



Annual Conference Reflection and Review Guide

Purpose

This guide assists members to pause and consider what they are doing and how they are serving. It offers a chance to reflect upon and review the past year and look to the year ahead.

When?

It is recommended you set aside a dedicated time (approximately 1.5 – 2 hours) for this process every 12 to 18 months.

Who?

You may wish to ask a skilled facilitator who is not a member of the Conference to lead the session so that all members in the Conference may participate. This may be a member from another Conference, the Regional Council President, or an employee, volunteer or parishioner with appropriate skills.

Preparation

- 1 Set the date in advance and inform all Conference members.
- 2 Consider additional people to invite, such as appropriate parish staff and volunteer leaders, Youth or school representatives, or Centres representatives.
- 3 Make a copy of page 3 for all participants. This could be given ahead of the meeting to allow people time to consider their answers.
- 4 Seek a note taker who is able to write clearly and record responses on butchers' paper or A3 paper.

Reflection on service is a key aspect of the Conference meeting. Members report on their Vincentian activities and consider the action taken or to be taken to further charity and justice."

From The Rule, Part III, Article 3 - Conference Meetings (pg.54)

Steps for the Reflection and Review

Reflect and Review

- 1 Begin with a Spiritual Reflection (Appendix 1 or another suitable one) 10 - 15 min**
- 2 Conduct a quick brainstorm of Conference activities this past year 5 – 10 min**
Note taker to briefly record contributions on the butchers / A3 paper

Examples include celebrations, training, fundraising, recruitment, collaborations with other Conferences, Social Justice and other initiatives, participation in parish activities or State, Regional or Central Council events and initiatives, including those that consider ways to meet the longer term needs of the people we assist.

Where are we now and what is possible?

- 3 Identify factors that may impact the Conference in the next year 5 - 10 min**

Examples include parish amalgamations, Conference President election, Mini Vinnies and / or Youth activities, Social Justice initiatives, need for new members, changing needs in the community, changes to government payments, etc. *Note taker to record contributions on the butchers / A3 paper*

4 Consider our current practice using the framework of 3 elements of Conference Life, page 3 10 minutes

Read the quote from the Rule at the top of the page and then invite people to take a few minutes to consider the strengths and what's possible.

5 Discuss Strengths 10 – 15 minutes

Starting with what people wrote in the 'Strengths' column, go around the group and invite each person to name just one thing at a time that they've recorded. Go around until all are named.

Note taker to briefly record contributions on the butchers / A3 paper

6 Discuss areas of potential or what's possible 10 – 15 minutes

This section identifies what members would like to change or develop in the Conference.

From what they wrote in the 'Potential' column, ask each person to name their top two suggestions for improvement for the Conference. Share more than two if time allows.

Note taker to briefly record contributions on the butchers / A3 paper

7 Review what has been recorded so far.

What stands out from what we've named so far? Are there some common strengths, actions or suggestions emerging? 5 – 10 min

Record responses which lead into planning.

Action Plan

8 Consider and list actions 10 – 15 minutes

Name specific actions that we can undertake that build on our strengths and address the areas of improvement and potential that have been identified.

These questions may assist in choosing three actions:

- What is achievable?
- What will have the biggest impact?
- What actions do people have the most energy for and therefore most likely to follow through on?

Note taker to briefly record contributions on the butchers / A3 paper

9 Choose three actions from the list and create a plan for each 15 – 20 min

See page 4 for a blank Action Plan and page 5 for some sample actions.

10 Put actions on future Conference meeting agendas to follow up

This Guide is available online at <http://mavs.vinnies.org.au/resources/> (click on the link or type mavs.vinnies.org.au into your browser). If you have questions please email membership@vinnies.org.au

Reflecting on the Essential Elements of Conference Life

Members complete this sheet on their own before or during the session.



Read this quote from *The Rule* which describes the essential elements of Conference Life. Using those elements as your framework, record some strengths and possibilities for your Conference in the table.

Excerpt from The Rule, Part III, Article 3 - Conference Meetings (pg.54)

“The Conferences meet regularly, usually weekly but at least fortnightly. In exceptional circumstances a Conference may meet at least monthly, but it is essential that all three dimensions of the Society are experienced by the members. Work for the poor, deprived or suffering is the first dimension. The second dimension is the spiritual development of members, and the third dimension is that of mutual support, inspiration and Vincentian friendship.

The meeting should be imbued with the spirit of charity and the spirituality which animates the Society. Conference meetings begin and end with the Society prayers, or other appropriate prayers. A period of spiritual reflection should also be included.

Decisions are taken by consensus where possible after prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental within the Society and when necessary a vote may be taken.

Given your experience and knowledge as a member, consider the strengths of your Conference and what's possible using the three elements of Conference Life		
	Strength/s: What is working well and is a strength of our Conference?	What's Possible? What might strengthen, improve, or develop this in our Conference?
<p>Spirituality</p> <p>Nurturing our faith and grounding all our actions in the Gospel and Vincentian practice.</p>		
<p>Service</p> <p>Reaching out with the hand of friendship to the vulnerable and those in need. Includes initiatives in our local community and social justice and advocacy activities.</p>		
<p>Community</p> <p>Mutual support, inspiration and Vincentian friendship with one another.</p>		

Action Plan for _____ Conference Date _____

Priority Action and specific steps	Who will initiate?	Action due date	First Step
1.			
2.			
3.			

Ask the Conference Secretary or a volunteer to keep track of actions and time frames and add these items to the agenda for future Conference Meetings.

Samples of Conference Actions

Priority Action	Who will initiate?	By when?	First Step
1. Initiate a Conference Recruitment drive to enable more new people to join us in our service.	Laura and Peter	28th Feb	Laura will contact the Regional office or State Support for Recruitment support. John to speak to the Regional Council President about our plan.
2. Delegate a member or two to attend the interagency meetings in our local area and report back to the Conference.	Mary	28th Feb	Mary will contact the interagency meeting.
3. Plan each month to read a short section from the Vincentian Visitation Guidelines at a Conference meeting and discuss briefly.	John, Michael and Corina	15th Feb	Conference President to add this to the meeting agenda. Michael and Corina will discuss a section to begin with and remind members to bring their copy.
4. Invite a guest speaker to talk with us about an area we have identified as a need. Invite other nearby Conference members to come along for the talk.	Henry	1st March	Henry will discuss a Regional event with the Regional Council President.
5. Increase our skills and knowledge about how to assist people more effectively with a 'hand up'	Conference President	30th June	Conference President will speak to the Regional Council President about holding a training course to increase our skills in visitation, particularly referrals and advocacy.
6. Organise a Conference Mass and/or commissioning of members at a Parish Mass.	Henry and Mary	31st March	Henry will speak to the parish priest. Mary will speak to the Mini Vinnies coordinator in the school.
7. Spend more time at our meetings exploring how to work more intentionally with some of the people we assist. This includes making time to discuss together how we can address the causes of their disadvantage.	Anne and John	1st June	Anne will lead a discussion about a family we have been supporting for 2 years at our next meeting. We will aim to do something similar at each meeting.

Appendix 1: Spiritual Reflection for Reflection and Review

Provide a copy of this page for all participants, in colour if possible.

Reflect on the painting

- This painting by artist Gary Schumer is often called an *Icon of a home visit*. Describe what you see in this painting.
- What does it evoke for/in you?

Quotes from Frederic Ozanam to reflect upon

Invite members to share the quote written below that speaks to them most strongly today.

“You are our masters, and we will be your servants. You are for us the sacred images of that God whom we do not see, and not knowing how to love Him otherwise shall we now love Him in your persons.”

“Let us love this little Society which has made known us to one another, which has placed us on the path of a more charitable & Christian life...”

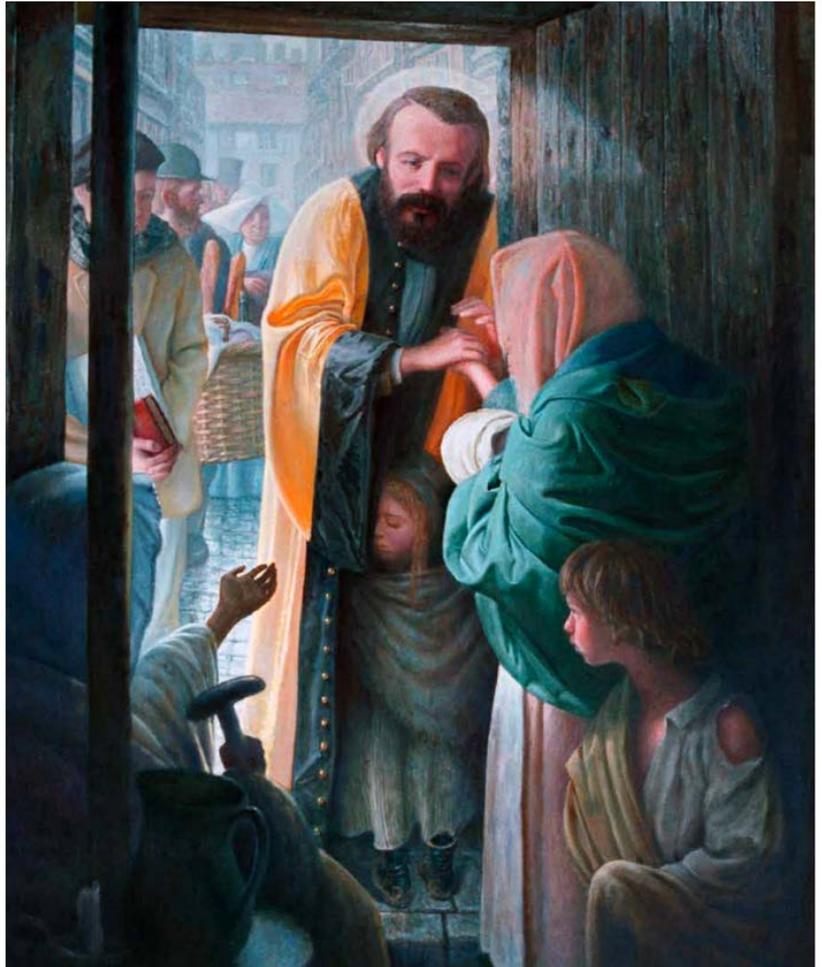
“There are two reasons why we join together ... Number one is, that by drawing closer to the poor, we draw closer to God ... My second reason is, that our membership in such a union will bear silent and humble witness to the faith that is in us...”

“Charity must never look backwards but always to the front, because the number of good deeds already accomplished is very small, while present and future hardships remain infinite”.

“What counts in the end, plainly, is not only the quality of the service to the person in need, but the personal and self-giving component of that service.”

Note: If your group is larger than 8- 10 people, you may find creating discussion groups of 3-5 people or pairs provides more opportunity for people to share with one another.

Other Reflections are available on mavs.vinnies.org.au



The person leading this reflection may wish to read this commentary on the painting beforehand. <https://famvin.org/en/2015/04/16/reading-an-ozanam-icon-sr-kieran-kneaves/>.