

**ST. VINCENT de PAUL, EVANSVILLE DISTRICT COUNCIL, MEETING MINUTES FOR  
APRIL 1, 2025**

**6:03PM President Dan Miller called the meeting to order in Rager Hall of Sts. Mary & John Parish**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Executive Committee members; Dan Miller (President), Jeff Kropfl (Vice President), Melanie Seibert (Treasurer), Rosemary Beckman (Secretary), St. Doris Clippard (Spiritual Advisor), Joe Cook (Executive Director), Mike McKee (Thrift Store Advisory Chair), Maggie Garrison (Thrift Store Manager), Bill Hussmann (Food Pantry Advisory Chair), Noah Werner (Director of Case Management).

**OPENING PRAYER:** Sr. Doris led us in reciting the traditional SVdP Opening Prayer.

**REFLECTION:** The Gospel of Luke (15:1-3,11-32) was read by Sue Gries regarding Jesus' parable of the Prodigal son. Joan Lutz read the Reflection from Living Liturgy. The father in the parable models for us the mercy of God the Father. Perhaps spiritual hunger (as opposed to the physical hunger experienced by the Prodigal son) prompts us to "change our minds" to turn away from sin and turn to God. In the Vincentian Meditation (McCullen, Deep Down Things) read by Phil Gamble, we learn the meaning of conversion. Between the Prodigal son's "give me" at the beginning and the "make me" at the end of the parable lies the story of conversion. The starting point is a selfish demand while the finishing point is the readiness to be a servant. Sister asked us to break into small groups to share a personal conversion experience from "give me" to "make me your servant". In closing we prayed to abandon our will to God's will.

**RULE 4.1:** Read by Dan

"Conferences and Councils help others in need, both at the national and international level. This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spurs Conferences and Councils to assist others with less resources or in particular situations. This direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources, is called twinning. This activity contributes to world peace and to understanding and cultural exchange among peoples".

**MINUTES:** Joe noted under 'In Attendance' Executive 'Council' should read Executive 'Committee'. With this change made Julie Buedel made the motion to accept the District Council March 4, 2025 meeting minutes and Tom Bryan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Melanie

## **Financial Statements - February 28, 2025**

### **District Council**

- Retreat income and expense occurred in February, 2024, but will be in March, 2025.
- Donations and other income were down about \$9,000 for the month, but are still about \$12,000 ahead for the YTD.
- February accounting fees were up \$6,500, due to the audit being completed earlier this year. No conference grants were distributed this February, compared to \$10,000 last February.
- Net loss for February was \$27,000 and \$108,000 for the YTD

### **Food Pantry**

- February donations were slightly more than last February.
- Cost of purchased food was again less than the previous year. This may change in the coming months, as Tri-State Food Bank grants remain in limbo.
- Other operating expenses remain very steady.
- Net income YTD is \$27,000.

### **Thrift Store**

- February sales were slightly ahead of last year (\$4,100), although cash donations were down (\$5,400).
- February payroll was about \$7,000 more than last year, while other expenses remained pretty steady.
- Net income for YTD is \$20,000.

### **Other Items:**

Encourage all conferences to apply for the Friends of the Poor Grant, especially those who struggle financially. We are in the Mideast Region, and can submit applications between July 23 and August 13, 2025.

In an effort to scrub our Charity Tracker database so that, if it were scrutinized, it would not be helpful in identifying any immigrants that we help, we talked about not recording Social Security numbers. Another thing to consider is that the fields for "Race" and "Ethnicity" are not required fields, and can be left blank.

In discussion on this point (Race and Ethnicity), Joe noted Charity Tracker is a shared database, in addition, this data may be required for future grant applications as it shows the diverse nature of those we serve.

The Immigration Welcome & Resource Center will be holding a Legal Clinic for immigrants on Saturday, April 19, 2025, from 11am to 2pm, targeted specifically to help them arrange protections for their children in case of a deportation. The center is in the old Goodwill building at 500 S Green River Road. They are needing one or more notary publics to volunteer at this clinic. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in helping out, please contact Melanie so she can relay the information to their director.

#### **Recording vouchers in Charity Tracker -**

- Report as “1 Item” and the type of voucher (clothing, bed, furniture etc.). Indicate in notes what you are doing but do not enter a dollar amount.
- Change the Status to “Pending” - Payment/Approval”. This allows Donna to periodically run a report based on this status, and close out vouchers that have not been redeemed within a reasonable time.
- When the voucher is redeemed and Donna invoices the conference, she will record the dollar amount in Charity Tracker.

Joe showed an example of how to do this on a large screen. He answered questions and explained the process is actually simplified in that there is no need for follow up on part of the conference (on vouchers) as Donna Hurm will run reports and close out the voucher referrals. Tom Bryan requested Joe send an email to the conferences with these instructions so presidents can more clearly explain the process to conference members.

BCS is the company that has been helping us through the DHS Grant process, and who will be doing any work related to the grants. Several of us will be meeting with their representative tomorrow to discuss how to proceed with these projects, given the uncertainty as to whether we will actually receive reimbursement of our expenses.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Joe**

Thanks to all who attended the Lenten Retreat at the Mater Dei Provincialate on March 15. About 75 were in attendance. Thanks also to Sr. Doris for making the arrangements and the Daughters of Charity for their warm and generous hospitality. Joe did record the retreat on his phone. The quality of the video was not what he hoped for as the volume was quite low. Joe can provide the video on a jump drive if any conference would like it.

#### **Grants -**

- National Council Friends of the Poor (FOP) Grant - July 23-Aug 13 is time for our region to apply for up to \$5,000 per conference. Please mark calendars and follow releases from National Council. An email with the hyperlink to the application was forwarded to all conference presidents/contacts March 20.
- Indiana Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) Grants for Thrift Store and Food Pantry - We are in conversation with a vendor regarding DHS's recommendations for moving forward on spending monies.
- Mission Ministry Impact/MMI Grant - We requested \$80,000 for Food Pantry purchases and \$10,000 for Crisis Fund. It is still under review with no word yet. Sr. Doris said April 29 is the date set for the meeting to determine the grant request outcome and shortly after that we should know the decision.
- City Development Block Grant (CDBG) - the grant paperwork is completed to receive funding for our 2024 request. The Advisory Board and Mayor review the

request before the City Council makes the final decision. Usually this happens in April.

- The Sacred Heart Fund report has been submitted. Five conferences received money from this fund. A private donor is the source of this fund and selected us as recipients. We hope to continue receiving this support at least occasionally.

Treasurer/President Training - has been completed. A recorded version of the training session will be posted on the website by Dan. The documents for the Financial and Process Audits have been sent to Regent Promotions for inclusion in the Members' Section of the website.

Cohort #4 of the 'Getting Ahead' program is off and running strong. This is the first time we have sold out and filled all 12 spots. Noah reports the energy in this group is very positive. The 'Staying Ahead' group continues to meet monthly to provide mutual support and work on future plans. Heidi Tromley, Julie Buedel and Chris Pace are conference co-facilitators that help keep participants on track. A graduate of Cohort #2 is the most recent recipient of a guaranteed microloan from First Federal Savings Bank. Another Cohort #2 graduate is close to meeting the underwriting requirements. Building credit is so important to getting and staying ahead. Joe especially thanked Chris Pace of All Saints conference for his expertise and advisement in refining our parameters in this effort.

Progress is being made toward finding our next Food Pantry Manager. We have had a few candidates apply with one more interview scheduled. Bill Hussmann is working on a date for an open house for Vincentians, volunteers and others to thank Sr. Donna for her 17 years of service as our Food Pantry Manager.

The 'Homeless Connect' event is being held at Old National Events Plaza on Thursday, April 3, from 9am-2pm. We have a number of volunteers helping enter information into Charity Tracker. Many services are made available at this event making it a 'one stop shop' for resources to the homeless.

#### **STORE REPORT: ( Mike and Maggie)**

- February figures showed an increase across the board in clothing with 122 adults, 51 children, 173 total served and 1354 separate clothing items sold for total of \$4,173.79; furniture sales at \$1,813.63 and bed sales (25 beds).
- Volunteer hours were down in February at 158
- Mike noted beds now can be delivered directly to the neighbor's address. Maggie passed out directions for filling out the bed voucher for Direct Ship Option:
  - Select option "Direct Ship".
  - If the conference pays 100% of voucher cost the Vincentian writing the voucher can give permission to the Thrift Store (TS) to ship the bed directly to the neighbor.

- If the conference pays a portion of the voucher cost, the neighbor will be required to come to the store to pay the difference.
- Once the TS receives the voucher, the payment will be processed to the conference and bed shipped to address provided on voucher.
- Maggie stressed making sure the shipping address is the correct address. Addresses on drivers licenses/ID may no longer be accurate.
- The beds will ship direct to the neighbor's home within 2-3 days. If there is a delay the TS will notify the neighbor or conference.
- Email and telephone contacts were provided should there be any questions or concerns about this process.
- There was concern the beds might be stolen by 'porch pirates'. Maggie noted pick up at the TS is still an option. Joe noted conferences can purchase beds in volume and store them if they have the space for delivery by Vincentians to neighbors instead of mail delivery.
- A suggestion was made whether we could consider providing baby cribs. Newborns are not supposed to be sent home from hospital if the home does not have infant bedding. A comment was made that 'pack and play's can be provided by the Health Dept. and Gabriel Project, Little Lambs or Trotter House in Evansville might be a source for infant bedding.
- The TS is in need of a cashier and a truck driver. Home pick ups of donated items have been turned down recently due to lack of a driver.
- Dan suggested Mike and Maggie attend the National Assembly in Louisville, KY this Aug. 27-30 to connect with other Thrift Store counterparts to share ideas and learn ways of improving TS practices as well as shop at vendors.

#### **FOOD PANTRY REPORT: Bill**

- In March 2,080 persons were served in 961 households. These numbers are up slightly from last month, and up slightly from March 2024. February and March are typically the slowest months of the year due likely to Earned Income Tax Credits/tax refunds.
- The Office of Emergency Assistance and the Food Pantry will be closed on Good Friday.
- There have been many recent donations:
  - Annunciation Parish - Lenten "Give A Can If You Can" delivers weekly
  - Young Dairymen's Assoc. donated 224 lbs of butter
  - St. John Daylight KofC Lenten project
  - TJ Maxx donated many cases of cookies and cases of Men's deodorant (they could not sell because the labeling was in Polish!)
- We are interviewing our 3rd candidate for Food Pantry Manager position. June 1 is targeted start date allowing 30 days to train with Sister Donna before she leaves June 30.
- Bill is planning a reception/open house to honor Sister Donna for her 17 years of service. It will probably be held near end of June on a weekend. Volunteers,

donors, representatives from businesses that help the FP and all Vincentians are encouraged to attend. We hope the reception will also serve to introduce and help transition the new manager to the position.

- New flooring for the office and entry areas of FP is needed. Two estimates were reviewed - Benny's Flooring for \$3,958.72 and Greer's Flooring America for \$4,226.41. Bill asked that we move forward on this noting Food Pantry donation reserves will cover this expense. Tom Bryan made the motion to approve \$4,250 for the new flooring and Debbie Neufelder seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

#### **ON-GOING BUSINESS: Dan**

- Should the District Council continue to participate in Tons of Toys? Dan had emailed 3 options to consider in making a decision -
  - Discontinue our relationship with WIKY in the Tons of Toys project.
  - Change its operation to serve only those referred to us by conferences and other trusted sources. This would require WIKY to acquiesce.
  - Continue the program as we currently do with volunteer leadership and help but with very little participation by the District Council office.
- The general conclusions of the conferences were that the Tons of Toys program requires much time and effort in an area that is not the primary focus of Vincentians and that most parishes offer 'Angel Tree' or other avenues for providing Christmas gifts to individuals and families. The Tons of Toys program also competes with other programs such as the Salvation Army 'Toys for Tots' that one of our schools (Good Shepherd) collects donations for. It was suggested the newly formed women's auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus might be interested in taking over the Tons of Toys project. Joan Lutz knew a contact person for them that Joe could refer to WIKY.
- Tom Bryan made the motion for the Evansville District Council to discontinue partnering with WIKY in the Tons of Toys Program and Mike Rogan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

#### **NEW BUSINESS: Dan**

- Introducing a draft Safeguarding Policy -  
Dan wrote and presented a detailed draft Safeguarding Policy and Harassment Policy for the Society of SVdP, Evansville District. Included in the draft are definitions, our principles, how the policies will apply to employee recruitment, Vincentian member recruitment, volunteers, partners, vendors etc., as well as means of communicating and implementing the policy, reporting violations and training. He also provided a copy of the National Council Resolution to adopt a Safeguarding Policy in 2021 and a copy of the proposal from the VIRTUS Program of Training for prevention of child sexual abuse and vulnerable adult abuse.

- When adopted, the Safeguarding Policy will require criminal background checks pursuant to Zachary's Law, Indiana Code Section 11-8-8 for all Thrift Store and Food Pantry employees, all active Vincentians, any Associate Vincentian who makes home visits and all Associate members and volunteers at the Office of Emergency Assistance or Food Pantry who have access to personal data of our neighbors. If a position requires operating a motor vehicle during the course of employment, a check of driving history will also be required.
- Mandatory training for safeguarding children, young adults and vulnerable adults for all the aforementioned positions must be successfully completed and Acknowledgement of Receipt forms read and signed. The VIRTUS training program, if adopted, can be completed online and takes approximately 2 hrs time.
- Dan asked that the policy draft and related materials be carefully reviewed. There are also required tasks to consider before we make a decision. At the May District Council meeting this can be discussed along with any suggested changes. The vote to adopt the Safeguarding Policy will probably not be held until the June DC meeting.
- Approval for a Flooring Quote for the Food Pantry - this was discussed and approval given under the Food Pantry Report above.

**ROLL CALL of Conferences, New Members, ill or deceased Vincentians, announcements**

- Conferences not in attendance were Holy Redeemer, Resurrection and St. Matthew.
- Jim and Peggy Harpenau of St. Clement are in nursing home and not doing well; Jennifer and Greg Schmitz of Resurrection have a sister-in-law and a nephew who were injured and Good Shepherd lost Vincentian, Mike McCollough to cancer.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Sr. Doris led us in reciting the SVdP Vision Prayer and the Hail Mary for those mentioned ill, injured and deceased.

**7:31pm ADJOURNMENT.** Next meeting is May 6, 2025, 6:00pm at St. Mary's Rager Hall.