

Welcome!

Module 2: A learning module for new members.

This module explains what Vincentians do, what a conference is, and how the Society is organized here, and around the world.

An experienced member will review the content with you.

This module will cover:

Section 1:

- Purpose and scope of our service
- Personal encounters with our Neighbours in Need

Section 2:

How is the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul organized to do its mission?

- What is a conference?
- How does a conference work?
- Understanding Particular and Central Councils
- What is the Greater Toronto Central Council?

Section 3:

- A network of Charity
- What do members do?
- Do you want to continue on your journey of becoming a Vincentian?
- Resources

Section 1:

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF OUR SERVICE

The following excerpts are from the Rule of the Society

1.2 The Vincentian Vocation

The vocation of the Society's members, who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person-to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope.

1.3 Any form of personal help...

No work of charity is foreign to the Society.

1.4 ...to anyone in need

The Society serves those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions.

1.5 To Seek Out the Persons experiencing poverty

Vincentians strive to seek out and find those in need and the forgotten, the victims of exclusion or adversity.

1.6 Adaptation to a Changing World

The Society seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the person experiencing poverty and to those who are most rejected by society.

Our Personal Encounters with Neighbours In Need

1.7 Prayer Before Personal Encounters or Visits

Vincentians pray that the Holy Spirit may guide them during their visits and make them channels for the peace and joy of Christ.

1.8 Reverence for the persons experiencing poverty

Vincentians serve people experiencing poverty cheerfully, listening to them and respecting their wishes, helping them to feel and recover their own dignity, for we are all created in God's image. In the person experiencing poverty they see the suffering Christ.

1.9 Empathy

Vincentians endeavor to establish relationships based on trust and friendship. They do not judge those they serve. Rather, they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister.

1.10 Promotion of self-sufficiency

Vincentians endeavor to help people experiencing poverty to help themselves whenever possible, and to be aware that they can forge and change their own destinies and that of their local community.

1.11 Concerns for deeper needs and spirituality

Vincentians are sincerely concerned with the deeper needs and the spiritual wellbeing of those they help, always observing a profound respect for their conscience and the faith they believe in, listening and understanding with their hearts, beyond both words and appearances.

1.12 Gratitude to those we visit

Vincentians never forget the many blessings they receive from those they visit.

Adapted from The Rule, Section 4, 1.2-1.12, p.95-98

Section 2:

HOW IS THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL ORGANIZED TO DO ITS MISSION?

The founding members of the Society gathered together and called themselves the Conference of Charity. The term conference has been an integral part of the vocabulary of the Society ever since.

What is a Conference? *The Rule 2.2.1 p.15-18*

2.2.1 Definition

Vincentians, within the limits of a parish, a school, a store, a workplace, etc., join to form a conference. The conference provides an environment in which they develop and nurture a common spiritual life and where they grow in their closeness to the Lord as they encounter Him in persons experiencing poverty.

2.2.2 Role and Responsibilities of a Conference

The main role of a conference is to group together Christians desirous of pursuing the Society's mission. A conference is a gathering of people similarly motivated to serve Christ by serving our Neighbours in Need.

Working within the conference, members can nourish and renew their faith, and sustain each other through prayer so that each member will grow closer to God.

Within a conference, an environment should be created that will enable members to develop a sense of Vincentian spirituality, friendship, and solidarity in their charitable activities.

The responsibilities of conference members are varied. The most important one is to bring comfort and aid to Neighbours in Need. The fundamental activity is the person-to-person encounter with the persons living in poverty through home visits, carried out by pairs of Vincentians.

Home Visitation demands the highest respect for the dignity of the persons experiencing poverty. Vincentians are the guests of the persons being visited, as those they visit are the hosts.

Within the conference, to carry out its mission, members:

- set objectives,
- plan, develop and carry out activities,
- work as a team,
- make decisions by consensus

Most conferences meet monthly (The Rule states bi-weekly) and come together as a community of faith, friendship, and service to persons experiencing poverty.

The Conference is the basic foundation of the Society put in place to fulfill the mission of the Society.

How does a Conference work?

Information to be shared:

- Number of members
- Meeting times and locations
- Officers of the Conference are President, Vice-President(s), Treasurer, Secretary, Spiritual Facilitator, Advocacy Representative
- Activities undertaken by the conference and shared by members follows:
 - Being on a Home visitation team (usually a male and female)
 - Making home visits (explain the frequency, time commitments and process)

- Attending all Conference meetings (usually chaired by the President or their delegate)
- Sharing in the work of administration and fulfillment of the conference's mission and activities such as the Conference Help Line administration, distribution of calls and support for visiting teams
- New member recruitment, training and mentoring
- Member development and training
- Fund raising through the "Poor Box" collections. What is the average annual donation revenue for the Conference?
- Counting and banking the "Poor Box" collection
- Conference Accounting Management, tax receipts and thank you to donors, charitable works expenses etc. (usually the Treasurer or their delegate)
- Meeting Minutes and record keeping on visits and voucher distribution to Neighbours in Need and Visiting Teams (usually the Secretary or their delegate).
- Meetings with Pastor to share information on what the conference is doing (usually the President or their delegate).
- Communicating regularly to the parish about conference activities, finances, expenses, needs and concerns; seeking ways to involve the parish and the local community in the work of the conference.
- Reports to the Particular Council on conference finances, activities, best practices, and challenges.

- Coordination of other works undertaken by the conference such as Bundle Up collections, food pantries, food banks, meal programs, Christmas gift programs, Camp Registrations for Camp Marygrove and Ozanam, etc.

Understanding Particular and Central Councils

The Conference is the foundation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul throughout the world.

The Society has a geographically tiered administrative structure, which exists to support conferences. The Conference is the first level of this structure.

Historically, as conferences increased in number and expanded geographically, it was decided to form different levels of **Councils** to support conferences

The Councils, whether they are Particular, Central, Regional, National or the International Confederation, are responsible for supporting and animating all the conference activities and Special Works of the Society.

This Conference is part of (*fill in name*) _____
Particular Council.

Your Particular Council has (*fill in number*) _____ of Conferences in your geographic area and meets regularly to keep conferences informed about:

- changing social conditions
- new issues and programs
- major events

The **Particular Council** also provides conferences with the support to:

- benefit from the knowledge and inspiration of other Vincentians
- expand Vincentians' horizons and sense of worldwide responsibility
- create new conferences
- re-activate dormant or defunct conferences

- organize training and formation sessions about the Vincentian ministry and spirituality for potential and current members.
- financial assistance if they need it.
- other pertinent forms of support.

What is the Greater Toronto Central Council?

Related to the International Vincentian Family, the Greater Toronto Central Council is an independent corporation operating within the Archdiocese of Toronto. Voting members of the Corporation are the Presidents of the Conferences and Particular Councils. The Board of Directors is responsible for the oversight of the Corporation, working with Committees and staff in carrying out our mission.

The Greater Toronto Central Council (GTCC) supports the 11 Particular Councils and 114 conferences in the Archdiocese. It also operates and manages 27 “Special Works” programs to support some of the most vulnerable people in the community including housing, camps, stores and other services.

Each year at the Annual General Meeting which is typically held in September, the members of the corporation elect nominees to the Board of Directors, approve audited statements, receive reports, learn about committee work and approve any By-law changes. The Society in Toronto has a Board of Directors whose members are elected based on their experience, skill and desire to serve. There are a number of committees who support the Board’s efforts including the Particular Council Presidents committee, a Finance committee, Governance committee, Communications committee, Membership Development committee, Spirituality committee, Health and Safety and the Camps committee

Our 1,400 Vincentians participate in one of 114 local conferences. Conferences join together geographically into Particular Councils of which there are 11 in the GTCC. Particular Council Presidents and Conference Presidents are the members of the corporation that elect the Board of Directors. The annual reporting on finances and activities is provided to the GTCC who represents their members, Conferences and Particular Councils to the higher Councils.

The Society in Toronto has always been as devoted to Special Works as to the Conference Home Visitation outreach. One of our earliest works first opened in 1894, was the St. Vincent de Paul Children's Aid Society established to address community concerns over the needs of orphans and neglected children. They began with one paid employee. Today, the Society in Toronto offers a wide variety of programs, employing up close to 300 persons and receiving millions of dollars in funding from various levels of government. As you can see from the chart below, the Society in the Greater Toronto area is the largest entity in the Canadian Vincentian family, supporting hundreds of Neighbours in Need, both in their homes, and in our homes and programs.

**Organizational Structure, Commitments and Programs
 National, Regional and Greater Toronto Central Councils**

	Instituted	Incorporated	Employees	Assets	Financials	Programs and services
National Council	1971	1982: By-law review 2011	3	Operating budget: \$937,383 + Head Office located in Ottawa	Unaudited	Committee work, resources, Twinning and emergency aid, support to Regional Councils
Regional Council	1984	1985: By-law review 2021	1	Operating Budget \$369,094	Unaudited	Committee work, resources, North of 60, Ozanam Fund, coordinates insurance and support for those outside of GTCC
Greater Toronto Central Council	1853 1897	1875: By-law review 2020	72 Full Time 122 Part Time 134 Seasonal	\$16 Million Operating Budget \$8 million	Fully audited	11 Particular Councils, 1,400 Vincentians; 10 owned sites, 15 leased sites, serving 270 Residents, 48 permanent (lifelong) residents, 2 camps serving 1800 campers, Funding agreements with City of Toronto, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Housing, Government of Canada, Catholic Charities; stores, resources, member screening, support and development, insurance for members and programs, committee work, risk management, policies and procedures

Section 3:

A network of Charity

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul can be defined as “*a network of friends who seek their personal holiness through service to those in need and through defending social justice.*”

Working within the conference, members:

- nourish and renew their faith,
- sustain each other through prayer so that each member will grow closer to God,
- develop a sense of Vincentian spirituality and friendship, and solidarity in their charitable activities.

What do members do?

- Get training.
- Get paired with a mentor (experienced member).
- In pairs, visit Neighbours in Need in their homes (fundamental activity of the Society)
- Participate in monthly conference meetings.
- Support and share in the conference projects (e.g. fund raising, parish communications, food drives, clothing drives, Christmas assistance programs etc.)

Do you Want to continue on your journey of becoming a Vincentian?

What do you need to do?

- Contact your parish conference leader and express your interest in their work. Arrange a meeting to learn about their work in your parish.
- Get a copy of the SSVP: New Member Information Package at <http://svdptoronto.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ApplicantPackage-2021.pdf>
- Review the position description at:
http://svdptoronto.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/POSITION_DESCRIPTION_MEMBERMay-2021.pdf
- Prepare your application and references form at <http://svdptoronto.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/new-memberfillable-form-2021.pdf>
- As a Vincentian you will be involved in visiting vulnerable people and will be required to provide information to the Police to allow a mandatory Police Records Check. Your conference leaders will advise you on the appropriate process which is dependent on which Police Force will be doing the screening.
- You will be paired with an experienced Vincentian from the Conference who will be your mentor and involve you in home visitations in your parish. This is to ensure you understand our mission and are comfortable in engaging in person to person contact with persons experiencing poverty.

- You will be invited to join the conference for their regular meetings and experience the role of the conference in the development of their members, and their service to our Neighbours in Need.
- Before becoming a full member, each candidate must:
 - ✓ Submit a completed Member Information Form, with references.
 - ✓ Submit an appropriate Police Records Check report.
 - ✓ Receive and read *The Rule and Statutes of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Canada* ©2020.
 - ✓ Sign a Service Covenant at <http://svdptoronto.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Covenant-Fillable-updated-May2021.pdf>
 - ✓ Complete the training and orientation process provided by your conference and Greater Toronto Central Council.
 - ✓ Successfully complete the final interview process.
 - ✓ Your journey to becoming a Vincentian is underway!

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

Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Founder of the Society
