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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.



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**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.





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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.





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**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. 🌞



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## 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.



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## **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.



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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. ☀**