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## BRICKS

to build the foundation

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**TOPIC: Escalation Policies & Procedures**

Date: April 2024

**Category: Administration**

This procedure was created by the Conference Resources Committee (CRC) to protect all Vincentians and the Council, to demonstrate fairness, and to formally reinforce our commitment to following up on issues in a timely, objective, thoughtful manner. Thus, we ask that this process be followed consistently. The CRC and Vincentian Support Services team is there to assist in any way possible.

This section below is for Volunteers within a Conferences and District. Procedures for concerns involving Volunteers within the Diocesan facility, its programs or activities, please see page 2 of this document.

## 1. Conference Level:

- Conference President is informed of the issue and offers solution to resolve.
- If the proposed solution is not implemented or issue is not resolved, the President is to document the complaint and send copies to the District and Vincentian Support Services.
- However, if the President is unable or unwilling to take action within a reasonable time, member should escalate to District President.

## 2. Escalation to District President

- District President to study the complaint and offer solution and implement a resolution.
- Depending on the severity of the issue, time frames for resolution may vary but should be resolved within a reasonable and timely manner.
- When resolved, document the resolution and copy Vincentian Support and Conference Resources Committee.
- If no resolution, District President is to escalate to Conference Resources Committee for investigation and recommendations for solution.



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### 3. Escalation to Conference Resources Committee

- After reviewing documentation and investigation, CRC will recommend Action for Resolution.
- CRC Committee and President to monitor that the resolution is implemented.
- If, no resolution, CRC Committee is to escalate to the Council President.

### 4. Escalation to Council President

- The committee believes that most issues that rise to CRC will be effectively resolved at that level. If, however, issues cannot be resolved at CRC level or the recommendation of CRC is of major significance to the Council, e.g., closing a Conference, the issue would be brought to the Council President for further action.
- If not resolved action to remove may be taken.
- Notification of action will be reported to the Board.
- Board discusses and decides on an action to resolve the issue.
- All documentation of process and actions/resolution taken shall be archived.

## **Concerns and Issues within the Diocesan facility, activities or programs**

- Member should bring the concern or issue to the appropriate supervisor, department head or Volunteer Services.
- Said person shall provide direction and resolution and supervise its implementation.
- If no resolution, this will be escalated to the next level of that operational area.
- The next level Supervisor will provide a solution and manage its implementation.
- If still no resolution, the issue will be brought to the Executive Director.
- If still no resolution, the matter will be brought to the Executive Committee for Board action.
- Documentation of this concern/issue shall be archived once resolved.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

**Topic: Maintaining A Positive Relationship With Your Pastor**      Date: April 2024

**Category: Administration**

Since 1949, the Bishops of Phoenix and Tucson have actively supported the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its works. Our Bishops endorse the existence and operation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at both the Diocesan and parish levels.

Many local pastors also have a positive relationship with St. Vincent de Paul and see the need for helping the poor in their individual parishes. Many pastors allow Conferences to raise funds through activities such as quarterly Fifth Sunday collections, poor boxes, food and clothing drives, and/or other events and activities that enable us to secure goods and/or financial support.

Conferences, however, should be aware that while the Bishops of Arizona support the Society, there is nothing that requires a pastor to have a Conference that operates within his parish. The existence and operation of a SVdP Conference is always at the pleasure of the pastor and so Vincentian Conference presidents must constantly strive to have a positive relationship and to establish and maintain frequent and effective communications with the clergy in their parish. *All members must remember that the Conference president alone speaks for the Conference.*

To maintain a healthy relationship between the pastor and a parish-based St. Vincent de Paul Conference, we suggest that Conference presidents do the following:

Create and maintain open, warm and positive communication lines with your pastor.

Provide regular communications with your pastor. Give him a copy of your Quarterly and Annual Conference Reports as well as a short summary of your current needs, activities and successes. If Pastor is newly assigned to the Parish provide a copy of the Rule and the Manual.

Invite your pastor and priests to attend Conference meetings. Make sure they know that this is an open invitation.

Ask your pastor if he or one of the other parish priests or deacons would be able to serve as the Conference's Spiritual Advisor. If they are not available to do so, ask if they would like to be a drop-in Advisor and include the pastor in the selection of a Lay Spiritual Advisor.

Schedule an in-person meeting with him at least every six months and stress the spiritual nature of the Society. Remind him about the spiritual aspect of our home visits. Explain that Vincentians pray before, during and after each visit.

Finally, stress that the Society is a charitable organization founded in 1833 that currently operates in more than 150 countries in the world. Our goal is not just to relieve material need but to promote growth in holiness among our members and those whom we serve.

Please note an expanded pamphlet on this topic is available by using this link: [Working with your Pastor Pamphlet](#)

You are encouraged to download and read that document.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

**TOPIC: New Member Admission Process**  
**Category: Administration**

Date: April 2024

In order to determine if God is calling them to become a Vincentian, a prospective new member, with the approval of the Conference, will be welcomed as a guest at a Conference meeting.

**Important Note:** All volunteers and potential Active or Full Members of the Society must complete the Catholic Diocese of Phoenix Safe Environment Training before working or volunteering with a parish conference.

A prospective new member, due to their involvement in the Society's work, may be invited or may convey an interest in becoming a Vincentian as an **Associate Member**:

"Associate Members are those affiliated with the Society by formal action of the Conference or Council with which the member will be joined. Associate Members include those who sincerely and publicly accept the Society's Rule but may or may not belong to the Catholic Church and may or may not attend Conference meetings or engage in the works of the Society on a regular basis. Associate Members are kept informed of the developments and activities of their immediate groupings, as well as the general progress of the Society, particularly in the local area or diocese. They are invited to attend the general meetings and special observances of the Society and to participate in its charitable activities." (Rule: Part III-Statute 3). For Active Membership, according to conference bylaws an active Member must also complete Ozaman Formation Experience (OFE)

It should be noted that for the Conferences associated with the SVdP Diocesan Council of Phoenix, non-Catholic Associate Members, who have completed the basic Ozanam Formation Experience (OFE) classes and who meet all other requirements for active membership may, by a Conference vote, be allowed to make motions, participate fully in Conference discussions, and vote in all Conference matters, but may not under any circumstances hold office. **(See Article 7 of the Conference Bylaws.)**

A prospective new member who may be invited or interested in becoming a Vincentian as an **Active Member** will be given a period of candidacy and discernment during which they will observe the Conference and participate in its activities:

"Active Members are those who participate regularly in the prayer life, meetings and charitable activities through personal contact with the poor of the Vincentian Conference. An Active Member accepts the Rule and Statutes of the Society, belongs to the Catholic Church and is received as a Vincentian brother or sister. Only Active Members hold office in the organization." **(Rule: Part III-Statute 3)**. According to Conference bylaws an Active Member must also complete Ozaman. Formation. Experience (OFE) classes.

When a prospective new member requests to be welcomed into the Conference as a candidate for Active Membership, he/she begins an Admission Process.

1. The following is the Admission Process. The candidacy and discernment period will last approximately 6 to 8 weeks or more and will consist of the following:

**THE CONFERENCE ASSURES COMPLIANCE WITH THE DIOCESAN "SAFE ENVIRONMENT" REQUIREMENTS BY HAVING THE CANDIDATE COMPLETE THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOUNDATION COURSE/RENEWALS AND A BACKGROUND CHECK. CANDIDATES MUST BE SET COMPLIANT BEFORE THEY ARE CONSIDERED FOR MEMBERSHIP.**



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**THE CANDIDATE WILL COMPLETE THE FORMATION POLICY REQUIREMENTS AS DEFINED IN THE APPROVED FORMATION POLICY OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PHOENIX DIOCESAN COUNCIL. (CONFERENCE BYLAWS, ARTICLE 7: ALL FULL-ENHANCED (ACTIVE) MEMBERS MUST COMPLETE THE BASIC OZANAM FORMATION EXPERIENCE (OFE) CLASSES AS DEFINED BY THE PHOENIX DIOCESAN FORMATION POLICY.)**

In addition to the OFE requirements, the Conference members may read, reflect and share their lived experiences on each section of the SVdP Member Handbook with the candidate. If this process is added, each member must have a copy of the handbook.

A Conference member will be assigned as a sponsor for the candidate. The sponsor will meet with the candidate to respond to questions and to describe the activities of the Conference.

The candidate will be given the opportunity to make at least two Home Visits with different Conference members. The exception would be in a Conference with Special Works where the candidate will be given opportunities for person-to-person service with those who are poor.

The Spiritual Advisor, Conference President, and/or designated Membership Coordinator will lead the candidate in prayerful discernment emphasizing the Society's primary purpose of growth in holiness and guiding them in Vincentian Spirituality.

At the conclusion of the candidacy period, the candidate will have a meeting with the President to discuss the candidate's experiences in the Conference. The candidate discusses the activities and services that they feel called to do as part of their ministry.

At this point, if the candidate has discerned that they have a calling to be a Vincentian they may request to become an **Active Member**.

2. After the President, Spiritual Advisor and the candidate discern readiness for Active membership, the Conference takes formal action, normally by a resolution, to accept the candidate into Active membership. **Rule: Part III-Statute 3)**
3. The candidate is then Commissioned as a new member of the Society and given the SVdP pin. This commissioning should take place at an appropriate time and occasion, normally at a Conference or Council liturgy or at a Festival Meeting. **(Rule: Part III-Statute 4)**  
The Commissioning Ceremony for a New Member is found in the Vincentian Celebrations book or online.

The new member will continue walking the Vincentian Pathway through reflection and sharing on the Serving in Hope Modules and the other resources offered by the National Office. The Council will offer opportunities for Vincentian Formation by sponsoring the Ozanam Formation Experience (OFE), retreats and various activities.

*Adapted from Document 1671 of the National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.*





# BRICKS to build the foundation

## Topic: Preparing for an Upcoming Conference or District Election

Category: Administration

Date: April 2024

The major and initial responsibility rests with the current office holder. Getting someone to succeed the President starts many months or even years before. The first step is to try to identify one or more willing candidates.

Ideally, a potential President is groomed and trained, moving up from a Vice-Presidency or other officer position. It is certainly the model situation to have the President-to-Be work closely with the President during his or her last year in office. While that is not always possible, we can do psychological grooming of future Conference Presidents.

- **Pray about it.** We are a faith-based organization. In every opening prayer, we ask the Holy Spirit to be with us in this ministry. Starting in April of an election year, include the following prayer in your closing prayers:

*“Dear Lord, we ask you to bless this Conference with continued growth and good leadership. We pray now that the Holy Spirit will inspire one of our members to consider and then accept the responsibilities of leadership in this Conference. We thank you, Lord, for the many graces and blessings you have bestowed on this Conference in the past, and ask for your continued guidance over our humble efforts to serve you by serving your poor. Amen.”*

- **Define the job.** Outline the responsibilities of the President (the Rule indicates they are remarkably few). The emphasis is on *simple*. Do not make the job appear overwhelming. The Approved Commentary on Article 7 Part II of the Rule says:

***“The President should not assume too large a measure of the Conference’s workload. As a leader, the task is to animate the team, be able to delegate responsibility, and to inspire accountability from colleagues.”***

- Therefore, teach that the secret to success in this job is delegation and real sharing of responsibility. This lesson is best taught *by example*, not words.

If you have someone to groom, get them involved *alongside* you. Remember: you are being a mentor. You should be there to answer questions, to make sense out of the sometimes confusing things we experience in our work.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

Once these things are underway, there are other things that can be done to make finding a new President easier. Start planning early (April is about right) for an election in August for a term that begins October 1. (*These things hold true for planned full-term elections but some may not apply for resignations or other short terms.*)

- Starting with the first Conference meeting in the election year, mention that a new President must be elected during the year. Get people to start thinking about this early. Say the prayer (above) at each meeting, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to the person who would make the best servant-leader for the Conference.
- Article 7 in Part II of the Rule states that the Vice President(s) “**organize the election of the next President.**” The first thing is for the first Vice President to appoint a Nominating Committee. Three members is sufficient. Good appointees might be past Conference Presidents, and hard-working rank-and-file members.
- If your desire is that the current Vice President, pantry manager or some outstanding home visit team member be the new President, **don't appoint** to the Committee anyone you think (or hope) will be the new President.
- The Nominating Committee has the responsibility to contact all members to encourage them to consider serving, who were not present at that meeting, to encourage them to consider serving, and to secure their nominations. A good candidate for President might simply be overlooked and never asked. Why? Because we presumed she was too busy with her kids, or he travels too much on business, or they are too young to have the experience to lead.

It is especially important for the current President to pledge her/his support to the candidates, for nothing is scarier than to take on a new responsibility without the help and Counsel of your predecessor for several months.

- Make it clear that, without an elected President, the Conference ceases to exist as a part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. This warning, although a last step and extreme measure, will sometimes motivate members to step forward. After all, most members feel the call of the Holy Spirit to this ministry, and are fulfilled and inspired by the work. We never know how important this work is, personally, to individual Vincentians. Other members would sorely miss the social camaraderie that occurs at the weekly meetings and home visits.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

**Topic: Reporting to Your Parish**

**Date: April 2024**

**Category: Administration**

*Being a good steward* is more than accepting the responsibility for the resources we are given to use; it also entails being accountable to those who provided the resources. *Being a good steward* is part of the reason that the Conferences are expected to provide quarterly and annual reports to the District and Diocesan Councils. And *being a good steward* is the reason behind asking each Conference to make formal reports to their fellow parishioners on a regular basis – either quarterly or annually.

Accountability is one reason; another has to do with public relations. The more that your pastor and your fellow parishioners know about what you are doing, the more they will support your efforts. This holds true for verbal support, monetary support and new members. There are various approaches to how this reporting can be accomplished.

- A very good practice is for the Conference President or designee to have a short meeting with your pastor and give him a copy of your quarterly and/or annual report. It is at this time that you should explain our ministry, the numbers on the report and what they represent, and clarify any misunderstandings or questions the pastor may have.
- Another possibility is to put together a bulletin announcement to thank the parishioners for their support and list by category the type of services the Conference provides.
- Some Conferences print a special flyer which expands on the idea of the bulletin announcement. This flyer is then included with the parish bulletin.
- Another approach would be to arrange to do a pulpit announcement.

Timing can be important also. Many Conferences provide this information in conjunction with fund raisers or membership drives. The week before a scheduled collection or the week of the scheduled collection is ideal times to make this information available to members of the parish. ☀



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## Safe Environment Training & Sex Offender Policies

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) established the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This document was revised and expanded in 2005, 2011, and again in 2018. This Charter calls for the establishment of Safe Environment programs in every Catholic diocese operating within the United States.

Motivated by this Charter and its application, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Diocesan Council of Phoenix adopted a resolution in March of 2008 preventing sex offenders from joining, volunteering, and/or being associated in any way with the Diocesan Council and its associated Conferences and District Councils. This policy also authorizes the immediate removal from participation in the Society and its works for any member, volunteer or person connected to the Society when said person is convicted of a sexual offense and/or if and when the Society is notified of any such past convictions. (See our Diocesan Sex Offender policy at the end of this BRICK.)

The SVdP Diocesan Council of Phoenix monitors the Safe Environment Training status of its potential and existing members, volunteers and associated persons through participation in the Catholic Diocese of Phoenix's Safe Environment Office and its related programs including training, interviews, renewals and routine background checks that are conducted by a Third Party Vendor through the use of Social Security numbers.

Safe Environment protocols for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Diocesan Council of Phoenix are as follows:

1. No person shall be considered a member, volunteer or associated vendor until the conference president has verified with the Parish Safe Environment (SET) coordinator or the designated SVdP Diocesan Council SET representative that the person is current and compliant with Safe Environment requirements including participation in the background check process and has received the status of "approved".
2. All ministers and volunteers must complete a Renewal class each year. Renewals must be completed between July 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> unless an earlier completion date is required by a particular Parish pastor. The renewal time frame is not based on the completion date of an individual's Foundation course and background check but upon the SET fiscal year. Earlier completion dates may be set by the parish and its administration. Such dates must be honored.
3. Compliance with Safe Environment Requirements cannot be certified by obtaining a Class Certificate of Completion only. A Parish Safe Environment Coordinator or the designated SET Coordinator for the SVdP Diocesan Council must verify the current SET status of each member or volunteer.
4. Conference presidents are required to provide their parish SET coordinator with a current membership list no later than August 1<sup>st</sup> of each year and to submit names of any and all potential members, volunteers and/or associated vendors before that person or company conducts any business or participates in any of the Society's works and ministries.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## **TOPIC: Voting at the General Membership Meeting**

**Category: Administration**

**Date: April 2024**

Vincentians often question why business items to be voted on at a particular General Membership cannot be discussed, debated or amended at that meeting. The SVdP Diocesan Council of Phoenix is somewhat unique in its structure and decision making process. While our Diocesan Council has an Executive Board comprised of the Diocesan Council Officers and a Diocesan Council Board comprised of the elected District Presidents and an equal number of Board members appointed by the Diocesan Council President, the power to make decisions in most cases lies with the Diocesan Council itself.

Our Executive Board and the Diocesan Council Board function primarily to ensure that all matters submitted for consideration by the Diocesan Council General Membership are congruent with our Society's Rule, consistent with our Diocesan Council Bylaws and/or policies, are in proper form, have sufficient information for members to consider when voting on the matter, warrant a vote of the membership and are distributed to the Conferences according to our mandated timelines.

The voting members of the Phoenix Diocesan Council are the elected Presidents of the affiliated Conferences who are in good standing with the Society and the Diocesan Council. Each Conference President literally carries the vote of their Conference to the General Membership Meetings and is required to vote as the Conference voted on each and every item before the Diocesan Council.

Because each Conference president is carrying a ballot with the actual vote and will of his/her Conference and because that Conference vote cannot be changed or modified in any way, items ready to be voted on by the General Membership are not debatable. The time for debate on most issues before the Diocesan Council is in our Diocesan Committee structure, at the District and Conference levels, during open forums or at General Membership Meetings designated specifically for discussion of agenda item that will be voted on at a later date.

When time allows, items for consideration are distributed to the individual Conferences and Conference presidents are asked to solicit input from their members so that the matter can be discussed at a specific General Membership Meeting designated for the purpose of discussion and debate. During such discussions, amendments can be proposed and procedural motions are in order. Once the resolution is in final form, it is distributed again for consideration by each Conference and a Conference vote is taken.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

Our structure and voting procedures may at first glance appear stilted and complicated, but their purpose is clear. The Diocesan voting procedures are designed to give the decision making power to individual Vincentians and their respective Conference. Unless they are also serving as a Conference President or proxy for a Conference President, no Diocesan Council Officer, District President or appointed Council Board Member has a vote at the General Membership Meetings. Even the Conference Presidents, only have the power to vote as their Conference voted. Vincentians at the Conference level have a direct voice in the decision making process of our Diocesan Council and our procedures are designed not to restrict input and discussion but rather to allow each Vincentian voice to be heard loud and clear.

(See attached *Voting at General Membership Meeting Policy* approved by the General Membership on September 20, 2003.)

**E) Once approved for vote by the General Membership, the following process must be followed to ensure that the Conference Members are aware of the issue and are able to vote for or against the issue.**

The motion must be presented in writing at least 45 days in advance of the General Membership Meeting.

The motion is to be sent out approximately 35 days in advance to all Conference members for discussion and vote at a Conference meeting prior to the General Membership Meeting. The President of the Conference then casts a single vote at the General Membership Meeting on behalf of his/her Conference.

Votes may only take place at a General Membership Meeting if a quorum exists. The quorum consists of a majority of the aggregated Conferences served by the Diocesan Council. For example, if there are 75 aggregated Conferences in the Diocesan Council, a quorum exists when 38 aggregated Conferences are represented.

**F) The annual budget is an exception to items E1 and E2 above. Preliminary numbers are available in the time frames specified; but final numbers may not be. When the budget is presented to the General Membership in the September meeting, the membership may approve or reject the budget but may not amend it. Amendments to the budget would be substantive motions and would have to go through the normal process. If the budget is rejected by the General Membership, the minutes of the meetings should reflect the recommendations for adjustment, if any, to be passed on to the Board. ☀**



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## TOPIC: Acquisition of Property or Vehicles

Category: Financial

Reviewed: June 2024

The SVdP Diocesan Council of Phoenix is unique in many ways including the fact that we are incorporated as one entity. The name of the corporation is the Diocesan Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Diocese of Phoenix.

What does that mean? That means all of the conferences and councils associated with our Diocesan Council are under the same 501(c)(3) corporation with the same EIN number. This provides our conferences and councils many advantages, but it does require us to operate in a cooperative and interactive manner.

Because we are incorporated as one entity, all property such as land and buildings as well as all vehicles must be held and/or titled in the name of the corporation which is our Phoenix Diocesan Council. This also applies to substantive leases related for property, buildings and/or vehicles. In general, such leases would entail long-term leasing contracts with a value in excess of \$10,000.

The purchase, construction or leasing of land, property, buildings, and vehicles by conferences and/or districts should be reviewed and approved by the Diocesan Council Executive Committee, its Council Board, and the Diocesan executive staff. The Diocesan executive staff is pre-authorized by the Diocesan Council to review financial plans including leases and purchases that obligate the Diocesan Council, District or Conference. Additionally, it is necessary to review, approve and record all leases and purchases to facilitate the Phoenix Diocesan Council's ability to insure such items and locations.

The purchase of equipment does not require review or approval of the District or Diocesan Council. For example, the purchase of a refrigerator, freezer or computer requires no reviews or approvals. The purchase of a vehicle (new or used) would need to be reviewed and approved because of insurance and title issues. An agreement with the local parish to co-purchase a nearby lot or building would also need to be reviewed and approved.

If a conference or council wishes to purchase or lease a vehicle, building or land, they should contact the president of their District and/or the Diocesan Council. Additionally, the current Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the corporation should be notified so that contracts/agreements can be reviewed, all titles are held in the name of the Diocesan Council, and that locations and vehicles are insured.

Remember, when in doubt check it out by contacting your District or Diocesan Council president. It never hurts to ask and consult.





# BRICKS to build the foundation

## **TOPIC: Conference Annual Audit Procedure**

**Category: Financial**

**Review Date: October 2024**

Audits need to be performed annually for each District and Conference. The audit may be conducted by two or more members of the Conference or District not associated with the Treasurer's position or by a qualified non-member such as a CPA or Certified Internal Auditor. However, at the time of a change of officers, the audits must be conducted by persons outside of the Conference or District. People generally think that an audit is a financial matter, however, an audit in SVdP should cover more than just the Treasurer's financial portion of Conference operations. The audit should include a basic review of the overall operations of the Conference.

From a general standpoint, the Society expects its Conferences to perform an audit annually. This is stated in a number of different ways in a number of documents. By Resolution 124 of the National Council, the Nationally Approved Bylaws and Resolutions of the National Council have the same authority as The Rule. Diocesan and District Councils also have bylaws and resolutions that amplify local circumstances.

Based on Part III of The Rule, Statute 2, Diocesan and District Councils should make it a formal policy to coordinate the practice and review of annual audits from the Conferences within their area of jurisdiction.

### **WHAT AN AUDIT INCLUDES**

A basic review of the overall operations should take into account:

Minimum Requirements for Existing Traditional Conferences (Resolution 071);

Requisite operational expectations of a Conference such as meeting frequency, doing Home Visits, working in pairs, etc.;

Non-financial recordkeeping and procedures.

Financial recordkeeping and procedures.





# BRICKS to build the foundation

## WHO SHOULD DO THE AUDIT

There are two types of audits that are requested by the Society. The first is the simple internal audit and it applies to 90+% of all Conferences in the Society.

The second type is an external audit performed by a qualified individual who is not a member of the conference or Special Works being audited. This second type of audit usually applies to Conferences that have a store and/or one or more special works as well conferences. This also applies to audits performed when there is a change in officers.

## RECORDKEEPING REVIEW

Ensuring the records are being kept properly is an essential part of any audit. Part of the operational review is to ensure that the various records are kept for a sufficient time period and are kept confidential. The Manual of the Society, Page 32, has a short list of time periods for documents that can be used for the review. It is reproduced here for convenience.

Annual Conference Report*	Permanent
Letters of Aggregation	Permanent
Bank Deposits	3 Years
Bank Reconciliations	3 Years
Bank Statements	7 Years
Cancelled Checks	7 Years
Invoices Received	7 Years
Case Records & Cards	3 Years
General Correspondence	3 Years
Meeting Minutes	7 Years
Minute Books	7 Years
Treasurer Statements	7 Years

\*including statistics, membership list, and items with historical significance

The confidentiality of the information we maintain related to those people that we serve is an important aspect of the Vincentian way. The audit should assure the Conference members and the members of the Council that the records are secure. Confidentiality also calls for us to destroy (not simply discard) the records when the retention time is expired. Shredding is the recommended method of destruction.

One additional consideration should be kept in mind. During any seven year audit period there will be multiple people in the various officer roles. It is important that there is a smooth transition of records moving from one officer to the new one.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

### Bank Account

Every Conference is required to maintain its bank account(s) separate from the parish and separate from the personal accounts of any of the members. There shall be no co-mingled funds. The funds of the Conference must be in standalone accounts not tied to the parish or any of the members. The only exception to this is when a Conference has an approved reserve account. To avoid any perception of hoarding, the reserve accounts should be approved by the next upper Council. The funds in the reserve may be combined into a shared investment account as long as the Conference has sole access to its funds.

### Society Expenses Only

All donations to the Society may be used for the legitimate expenses of the Society: assistance to those in need, operational expenses, support of upper Councils, meeting expenses, etc. No Society funds may be given to fund other organizations. The exception to this is in the case of a co-payment where the Conference and the other organization have agreed to share the cost of helping a specific family or individual. This type of transaction does not fund the other organization.

### The Financial Audit

Please use the Financial Review Worksheets to complete the following:

1. Verify signers on the account with the signature card at the bank.
2. Review the Conference Guidelines for disbursing funds.
3. Randomly select one month from each quarter of the fiscal year being examined. For each of the selected months, check income:
  - a. Verify that the deposits reflected on the bank statements agree with the income recorded in Conference records.
  - b. Select one deposit randomly for each month to verify that the count sheet, deposit slip, Conference records, and bank statement all agree.
  - c. Review the reconciliation of the Conference's ending book balance (on the Financial Report) with the bank statement to make sure they agree.
4. Check expenditures by randomly selecting at least three (3) disbursements from each of the four months being reviewed:
  - a. Compare the amount on the check with the amount on the bank statement.
  - b. Make sure that checks listed on the reconciliation "clear" the bank on the following month's bank statement. (If a check has not cleared in the following month, determine if a stop payment is necessary.)
  - c. Determine whether the disbursement is recorded in the correct expense classification on the monthly financial report.
  - d. Determine that the disbursement is supported by proper documentation including case record form, receipt, check request form, and/or invoice.

To access the Audit Worksheets go to [svdpaz.org/Vincenian\\_Support/Conference\\_Resources/Audit\\_Process\\_Worksheets](http://svdpaz.org/Vincenian_Support/Conference_Resources/Audit_Process_Worksheets) or use this link [Audit Process Worksheets](#)



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## TOPIC: Disaster Appeals

### Category: Financial

Reviewed: June 2024

*“When disasters, war or major accidents occur, the Society launches emergency initiatives on the spot and provides funds for the local Society to help victims.” Rule Part I: 4.2*

There are two types of assistance when discussing disasters: domestic disaster assistance and international disaster assistance. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, tsunamis, and fire are all causes for a disaster. Although SVDP is usually not a first responder, SVDP is on the ground, providing comfort, support, and financial assistance.

In the Rule Part III: Statute 26 we are reminded:

*“However, no matter how worthy the cause, funds shall not be diverted in the form of donations or contributions to other organizations or charities, except, occasionally, for other branches of the Vincentian Family.”*

When a family loses a home, it is a disaster for that family and their needs will be addressed at the conference level. When a disaster is declared at the national or international level a significant number of people are affected.

A request for financial assistance is issued through either our National Council's Disaster Fund or through our International Council General's offices. Assistance is sent to conferences serving in the area of the disaster. This assistance should be sent to our National Office and identified as either for National Disaster or International Disaster. There is no need to be more specific than that. Please do not list a specific disaster as then the money is restricted for that one particular area. There must be active conferences that can provide the assistance.

When Ukraine was attacked, several conferences wanted to contribute disaster funds. However, there were no conferences in that country still operating and many people were fleeing to other countries. If the money was labeled “For Ukraine” it could not be used in the countries with conferences receiving the refugees. If it was identified as “International Disaster,” it would first be sent to our National Office and then be forwarded to the International Office which maintains records and communications with our brother and sister conferences outside of the United States and where emergency funds are needed.

All disaster funds, whether for national disasters or international disasters should be sent to:

Society of St. Vincent de Paul Disaster Services

66 Progress Parkway

Maryland Heights, MO 63043-3706



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## TOPIC: Domestic & International Twinning

Category: Financial

Reviewed: June 2024

*Conferences and councils help each other in need, both at the National and International level. This is one of the activities most cherished by the society (Rule: Part I, 4.1)*

Through the process of twinning, Conferences and Councils help others in need, both at the local, national, and international level. This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. The awareness of acute poverty and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spurs Conferences and Councils to assist other Vincentians with less resources or in particular situations. This direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and resources is called twinning. Twinning is a 'special work' of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. It is one of fraternal union and sharing.

### DOMESTIC TWINNING

The Society is a family. Twinning, the sharing of human, spiritual and financial resources, is the ultimate expression of the love and sacrifice that is present in a family. By twinning, we strengthen our bonds as brothers and sisters, encouraging one another in our common mission of spirituality and charity. We are called to pray for one another as we would pray for our own brother. We are called to serve one another as we would serve our own sister.

Within the Society, the term Twinning applies when resources are shared from a Conference to a Conference or a Council to a Council. If a Conference gives money to a Council, it is considered and recorded as *Aid to Upper Councils* not as Twinning and if a Council helps a Conference, it is considered and recorded as *Aid to Conferences*. It is important to remember that twinning is when resources are shared at the same level of the Society.

When funds are needed for a specific situation the twinning request should be from Conference President to Conference President or District President to District President.

Twinning, however, is about more than the sharing our financial resources with other Conferences or Councils. It includes the sharing of our time and our talents. Although the sharing of talent is not recorded on any report all time spent with another conference should be reported in your conference volunteer hours. Sharing our time and talent with other conferences is often critical to the survival of other Conferences and Councils. Several Conferences within our Diocesan Council have needed members from other areas and Conferences to join their Conference as members or officers. Other Conferences in rural and inner city areas need Vincentians from other Conferences to join them in providing services as their access to new members as well as funds is extremely limited.

Many Conferences twin goods to other Conferences. These goods are usually in the form of food. Conferences that do not operate a pantry often do Food Drives and twin their food with Conferences that require large amounts of food because those Conferences are located within a 'food desert'. It is important to note that in those cases, the Conference receiving and actually distributing the food records the food and the Conference collecting and twinning those goods records nothing on their quarterly/annual reports. This is an important practice that prevents the Council from double recording the same donated goods and thus violating IRS guidelines.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

Twinning can be a single event or an ongoing project and relationship.

## INTERNATIONAL TWINNING

While the Society is present in more than 150 countries, Conferences are virtually unable to help themselves in the majority of these nations. A system is in place at the national Council of the United States for the protection of contributors. It assures that all donations go to help the poor by requiring, among other things, that the funds be distributed or used by members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Make the decision to share part of what we have with other members of the Vincentian family who have far, far less. If your Conference doesn't have a specific location in mind, National can match it with an overseas Conference in need. ("Overseas" is anywhere outside the U.S.A., including Mexico and Central America.) The Council General (International) now permits us to twin with national councils, area (district) councils, or Conferences anywhere in the world. As we consider international twinning, remember that a Conference must twin with a sister Conference of the Society. Giving money to someone else, even to a missionary who may be a former pastor and doing very worthwhile things, is not an appropriate use of funds contributed to the Society.

Each U.S. Conference is expected to pray in a special way for its twinned Conference, its members and the poor they serve.

An application may be obtained by contacting the U.S. National Office, St. Louis, Missouri at (314) 576-3993 and ask for the International Twinning Coordinator. For more information, the Coordinator can provide that to the Conference.

All International Twinning MUST go through US National Office who will coordinate the distribution through the International Office. A Conference will receive a transmittal letter from the U.S. National Office at the time it sends the funds to the foreign country. The President of the National Council in that country is requested to sign a "B" transmittal copy indicating that it has received the funds and has delivered them to the proper twinned Conference or council. When the U.S. National Office receives back the "B" transmittal copy, it will send the U.S. Conference a copy.

Please see BRICK for Disaster Appeal requests.

*Twinning is not an extraordinary work of a Conference but rather how we live and work as a family. It is the perfect way for us to show our unit and commitment to a global view of poverty and our commitment to help the poor wherever they may be. All Vincentians and all of the poor are our brothers and sisters and in need of our support. It is, after all, what Christ is asking of us "Whatever you do the least of my brothers, that you do unto me".*

**Nothing can make you twin except the voice of your conference conscience.**



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## TOPIC: Hoarding: Keeping Excess Funds

Category: Financial

Reviewed: June 2024

“Money must not be hoarded.”

Rule Part I:3.14

As Vincentians, we are asked to love those in need in the best way we can. The only way to do that is to treat each case on its own merit. While establishing general guidelines for assistance has some benefit, Vincentians are called upon to assess each home visit as a unique encounter and should not set predefined limitations on the amount of help to be given or the type of help to be given or the number of times to help someone. To love someone in the best way possible is to keep all of our resources available for our Lord’s use. All of our resources include our hearts, our time, our funds, and other things we use to help people.

Members must accept the fact that our donors have given the Conference resources to use to help those in need. **The reality is that the donations (financial, food and goods) we have belong to the suffering, the deprived, the forgotten, the poor, and those in need. We are stewards of these resources and are accountable for how they are used.**

The Rule of the Society makes it clear that Conferences and Councils may not hold onto funds beyond their short-term needs. The Rule reads, “Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society’s funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence, and generosity. Money must not be **hoarded**. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles.” (Rule, Part I, Article 3.14)

**Hoarding occurs when a Conference decides to keep funds in its financial instrument or food in its pantry rather than helping an individual or family that it is capable of helping.** The fact is that once the Conference decides that the request is legitimate and it has the resources to fulfill the request, then deciding to keep the money in the bank, or food in the pantry is the wrong decision and constitutes hoarding.

The Rule goes on to explain who is responsible for the oversight of Society funds, “Councils and Conferences zealously manage and maintain the Society’s assets. The authority to manage the Society’s assets remains exclusively with Councils that may delegate this authority in accordance with the Rule of the Society and the Bylaws and Resolutions of the National Council.

Faithful to the spirit of non-accumulation of wealth, the next higher Council may determine annually the percentage of the funds of each Council or Conference within their area that may be made available to them. The next higher Council will work with the Council or Conference to determine an appropriate reserve for unanticipated events and direct the allocation of funds which exceed the anticipated demands, which may not be **hoarded** as a capital sum, to the service of the poor in their own area or abroad in the poorest areas of the world.” (Rule, Part III, Statute 24)





# BRICKS to build the foundation

According to the Manual, “It is wrong for a conference to seek financial security by building up a large balance for the needs of the future. Conference balances generally should not exceed what they expect to spend during an average quarter. Surplus funds should be shared generously with more needy Conferences or the Special Works of the District Council.”

As a general rule, Conferences and District Council’s should not maintain reserve balances greater than their projected expenses for a given Quarter or 25% of their annual expenditures. Conferences with large reserve funds can be seen as compliant if they are routinely disbursing funds in excess of their income thus making regular progress in spending down their excess funds.

If a Conference receives a large sum of money designated to be spent within their Parish boundaries or for a specific purpose such as food, utilities or rent, the Conference must consider giving away their non-designated funds such as Fifth Sunday collections to other Conferences, Councils and SVdP programs in order to bring their financial assets to a more appropriate level.

Conferences that operate a store, a dining room or other SVdP programs such as a Dental Clinic should maintain a three to six month reserve to cover fixed expenses. Conferences and Councils may also set aside Capital Campaign funds that are restricted and designated for purchases of property, buildings, vehicles or to start new programs. All Capital funds must be used solely for the expressed purpose that they were raised for and expended in a timely fashion.

Conferences that are blessed with funds in excess of their normal needs, must always keep in mind that many Conferences in poor and rural areas have few if any sources of income. It makes no sense that the “haves” among us would hold onto money they do not need while the “have nots” turn the poor away on a daily basis because they have nothing to share with them. In Luke 12:48 Jesus challenges us by saying, “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” Much is expected of those Conferences and Councils to which much has been given. Let us share with open and generous hearts and with a desire to be one in solidarity and support of one another.

Suggested Ways for Conferences to expend excess assets:

To the Diocesan Council Aid Fund

To the Phoenix Diocesan Council Vincentian Endowment

To poorer Districts to distribute to their conferences most in need

To the Phoenix Diocesan Council and its programs  
including the Scholarship Program and Family Support Services

To SVdP Domestic and/or National Disaster Fund

*Excerpts taken from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul’s National statement on Hoarding.*



# BRICKS to build the foundation

**TOPIC: Investments, CDS & Saving Accounts**

**Category: Financial**

**Reviewed: June 2024**

*“Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles. Accurate records must be kept of all money received or spent.”*

Rule, Part I, 3.14

In cases where a Conference receives a large donation or has a bank account balance that exceeds what they would normally need to fund their works and expenses, it may, in consultation with their District president, develop a plan to supplement monthly expenditures with income from invested funds. The large donation or excess funds may be invested in a savings account, Certificate of Deposit (CD) or in equities or bonds. “Hoarding” would result if the Conference purposely allows the principal of the investment to grow with the sole objective to accumulate additional excess funds.

A Conference should create a plan to eventually draw down the investment for the purposes of assisting the poor through the works of their conference or the larger Society including twinning with other Conferences or in making contributions to Higher Council works or programs.

In setting Conference Guidelines, members should remember that assistance to the people we serve is based on their need and not on a need or requirement to maintain a certain level of funds in Conference investment portfolios, CD’s or saving accounts. The one exception to the concept of reserves is in the case where the Conference itself is operating a special work, such as a thrift store or a dining room. A portion of the funds may be placed in a reserve to pay anticipated expenses (such as rent, utilities, etc.) for a short period of time (up to six months is recommended).

A Conference that is presented with a large financial gift should refer to the Phoenix Diocesan Council [Policy for Conference Funds Management](#) which is attached as an Appendix.

Remember, the Society relies on Divine Providence and the need to put funds to work toward our mission as expediently and effectively as possible.

## **APPENDIX: POLICY FOR CONFERENCE FUNDS MANAGEMENT**

### **Policy for Conference Funds Management**

As a “collective” entity, The Diocesan Council for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its affiliated Conferences have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure the appropriate stewardship of assets contributed directly to the Council and its Conferences. The Council has, over many years, established a formal process to ensure this fiduciary responsibility is fulfilled, including the formalization of an Investment Committee (Committee) comprised of Board Members, Conference Members and outside investment professionals. The Committee has conducted a formal selection process to engage a third-party, fiduciary provider of investment advisory services (Investment Advisor) to manage the investment process under the oversight of the Committee and, ultimately, the Society’s Board. Additionally, the Committee has established an investment policy (Investment Policy Statement) to facilitate the governance of assets gifted to the Society and ultimately, protect the long-term, continuation of the mission of the Society through disciplined investment management of these assets.





# BRICKS to build the foundation

Given this context, the Society's Board is providing this policy to the Conferences to provide the same level of fiduciary oversight and stewardship of assets given directly to the Conferences. The Conferences subject to this policy shall:

- Conferences with operating cash or longer-term assets of \$100,000 or less, are required to ensure the safe keeping of these assets by having the assets invested in checking, savings, money market or Certificates of Deposit within FDIC Insurance coverage at a local bank or financial institution.
- Conferences that are given contributions or who have accumulated excess reserves greater than \$100,000 are expected to notify the Chief Financial Officer, and the Chair of the Society's Investment Committee. Together, with the Conference, this collective group will secure investment advice and establish a separate investment account in the name of the Conference for the stewardship of these assets and protect the long-term, financial wellbeing of the Conference. The investment plans for such contributions will be developed with the direct input of the Conference's leadership and managed in accordance with the Society's Investment Policy Statement.
- Conferences are generally prohibited from holding individual equity or fixed income securities that do not fall under this policy unless these securities are under a restriction established at the time of the gift by the donor. If a contribution to a Conference meets these criteria, the Conference will notify the Chief Financial Officer and the Investment Committee Chair. Together, with the Conference, the collective group will secure investment advice with respect to a plan for the long-term stewardship of these securities.

*Approved by the Diocesan Council Board on June 20, 2018*



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## **TOPIC: Quarterly and Annual Reporting**

### **Category: Financial**

**Review Date: June 2024**

The Quarterly and Annual Reports are extremely important. They are used for government statistics and the basis for applying for grants to support the work that we do. To ensure that your report is done in an expedient and timely manner, as well as correct, contact Vincentian Engagement Support Services if you have any questions.

Donors provide resources that we use on a regular basis within our Conference. Included in those resources are money, food, furniture and clothing. We are expected to be good stewards of the resources that we are given. We are expected to track those resources and to utilize them in a smart and loving manner. The resources do not belong to us; they belong to those in need. We are agents caring for and utilizing those resources on behalf of those in need. Besides using those resources properly, we are expected to report to our donors how we have used them.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has granted the Society of St. Vincent de Paul a 501(c)(3) tax exemption status which allows two advantages: we do not have to pay income tax and we can solicit tax deductible donations. In exchange for those privileges, we are expected to keep proper records related to what we do and how we spend our money. The Diocesan Council prepares an annual report, known as a Form-990, which is a summary report of how the Diocesan Council and all of the Conferences within its area utilize their funds. This record keeping and reporting is a legal obligation.

In order to fulfill this dual obligation, Conferences are to prepare both quarterly and annual reports. The quarterly report effectively acts as an overview of Conference activity that can be reviewed and evaluated by the District President. The quarterly report identifies the income on which the Conference is to tithe 10% to the District Council. This is defined in the Rule and District Council Bylaws as support which each Conference is obligated to provide to the Council. The Diocesan Council Aid Committee meets annually to review Annual reports and determine how Diocesan Aid will be distributed.

### What is Required?

It is important to understand the reporting period, quarterly reports and annual report process of the Phoenix Diocesan Council. Quarterly Reports provide financial records for a three-month period and the Annual Report is for an entire fiscal year.

Reporting Period: The Fiscal Year for the Phoenix Diocesan Council is October 1 to September 30 of each year.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

**Quarterly Reports:** The Quarterly Report includes the Quarterly Conference Report and Special Works Report. These reports provide financial information for a three-month period.

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter – October 1 to December 31

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter – January 1 to March 31

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter – April 1 to June 30

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter – July 1 to September 30

**Date to Submit to District President:** The Conference maintains the original of each quarterly report for its records and submits a copy to the District President. The tithing check should be sent with each quarterly report.

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter – January 31

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter -- April 30

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter – July 31

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter – October 31

**Date for the District President to submit to VESS.**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter – February 15

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter – May 15

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter – August. 15

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter – November 15

**Annual Report:** The Annual Report provides the financial information for the entire fiscal year, which is October 1 to September 30. The Annual Report includes the Annual Conference Report, Membership Roster, Special Works Report, Bank Statement closest to September 30, Safe Environment Membership Compliance Report and Conference/District Guidelines. The dates for submission follow the same rules as the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter reports.

**The Conference maintains the original of the Annual Report for its records.**



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## **TOPIC: Diocesan Food Drive**

**Category: Food & Pantry**

**Review DATE: June 2024**

The Annual Diocesan Food Drive has been a tremendous boom to the Conferences of the Society in the past. In order to take full advantage of the food that is collected it is important to take the time to plan and prepare for the overflowing generosity of our donors.

Following are some proven ideas for making your Parish food Drive a success:

Utilize the Youth of your Parish – Reach out to Youth ministry groups or teens that are in need of service hours.

Supermarket cart loans – Contact a local supermarket and borrow shopping carts for the days you are collecting food. Carts can be used to transport food from cars to the Parish collection area.

Patrol the church parking lot - Accept the food from the donors right at their car and move the food to the Parish collection area.

Collect Sturdy Boxes – Collect sturdy boxes for collection day and start collecting a month ahead of your event date. It is best to collect the same size paper boxes which will allow for easy stacking.

Opportunity for smaller children - Ask the Pastor if children can bring their “offering” up to a special place during the Offertory of the Mass or at the children’s or family Mass.

Additional Drop-offs/Donations – Provide Instructions for additional drop off opportunities for those who didn’t bring food and want to participate. Make sure you have additional bags available during your event.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

**TOPIC: NO Food Repackaging**

**Category: Food & Pantry**

**Review Date: June 2024**

Food Repackaging is not allowed by the Council. **The possibility of contamination and liability does not justify the effort.**

Should a Conference receive a quantity of large sized commercial products such as sugar or flour with current dating and the packaging is intact, they may consider bringing it to the Dan O'Meara Center on Watkins for kitchen use.



# BRICKS to build the foundation

## **TOPIC: Pantry Shelving**

**Category: Food & Pantry**

**Review Date: June 2024**

Many Conferences have a food pantry, which they keep stocked with various food items that are used to make up food boxes to be taken to families in need. Because of the nature of the product that is stored on pantry shelves, there are specific requirements related to the makeup and use of the shelves. These requirements are related to construction, maintenance and cleaning and are as follows:

Wooden shelves must not be used because they are too porous and spilled liquids would be absorbed in the shelving possibly causing a health problem.

Wood is discouraged as a material for the framework of the shelving. The better material for the framework is metal.

Plastic/vinyl/fiberglass shelves are not appropriate because they typically are not strong enough to hold the weight of many of the food items.

The best material to use is stainless steel shelving or stainless steel mesh shelving. The likelihood of contamination is minimal with stainless steel material and it is normally very strong.

Toxic materials or non-food liquids (such as liquid detergent) must not be stored on the same shelf as food items nor on the shelves above those containing food items.

Nothing should ever be stored on the floor.