



Your generous hearts keep us going



With masses suspended, online donations help SSVP continue its mission to help the poor

Never before have we been faced with a situation like this. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) depends mainly on the 2nd collection conducted in the Catholic churches on the 1st Sunday of each month to help more than 3,300 Friends in Need (FINs) under its care. When masses were suspended due to Covid-19 our Catholic brethren, who helped to keep this SSVP mission going with their generosity, had no avenue to help us.


That was when we decided to create an online platform for donations. Vincentians and our well-wishers helped push the online campaign over social media especially through WhatsApp and Facebook. Many parishes carried our appeal on their social media platforms. Archbishop William Goh in one of his homilies streamed over YouTube reminded the faithful that during the period of Lent they could support the activities of SSVP in order to help the poor. We also created a short video which was played by the Archbishop's Communication team once before a Sunday mass and several times after weekday masses by the Archbishop. The video shows the work done by SSVP and how it

brings hope to many among us who are not as fortunate as we are.

The response was encouraging as many donated what they could and continue to keep donating. Many sent their donations using online Internet banking directly to our bank account. While others sent cheques to SSVP National Council Singapore and also to the various SSVP Conferences. Some others continue to drop cash in the poor boxes in their parishes.

SSVP spends \$5.2 million a year to help the poor across Singapore. To make up for the loss of the first Sunday collection, we launched our online appeal on March 3. It has brought in \$1.37 million as of April 30. We want to assure you that all the poor under our care will be provided with financial support. In line with the current restrictions, we are looking at sending them money using Internet banking and direct payment methods. We want to thank you for your kindness and generosity and look forward to your continued support.

Said SSVP National Council President, Florence Tan: "Given the current situation and the government measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus, it will take months for community and

economic activities to normalise. We anticipate more people seeking SSVP's help as the economy and jobs take a hit. We continue to seek your generosity as we reach out to those who are most vulnerable. On behalf of our Friends In Need, we thank you for being a part of our journey." 

If you wish to donate to help the poor served by SSVP, you can transfer your donation via PayNow (our UEN code is: S61SS0149BNCS) or you can go to our website: ssvpsingapore.org to scan a QR code using your banking app. You can also issue a cheque to "SSVP NC Singapore" and mail it to SSVP Office, 7A Lorong 8, Toa Payoh, #04-01 Agape Village, Singapore 319264



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY
OUR POOR NEED YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

We are humbled and grateful for the tremendous response to our first appeal for donations. You gave us \$64,000 from March 3 - 31.

Given the ongoing pandemic and continued suspension of masses, we will need a further \$2m to meet the basic needs of the poor till the end of the year.

We once again appeal to your kindness and generosity to meet that target. Many lives have been turned upside down by the current crisis and we also anticipate more coming forward to seek our help. Please help them tide over this crisis.

If you wish to donate to help SSVP's Friends in Need:

PAYNOW DONATIONS
UEN Code: S61SS0149BNCS
or visit our website at www.ssvp.org.sg to scan the QR code

CHEQUE DONATIONS
Issue cheques to "SSVP NC Singapore".

MAILING ADDRESS
Society of St Vincent de Paul,
7A Lorong 8, Toa Payoh,
#04-01 Agape Village,
Singapore 319264

4 April 2020

Age no barrier for Mary

By LAURA CHUA

Every Monday, Mrs Mary Wee visits her Friends in Need (FINs) and the homebound in the East. She also visits residents at St Vincent's Home and St Joseph's Home weekly to pray with them. Her daughter-in-law joins her and plays an active role in her outreach at St Vincent's Home now.

Mary commutes through public transport during all her visits. This is outstanding as she is 85 years old. Yet, she exudes a youthful, energetic spirit which belies her age. Coupled with an admirable passion for her mission, she is almost unstoppable.

She has deep compassion for those residing in Nursing Homes and is convinced that she is visiting Jesus in His loneliness. "You need to be there to feel it", she said emotionally, almost choking on her words.

Seeds of mission planted

The seeds of Mary's mission were planted when she was 10 years old when she visited St Joseph's Home with her grandmother, who would give coins to the poor along Bukit Timah Road – coins accumulated after making her grocery purchases. She would also



offer masses for the poor and sick at the Carmelite monastery at Bukit Teresa Road. Mary maintains this close tie with the Carmelite sisters at the monastery and visits them on special occasions and feast days.

With her caring and compassionate nature, nursing was a natural choice as a profession. Mary served in a ward to care for the sick just before she started her course formally. She worked as a nurse for five years before she became a homemaker when her first child was born.

Education is key


Mary joined the Society of St Vincent de Paul's Holy Family Conference in 1975 when her two children were older. She feels satisfied and happy when she sees the improvements in the lives of her FINs due to education.

"Education is very important. No one can rob you of your educational qualification and it opens doors to work opportunities."

She is deeply concerned about her FINs and would sometimes make deliberate detours to their neighbourhood just to check on the children – ensuring that they are not engaging with 'wrong company' at the void decks. She recalled her FIN struggled to make a living, leaving her two children to fend for themselves at home. She was glad that the children turned around and are now making good progress in school after they became motivated to focus on their studies after constant encouragement and prayers she offered for the family.

Simple but deep faith

Mary's faith is simple but deep. She sees prayer as an integral part of her Vincentian mission. "We must pray. Work without prayer will not have any meaning. With prayer, you know Christ is leading you".

When asked if she has plans to slow down, Mary shook her head and said "until the Lord wants me to stop. I will know then". 

Why SSVP inspires me

Isabelle Chan, 15, shares her experiences of her ministry attachment with SSVP

While preparing for my Confirmation at the Church of St Teresa, I opted to join the SSVP Conference in July last year as an Auxiliary member as part of my ministry attachment.

I wanted to understand the values of kindness and compassion by serving the less fortunate, including the financially disadvantaged, and



those with mental and physical challenges.

I would wake up early every first Sunday of the month to help with the distribution of cash and rations and to serve breakfast to the FINs. I was also allowed to interview some of the FINs - to learn more about the challenges they face.

On 15 September 2019, I was granted the privilege of visiting St Joseph's Home. During the visit,

Continued on Page 3 ...

SSVP Youth hold camp

Twenty-four youths, aged 18 to 25, participated in a three-day SSVP Youth Camp held at the Church of the Transfiguration from 29 November 2019. The theme of the camp: *Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you.*

Through guided prayers, talks and reflections the youths pondered over their spiritual life and Christian calling. They also got to understand and experience SSVP's spirit of charity and love for the poor and marginalised among us.


Experienced Vincentians journeyed with the youths to void decks, hawker centres, etc, to connect with the needy or the lonely. They were guided on how to reach out to the needy, offering their help, connecting with a smile or striking up simple conversations so as to share God's love. The youths opened their hearts and became more aware of the needs of the less



Youths found the camp spiritually enriching, drawing them closer to God.

privileged in our midst.

Said Sean Lee, the outgoing SSVP

Youth Leader: "I was heartened to see the desire and zeal of our young Vincentians to serve the poor around us. More youths are also gaining awareness of SSVP and joining our charitable mission." To this Anselm Vincent Salvatore, the new leader, added: "Ongoing spiritual formation of our youths would be key so that they will adopt the right disposition, guided by the Holy Spirit, to make a difference in the lives of the poor and marginalised." 

SSVP invites you to join our district level Youth Community

Contacts in your District:

Serangoon District: Anselm Vincent. Email: anselm_2@hotmail.com

East District: Rebecca David. Email: bexiedavid@gmail.com

West District: Adonara Mucek. Email: adonaram@gmail.com

General Youth Enquiries: enquiry@ssvpsingapore.org

For more information visit:

Instagram: [@ssvpsingapore](https://www.instagram.com/ssvpsingapore)

Facebook: [SSVPSingapore](https://www.facebook.com/SSVPSingapore)


... Continued from Page 2

our SSVP members captivated the residents by giving out Monopoly money which they used to 'buy' treats from us.

We distributed snacks and tidbits such as green bean soup and siew

mai. The Home overflowed with the Lord's joy.

These experiences which seemed unique to SSVP have broadened my horizons as a member of the Society as well as a member of the church. It has allowed me to fully appreciate charity, the nature of

generosity and its virtues as well as how we, as a society, can truly come together to make things better because we share our privileges with those who need it. Going forward, I will consider becoming a full member of SSVP if my school schedule permits. 

Journeying with the children of FINs

By LAURA CHUA

The Society of St Vincent de Paul started a tuition programme 12 years ago when Agnes Tan and Enoch Yang from the St Joachim Conference (St Joseph's Church, Bukit Timah) felt there was a need for such a programme while reviewing the school grades of their FINs' children for bursary awards. They felt that unless tuition help was extended to these children, the family would remain trapped by their disadvantaged family situation and poverty.

The 1-to-1 tuition programme has come a long way since the early days when some members would drive to the homes of unmotivated, disinterested student FINs to bring them to the church every Saturday morning. It didn't help that some parents, faced with many pressing priorities given

their family situation, were not very supportive.

The success of the St Joachim Conference's programme inspired the Church of the Transfiguration (COTT) Conference to launch their 'Be The Change' programme – designed to instil discipline and a love for learning in the children so as to motivate them to achieve their ambitions and dreams. The caring environment and close interactions with the tutors and mentors provide these students a safe and conducive environment to learn and flourish.

The COTT programme aims to inspire learning through motivational talks, bonding sessions with tutors and hands-on activities such as baking.

One student, who initially did not show much interest in the programme, turned into an active

If you are keen to volunteer, contact:

Marcus Foong

St Joseph's Church (Bukit Timah)

Email: ssvp.saintjoachim@gmail.com

Mobile: 96191682

Julie Boon

Church of the Transfiguration

Email: boonjulie@gmail.com

Mobile: 94751932




Session by Fr Antony Kuttianickal (Spiritual Advisor, COTT Conference), with volunteer tutors.

'ambassador' for the programme by encouraging her siblings to attend. She has also taken her neighbour under her wing, making sure that she is not late for the Saturday tuition sessions at COTT.

The dedicated volunteer tutors are themselves enriched by the experience, and knowing that they are instruments of God's healing grace to the FINs also gives them joy. They have been inspired by the FINs' fortitude despite their challenging circumstances and they have learnt to celebrate 'small steps rather than big jumps' as even small achievements mean a lot to the FINs.

The tuition programme has yielded concrete results. For example, a student who joined the programme at the St Joseph's Church when he was in Primary 4 scored very well in the 'O' Level examination.

The care and dedication of the tutors aims to help FINs flourish and eventually make their mark in the world despite the challenges they face. 



A tuition session at St Joachim Conference (St Joseph's Church, Bukit Timah).

They showed me the path to a better future

A former student who benefitted from SSVP's tuition programme shares his story

By LAURA CHUA

An articulate young man, 21 year old Kannan s/o Rajamohan wants to “do an InfoComm-related course in the Polytechnic” after serving his National Service. Filled with youthful hopes and dreams, he is raring to ‘conquer the world’.

But when he was younger, Kannan’s family struggled to make ends meet and putting food on the table was their key concern rather than him making it through the education system, let alone excelling.

Turning Point

Kannan’s family often moved from place to place and he hardly attended school. But he and his brother Sathish experienced a turning point which changed their lives when their mother enrolled them for a tuition programme at St Joseph’s Church at Bukit Timah in 2012.

Enoch Yang and his wife Agnes Tan, both Vincentians, started the SSVP tuition programme at St Joseph’s Church 12 years ago when they saw the need for such a programme to support the children of the Friends in Need they served.

In the beginning the boys did not take positively to the programme. Kannan who was often playful and inattentive said: “Who would want to go for tuition on a weekend?” But the tutors and mentors soon won the boys over. They felt welcomed and Kannan felt that, “Uncle Enoch connected with me”.



Under the wings of dedicated tutors and mentors, their grades soon improved significantly, “beyond expectations”, as Kannan admitted. Today, Sathish is at the Institute of Technical Education, taking an Engineering course.


Planting seeds of hope

Although he started off unmotivated, Kannan now looks back on his years in the programme with gratitude.

“Small, little chats” with Uncle Enoch were like seeds planted in his young mind. Gradually, he realised that he could overcome his challenges to pursue his dreams and do well in life, as long as he was willing to work hard. His Mathematics tutors Paul Lau and Paul Wan as well as English tutor John Leon Tan all gave

him hope which motivated and inspired him.

When Kannan shared that his ambition was to be a pilot, John bought him a book about flying as well as self-help books which he still reads today and shares with Sathish. These acts of kindness have inspired Kannan to pay it forward one day, and when he has the means he intends to donate books and stationery to needy children. The bonds with his tutors and mentors and the breakthroughs they inspired him to make in his life touched him and changed his life. Kannan still keeps in touch with Uncle Enoch for an occasional chat.

“I am grateful to all the tutors who have taught and journeyed with me to make me who I am today”, said Kannan. 

Happenings In And Around Your Parish

The SSVP Conferences at the 29 parishes in Singapore provide not only financial aid but also spiritual and moral support to their Friends-in-Need (FINs). They also work actively with their fellow parishioners and parish ministries for the benefit of the larger parish community

Conference of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (OLPS)



Members of MUIS/Islamic Religious Council of Singapore and OLPS SSVP discussing ways to help FINs.

Members of the OLPS Conference and the MUIS/Islamic Religious Council of Singapore gathered for a dialogue at OLPS Church recently. Representatives from Al Ansar Mosque and Kassim Mosque were present too. SSVP and MUIS actively provide assistance to the poor and needy in the neighbourhood of Chai Chee and Bedok.

The OLPS Conference and MUIS have been cooperating for a number of years to share information so as to provide a more holistic and comprehensive assistance to the poor and needy. The idea to meet, mooted in 2019, was aimed at strengthening ties for better cooperation and engagement. There were also plans to meet more regularly.

Both shared details of their organisations' structures, outreach work, services and even challenges. The meeting brought better understanding and more importantly, fostered a stronger friendship between SSVP members and MUIS officials.

OLPS Conference offered to provide interim help to FINs who are under consideration for assistance by MUIS – especially for those who did not qualify for any assistance and both parties agreed to refer FINs to each other wherever relevant.

The parties recognised each other's efforts and aspirations to forge greater cooperation for the betterment of the FINs.

Conference of St Francis Xavier

You need not be a Vincentian to bring hope to the poor. Several volunteers work with Vincentians to make a difference in the lives of FINs. One of them is Cynthia Chew who works with Vincentians of the St Francis Xavier Conference when opportunities arise.

In 2018, she met Joanne Lio and her two daughters who were FINs of the Society. Joanne's husband Esmond was then suffering from stage 4 cancer. The family was struggling and was being helped by SSVP.

Joanne had attended a baking course and decided to try and earn a living through this avenue. Cynthia helped her to 'market' baked goods through Facebook. Her posts went viral and Joanne was featured on radio shows and the print media. She was overwhelmed with orders. But baking was taking a toll on Joanne's health so Cynthia further helped them raise funds through an online platform.

Joanne and Esmond were touched by the love and the blessings being showered on them and decided as a family to find out more about the Catholic faith. Unfortunately Esmond's condition worsened and he passed on in August 2019.

Cynthia and SSVP members continue to visit the family and provide support.



Joanne and volunteers baking and packing cookies for sale.

Conference of St Louise de Marillac (Church of St Vincent de Paul)



Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.

When SSVP provides support to its FINs, it aims to not just assist but also provide motivation, sustainability and help to lift their spirits, build aspirations, hopes and dreams. And the children of FINs benefit too. An example of this is the education awards given to the children of FINs every year. In January, the children were honoured during the Conference of St Louise de Marillac’s annual academic achievement awards ceremony and Christmas celebrations. The children were also invited to contribute their wishes for the year during the occasion.

The function was graced by the Conference’s Spiritual Director, Fr JJ Fenelon. It was attended by a hundred FINs, their families, Conference members, well-wishers from the parish and auxillary members.

Conference of St Peter



From left, Vincent Neo, Henry Peh, Fr Thomas Lim, Peter Lim & Joseph Chia

Three FINs from the Conferences of Sts Peter & Paul and one from Our Lady of Lourdes received the sacrament of baptism on 14 December at the Church of Sts Peter & Paul. The four – Vincent Neo, Henry Peh, Peter Lim and Joseph Chia – had attended the RCIA for six months. Stephen Sim, an SSVP member, journeyed with them as their godparent during their RCIA days. The FINs were baptised in a special ceremony by Fr Thomas Lim.

We congratulate and welcome our new brothers as they take a leap of Faith, becoming a part of the Catholic community.

Conference of Church of St Teresa

The Family Formation Group (FFG) of the Church of St Teresa which comprises SSVP, Catechists, Young Adults and Golden Years Club banded together to create a project for Advent 2019.

Advent is a time for preparation for the coming of our Lord. Therefore, the objective was to provide an opportunity for parishioners to prepare their hearts and spirit for Christmas, focusing on charity and love towards those in need. The FFG also aims to build on our Catholic social teachings and to expand its outreach in sharing Christ with all people during this season.

Since SSVP’s collections had declined drastically from August 2019 when funds were channelled to the church’s restoration, the Advent project focused on creating awareness for SSVP’s activities and to raise funds for the Society.

To this end, a number of activities were organised. One of these was a “Decorate Charity Ball” workshop. Families/parishioners purchased a DIY kit to decorate Christmas baubles or they sponsored a decorated bauble for sale. Sales of the baubles were conducted by the FFG. Children who were attending a camp run by Catechists were roped in to help on one occasion.

Parents of these children also made generous donations to FINs based on a prescribed list of toiletries required. Parents and children gathered to pack the donated gifts and also inserted hand-made Christmas cards into the goodie bags. The cards were designed by the children who were briefed by Vincentians on the objectives of the goodie bags.

This successful collaboration raised about \$4,800 and the entire proceeds were channelled to the SSVP to help its FINs.



The Family Formation Group packing Advent goodie bags for FINs

More than just a Thrift Shop

Volunteers and Vincentians keep the SSVV Shop buzzing

Ever since it opened its doors in September last year, the SSVV Shop has attracted a steady stream of customers. As many can attest, one of the attractions of shopping at SSVV Shop is the thrill of finding a good quality, high-end handbag or an elegant vintage tea set, at a very cheap price.

Many come to the shop, located at 501 Geylang Road, having heard about it through word of mouth. Customers are also kept updated through the SSVV Shop's active marketing on social media platforms, constantly tempted by the shop's latest offerings and promotions.

The shop's full-time shop supervisor is supported by a team of dedicated volunteers who help during weekdays. They help with sales, price tagging and product display, packing and keeping the shop neat, clean and tidy. On Sundays, Vincentians from the various Conferences man the SSVV Shop.

"We are heartened by the

commitment of our volunteers at SSVV Shop. Along with Vincentians from our Conferences who volunteer on Sundays, these volunteers have been very generous with their time, energy and talent to contribute to the success of SSVV Shop", said Robert Nguyen, a Vincentian, who is part of the team that manages the shop.


"We are motivated to know that we can make a difference in the lives of the underprivileged through our volunteer work at SSVV Shop. It has really been a great experience," said Sally Wee, a volunteer. Another volunteer, Regina Lim, added that she looks forward to her weekly volunteering duties as, "we are such a happy team working well together and it gives me the opportunity to promote sustainable shopping by reducing waste through recycling".

The SSVV Shop has evolved into



Vincentians from the IHM Conference who manned the Shop on a Sunday.

a welcoming space for community building, forging bonds and friendships. It has since attracted a string of 'regulars' who pop in to browse or simply to say 'hi' to familiar, friendly faces in the shop. They stay to chat and share a slice of their life stories. It is heartening to see SSVV Shop becoming the welcoming community space that it was envisaged to be at its inception.

By supporting SSVV Shop you support the 'green' movement and sustainable shopping. All sale proceeds contribute towards SSVV's charitable mission of helping the poor. 



Contact details :

Address: 501, Geylang Road, Singapore 389459
(between Lorong 27 and Lorong 27A)

Tel : 69742480

Website: ssvshop.sg

Facebook: [SSVPSHOP](https://www.facebook.com/SSVPSHOP)

Instagram: [@ssvshop_sg](https://www.instagram.com/ssvshop_sg)

Email : shop@ssvpsingapore.org

Operating Hours:

Tuesday – Sunday: 10am – 6pm (Closed on Mondays)

Due to the Circuit-breaker restrictions in place, the shop remains closed until further notice.