

Diocese of Kingstown

SOCIAL SERVICES
OF
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN
ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

A graphic illustration of two hands reaching towards each other against a warm, orange-hued sunset background. The hand on the left is open and palm-up, while the hand on the right is more closed, with fingers slightly curled. The sun is visible as a bright, glowing orb between the two hands, creating a sense of connection and hope.

Prepared by
Diocesan Social Services Network (DISSERN)

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01. DIOCESAN SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK (DISSERN)



Synod 2015 sought to find ways to address issues affecting the Catholic Church in St Vincent and the Grenadines. One strategy put forward was to develop and promote a documentary on the social works provided by the Catholic Church through its various groups, which it is anticipated will highlight the church's efforts at service and opportunities for the involvement of everyone.

Synod Resolution 3 from the perspective of SERVICE states: "Be it resolved that Catholic Social Teaching be promoted and nurtured ..." In addition, Catholic Social Teaching stresses the importance of Care for God's Creation, Life and Dignity of the Human Person, and Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. It is in light of these two fundamental teachings that the Catholic Church in St Vincent and the Grenadines has initiated groups to address these. Collectively, the Diocesan Social Services Network (DISSERN) formed in May 2016, initiated by Bishop Gerard County, constitute these groups which provide critical and pertinent social services to Vincentians on a Parish and Diocesan level, thus sharing among membership and encouraging participation as they work towards a common goal.

DISSERN's Mission is enunciated as "To discuss, share and collaborate on social issues nationally, with a view to addressing them from a spiritual and moral perspective, conscious of human and financial constraints, thus avoiding duplication and wastage." This network functions at both Parish and Diocesan levels so as to build capacity at both the individual and collective levels, thus strengthening the Catholic faith. Credibility and support will also be enhanced as recognition for services, dynamism, productivity, transparency and good governance will be attributed locally, regionally and internationally.

Vincentians specifically and nationally will therefore recognize the value of the Catholic Church locally as a trail blazer, a religious denomination that "puts its money where its mouth is" thus participating and contributing to its mission, vision, activities and programmes.

02. CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES:

i. BREAD OF LIFE HOME

Bread of Life was founded as a Catholic community by Sister Zita Knights, Garth Eversley and Fr Michael Stewart in 1995, with housing at Fairbain Pasture. It later evolved into a home to care for children facing social ills and those whose parents died of HIV/AIDS leaving the children to experience the stigma and discrimination perpetrated against them. The home is managed and operated by a board of directors and is maintained by individual and corporate benefactors, and Government assistance. Today, the home is located in the residential community of Mt Bentinck, Georgetown and operated by the Carmelite Sisters. Counseling is provided by Marion House.

ii. CATHOLIC TEACHERS ASSOCIATION







Catholic Teachers Association (official name St Vincent and the Grenadines Catholic Teachers Association) legally registered, was founded in 1980 as a faith development/educational organization. It was formed by a group of Catholic teachers from within the Catholic schools throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines to address the strengthening of the faith, issues affecting them and to network locally and regionally.

The Mission is “Guiding all and practicing the Catholic ethos.” The target group for membership is Catholic teachers. Programmes and services offered include meetings and educational upgrading. The association became dormant in the early 2000’s and is currently being reorganized. Ianthe Leigertwood-Octave is assisting with the reformulation of the constitution while Jeanie Ollivierre and Yohorne are assisting with mobilization.

Although the Catholic Teachers Association is not a member of DISSERN, it is important to mention it in light of the positive social impact the group, through the schools, has had in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

iii. DE PORRES TRUST

De Porres Trust was founded by Father Jim Candon in the late 1990’s with its main focus being service to the indigent poor. It is a legal entity with bye-laws to govern its operations, registered in St Vincent and the Grenadines by Eucharista Bruce Lyle in 2008 as an incorporated

charity. This group, whose membership is of the Catholic community, serves 150 indigent poor, providing clothing, toiletries and weekly \$10 vouchers for groceries out of funds contributed by local and overseas benefactors.

The Trust also provides lunch every Sunday except the first Sunday of the month when it is provided by another charity. As part of its community outreach, the group also visits the prisons weekly, provides spiritual guidance and assists with toiletries, underwear, slippers, fruit as the need arises. Released prisoners are assisted with clothing and toiletries.

The Incorporated Trustees are Fr Jim Candon, Fr Richard Paynter, Anike Soluade, Kirk Da Silva, Franklin Young, Pamela Bonadie, Margaret Charles, Diane Da Silva-Clifton, Winnifred King, Martin Folan, with Legal Advisor Eucharista Bruce-Lyle.

The Trust's Mission is "To assist the poor and those who are marginalized,"

Its vision is "To see fewer people in need of our assistance."

iv. GARIFUNA BAKERY





Garifuna Bakery was established in Sandy Bay on July 17, 1993 by the Commission for the Development of People (CDP) under the leadership of Fr Callistus St Louis. The objectives were to provide affordable fresh bread and cakes etc to the people of Sandy Bay and surrounding areas and to provide employment opportunities for a number of people in the area.

The CDP first consulted with the residents of the Sandy Bay area, then in December 1989, Fr Callistus St Louis - Director of CDP, and Ordan Graham – Coordinator of CDP, met with Mrs Gisela Balcombe – Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany, to discuss a proposal for the establishment of a bakery.

Work on the project began on September 30, 1991 and the bakery officially opened on July 17, 1993. Capital cost upon completion was just over EC\$100,000. Initial funding of EC\$24,382.04 was provided in August 1991 by the German Embassy in Trinidad through the efforts of the local Honorary Consul, Mrs Gisela Balcombe. Further funding came from The Canada Fund, which was a section of the Canadian Development Assistance Programme based in Barbados, and Misereor of West Germany.

Other assistance came in the form of technical drawings by Mr Errol Belgraves, bakery equipment which arrived in December 1992 and March 1993 consisting of an oven, dough mixer, baking pans and racks, a generator, and paid freight from Food For the Poor, waiver of customs duty on bakery equipment to the tune of EC\$8,000 by Government, installation, technical advice and trial runs by Mr Keith Edwards through Eastern Caribbean Flour Mills and Mr Andrew Glasgow. Management training was provided by Mr Ricky Deane and Mr Simeon Green, bakery training by Mr Antrobus of Antrobus Bakery and Mr Browne of Yank Bakery. More than half of the usual fee was waived for medical examinations and certification of staff by Dr Junior Bacchus.

Though the bakery is not a DISSERN member and is not considered a social service, it was conceived out of unemployment concerns and does help to address the lack of employment and social consequences in Sandy Bay and the surrounding villages. The bakery is governed by an eight member board of directors with daily operations overseen by a manager and supervisor.

v. LADIES OF CHARITY

Ladies of Charity, whose official name is The Association of the Ladies of Charity, comprises a group of Catholic women and was founded in 1962 to cater to the spiritual and material needs of poor and displaced persons. Meetings for the current 21 members, headed by a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, are held on the third Tuesday of each month. The Parish Priest of the Cathedral is the assigned spiritual director.

As part of its mission, the Ladies of Charity provide monthly food packages to 25 elderly persons and visit the indigent elderly. Their main spiritual activities include, visits to their recipients, annual visits and assistance to the Lewis Punnett Home, Lenten retreats, celebration of their feast day, quarterly motivational and spiritual talks by local and overseas guest speakers, participation in church annual events, as well as representation on various church committees.

Funds for their activities are generated from operation of a thrift shop, local and overseas donations, Soroptimist Club, monthly subscriptions and other activities including annual Mothers Day luncheon, Carnival Creole sale, barbecues and take-away lunches.

The Ladies of Charity organization was instrumental in procuring a building at Rose Place to operate as a night shelter for the homeless in Kingstown. The residents are also served breakfast and dinner.

The following are listed as the group's objectives:

- a. "To carry out the work of our Lord Jesus Christ by assisting the poor in their spiritual and material needs,"
- b. "To foster and encourage the spiritual good of its members through their ministry to the needy."

Its mission is "To cater to the spiritual and material needs of the poor and displaced persons within our Catholic communities in St Vincent and the Grenadines," and the motto "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters that you do unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

vi. LOAVES AND FISHES SOUP KITCHEN



Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen was founded in 1994 by Fr. Andrew Roache out of concern for the poor and marginalized in and around Kingstown, particularly the homeless, who were fed

three times a week at the Cathedral's garage. Fr Andrew was, at the time, associate pastor at the Cathedral of the Assumption.

During the early years of the soup kitchen's operation, it catered to those in need three times a week. Clients included those who sought refuge and assistance with food, clothing and shelter, children of the unemployed, and those attending school far from their homes. The soup kitchen was also a place of rehabilitation, where persons from medical college and well wishers devoted their time and effort.

Concerned parishioners brought food items and clothing on a regular basis and offered time, talent and treasure free of cost until the effort became overwhelming. The parish made other arrangements for sponsorship from parishioners, Food for the Poor, Government and the private sector to serve the increasing numbers.

The soup kitchen was relocated to Rose Place with much assistance from St. Vincent Electricity Services Ltd (VINLEC), and other public and private sector organizations. It was rededicated on November 18, 2016 and now caters to 150 persons on a daily basis in its new premises. Funding comes from parishioners, other individuals, Government, private sector and World Food Programme.

vii. MARION HOUSE



Marion House was jointly founded October 2, 1989 by a group of Catholics from the Kingstown community with Fr Michael Stewart as leader, to address youth issues locally and nationally in partnership with National Children's Home, a United Kingdom Methodist agency headquartered in Barbados.

Marion House is a non-profit, professional counseling centre offering services to the Vincentian public through "walk in," individual, group, employer, the Court or institution referral. It was officially housed at the Da Costa building in Frenches, offering services to young parents and youths generally, therapeutic/counseling, support for victims of domestic violence and chemical dependency.

With no financial resources, the centre was then housed at the old Magistrate's building at Murray's Road where it was engulfed by fire in 1990, causing staff to temporarily relocate to Kingstown Hill, while negotiations with the European Union (EU) and Sir James Mitchell, then Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, materialized. The EU subsequently provided funding for construction of a building, administration and programming for a five year period.

Marion House flourished at its new location with individual space for counselors, programming, administration, conference room, library and HIV/AIDS resource room.

The following are programmes offered by the institution:

- a. The Youth Assistance Programme (YAP) both at Kingstown at Georgetown, constitutes a full time one year "in house" life skills at the centre, with another six months in apprenticeship based on the skill of choice of the youth. Mentorship and community service are also included,
- b. There is a Young Parent Empowerment Programme (YPEP) which provides alternate parenting to parents enrolled,
- c. A "right step" or substance abuse programme which is offered at an individual or group level,
- d. Individual, couple, family or group counseling is also provided,
- e. A "Helping Hurting Hearts Heal" domestic violence support group is also a reality.

Marion House was legally registered in 1992/October 18, 1994 by legal advisor Randolph Howard, with a board of six/seven practicing Catholics. Policy decisions, inclusive of employment and termination of staff fall within the jurisdiction of the board of directors, headed by the chairperson. Daily administrative matters are the business of the Director, policy matters, legal agreements etc are discussed with and approved by the board.

The institution's Mission is "A presence of people who care, guiding the individual on the road to wholeness."

viii. MARGUERITE SHANAGHER NIGHT SHELTER (THE)



The Marguerite Shanagher Night Shelter located at Rose Place was established by the Ladies of Charity, a group of Catholic women, to offer overnight shelter to the homeless. This project was partly funded by the Good News Group in Wisconsin USA and the local Soroptimist group, the latter fully furnished, and continues to maintain a room in the shelter. The corporate sector plays a vital role in maintenance of the property and furniture upgrade.

ix. OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE HOME



Our Lady of Guadalupe Home, the brainchild of Sister Patricia Ann Douglas, officially opened September 8, 2007, the birthday of Our Lady. The home offers accommodation, nurturing and therapeutic services for young girls at risk. The objective is to provide an opportunity for healthy spiritual, social, emotional and educational development through counseling, general youth information, after school lessons, training and development. The home also provides an integrated service of support for the girls: life skills, including direct work, private counseling and other health, educational and recreational activities outside the home where appropriate.

On staff are, an administrator, resident house mother, night security. Girls are referred to the home by Government case workers, and Marion House provides counseling on a weekly basis. The office is open from 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon and 1.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday. A member of staff is available after office hours in case of emergency. The physical structure comprises a 16-bed dormitory, showers, living-room, kitchen, laundry and bathroom facilities, and is located in close proximity to a Roman Catholic Church, health centre and police station.

Assistance is received from Government, the corporate sector and other benefactors.

The Mission: “Our Lady of Guadalupe Home is a Catholic institution in the Diocese of Kingstown, which transforms lives of suffering into lives of hope and promise by providing a safe, caring and nurturing environment for girls ages 12 to 18 years old. **Empowering Teenage Girls at Risk.**”

x. ST BENEDICT DAY NURSERY AND CHILDREN’S HOME INC

St Benedict Day Nursery and Children’s Home Inc. is located in Mt Bentinck, Georgetown, the North Windward side of the island, twenty-two miles from capital Kingstown. The nursery was established July 25, 1963 by Fr Roland Roberts of the Scarborough Foreign Missions in Canada to provide daily care for one hundred children in need. He was the parish priest at the time. The nursery closed in 2005 due to poor conditions but reopened in 2012 through assistance from the Mustique Charitable Trust, however, it closed again in 2017.

The St Benedict Children Home, formerly called the St Benedict Infant Hospital, was founded February 13, 1968 initially for severely malnourished children and children with medical and social complications. It has evolved into a haven for orphaned, abandoned, abused, mistreated, physically and mentally challenged and needy children. The institution is managed by the Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters with funds from private local and international donors, Government contributions, and the administrator’s active fundraising. The administrator is Sr Nyra Anne Pajotte.

xi. ST PATRICK’S SOCIETY



St Patrick's Society, commenced in 1847 as a cooperative to assist members with death benefits, medical benefits and other needs. Assistance is occasionally given to the needy. There are approximately forty members who are expected to assist in cleaning the church and to attend Mass every third Sunday as a group. The society owns a building at White Chapel in Kingstown.

xii. ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

St Vincent de Paul Society, local conference was founded in April 1992 to care for the poor. The late Br Steve Solomon of Trinidad and Tobago was invited by Fr Michael Stewart in St John's parish, Mesopotamia, to start what is now the St John the Evangelist Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. The society's first President was Kenneth Browne. Conferences were subsequently started at St Theresa's in Gomea, Sacred Heart in Rillan, and a youth conference at St Joseph's Convent Marriaqua, but these are no longer active. There are two conferences at present – St John's/Mesopotamia and St Martin De Porres/Stubbs, one of the missions of the Corpus Christi parish. There have been several futile attempts to start conferences in other parishes throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The St Vincent de Paul Society works along with Good News of Wisconsin, USA to provide basic shelters for the poor and assist with the distribution of medical supplies, school supplies and

