



**THE SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL**

**CALGARY CENTRAL DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

## **Introduction:**

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) has been in operation within the Diocese of Calgary since 1933. This Catholic Lay Organization has grown to operate Conferences in 23 of the 37 parishes listed within the city boundaries. The Conferences report to three Councils, respectively known as North, South and West Particular Councils. These Councils in turn report to the Calgary Diocesan Central Council (CDCC).

Each Conference and Council is aggregated under SSVP Canada and should be registered with the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) if they issue tax receipts and file, as a non-profit organization, annual tax reports as required. SSVP is governed by The Rule and Statutes of SSVP Canada (the Rule) that specifies operational requirements and procedures.

SSVP Calgary Diocese Central Council is an approved non-profit association eligible for grants from the Together in Action (TIA) program of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary. This report addresses SSVP's commitment to provide an annual review of the status of SSVP operations within the Calgary Diocese to the Diocesan Department of Social Justice and Outreach Ministries.

Due to COVID19 circumstances and the associated financial strains, SSVP was informed that the TIA grant for 2020 would not be forthcoming. Nonetheless, SSVP wishes to maintain transparent relations with the Diocese and the objective of this summary report is to meet that intention.

## **Basic Organization:**

SSVP is a spiritually based ministry as expressed in the Rule as: *“Vincentians are called to journey together toward holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness.”* and *“Vincentians assume the need of the poor as their own.”* In practical terms, SSVP Conferences within the Calgary Diocese focus on the supply of food, clothing, shelter, and other financial support to those in need in our communities.

Typically, SSVP Conferences are tied to a parish and use the church building as their base. With parish leadership they agree upon food storage, funding methods and meeting space. Conferences may call upon their Particular Councils or on CDCC for additional funding as needs are identified. All financial disbursements to approved creditors are documented and approved by the conference or council.

SSVP in Calgary has no assets: no buildings, no storage spaces (other than granted by parishes) and no paid staff. Conferences are encouraged to reach out for alliances with other organizations such as Value Village (for clothing) and Helping Others (for appliances and furniture). Each Conference must generate their own funds within their parish community, and they do this often with help from the Catholic Women's League (CWL) and the Knights of Columbus (KofC). They also can reach out to private organizations such as Cobbs (free bread), the Calgary Foodbank and Spinz-Around (free food), as well as schools within their districts for food drives.

Each Conference tithes funds to their respective Particular Councils and these, in turn, tithe to CDCC. The amount of tithing is left to each individual Conference, but the Rule discourages hoarding of funds and recommends sharing everything beyond “prudent operating costs” to higher Councils. CDCC in turn is also obligated to share their funds with SSVP Western Region that covers the land mass between BC and the Ontario Border. Finally, Conferences and Councils are encouraged to engage in “Twinning” by supporting a SSVP Conference in a developing country by donating \$2000 - \$3000 a year to their twinning partner through the SSVP National Council. The current twinning partner for CDCC is Our Lady of Health Parish, Castle Bruce, Island of Dominica.

In summary, SSVP is a very dynamic Lay Organization that covers much ground and has been able to do so because of steadfast reliance on the Gospel. The extent of SSVP corporal works is dependent on the identified needs, donated funds, available membership, and associates, as well as on the support received from parish leadership. In addition, SSVP provides means for parishioners to actively participate in missionary work as envisioned in Vatican II and promoted by the Holy Fathers, by serving those in need outside Church boundaries.

### **Calgary Diocesan Central Council (CDCC):**

The current members on the CDCC are:

|                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Father Troy Nguyen            | Spiritual Advisor                  |
| Theo van Besouw <sup>1</sup>  | President                          |
| Lance Berrington <sup>2</sup> | Vice President                     |
| David Mayer <sup>3</sup>      | Vice President                     |
| Heather Schilling             | Secretary                          |
| Bill Smith                    | Treasurer                          |
| Pamela Rath                   | President North Particular Council |
| Murray Busby                  | President South Particular Council |
| Kathy Savoia                  | President West Particular Council  |
| Social Justice                | OPEN                               |
| Youth Representative          | OPEN                               |

- 1 Theo van Besouw has been in the President position for four years and will resign July 1, 2021 so CDCC can continue under new leadership.
- 2 Lance Berrington will also resign July 1, 2021 and will take on a new position with the SSVP North of 60 program.
- 3 David Mayer has resigned his position in March 2021 as he will be moving to Vancouver in for employment. He will continue his support to the local SSVP.

CDCC will follow guidelines provided in the SSVP Rule and Statutes to select a new president. Based on nominations received, the new president will be selected during the Annual General Meeting scheduled for April 17, 2021.

**2020 Consolidated Financial Report:**

The 2020 SSVP Consolidated Report totals the finances of:

- Calgary Diocesan Central Council
- North, South and West Particular Councils
- 23 active Conferences that operate in Diocesan Parishes

Total Revenue Reported: \$1,939,892 (includes \$400,000 COVID19 grants)

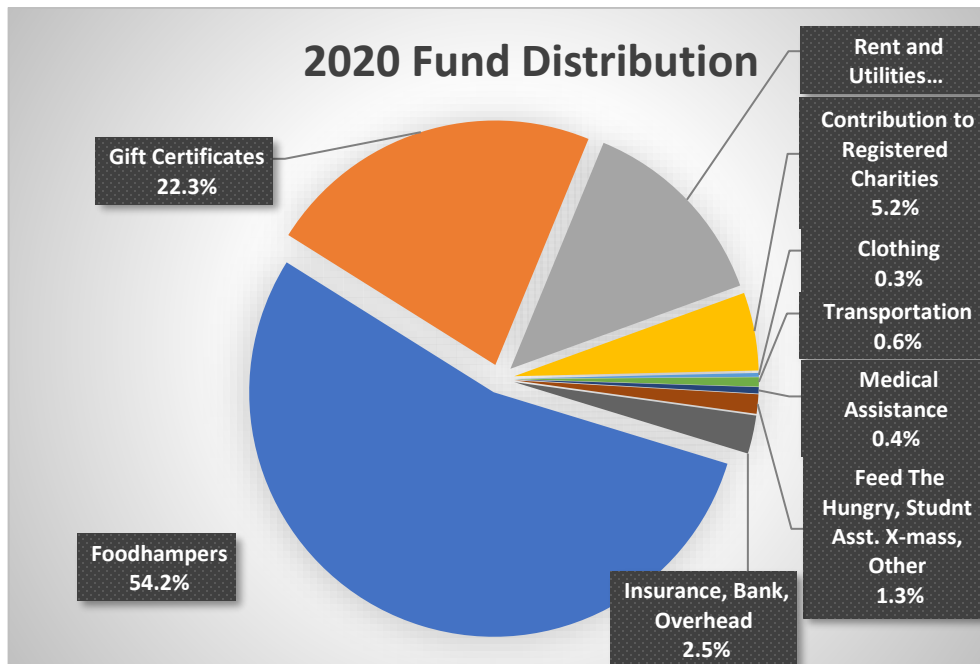
Total Expenses Reported: \$1,613,270 (includes \$400,000 COVID19 distributions)

Balance: \$ 326,622

As this year was marred by COVID19 that affected many people in terms of financial hardship, SSVP applied for government funding and received \$400,000 in grants (\$175,000 City of Calgary Social Services, \$100,000 City of Calgary Emergency Resiliency Fund, \$125,000 United Way). This amount was fully distributed to the three Particular Councils who in turn provided the Conferences with funds according to need and capacity to disperse help to those in need. The grants included an agreement to dispense all funds by December 31, 2020, but as the monies were received rather late in the year, extension was granted to March 31, 2021.

In addition to the government funding, SSVP received more than \$1.5 MM in donations which testifies that many parishioners and supporters value SSVP’s corporal works.

As SSVP in Calgary does not have any assets and does not pay personnel, virtually all expenses go to those in need. The distribution of funds is expressed as percentage in the following pie-chart:



The funds are typically distributed according to need:

- Food:** Represents the 54.2% of funds to the cost of food but does not include “free” food donated in churches, by schools or food-drives or other means.
- Gift Certificates:** Now more parishes are using Grocery Store and Tim Hortons gift cards as means of fundraising, SSVP detected a noticeable increase in donations of gift cards instead of cash. Typically, these gift cards complement the food hampers for the purchasing of personal items.
- Housing & Utilities:** Represents support in the form of partial or whole funds for damage deposits, rent arrears and/or utilities. Typically, these funds are only released to a qualified creditor after a home visit and backed up by a financial request form. During the COVID-19 pandemic, home visits have been limited to phone consultations.
- Charities:** Conferences and Councils are encouraged to avoid hoarding of funds and assist other Conferences and Councils that are in need of finances. When contributing to other charities, careful evaluation is conducted to ensure there is no conflict with Catholic values. This year CDCC again sponsored Feed the Hungry as part of World Poor Day proclaimed by Pope Francis by financing and by providing manpower as well as donating funds to Twinning Partners. Conferences and Particular councils with adequate funding did the same..
- Transportation:** Transportation is predominantly provided in the form of bus/LRT tickets.
- Medical Assistance:** SSVP has contributed to the purchase of medical equipment, dental treatments and optical requirements.
- Clothing:** SSVP is encouraging Conferences to use Value Village for clothing as the prices are reasonable and the selection is good. Occasionally, a call goes out to parishioners for specific clothing requests but that is rare. The KofC donates jackets through their “Coats for Kids” program. SSVP has also participated in the Pass-It-On initiative of St. Stephen’s and has expanded commitment to their COVID modified 2020 program. Gift certificates may be dispensed to support a particular need.
- Additional Needs:** This is a catch-all group to capture expenses for furniture, baby supplies, glasses, education subsidy and some special Christmas support.
- Administration:** SSVP does have an obligation to provide insurance for all volunteers. This category also includes expenses related to the One Box central telephone system, computer and website expenses, postal box rental, training materials for volunteers, and Franciscan Retreat in Cochrane.

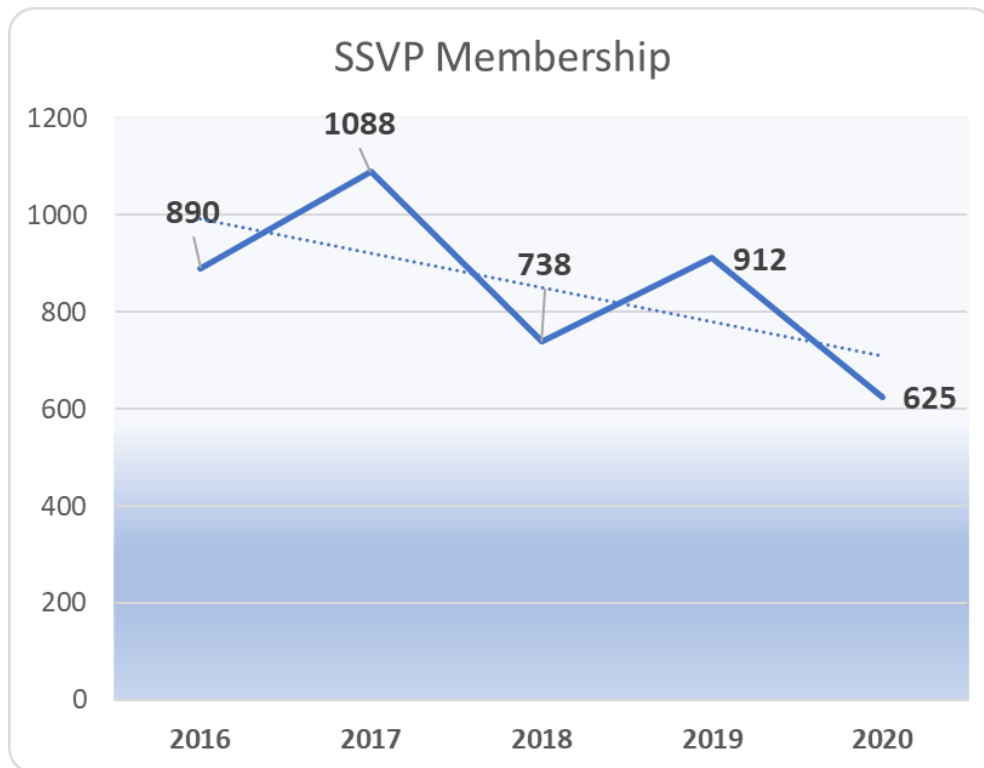
**Calling Statistics:**

SSVP operates through the “One Box” call system. A central telephone line [403-250-0319] and website [ssvpcalgary.ca] are means for anyone who needs help to call. Through a number selection menu, a person is connected to the nearest Conference. Excess calls and those for which no selection is made end up at a central line that is monitored on a daily basis. After the message is received and the address of the caller verified, the Conference or parish in the area is notified so they can contact the person in need.

Based on 2020 billing information received, SSVP processes annually more than 62,000 calls that come in and more than 32,000 calls going out.

**SSVP Membership:**

The total membership count for 2020 is reported at 625, a 31% drop from the previous year. The 4-year trend shows a 30% decline in membership. Individual Conferences range from 6 to 30 members. The fact is that SSVP membership consists predominantly of seniors (over the age of 60). While we believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted this year’s membership numbers, the decline is following an existing 5-year trend. Although each conference has a core group of members who are committed to serving those in need, the potential for volunteer burn out is real. With an anticipated increase demand, seeking new members must be a key focus for all conferences and councils.



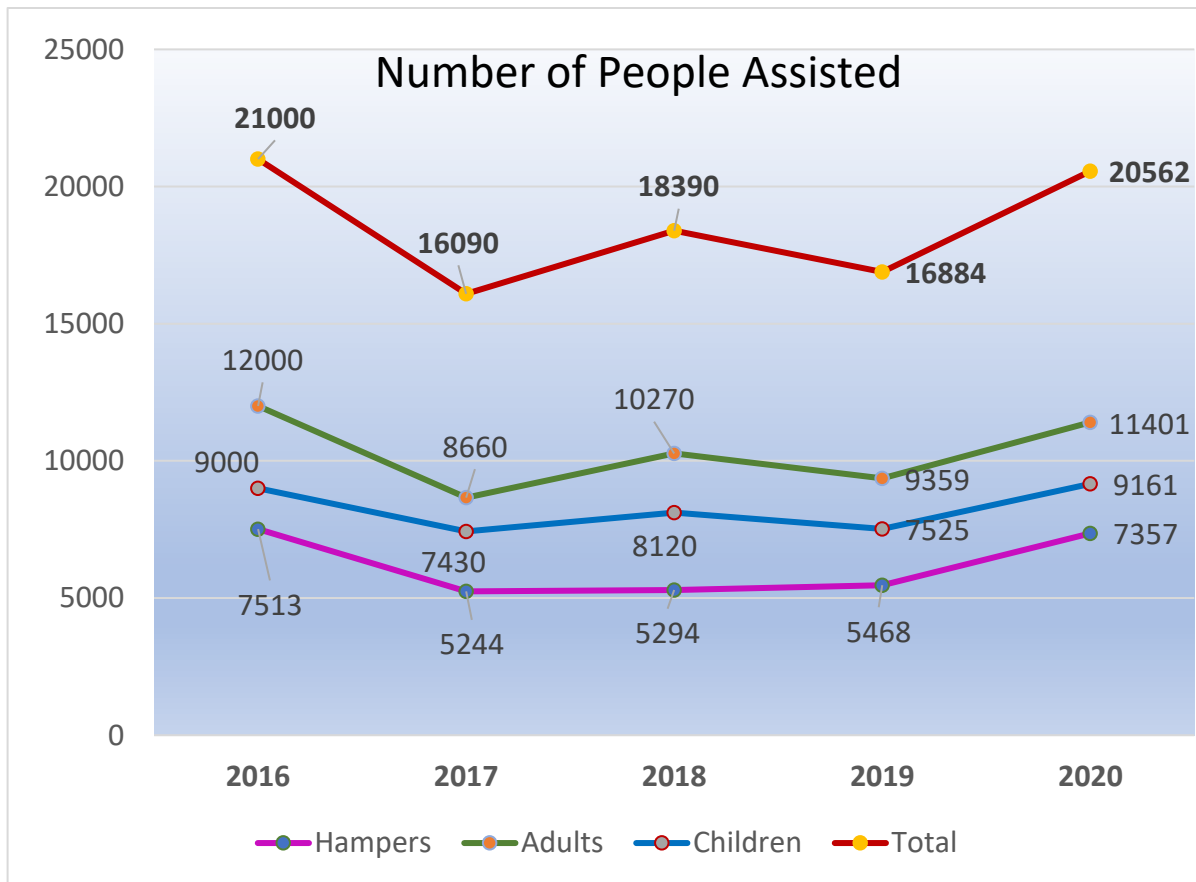
**Spiritual Advisors:**

Although each Conference and Council is recommended by SSVP Rule and Statutes to have a dedicated Spiritual Advisor, in 2020, 7 of the 27 conferences or councils reported having a Spiritual Advisor. As spiritual formation is essential to SSVP, Councils are urged to appoint a person who can guide the mission by sharing scriptural inspirations.

**Our friends in need:**

The following statistics summarize the breakdown of those who received assistance from SSVP in 2020:

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Hampers Delivered:      | 7,357         |
| Adults Helped:          | 11,401        |
| <u>Children Helped:</u> | <u>9,161</u>  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>20,562</b> |



The increase in demand in 2020 was tempered by the effects of CREB availability to reduce the economic impact directly related to COVID-19. As demand is related to the health of the economy and the availability of social services, the anticipated decline in both of these factors are expected to lead to increased need.

### **Social Justice:**

Social Justice took, due to COVID19, an unexpected turn. As food supply to those in need started becoming a serious issue, approximately 45 agencies participated in monthly Zoom meetings to address the challenges. The results were quite encouraging. It was concluded that there is enough food to feed those in need in Calgary. The challenge appeared to be getting people in touch with the agency best suited to help them. A Calgary interactive map was developed which contains all participating agencies and means of contact. The map can be found at [www.tinyurl.com/covidfoodyyc](http://www.tinyurl.com/covidfoodyyc). A comprehensive list of agencies is available at: [www.tinyurl.com/covidfoodyyc-list](http://www.tinyurl.com/covidfoodyyc-list). Particular Councils have been encouraged to share this information with their Conferences.

### **Collaboration:**

CDCC continues encouraging Conferences and Councils to look for collaborative opportunities with other entities that potentially could improve the lives of those in need. The following list provides an overview of SSVP current collaborative partners:

- Horizon Housing: below market housing for those with low income and those living on social benefits; CDCC is the support agency for 4 residents.
- Cobbs Bread: Collection of surplus and distribution to others.
- Helping Others: Brokering of donated furniture and household goods without exchange of money.
- Spinz-Around: Collection of free food for hampers.
- Bow West: providing access to government services and social support.
- Aspen Family & Community Network Society: helping people to access resources to move from vulnerability to sustainability.
- Muslim Foodbank: those in need of Halal food.
- Calgary Food Bank; for Conferences low on food supply.
- Coldest Night of the Year: fundraising for housing.
- Catholic Family Services/CBE Louise Dean School: supply of food gift cards to students who are young parents.
- Pass-It-On: free clothing event.
- Knights of Columbus: Coats for Kids program
- God Squad: Mutual support in ministerial work.



**Diocesan SSVP Conference Status:**

With Ascension Parish joining SSVP, there are now 23 active SSVP Conferences within the Diocese of Calgary. There are 7 parishes that do not belong to SSVP and either operate a foodbank independently or are not interested:

1. St. Luke's – parish-based Foodbank.
2. Sacred Heart – SSVP conference preferred a parish-based Food hamper program.
3. Holy Name- parish based Foodbank.
4. Holy Spirit – parish-based program - Come to the Table
5. St. James – parish-based Foodbank
6. St. Paul's (Airdrie) – SSVP conference recently (2019) folded
7. St. Mary's (Cochrane) – not interested at this time

The reasons for non-participation vary. Some have had controversies with CDCC in the past or find the SSVP Rule and Statutes too restrictive or too onerous. The obvious drawback is that the benefits (e.g. sharing financial resources and insurance coverage) and executing Corporal Works of Mercy within a larger spiritually focused organization is not recognized. However, SSVP does maintain contact with any parish that does have a foodbank and asks for (and receives) assistance for those in need of food in their parish areas. SSVP councils and bordering conferences also provides financial assistance to those in need in these parish areas.

It has been observed that the most effective Conferences in the Diocese have two identifiable attributes that are essential to their "success":

1. Parish leadership support/Spiritual Advisor AND
2. Adherence to the SSVP Rule and Statutes

Those Conferences that enjoy moral support of their parish priest tend to be visible in their parish community, have adequate room for food storage and can count on parishioners (including CWL and K of C) for donations and program support. Those who operate according to SSVP Rule and Statutes, effectively plan for succession, switch leadership positions as recommended and seem to maintain a dynamic team in which issues are openly discussed and funds are responsibly distributed. In addition, their reports are timely and accurate.

Thanks to Vincentian initiatives of Heather Schilling, Murray Busby and Tony Barry and the respective parish leadership, three parishes have indicated strong interest to become part of the SSVP Family:

1. Saint Anthony's Parish
2. Saint Mother Teresa
3. Holy Spirit

## **2020 CDCC Operational Report:**

### **Covid-19 Funding:**

CDCC applied for and received \$400,000 in grants from the City of Calgary and United Way on behalf of the Particular Councils and Conferences to assist with the financial impact of COVID-19. All grant money was disbursed to those in need within the Diocese by then end of December.

### **Mount Saint Francis Retreat:**

Every January, CDCC sponsors a silent retreat that is held at the Cochrane's Mount Saint Francis Centre of the Franciscans. Vincentians are encouraged to participate, and funding is available to attend. The retreat program typically includes daily Mass, motivational speakers and ample time for silent reflection.

### **Coldest Night of the Year:**

On February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, SSVP participated in the annual "Coldest Night of The Year" walkathon and raised \$2,650 for the homeless. There was also much appreciated presence of the Diocese at the event which helped promotion of this worthwhile fundraiser.

### **2020 SSVP Annual National Formation (ANF):**

After more than one year preparation selecting venues and logistical details, the event was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Ozanam Day:**

Ozanam Day celebrates the feast day of our Founder Frederick Ozanam on September 9. This is an annual faith development day for Vincentians across the Diocese. Ozanam Day 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **"Pass It On" Free Clothing Give Away Event:**

Because of Covid-19 pandemic, the Pass It On 2020 event had to be modified and as a result, CDCC involvement and participation was minimal this year.

### **Catholic Family Services/CBE Louise Dean Centre:**

At the initiative of Ms. Joy Gregory (St. Peter's Conference), CDCC committed to support students at the Louise Dean Centre (LDC) with food gift cards. Joy has worked with the school to set up a supply room at LDC that will be regularly stocked by Joy who will get supplies from the Calgary Food Bank. Catholic Family Services social workers distribute the gift cards provided by CDCC to students requiring financial support to acquire adequate food for their families.

### **Day of the Poor – Feed the Hungry:**

Since 2018 CDCC has responded to the papal call for “World Day of the Poor” by sponsoring the Feed the Hungry dinner on that Sunday in November.

### **Horizon Housing**

Throughout 2020 CDCC has ensured stable housing for three residents sponsored by CDCC at Horizon View, 50 Ave SW Calgary, by providing monthly rental subsidies and ongoing wellness assessments.

### **2021 Forecast**

2021 will be a year of change as the composition of CDCC will be different. Under new leadership it can be expected that fresh ideas and different people will have their impact on the SSVP organization within the diocese of Calgary. There is little doubt that SSVP will face challenging times in terms of funding and volunteers, but that is not something new in its 175 years of existence. Missions that stay true to the Gospel do not fail.

The opportunities that present themselves are best articulated by comments of Pope St. John Paul II on *Lumen Gentium* [34-36] as they are so appropriate to SSVP’s mission:

*“I call to mind, as a new development occurring in many churches in recent times, the rapid growth of “ecclesial movements” filled with missionary dynamism. When these movements humbly seek to become part of the life of the local churches and are welcomed by bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures, they represent a true gift of God both for new evangelization and for missionary activity properly so-called. I there therefore recommend that they be spread, and that they be used to give fresh energy, especially among young people, to the Christian life and to evangelization, within a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves.”*