

A. Chanam

V E T E R A M O N I M E N T A

April, 2021 | A monthly newsletter of Tools, Resources and Activities for Vincentians in Contra Costa County

Calendar

Good Friday

Friday, 4/02
All Day

Easter Sunday

Sunday, 4/04
All Day

1st Tuesdays with Vincentian Leaders

Tuesday 4/06
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM on Zoom

Food Distribution

Tuesday 4/13
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
217 Harbour Way, Richmond, CA

Spiritual Advisor Training

Saturday, 4/17
9:30 AM - 2:30 PM on Zoom

Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, 4/20
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM on Zoom

Ozanam Sunday Feast

Sunday, 4/25
All Day

Bob Liles' Corner

Invitation to Contribute

You'll notice a lot of material in this month's newsletter is being written by names many of you have become familiar with over the years. That is because this newsletter is a newsletter for and by Vincentians.

That means YOU.

We both want and need you to contribute. If there is anything that you believe pertains to your life as a Vincentian, be it best practices, stories from your Conference, or spiritual reflections, please feel free to share them.

Submit your stories to Stephen Krank at s.krank@svdp-cc.org and we can help grow our little Vincentian corner of the world into a truly bold and vibrant community.

National's Mid-Year Meeting Recap

National's mid-year meeting was held during the first week of March over Zoom.

This was the first National meeting I have ever attended. I'm really not one for conventions, Zoom meetings, or listening to speaking engagements, but I have to admit, I learned a lot by attending these sessions.

There were sessions on recruiting volunteers and board members, sessions on the history of St. Vincent de Paul, sessions aimed at exploring our spirituality as Vincentians, and there are even sessions on how to better run our thrift stores.

All of these sessions were recorded and are available on the SVdP National website. I recommend watching them. I asked a few attendees to briefly described the sessions they attended, to let others see which they may find pertinent and interesting.

You can find these sessions and descriptions on page 3, check them out!



My Vincentian Vocation, Tuesdays with Vincent

by Karen Glen

I am writing to you as a sister in our ministry of St. Vincent de Paul. I have had the honor of being a Vincentian for over 10 years, a mere speck in the years of service by many of you, as well as the many years of ministry of those who have gone before us as pioneers for decades. I feel honored to walk in the footsteps of those before as well as walk alongside many of you at this time in history. Our history is rich and full of many saints who answered the Gospel call.

My Vincentian vocation began as I have heard many say, to feel a purpose in serving those in need. I grew up in 7 sibling household ran by my single mother in a low-income neighborhood, right here in the Bay Area. Our parish community, St. Patrick's in Rodeo, had a wonderful group of people who served with the sisters and the Pastor, known as St. Vincent de Paul. I was inspired by these wonderful people when I was a child, mostly because of the love and kindness they showed my family. When they visited our home with food and other gifts, I never felt like we were receiving charity, but the kindness of neighbors from our church community.

When I found myself at a point in my life to add a ministry to my weekly activities, St. Vincent de Paul seemed like the right fit. I was excited to serve and learn more about being a Vincentian. I attended my first Ozanam Orientation and learned so much about the Society, I was hooked. The charism that has resonated the loudest within me was the call to grow in holiness with my fellow Vincentians. It made sense to me that the difference that set Vincentians apart from others providing social services to the needy was the aura of love and friendship in which they did their service.



For the past 6 years I have had the privilege of serving as the Spiritual Advisor to the District Council of Contra Costa St. Vincent de Paul. I have learned so much from serving with the Vincentians in our Diocese. Knowing that we all desire to live according to Gospel values and grow in holiness has been a blessing. I have no special degrees or high-level education, yet God called me to simply serve with my freinds walking together in the faith.

In my role as the Spiritual Advisor, I am excited to encourage you to consider the charisms of your vocation. Joining in on the new series offered by the Spirituality and Formation Team, "Tuesdays with Vincent," (via Zoom on Tuesday evenings - see the schedule on page XX), is an opportunity to spend time with our friends and fellow Vincentians who can share some of the rich history from the time of Vincent and Louise, to Frederic and Rosalie, as well as our current times. I highly encourage you to take the time, relax and enjoy this informative and enriching series.

Additionally, every Conference should have at least one trained Spiritual Advisor. We are all called to grow in holiness together and this is simply sharing our faith with one another. The purpose of the training is to help guide you in the joys and benefits of sharing with our friends the path to holiness in our person-to-person service to our neighbors. We will be offering ongoing Spiritual Advisor training and workshops. This April 17th, we will be offering a session with Sr. Paule Freeburg, D.C. We hope you will consider joining in. You don't need to be a Spiritual Advisor to attend and learn more. We would love to have everyone experience this wonderful formation opportunity.

I am grateful for each one of you and I want you to know that you are in my prayers daily. God has called us to walk together, and He will provide the strength and fortitude for us to persevere in our journey. May God bless you and keep you.

The District Board Needs Members

We need more board members at the District Council!

The District Council Board helps oversee and guide the activities of the District Council, and has a huge impact in the lives we touch as Vincentians in Contra Costa County. By joining the board, you can help continue feeding and clothing our neighbors in need by being involved in deciding how grants should be granted to Conferences, deciding how our thrift stores (which help fund our Vincentian activities) should operate, and you can even help expand the aid we are able to offer our neighbors in the county. Recently, the Board decided to partner with Dentists on Wheels, and soon the District Council offices will feature a 3-chair dental clinic that will provide free dental care to our neighbors.

The Board meets on the 2nd or 3rd Tuesday of each month from 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM at the Family Resource Center in Pittsburg in normal times, but has been meeting over Zoom during the pandemic.

Please pray on this decision. The Board is a critical element to the work we do as Vincentians, and the Board needs your help! If you have the time and want to join, please email me at: president@svdp-cc.org and you can always join us for a few Zoom meetings before making a decision!

National Mid-Year Meeting Recap, Cont'd

The National Mid-Year meeting is a chance for SVdP's National Council to check in on how SVdP Councils across the country are performing our mission of helping our neighbors in need. The meeting is also a chance to offer helpful tips and advice on how to better pursue our mission.

Recordings are available for the sessions presented at the SVdP National Mid-year Meeting, which took place in early March. See below for a list of some sessions you may be interested in viewing, and a brief comment about them by a Vincentian! A full list of sessions will be available on the final page.

Click the name of each session in blue to be linked to the recording:

[SVdP Housing Survey Update & Homeless Housing in the Pandemic](#) - I was impressed by a group in Louisiana that reduced their homeless population from 500 to 3.

[First Things First: Governance Priorities for New Leaders](#) - A list of the top things that new Presidents need to make sure gets done. A must for all Conference Presidents.

-Bob Liles

[History / Paris Tour/ John Agnotti Concert](#) - It's nice to have zoom that I can bop in and out. It was easy to listen to Tim Williams, he has great prayers and impressive memory of Vincentian history. The tour was fun and now Ron doesn't think we need to go to Paris! It was like having a concert in our dining room.

-Shawwna Costanzo

[Finding Servant Leaders](#) - The importance of always cultivating the seeds of interest of potential Vincentians. Asking someone to join in our mission, not hoping that they find us.

[Stores](#) - I am proud of our team for reopening the stores following all of the recommended COVID-19 safety protocols and incorporating them into their everyday work. We are following some of the recommended best practices, but we have so much more that we can do to make the stores more successful.

[Our spirituality is at the crux of all that we do](#) - We can never lose sight of that and we must remember that it is what gives us the motivation, strength and courage to fulfill our mission.

[Strategic Plan](#) - Having a plan is important but having committed volunteers (not just staff) that help stay on course is key. It has to build from the ground up (conference/council/region/national) for it to be embraced by all. Often success is not noticed immediately but as a result of adhering to the plan and carrying it out.

-Claudia Ramirez

[Stores](#) - These are the most important takeaways: stores can do much better with the right people and the right structure. We need to empower everyone to be decision-makers. We need to invest (in training, fixtures, supplies, etc.). We need to focus on hiring the right people.

-Monica Perez

Working to Change Lives

by Ron Costanzo

We invite people who may have a barrier between them and gainful employment to join our Workforce Development Program. The 24-week program, which has been around for 9 years now, offers paid part-time work and training to assist folks who want to enter or reenter the workforce. Many people who may have complicated personal histories find it difficult to find work. Many people just need a bit of guidance and a chance, in order to turn their lives around for the better. The WFD program helps ensure our friends and neighbors can get that chance.

The Trainees typically work three days a week and are paid for class one afternoon a week. The on-the-job work is based in the SVdP Thrift Stores. Currently, we have six participants in the program. Three will graduate in the next couple months. We will be inviting new participants to join the program with free orientation sessions in April.

Several of our successes come from families that our Conferences know very well. It's extremely helpful to our neighbors when their relationship with a Conference is joined with the income, work experience and confidence building that the program imparts. It's also a great point of pride for the volunteers in the program to see the Trainees find success in their lives. We have had some major successes, with our neighbors find new jobs and new future possibilities after our classroom and on-the-job training.

Please refer to the website <https://www.svdp-cc.org/getinvolved/jobs/> or contact Ron Costanzo: (925) 487 - 4986 or the Council office: (925) 439 - 5060 for more information.

Our Legacy

by Barb Hunt



**PLEASE REMEMBER
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST**

You've been a loyal Vincentian for many years.

Because you are so committed to SVdP, we wanted to get your feedback on a planned giving program we are launching.

There are areas within the SVdP organization that we want to focus on growing; providing long-term support for St. Vincent de Paul in Contra Costa County so that we can continue our work for decades to come. Would you be willing to let us know if you find these priorities to be inspiring?

Please email Barb Hunt, b.hunt@svdp-cc.org and let her know what you think about these priorities or suggest one of your own!

- **Establishing an Endowed Vincentian Support Position:** (i.e. another Stephen Krank - even though he is a one-of-a-kind!), to support the spiritual growth, education and training of Vincentians and recruit additional Vincentians.
- **Establishing a Centralized Fund for Conferences to Access:** Expanding the funds available to help Conferences in need. This can help ensure we are always able to help the most vulnerable in our County no matter where they may be located, often donations and grants have geographic stipulations around who the money can be used to help.
- **SVdP Facilities & Vehicle Upgrade Fund:** The SVdP Thrift Stores and trucks support the long-term financial health of the organization by providing earned income to SVdP. Building upgrades have long been neglected and are sorely needed at the Pittsburg Thrift Store and the Pittsburg Family Resource Center. Several of SVdP's trucks are really old and in need of replacement.

If you and your family are interested in being a SVdP Planned Giver by identifying a small portion of your will or estate to SVdP, please contact Barb Hunt at b.hunt@svdp-cc.org or (925) 330-6732 to learn more.

A Vincentian Heart

by Jo Beth Strawn

I have the honor to introduce a lady who has volunteered distributing food at the St. David of Wales Pantry, (St. Vincent de Paul's weekly food distribution program), based out of St. Mark's Catholic Church in Richmond.

Olivia Mejia has been volunteering since 2005, more than 15 years. When she was 33 years old she began attending Contra Costa College. In one of her classes, they required that she do volunteer work. She started her volunteering at the Richmond Rescue Mission.

Olivia was a single mother of two children. She heard about the SVdP food distribution going on at St. Mark's and, since she was in need of food for her family, she went there. At St. Mark's she learned that the food distribution was operated by St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County. She met a person named Jesus Garcia. He told her that they were in need of volunteers, to help distribute food. They offered to train her to help with the registration of people in need of food. Olivia was put in charge of having people sign in and giving each person a number. When their number was called, that person would come pick up the food they needed.

After a few months of volunteering at the food pantry, she was trained on how to go on home visits with Steve Krank & Martha Regis. She did that for a few years.

When the SVdP Conference at St. David of Wales started up again in 2015 Martha Regis came on as the 1st Vice-President & Olivia was the 2nd VP. They both served for 3 years when I was the President.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the St. David of Wales Pantry suspended activities as a precaution to ensure the health and safety of the many older Vincentian volunteers who staffed the pantry. The need for food in the community, however, remained. Olivia stepped up to the plate again. She cooks food & distributes meals from her home. A gentleman from a nearby homeless camp came to her home to pick up the food to distribute it to his encampment and a second one that is close by. She has not only been able to give him food but other necessities for people who need to camp out. A few of the items that have been distributed include sleeping bags, blankets, coats, sock and anything else that can be used to help our neighbors in need.



“Make it a practice to judge persons and things in the most favorable light at all times and under all circumstances.”

-St. Vincent de Paul

Conferences Now Have a Shared Zoom Account by Claudia Ramirez

The Conferences now have access to a shared Zoom account so that you can set up your Conference and Committee meetings. We may have to go through a training on how to see how meetings are scheduled. but, in the meantime, you can start scheduling them on your own.

We hope that this will help the Conferences.

There are some guidelines, especially when it comes to naming your meeting. You can access a very brief tutorial (Word and pdf) but Zoom has great tutorials if you click on **SUPPORT** in the upper right corner of the screen.

To set up a meeting to discuss the login credentials and some usage guidelines, please contact me at c.ramirez@svdp-cc.org or Steve Krank at s.krank@svdp-cc.org



What's Happening at the SVdP Family Resource Center in Pittsburg? LOTS!

During the COVID pandemic, the SVdP Family Resource Center in Pittsburg never closed!

The staff is here to support you and our neighbors in need with the following programs:

- **Rental Assistance Grants and more:** The SVdP District Council continues to secure rental assistance funding and more. If your Conference is offering home visits, this funding is available to support your efforts.
- **Free Dining Room:** "To-go" meals are being provided 7 days per week from 11:00 AM - 12:45 PM in partnership with Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa.
- **RotaCare Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul:** The clinic, in partnership with RotaCare Bay Area is predominately providing care via telehealth right now, and looking to return to in-person care once volunteers are fully protected with the vaccine.
- **Free Food Pantry:** Open M-F, 9 am to 4:30 pm. Families can receive a large supply of food once a month.
- **Thrift Stores:** Can you volunteer to help us in one of the three Thrift Stores? We are receiving a record volume of clothing/houseware donations and need help to process the inventory.

First Tuesdays Schedule for 2021

All presentations 6 PM - 8 PM

The Ladies of Charity

Sister Paule Freeburg, D.C.

Spiritual Advisor - Western Region

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

National Spirituality Committee - Ladies of Charity

Presentation: April, 6 2021

Congregation of the Mission

Fr. Thomas McKenna, C.M.

Presentation: June, 1 2021

Upcoming Topics (In Order)

August - Daughters of Charity & Blessed Rosalee Rendu

October - Blessed Frederic Ozanam

December - The Society Comes to America
(Founding Documents)

February, 2022 - St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Tuesdays with St. Vincent de Paul

by Sr. Paule Freeburg, D.C.

It's been over 400 years since the Vincentian Family was formed in Châtillon, France in 1617 with the founding of the Ladies of Charity.

Although other main branches would be founded later (The Vincentian Priests and Brothers, The Daughters of Charity, The Sisters of Charity and later the St. Vincentian de Paul Society), it all started with the Ladies of Charity in 1617.

The mission given to that first group, to serve the poor spiritually and corporally, became the model for all the other foundations in the Vincentian Family.

“What St. Vincent said and taught the Ladies of Charity, he has said and taught us all.”

Our family Charism, our way of life, started in Châtillon in 1617.

At the April 6 Tuesdays with Vincent meeting, we will explore the founding of the Ladies of Charity.

Today, there are over 100,00 Ladies of Charity serving in 55 countries, including the United States.



“Extend mercy towards others, so that there can be no one in need whom you meet without helping, for what hope is there for us if God should withdraw His Mercy from us?”

-St. Vincent de Paul

Sister Paule Freeburg, D.C.



Sister Paule Freeburg has an extensive background with the religious education of both children and adults. Though not raised Catholic, she became one during her undergraduate years.

A few years later, she took her new faith one step further by becoming a nun, joining the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. She was inspired while watching a community of sisters in Santa Barbara work with developmentally disabled children. "I saw in them a profound respect for the dignity of human beings," she said. She took her vows in 1971 and then went to Gonzaga University to earn a master's in theology.

On the first Tuesday, April 6, 2021 from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM Sr. Paule Freeburg D.C. will introduce us to the oldest Women's Catholic Charity on the planet, The Ladies of Charity. This first arm of the Vincentian Family was the catalyst for the formation of The Rule by St. Vincent de Paul.



This Lent, commit to our global human family through daily **prayer**, weekly **fasting** and **almsgiving**.

Participate in CRS Rice Bowl in your parish or do it on your own by going to crsricebowl.org.

What you give up for Lent changes lives locally and globally.

- **25%** of the proceeds from Rice Bowl are **kept locally**, most of which goes to nonprofits in the East Bay working to alleviate hunger, like **St. Vincent de Paul parish conferences**.
- Please **let your fellow parishioners** know about how Rice Bowl helps those struggling both locally and globally. For information about promoting Rice Bowl in your parish, contact the CRS Diocesan Coordinator at mmckimmey@cceb.org.

FOR **LENT** FOR **LIFE**

Many SVdP Conferences in Contra Costa County receive Rice Bowl grants, which help support their efforts to feed the hungry in their neighborhoods.

Can you help by supporting the Rice Bowl this year?

crsricebowl.org

Staying Up-to-Date on COVID-19

by Steve Krank

The Pandemic is not yet over.

The good news is hope is on the way.

We have a problem in that homelessness prevention funding, resources for back rents and mortgages, and eviction protections and the requirements for our neighbors in need seem to be changing every day, if not several times a day.

One source noted that SVDP Pantry Workers fall under the "Emergency Services" category and can schedule an appointment for their COVID vaccinations.

To provide the ever-changing information on the application and accessibility of these and other resources that can favorably help our neighbors in need, below is a link to the COVID-19 Resource Folder in the Dropbox, where you can access the most up-to-date information available.

Link to COVID-19 Dropbox

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/0ktjv6tqulbe85v/AACJY1R1xQLAwuKleYEeFJ_wa?dl=0

To facilitate this data's accuracy and timeliness, if you learn of any new COVID-19 information, please forward it to s.krunk@svdp-cc.org and he will update the file as needed. This way, we can have a central location for COVID-19 information as it pertains to Vincentians and our mission to help those in need in our communities.

Together we can make sure our communities are served spiritually and with service, while also making sure everyone stays healthy.



SVdP Monthly Large-Scale Food Distributions

The second Tuesday of each month, from 10 AM – 1 PM, Vincentians partner with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano and Catholic Charities East Bay to host a large-scale free food distribution at 217 Harbour Way in Richmond, CA.

The last year has been insanely hard on too many people. At these food distributions, Vincentians are able to help hundreds of families in Contra Costa County deal with the hardships the last year has introduced.

At these distributions, which started in March, 2020, over 100,000 people have been given healthy food. The people that arrive at our food distributions come from all walks of life, and many of them are seeking help for the first time in their lives. They're anxious and are scared about how they will feed themselves and their families, but thanks to our Vincentians our neighbors can rest a little easier while knowing their food needs will be met.

The next large-scale food distribution is happening on April 13th, 2021. We hope we see you there.

Together we can end poverty one person, one family, and one community at a time.

Links

First Tuesdays with St. Vincent de Paul

Time: April 6, 2021 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83218451763>

Dropbox:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yfj70vzjy3bj5ky/AADDxY9E5ywnpl0DarZEVMrTa>

St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County:

<https://www.svdp-cc.org>

National Site for Vincentians:

<https://www.svdpusa.org/members/>

St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County Youtube Page:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMKjgpCZOYqdmXRF0kn0tUg>

National Meeting Session Recordings:

General Sessions

- Opening Session and History Presentation
<https://vimeo.com/521016408>
- Paris Tour
<https://vimeo.com/521126741>
- Strategic Planning Session
<https://vimeo.com/521118439>
- John Angotti musical visit
<https://vimeo.com/521136066>

Spirituality

- Morning Reflection
<https://vimeo.com/521074419>
- Formation Planning
<https://vimeo.com/521141450>

Governance

- First Things First
<https://vimeo.com/521101621>
- Finding Servant Leaders: Recruitment & Discernment
<https://vimeo.com/521149380>

Programming

- Monthly Growth & Revitalization Sharing Opportunities
<https://vimeo.com/521198340>
- Public Policy Priorities
<https://vimeo.com/521123930>
- Where Have We Been with Systemic Change
<https://vimeo.com/521121034>
- Housing and Homelessness in the Pandemic
<https://vimeo.com/521094747>

Business

- Business Meeting
<https://vimeo.com/521029511>
- Stores Meeting
<https://vimeo.com/521529672>

California Tenant and Landlord Housing Resources:

https://landlordtenant.dre.ca.gov/tenant/protection_guidelines.html

<https://landlordtenant.dre.ca.gov/landlord/resources.html>