



# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE US SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## ® A Letter From Our President

Dear Vincentian Friends,

The breadth and pace of the decisions we need to make now as Vincentian leaders is becoming overwhelming. Our Vincentian spirituality and friendship is our most valuable asset in this moment. I will try to communicate regularly with you to offer support, share some insights and best practices.

Do not expect or wait, however, for the National Council to provide specific recommendations about what you need to do in your Conferences and Councils. Why is that? Things are changing so quickly that by the time you see a message and bring it to your membership for discussion, it may be irrelevant. Local circumstances also vary greatly. Our government and Church officials are increasingly providing guidance or even mandating practices that we need to follow. Across the country, the types of services we provide, the financial strength of our Councils and Conferences, and the profiles of our members and volunteers are very diverse, so it is you who are in the best position to know how to proceed in your community.

Servant Leadership will be needed now more than ever. Stay in touch with each other. Try making these difficult decisions with broad input from the group. We may not agree on what steps need to be taken, but – now more than ever – we need to listen to and respect each other. If you are part of a group and a decision is made contrary to what you suggested, please support the consensus of the group as best you can.

A current trend in strategic planning is the concept of being agile. I encourage you to embrace that idea. Do not be afraid to revisit your plans and reverse course, if that's what's needed.

I know the Councils with programs and stores are making difficult decisions. How to protect our members, staff, volunteers and those we serve needs to be our priority. For many of you, however, I know the financial implications of these decisions are sobering.

How to help our employees who cannot work is an issue without a good solution. Hopefully, there will be some governmental help for all businesses faced with this problem. A whole new agenda for our Voice of the Poor efforts may be emerging. Clearly, our first concern needs to be the health and safety of everyone involved. We have many members and volunteers who are particularly vulnerable to this virus. This will eventually pass, so let's be sure we do not jeopardize our future ability to serve, but rather see this as an opportunity to strengthen our network of charity.

**National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

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I see no need to duplicate the informed advice that is readily available from many sources, but in the days ahead I will continue to share what I observe happening within the Society. Even though our meetings are being cancelled at every level of the Society, there is a need to stay connected. We are all self-isolating for good reason, but we can still maintain our bonds of friendship and mutual support.

As Vincentians, let us truly commit to our “serving in hope.”



Ralph Middlecamp  
National Council President