



2024

SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT
DE PAUL IN NEW ZEALAND

Annual Report



"A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just."

– Pope Francis



Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand

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The Society of St Vincent de Paul is an international Catholic lay organization inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Vincentians work to promote human dignity and Justice through personal contact with those in need.

Society of St Vincent de Paul New Zealand is a registered charity: CC34707

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“Go and do likewise”

When Jesus told the lawyer in the Good Samaritan parable “go and do likewise”, he laid down a challenge that today, some 2,000 years later, is still very much with us. That mission from Jesus is greater and more urgent than ever before.

The need for us all to “do likewise” has increased as we humans seem to be becoming more insular, self-centred, judgmental and withdrawn from the wider society. “Me” has become more important than “Us”!

Sure, every year we rise to the occasion, “pack the bus with food donations”, buy toys for the children, put on a Christmas dinner for the needy and perhaps even talk to our elderly neighbours who we haven’t spoken to in the last 12 months. But really, we all know that a once-a-year effort is never going to cut the mustard. It might make us feel better for a few days, but it does not deal with the real problem of the people “left behind”.

Rising demands on our food bank services tell a different story, especially when “employed” people are coming and asking for assistance. Unbelievably even our planet earth now could be included as part of those “left behind”, as Pope Francis has reminded us.

The last 12 months could be best described as “interesting” and many a time I have had reason to remind myself of Jesus and a boatload of apostles in the storm on the lake. He told them to “be not afraid” and chided them for a lack of faith as He calmed the storm. The apostles survived and went on to carry out the mission, and we will do likewise.

In January we farewelled Terry, our National President, and in true Vincentian fashion provided support and love to his family grieving a husband, a father, a grandfather and a friend. On their behalf I thank you for your support and love.

One of the last things Terry said to me was “make sure you keep things going”. I want to thank the National Council, the Board and all the membership for their prayerful support, encouragement as we did just that.

At last year’s AGM we approved a new structure to try and make the Society more effective and responsive in today’s world. The new structure

began at the start of the new Presidential election cycle in October 2024.

The new Government’s focus on cutting unnecessary spending has also managed to cut much necessary spending in terms of helping the poor. Many “food bank charities” who relied on Government funding have closed their doors, putting a greater strain on those left. It is a tragic situation if we have to compete for funds to help the poor.

Membership continues to be a major concern. All English-speaking countries are experiencing rising secularism with shrinking church attendance and religious belief which is reflected in Vincentian membership. This was confirmed when I attended an international meeting in Goa, India.

And yet, at the same time, it was heartening to see and hear of the inspiring work being done in smaller non-English-speaking countries where they were truly “doing likewise,” as commanded by Jesus.

In 2018 in New Zealand, we had an active membership of around 4,000 in over 135 adult Conferences. Today we have approximately 1,100 members in around 100 Conferences, while the need to “do likewise” with practical and personal assistance continues to grow. Membership and Conference development will be a major focus in the coming months.

Young Vinnies continues to be popular among the schools and colleges. This is the result of some valiant efforts by our Young Vinnies Co-ordinators who urgently need more coordinated support and resources. We need to see that Young Vinnies is respected as a vital part of our Mission in their own right, and not just a feeder for adult Conferences. We owe those Co-ordinators, both paid and voluntary, a massive vote of thanks for their hard work and commitment.

Health and Safety for our members, volunteers, staff and shop customers is a continuing matter of some concern. A review of our Policies and Practices



is underway and there will be changes to the way we manage these situations. WorkSafe need to be seen to be vigilant enforcing the law, just as we need to be seen working with the law.

Safeguarding. You will recall that last year's AGM was addressed by Virginia Noonan, the leader of the Catholic Church's National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS). In today's world and considering the abuse problems there have been within the Church, this is an issue we must take very seriously. While our Society is independent of the Church and has its own Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, we need to be sure that our procedures are clear and are being followed. Failure to do so puts the Society at considerable risk. With the help of NOPS, we are currently undertaking a review of our procedures and practices. We cannot afford to ignore the potential for wrongdoing.

Refounding. As I mentioned earlier in this report, our membership is shrinking and it is becoming harder to find presidents at all levels of the Society. Doing nothing about the problem will see us disappear in the next ten years or so.

The secular environment in which we now live bears a striking resemblance to that which existed when Frédéric Ozanam founded the Society in France in 1833. Refounding is a process of returning to our roots, seeing how Frédéric carried out his mission and being inspired by his actions. We then must find radical new ways, relevant to today's world, to continue our mission. The Refounding process will be difficult as we let go of the old ways ("we have always done it this way") and accept the need to do things differently. But if we are to survive, we must change.

Donors. It has been rightly said, "no money, no mission". It would be impossible to do our work without the assistance of the many people, organisations and businesses that provide us with

so many services, goods, food, time and grants. These donations enable us to carry out our mission. To them all, big and small, I offer a heartfelt thank you. Without you there would be more grief, more sadness and less hope in our world.

Thank you also to all our staff in many positions throughout the country, whether they be Area, Centre or Shop managers or assistants. They all willingly go that extra mile, whether asked or not, and their support is strong and constant. Also, to all our volunteers who cheerfully help us in our mission. Special thanks to Anne-Marie, the National Executive Officer and her staff who fulfil my every request even when they sometimes wonder what's he up to now?

Our Vinnies Tamaki Makaurau Trust in Onewhanga have their own way of carrying out our mission, but they always willingly give of their time and resources when we ask for assistance. Thank you Del and your team.

My special thanks also go to the members of the National Council and Board for their assistance and support and their ongoing confidence in their President.

Last but not least, my sincere thanks to all those "real Vincentians", the Conference members, volunteers and associate members for their work and prayerful support over the past 12 months. Without them there would be no mission, no hope and no love.

With every blessing,

Gerry Stevens
National President



2024 – Communities under pressure

Across the country there was a growing demand for our services in 2024. Our Conferences and Councils report that an increasing number of New Zealanders find themselves under severe financial pressure and in need of St Vincent de Paul services on a regular basis.

Food banks used to be accessed in times of emergency or temporary hardship. Now a number of Conferences report that for many families it is the usual state of affairs.

The pressures come from many sources. Housing affordability is probably at the top of the list, with many families struggling to cope with a large mortgage or steep rental costs. This results in a growing number of people lacking access to stable housing, some being forced to live in cars or temporary shelters.

2024 was a year of increasing unemployment. The consequences of long-term unemployment are destructive and long-lasting, placing huge stresses on individuals and families. Survival on a benefit was even harder in 2024 with inflation running at around 4.5 percent. Many children live in households without access to adequate food and healthcare.

In 2024 we saw growing disparities in income, health, education, mental and social wellbeing. The day-to-day realities for many individuals and families in our communities are often desperate. This state of affairs has become so prevalent that it is easy to be lulled into an acceptance that huge inequities are an unchangeable reality.

But this is not the Vincentian way. In the words of our founder Frédéric Ozanam: 'The poor person is a unique person of God's fashioning with an inalienable right to respect. You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis. You must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long-term improvement.'

The causes of our social ills are many and complex and so too are the solutions. From government to local community level, we must work to address the many inequalities that surround us. This requires

new policies and programmes of action which lift families out of poverty and bring hope for a better future. For the St Vincent de Paul Society, our concern must be with reducing inequalities, as well as charity and compassion.

In 2024 the Society continued to be a powerful force for good at a grassroots level in our communities. Nearly 1,500 members and associate members and 2,000 volunteers provided practical and effective help to those in need, sharing their burdens and joys and promoting self-sufficiency. Local Conferences lived out the values of the Society, responding to the needs of the poor, the lonely, the marginalised and the dispossessed. Increasingly the Society has been working alongside other social service agencies to advocate on behalf of the vulnerable and make sure they receive their entitlements.

The Society's practical action takes many forms – furnishing homes for refugees and the disadvantaged, providing food parcels and community centre meals, supplying firewood for the elderly, visiting the sick and elderly, supporting the bereaved, assisting prisoners after their release, providing financial support for dental and medical bills. The list goes on and the needs are seemingly endless. But as our spiritual director Fr Alan Roberts has said: "There is an ocean of service to meet the ocean of need."

The Society had a highly effective network of 55 Shops throughout the country in 2024, making our work and intentions visible to the public. The Shops are a boost for recycling, provide low-cost goods for the community and raise valuable funds for other outreach programmes.

The Vinnies Youth programme continues to reach thousands of students every week across the country. In 2024, through the dedication of paid youth workers, teachers, and volunteers, we were able to deliver programmes that educated students



on critical social issues, while also providing opportunities to serve the needy in their local communities. The vitality and idealism of the Vinnies Youth programme extends the spirit of Frédéric Ozanam and his fellow founders to a new generation of Kiwis, bringing new life and enthusiasm to the Vincentian enterprise.

My deep gratitude goes to all those committed and dedicated Vincentians who serve the needs of others with deep faith. While we have many challenges as a Society, not least our aging membership, at the same time let's not forget the great work that is being done every day by our members.

Mahatma Gandhi once said: "the true test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members'. I am very sure Vincentians understand the spiritual truth that lies behind this famous saying. Certainly Vincentians play their part in making the community in which they live a more caring and compassionate one.

May God bless you all,

Anne-Marie McCarten
Executive Officer



"The poor person is a unique person of God's fashioning, with an inalienable right to respect."

– **Frédéric Ozanam**



From our Spiritual Director

Keep up the spirit of Ozanam

During the past year I've been fortunate in being able to attend two conferences involving members from all over the country. During one of those meetings, it struck me how efficiently very worthwhile projects were completed in countries where there is real need.

We all know the value of water and how we take it for granted here in New Zealand. Even when there are problems causing us the slightest inconvenience, we feel it. So imagine how much those who are given access to clean water appreciate what is done for them.

All in all, I am very impressed with the dedication and the commitment of you all. Included in this is the concern you have for your own areas of responsibility. At the national conferences I have attended, I have made a point of quietly speaking to individuals about what is happening in their region. Each time I come away with a sense of gratitude. The Church cannot be dying when there

is so much good going on. We are told that faith without works is dead, so I don't believe those who say "the Church is dying".

All I can say is keep up the spirit of Ozanam. Keep working to ensure you are serving in the most effective way possible and thank you for what you do.

May you all enjoy a blessed and happy 2025.

Fr Alan Roberts
Spiritual Director



Our Mission

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is the largest Catholic lay organisation in the Church. Our members take seriously the commands of the Gospel to serve others and work for justice. We work in a caring and practical manner to promote human dignity and justice through personal contact with those in need.



Our Vision

We strive to provide person-to-person practical and effective help to those in need – sharing their burdens and joys, sowing seeds of hope and promoting self-sufficiency.



OUR CORE VALUES

Generosity

Giving of one's self and one's time.

Integrity

Living by the Society's values, vision and mission.

Compassion

Opening our hearts to all in need with understanding and without judgement.

Empathy

Establishing relationships with those in need by actively listening to them and striving to understand how they are feeling.

Responsiveness

Responding to the needs of the poor, the lonely, the marginalised and the dispossessed.

Respect for people

Serving all in need regardless of creed, ethnicity, or social background.

Respect for the environment

Taking action, and supporting others to take action, to reduce our carbon footprint and live sustainably.

Innovation

Embracing new ways of doing things so we can strengthen the Society and respond more effectively to the disadvantaged in our communities.

Courage

Finding the courage to be close to those who are vulnerable and lonely, and act on their behalf.

Advocacy

Helping those in need to get the support they need and secure their rightful entitlements to welfare. Working alongside like-minded organisations to address the causes of poverty and injustice.

2020-2025 STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

OUR MEMBERS

To ensure a spiritually-focused and fully-engaged Society committed to its vision, mission and values.



OUR FUTURE

To create and invigorate a young, innovative, unified and sustainable Society.

OUR WORK

To serve Christ in the poor, the displaced, the lonely, the marginalised and the isolated.
To recognise our responsibility to care for the earth and the poor of the earth in the way we live.





“We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace.”

– Pope Francis



STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES IN ACTION

1 Work with like-minded local/ community organisations

- Ashburton has a food rescue service bringing food items into Ashburton twice weekly
- Healthy homes programme: energy, power (Hamilton)
- Riding for the disabled, school holiday programmes (Marlborough)
- Visits to rest homes (Wellington)
- Morning tea shouts at local flats (Newtown, Wellington)
- Work with Police (Western Bay)
- Work with Oranga Tamariki assisting families in need (Western Bay)
- Dental support - developing relationships with local providers where people don't get WINZ support (Timaru)
- Hearing clinic - partnering with local hospital (Timaru)
- Partnering with local community food banks (Nelson and Stoke)
- Assistance at local community houses (Motueka - Nelson)
- Partnering with local suppliers for food needs – parishioners, businesses, local farmers, growers, supermarkets, and local schools (Nelson)
- Food parcel visitations to aged facilities (Manawatu)
- Community lunch for the hungry (Hamilton)
- Toy run – collaborating with local agencies to distribute toys for children (Hamilton)

2 Train members to advocate and support those in need

Training occurs through all Areas of SVdP in New Zealand. Members, Shop staff and volunteers are trained to assist people and direct them to Vinnies services/external services as required.

3 Employment support

Employment pathways programme/DINE academy (Vinnies Hub)

4 Community mental health support

- Taking communion to infirm parishioners (Hastings)
- Delivery of hospitalisation and bereavement packages (Hastings)
- Potluck dinners for volunteers to thank them (Nelson)
- Morning teas at local Council flats (Kotuku Flats, Wellingtons Eastern Suburbs)
- Wellbeing focus: homelessness, social exclusion, mental wellbeing (Vinnies Hub)
- Vincentian Centre: mother and baby's session (Kapi Mana)
- Assistance at local community houses (Motueka, Nelson)
- "Lest we forget" pensioner programme (Hamilton)
- Supporting people through their cancer journeys (Western Bay)

5 Homelessness and housing support

- Continuation of supporting living/housing needs in response to natural disaster recovery (Hastings)
- Furnishing households in Invercargill for people moving from other parts of New Zealand (Southland)
- Healthy Homes programme – new energy through Good Power (Hamilton)
- Provision of firewood, partnering with local schools to assist splitting and bagging the wood (Christchurch)
- Wellbeing focus: homelessness, social exclusion, mental wellbeing (Vinnies Hub)
- Assistance with shifting house, house maintenance and medication support (Western Bay)
- Support for the elderly – cards, movies and petrol vouchers (West Coast)
- Furniture – full house-packs (Hamilton)
- Home-cooked meals (Taupo, Thermal Lands)

6 Work with like-minded Catholic organisations

- Adoption of Catholic primary schools within the Conference jurisdiction (Hastings)
- Serve meals for guests at Suzanne Aubert Compassion Centre (Wellington)
- Education support at Sacred Heart School (Wellington)
- School programme - funding students for school camps, sports gear, food, uniforms, bus passes, technology (Christchurch)
- Bereavement baskets and Mass cards (Taranaki)
- Food bank cooperative (Nelson)

7 Refugee and migrant support

- Wrap-around support for migrant family due to visa breakdown, awaiting MBIE outcome (Ashburton)
- Helping resettlement of refugees (Wellington)
- Immigration advice and assistance (Western Bay, Thermal Lands)
- Furnishing households in Invercargill for people moving from overseas, providing hot water bottles, curtains, bedding for new immigrants (Southland)
- Wellbeing focus: homelessness, social exclusion, mental wellbeing (Vinnies Hub)

8 Prisoner support and rehabilitation

- Support of 23 prisoners (Taranaki)
- Prisoner rehabilitation after release (Auckland North)
- Work with police, hospitals, child and youth agency (Western Bay)

9 Network with other businesses to reduce inequality

- Work with social services to help local families in need – medical costs, sports participation and general assistance (Takaka, Nelson)
- Healthy Homes assessment – housing needs identified, partnership with Kaianga Ora and power companies (Hamilton)

- Dental assistance, including dentures (Timaru, South and Mid-Canterbury)
- Partnership with local pharmacies, chemist bills (West Coast)
- Medical support – subscriptions and doctor bills (Taranaki)
- Our Power, cheaper utilities (Hamilton)
- Partnering with local suppliers for food needs – parishioners, businesses, local farmers, growers, supermarkets, and local schools (Nelson)
- Dental support - developing relationships with local providers where people don't get WINZ support (Timaru)
- Hearing Clinic – partnering with local hospital (Timaru)
- Partnering with DePaul House and their food bank activities (Northcote, Auckland North)
- Collecting unsold bread from local businesses to distribute to families in need (Wellington)

10 Budgeting services

- Provide clients with financial assistance (renewal of MSD contract, Auckland South)
- Offer budgeting and counselling services referring some clients to Te Korowai Trust (Stoke, Nelson)
- Visit homes to assist people with budget shortfalls and prepare for future costs (Eastern Suburbs, Wellington)

11 Environmental advocacy and sustainable living

Young Vinnies operating throughout New Zealand (all primary and secondary Catholic schools in Christchurch have Young Vinnies)

12 Recycling second-hand goods and reducing waste

The operation of SVDP shops across New Zealand (all Areas)



The Society in New Zealand 2024 – A Snapshot



22
AREA
COUNCILS

105
CONFERENCES

55 SHOPS

67 FULL-TIME
PAID EMPLOYEES

1,157 MEMBERS

50 PART-TIME
PAID EMPLOYEES

352 ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

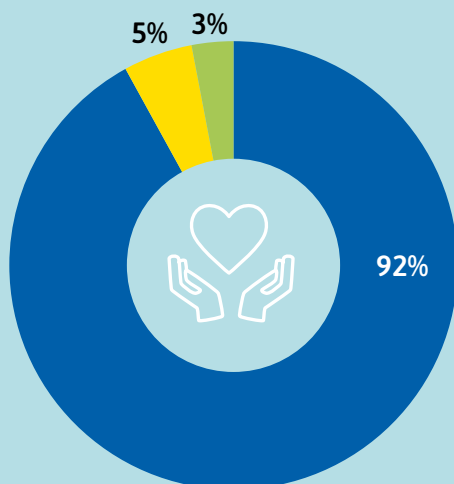
1,759 VOLUNTEERS

60,432 FOOD PARCELS
DISPATCHED

1,875 HOUSEHOLDS
FURNISHED

CLIENT ASSISTANCE 2024

- Food parcels dispatched
- Households furnished
- Budgeting/
Counselling
services



“This is what the Lord
asks of you, only this: to
act justly, to love tenderly
and to walk humbly with
your God.”

– Prophet Micah



ADVOCATING FOR THE VULNERABLE



Advocating for those vulnerable

Actively speaking up for those experiencing hardship, ensuring their voices are heard in social policies, housing issues, and access to essential services.

Running Vinnies Shops

Operating charity shops that provide affordable clothing, furniture, and household items, while also using proceeds to fund community welfare initiatives.

Providing Emergency Relief

In times of crisis, whether due to natural disasters or financial hardship, St Vincent de Paul provides immediate assistance such as food, shelter, and financial aid.

Organising food banks

Through the collection and distribution of food parcels, St Vincent de Paul ensures that individuals and families facing food insecurity have access to nutritious meals.

Visiting people in home, hospital and in prison

Volunteers offer companionship, comfort, and practical support to those who are isolated, unwell, or incarcerated, reinforcing a sense of dignity and belonging.

Assisting people in need through community outreach

Whether through financial aid, support services, or social programmes, St Vincent de Paul reaches out to individuals and families struggling with hardship, helping them regain stability.

Supporting migrants

Helping newcomers to New Zealand settle by providing essential resources, language support, and a welcoming community to ease their transition.

Supporting families under stress

By offering counseling, financial assistance, and emotional support, St Vincent de Paul helps struggling families navigate difficult circumstances and maintain stability.

Mobilising Vinnies Youth to care for others

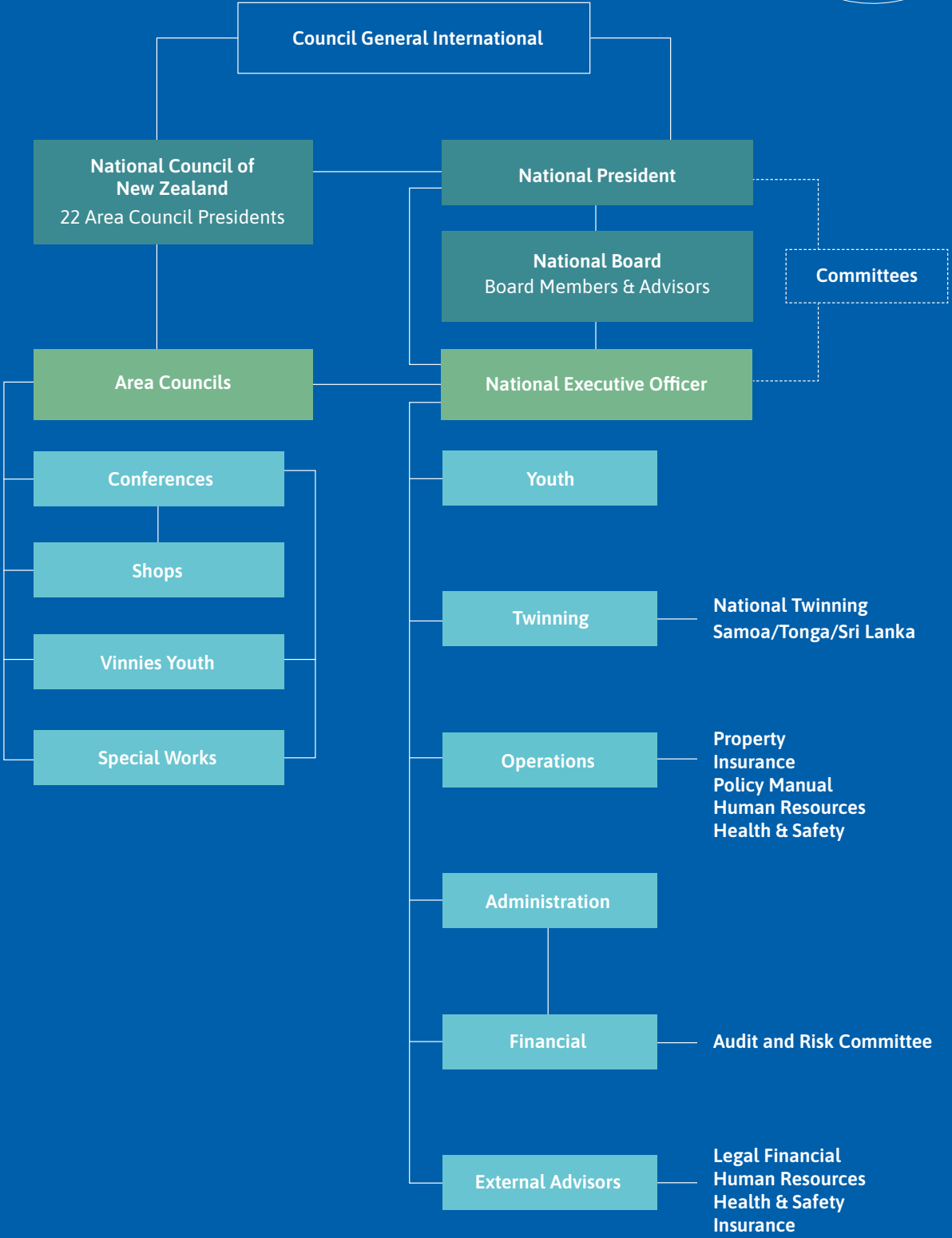
Equipping young volunteers to engage in charitable works, fostering a culture of compassion and service among the next generation.

“Assistance honours the poor man since it treats him with respect – as a superior – since he is suffering for a lifetime that which I am perhaps incapable of suffering for an hour.”

– Frédéric Ozanam



Organisational Chart





Provided those in need with food vouchers

Distributed 60,432 food parcels and furnished 1,875 households

Provided free clothing for RSE workers

Supported Youth Vinnies programme through the country

Provided low-cost clothing and household goods through our network of 55 Shops

Advocated on behalf of beneficiaries to ensure entitlements are received

Funded and provided counselling and budgeting services

Organised loads of firewood

Paid power bills for people struggling financially

Hosted morning teas and lunches for seniors

Helped prisoners reintegrate back into the community

Provided bedding and household furnishings for refugees

Worked with local marae to support the homeless

Mobilised 1,759 volunteers to assist the needy in our communities

Ran a Breakfast Club for children who come to school hungry

Raised funds on behalf of the vulnerable

Made regular rest home, hospital visits and home visitations to the sick, lonely and elderly

Supported development projects in Tonga, Samoa and Sri Lanka

Provided a refuge for domestic harm victims

some of
WHAT
we did



Organised Christmas meals and celebrations for the elderly

Ran holiday programmes for children

Ran food banks and supported existing food banks

Helped meet schooling costs for families in need

Collected and distributed surplus food from supermarkets

Supported communities affected by flooding and other natural disasters

Provided special Christmas grocery boxes for families

Helped people access mental health services

Provided low-cost school lunches

Provided community and home delivery meals

Supported communities in war-torn Ukraine

Provided funds to help with doctor and optician expenses

Sewed quilts for a children's hospital in Kiev, Ukraine

Provided clothing for families facing harsh winters

More than 100 Conferences met regularly and supported the spiritual growth of members

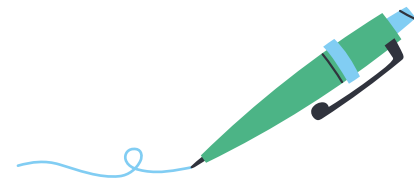
Visited prisoners in prison

Supported people in transitional housing with household goods and food supplies

Organised vanloads of furniture and household goods for families in need

Supported the unemployed

Provided kindergartens with essential supplies



The impact of Vinnies Youth

The Vinnies Youth programme reaches thousands of students every week across Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the dedication of paid youth workers, teachers, and volunteers, we deliver impactful programmes designed to educate students on critical social issues, such as food and housing insecurity, while also providing opportunities to serve the lonely and marginalised in their communities.

In Auckland, Vinnies Youth has shown outstanding growth and dedication, contributing over 6,000 voluntary hours in a single month. With 60 committed leaders across 15 schools, these young leaders engage in impactful activities such as preparing and distributing meals at the Onehunga Food Hub. This tremendous effort demonstrates the power of collaboration, which is made possible through the steadfast support of our local Area and Conference members.

Nationwide, our focus remains on growth and maintaining high-quality programmes. Leadership initiatives empower young people to develop resilience, improve mental health skills, and gain the confidence to thrive. The consistent engagement of our Vinnies Youth members is a testament to the positive impact of these programmes.

Vinnies has seen significant engagement and growth in the world of social media. With our Facebook page gaining an impressive number of total fans and engaged users, we regularly

connect with supporters who share messages of encouragement and gratitude for our work. Notably, one of the top posts – which highlighted our new shop in Tonga – reached over 30,000 people with an engagement rate of over 13 percent, reflecting the resonance of our mission with our online community. Instagram has also become a key platform for showcasing the incredible efforts of our young members and inspiring others to join our cause.

“Through both in-person and digital engagement, Vinnies Youth continue to exemplify the spirit of service and solidarity, making a lasting difference in their communities and inspiring positive change across Aotearoa.”



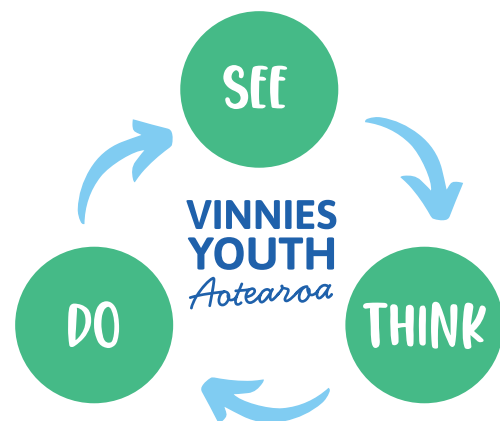
Pictured: Students from Christchurch and Auckland



We can change the world. With just our hands and our hearts.



www.vinniesyouth.org.nz



Twinning Report

The generosity of Area Councils, Conferences and Individual donors during 2024 needs to be fully acknowledged. This commitment allowed us to assist in the areas of poverty, disasters, economic hardship, war and with educational development. We thank you.



Our 2024 project funding was greater than the 2023 contribution. Two projects, in Tonga and Sri Lanka, were completed. The Samoa projects are underway and will be completed early 2025. Project funding distributed totaled NZ\$137,698.

Total Twinning
assistance provided
in 2024

\$137,698

SRI LANKA

New Zealand is now the sole donor for Sri Lanka. 2024 funding was NZ\$63,000. Your contributions are well utilised in all areas of need throughout the many Conferences we support in Sri Lanka. When funds are remitted, we forward detail on the NZ Council and Conferences contribution which is then forwarded to our Sri Lankan Twin Council and Conferences. This process ensures contributions reach our twin Council and its Conferences.

As reported in 2023, a project in Aligambay, a village in the east of the country, was completed. The project was the development of a new freshwater well and storage which provides drinking water to a village of 2,000 and supports agriculture. During 2024 we further expanded the water supply project, at a cost of NZ\$12,000, which assisted a further 58 families from Thevakiramam. It also supplied water for the irrigation of crops.



TONGA

The shop/welfare centre project was completed in September and opened on September 27. The final project cost, met by New Zealand and Tongan contributions, was NZD\$135,700. The local support for the shop has probably exceeded expectations with a big demand for clothing and household goods.

A website for the National Council of Tonga has also been established and the Xero accounting system has also been implemented.

SAMOA

A total of NZ\$23,000 was raised and forwarded to Samoa for the housing project. This work is underway and will be completed in early 2025.

Earlier in the year we supported an educational training programme which assisted students who had fallen behind to reintegrate back into the education system.

ASSIST A STUDENT

In our first year we assisted 200 students in Sri Lanka, Tonga and Samoa. The contribution to individual students helps them in many ways. SSVP Australia will continue to assist in the Sri Lankan programme until we reach our required contribution level. Assisting students educationally is recognised by the Society internationally as a key first step in addressing poverty. We thank you for your ongoing support.

OCEANIA

The Oceania region continues to be supported by two donor countries, Australia and New Zealand. The ITVP for Oceania, Frank Brassil, and the Zone Co-ordinators, Keith Norton and Lily Lober, have put much effort into ensuring that twinned countries within the region have in place the structures and procedures that assist in meeting international policy. An Oceania meeting in November 2024 was very successful and covered many areas relating to the Society and its governance. The region currently has nine countries working in partnership, along with two others to be integrated.

INTERNATIONAL

2024 has seen the strengthening of the relationship between Solidarity and Special Projects. This section of the international structure embraces Twinning, Commission for International Aid and Development (C.I.A.D), and the Fund for International Solidarity (F.I.S).

Twinning, C.I.A.D and F.I.S. reports to International Vice-President Ralph Middlecamp.

Strategy 25, which was launched in April 2022, focuses on the member countries, twinned and un-twinned, who are in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is measured by those earning USD\$2.15 per day. Most of the project countries are in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and northern South America. Poverty ranges between 55 percent and 84 percent of the population. In Oceania, 7 percent of the population, 3.1m people, live in extreme poverty.

Many thanks for the generosity of all our donors.

Arthur Schultze
NZ Twinning



Health & Safety Report

The health, safety and wellbeing of our people, and those who support us, are a top priority for the Society as we go about our activities. It must be a conscious focus of the Society at all levels so that “our people go home safely every day”.

Over the past 12 months, there has been increased awareness of the need to strengthen health and safety at all levels of the St Vincent de Paul Society. With our health and safety facilitator having stood down, it is an opportune time for the current health and safety system to be reviewed and brought into line with the revised Governance process, inception of the Governance Board, Safeguarding audit report, and amendments to the Health and Safety at Work Act.

The Society has engaged a third party to rationalise the current health and safety management system to develop an integrated, centralised system which Area Councils, Conferences, and regions will operate, monitor and report against. The new system will incorporate the core principles of the Society, applying roles and responsibilities at all

levels while considering all aspects of risk, hazards and controls to ensure the safety of our people.

Achieving this takes a concerted effort and will be supported with training at all levels, ongoing monitoring, review and auditing. A full-time health, safety and wellbeing advisor will be appointed in early 2025. The amended health and safety system will be rolled out with the support of the Society President, National Council, Executive Officer and the Health and Safety advisor.

Ngā mihi

Mike Schultze

Construct Health Ltd



TAKING SAFEGUARDING SERIOUSLY

The Society of St Vincent de Paul has adopted the New Zealand Catholic Church Safeguarding Policy to ensure people within its communities are protected from harm.

Safeguarding involves reducing and preventing risks of harm, and working to ensure that vulnerable individuals and communities are safe and empowered.

The implementation of the Safeguarding Policy involves all individuals working at the Society – Area Councils, Conferences, in Shops or on special projects. This includes employees, volunteers, contractors, members and associate members. The National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS) has spoken to Area Councils about the importance of creating and maintaining a safety culture in line with the Society's and the Churches safeguarding policies.

The Society's Policy makes paramount the welfare of the people the Society assists.

Concerns or allegations of abusive or exploitative behaviour are always taken seriously, investigated

and acted on as appropriate. The Policy ensures that SVdP staff and the people the Society helps have access to information about how to report concerns or allegations of abuse.

In recruiting staff, the Society will not recruit personnel or volunteers if they pose a known risk to the safety or wellbeing of those it assists. Induction processes include a thorough knowledge of the Society's safeguarding practices.

In increasing its focus on safeguarding, the Society has introduced a number of specific measures. These include a 'Two Adult Rule' which says that unless there is urgent need, no fewer than two SVdP personnel should be present during any meeting with companions. The 'Two Adult Rule' serves to keep vulnerable persons safe, and to protect against false/malicious allegations being made against SVDP Personnel.

The Policy also emphasises the need to respect the privacy of clients at all times. Identifying information about children or vulnerable persons should not be disclosed.



“It is true that we are called to create
a better world. But we are first of
all called to a more immediate task:
that of creating our own lives.”

– Thomas Merton,
American Trappist Monk and writer

Getting the message out

In 2024 the Society continued to promote its work to the Catholic community and wider public. The Society's reputation for providing a helping hand to those who are vulnerable or going through a tough time always ensures a generous response from the community.

This year the Society ran several advertisements. The main campaign in the Catholic media was targeted at the Catholic community, inviting people to join the Vinnies as a member or volunteer and to support our work financially. A secondary campaign, *Lifting the human spirit*, invited people to consider making a bequest to the Society. This too drew an encouraging response.

Advertising was supported with a regular flow of stories in Catholic media and online, showing the Vinnies in action, ready to roll up their sleeves and get involved where the need is greatest.

The Society's website was updated regularly and provided ready access to all aspects of Vinnies'


operations. Training resources are available there, along with information on the history and functioning of the Society. A regular e-newsletter is disseminated and Fr Alan Robert's spiritual reflections are also available online.

Word of mouth and the example of Members' service to others is always the Society's most effective communications tool at a local level. But in the world in which we live there is plenty more that can and must be done to harness the potential of the latest communication technologies to support the Vincentian cause.

JOIN THE VINNIES



Young and old, town and country. Vinnies harness the generosity of Aotearoa NZ – whānau, churches, community groups, schools. Get involved and help those who are going through tough times.



St Patrick's School fundraiser – 800 cans donated to the Vinnies Annual Food Drive in Christchurch.

Join up with your local Vinnies or make a donation:

Society of St Vincent de Paul
BNZ 02-0528-0208598-027
 Please use your name and email address as a reference and we will send you a receipt.



www.svdp.org.nz

LIFTING *the human spirit*

A readiness to give lifts the human spirit in many ways, often unspoken.

A bequest to St Vincent de Paul is an act of generosity that will make a lasting difference to the most disadvantaged and needy in our community.

If you would like to discuss a Bequest with us, please give us a call, or send us an email...

Society of St Vincent de Paul
 Freepost 992, PO Box 10-815, Wellington 6143
 Phone: **04 499 5070**
 Email: national@svdp.org.nz

The St Vincent de Paul Society has a nationwide network of workers and helpers who provide practical assistance every day to people in desperate situations. The Society in New Zealand is an international Catholic social services agency which has been doing this vital work for more than 150 years. Help is offered to all, regardless of origin, cultural background or religious belief.



www.svdp.org.nz



Pictured above - a spread from our e-news newsletter, all back issues available for download on www.svdp.org.nz

FEEDBACK FROM THE REGIONS



Auckland East Area Council

Vincentians locally are engaged in a range of activities.

Visitations continue to rest homes and hospitals. Transport is provided for people in need who have hospital appointments.

We support Sr Marie Brown at Te Waipuna Puawai Mercy Oasis with food parcels, vouchers and clothing. We provide transport to take people shopping, and we deliver a weekly supply of bread to 186 families. We had a good response to the sale of Christmas cards, raffles, Christmas mince pies and minnie cakes, raising very valuable funds.

Glendowie has a new President due to the death of Gerard Hart. Thank you all for support and prayers during the year, especially at the time of Gerard's funeral.

Heather Hart

– Auckland East Area President

Auckland North Area Council

The North Auckland Area Council consists of six Conferences, all of which are active. The primary mission of the Society is to visit and to care for the poor and all six Conferences are actively engaged in this mission.

To support them, North Auckland area operates two Shops, one in Ellice Road Glenfield and one in Barry's Point Road, Takapuna. The Ellice Road Shop is steady, though sales are down, as are sales in the second-hand retail sector across the country. The Barry's Point Road Shop opened in October 2023 and is still developing a client base. We are currently reviewing and revising our Shop operating plan to grow their donations, volunteer base, and sales. There have been staffing concerns this year due to serious ill health and resignations.

The Area Council remembers with gratitude the life and work of Kevin Mulcahy, a former Area President who died in September this year after a long illness.

St Mary's Northcote Conference

Northcote has remained fairly quiet this year. We continue to provide our area with food parcels, make visits to rest homes and hospitals and help our friends in need. We have a few generous parishioners who regularly contribute each month but we are not a wealthy group. We make our supplies go as far as possible, making contributions to and good use of the De Paul House food bank.

We could do with a few more members to help with the bread runs on Wednesday from Bakers Delight who keep us supplied with copious quantities of leftover bread. Our main receivers of this gift are De Paul House, two local secondary schools, two primary schools plus some needy families in the area. We are moving some of our regular receiving families onto a local North Shore organisation called The Good Works Trust who are a social supermarket. Their rules about supplies are much stricter than ours but they give a hand up, not a hand out. Support from our Northcote Parish of St Mary's is always welcome although we are running into competition for available funds from the new social supermarket starting up in the parish, called Mary's Pantry. So far they are supplying families from de Paul House with vegetable parcels. They hope to extend their circular economy to the wider community with new products.

St Thomas More Glenfield Conference

The Glenfield Conference gained three new members during the year. At the start of the year the Conference helped several families with the cost of getting their children back to school. The costs included laptops, uniforms, stationery and school fees. During the year the Conference has experienced an increased demand for food parcels while cash donations have decreased.

At Christmas, thanks to the generosity of parishioners, we were able to deliver Christmas hampers to families in need in the Glenfield area.

Maria Assumpta Beach Haven Conference

The Beach Haven Conference has had two new members this year. We are actively seeking more members to assist with our food parcels following the death of our President, Chris Simpson, from cancer on Easter Day. We provide food parcels in our area and also have a weekly bread run, which keeps us in regular contact with some of the more needy and lonely folk in the area. We also provide gift vouchers for use at Woolworths and will distribute around 30 of these this Christmas to those in ongoing need. Many households are reporting lack of sufficient shopping money due to the current reduction in benefits availability.

St Joseph Takapuna Conference

The Takapuna Conference has had a good year. They have lots of food parcel requests. They are the phone service for the North Shore area and redirect requests to the relevant Conferences, but are still quite busy themselves with deliveries of food parcels as there is a lot of emergency housing and new social housing in their area.

The Takapuna Conference supplies the North Shore hospital with care packages for needy patients. In August the parish held a volunteer expo and they have had four new members join. They are exploring ways to be more useful to the parish.

They have decided to enclose the food bank to make it more secure. One new member has organised for the local Bunnings to donate the materials and the builders they employ have offered to erect the structure at no cost. They have had a successful year.

St Francis de Sales and All Souls Devonport Conference

The Devonport Conference consists of seven members with one auxiliary member. In the year ended 30 June 2024, the Conference was engaged for 138 hours in visiting 103 people on 52 occasions. They delivered food parcels to 163 people and spent \$4,152 on food vouchers and \$1,973 on assistance with power bills and other household utility expenses, \$1,054 on petrol and vehicle expense aid, \$675 on medical and school fee aid, and \$111 on clothing and furniture aid.

St John the Baptist and St Francis de Sales East Coast Bays Conference

The East Coast Bays conference consists of nine members with one auxiliary member. In the year ended 30 June 2024, the Conference was engaged for 223 hours in visiting 464 people on 273 occasions. They delivered 211 food parcels to 703 people on 171 occasions. They spent \$1,670 on food vouchers and \$402 on clothing and furniture aid, \$141 on petrol and vehicle aid, and \$3,314 on school and pupil aid.

Charles Grinter

– Auckland North Area President

Auckland West Area Council

Regular Area Council meetings have been disrupted this year as I've battled with illnesses and hospital visits. Instead, I've attended Conference meetings to talk about issues in our area and give thanks for all that our members do. I'm so grateful to my Conference Presidents who have continued their amazing work to keep things going. Here's hoping for a much healthier 2025.

A common theme throughout our Conferences is the growing need to help families with a holistic focus. Donations are dwindling and the cost of living is rising. Average rental costs in Auckland are around \$800 per week. Add onto that rising utility, petrol, food and education costs and you can see how families struggle. Mental health issues are on the rise and we're not qualified to help with that.

I've asked our Conference Presidents to discuss a few issues prior to our next get-together:

- Are we really helping by delivering a food parcel that may last the family a few days?
- Do we make time to get to know the families or do we just drop off the food parcels?
- Can we help with referrals to other professional agencies?
- Have we created or utilised a network of government and charity organisations in our area?
- Can we look at joining forces with these agencies to make a real difference?

Pope Francis declared the 2025 Jubilee Year theme as “Pilgrims of Hope”. I find this exciting. With the theme in mind, our Conferences have been asked to discuss and plan events for our elderly. I feel the elderly are our most vulnerable people and loneliness is one of the biggest factors in their decline.

We also hope to develop classes on gardening, budgeting and maybe a homework programme to empower young parents to learn new skills which will build confidence and strengthen their family units.

We farewell two longstanding Conference Presidents, Marion Carrodus (Massey) and Maria Faleusu (Henderson) who have made the hard decision to retire but continue to help as members. We welcome Tina Veal (Massey) and Michael Eades (Henderson) as our new Conference Presidents.

Thanks again to our National Office team, Anne-Marie, Natasha, Ross and Anthony who continue to help without hesitation. I am so grateful for you all.

Paula Betham

– President Auckland West Area President



Our annual Christmas and “thank you” lunch. Around 40 members from our Council attended.

Christchurch Area Council

There were many highlights and achievements for the St Vincent de Paul Society in Christchurch in 2024.

Local Vincentians celebrated the Feast Day of St Vincent de Paul at St Gregory’s Parish Church where Mass was celebrated by Fr Chris Orr. At the end of Mass, about 25 new Vincentians were commissioned. Mike Daly, National Vice-President, presented the newly commissioned members with their Vincentian badges.

Long service awards were also made to Mike Smith (Papanui), Shirley Scott (Cathedral), John Ruane (West Conference), John Reilly (Cathedral) and Marie McCaskey (Cathedral). Over the Feast Day weekend, many Conferences also undertook a membership drive.



Vincentians gather at St Gregory’s Parish Church on St Vincent de Paul’s Feast Day.

Marian College was the venue for our annual Festival Day in 2024 with over 80 Vincentians present. The event was described by many as inspiring. The day started with Mass followed by a number of engaging speakers. These included Elizabeth Owens (Nelson Area President), Mike Daly, Maurice Lawlor, Jenny Carter (Rangiora President) and Ian Tennant (former Selwyn President).

After lunch, our National President Gerry Stevens emphasised how important our Conference members were and he thanked them for their work for the Society in Canterbury. Luis Arevalo from Catholic Social Services spoke about the importance of advocacy for those in need and the importance of counselling for the depressed. Bruce Mayhew and Cyrene (Young Vinnies) concluded the afternoon.

The annual Young Vinnies Commissioning Mass was held in April. Our new Young Vinnie members, their families, teachers and many St Vincent de Paul Conference members filled St Mary's Pro-Cathedral in Christchurch. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Michael Gielen. More than 200 students were commissioned as new members of St. Vincent de Paul, resulting in some 600 Young Vinnies now active in our schools.



Young Vinnies Commissioning Mass

Several Vinnies Fashion Events were successfully held during the year. These included a "Vinnies Meets Vogue" event held at our Papanui shop in September. Over \$5,800 was made in a two-hour shopping exclusive! Villa Maria College Young Vinnies also held a Fashion Show event which raised \$5,000.

Our annual "Christmas Grotto" event was held in December, providing gifts for children under the age of 13 years.



Cyrene (Young Vinnies) preparing gifts for the Christmas Grotto.

Demand for welfare in Canterbury continues at a high level. In the 2023/2024 year the Society provided nearly 8,000 food parcels to the local community, worth an estimated \$782,000 dollars. The Society is hugely grateful to the many parishioners across Canterbury who willingly donate dry foods each week whilst others donate financially. Our Young Vinnies have also contributed with Can Drives and Fundraising Appeals. Donated firewood continues to be distributed due to the hard work of several Vincentians.

Our Selwyn Conference in Canterbury sponsored a Community Refugee programme (CORS) with the family finally arriving in New Zealand from Afghanistan at the end of June 2024. This necessitated obtaining suitable housing and the provision of winter clothing. Orientation began with a trip into the city centre, to the Botanical Gardens and to the seaside at Sumner. It was the first time the family had seen the sea. A couple of months on from this, the family are happy, settled and establishing links with their local community. The children are thriving at the local schools. A huge congratulations to Ian and Selwyn Conference members.

The Ozanam Apartments, opened in mid-2023, offer young families transitional housing which provides stability and a safe space to work through life's challenges. The young parents development team from St John of God (Waipuna) are steadily building relationships with families. There is a lot of hardship within our communities with the cost of living crisis. Our young families are bearing the brunt of this with housing discrimination and major financial challenges. Kath Prins (GM, Community, Youth & Child Services) at St John of God reports that "the young mums amaze us with their resilience and their ability to keep moving forward for their family". One of the young mums who recently left the apartments stated that she "felt really excited for me and my daughter because it was a really nice warm dry house."

She also made "heaps of friends there". Other mums were all friendly and she appreciated "the support workers from Waipuna. They were very helpful, always there when you needed something and always there to help you. They have helped me learn to pay bills, like my power bill and rent, and have helped when MSD got things wrong."

Mike Moore

– Christchurch Area President

Hamilton Area Council

St Vincent de Paul Hamilton has had a remarkable year, marked by our continued dedication to serving the community's most vulnerable.

The Vinnies food bank delivered a total of 3,791 food parcels, meeting the rising demand for support. Our efforts ensured that families and individuals facing food insecurity received the essentials they needed to get through difficult times.

In addition to our food parcel service, the Community Lunch initiative successfully provided 3,530 meals throughout the year. This programme not only addressed hunger but also created a space for companionship and connection, bringing people together in an environment of warmth and support.

Our Food Recovery programme also played a crucial role in addressing food insecurity while combating food waste. This year, we rescued 4,713 tons of food, valued at \$90,289. The food was repurposed and distributed to families and individuals in need, ensuring that surplus resources were effectively used to nourish our community rather than being discarded. The partnerships and collaborations we've maintained with local businesses and organisations have been instrumental in the success of this initiative, allowing us to have a significant impact.

The Family Assistance programme reached out to 41 families this year, providing essential support through furniture donations and other household necessities. Although we faced challenges with inventory shortages, we adapted by focusing on providing other crucial items like linen, blankets, and cutlery. This initiative continues to be an important resource for families transitioning into new housing or experiencing hardship, ensuring they have the basic needs to create a comfortable home environment.

Our Healthy Homes programme has also made strides in improving the living conditions of families across the Waikato. We conducted 109 home visits and gained 100 new customers through Good Power, our affordable energy service. Our team provided education on energy efficiency and distributed essential items such as draught-stoppers, temperature cards, and other materials to help families maintain healthy and comfortable living spaces. This programme has positively impacted both renters and homeowners, contributing to safer and warmer homes.

The annual Toy Run was another highlight of the year, with a total of 5,789 toys distributed to children in need. Each child received a variety of toys, bringing joy and relief to families during the holiday season. This initiative, in collaboration with local agencies and community partners, ensured that children who might otherwise go without had the opportunity to experience the excitement and happiness of receiving new toys.

Our Winter Warmers initiative provided vital support to those facing the harsh winter months. This year, we distributed 143 blankets and 210 warm clothing items, thanks to the generosity of local Catholic schools and community members. The support extended not only to individuals living on the streets but also to those attending our community lunches and those within our Family Assistance programme. By ensuring that people had the necessary clothing and blankets, we helped keep our community members safe, warm, and comfortable.

Reflecting on our work this year, we find inspiration in the biblical call to serve others. As Matthew 25:35-36 reminds us, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes, and you clothed me."

Our mission is to embody this spirit of service and compassion, ensuring that every person who comes to us in need finds the help, care, and support they deserve. The achievements of this year demonstrate our commitment to these values, and we remain steadfast in our dedication to being a source of hope and light in our community. We look forward to continuing this work in the year ahead, guided by our faith and the enduring call to serve.

Jim Nolan

– Hamilton Area President



Hastings Area Council

The SVdP Hasting Area Council and its four affiliated Conferences, St Peter Chanel, Our Lady of Lourdes, Sacred Heart and St Pius, have worked tirelessly over the past year to meet the ever-increasing requests for support from individuals and families of our region who, for a variety of reasons, found themselves in a situation where they were unable to provide for the basic necessities of life.

Cyclone Gabrielle, which hit the Hawkes Bay region back in early 2023, is still impacting on the lives of many families in the region both financially and psychologically. This, along with the economic downturn, housing crisis and employment security, has led to an increased demand for SVdP services across the region.

The Council's two Shops in Hastings and Flaxmere have continued to be supported by our local communities, providing a valuable income that, along with generous donors and funding grants, have enabled the Council to meet all requests for support to date.

Over the year requests for assistance from our Council and affiliated Conferences have continued to rise at a notable rate. Our outreach programmes across the region are committed to providing support through donations of food boxes, firewood deliveries, bereavement packages, furniture, kitchenware, bedding and clothing as well as financial support to meet electrical, medical expenses, transport and fuel costs.

At a Conference level, members have continued to support the elderly, sick and lonely members of our communities. They have been involved in taking Communion to the sick and elderly, and Rest Home residents on a weekly basis, as well as the regular home visits or phone calls offering friendship and support. Numerous bereavement packages and Easter and Christmas cheer parcels have also been distributed at the appropriate times. Others have been involved in the collection and redistribution of donated furniture and household items.

This year, in conjunction with the Napier Area Council, we have employed Joylene Whibley as the Vinnies Youth Co-ordinator for Hawkes Bay. At present she is working in the two Catholic secondary schools in Hawkes Bay (St. John's College, Hastings and Sacred Heart College,

Napier), as well as three primary schools (St. Mary's primary school Hastings, St. Joseph's primary school, Hastings, and Reignier primary school Taradale). The other two Catholic schools in our jurisdiction have SVdP volunteers leading the Vinnies youth groups.

We have continued our support of the three Catholic primary and two secondary schools in our jurisdiction by providing a \$1,000 scholarship to a Year 9 student undertaking studies at St. John's College, Hastings, and making donations towards transport costs. We also assist individual students the school principals nominate for financial support regarding ongoing schooling costs.

The Council's contact and commitment to supporting the growing number of RSE (Recognised Seasonal Employer) workers in the region has continued to strengthen. This year, on their arrival in the district the workers were given access to free clothing and other essentials, and received similar support on their return home – a cost of approximately \$4,000 that was absorbed by the Council.

Our goal is, as always, to build our membership so we can commit more to supporting the elderly, the lonely and the vulnerable throughout our local community.

Jim Leogreen

– Hastings Area President



Hutt Valley and Wairarapa Area Council

Our mahi

This year has been an exceptional year in terms of helping people in need and visiting the lonely and those in need of a hand-up.

There have been highs and lows this year with implementing new processes and streamlining the way we do things as the Hutt Valley and Wairarapa Area Council.

Our Area Council is made up of ten Conferences and three retail Shops. The Petone and Carterton Shops trade six days a week, and the Wainuiomata Shop opens on a Saturday morning. A special thanks to Shop Managers Jino Jose and Greg Vesper, and also to Trish Kerr and her team of volunteers in Wainuiomata. We have seen a big increase in sales and also in the number of families being assisted with goods. The number of donations has increased substantially this year.

Waiwhetu and Eastbourne Conference

The Te Kakano O Te Aroha Church/marae forms part of the Wellington Presbyterian Māori pastorate and is situated in Moera, Lower Hutt.

The Eastbourne/Waiwhetu Conference have partnered with the marae to help support the homeless by making weekly donations of food, clothing and toiletries for them. Additionally, the Conference also makes weekly deliveries of food for distribution by marae staff to those who require assistance.

Conference President Phil Foster and his members will continue with this valuable partnership throughout 2025.



I am very thankful to all the Vincentians, volunteers and paid staff who continue to promote the vision of St Vincent de Paul. In their mission as Vincentians, they provide a hand-up to families in need, as well as visitations to the sick and people wanting some company.

I would also like to thank the Management Committee – Pat Sheehan, Mike Driscoll, Charles Bell, Trudy Stead and myself. We had our final meeting on 2 December as I want the Conference Presidents to have more involvement and work closer as a whole group rather than in silos.

A special thanks to everyone who has contributed to the cause and have reached out and found people in true need of assistance.

I would like to end with the following whakatauki:

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

It acknowledges that everybody has something to offer, a piece of the puzzle, and by working together we can all flourish.

Mauriora

Bernice Smith

– Hutt Valley and Wairarapa Area President

Kapi Mana Area Council

Tēna koutou katoa. I will briefly highlight our activities for the year ending June 2024.

We have a small Conference team who I thank for all their work. Our team consists of five members, Stephanie-Harris Stevens (Treasurer), Mary-Elizabeth Bayliss (Secretary), Pam Scrimgeour, Marie Gadsden, Gerry Stevens and Peter Mohan (President) and two Associate Members, Spencer Carr and Moira Blake.

Also, I wish to acknowledge the work of Father Alan Roberts in his role as Saint Vincent de Paul Spiritual Advisor for the whole country. I wish to thank our Kapi-Mana Area Council President, Gerry Stevens for his on-going support and guidance.

Many of our members are involved with parish life and also with other organisations. Every Friday, bread is collected from Countdown

Waikanae and is distributed to the Otaki Catholic Workers Community, the Soup Kitchen lunch and the St Vincent de Paul Levin team. The Catholic Workers Community are also supported by us each week with tinned food for their community.

Our members' involvement in other organisations enables us to get a better grassroots understanding of the needs of the Otaki community. One of our members is the Parish Secretary. Another member continues to volunteer at the Vincentian Centre Levin Shop once a week. One of our members helps out at the Cobwebs Op shop. Another member goes at least once a month to the Levin Refugee Centre, sorting and packing household items on behalf of St Vincent de Paul. One of our members is a WINZ Benefit Advocate in our community, ensuring clients get all their entitlements. Another member is a War Veterans Advocate, ensuring that war veterans and their widows are aware of their entitlements and making any necessary arrangements with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

Throughout the year, individual Conference members have done some great work supporting and visiting the lonely, providing companionship, going to rest homes and visiting the sick. We provided funding for prescription medication through the local pharmacy for people in need and also provided funding for the Otaki Medical Centre to assist those in need. We also provided money for food pantry packs for the refugees who have come to Levin.

Every month we have a St Vincent de Paul Collection which tends to be targeted towards a particular activity that has supported our work. From time to time, food vouchers are given out to meet emergency situations.

As in previous years, Christmas cards continue to be purchased and sold. Some Christmas card packs were distributed to prisoners through the prison chaplains and to Catholic Social Services for distribution.

Thanks to the generosity of some of our members and parishioners, we can donate money to St Peter Chanel School for school fees. We also contribute a monthly amount to a St Vincent de Paul Conference in Sri Lanka, which the Kapi Mana Area Council oversees on our behalf.

An Area Festival day was held on 23 February

2024 which was a very successful event for all St Vincent de Paul members in the Kapi Mana Area. It was a great opportunity to meet with our colleagues, share reflections and also learn more about the work done by all five Conferences.

As noted in previous years, we continue to have some challenges in being able to identify those in need. These challenges relate to having to take into account factors such as the privacy laws, the size of our team, the age of our Conference members and the lack of new members.

The strength of our Conference is that we have a very generous and supportive church community who are willing to support and assist the needy in our local community and the refugees in Levin. This is reflected in the generous donations to our monthly collections at Mass and the monies they deposit into our bank account.

Lastly, I should mention the passing in January 2024 of National President, Terry Jordan. Rest in peace, Terry. The passing of Terry meant that Gerry Stevens as National Vice-President was asked by the National Council to assume the role of National President.

Ngā mihi.

Peter Mohan

– Conference President

Our Lady of Kāpiti Conference



Parishioners at Our Lady of Kapiti donate goods faithfully every week.

This has been a very busy year for us. We continue to be blessed with enormous support from our parish and from local businesses. For example, Rotary and

Lions have combined to form 'Fish for Good'. They have cajoled businesses into paying for fish, at generous discounts from Starfish Kāpiti, to give to us and other local charities. Last month they gave away 225kg of fish. Most months we receive about 40kg – that's a lot of protein and a big reduction in pressure on our budget. Anzil / Party Perfect, a local restaurant and caterer, donate to us 50 restaurant-quality frozen meals each week. These meals are perfect for stressed families and older people living on their own.

We have three branches operating at the moment. The conventional senior citizens age group forms a Conference of 24 active members with 12 associates. Our parish school has a Young Vinnies group of 20. In between we have a group of five adult workers and two college students. It was so good to be approached by the parish youth worker and asked to form this group. We make every endeavour to maintain strong spiritual and friendship ties among our members.

None of you reading this needs to be told that demand is growing for Vinnies' help, nor that it is not just about food. We are also active in visiting lonely people and supporting students in their education. We are honoured to be Vincentians.

Peter Ryan

– Conference President

Manawatu – Whanganui Area Council

The Manawatu -Whanganui Area Council comprises St Patrick's Conference Palmerston North, St Brigid's Feilding, St Joseph's Dannevirke, St Mary's Foxton and Holy Family Whanganui.

St Brigid's Conference in Feilding has 12 active members, ten associate members, a number of casual volunteers and an enthusiastic group of Young Vinnies at St Joseph's school under the guidance of the Director of Religious Studies.

At a community level we were able to help by providing:

- 200 emergency food parcels to local families
- 200 winter food parcels to residents of the Manawatu Trust pensioner flats
- 45 fruit trays to the residents of St Dominic's Trust.

We were fortunate to have 20 young men from Hato Paora and some not-so-young men from Lions to assist with the deliveries to the Trusts, along with several parishioners and Young Vinnies.

St Brigid's Vinnies has good working relationships with St Joseph's School and St Matthew's in Marton and families are assisted through local schools. We are well supported by

- St Brigid's parishioners with prayer, donations and practical assistance
- Rotary, Lions, the St Dominic's Trust and Feilding Woolworths
- the Mad Butcher and Meet the Need who donate generous grants or food items.

In a new Initiative, over 35 pre-cooked meals have been provided to families with children undergoing heart operations in hospitals and hospital follow- ups.

After a break during the Covid years, Anointing Masses are back and are a key reminder in our motivation of seeing Christ in all who suffer.

St Joseph's Conference in Dannevirke has seven active Conference members who give of themselves as they visit the sick and elderly. The Conference supports local and national appeals.

There are 27 Shop volunteers who deliver a high standard of friendly, efficient and good-humoured service. They commit to achieve an income that allows us to provide financial, clothing, furniture and medical support to the community and St Joseph's School.

At a community level we distributed 126 Christmas parcels, plus gifts for 162 children. Our Shop held two free clothing days which were well supported. As the sole provider of food parcels in the town, our team is kept busy.

Sadly we farewelled our president Lois Ogier due to her failing eyesight. We pray for Lois and thank her for her humour, friendship and excellent management skills.

Holy Family Conference in Whanganui has eleven active members and a new member was welcomed in September. Conference members visit sick and elderly parishioners. There is a team of approximately 35 Shop volunteers assisting in our Vinnies store.

WE ASSIST THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN A NUMBER OF WAYS:

- The Shop provides food parcels and clothes to all who ask for help.
- We provide tinned fish to the Whanganui food bank on a six-weekly basis.
- We have a money pool at Gonville Health Pharmacy to assist prescription payments for customers who cannot afford their prescription.
- We provide financial assistance by way of Pak'nSave vouchers to families in need (when approached). We are in contact with a community nurse in the parish who lets us know of any specific families who may need financial support for a specific need.
- We provide Warehouse vouchers to needy families at Christmas time to ease their load. These families are selected by our three Catholic primary schools.

Parishioners generously supported the three raffles we organised during the year to boost our funds. We try to provide financial support annually to Head Office for relief requests.

We keep the Whanganui Catholic parishioners informed about our activities by putting small blurbs in the newsletters. Fr Craig Butler actively supports us in our work.

St Mary's Conference in Foxton has an active membership of four members and three associates.

It has been a busy year with a big demand for food parcels from community and welfare organisations. We have been well supported by local churches and our New World supermarket which held a 'grocery grab' and the yearly 'family to family' \$20 food bag. These initiatives kept up the stock at the food bank.

Visitation is not high as many requesting food pick up their parcels themselves. Some members

support our school at weekday Masses and special events. Our food store has been moved to the SVdP complex.

St Patrick's Conference in Palmerston North has 16 active members and 14 associate members.

Our community outreach includes:

- personal deliveries of food parcels which accounts for the majority of our service
- follow-up visits to those we have contacted and helped
- welfare deliveries of hard and soft furnishings from our Shop
- food parcels for incoming refugee families as advised by Red Cross
- holding Liturgy of the Word and Communion services in rest homes
- help and companionship for those confined to home.

We are well supported by the Catholic community with regular and generous donations of food, money and goods. We have a committed team of volunteers at the St Vinnie's Shop and we have Young Vinnies groups at our Catholic Schools. These were begun by our Young Vinnies' worker. St Peter's College held pupil-driven collections of food, clothing and toys during the year which were a welcome supplement for our stocks.

The presider at our festival Mass for the feast of St Vincent de Paul was Fr Vui Hoang who accepted our invitation to be our Spiritual Director. We commissioned a new member for our Conference at this Mass.

Rose Semmens

– *Manawatu - Whanganui Area President*



Hato Paora students and other volunteers preparing to deliver food at St Brigid's in Feilding.

Marlborough Area Council

Our Picton and Blenheim Conferences have been working very hard over the last 12 months, serving the people at the top of the South Island.

The renovations to the Picton Shop, incorporating the previous holiday home, has proved to be very beneficial to the work of the Society. The Shop has increased its hours and we have new volunteers interested in becoming Conference members. Picton is humming!

The Shop has increased its hours to accommodate cruise ships and to cater for RSE workers. We are also liaising with schools to supply free uniforms and we work with local agencies to support the most vulnerable in our community.

The Blenheim Conference was recently thrilled to induct two new members. Although the Conference is small, we are a hardworking, dedicated team, well supported by our wonderful Shop volunteers. As is the case throughout the country, there are plenty of people in need in our community, people who we visit regularly. Their issues are becoming more and more complex. Prayers, patience and empathy are not enough.

At our Volunteers Christmas High Tea we farewelled our long-time volunteer Pauline Brunel (now 92) and Conference member and shop roster magician, Neroli Kay. Following an Anointing Mass, our Blenheim Conference also put on a Christmas luncheon for 60 people.

Our challenges are many and varied but we pray for guidance in the months ahead.

Lorraine Walker

– Marlborough Area President



100 Christmas hampers for Picton recipients.

Mid-South Canterbury Area Council

The Mid-South Canterbury Area Council comprises Ashburton, Timaru, Temuka and Waimate Conferences.

Ashburton Conference

It has been a busy year for Holy Name Conference, Ashburton.

Conference membership stands at 30, with five new members having joined during the year. There are also groups of associate members in Methven and Rakaia who we don't ask to attend meetings because of the distance involved. However, they do Society work in those areas, supported by the Conference. Another 30 people are involved with various aspects of operating the Conference shop.

From July 1 to December 31, about 360 people have been helped with food deliveries and other items including clothing and furniture. We have paid for septic tank repairs and vehicle repairs and have referred several people to "Reducing Power Bills and Energy Poverty" education. We have paid for accommodation for three families as well as medical bills. We have noticed a recent increase in the number of Pacifica families we are asked to help, many with large families.

Our share of the annual Lions Club Toot For Tucker appeal was 200 banana boxes of food, with the Salvation Army getting a similar number and Presbyterian Support getting about 50 boxes.

Several of our members have undertaken training allowing them to undertake "test and tag" on electrical goods, giving us another income source for the shop. From January there will be a six-month trial of opening the shop on Saturdays.

There have been several highlights recently, including hosting the annual Anointing Mass for the parish and buying a large new furniture van for the shop. The biggest highlight, however, was the opening in December of the St Peter's Centre.

For more than two years the Conference has been planning, fundraising and working towards completion of this project which has seen the former St Peter's Anglican Church purchased and converted into a short-term refuge for domestic harm victims. This refuge will be operated by the

Police and He Waka Tapu, the agency that holds the Police family harm contract in the area. The Conference will be responsible for housekeeping only after each person leaves and will have no actual contact with people staying there.

This aspect of the project came about because over the past few years He Waka Tapu has involved us increasingly with supplying welfare care to their clients, and we became aware of the level of the problem in the area. The late Mick Hanham saw the church advertised and before we knew where we were we owned it.

The remainder of the building, about 80 percent, is used for storage of furniture items too large for the shop. We have no resource consent for selling items from the Centre but items can be viewed from the shop using cameras to zoom in on a particular item. We also have storage at last for the Toot For Tucker food, and in another room we have pre-packed welfare packages for emergencies. The section was large enough for us to build a large garage for all our vehicles and we also have a small office where we can talk to country clients.

We also work closely with Food Rescue Aoraki which will be operating its Ashburton work from the St Peter's Centre two days a week. Twice a week Food Rescue supplies food for eight food banks in the Ashburton area.

Michael Hanrahan

– Ashburton Conference President



St Peter's Centre has multiple purposes, including being used as a short-term refuge for victims of domestic abuse.

Waimate Conference

Outside major cities, St Vincent de Paul Conference operates as the welfare arm of the parish. St. Patrick's Waimate, with a Mass count of 110, is in a district where 85 percent of working income is land-based. New settlers of a Catholic heritage dominate in the hardworking systems of farm milk production.

The industry needs a supply of workers – resilient at 12 hours a day, reliable, with a family priority. The milk platform, in turn, is reliant on new settlers – Sri Lanka, India, Vietnam, Chile, and particularly the Philippines. A large number of these people are settled in North Otago and Waimate. The factor common to all – not one family of this generation will own land or a home.

As new settlers work their way through the anxieties and expenses of New Zealand's immigration system, St Patrick's Conference endeavours to support their families.

THE CONFERENCE:

- initiated establishment of the Pinoy Support Project
- drew down monies from the Tindall Foundation grant
- advocated on employment and immigration visa and residency applications
- assisted families with transport cost for their children to access Catholic education
- encouraged cultural events and the participation of new settlers in community affairs, doing what we can to assist families whose obligation to family at home becomes a heavy burden when unexpected sickness or burials occur. The expectation is that new settlers will steadily be numbered in the ranks of St. Patrick's Conference. And that is our succession policy.

The Conference continued to sustain the Vincentian spirit in St Patrick's parish. We continue to meet needs. There are many parishioners who

are unable to venture far from home. Six members in pairs visit at least 20 people once a month.

In welfare, “meeting need” is primarily in food and parcels, mostly on referral from Timaru SVdP or St Patrick’s School. Also as required, assistance is provided to the school for pantry and pupil fees. Bus fees from Waimate town for attendance at St Kevin’s attendance is \$700 a term. The Conference assists with a portion of that expense.

Generous support for Ukraine resulted in \$1500 being remitted for relief to a population suffering brutal Russian invasion.

John Foley is Conference delegate to St Vincent de Paul’s Shop in Timaru. The Management Committee is responsible for a high-quality retailing business, selling high quality clothes, kitchenware and furniture. The Shop is sustained by up to 30 volunteers. Three Waimate members travel regularly to the Shop and assist with garment-grading. The above activities – welfare, visiting, and Shop work – are all part of serving the community. To participate, even on a casual basis, can be very rewarding. Please join us and help in this work.

The Conference is grateful for the support received in our work and particularly to our Secretary and Treasurer Maylen Medida, a wife, mother, and member of the Filipino community.

John Foley

– Conference President

Napier Area Council

Wairoa was again hit by a major flood this year, this time on the other side of the Wairoa River. It was brought to our attention that 119 homes were damaged and that, again, urgent help was needed in the area. We had already established a working relationship with a project team when Cyclone Gabrielle hit, with the initial guidance of Father Kingi who is resident in the area.

We again supplied funds so that residents with the most need could be prioritised. Twenty-three families were provided with replacement household goods/furniture, food supplies, water and financial assistance. The work crew removed damaged insulation from under homes and flood-damaged household goods. The people of Wairoa were again very grateful for the assistance given.

At the beginning of the year our Napier Area Council employed a Young Vinnies Coordinator who visits schools in our Napier/Hastings area. After a visit from Joylene there is much interest in establishing Young Vinnies in the five schools she visits. We look forward to a great relationship with Joylene in building up the Young Vinnies groups which we hope and pray will build a line of succession for the Society in the future.

In conjunction with local school principals, we assist families in need by meeting the costs of uniforms, shoes, and school camps throughout the year. The need this year has been greater than ever been. Some of the schools we support now provide a breakfast club for children who come to school hungry. The breakfast club at Sacred Heart College is overseen by Joylene, our Young Vinnies Co-ordinator. No pupil is turned away from the breakfast club and it is treated as a social occasion where the students mix and mingle, so that no-one attending can be identified as needing help more than anyone else.

In addition to this, some principals have asked if we could provide help for school families struggling with other expenses which we call “Student Welfare”. The funds are donated direct to the school and it is left to the discretion of the school principal to decide how funds are allocated.



The Young Adult Youth Conference Retreat in Wellington held earlier in year. We had two youth workers from our St Pat’s Conference attend.

We have assisted those in the community needing help buying firewood or paying their power bills. This winter we delivered 18 cord of wood to those identified as needing help. We have also identified and visited families struggling to put food on the table. In these circumstances we have supplied them with supermarket gift vouchers to help ease their financial circumstances for a while. Some of these families have been cyclone victims.

We assist the Whatever It Takes (WITS) organisation who are working mainly with homeless people, many of whom have mental health and alcohol issues. We are also able to support those in transitional housing with clothes, blankets, sleeping bags and other goods from our Vinnies Napier shop. We also provide food on a regular basis.

We continue our work with PARS (Prisoner Aid and Rehabilitation Society), providing support for released prisoners. We have provided new beds and other items for those who come to our attention seeking help.

I would like to thank our Conference members who offer help to those who are vulnerable in our community. The income from our Vinnies shop also plays an important role in assisting so a big “thank you” to all our wonderful volunteers and our Manager.

Christine Tong
– Napier Area President

Nelson Tasman Area Council

He taonga rongonui te aroha ki te tangata – goodwill towards others is a precious treasure.

This year our Area was pleased to be able to support the Twinning Appeals for Sri Lanka, Tonga and Samoa. Locally, we were able to support the Nelson Community Foodbank and Oracy Aotearoa Project which our members are involved in.

Overall, our statistics tell a story – increased activity, revenue, expenditure, number of

volunteers and membership. These gains are timely as the demand for Vincentian support and understanding is also increasing.

This is a growth period for the Nelson Tasman area. We have two new Presidents in our region, Mike McGrath for Richmond and John Collins for Motueka. It is exciting to see the new ideas and initiatives brought to the Society from new members. A highlight this year came from new associate member and historian, Hilary Mitchell, who delivered an informative presentation at our Area Conference in June on local iwi settlement, horticulture and argillite trading.

We are aware of the post-Covid economic and cost of living challenges for our communities. We have also noticed the demographic changes in our country, with many New Zealanders born overseas (30 percent) and the cohort of ageing baby boomers. Our aim is to stay relevant and engaged in our local communities, with all types of people. Our Conferences remain focussed on the mahi at the local level – serving and advocating for those who suffer from material, emotional or spiritual poverty.

This year our Motueka Conference provided a commercial oven and rangehood to the Community House kitchen to help them provide regular hot shared meals to the community. Nelson Conference supported local migrant teenagers with football boots through the local football club. In Takaka we gave Mohua Social Service a fridge-freezer, as they offer emergency food supplies. Richmond Conference invited the RSE workers to their Shop to receive boxes of free clothes at the end of the season and Stoke continued to run assistance sessions each Wednesday, while offering a dedicated text message line for those in need.

As we have grown and become better known in this Area we have had to adapt. Our three Shops are too big and busy now to be reliant solely on voluntary management. We have appointed, 3 part-time Shop Managers. In the first year, the Nelson Shop Manager has achieved a 23 percent increase in revenue and improved training, support of volunteers and our attention to Health and Safety. All three Shops are being improved and modernised.

As more people come to us for assistance during our regular open-to-all sessions, our general home visit numbers have dropped. However, our Conference members continue (in pairs) to visit

parishioners, the elderly and rest homes. As part of our community food bank, and through local Kai Rescue services, we arrange each week to have food dropped off to clients at home, if they lack transport.

Our focus for the year ahead is to improve our processes, and strengthen our skill set with the recruitment of new members.

Elizabeth Owens

– Nelson Tasman Area President

South Auckland Area Council

A recap of 2024 activities begins with a selection of events happening in our Conferences.

At Howick we are very fortunate to have a wonderful reciprocal relationship with the parish primary school, Our Lady Star of the Sea. An annual amount is donated to the school to be used as they see fit to help families struggling financially. During Lent the students donate many cans of tinned food in response to 'We Can Bring A Can'. The Director of Religious Studies accompanies some students to come and see the food bank in action. They pack away the food they've brought in, help pack food parcels and we speak to them about how Vincentians are called to help those in need and how their donations help us to do that. They see the 'whole journey' of items that get brought to school as part of their Lenten appeals.

For the last three years our Conference has been lucky enough to be one of the recipients of the Howick Rotary Club's 'Blankets 4 Kids 4 Winter' appeal. Hundreds of blankets are donated by our generous locals. The blankets we receive are then shared with other Conferences, our Otahuhu Centre and Catholic Social Services.

At the Papakura Conference, a yearly initiative has been to reach out to the seniors living in Papakura under Haumarū Housing (Auckland provider of affordable rental housing communities for older people). This has taken the form of a morning tea hosted in the Ryder Room at St Mary's and a supermarket voucher. The vouchers are hand-delivered to some 70+ flats in Papakura/Takanini, which provides an opportunity to directly connect with the residents. Haumarū Housing recognised this help



For 30 years Christmas hampers of food items and gifts have been prepared by a great team at Papakura. In recent years the collation of food and gifts has been led by the two ladies (posing reluctantly), assisted by many other helpers.

with a 'thank you' in their newsletter: 'Tenants of our Takanini and Papakura villages were delighted to each receive a \$50.00 gift voucher for Pak'nSave or New World from the Papakura St Vincent de Paul Society.'

The Conference at Pakuranga, which is very generously supported by the parishioners of St Mark's, has continued throughout the year with a weekly Friday food bank to assist the needs of their community. What has been noticeable is the increased demand for food assistance. Delivery services have continued ensuring vulnerable individuals, such as seniors and those with mobility challenges, could receive food directly at their doorsteps.

The parish and the Society have focused on partnerships with the local business community, especially in the lead-up to Christmas. A poster was put up in eight local cafes and a pharmacy inviting locals to donate a Christmas gift. These gifts were distributed with Christmas hampers.

St Vincent de Paul South Auckland centre in Otahuhu is dynamic and busy, responding to exceptionally high community need. The cost of living, spiralling rents and high petrol costs hits the most marginalised people the hardest. Our centre is helping more working families that cannot afford food. The escalating level of debt people carry and KiwiSaver hardship applications show how tough it is for many people.

The cornerstone of our work is providing financial mentoring services. We are very grateful to have a government contract for Building Financial Capability renewed and expanded to include Vinnies East Auckland (Vinnies Tāmaki Makaurau). Our service hosted a Communities of Practice meeting of 33 South Auckland financial mentors, and is working closely with people in our networks and other Catholic social service organisations to alleviate poverty in South Auckland. We participated in an initiative to host senior banking executives to help them understand the issues the families we work with face.

The centre has a stable and committed staff and volunteers. We have been fortunate to increase our volunteer base to provide more comprehensive reception and booking services. Throughout the year we welcome school students who need to do service hours, or work groups that cook single -serve meals for food bank clients living in boarding houses.

The Op Shops (Papakura, Manurewa and Mangere Bridge) have committed managers who create inviting, well-presented shop environments that bring in donations and customers to ensure our sustainability. We are sourcing more furniture to go into the Op Shops as this helps with increasing revenue, which goes into the food bank and furniture donations to families in need.

From Jul 2023 - Jun 2024 we have provided:

- 4,600** food parcels
- 500** pieces of furniture
- 770** financial mentoring sessions
- 28** hardship scholarships for fee support to secondary school students.

CLIENT STORY:

A single mum in her 40s was referred for financial mentoring help as her debt was escalating. She was working two jobs seven days per week (52 hours per week) and was exhausted while sole-caring for her child.

The financial mentor assessed her situation and identified the tax rate on her secondary income meant it was less viable and it pushed her over the limit for Working with Families support. The financial mentor negotiated the debt down with creditors, and after some months she felt comfortable leaving her weekend job. Noting her water bill was consistently very high, Watercare was asked to review and education on conserving water was provided.

The monthly water bill was reduced by 60 percent. SVdP paid off her remaining debt through an interest-free loan and is receiving regular repayments. Her quality of life has improved markedly.



2 degrees team cooking for the food bank.



De La Salle scholarship students.

This year we have offered new services to further help our communities:

- our financial mentors provide outreach in Ōtara, Māngere and Manurewa suburbs
- a kai class to teach basic cooking skills for young people in transitional housing
- a MoneyMates programme to support financial literacy in a peer-group setting.

The generosity of Conferences, individual donations and national appeals keep the Otahuhu centre alive and able to help as many people as we do. We are so grateful for the ongoing support.

Our committed Board of Rosanne, John, Libby and Marjorie met monthly to support the work of the centre, and we wish to acknowledge their tireless support. It was with immense sadness that Frank Heffernan, a stalwart of St Vincent de Paul, was honoured and laid to rest after a short illness.

Rosanne Wills

– South Auckland Area President

Southland Area Council

The message of the Gospel, the leadership of our kaumatua and the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, along with the response of the community whom we serve, helps to give us hope in an uncertain world.

Recently we lost one of our kaumatua, Ted Maloney, at the age of 100. With the support

of his family, he was able to remain in his home until his death and he maintained his Vincentian practice until the end. He was one of a group who helped build six flats for older people in the 1980s and 90s which we still have today. He has left a great legacy in many areas of the city and he deserves an obituary in his own right.

Our two Shops and the generous donations of parishioners, along with our close association with the Southland Foodbank, help us to feed the poor in the city and in areas of the country where poverty is rife. Sr Maria has excellent contacts with the rural community and we regularly take a car-load of food and clothing out there. It makes a real difference.

Gore members regularly receive donations from a generous congregation and they are very active, making sure that children's needs are met and that migrant workers are helped to get established in and around the town.

The main focus for the Area Council this year has been planning a new Shop in South Invercargill. After years of research we have come to the conclusion that there is no other available premise that we could rent or buy that could equally fulfill our needs. Hence our decision to demolish the current shop, which is well beyond its useful life, and rebuild on the same site.

It all takes time and it is something that we want to do right so that we can meet the needs of the marginalised in the south of the city. Luckily the right people have come on board at this time to help in the process.

We have hard-working and gifted Shop managers in Joy, Pam and Christine and they in turn attract more generous volunteers in the shops. Much of our work is done there, selling items at very low prices and giving much away free. Even more important is the emotional and spiritual support that the volunteers offer for those whom they meet.

We are blessed and humbled by the work of our volunteers in the Shops, looking after the flats, preparing the accounts, and visiting those in need. We are looking for younger volunteers who can carry on this important mission and we see signs that this is happening. We are filled with hope.

Bernadette Ford

– Southland Area President

Taranaki Area Council

A total of 37 members, 60 associate members and 35 volunteers/shop workers make up our three Conferences in Hawera, Stratford and New Plymouth.

We also have four active Young Vinnies groups – two in New Plymouth and one each in Stratford and Hawera. These children help their Conferences with community meals in New Plymouth, morning and afternoon teas in Stratford and in the Hawera Shop. They also help out with fund-raisers and entertainment.

All Conferences meet monthly. Meetings open with prayers and a spiritual reflection. The Area Council meets every three months.

Visiting is a core work of the Society. It is carried out by a small but very special group of dedicated people within SVdP Taranaki. They regularly visit the elderly, sick and the impoverished, spend time with them and offer a listening ear.

Often a SVdP visitor is the only person they have seen in a long while. Help with transport to and from appointments, supermarket and pharmacy pick-ups are also provided.



Visitations recorded:

Rest Home	969
Private Home	420
Hospital	60
Phone calls	165
Transport	130
Bereavement baskets/Mass cards	38

Social Services:

Food parcels provided	3,628
Meals provided by members	252
Meals on wheels delivered	426
Food vouchers	39
Community meals/morning/afternoon teas	2,354

Other services we provide:

Furniture delivered to homes	412
Linen/bed packs	275
Crockery	185
Firewood/gardening/lawn mowing/house cleaning	32
Fuel vouchers, power accounts and other services	29
Prisoner support	23
Medical/health costs	16
Budgeting/counselling	38



New Plymouth and Stratford Conferences both have a special Christmas celebration meal with Santa and presents, which is always appreciated and enjoyed by those who attend. Surplus presents are taken to local rest homes and families known to struggle financially around that time of the year.

New Plymouth Whare kai (cooking classes for young mums) finished in November last year due to a lack of volunteers. Hawera Conference pays for elderly folk to attend monthly lunches provided by a local Lions club. Christmas parcels are delivered to families we have had contact with through the year.

National Appeals/ Local donations

The Society in Taranaki always contributes to national appeals, people in need in Sri Lanka through our twinning programme, and our Pacific neighbours. We also donate to many local organisations in Taranaki. We also give tertiary grants to deserving children from our schools.

We are again grateful to the Toi Foundation for grants of \$20,000 towards a new van in New Plymouth, \$15,000 towards food for community meals and \$3000 to help with administration costs.

Shops

The two Shops continue to do well financially. They are well supported by our local communities both with what we receive and then what we sell. The shops are bright, fresh and goods and clothing are well presented with realistic pricings for sale. We are fortunate to have many volunteers so that both shops are fully staffed.

It has been another very good year from our Taranaki Vincentian team.

Annette Orchard

– Taranaki Area President

Thermal Lands Area Council

St Michael's Conference Rotorua

Our food bank is getting more food parcels requests every fortnight. We are fortunate that we have support from Elmer and Gina of Kai Whakaora (Food Shed) who provide items for our food cupboard and also from Lucia who gives food from the Depot Street Hub. If extra food is needed,

a request for a top-up goes out to the parish. John Paul College has a monthly food bank drive, organised by a teacher Gillian Cook, asking students to bring items for the food bank. Profits from our two shops generate funds for social services, including food parcels. We have four volunteers who help with sorting out food parcels.

We also supply four kindergartens with some basics – milk, margarine, cheese, and jam. Every Monday, our staff member, Francie, goes to Pak'nSave to buy food. Sandwiches are supplied to four primary schools and one intermediate school. In April, we purchased a new Nissan van to use for deliveries and raise our profile.

We have two Shops in Rotorua – one at the Te Ngae shopping centre and the other at Westend shopping centre. Fifty volunteers help in our two Shops. In September we installed CCTV cameras and monitors to safeguard our volunteers.

St Michael's Primary School has established a Young Vinnies group with 12 students, organised by a grandmother, Rosemary Lyons.

June Murphy – Rest in Peace



We acknowledge the passing this year of June Murphy, a loyal member of St Michael's Conference for 30 years. She was 90 years old. May she rest in peace.

John Paul College Young Vinnies Rotorua

This is my 15th year co-ordinating the JPC Young Vinnies Group. We have accomplished a lot for the local and global community over the years.

In 2023, 25 students signed up to participate in Young Vinnies. In 2024 there were over 60 Young Vinnies who met weekly to work on our chosen project – sewing quilts for a children's hospital and attached shelter in Kiev, Ukraine.

The Young Vinnies are proud to be part of an international voluntary organisation, which was founded in 1833 where its members perform

personal services for the poor, wherever there is a need. Started by Frédéric Ozanam and Emmanuel Bailly and named after St Vincent de Paul, our own SVdP Young Vinnies reach out to assist the poor in a war-torn northern hemisphere location, as members of the global Vincentian Family.

Despite being a smaller group in 2023, we achieved a lot! Our main focus was on providing warm clothing, baby bags and blankets to support "Operation Cover-Up" – a Taupo-based national organisation which fills a 40ft shipping container with hand-knitted and crafted toys, blankets and clothing items for people of all ages. These items are shipped to places in Europe where they are needed most. Distribution of these items has been especially appreciated in places of conflict such as Ukraine.

We made polar fleece baby sleep bags which are easy for the families to make patterns from in the future, plus knitted and crocheted blankets, knitted baby clothes and hats. Warwick Fabrics in Auckland have kindly donated to us discontinued samples of lines of some of the most beautiful fabrics in the world. We have been able to create incredible quilts from these.

All clothing and bedding items made by the Young Vinnies at John Paul College have professionally-made fabric labels sewn on to them, with our school's name, Catholic and La Sallian identity and a short message.

The same labels go on our Christmas cards each year. By now the people in Kiev who receive the cards and warm items from our students and staff will know that we have always remembered and prayed for them. We aim to continue to strengthen our connection with them annually, in faith and love.

The SVdP food bank donations initiative is run each year in Terms 2 and 3. We have been able to send boxes of food and donated fruit to the local SVdP food bank at regular intervals during the winter months.

Each year in Term 3 and 4 a small group of Vinnies meet to create recycled Christmas cards for people in shelters in Ukraine, and more recently for the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kiev. We made and posted 220 cards to shelters via UNICEF in 2022 and 175

last Christmas to the children's hospital, which all arrived in Kiev in time for Christmas. This project hopefully provides some brightness, New Zealand Kiwiana and Christmas blessings amidst the last, the lost and the least, in the hospital or a section of a shelter they call theirs.

– Gillian Cook

St Peter Chanel Conference Whakatane

Looking back at the year, two things stand out – the incredible effort of our volunteers and the increasing pressure on those struggling in our community.

It is hard to assess the overall contribution of our volunteers. Hours put in at our Shop total 160-180 each week for 50 weeks of the year which totals approximately 8,000 hours per year. This does not include the extra work done away from our premises collecting, cleaning, repairing or otherwise preparing goods for sale or donation to those in need. Add in the general admin, financial, secretarial services provided at home and we can only be grateful for the amazingly generous contribution of all our volunteers, without whom we could not survive. While we do recruit some new volunteers, we, like so many other organisations, rely on an ageing and diminishing pool of volunteers.

The cost of living continues to increase and families are facing greater struggles daily. This week we provided food assistance to a family that had been through budget management by another agency. The family had \$34.00 each week left for food and/or unexpected expenses. I highlight this instance because it was specifically documented by the other agency. This situation is becoming increasingly normal. It seems that the poorer people in our community will come under pressure for some time to come.

Two years ago, I reflected on what should be the prime purpose of our Conference activities. I mused on roles such as recycling centre, low-cost shop outlet, welfare society. Now I have absolutely no doubt. First and foremost, we are a welfare society providing assistance to poor people in our community. Primarily this is via our food bank service but also through cash assistance or gifting of goods. Our Shop sales are the fundraising mechanism to finance these activities. To this end, we must always look to maximise selling prices.

Last year we did an in-depth analysis of who we were providing assistance to. Over a three-month period, 222 families received assistance, most received assistance once only, around 20 percent received two food parcels, a small number received more. I have little doubt we are having many more people repeatedly requesting our assistance. In part this is due to the cost-of-living issues mentioned above, but also an increasing number of people who have mental health, intellectual or physical disabilities.

Our Lady Help of Christians Opotiki Conference

We continue to support the community in a number of ways. Weekly food assistance goes out with the Plunket Kaiawhina – food given by the parish family and boosted by other essentials like eggs, butter, milk powder, which we buy using money donated and raised ourselves.

We have a steady number of isolated, lonely or bereaved folk who enjoy a home visit and the Rest Home, Thornton Park, has a weekly sing-along to which we contribute. We support parish activities and our introduced cuppa tea after Mass on the fourth Sunday is now well established and enjoyed rain or shine in our carport or porch. A successful plant sale was held, along with preserves and baking, and a total of \$500 raised to ensure we can look after those in need. Our membership remains very small, and is getting older but God smiles on us and sends us many blessings.

St Patrick's Conference Taupo

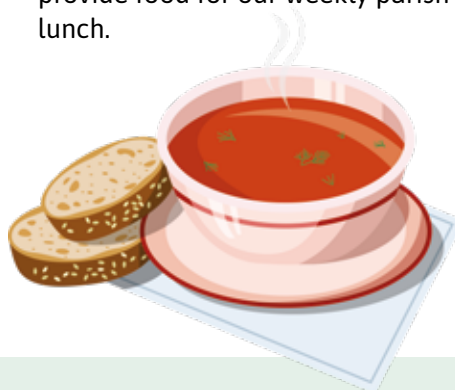
We meet monthly on the second Thursday of each month and spend time in prayer to deepen our SVdP spirituality. We then review requests for assistance and discuss how we can best respond to these needs.

We have a very small membership of eight women. Sadly, we lost a very loyal member – Colleen Searle – who died unexpectedly in July. Also, our Monsignor Trevor Murray has left Taupo to take up the position as Hospital Chaplain at Waikato Hospital. He was a wonderful supporter of our group and we will miss him dearly. He wishes to remain an associate member.

Unfortunately, we have had little success in recruiting new members. I feel the reason for this is that our parish has several other dedicated groups involved in various parish work e.g. Healing Hands who take Communion to the sick. Some of our members also belong to this group.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS WE DO IN OUR PARISH COMMUNITY:

- provide lunch for those attending a monthly Anointing Mass
- organise an annual soup drive during the winter months. This winter we prepared over 100 ice cream containers of frozen soup for those in need
- support the local food bank
- do once-a-month cafe duty after Sunday Mass
- source and provide furniture, homeware and firewood
- organise annual fundraising
- prepare home-cooked meals for those in need
- provide food for our weekly parish lunch.



I have had a great team around me who have been very supportive of me as President, and I thank them very much. I would like to make special mention of our wonderful Secretary, Joyce Ranger, whose dedicated services we could not do without.

Stella Maris Conference Gisborne

Vinnies have had another busy year this year.

We were very saddened to lose one of our valuable members, Jenny Russell. Jenny worked hard keeping our den in tip-top running order. It was great to be able to support her and her family during this difficult time for them.

Apart from the normal calls for food parcels, the focus seems to have been more on

providing beds and bedding for the large number of people who have been put out of motels and managed to find new accommodation. The girls in the den have done a wonderful job of keeping the supply of linen up with a large turnover each week, and the demand is still ongoing.

In June, Wairoa was struck by its second big flood since Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle and the Wairoa District Council Flood Coordinators asked if we could provide them with more whiteware. With \$62,334.70 of flood relief money left over from Cyclone Gabrielle, we were able to supply them with 78 items of new whiteware (stoves, fridge-freezers and washing machines). We were also able to give a small cash donation to 18 individuals from Wairoa who needed immediate help.

We have also been able to help and befriend a couple of migrant families who have found it very tough trying to set up a new life for themselves and their families in New Zealand.

With standard rents being charged by landlords in Gisborne at around \$600 per week (for a tiny two-bedroom house if you can find one), it is extremely difficult for them to get established, as well as paying off a vehicle so they can go to work and repaying employers the cost of their airfares as well. We have been able to support them with food and other costs until they can get themselves settled.

Visiting elderly/lonely parishioners, and being able to take them home-made soup, meals and biscuits made by Campion College Master Chef classes, has also been a real pleasure for us. On Friday freezers are filled with soup and loaves and distributed with food parcels.

With the generous support of a wide range of people from our parish, the local community and our schools, we are able to keep going. We are really grateful for all the support you give us – cash, food, linen, furniture and donations of all manner of goods. The thought of being able to provide children with warm pyjamas and nice clean bedding certainly makes our task worthwhile.

Stephen McLeod

– Thermal Lands Area President



Wellington Area Council

2024 has been a year of challenges and change. The demand for help has never been so great and it has been a major undertaking to meet the need.

Andrew Bridgeman resigned as president of the Wellington Area Council after many years of service. Thank you Andrew. Andrew has been replaced by Paul Cameron.

The challenges have been many. A number of food banks in the Wellington area have closed which has put a great deal more pressure on the Conferences. Wellington Central Conference successfully run a food bank from Ozanam House distributing over 200 parcels. St Francis of Assisi Oharui provided 70 Christmas hampers and 150 food parcels.

All Conferences have been working with refugee organisations, providing furniture and food parcels. Working together with other charities has been very successful, enabling us to connect with the needy and provide them with furniture, clothing and food.

All five Wellington Shops are undergoing refurbishing, starting with the Khandallah store.



Ozanam House Christmas Toy Shop

Ozanam House staff created a Christmas shop of toys where people could book and come and pick presents for under 16s. This initiative was very popular.

Paul Cameron

– Wellington Area President

West Coast Area Council

Greymouth Conference

Greymouth Conference has a great committee and an excellent group of volunteers who work tirelessly to provide assistance in our community. As always, we are very grateful to our wonderful group.

For many in our community it has seen a struggle to make ends meet this year, even more difficult than last year. We are thankful that we have been able to provide help in many different areas.

We have continued to be involved with many schools in our area. Working with the school secretaries, we have identified families who are struggling and assisted them with food, clothing, wood and coal where needed. Each month our Shop Manager makes contact with the schools regarding their needs.

This year has also seen us helping out in the medical area. We contacted two Medical Centres to offer help to those who were unable to meet the cost of their medical bills. This has been a great success with one of the GPs. However the other one is yet to get on board. We feel sure that they too must have clients who are unable to pay their bills.

This year we have been helped through the Wrightson "Cash for Communities" programme. This great initiative gave a charity nominated by a farmer a monetary payment dependent on the quantity of fertiliser that farmer purchased. This was a source of unexpected income for us and we thank all involved, especially our committee member who got this up and running.

Special thanks to the teams at the Conferences in other areas who have kept us supplied with quality clothing and kitchenware when our stocks have been running low. This, along with sponsored advertising provided by our local newspaper The Greymouth Star, have enabled us to keep our Shop well stocked and looking inviting to those who pass.

It is also wonderful that friends of our family members and members of the community are very generous with their giving. This support comes in the form of items for the Shop or often cash donations. There are so many kind, caring people out there to whom we are so indebted.

We have had several outings for our volunteers. The lunches out are really well supported and most of our group attend. We find this is also a good time to talk over anything they may have come across while doing their shift.



Greymouth Conference members.

Hokitika Conference

I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 President's report for the St Mary's Conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society to our members, supporters and St Mary's Parish. I am so lucky to have a very dedicated, experienced committee with their knowledge, passion and energy to make things happen in our small town of Hokitika. Our keen volunteers not only serve and sell in the Shop but they also sort the donated material items. It is an opportunity for great friendship, fellowship and networking.

We have been back in our 80 Revell St shop since 10th May 2023. Father Jo, who did the opening blessing of the shop, has gone back to the Philippines, and National President Terry Jordon, who was at the opening and fully supported our grant application for the rebuild at 80 Revell St, has passed away. We are so indebted and grateful for his support.

We have continued to support the needy in our district to the value of \$19,493 (an increase from \$15,210 last year) with food and fuel vouchers, wood and coal. We have also supported St Mary's school camp and school-leavers, and assisted people with rental accommodation, a local food bank drive, as well as clothing and furniture.

We provided the Greymouth branch of the St Vincent de Paul Society with boxes of clothing. Lorraine and Chris have taken an estimated 200-300 bags of surplus clothing to Lincoln-Christchurch for the Kids for Cancer fundraising effort.

Our Shop trading figures for the first eight months were fantastic, as we had summer and winter clothing sales to reduce our stock. Then the New Zealand economy hit a real low, with high prices and increasing financial pressure being felt by people in our community. Our district rates went up to over \$7,000 for the year; insurance, power and phone costs all went up sharply too.

On the positive side, we are very fortunate that we have lots of generous local people who donate their clothing and other material items to us. This year we have been able to reduce our building loan substantially.

We run quarterly workshops for staff and volunteers which always yield great ideas and suggestions. We have many dedicated staff who deserve our gratitude. Lorraine Davidson, our Shop Manager, puts so much time and energy into organising the Shop. She is a great example of what St Vinnies stands for. Big thanks also to our handyman Ian Davidson and treasurer Chris Wright. Stephanie Knighton, our secretary, has been the eyes and ears of our Hokitika branch with contacts at both the St Mary's parish and school. Her knowledge and experience is certainly going to be missed when she retires this year after 10 years in the role.

Finally a big "thank you " to our committee members and keen volunteers who make it all happen. There are three kinds of people in this world: people who make it happen, people who watch what happens, and people who wonder what happened.

Julie Hands

– West Coast Area President

**"The fruit of Silence is Prayer,
The fruit of Prayer is Faith,
The fruit of Faith is Love,
The fruit of Love is Service,
The fruit of Service is Peace."**

– Mother Teresa

Western Bay of Plenty Area Council

Western Bay of Plenty has leapt ahead this year. We are blessed with an incredible team throughout the Society, which makes us successful. Our Vincentians are passionate about serving the people in need in our area.

If you asked me "What makes your area work?" I would have to say our Vincentians.

We strive day-to-day to help others in need and we also work hard to help each other and live by Frédéric Ozaman writings of "being Brothers and Sisters to each other". Caring about each other is essential to being a member of our Society.

Our Conferences continue to excel in providing people in need the support to get through difficult times. That support may be helping them get to doctors' visits or taking a food parcel to a family with two working parents, barely coping with high rents and increased mortgages. We also provide a cooked sit-down lunch for the elderly in our parish. Sitting and taking time to talk to people is the simplest and most rewarding part of what we do. Building and savouring relationships is the best outcome for all involved.

We have provided over 8,900 food parcels, an increase of over 35% in the last year.

We have had a huge increase in re-homing families from emergency housing to new Kianga Ora homes in Papamoa and Bethlehem, providing 769 families with furniture and whitewear.

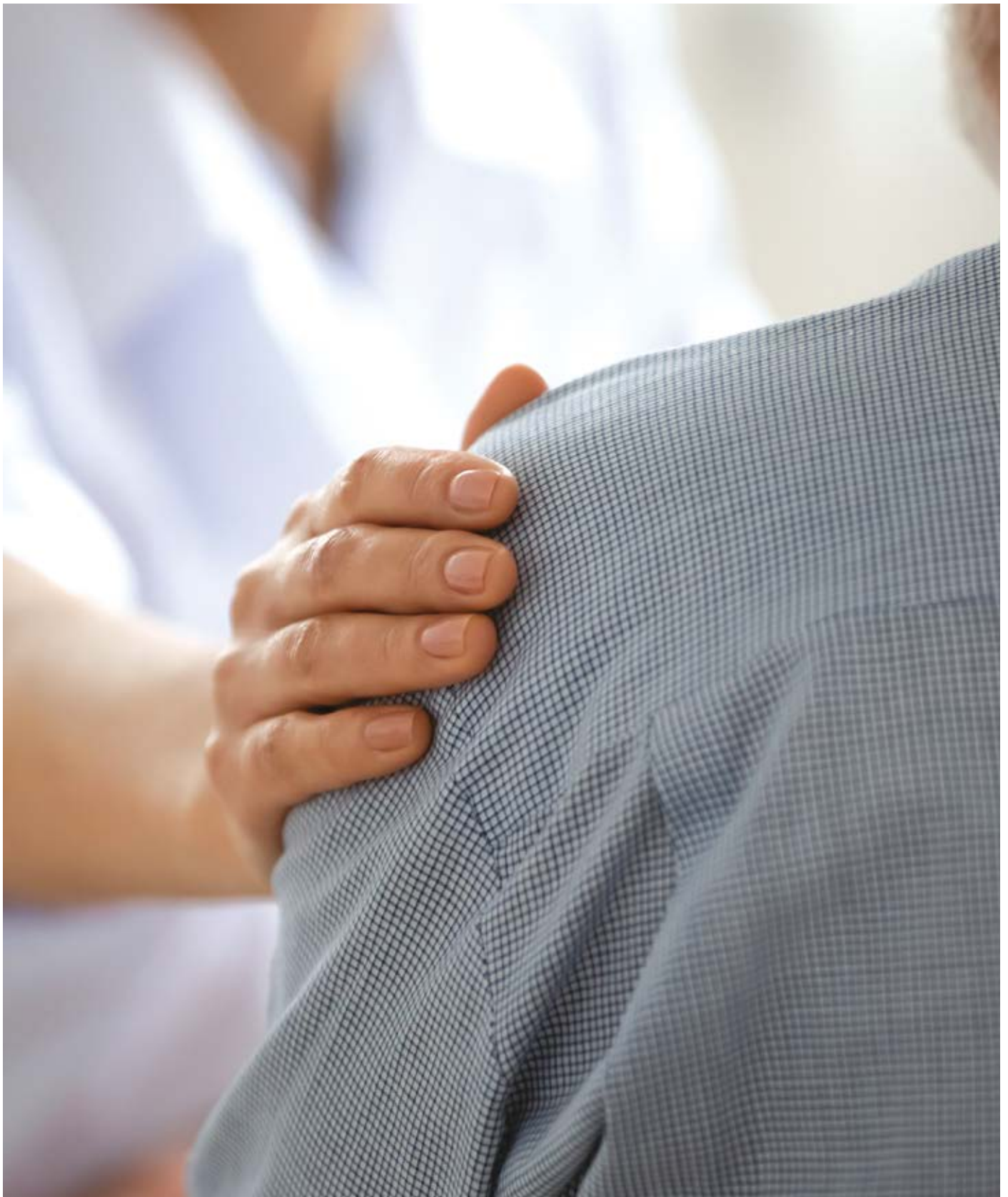
Our Support Centre sees an average of 40 people a day. Around 10-15 clients a day are referred to Conferences.

Our Shops provide the resources and revenue for us but most of all they provide good quality affordable everyday items to provide dignity to those providing for their families.

Next year is going to be just as tough. Many people are still losing their jobs due to the economic downturn which is still evident in our area, but we are prepared and have a team to help people.

Des Mulhern

– Western Bay of Plenty Area President



“The knowledge of social wellbeing can be learned not from books but in climbing the stairs to the poor person’s garret, sitting by their fireside, feeling the same cold that pierces them, sharing the secrets of their lonely hearts and troubled minds.”

– Frédéric Ozanam

Summary Financial Statements

Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Revenue and Expense For the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
OPERATING REVENUE		
Revenue from sale of goods	9,224,553	8,716,270
Revenue from fundraising activities		
General donations, appeals, and other fundraising	1,530,119	1,999,885
Government grants	752,116	1,705,794
Other grants and sponsorship	1,213,659	1,644,427
Other bequest revenue	3,276,384	194,023
Total revenue from fundraising activities	6,772,278	5,544,129
Other revenue		
Rental revenue	329,494	185,205
Historical GST	528,654	-
Other revenue	52,941	114,377
Total other revenue	911,089	299,582
Total operating revenue	16,907,920	14,559,981
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Wages, salaries and other employee costs	5,927,057	5,311,723
Shops operating expenses	1,556,037	1,440,294
Rent and rates	1,863,715	1,771,029
Depreciation of property, plant and equipment	1,037,606	963,126
Amortisation of intangibles	1,095	1,095
Other overhead and administration expenses	874,368	687,827
Repair and Maintenance Expenses	509,836	716,506
(Gain)/Loss on sale of property, plant, and equipment	9,072	(13,806)
Total operating expenses	11,769,714	10,891,600
OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	5,138,206	3,668,381
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Interest Revenue	414,633	208,921
Gain/ (loss) on Hay Estate Investment Fund	91,313	111,549
Other unrealised gain/(loss) on investments	14,788	28,954
Total surplus/(deficit) from investing activities	520,734	349,425
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) BEFORE PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO THOSE IN NEED	5,658,940	4,017,805
PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO THOSE IN NEED		
Service delivery costs	776,699	652,969
Grants and donations paid (welfare support)	2,668,591	2,481,661
Total costs related to provision of support to those in need	3,445,290	3,134,630
SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	2,213,650	883,175
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE REVENUE AND EXPENSES		
Revaluation of land and buildings	882,333	(2,755,058)
Total other comprehensive revenue and expense	882,333	(2,755,058)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE REVENUE AND EXPENSE	3,095,983	(1,871,883)

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash and cash equivalents	9,071,125	6,044,644
Current term deposit and call accounts	3,822,261	4,017,388
Debtors and other receivables	311,897	197,442
GST Receivable	264,074	35,880
Inventories	6,328	14,045
Total current assets	13,475,685	10,309,399
Non-current		
Property, plant and equipment	32,676,905	31,870,316
Non-current term deposits	50,000	683,673
Investment Hobson Wealth Fund - Hay Estate	1,984,926	1,933,613
Other investments	269,234	254,446
Intangible assets	1,985	3,081
Total non-current assets	34,983,050	34,745,129
TOTAL ASSETS	48,458,735	45,054,528
LIABILITIES		
Current		
Creditors and other payables	548,459	348,307
Employee entitlements	549,129	517,818
Income in Advance	185,833	100,000
Total current liabilities	1,283,421	966,125
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,283,421	966,125
NET ASSETS	47,175,314	44,088,403
EQUITY		
Accumulated funds	11,793,780	9,975,847
Property, plant, and equipment reserves	32,676,905	31,870,316
Hay Estate bequest reserve	1,984,926	1,933,613
Other restricted funds reserve	719,703	308,627
TOTAL EQUITY	47,175,314	44,088,403

ON THE GOLDEN MILE

What lantern are you hiding
to write such a thing?

I LOVE THE WORLD
IT'S BEAUTIFUL

the last thing you expect
from a rough sleeper

on the Golden Mile
the week before Christmas

but there it is, scrawled in CAPS,
truth on tattered cardboard,

dazed shoppers streaming by, wonder's champion
wrapped in a dirty blanket.

– Michael Fitzsimons







Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand

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