



November 2023

Vincentian **Wisdom**
Quotes • Charism



Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday 11/21, 9:30 AM–11:30 AM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Event

Thanksgiving Meal & Fellowship
Thursday 11/23 11:00 AM–12:30 PM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Event

One Warm Coat Kick-off
Saturday, 11/25 All Day

Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday 12/12, 9:30 AM–11:30 AM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Meeting

District Council Meeting
Saturday 12/16, 9:30 AM–11:30 AM
First 5 Contra Costa, Concord, CA

Event – SVdPCC Closed

Christmas Eve
Sunday 12/24 All Day
All Locations

Event – SVdPCC Closed

Christmas Day
Monday 12/25 All Day
All Locations

Event – SVdPCC Closed

New Year's Day
Monday 1/01/24 All Day
All Locations

Bob Liles Corner

MEETINGS

I am not the right person to urge every conference to have two meetings per month because when I was conference president, we did not hold two formal meetings per week. But per National both meetings don't have to be formal.

Keep in mind that members gathering first before doing home visits, or working in a food pantry, qualifies as a meeting if some spiritual development (prayer, reflection etc.) and friendship are present at this gathering. A meeting does not need to be conducted around a table!

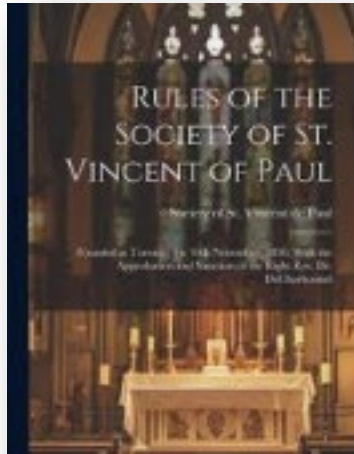
There is another document that states that attending Mass together, eating together and doing other activities as a group can count as a meeting.

Since my conference attended our Thanksgiving and Christmas give away and potlucks, I included that as a meeting. That didn't get us to 24 per year, but we also had a lot of people show up at our Thursday food pantry since that is the day that we would get food to restock our pantry.

But I should have done more.

Instead of me writing why two meetings are important I will just point to a recent issue of Frederic's e-gazette that addresses this in the Q&A section:

<https://members.ssvpusa.org/weekly-qa/08-31-2023-questions-and-answers/>



The Rule: 3.10 Democracy

All decisions are made by consensus after the necessary prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental at all levels of the Society and, when appropriate, matters are put to a vote.

Have a Question?

Need a Resource? What about Home Visits? Spirituality? Season of Sharing? Hope Conference? PG&E? Twinning vs. Co-Pay? The Diocese? Homeless? Mental Health? Food Bank?

Every Tuesday at 10:00 AM. Come by with a Question or just come by – We may have the Answer, or You May Be the Answer for Someone.

<https://bit.ly/TuesdayZoomForum>

Meeting ID: 925 439 5060

Passcode: Ozanam



June 2024 Marks SVdP of Contra Costa County's 60th Anniversary!

Will we be celebrating in style, (date TBD), and are looking for Vincentians to join the 60th Anniversary Planning Committee!

- Use Your Special Skills and Talents
- Network with Other Vincentians
- Be Part of Making this Celebration Special

Contact Barb Hunt, b.hunt@svdp-cc.org

Examining Frederic Ozanam's Family Life

A talk was given at the St. Louis National Assembly by National Council President Ralph Middlecamp.

Our founder was a prolific letter writer, and after his death, his wife collected many of the letters he wrote to friends and family. Ralph read some that Frederic and his wife wrote, showing how they were just like us. When Blessed Frederic moved to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, he wrote a letter to his father complaining that it was a 15-minute walk from the room he was renting to the law school. And like all college students, he asked that more money be sent to him. Later, he made the acquaintance of Andre-Marie Ampere (whom the electric amp was named after) and rented a room from him. He wrote his family how much happier he was with his new lodging since it was only a five-minute walk to school and, of course, asked for more money. Ralph then showed us a map of Paris, which showed that Frederic had only moved a couple of blocks and was still the same distance from the law school.

Then he read a letter from Amelie to her mother complaining about how when she told Frederic before their marriage that his room was a mess, with the floor covered with papers and books. After they were married, Frederic went to Paris and wrote to Amelie that he had accepted a job there, and when he got back home, they would move to Paris. Her letter to him stated in no uncertain terms that she was very disappointed that he did not consult with her about this. That marriage was a partnership, and they need to make all of these decisions in the future.



And we are trying to make this guy a saint... Makes us more hopeful of our chance at sainthood.

Bob



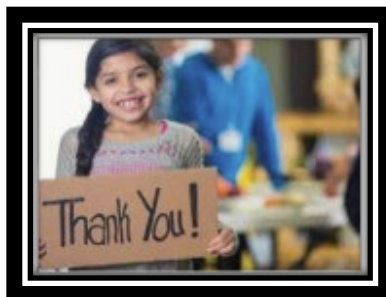
TWINNING – Needed Now More Than Ever

Twinning is when a conference sends unrestricted money to another SVdP organization. Some conferences with extra funds send them to the Hope Conference, to nearby conferences, to conferences across the county or to conferences in other countries. However a conference wants to use their surplus funds is the conference's decision. However if it twins outside the USA it must go through National.

Right now, a lot of conferences, including Hope, are very low on funds. If your conference has extra funds please consider twinning. Steve Krank can always give you advice on which conferences are in need.

HOWEVER, always keep in mind that we cannot do it all. As much as it hurts our neighbors in need and our hearts, sometimes we have to tell them that we simply cannot help them financially. What we can do is listen to them, pray with them, offer some suggestions and maybe give them some hope. That's easier to say than do, but I did it half a dozen times last week, when I was responding to messages on my conference's phone line. Surprisingly many of them told me that they understood and thanked be profusely for at least taking the time to respond to their call.

PLEASE NOTE: If your conference sends money to another conference for a specific neighbor in need that is not twinning. That should be treated exactly as if your conference helped the neighbor directly. While your conference may be writing a check to another conference, which will pay the rent or utility bill, treat it the same as if your conference is writing the check to the landlord or the utility company. This is how National wants it handled. **Bob**



More on Twinning and Addressing the Urgent Need for Support in Our Community

By an Anonymous Conference President and Stephen Krank, Vincentian Support Services

Conference Presidents,

I hope you're doing well and staying healthy. I am writing on behalf of the St. Paul Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to ask for your help. Their mission to serve the vulnerable in our community is more critical than ever, and we believe that with your assistance, we can continue to make a meaningful impact.

While the pandemic may be in the past, the pressing need to assist our neighbors continues to grow. Increasingly, families are turning to our SVDP Conferences not just for food aid, but also for rent and utility assistance. The magnitude of this need can be emotionally, spiritually, and financially overwhelming, making it crucial that we unite to support both our families and fellow conferences. Here are several ways we can achieve this:

1. Financially stable conferences can provide twinning from their treasuries to conferences in greater need. These twinning donations can be made on an as-needed, monthly, or annual basis.
2. Conferences can request assistance from other conferences through co-pay arrangements for individual cases where resources are insufficient.
3. When a conference lacks the resources to provide rent and utility assistance independently, applications can be submitted to the Hope Conference to maximize support for families.

Now, I want to emphasize the urgency of the situation. The St. Paul Conference is a Vincentian Conference without access to full-service resources.

Last month, at all the Masses, they hosted an Invitation to Serve both in English and Spanish over the weekend. The appeal reached out to invite new members to grow in Holiness and provide the help they desperately need. "With more Vincentians, our burden is shared."

Most Bay Area residents do not know that San Pablo has the highest density of new immigrants in the Bay Area, is still one of the largest areas where the unhoused have found a place to camp, and St. Paul's in their service includes the "Iron Triangle" area that was left with a major void when St. David's Pantry closed.

Even the Contra Costa County Health Care for the Homeless, acknowledging the plight of our neighbors living in the area, has set up a permanent site at the GRIP Dining Room to keep our neighbors from going over the edge.

In light of these challenges, the St. Paul Conference's financial resources are dwindling rapidly, and they are eagerly awaiting the announcement of the FOP Grant next month, which will determine whether they will receive the support we desperately need.

In the meantime, they have faced the difficult decision of reducing their food service from four times a month to just two times a month in November and December. (Seasonally, these are some of the most significant months of the year when low-income families need help). This temporary measure will help them bridge the gap until they secure support from the Food Bank.

Moreover, they have reached out to local Conferences who do what they can to help. "We hope that this support remains available to us. Our conference recently conducted a food sale event to raise funds for a much-needed refrigerator." Any support you and other conferences can provide would be immensely appreciated during this challenging period.

Good Stewardship and Twinning

To identify cases where families are seeking assistance from multiple conferences, we can use the Seattle Database, which allows us to search our records and those of other conferences. An increasing number of conferences are using this tool to make informed decisions on assistance allocation. Collaborating with other conferences will help us leverage our resources and provide better support to our neighbors in need.

In conclusion, we appreciate your time and consideration of our appeal. May God continue to bless us all and provide us with the love and strength to serve those in need.

Now, let's come together to address this pressing need. Would you be willing to share this article with your Conference and prayerfully consider what we might be able to do together to support the St. Paul Conference?

Thank you again for your unwavering support and dedication to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Together, we can make a significant difference in each other's lives and also in the lives of those we serve.

Sincerely,

Stephen Krank
Vincentian Life
Manager, Vincentian Support Services
On behalf of the St. Paul Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Who would want to be President?

By Stephen Krank



No, I am not talking about the United States....

Serving as the Conference President for the Vincentians is a role defined not by wielding power but by embodying the principles of Servant Leadership. In this capacity, the emphasis is not on authority or control but on fostering humility, compassion, and a sincere commitment to uplift and support fellow Vincentians serving those in need. The Vincentian tradition, deeply rooted in the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul, strongly emphasizes serving the marginalized and less fortunate.



Stephen Krank, Vincentian Service Manager, and Renato Lima de Oliveira, Immediate Past President, International Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at the 2022 National Assembly.

As Conference President, one's foremost responsibility is to lead by example, attentively listen to the concerns and needs of members within the community, and collaborate tirelessly with fellow Vincentians to alleviate suffering and promote positive change. This role epitomizes selflessness, prioritizing the well-being of others ahead of oneself and striving to serve as a guiding beacon in the pursuit of justice and charity.

Being a Vincentian Conference President signifies a profound dedication to the ideals of Servant Leadership. We serve in faith as living examples and models of

servant leadership, with the aim of transforming lives and communities through love, empathy, and unwavering dedication to service.

Notably, a significant number of the most effective Conference Presidents did not actively seek or desire the role. As I had the privilege of learning from Renato Lima de Oliveira, the recently concluded International President of SSVP, "We all take our turn in accepting the responsibility for stewarding the society."

Renato emphasized the critical importance of succession and succession planning in our Society and our rule. With the end of his term as steward and Servant Leader, a new chapter begins for our International Society. Without this commitment to succession, we cannot honestly uphold the legacy of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.



Western Region and Annual Assemblies

By Shawna Costanzo

For over a decade, I've been a dedicated attendee of the Western Region and Annual Assemblies. This past September, in St. Louis, I had the privilege of reuniting with my fellow Vincentians. It was a gathering of kindred spirits, where we nurtured our Vincentian virtues and shared our accomplishments and aspirations.

The experience was spiritually uplifting, as I anticipated being moved by the words of our Servant Leaders. There's something profoundly enriching about sitting at a table with Vincentians, hearing their stories of inspiration, and connecting with both West Region and Contra Costa County Vincentians.

One of the highlights was visiting our national headquarters in St. Louis, where I could walk in the footsteps depicted during Ozanam Orientation. It exceeded my expectations, and I wholeheartedly encourage everyone to join us at next year's Annual Assembly in sunny Phoenix, Arizona, from August 14th to 17th in 2024.

**"My odds of living
were a million to
one. What are your
odds of living life to
its fullest?"**

-John P. Foppe, *What's Your Excuse?*

As an experiential learner, I was deeply touched by our keynote speaker, John Foppe, who shared insights on resilience and purpose in serving the poor when all else fails. His words challenged my preconceived notions and reminded me of the importance of listening and staying open during our home visits, as well as the power of prayer.

Rather than repeating his words, I invite you to watch his inspiring presentation, which can be found in the 9/28/23 E-Gazette. If you're not already receiving it, kindly ask your president or secretary to add your email to the distribution list."

The Importance of Sharing the Story of St. Vincent de Paul in Contra Costa County: A Call to Conferences and Vincentians

In Contra Costa County, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been a beacon of hope and support for those in need for many years. Our remarkable organization has touched countless lives, providing assistance, compassion, and a helping hand to those facing adversity. Yet, the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is not just about providing aid; it's about telling a powerful story of resilience, community, and transformation.

As we tell our story, we inspire others. Sharing pictures and articles about the work and fulfilling the mission of St. Vincent de Paul in Contra Costa County can inspire others to join our work and offer HOPE. When people see the impact that St. Vincent de Paul has on individuals and communities, they are more likely to want to get involved. These visual and written stories serve as a testament to the positive change that can occur when people come together with a shared purpose.

Many people are unaware of the challenges faced by those in need in their own communities.



By sharing pictures and articles, Conferences and Vincentians can raise awareness about the issues they address daily, such as poverty, homelessness, and hunger. Increased awareness can lead to greater empathy and support from the community, including donations, volunteerism, and partnerships with local businesses and organizations.

Our Vincentian family is a global network of individuals and groups committed to the ideals of St. Vincent de Paul. By sharing their stories, Conferences in Contra Costa County contribute to the larger narrative of Vincentian efforts worldwide. This strengthens the bonds of solidarity among Vincentians, fosters collaboration, and allows for the exchange of best practices and innovative ideas.

Sharing pictures and articles enables Conferences and Vincentians to celebrate their achievements and milestones. It provides an opportunity to recognize the hard work and dedication of volunteers and staff, as well as the positive outcomes experienced by those they serve. This acknowledgment not only boosts morale within the organization but also encourages continued dedication to the cause.

The work of our Conferences in Contra Costa County is an essential part of the region's history. Capturing this history through pictures and articles ensures that future generations will understand and appreciate the legacy of service and compassion that has been built over the years. These stories become valuable for educating others about the organization's history and impact.

By sharing pictures and articles that tell the story of St. Vincent de Paul in Contra Costa County, Conferences, and Vincentians can inspire others, raise awareness, strengthen the Vincentian family, recognize achievements, and preserve their history. Through these narratives, the mission of St. Vincent de Paul continues to thrive, bringing hope and compassion to those who need it most.

Have a story to share and need help gathering information or photos? Contact **Brian Boyle**, Communications and Development Associate at b.boyle@svdp-cc.org or 925-439-5060 ext. 34.

HELP HOPE HELP OUR NEIGHBORS

by Rick Richardson, Hope Conference President

1. Hope Conference needs to be ensured that conferences are going to other sources for rental assistance before applying to the Hope Conference. If they have, and are not able to get assistance from other sources, it is essential that the application notes this. Then it will be clear to us that they have tried other sources, and why they were not able to get assistance from them.
2. When it comes to Utilities, the same as above should be noted. We should not get an application for utilities until all the other resources for utility assistance have been requested from other agencies. We get the request only after they have applied and been turned down.
3. All listed income needs to have supporting documentation, i.e., pay stubs, child care docs, CalFresh approval letter, etc.
4. You need to ensure that when entering expenses as 'Other' it needs to be clear what the 'Other' expenses are. Also, ensure that all expenses are listed.
5. Documents must be readable. If you cannot read them neither can we. The best way to put the documents into the application is to scan them. (If you have a cell phone then you are able to scan documents. If you need help; we will help you learn how to scan).
6. Many times, the Application has not been signed by the neighbor, and the Release of Information is not signed by the home visitor (case worker).
7. We do not require Social Security cards.
8. **This is important.** Section 4 of the application needs to have the amount of assistance that has been applied for, and that the payee section be completed. If this information is not on the application then we cannot write a check to pay the request. (You call and ask why the bill has not been paid? We might have no address or the wrong address, and then the check is floating around somewhere. We need to know where to send the check.) We get charged \$35.00 to stop payment on a check and from now on we are going to have the applying conferences pay this amount.