

News in Brief

E-news June 2026 | Issue 39

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@sudp.org.nz

MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

The Cry of the Poor



Nau mai, haere mai.

Earlier this year Pope Leo sent out his first Letter. Following on from Pope Francis, he urged us to remember

to hear the “cry of the poor”. This was significant. Not only was he following Francis’ lead, he was reminding everyone of one of the essentials of being a follower of Jesus – looking after those in need – the poor.

Part of me wanted to smile at the reminder he gave us and I was tempted to think, “been there, done that” and then I remembered that Jesus also said: “the poor will always be with you”. So what does that mean?

First of all we must remember that the poor are not just those who are economically challenged, low or no income or those who come requesting food parcels. It really has very little to do with money but more to do with those who are left out of everyday society – the homeless, the lonely, the different, the street-dwellers, the discriminated, the elderly, the marginalised and the disabled who can’t take part in our so-called society. In Jesus’ day it was the blind, the crippled, the widows and orphans,

the street ladies, non-Jews and the tax collectors (who were actually quite wealthy but were despised as they worked for the ruling race). In effect, anyone who was different. They were often referred to as sinners.

In short, the poor are the “forgotten people” of today’s society. The ones society wants to move off the street and around the corner.

“Out of sight, out of mind”. It is our job to make sure that doesn’t happen.

In Frédéric Ozanam’s day too, it wasn’t much different, though he had to cope with thousands of unemployed. When he and his companions visited the poor, they discovered that it wasn’t so much practical help that was needed but more just someone to talk to, someone who would listen to them. That is why Frédéric insisted that visits to people were more important than the practical help i.e. food vouchers or parcels. Yes, those parcels do help but more importantly it is letting people know that someone cares about them.

From the Vincentian perspective, it means that God cares, Jesus cares, and we are missionaries delivering the Good News, “you are loved by God”.



Years ago I read a novel by Nevil Shute called “Round the Bend”. Some of you may have heard of it or the author. It is a book I have read many times. About ten years ago I came across a hard-bound copy in a second-hand book shop. I bought it and it is still a treasure in my book collection.

Let me quote from it...

“they think he’s a man, but a man touched by the hand of God, whatever form of God they happen to believe in. And because that’s what they think, it does them good and gives them something to hang onto. Because it means that God still cares about the world and cares for them.”

– Nevil Shute, Round the Bend

The man they were talking about was a simple ordinary aircraft engineer who taught his fellow workers that doing the job properly and carefully, without fuss and shortcuts was doing the will of their God. Nothing spectacular, nothing flashy, just simple ordinary everyday actions by ordinary everyday people. People who cared and were cared for.

We may not be touched by the hand of God, but we are God’s Vincentian messengers and we bring the same message to the poor. God cares about them and the world.

They are not forgotten!

Every blessing.



Gerry Stevens
– National President



‘Human dignity has no passport’

Pope Leo XIV condemned the callous treatment of migrants and refugees in the strongest terms on his historic journey to Spain last month, noting that “all of us are migrants.”

The Pope chose to visit the Canary Islands as part of his trip because they have become one of Europe’s main entry points for desperate migrants arriving from Africa. Thousands have attempted the dangerous Atlantic crossing in overcrowded boats, and many have died at sea. Standing at the port of Arguineguin in Gran Canaria – a site that became a symbol of the collapse of migration management in 2020 – Pope Leo XIV called for an “examination of conscience” on migration.

The small fishing port on the southwest coast of Gran Canaria was once dubbed the “dock of shame” after more than 2,600 migrants were left crowded outdoors there for weeks six years ago, many sleeping on rough concrete after crossing the Atlantic in fragile boats from Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Morocco, and parts of the Sahara.

“It is not enough to manage arrivals, distribute figures, reinforce borders, or mourn the dead once they have already died,” the Pope said.

Human dignity “requires legal and safe routes, rescue and assistance, real cooperation against traffickers, effective protection for victims, serious processes of welcome and integration, and policies that allow each person to live with dignity in his or her own land.”



Pope Leo XIV waves to crowds during Mass at the Port of Santa Cruz in Tenerife, Spain, June 12, 2026. (photo: Vatican Media)

The Pope emphasised that while there is a right to seek refuge when one’s life is threatened, there is also a right not to be forced to migrate: “the right to remain in one’s own home without hunger, without war, without persecution, without violence, without the land becoming uninhabitable, without corruption stealing the bread of

the poor, without weapons destroying the future of children."

"We cannot grow accustomed to counting the dead."

"We cannot grow accustomed to counting the dead," Pope Leo said. "Human dignity has no passport and does not lose its value when crossing a border."

The Canary Islands marked the final stop of Pope Leo XIV's visit to Spain and was one of its most symbolically-charged moments. Migration remains an open wound in Europe and beyond, and Arguineguín has long stood as one of its most visible scars.

Pope Leo directed his appeal to several audiences. Countries of origin, he said, "must create conditions of peace, justice, and development." Countries of transit, he added, must "not leave the weak in the hands of criminal networks."

He also addressed Europe directly, saying it "cannot proclaim human dignity and grow accustomed to the

Mediterranean and the Atlantic becoming cemeteries without headstones." The international community, he said, is called to "effective and persevering cooperation."

"The Church, too, must allow herself to be challenged," the Pope said. "Welcoming the migrant cannot be something secondary or delegated only to a few volunteers."

"The Church, too, must allow itself to be challenged."

Pope Leo's visit to the Canary Islands was one Pope Francis had wanted to make but was unable to carry out. Pope Leo's message echoed the one Pope Francis brought to Lampedusa in 2013. Leo is also scheduled to visit the island of Lampedusa on July 4, the day the United States marks 250 years since its founding.

In a speech interrupted several times by applause, the Pope asked that history "not have to accuse us of having turned the pain of those who suffer into the usual landscape of our coasts." Source: EWTN News, CathNews.

'JOIN THE SOCIETY AND GROW YOUR SPIRITUALITY'

The St Peter Chanel Rangiora Conference has been engaged in a process of Refounding for the past three years, says Conference President Jenny Carter.

The heart of Refounding is your spiritual journey as a Vincentian, says Jenny. Nurturing spirituality within the team is the most critical part of what a Conference does.

"The message has changed. Now the message is join the Society and grow your spirituality. A Refounded society is one which nurtures the spirituality of its members and models how to live out the Vincentian virtues. That comes first."

When Jenny joined the Conference four years ago, there were only five members and little money in the bank. Now there are 23 members in the Conference which is strongly supported by the parish. Careful financial management has resulted in a healthy bank balance of \$10,000. There are two Conferences in the parish.

"When I started, St Vincent de Paul in our parish was a very little organisation," says Jenny. "I went to a meeting that was advertised and didn't happen, and messages were not initially answered. There was little communication. When I finally got to a meeting, I was flabbergasted about how rote the meeting was. It was



Jenny speaking about Refounding at a meeting of Area Presidents in Wellington.

more about the coffee and scones than about living the mission of Jesus. There were about four or five food parcels distributed and that was it for the month."

"There was little connection with any other agency, and I thought to myself this just isn't right. I persevered for a couple of months and at elections of officers I became President. I then had to up my game to be a Conference President."

Jenny began by diving into the relevant material such as Pope Francis' landmark encyclical *Laudato si'*, the SVdP handbook and daily Gospel teachings. She was familiar with the *Lectio Divina* meditative prayer practice which was helpful. Also useful were the Society's Annual Reports which highlighted the Society's mission and core values and provided many examples of how other Conferences were reaching out to help the disadvantaged in their communities.

"The Annual Reports were a real source of inspiration for me. It all resonated with me."

These days their meetings have a strong spiritual focus. More than a quarter of the time together is allocated to prayer and reflection, and designated spiritual companions make sure spirituality is part of the ethos of how the Conference operates. A daily prayer is shared with members on What'sApp.

"We have become part of a bigger community effort which has given us confidence and allowed us to develop friendships outside our own small organisation."

Strategic priorities

The process of renewal saw the Conference develop a strategic plan with three main strands. The first one was working with like-minded organisations in their community.

"That really was the thing that first and foremost helped us to grow as a Conference," says Jenny.

"It gave us visibility and enabled us to work collaboratively with organisations such as the Salvation Army and Hope Trust which both run foodbanks. Hope Trust supply us wild venison mince and we also get food from Satisfy Food Rescue, and Salvation Army (Toot for Tucker collection).

"We have become part of a bigger community effort which has given us confidence and allowed us to develop friendships outside our own small organisation. We have a valuable role to play there as they see St Vincent de Paul as a like-minded, spirit-based organisation. What has been achieved through this collaborative approach has been amazing."

Partnering with the Salvation Army has worked particularly well, says Jenny. With the Salvation Army they visit folk in Council housing, and they have helped the Salvation Army do a Christmas lunch for the last few years.

Advocacy to support people in need is another strategic priority for the Conference.

"This has been an area of growth for us. We have developed a good relationship with a staff member at MSD (Ministry of Social Development). If our client is having difficulty accessing benefits and support, we accompany them to MSD and get action if it is at all possible. By helping people in this way, we are living out the core values of the Society."

The third area that the Conference chose to focus on is migrant support.

"We have a lot of migrant families moving to Rangiora – our help has mostly been to support the Indian community. We help people access social services and English language support if required. We help them find jobs, get further training, or connect with budgeting services. Our Conference prays daily for our immigrant families and in addition we provide families with household goods, furniture and grocery boxes as needed.

"We offer them practical and moral support and we can also be a friend to them."

Making the Society make sense to people

The Conference actively promotes what it does with regular articles in the parish newsletter. Jenny speaks at Mass two or three times a year.

"I spoke at Church on the World Day of Prayer for the Poor. What I said was that in living out our vocation to St Vincent de Paul, we will grow our love of God and be known in the community as advocates for the poor."

"The message has changed. Now the message is join the Society and grow your spirituality."

"Along with that I spoke about the 'Toot for Tucker' initiative, a charity food drive operating in North Canterbury that we participate in. Twenty people responded to my request for volunteers. Three years ago I could have stood at the door and asked for help and people would have walked on by.

"I think that is the result of what we have done over three years, trying to make the Society make sense to people.

"We're making a much greater effort to challenge ourselves, contemplating on what the Gospel is asking of us and trying to live out the Society's virtues in everything that we do.

“Recently, we combined with youth in the parish to help with a charity dinner in the city for a hundred people. It was spectacular. We don’t know how good we are until we are challenged and think about things differently. Our challenge is to keep doing things better.

“When I think about my time in the Society, I am confident that St Vincent de Paul spirituality transformed my spiritual life. It has provided me with

friendships that inspire me to act with confidence in a gentle, innovative, non-judgmental way, not being afraid to get it wrong.

“Vincentian spirituality is all about right relationship with God, listening for the movement of the Holy Spirit and knowing that in responding to need, we respond with Jesus, putting love into action. We praise and bless God with grateful thanks.”

National Social Justice Committee re-established

As resolved at this year’s AGM in March, the Society has re-established its National Social Justice Committee.

Brian Hutching is the chair of the Committee. Other members include Gerry Stevens, National President, Peter McGurk, David More, John Kennedy-Good and Michael Fitzsimons.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee have been drawn up and are posted on the Society’s website.

The Committee has been established to provide national leadership on social justice matters, as well as supporting Conferences and Area Councils with their local social justice issues.

“The Society is at the forefront of assisting people in need,” says chair Brian Hutching. “It’s our role not just to help with immediate assistance but to look deeper and ask why people are in these circumstances.

“Addressing social injustices and inequalities, adding our voice on behalf of the vulnerable and disadvantaged, is integral to our mission. It is what our founder, Frédéric Ozanam directed us to do.”

Frédéric Ozanam famously defined the relationship between charity and justice with these words: “Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is Justice’s role to prevent the attack.”

The Committee will be guided in its work by the teachings of Frédéric Ozanam and the core tenets of Catholic Social Teaching.

The Committee will undertake the following key activities, as set out in the Terms of Reference:

- Gather information and data from SVdP Conferences relating to social issues affecting SVdP clients, e.g. The living wage, homelessness, and food security.
- Make submissions to Parliament on legislation relevant to these issues.
- Establish/ re-establish relationships with Caritas, Catholic Social Services, and other like-minded organisations, and work with them on submissions and public awareness activities.
- Be a trusted voice in the media on issues affecting the well-being of the poor and vulnerable.
- Raise awareness among Conferences of social justice issues, and suggest ways they can respond locally e.g. advocacy re benefit entitlements.
- Ensure SVdP practice is in line with the principles it espouses and Catholic Social Teaching.



“We want to draw on the experience of Conferences at the grassroots level,” says Brian. “Our work needs to be informed by the Society’s day-to-day experience of what’s happening to the most disadvantaged in our communities, and how policies are affecting them.

The first task for the Committee is to make a submission opposing the Summary Offences (Move-on Orders) Amendment Bill. The proposed Bill would extend the powers of the New Zealand Police to issue “move-on” orders to people who are begging, rough sleeping or indicating an intention to inhabit a public space.

“Our goal is to help address injustices in New Zealand by becoming a recognised and trusted voice on their behalf.”



Creating vibrant active Conferences

By Mike Daly

Despite the challenges the Society faces with declining membership, we are seeing amazing examples of Conferences being rejuvenated and long-standing Conferences remaining strong and active.

Successful Conferences attract new members, provide a fulfilling experience for their members and are incredibly effective in their activities.

What is the secret to their success?

We have had an in-depth look at these successful Conferences to find some common features behind this success. We have

also networked with Australia and a number of other countries to share ideas and gather knowledge around best practices that work.

From this investigation, we have developed a series of concise “Best Practice” guides. These six documents deal with separate topics and together they provide the tools to create a vibrant and active Conference.

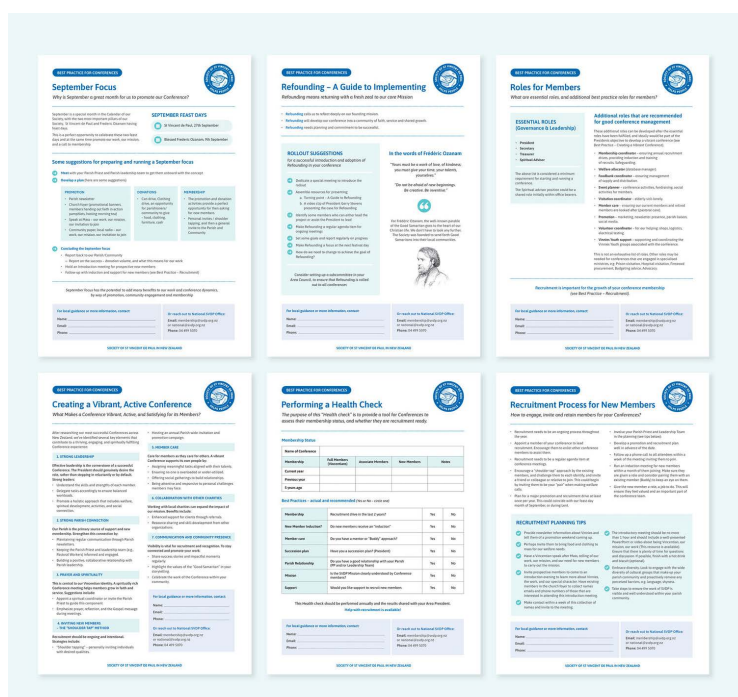
The topics are:

1. Recruitment Process for New Members
2. September – a Focus for Promotions
3. Roles for Members
4. Refounding – a Guide to Implementing
5. Performing a Health Check
6. Creating a Vibrant, Active Conference

Each guide is a standalone resource of 1-2 pages, giving practical tools and advice that has been shown to succeed. We suggest introducing one document at a time, perhaps at your regular Conference meeting, and allow for 15 minutes or so to discern, discuss, and plan.

Over six months the whole set could be presented, and we are confident that good things will happen to your Conference as a result!

The guides are available on the [Members section](#) of the SVDp website under ‘Refounding Resources’.



Vinnies back the Living Wage

The Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand is calling for payment of the Living Wage as a replacement for the Minimum Wage to relieve the rapidly mounting pressures on the “working poor” of New Zealand.

Speaking at the Society’s AGM in Nelson in March, President Gerry Stevens said that over the last 12 months “the Society had begun helping a new class of need, ‘the working poor’. These are people who have fulltime jobs, but their income is such that they live on tight budgets which have no room for unexpected emergencies, such as car repairs or a spike in power bills.

“The cost of living has hit them the hardest. These people along with all the needy, the marginalised, the outcasts and homeless are not a problem to be solved or moved around the corner to be ‘out of sight, out of mind’. They are human beings, just like the rest of us.”

Gerry questioned why when the country needs to ‘get back on track’ it always seems to be lower socio-economic people who carry most of the burden.

Many Vinnies Conferences across the country have reported a big increase in demand for food assistance and other forms of support over the last year. They say an increasing number of clients are in employment. In 2025, the Society distributed 61,359 food parcels and assisted people with 28,624 budgeting and counselling sessions. Furniture was provided for 3,656 households.

Requests for food assistance increased significantly in some parts of Aotearoa New Zealand, says Gerry.

“People are becoming increasingly anxious over food security and their ability to put food on the table. Increasing numbers of requests are coming from working couples who live on a tight budget which is easily upset.”

Gerry said the change in Government and changes in fiscal policy has seen food assistance grants disappear and many food banks have also disappeared, putting more pressure on the Society’s resources.

The Living Wage significantly exceeds the current adult Minimum Wage in New Zealand which is set at \$23.95 per hour. The New Zealand Living Wage is \$28.95 per hour. This voluntary rate is independently calculated to reflect the income necessary for workers to afford basic necessities and live with dignity.



VINNIES VOLUNTEERING DUO

By Michael Landreth

Denise has been volunteering for three years, and Harvey joined later after seeing how rewarding the work was. As former teachers, they love using their skills to connect with people. Harvey’s handyman skills come in handy too around the Shop. They love seeing the ongoing improvements to the Shop, and helping customers find joy in little trinkets—like the time they tracked down a rare book to make a visitor’s day.

For them, the best parts of volunteering are the team camaraderie, helping people in the community, and seeing their grand-daughter thrive in Vinnies Youth. As they put it: “Society is better off if more people are willing to help.” Drop by to say hello to the Vinnies team and find out how you can join them!



Obituaries

In loving memory of our fellow Vincentians and with grateful thanks for their lives of service.

Joe Tembrook

12 March, 2026.

Past Area President, Kapi Mana.

Ronald Peters

19 February, 2026 – Marlborough.

Ron was a dedicated and committed Vincentian for many years and reflected the very heart of the Vincentian Charism – a willingness to walk alongside those experiencing hardship with humility and respect.

Rose Semmens

June 2026 – Area Council
President Manawatu and

Rose was a very dedicated and committed Vincentian who gave of herself over many years and in so many areas, serving the poor and marginalised in the community. A role model and inspiration to all.



Maligi McKay

20 June, 2026 – Sydney, Australia.

Although Maligi lived in Australia for the past nine years, she remained a special part of Maria Assumpta Parish and Conference in Beach Haven, Auckland. She gave so much of her time and care in many roles within the parish. She volunteered with St Vincent de Paul as a committee member, helping to deliver bread and food parcels, supporting senior lunches, and working at the Vinnies shop on the corner of Lancaster and Beach Haven Roads. Whenever the North Auckland area held a 'festival meeting', Maligi was noted for making some of the best club sandwiches members had ever tasted.

In addition to her work for the Society, Maligi was also very involved in the life of the parish. As a very keen gardener, Maligi looked after the flower gardens around Maria Assumpta Church. She gave so generously of herself, serving as Caring Convenor on the Parish Pastoral Council, embracing the Youth Group as a devoted Nana, contributing faithfully to Enua Ola, and contributing to many other ministries. Her smile, kindness, warmth, and unwavering commitment have left a legacy among us. Maligi will be remembered for her kindness, warmth, and dedication. She has left a lasting impact on all of us.

Mark White

25 May, 2026 – Greymouth.

St Vincent de Paul stalwart Mark White passed away after a long battle with cancer in May. Mark was a wonderful Vincentian for many years and a fountain of knowledge for us all here on the Coast regarding the Society. He held many roles over his long service including Secretary and Treasurer for both the Greymouth and West Coast Conferences.

He was thrilled to receive a Life Membership, which our group celebrated with him by his hospital bedside.



Regional News & Reports



AUCKLAND SOUTH AREA COUNCIL

Papakura Star Volunteer

We have a knitting sensation in Papakura! We don't remember exactly how many years Pat has been knitting slippers that are hot-sellers in the Vinnies Shop, especially in winter. Currently they sell for \$8.00 a pair and are sold almost as soon as they arrive. A very generous contribution by Pat, who was honoured by Papakura Vinnies as a Star Knitter at the parish knitting group.



Boarding House Advocacy

South Auckland Vinnies have been strong advocates for change.



Community Dinner

This month South Auckland and Vinnies Tamaki Makaurau started their community dinner in Ōtāhuhu, South Auckland.

In partnership with St Joachim Catholic Church and St Andrews Community Presbyterian Church, each fortnight we provide a nourishing hot meal for people struggling with food and housing costs. On our first night we provided over 60 meals produced by Vinnies Kitchen chefs Thomas and Tutuila. St Andrews has a long history of community outreach and support community dinners with an accessible venue and many willing hands to serve.

The collaboration between two churches and two St Vincent de Paul branches brings together our skills and strengths to make an impact at a challenging time for our community.



AUCKLAND WEST AREA COUNCIL

The Society is currently working through a Refounding process, going back to the basics of what we were founded to do. While still providing food parcels where needed, we are refocussing on our core mission of visiting and helping people long-term in a face-to-face manner.

I am responsible for the Auckland West Area Council (covering Mt Albert and Owairaka through to Helensville) and Northland. We hope to become more visible and to link in with networks that could help people in a broader fashion. For example, our food parcels may help a family for up to a week, but we hope to have a listing of agencies that could possibly help families long-term with budgeting, advocacy or training. We may also be able to provide resources that help families long-term.

After a recent workshop, bringing together Presidents and members from around parishes, we agreed that branding and celebrating our area was one of the aspects we wanted to improve on.

We would like to have cards for different aspects of our work. We hope to replace our standard St Vincent de Paul Christmas Cards and place other cards in all of our food parcels, at our shop in Pt Chevalier and for any visitations we do for wellness and hospital/rest home visits.

– **Paula Betham**, Auckland West Area President

BAY OF PLENTY YOUTH REPORT

The Bay of Plenty Vinnies Youth are highly active in the region, working with seven primary schools and three high schools. Of these, all but two schools currently operate a Vinnies Youth programme.

St Mary's in Tauranga has recently completed a beanie drive within their school, providing much-needed warmth for the community as winter approaches. Many schools also organise regular food drives to support those in need within the area.

Overall, the Vinnies Youth programme in the Bay of Plenty is dynamic and continues to make a positive impact through ongoing charitable initiatives and strong school involvement.

Vinnies Papamoa

Vinnies students at Suzanne Aubert Catholic School, Papamoa recently put their faith into action by preparing and freezing Pad Thai and Butter Chicken meals for families in our community. The students worked together to create recipes, cook the meals, and package them with care. We are proud of the compassion, teamwork and service they showed as they helped make a difference for others. Special thanks to Anna Were of St Thomas More Mount Maunganui Conference who coordinates with our School Conference.



Aquinas College Youth

A big thank-you to our community for your generous support of the Aquinas College 2026 Vinnies Youth Winter Wellness Initiative.

Last month, donated blankets were delivered to the St Vincent de Paul Support Centre, where they will be distributed to those in need.

We are especially proud to share that our contribution included a beautiful hand-knitted blanket, created by past and present students and staff of Aquinas College. Your kindness is making a real difference in the lives of others.



It has been a busy start to the year for our Aquinas Vinnies Youth group. Each month, students visit residents at Copper Crest Retirement Village, offering companionship, conversation and a listening ear. Inspired by the mission of St Vincent de Paul, they seek to see Christ in every person they meet, building relationships grounded in dignity, compassion and respect. At the same time, they support Copper Crest's Attitude of Living Well model, which values meaningful connection, joy and a sense of belonging.



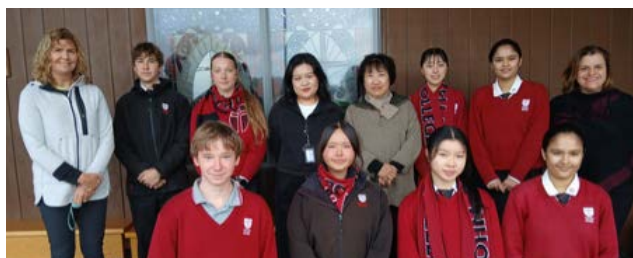
Earlier this year, the group also held a workshop to create a basket of crosses for parishioners attending Palm Sunday Mass.



We are proud of these students who continue to put their faith into action through service to others.

John Paul College Youth Rotorua

The Saint Vincent De Paul Society in Rotorua are very grateful for the support we receive from John Paul College. Our latest joint initiative is the Monday Lunch Programme for St Michael's Primary School in Western Heights, Rotorua.



Every Monday a group of John Paul Students get to school very early and under the guidance of a team of dedicated teachers, prepare lunches for around 100 students. There is a healthy lunch prepared for every student at the school. One feature of the lunches is the home baking that the St Vincent de Paul members bake themselves.

We appreciate this support and so do the St Michael's students and teachers. Feedback is that the students love the Monday lunches. The lunches are delivered by our foodbank employee Mata, who goes over and above her role to help where she can.

Bernadette Fredrickesen, the teacher in charge of Vinnies at John Paul College, in conjunction with our Conference, is planning more interaction with the students at St Michael's, giving the younger students encouragement and support. These students epitomise the words of Frédéric Ozanam: "Yours must be a work of love, of kindness, you must give your time, your talents, yourselves."

Thank you John Paul College Vinnies for your service and faith.

– **Veronica Aislabie**, President, St Michael's Conference

VINNIES BLENHEIM

Shop Manager Michelle Simcox and her team of volunteers hosted a Ladies Night on 11 June, offering light refreshments and a welcoming shopping experience. Around 50 women attended with workmates, family, and friends, enjoying the chance to shop together, share feedback, and have fun in a relaxed setting. The evening raised awareness of the wonderful donations Vinnies Blenheim receives, lifted the Shop's profile and raised \$1,000.



EAST COAST BAYS, AUCKLAND

SvdP has continued to provide food parcels for the many, many people in need, thanks to the generosity of our parishioners. Even though times are tough we are very grateful for that which we receive – both monetary and food-wise. Donated funds continue to allow us to assist with school fees, school uniforms, clothing vouchers, national and international causes, children's school activities and supporting those who need moral support through difficult times.



OUR LADY OF KĀPITI CONFERENCE

Eddie Dickson retires from SVdP Kāpiti

Over 40 members, past and present, gathered for a pot-luck dinner to honour Eddie Dickson, who has retired for health reasons after 12 years of very active service in the Our Lady of Kāpiti Conference.

Eddie joined Vinnies in 2014 following a distinguished and rewarding international career with the Trade Union movement, both in New Zealand and internationally. He was the project secretary of the Workers' Union as the Huntly Power Station was constructed. After periods with the Harbour Workers' Union and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union in New Zealand, he became the Assistant Secretary Inland Transport for the International Transport Workers' Federation, based in London but with much work throughout Africa and other parts of the world. He was also a UN observer for the 1994 election in South Africa when Nelson Mandela was elected president.

After retiring to Paraparaumu, Eddie was looking for something worthwhile to do, that would continue his commitment to help others. He recounted incidents where prayer and faith had made a huge difference to events – both in his dealings with difficult union meetings and in supplying the right amount of money at the right time to enable Vinnies to meet a pressing need.

Within our local Conference Eddie was the Secretary for some time and he and his wife, Joy, have put in many hours to work with Levin and Otaki Conferences in supporting refugees arriving in Levin.

In his farewell speech, Eddie said:

There are many talented SVdP members both present and past.

The “get it done” team of the past has been replaced by “what is it that needs to be done” members.

The leadership of the Conference has opened up new options and challenges and collectively we have found ways to meet and overcome them, so much so that the number of members has increased. Money has flowed in to meet our reasonable needs.

Our member-led prayerfulness continues to spiritually challenge each of us. We are all soldiers in God's army.



From left to right: Peter Ryan (Area President, Kapi-Mana), Trish Scott (Conference President, Our Lady of Kapiiti), Gerry Stevens (National President) and Eddie Dickson as he cuts his cake.

Eddie remains an active member of our parish, with his wife, Joy. He is continuing his commitment to help others as he lives in a four generation household, caring for their one- year-old great-grand-daughter one day a week. He also remains on-call for Vinnies tasks.

God bless you and your family, Eddie - and thanks for your faith, hope and love expressed in practical terms and in your spiritual reflections shared with our Conference.

HOKITIKA CONFERENCE

The St Vinnies Hokitika Conference has gifted 86-year-old Jan Bain a Life Membership for her loyal service and volunteering work for the Society.

Jan was one of six local people who originally set up St Vinnies in Revell Street 40 years ago, and she is still helping out in the Op Shop today.

Jan was involved on the original committee, both as President and then as a committee member for all those 40 years. When the Society first began in Hokitika, the committee members had to take home all the gifted clothes to wash and dry and return to the Op Shop to sell. “You do it because you enjoy helping the needy in our community,” said Jan.

Jan has loved the friendship and fellowship with all the volunteers who have helped out in one way or another in the Shop. She has seen some huge changes from the early days and has noticed a lot more needy people in our community today.



Jan Bain ... "a lot more needy people in our community today."

West Coast Region News

At our quarterly West Coast region [Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika] Conferences meeting on May 30, 2026, one of the topics discussed was how much money had been gifted back to their communities in the past 10 months period. It was a huge amount of \$110,452, which is a fantastic effort for our small Coast region.

– **Mike Keenan**, West Coast Area President.

HOLY TRINITY EASTERN SUBURBS CONFERENCE, WELLINGTON

During May, we had a wonderful time being able to support a wide range of clients with a wide variety of practical assistance for their journeys.

This included: fortnightly help delivering a big bag of nappies and formula for a new baby; visits to those unable to leave their homes through sickness and support for their families; visits to those who are lonely or simply feel better after someone has made the effort to spend time just for them; fortnightly morning tea and conversation provided to Community Housing clients at Kotuku Flats in Kilbirnie; a birthday cake, balloons, candles and flowers for a client turning 65 so that she could invite her grandchildren to celebrate with her; food deliveries on request; support to flood victims; phone calls to check-in and say hi; purchase of winter school uniform items for a college student; clothes, lunch box treats, and stationery for a client's child starting school; transport to, and support of "Thursday friends", a group who come together for prayer and fellowship; and petrol vouchers delivered to clients reliant on their cars for work or care of children.

OAMARU CONFERENCE

The Saint Kevin's College Special Character leaders recently initiated a "Loaves and Fishes Drive" of non-perishable goods to support our local branch Emergency Food Pantry.

Through the generosity of the students and their families, over 1,000 items were collected for the pantry, providing much-needed support to families in our community. It was an overwhelming result.

Just as Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two fish, the individual contributions given, no matter how small it may have seemed, came together to make a real difference. This generosity highlighted both the spirit and heart of the school community, especially in the current economic climate.

– **Rosemary Burke**, Conference Secretary.



St Kevin's College students who made the delivery of pantry items, along with the Director of Religious Studies and our secretary, Rosemary, who thanked the School Community at a recent School Mass.

PAPAKURA, AUCKLAND

Our Papakura Vinnies celebrated National Volunteer Week with a get-together of our Shop and foodbank volunteers on June 19. It was a great way to support each other and build friendships.



PICTON CONFERENCE

These meals are available to anyone needing a warm heart! A huge shoutout to all those involved to make this happen. What an awesome community we have. As always thanks to our wonderful Vinnies Picton team and our many friends.



PLIMMERTON CONFERENCE

When there is bereavement in our parish, a member of our SVdP Conference takes the family a basket of food items, which we hope will help them during the time they have family, extended family or friends staying with them.

On the day of the funeral, we have a group of 18 SVdP members, plus eight parishioners, who volunteer to assist with refreshments. A roster is made up of those who are available to help on the day, whether it be for the duration of the funeral, or for one or two hours. This group sets up the hall, serves the refreshments, then cleans and tidies the hall afterwards.

In this way we are able to support the grieving family, and show "love in action".

– Robyn Teppett, Conference President



SELWYN CONFERENCE, CHRISTCHURCH

In mid-2022 Selwyn SVdP agreed to the request from Area President Mike Daly to sponsor a refugee from Afghanistan. He became a refugee in Pakistan because of death threats to himself, and his daughters having to stop going to school after the Taliban takeover of the country. A small group of our Vinnies agreed to sponsor him under the CORS (Community Organisation for Refugee Support) scheme. By November we were registered and the long process was underway. The whole family was able to travel to New Zealand and arrived at the end of June 2024. Our CORS commitment ends at the end of June this year, with the family being supported to become New Zealand residents. This was a most heartwarming initiative, knowing we have altered a family's life so much for the better. The process was greatly assisted by the generosity of Cathedral conference and several Selwyn parishioners.

– Ian Tennant



WESTPORT CONFERENCE

St Vincent de Paul Westport is very grateful for the generous support which we receive from Foodstuffs South Island Community Trust and Westport New World.

At the beginning of the year we were the recipients of a generous donation of Gift Cards from Foodstuffs. We then donated Gift Cards to the three local primary schools – Westport North School, Westport South School and St Canice's School – and also to our local Foster Hope co-ordinator as it is they who know the families most in need of support.

The food items donated through the Family to Family appeal organised through New World supermarkets were donated to our foodbank, along with financial donations from customers and New World management.

Rotary Club of Westport continues to support us with their "Cans for a Cause" project. We are most grateful.

At the beginning of the school year, we donate \$1,000 to each of the three primary schools for student support throughout the year.

We were approached by Corrections and asked if we would place a lady who had some "community hours" to complete. The lady proved to be very capable and carried out any task asked of her. As she enjoyed her time with us so much, on completion of her "community hours" she has stayed on as a volunteer and now volunteers twice a week.

We have a young mother who is studying for a Social Work Degree through Massey University approach us and ask if she could complete her volunteer hours (as required for her studies) with us. She has proved to be a great worker and really enjoys her two volunteer shifts each week with us.

Support projects and annual donations

We continue to supply Buller High School Breakfast Club each week with fresh fruit for their project, and they in turn supply us with any excess non-perishable food items. We in turn pass on any extra to the "Who Cares" foodbank in Reefton.

We work with organisations supporting families and children – Homebuilders West Coast to whom we donate Easter eggs and we support Foster Hope with winter pyjamas, tooth paste, tooth brushes and soap. The Co-ordinator has advised that the children love to have their own tooth brush and warm pyjamas.

We also support:

- an ex-local Sister of Mercy stationed in Samoa. She uses the money to pay for student needs in Samoa.
- our Vinnies Overseas Twinning appeals
- our local Catholic School, with assistance towards school dues
- our local Westpac Helicopter Appeal
- our Swim School Co-ordinator with her Swim for Life Programme, targeting students at the local primary schools.

We also donate cemetery plots to our local funeral director to assist families.

One of the teachers at Saint Canice's School, has a baking afternoon with her students. The students then bring their "goodies" to St Vincent de Paul for the volunteers to enjoy. We have some budding bakers for the future.

One of our long time member/volunteers recently celebrated her 90th birthday. Congratulations Imelda on this great milestone.

Saint Vincent de Paul Westport is most grateful for the continued support and generosity which we receive from our community.

TAKAPUNA CONFERENCE



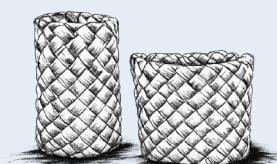
We have started working with an organisation called Orange Sky, which operates a mobile laundry and shower service for the homeless. We do this every second Saturday afternoon from 1:30 to 4:00pm. The vans have twin washing machines and driers, plus a shower at the back.

Our Vinnies crew supply a meal with refreshments and tea and coffee. Our service is not just for the homeless but for anyone who is lonely, or needy so they can have a free meal and an outing to brighten up their week. We have had six days and we are starting to get regulars turning up after an extensive advertising effort.

– **Garth Clarke**, Takapuna Conference President

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.

With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive.



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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