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SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice has been a key component of our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for close to 20 years, as we joined the larger Vincentian family (FAMVIN) in active systemic change. As defined by FAMVIN, Systemic Change among those in poverty aims beyond providing food, clothing, shelter and alleviating immediate needs. It enables people themselves to engage in the identification of the root causes of their poverty and to create strategies, including advocacy, to change those structures which keep them in poverty. [SYSTEMIC CHANGE REQUIRES TRANSFORMING ATTITUDES](#)

Transforming attitudes can mean stepping outside of our comfort zone of charity only work to including trying new methods of actually making a difference in the lives of persons living in poverty. This may include listening to their voices, allowing our own thinking to undergo change.

Why Social Justice? Listen to these voices.

Frederic Ozanam said, “[You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crises; you must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty with the aim of a long-term improvement.](#)”

St. Vincent told us... “[The Poor sometimes suffer more from lack of order than from lack of charitable persons.](#)”

Catholic Social Teachings also provide us with the framework to take actions on various issues that must be addressed in order to provide every human being with the level of respect and opportunity to share in the common good for all.

Our National supports social justice by encouraging having a social justice rep or committee at every council/conference, and also including social justice as an agenda item at every meeting with sufficient time allotted for discussions, and yet, we still struggle with becoming more active about social justice issues. Our 2020 annual report provides these stats on our activity: Only 116 conferences have a social justice rep; only 100 conferences include social justice on meeting agendas. Why is this? What are the barriers? How can we all do more?

In order to provide further resources and support regarding social justice, we shall offer articles and links in the SSVP newsletters for April and May. As always, we invite you to visit our national website (www.ssvp.ca) for social justice resources and subscribe to this bi-weekly newsletter for social justice news.

National Housing Campaign

This [campaign](#) has entered its second year and is an outstanding example of a systemic change project seeking to address the severe lack of affordable and adequate housing across Canada. We need your support at the regional and conference level. Housing and homelessness is an issue in every city or town, in every province and region. Therefore, during the months of April

and May we shall also provide several articles about how you can make a difference in this housing emergency by being a local housing champion.

I invite you to read our future articles in April and May editions of this newsletter and I challenge every member to take that extra step and get involved in one or more of our social justice committees and actions.

Jim Paddon, Chair

National social justice committee



OUR UNKNOWN NEIGHBOURS: MIGRANT WORKERS

Migrant Workers Program

The strength of Canada's economy is measured in part by the size of the labour force that generates income taxes for the government.

Foreign workers are a growing segment of the Canadian labour force. Migrant workers (MWs) come from different countries, the most predominates being the Caribbean islands, Mexico, Guatemala, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, Ecuador, China, Ukraine, Peru and Brazil.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2016 approximately 613,200 foreign nationals in Canada held work permits (www150.statcan.gc.ca). Even with this large number of foreign workers in the labour market, there is still a need for more. It is a growing labour shortage that is projected to increase. A study by the Conference Board of Canada is projecting 113,800 unfilled jobs by 2025.

Migrant workers come to work in Canada under the structure of two programs:

- Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), which needs a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) and includes the Low Wage Streams and Primary Agriculture Stream programs.
- International Mobility Program.

In my experience, the most vulnerable workers are the ones who work under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP):

- The low wage stream includes positions with wages below the provincial or territorial median hourly wage. This includes industries like manufacturing, transportation, construction, services, caregivers, food and beverage, hospitality, and agriculture.
- The primary agriculture stream refers to temporary foreign workers engaged in on-farm primary agricultural work and includes the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP).

Statistics

On-farm agriculture is the one industry that has the highest vacancy job rate of any industry. This accounts for approximately 60% of all workers who may enter Canada under the TFWP.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) is the stream most commonly used by agricultural producers. In 2019, approximately 30,500 work permits were issued under the SAWP, with 9,100 workers, or 30%, arriving from participating Caribbean countries and the remaining 70% from Mexico.

In 2020, most foreign workers who worked on farms were located in Ontario (43%), Quebec (30%), and British Columbia (18%).

Difficulties that Migrant Farm Workers Face

Under these programs, workers come to work in Canada with closed work permits. The vast majority of workers live in bunkhouses on the farm, sharing their space with other workers, often lacking any kind of privacy. They work long hours and, in some cases, work seven days per week. They arrive leaving

their families behind for many months. Depending on the program that they enter Canada under, some workers come for eight months a year, while others might stay for two or more years at a time.

Workers also have many challenges accessing appropriate health care because of long hours of work, lack of access to transportation, living in remote areas and language barriers.

Another challenge can be the mental health of MWs. Even though they are very resilient, we can only imagine how hard it is to leave family behind, missing out on many important events and moments shared with the family. This is cause of stress for many families and it can dramatically affect family relationships.

Why the Sacrifice

You may be asking “Why do MWs want to come to Canada?” Sadly, they can earn in Canada in two weeks approximately what they could earn in their home countries in two months. These men and women come with hopes and dreams to provide a better life for their families. Some of the things workers earn money for are to give their children a good education, help their parents with medical bills (e.g., in Mexico, health care can be very expensive). Some want to be able to own a house one day and some want to save for an opportunity to retire comfortably.

The sacrifice seems great when you think that these men and women who labour among us, in many cases, come back to work year after year for many years. I have met workers who have come for 25 to 30 consecutive years. The opportunity to apply for permanent resident status is limited. They are unable to bring their families or to have their children study here, while working in Canada. Also, due to the long hours of physical labour, they are prone to developing musculoskeletal problems and other health issues.

From their perspective, all of these sacrifices are worth it when they proudly say that they were able to build a home for their family, send their children to good schools, and to pay for university. Many know that their children will have the opportunity for a better education that will give them the opportunity for a better future.

It is important to recognize the contribution that MWs contribute to our economy. MWs pay their taxes, pay EI and contribute to the Canadian economy when they buy their groceries, clothes and gifts for their family. The most important contribution is that they are a vital part of ensuring the agricultural sector is productive and they put fresh food on the tables of Canadians.

Communities Can Help MWs

The Diocese of London has recognized the importance of serving our brother and sister MWs. That is why in 2003, the Diocese of London, established the Migrant Worker Ministry and has been “Sharing Faith and Life” with migrant workers ever since. Each year, the number of men and women coming to our Diocese continues to increase, as well as the countries they come from.

The ministry also works in conjunction with community partners to serve various migrant cultural groups and with community organizations who collaborate with us in a “community building” approach. This enhances the welcome MWs receive and support for those who come to our country in search of employment in safe and just conditions.

We recognize that MWs are part of our community, that they are our neighbours and that most come to Canada without family or friends to help them. We, the community, are their family. It is very nice to find a place where they can speak their own language, where they can celebrate their culture, find friends who welcome them into their lives and families, and find spiritual nourishment and access to the sacraments. That is what we, in the Diocese of London, do for them.

We rely on our volunteers within the communities to support this ministry. I have encountered amazing people helping MWs, reaching out to workers, and giving a friendly hand to them. We always welcome volunteers and are always in need because, at the end of the day, it is the people who can create amazing communities where all neighbours are family.

The Diocese of London Ministry Services and Masses

The Diocese of London serves the following counties in Ontario: Huron Perth, Oxford, Norfolk, Middlesex, Elgin, Lambton, Chatham-Kent and Essex. Our diocese is staffed by a Migrant Worker Ministry Specialist and a dedicated Spanish-speaking priest. This ministry is also supported by many other Spanish-speaking clergy who offer Spanish masses in the different areas. Pre-pandemic, we also offered dinners after mass and are hopeful to resume the dinners this summer.

Our Spanish masses vary on different days according of the region, but Leamington has a mass every Sunday at 3:00 pm in St. Michael's Parish.

If you are interesting in learning about our masses and services in the other regions, or you would like to know more about Migrant Workers Ministry,

Go to: <https://www.dol.ca/migrant-workers>

Call: Migrant Worker Specialist, Azuani Cano at (519) 433-0658 ext. 260

Donations can be made to the Migrant Workers Ministry at <https://dol.pllenty.com/#/>

Article from the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows News

By Priyanka Ketkar, March 2, 2022

<https://www.mapleridgenews.com/community/volunteers-to-donate-200-bikes-to-migrant-farm-workers-impacted-by-flooding/>

Volunteers to donate 200 bikes to migrant farm workers impacted by flooding

A few residents from Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows have been repairing and donating bikes to support migrant farmworkers, and their next haul of around 200 bikes will be going towards farmworkers who lost their bikes during the Fraser Valley flooding last year.

The individuals are now seeking volunteers to help repair and fulfill a large order of bikes.

Steve Nicklen, a Maple Ridge resident, who is part of this group of individuals donating bikes, is also the member who fixes up the bikes. He remarked that while he loved fixing the bikes, he could use help.

“I’m working six days a week at two jobs and I have about 50 bikes to repair on the side. I could definitely use help fixing right now. So, for volunteering to repair bikes I would be looking for someone that has some bike repair skills and can do some fairly advanced stuff, like replacing cables and properly tuning gears. I can get parts for them but it would be good if they had some tools at home and a space to work and keep a few bikes to work on,” he said.

Earlier in February, Nicklen delivered 30 bikes to migrant workers in Langley. The next delivery will be for around 200 bikes to migrant farmworkers who lost their transportation during the Fraser Valley floods last year.

Byron Cruz from Sanctuary Health and the program “Migrante a Migrante”, has been working tirelessly with migrant farmworkers. After the Fraser Valley floods, he realized that not only had these workers lost their possessions and means to provide for themselves, they had also lost transportation.

He reached out to Pitt Meadows’ migrant farmworker rights advocate, Thelma Rodriguez, and let her know of the need for bikes.

“We definitely need the help. We also need a place for storage. Right now, Carolina Echeverría from the Family Education and Support Centre, is providing storage for the bikes and has also given some financial help,” said Rodriguez, who was recognized by the City of Pitt Meadows for her dedication to the community last year, with the Good Neighbour Award.

READ MORE: [Pitt Meadows honours 2021’s do-gooders with Community Service Award](#)

Another advocate, Yves Chinnapen, chair of the Ridge Meadows Multicultural Society, also discovered the need for bikes for migrant farmworkers post-flooding, through his work with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

“There is a bigger branch of the Saint Vincent de Paul that covers the migrants in greater Vancouver. That’s when I found out that migrant workers lost a lot of their prized possessions including bicycles in the last Fraser Valley flood,” he said, noting, “Their bicycles are their pride and joy. They give them a sense of independence.”

Nicklen, who is leading the bike repairs, has been grateful for the community’s help. He also gets asked how he could possibly fulfill such a big order.

“I’ve been asked a lot how I am going to meet the demand of all these bike requests, and my answer to that is simply ‘one bike at a time’.”

To get involved in the effort, people can reach out to him on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook, or send an email to steve.nicklen@gmail.com.

ALSO READ: [Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge locals lend a helping hand to migrant farmworkers](#)



CAMPAIGN - SAFE, SECURE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

The Reality in Moncton

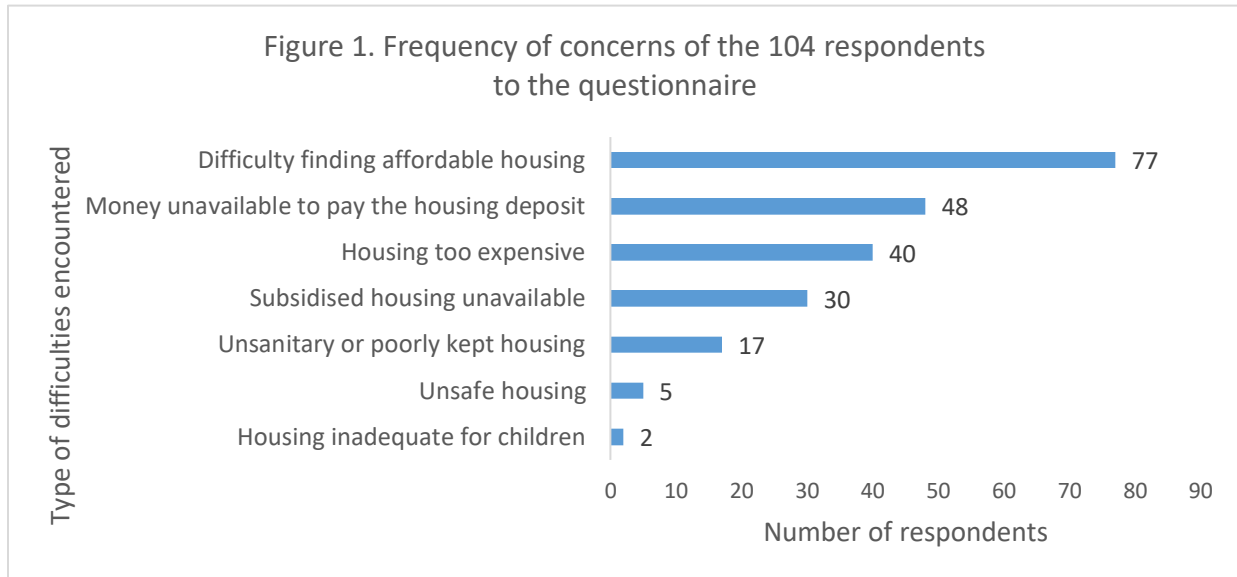
A home is a place where you feel comfortable, where you decorate with objects that reflect your personality and where you invite your friends. The right to have a shelter, to sleep in one's own bed, under a roof, to live in a place where each person can be safe is a right enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights. Having a home is essential to maintaining one's dignity, safety and health. Yet many Canadians struggle to put a roof over their heads.

The Canadian Society of Saint Vincent de Paul recently identified the housing crisis as the central theme of a campaign they are conducting across the country. At their invitation, in Moncton, members of the Mother Teresa Conference of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul chose to gather information from the people who use their services. During the year 2021, a dozen members of the Mother Teresa Conference responded to requests from people living in poverty by visiting them. In all, 189 homes were visited: 156 different homes were visited and, 33 others were helped without meeting them personally. Members were able to serve 239 adults and 136 children. During the year 2021, the Mother Teresa Conference spent \$42,521 to help these needy people: food, clothing, shelter, furniture, transportation costs, medical assistance. The greatest need (56%) was for housing and utilities.

The tool used to collect data about housing included the following eight questions, to which Mother Teresa Conference members could answer yes or no and could also record comments:

1. Difficulty obtaining affordable housing
2. Difficulty paying the required housing deposit
3. Unavailability of subsidized housing in the area
4. Housing too expensive
5. Lack of maintenance by the landlord
6. Unsafe housing
7. Inadequate housing for children
8. Unsanitary housing

Of the 189 people contacted, Mother Teresa Conference members were able to compile responses from 104 people saying they had concerns about their rent. This means that 55% of the people who called for help from the Mother Teresa Conference were experiencing housing difficulties. The distribution of hardship is shown in Figure 1.



The data clearly shows that the availability of affordable housing is the biggest issue for the less affluent people who have sought assistance from the Mother Teresa Conference. The addition of subsidized housing would greatly assist these individuals. For those who do not have enough money to pay the deposit, one solution to propose to the government would be to create a special fund from which the needy could draw to pay the deposit. This would be cheaper than maintaining the homeless.

A small number of respondents indicated that their housing was either unsanitary, poorly maintained, unsafe or unsuitable for children. Specific comments made with respect to certain housing conditions included the following:

- Inaccessibility for a wheelchair
- Long repair delay for broken items
- Presence of mice
- Presence of broken stoops
- Poor maintenance of an icy entrance

Currently, there are plenty of rentals available if a person can pay \$1,200 per month or more. What is lacking is affordable rent for which one pays no more than 30% of their income.

Housing advocates say that we should not rely on the private sector to build affordable housing. In New Brunswick, large corporations looking to make a quick profit invest in real estate and build high-end housing, which is the most profitable. Financial institutions lend them the money to do this, knowing that they will be repaid.

Recently, rapid increases in housing costs are hurting people in poverty. There is a need to encourage the construction of cooperative housing, to strengthen current housing legislation and to put a cap on rising rent prices.

In their actions, the members of the Mother Teresa Conference are motivated by a desire to be close to the poor in order to give them relief and hope. Their cry of distress is obvious but this housing crisis will not be solved alone. It will require the help of other concerned groups.

Aur a Cormier and Denyse LeBlanc, Mother Teresa Conference, Moncton N.B.



ANNUAL NATIONAL FORMATION

We are excited to invite you to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Annual National Formation (ANF) to be held in Ottawa on June 17 and 18, 2022 at Carleton University.

The theme of the 2022 ANF is HUNGER; this theme covers different types of hunger topics such as in-person contact, continuity of SSVP, spiritual, emotional, as well as the obvious hunger related to food insecurity. We are offering multiple workshops in French and English and a Live Chat Room for an opportunity to exchange ideas and enter into conversations with our fellow Vincentians on their initiatives. We are also pleased to offer a plenary session with a keynote speaker (TBA). The theme of HUNGER will be a thread that runs throughout the two-day event.

The Live Chat Room is a forum where members, conferences or councils can identify a topic for discussion or share their successful initiatives/projects with other Vincentians. Please reserve a spot at the Live Chat Room to present your initiative or project by filling this [submission form](#).

Workshops are typically 75 minutes long, to include presentation with a question and answer period. Presenters must provide their own presentation material. Please submit your workshop proposal by filling this [submission form](#).

Please submit by April 30.

This in-person event is long-awaited after our hibernation over the last two years. Our hope is to create an inspiring and uplifting event in which we can once again network and enjoy each other's company and wisdom. We hope to see you there.

National Formation Committee



UKRAINE

In solidarity with the people of Ukraine who are being pressured to leave their beloved country to flee the war, and to assist with the exodus of people from Ukraine to neighboring countries or refugees who will be coming to Canada, the National Council of Canada has established a special appeal “Emergency Ukraine”; in conjunction with the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Commission for International Aid and Development (CIAD) , funds will be directed where aids will be required.

Donations can be made at:

MAKE A DONATION

The SSVP and the Vincentian Family Standing Up for Peace

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Canada is twinned with two of the four SSVP conferences in Ukraine. The Simcoe North Particular Council, Ontario, is twinned with the Blessed Marta Wiecka Conference, Kiev, Ukraine and the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Conference, Sherwood Park, Alberta, is twinned with the Luisa de Mariac Conference, Murovani, Kurilovci, Ukraine.

On February 22nd, the Vincentian Family published a Statement on the current situation which is sadly unfolding in Eastern Europe. Therein, the Vincentian Family calls on all parties to reach for global peace and stands firm in their commitment to fully support the people in Ukraine.

This statement was signed by all global Vincentian Family leaders, including our 16th President General International, brother Renato Lima de Oliveira, on behalf of the whole Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Click here to read the full statement published by the Vincentian Family:

<https://famvin.org/en/2022/02/24/letter-to-the-vincentian-family-in-ukraine-and-eastern-europe/?noredirect=en-US>



PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek:

to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

This prayer is often referred to as the *Prayer of Saint Francis*. The person saying it is praying that his or her desires be seen as irrelevant and, instead, that he or she become an instrument of God, a tool of God's divine will, to move beyond their own will and do only what is discerned to be God's will.

It is God's will that we be a positive influence – to bring love where there is hatred, pardon where there is injury, faith where there is doubt, hope when there is despair, light where there is darkness, and joy where there is sadness. This is not always easy. It is far easier at times to fall into the negativity and worldly cynicism which has always surrounded us.

As an example, a person talking about pardon where there is injury would have to be prepared for rejection and even opposition to the message. The injured party would want justice from the other party - offering pardon would be perceived as a blow to their pride or a sign of weakness. It would take time, prayer, and discernment for the wounded to see the liberating aspect and nobility of forgiveness as opposed to the immediate gratification of "An eye for an eye!"

Service in His name was seen as a vital aspect of the Franciscan tradition, as it is in the Vincentian tradition, not just in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul but throughout the Vincentian family. To console others, to understand others and, indeed, to even love others in His name is what we are called to do. Our personal consolation, acceptance, and appreciation is not required and suffering endured due to a lack of these blessings may increase the sanctity of the consolation, understanding, and love offered to others in His name.

It is in giving that we receive. Through acts of service in His name, allowing us to be the agents of His salvation plan, we sanctify ourselves and come closer to Him. Most of us have been on cases for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul where, upon resolution, the person thanked us. It is we who should be thanking them for allowing us to do His work in our small way.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. The virtue of forgiveness is its own reward – be forgiving as the Father is forgiving.

It is in dying that we are born to eternal life. This is more than a statement of faith. It is also a statement that the rejection of our needs and dying to ourselves in the service of others in His name is the path to eternal life.

Being an instrument of God's peace is not an easy task. It is surprising how many peacemakers often meet violent ends. Gandhi, Sadat, Begin, Lennon – all these people have paid the ultimate price for making, or trying to make, peace. Christ certainly did and he is our example.

A very big part of service in God's name is realizing and accepting that it is not about you. It is about accepting divine will, His will. This is difficult for many to accept and even seems suspicious, even to co-religionists. Sometimes you wonder yourself. The Gospel message is a call to action, but I am not worthy to do God's work. To say I should do God's work seems presumptuous. You would be right. No one is worthy of doing God's work but God's work always gets done by people like us.

It is noteworthy that the first appearance of this prayer in writing was in 1912, long after the death of Saint Francis. While it is attributed to him, it is unlikely that he ever even heard this very popular prayer.

*John Carry, Chair
National Spirituality Committee*



TWINNING

Communication and prayer with a twinning partner in Guatemala

There are three main components to an effective twinning – financial assistance, communication and prayer with (or for) the partner. Communication by the recipient twin is a regular challenge due to difficulties in accessing Internet networks, or having no access at all. The language barrier can also be an obstacle. Donor twins must adapt their means of communication to recipient partners with few resources. Cellphones are widely used in developing countries of the southern hemisphere because they are low-cost and free communication options are offered (Messenger, WhatsApp, etc.). These methods of communication are encouraged to maintain regular and effective contacts with twinning partners.

Following is a good example of a novel fraternal contact. The North Fraser Particular Council, Coquitlam, BC, has been twinning with the National Council of Guatemala since 2017. Sister Susanna D’Souza is the twinning contact person at the Council. Here is her report:

On Saturday night, February 19th, I received a message from an unknown number in Spanish. I Google translated it and came to understand it was from Guatemala and it was from Patricia Hidalgo, President of the National Council of Guatemala. Patricia thanked North Fraser Particular Council for helping the Council of Guatemala. This conversation went on for two hours, while I translated from Spanish to English. Replied in English and Google translated back my answer in Spanish. Anyway, we agreed to say the rosary the next day on Sunday at 4 p.m., which was 6 p.m. in Guatemala.

At 4 p.m. Patricia called on a video chat, we both showed each other our rosaries. As I was sitting in front of my laptop, I played the rosary in Spanish on YouTube on the speaker while I had Patricia on Video chat. We said the Glorious mysteries together. Patricia prayed in Spanish and I prayed in English. We plan to have more conversations in the future.

Here is a screen shot of the two of us. This was our first attempt at communicating and seeing each other in real time.



I encourage donor twins to use these communication tools to build fraternal links with their twins.

*Clermont Fortin, Chairperson
National Twinning Committee*



QUESTION & ANSWER

Q: What are the major areas of responsibilities for a Board?

A: As servant-leaders for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul with the primary focus to be stewards of the organization, it is important to include the Duty of Care, the Duty of Loyalty, and Duty of Obedience in the areas of responsibilities as the governing body on behalf of all members.^{1 2}

Duty of Care: A Board member is expected to act as any ordinary, prudent person in similar circumstances. This requires diligent, attentive, informed participation, i.e., reasonable care when making decisions in stewardship of the organization.

The duty of care is evident in the following activities:

- The Board holds regularly scheduled meetings;
- Board members have received and read the by-laws and policies;
- Information is provided to the Board in a timely manner and in advance of meetings;
- Board members arrive at meetings prepared, having read the minutes and advance material;
- Financial reports are furnished on a regular schedule and are reviewed by the Board;
- The Board makes informed decisions based on information provided, and seek information is insufficient information is available;
- Minutes accurately reflect Board votes and decisions, including dissent.

Duty of Loyalty: Board members are expected to act in good faith, giving undivided allegiance to the organization, when making decisions that affect it. They should not operate for personal gain against the best interests of the organization. When a conflict arises between the interests of a Board member and the well-being of the organization, the Board member should immediately disclose the matter and recuse from both the discussion and the decision-making. If the matter proceeds, the terms of any transaction with a Board member must be at least as favorable to the organization as that which could be obtained from a party with no ties to it. Board members should observe confidentiality regarding the Board's deliberations and decision-making, and respect and adhere to all Board decisions, regardless of whether they voted in favor of the motion. Only designated spokespersons (usually the President) may speak publicly on behalf of the organization.

Duty of Obedience: A Board member is expected to act in a manner that ensures the organization operates in keeping with its mission and by-laws and in accordance with the laws and regulations governing its formation and status. To maintain the public's trust as a non-profit organization, Board members must be fully conversant and compliant with the organization's mission, by-laws and policies, and ensure that the policies, goals and activities (including competent management of its funds and other resources) are executed in accordance with the mission.

¹Source: Anne Dalton, "Three Major Areas of Board Responsibility," The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc., 2014.

² US SVdP, <https://files.constantcontact.com/fd89f49d001/6973e70b-c88a-412e-b4a4-3a83b874923f.pdf>