard, and be protected from harm.
- We commit to continuous learning, transparent reporting and accountability.
- We work collaboratively across national, regional and local levels to embed safe and healthy practices.

A Background Rooted in Safety and Service

With a strong background in health and safety, Edmund previously worked as an Investigation Inspector at WorkSafe New Zealand and as a Senior Health & Safety and Wellbeing Advisor for the City Rail Link Project in Auckland, the country's first underground Metro system, set to open in early 2026.

Beyond his professional career, Edmund and his family are active members of their Catholic parish in Auckland and long-time leaders in the Couples for Christ (CFC) community, an international movement under the Pontifical Council for the Laity. He also serves as one of the Board of Trustees for ANCOP New Zealand (Answering the Cry of the Poor), a CFC-led charity that supports the poor through educational sponsorship programs, values formation, and home building projects.

Edmund's faith and vocation come together in his work for the Society.

"Everyone deserves to serve and be served in an environment of care and respect," says Edmund.

NAPIER AREA COUNCIL

Help for Solomon Island seasonal workers

Recently our Napier Area Council was asked by Fr John Craddock, our Spiritual Advisor, to assist seven men from the Solomon Islands who arrived in Napier for seasonal work as pickers in Hawke's Bay. As they had come directly from very high temperatures in the Solomons, they didn't have enough warm clothing to tide them over until warmer weather arrives.

We were happy to assist with this request and Fr John and Dan Sussmilch of our Area Council met with the men and provided them with vouchers to purchase whatever they needed.

They were very grateful for this assistance and for our promise to keep in touch with them offering advocacy help for the duration of their stay.

Christine Tong

President, Napier Area Council



Welcoming Solomon Island seasonal workers in Napier in September.

Vincentian Foundation for the Elderly Update

Hearing loss affects about 1 in 6 people in New Zealand and is commonly caused by aging (affects about one third of people over 65), loud noise exposure, genetics and can also result from illness and injury (infections, viral illnesses and physical injuries to the ear.)

Studies show the prevalence of hearing loss in New Zealand is 15% for those aged 60 – 69 and 22% for those aged 70 years and over.

Currently the Foundation's assistance is limited to a maximum of \$700 per pair of hearing aids to successful applicants who meet the criteria of being over 65 years, hold a Super Gold Card with a Community Services endorsement.

The following table shows the increased level of demand which the Foundation is struggling to accommodate.

	1 June '25 to 31 Oct '25	1 June '24 to 31 May '25	1 June '23 to 1 May '24
Number of grants made	36	67	22
Cost of grants made	\$17,600	\$38,849	\$9,735
Average cost	\$489	\$580	\$443



If the level of demand continues at the current rate the Foundation will need to finance 86 grants at an approximate cost of \$42,240 – a 28.3% increase !

The Vincentian Foundation Trustees thank the National President for the recent National Appeal and urges Councils and Conferences to forward donations to the following National Office bank account:

02-0528-0208598-027

(Ref: Vincentian Foundation)

Thank you for your consideration

Pat Sheehan

SVDP National President's Representative on the Vincentian Foundation.



Kevin Wilson

RIP 6th September 2025, Nelson

A devoted and long-time member of Richmond Conference.



Pat Sheehan, the National Treasurer at the time initially met Pat when the National Office was located in a derelict building in High Street, Lower Hutt. Fortunately space was located in the Catholic Centre in Hill Street. The next move was to the Kirks building in Brandon Street – Pat coped well with all the moves.

His fondest memory of Pat was his sense of humour. He would phone and when you answered “Good Morning” his immediate response was “Well it was until I called!” He also recalled his great love for Shirley his wife and his pride at the success of his family. Shirley would occasionally provide catering at Board meetings – Pat loved the morning/afternoon tea and lunch breaks – it was a great chance to share fellowship.

Pat was meticulous in the keeping of the Kalamazoo cash books to record bank statement transactions – a work of art!

One of his favourite sayings was “if you are not rewarded in this life may you be rewarded in the next”.

May Pat be enjoying the rewards of the next life.

Patrick O'Rourke

RIP 20th October 2025, Wellington

Pat passed away after a life richly lived and generously given. He will be remembered for his sharp wit and the Irish jokes he loved to share – stories that brought laughter to family, friends, and anyone lucky enough to cross his path. Beneath the humour was a man of deep conviction, who stood firmly for social justice and fairness for all.



His lifelong commitment to serving others was most evident in his devotion to the Society of St Vincent de Paul, where he served faithfully for more than 20 years as National Secretary. His steady leadership, compassion, and sense of purpose left an enduring mark on the Society and those it serves.

SVDP SHOP IN WHANGANUI CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Thirty years of service to the Whanganui community was celebrated in style by local Vincentians and supporters.

Celebrations began on Monday 7 July and continued throughout the week. The shop was beautifully decorated by Margaret Healey, Sue Barclay (our managers), and Karen Coleman, with balloons and changing clothing specials each day. Chocolates were given out, spot prizes drawn daily, and raffles sold out quickly.

On Wednesday morning, 9 July, our longest-serving staff member, Shirley Cooper, joined Fr. Craig Butler to cut a cake made by Madeline McCrea.

A colouring-in competition themed around St Vincent de Paul and Vincentian service was held, with book

vouchers awarded to the winners across age groups.

Saturday afternoon featured a lively fashion parade at St Mary's Church Hall, with clothes from the shop modelled by members, helpers, and children. The hall was beautifully decorated, including a red carpet. Margaret Gudsell, our SVDP President, was a confident and capable compere. Paul Watkins provided music, and the show was enjoyed by a large crowd of customers, family members, parishioners, and Conference members. Afternoon tea, raffles, and lucky spot prizes rounded out the celebration.



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:

Anne-Marie McCarten
Email: national@svdp.org.nz