**Society of St Vincent de Paul**

**St Joseph’s Conference**

**New Plymouth**

**Annual Report 2021 - 2022**

Membership:

The Conference has eight members. However, our team of Associate Members /Volunteers continues to expand. We now have 80 peopled active in the Community Meals, the Whare Kai, in parish visiting and in furniture pick-up and delivery,

Spirituality

At our monthly meetings our spiritual reflections have focused on the Rule of the SVdP Society, on sections of the Poverty and Justice Bible and on the letters we have received from our President General, Renato Lima Oliviera. Members have taken turns at leading this learning time

Our members and volunteers were blessed by Fr Simon at a celebratory Mass in 2020. COVID affected our ability to gather for a blessing in 2021, however, it was great to see our Young Vinnies from St Pius recognized at a Parish Mass in August.

**Our activities:**

Community Meals

We are now into our seventh year of providing a free weekly Community Meal to New Plymouth citizens. We have served or delivered more than 2,100 meals over the last year. This covers the Covid-19 lockdown period when meals could not be served at all.

Prior to lockdown, Young Vinnies of Pius X School provided hot soup during the winter months while students from St Joseph’s school and their parents provided practical help in the kitchen and dining room.

The meals re started after lock down - served from the hall, in take away boxes.

The number of people arriving at the door for take away meals has fallen. An average of 25 people turn up each week for take-away meals and we deliver a similar number in to the community after the meal. In October 2021 we began delivering nine meals each week to the New Plymouth Emergency Shelter which has nine beds. These have been very much appreciated by the men. – That’s one night a week, when the men do not have to go out and purchase food.

To support this work, in October 2021, we applied for and received a grant of $5K (about 33% of the budgeted cost of this activity in 2022) from the Catholic Charities Foundation.

Whare Kai

The Whare Kai is moving into its third year of operation. This initiative sees members guiding the mothers of young families in the cooking of a family meal, which they take home to eat.

St Vincent de Paul members, decide recipes (after consultation with the Mums), shop for the ingredients and apportion them according to the household numbers, co-ordinate a roster of Associate members, who come to support the cooks to help produce the cooked food.

The Whare Kai is currently operating from the hall at St James Presbyterian Church in Moturoa. The sessions start at 9.30 am. – Just after children have just been dropped off at school and pre school. It also enables the production of slow cooker meals which can be taken home and cooked during the day for the evening meal.

Currently there are nine Mums with 45 children between them, who are attending Whare Kai.

In 2022 we plan to introduce the opportunity to learn to use a sewing machine, into the Whare Kai sessions. Mum’s expressed a desire for this after we were given a sewing machine.

We can see that we have built trust with these women and believe that their families benefit by their attendance. We have been able to help them in ways that go far beyond supporting them to feed their families. And similarly we have learned a lot from the participants.

In December 2021 The Toi Foundation granted us $10K towards the budgeted Whare Kai expenses of $16,000 for 2022.

Furniture Pick-up and delivery: In April 2019, OLHC Conference assisted us with the purchase of a Ford Transit Van, which was emblazoned with the SVdP logo and put into service, with furniture pick up delivery being its key function. The van was fitted out with a rear tail lift.

We have 17 volunteers in our furniture pickup and delivery team. This includes two people who vet furniture prior to pick up.

In June 2021 this team received a Civic Award from the New Plymouth District Council for their work delivering furniture to clients of Taranaki Women’s Refuge.

From January – Dec 2021 this team made: 114 deliveries of furniture to families in need and picked up 113 loads of donated furniture.

We are well supported by the Our Lady Help of Christians Conference in Fitzroy, which supplies bedding (sheets pillows, duvets/ blankets) to go with the beds we deliver. They also supply kitchen utensils, pots and pans and crockery.

The budgeted cost for running and maintaining the van is $6,000 per year.

Visitation and the Drop in Ministry

A team of eleven (3 members and 8 Associate Members) make regular visits, in pairs, to 15 members of the Parish and of the wider community who have requested to be visited. Some of these people are in rest homes. Others are in their own home. These visits keep those visited people in touch with the Parish community and provide distraction form the routine of daily life. They are very much enjoyed by all parties.

Tertiary Study Grant

The St Joseph’s Conference, together with the OLHC Conference continues to offer tertiary grants to students from parish families, who need an extra boost to assist them with fees or other tertiary study expenses.

Social Justice:

Homelessness: In 2021 St Vincent de Paul took a leading role in forming “The Homelessness Group”. This was the outcome of meetings during Social Justice Week in October 2020. The membership of this group is made of representatives of almost every agency in New Plymouth which deals with people suffering from the effects of the chronic housing shortage.

Currently this group is awaiting the overdue outcome of a “Strategic Housing Summit” held in August which included local body and national politicians.

Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship (CORS)

We are currently seeking to become accredited as a Community Sponsor for a refugee family in New Plymouth. This exploration is in early stages. If successful this will involve finding accommodation for ta refugee family, (identified a refugees by the United Nation Refugee agency UNCHR) connecting them with Government support agencies so they receive all government provided entitlements, helping them get their children into schools and assisting them with practical help / advice for the first two years of their settlement. If it goes ahead, CORS will provide another opportunity for parish community involvement and support.

Other activities:

We act as advocates for people who need help communicating with helping agencies, and local body and local parliamentary politicians to access the services they need.

One of our members is a Trustee of the New Plymouth Men’s’ Shelter Trust and another is Trustee of

Community Housing Action Trust (CHAT).

We attend meetings at the offices of MSD, where agencies working to meet the needs of those disadvantaged by poverty, share the latest developments in their activities. Thus meetings keep us in touch with the bigger picture of Social Justice needs in New Plymouth.

There are many other one off calls for the support of people in need, which are attended to on a daily basis.

Finance:

We rely on donations o people’s time materials and money for all our work. The generosity of our supporters has given us the confidence to instigate and persist with activities which require significant finance.

In the year from June 2020 – June 2021, we spent in excess of $40,000. The key items were

* The cost of the Community Meals $10,035.
* The cost of the Whare Kai $11,526
* The cost of education assistance $5,274.
* Van costs (insurance, operation and maintenance) $5,229
* Emergency food (in addition to Community Meals) $800.00.

Sources of funding

* The annual parish collection: $6,942
* The TSB Community Trust: $ 10,200
* MSD Community Capability and Resilience Grant $8,800
* Catholic Charities Foundation: $3,000
* Other ad hoc donations: $9,568

Health and Safety

We are blessed to have been accident free in the past year. We have paid careful attention to lockdown rules as they apply to our activities.

In Summary:

2021 has been a busy and productive year for our Conference. There is always more to do.

COVID 19 has had an impact on us, limiting or changing our activity for weeks at a time. There will be an on-going need for the flexibility to meet the needs of people in these pandemic-ridden times.

The generosity of the parishioners, priests and staff, our Conference Members and Associate Members and volunteers keeps all our activities rolling over – and even expanding.

There are many good people who want to help us.

A very big thank you to all our supporters. God’s blessings to you all!

Romellia Rosal

President.

**Donations can be made to our Bank Account No: 15-3942-0689853-00**

**Please state on paying-in slip: Donation 2022; Parish No; Surname & initials**