

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

**FOUNDED IN PARIS 1833 – ESTABLISHED IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO 1857
INCORPORATED BY ACT NO. 35 OF 1950**

**NATIONAL COUNCIL REPORT 2001 –2002
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 22ND, 2002.
ST. MARY’S CENTENARY HALL, PORT OF SPAIN**

**TRUSTEES: BROS. CLIVE BELGRAVE, CECIL MILNE, HUGH A.S. CLERK,
KENNETH AUGIER AND JOHN JARDIM**

MEMBERS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL

MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	-	Bro. Anthony Wong Doo
Senior Vice President	-	Bro. Clive Belgrave
Spiritual Advisor	-	Rev. Fr. Joseph Harris C.S.Sp.
Vice President	-	Bro. Hugh A.S. Clerk
- Emeritus	-	Bro. Rigsby Charles
- Emeritus	-	Bro. Kenneth Solomon
- South	-	Bro. Ronald Ho
- Central	-	Sr. Leah Gordon
- North West	-	Bro. Rudolph Boneo
- North East	-	Bro Kenneth Augier
Chairman	-	Bro. Winston Mathura
- Finance	-	Bro. Louis Rodriguez
- Development & Communication	-	Sr. Yvette Woodruffe
- Maintenance of Institutions	-	Sr. Alake Atiba
Administrative Secretary	-	
Recording Secretary	-	

PARTICULAR COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

Port of Spain	-	Bro. William Callendar
Central	-	Sr. Cynthia Soodeen
North West	-	Sr. Heather Alleyne
North East	-	Sr. Cynthia Etienne
Tobago	-	Sr. Crescent Parisienne
Sub-urban	-	Bro. Patrick Baptiste

South	-	Bro. Paul Fitzwilliam
South West	-	Bro. Mc Donald Bedeau
South East	-	Bro. Keith Rodriguez
South West Peninsula	-	Bro. John Boodoo
Institutions	-	Bro. Thomas Assing

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Fund Raising	-	Bro. Clive Belgrave
Finance	-	Bro. Kenneth Augier
Legal	-	Bro. Isidore Smart
Development/Communication	-	Bro. Winston Mathura
Institutions	-	Sr. Yvette Woodruffe
Communication	-	Fr. Rudy Mohammed
Employment/Social Relief	-	Bro. Horatio Nelson
Local Twinning	-	Sr. Leah Gordon
Foreign Twinning	-	Bro. Ignatius Ferreira
Care of the Aged	-	Bro. Evans Foncette
Training	-	Bro. Dennis Bryan
Tobago	-	Sr. Evelyn Stewart
Prisons/YTC	-	Sr. Cynthia Soodeen
Ecumenism	-	Fr. Pascal Tiernan O.P.

This year under review was a most challenging, innovative and interesting year. Just three weeks after the last Annual General Meeting held at Gulf City, we were faced with the sudden death of the Executive Secretary for thirty-two (32) years, Bro. Steve Solomon. This event overshadowed developments in the Society throughout the year, but everyone rallied together and co-operated to ensure that the ideals he strove for would remain alive in the operations of the Society.

We were also called to deal with working within an increasingly complex social environment, notwithstanding the effects of the American September 11th crisis and the local 18/18 political deadlock. More and more frequently, we are encountering people who feel vulnerable, confused, hopeless, disillusioned and disenchanting, people afflicted with a “poverty of spirit” who are not necessarily materially poor. They too are the marginalized in our society, *a mother coming to us for help in getting her child into a ‘good’ school* is symptomatic of a distrust in the ‘system’. There has been over the year, a steady increase in people seeking assurance, encouragement, emotional support and consolation.

The networking strength of the Society has to be maintained/extended/shared and so coming together and interacting fosters a spiritual bond and friendship between members as well as a common mission which they develop together to assist the poor and marginalized.

Our National Executive continues to meet on the first Monday of each month, holding special meetings when necessary. The National Council meets occasionally with the Particular Council to keep them abreast of developments in the Society and also ensuring the links with our Conferences and Committees.

A very successful and well attended Presidents' Meeting was held in February where our President informed on his plans and Fr. Christian Pereira explained the Synod Process with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's involvement.

Over the years, the Society has been silent on social issues bedeviling Trinidad and Tobago, many people did not know about our existence and our work because they were not hearing anything about us. Today's media-conscious society demands that we move out of that mode and move on to Public Relations endeavours. We are happy to report that there is a vibrant Public Relations Committee now in existence in the Society. Bro. Mathura's report will tell you more about this Committee and its achievements and projections, but suffice it to say that it is like a '*breath of fresh air*' in the Society.

There is another Committee that is giving us more visibility in the national community, the **Prison Committee**, members of which are doing tremendous work at the Youth Training Centre (Y.T.C.) befriending about thirty (30) young men who have been abandoned and receive no visits from their family and friends and who depend on our Prison Committee members not only for guidance, love and assurance but for basic toiletries like soap and toothpaste, clothes, classes, regaining contact with their family, social afternoons and their well being, including lodging after discharge.

Another avenue whereby we try to maintain public awareness is the operation of the SVP Documentation Centre in Gulf City Mall. This venture helps us spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and the social teachings of the Church. During the year the Archbishop held a meeting with all the religious shops operating in the Archdiocese and the Society was represented at that meeting. He stressed the need for youth to know their faith and spoke of the plan to establish a website in the Archdiocese that would help form Catholics in the faith.

At the regional Society of St. Vincent de Paul level, Trinidad and Tobago was privileged to host the Caribbean SVP Presidents' Meeting in May of this year. It was held at Top of the Mount, Mt. St. Benedict and participants commented on the remarkable hospitality extended by SVP Trinidad & Tobago. They were impressed with the magnitude of our work, especially amongst our institutions here in Trinidad & Tobago. The topics discussed were the Caribbean Rule of the Society, Closer Caribbean Collaboration, Youth, The role and responsibility of Presidents and Spiritual Formation of the members of the Society.

The main fund raiser of the National Society of St. Vincent de Paul – *the National Raffle* – was an unqualified success this year. For the first time tickets were sold at three (3) malls on Saturdays and the volunteer vendors all reported on the animated patronage by the public.

Sales by the individual Conferences throughout Trinidad & Tobago was remarkably higher than in previous years, and this deserves to be commended. Returns of unsold books were few and far between. The other fund raising events namely – *the Back in Times Party in September, 2001, the Chinese Luncheon at Chinese Wok in October, 2001, the Chinese Takeaway in the last quarter of the year, the Mt. St. Benedict Brunch in March this year and the Dinner/Show “An Evening par Excellence” which took place at the Cascadia Hotel Ballroom three months ago* were all exciting, stimulating, well patronized and successful.

A project that deserves mention is that of the selling of Catholic News every weekend at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception by members of Conferences in surrounding parishes and by residents of the Nazareth Halfway House and Audrey Mollineau Halfway House. It gives credence to our philosophy and mission: **“No work of charity is foreign to the Society.”**

The Secretariat administers the Archbishop Pantin Memorial Relief fund and the Archbishop Gilbert Christmas Hamper programme, both at the request of His Grace the Archbishop, and great relief is provided to the dispossessed e.g. payment of rent, utility bills, medication etc. His Grace Archbishop Gilbert from time to time requests the Society to represent the Catholic Church at meetings and functions as the social action arm of the Church.

The Society networks with a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Relations with Government Ministries that we liaise with remain cordial and co-operative. Members of the National Executive met recently with Miss Donna Carter, Minister responsible for Social Services Delivery at the ministry of Social Development. We also maintain a close relationship with the Ministries of Health and Community Development, and with programmes like Y.T.E.P.P., G.A.P., and Women’s Programmes. We are in touch regularly with Social Welfare Offices and social services clubs, particularly the Lions Club. We collaborate with the Caribbean Conference of Churches and its programmes. We are in constant communication with the SVP Regional Co-Ordinator, Sr. Mary Rose Knight in Antigua and the International Council General in Paris. Our President, Bro. Wong Doo, attended the main meeting in the Western Hemisphere, Ibero-Americano IV which was held in Mexico in October, 2001.

The Council General granted certificates of aggregation to five (5) Conferences of Trinidad & Tobago over the year:

1. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference, Talparo
2. St. Thomas More Conference, Fyzabad
3. Sacred Heart Conference, La Brea
4. Christ the Lord Conference, Marabella
5. St. Peter’s Conference, Carenage

We appeal to those Conferences that are not aggregated to fill out the application form obtainable at our Secretariat and we will forward it to Paris. About half of our Conferences in the country are not aggregated.

In March of this year, Bro. Rigsby Charles, our Vice President – Emeritus, was honoured for having attained fifty (50) years as a Society of St. Vincent de Paul member.

The appointment of a new National President and the demise of Bro. Steve presented an important and testing time for the Society. After Bro. Steve's 32 years involvement in all aspects of the Society's work, it was necessary to consider the continuity of the operations. It was agreed that a reorganization of the Society be undertaken and so the Executive commissioned Ernst & Young to conduct a Management Audit. The findings and recommendations were resented in April of this year and Bro. Wong Doo in his address will detail these.

With regard to youth, efforts at recruitment have not been successful over the year. However, the youth members were not stagnant. There was a meeting of youth organizations with the Minister of Youth Affairs at which the Society was represented, S.V.P. Youth were involved in the Rally, World Youth Day in Canada and last month's Youth XP in Couva.

We thank our Spiritual Director for the Lenten Day of Recollection conducted throughout the country and the seminarians who assisted him. Members need to place greater emphasis on attending this exercise and other spiritual exercises organized by the Society. The Day of Prayer, Study and Reflection at Mt. St. Benedict was held in November, 2001 and was conducted by Fr. Gabriel Malzaire, who will be ordained Bishop of Roseau, Dominica in a few weeks time. The Palm Sunday Walk-a-Thon and World Day of Peace session at Laventille Shrine maintain the regular attendance.

The Society organized a Mass for the first anniversary of the late Archbishop Pantin's death at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception.

The forty days after the death of Bro. Steve was marked by recitation of the Rosary at the graveside and Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. The first anniversary of his death will be marked by the celebration of Holy Mass on **October 14th at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at 5:00 p.m.**

During the past year the following members, benefactors and friends have died:

PAST MEMBERS:

Steve Solomon	-	Executive Secretary
Catherine Neptune	-	St. Augustine, Cunupia
Maude Green	-	SS Phillip & James, Chaguanas
Mc Donald Robinson	-	St. Francis, Belmont
Cecil Edinborough	-	St. Anthony's Petit Valley
Winston Dasent	-	National President

Neville Singh	-	St. Paul's, Manzanilla
Rita Cheeseman	-	Tritscher Home Committee
Veronica Edmund	-	St. Dominic's, Morvant
James Camacho	-	St. Finbar's, Diego Martin
Sandra Franklyn	-	Our Lady of Laventille
Maurice Smith	-	St. Joseph's, St. Joseph
Rupert Lambert	-	Sacred Heart, La Brea
Rupert Charles	-	Sacred Heart, La Brea
Patrick Steel	-	Our Lady of Fatima, Curepe

BENEFACTORS AND FRIENDS

Lady Ermyntrude Clarke
Melanie Pierre
Theresa Williams
Vera Carter
Terrence Malcolm Milne
Elaine Browne

Odette Cuffy
Jean George
Hetti Valentine
Cyril George
Joan Mg Fan
Claire Weekes

We remember these beloved and dedicated persons in our prayers and comfort ourselves knowing they have passed on to another life and gone to their reward.

We wish to acknowledge and commend the efforts of members of staff and volunteers at the Secretariat and to thank them for their contribution towards the success that we achieved over the year. We also acknowledge and thank the Matrons, support staff and volunteers who work at our institutions, for their untiring work and ever-present concern for the welfare of the residents. We are appreciative of the goodwill and patience exhibited by the business suppliers, their credit facilities help us enormously. We also appreciate the services of our legal advisors, Isidore Smart and his son, Wayne Smart, who volunteer their time and effort to the Society. We continue to receive support from the electronic and print media.

Our deceased Executive Secretary maintained that the National Secretariat had an ***Open Door Policy***. We inform that this still holds not only for our clients we serve but for you our Brothers and Sisters. **VISIT US.**

Above all, we thank Almighty God for our Blessed Mother Mary, St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederick Ozanam who have been the inspiration and motivation to us all.