
HOW TO SET UP A SUCCESSFUL MEETING WITH THE BISHOP (AND DEANERY MEETING)

WHY MEET WITH THE BISHOP

SSVP National encourages all PC Presidents to meet with the Bishop of the Diocese regularly. It is an opportunity to inform the Bishop of the work of the Society and to ask for support where needed.

Two PC presidents can work together to make the meeting happen. Decide who will lead this.

WHO WILL BE AT THE MEETING?

Find out from SSVP's regional office how many PC's are in the diocese. In Hamilton we were dealing with seven PC's.

Request from regional office a list of PC presidents with contact information.

Contact all presidents by email informing them of intention to meet with the Bishop. Explain the plan of action and timeline. Invite all to participate and by response get an idea of how many would like to be involved. Explain that they will be asked to provide some information about their conferences. A sample email is included in this document.

ARRANGE THE MEETING

- Contact diocesan office and ask for a meeting with Bishop, explaining that it will be an informative session involving the leaders of the various councils across the diocese.
- Determine approximate timing. It usually takes a few months to get an appointment with the Bishop and so expect to have some months to prepare.
- Try to get a few windows of time so that you can poll the presidents to try to get maximum attendance. (In Hamilton we were given a few dates and we had to land on one that suits us all best. We used doodle.com, a free scheduling app to find best date.)
- Confirm the best date and timing with the Diocesan office.
- Send out formal invitation to the presidents and ask for RSVPs

PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- Allow time to collate some information about the work of SSVP in the diocese.
- Use google docs or excel and create a simple questionnaire. Most answers can be taken from the year end reports: number of conferences, number of members, number of home visits, number of individuals/families served, number of stores with number of employees and volunteers,. Other types of special works, and social justice projects. Invite input to determine what the challenges are, how supportive the pastors are. Sample questionnaire attached which was created on google forms. Google forms provides a link to the recipients so that when they submit their responses the data is gathered into one place and can be exported into a spreadsheet. Excel is a good alternative. You can change the questions or add to them.
- Key questions are: what is the work of SSVP? What additional assistance do we provide, what social justice activities are we involved with, how many PC's have/do not have stores &/or other special works. Are we facing a recruitment/membership challenge? Are home visits still our core work? Are there some areas of decline that are concerning? We might be seeking support from the pastors through the Bishop and deaneries to encourage support for building awareness and pulpit talks. Building awareness will help to address our membership and funding challenges. Could the Bishop use his influence to help us?
- Create a simple fact sheet on one side and agenda on the other as a handout for the Bishop. Using the information collected from the PC presidents a fact sheet will provide a picture of SSVP. Sample is attached.
- What will we ask of the Bishop? Keep it simple. Determine two or three requests and no more.

THE MEETING ITSELF

- We had seven presidents participating. The discussion was led by the two who had coordinated the meeting. There was time at the end of the agenda for open discussion and questions and an opportunity for all to speak if anything had been missed.
- Remind the leaders about the meeting the week before.
- Arrange to meet thirty minutes before to gather the group.
- Start meeting with introductions and provide the hand outs to all present.
- Advise the group the appropriate way to address the Bishop. Your excellency Bishop 'Last Name' is best for meeting in person.

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES FROM THE MEETING

- Ideally a communication from the Bishop to the pastors is the best outcome as it is quick and effective. This was the response from the meeting in Hamilton. It was spontaneously offered by Bishop Crosby and has had the effect of putting SSVP front and centre in the minds of the pastors at that time. In our case it was a few weekends before World Day of the Poor weekend in November.
- The words of support and encouragement were a real boost to the conferences. A copy of the letter from Bishop Crosby is attached.

EXAMPLE OF INITIAL EMAIL TO PC PRESIDENTS

Hello everyone

I am writing to you today about a meeting that Pat and I are trying to set up with Bishop XXX. Pat is President of Brant PC, I am President of Halton PC.

The meeting would take place in the fall and would represent all the SSVP conferences in the Hamilton Diocese. The seven Particular Councils are: Hamilton, Hamilton West, Halton, Guelph, Brant, Cambridge and Kitchener Waterloo.

We are moving this forward to be in line with the National and Ontario Strategic plan which strongly encourages us to stay connected with the Bishop and keep him apprised of the work of SSVP.

Pat and I are working together to make this happen. We will assess the availability and preference for timing and then set a date with the Bishop's secretary. We will then reach out to each of you to compile some basic information about the SSVP in your area and the work you are doing as well as the challenges you are facing. We want to provide a summary to the Bishop for him to be able to review. We hope to leave him with some key messages of what we need him to be aware of and how we would like the diocese to support us. We understand that not all of you might like to participate in the meeting itself but we would like to include all of the information for all areas of the Diocese.

We need your help in 2 specific ways at this point.

1. Could you please reply to this email and indicate whether you as President of your Particular Council would like to attend the meeting with the Bishop.
2. Could you please click on this poll, through the free easy application called doodle poll, to share your preference for timing. We will show the options that we have been given. Mornings and afternoons are preferable unless these are not possible for the majority of us. (The Bishops office said weekends and evenings are always harder for the Bishop's schedule). The doodle poll is easy to use. Please just click it, type your name in the box and indicate which preferences suit you best. We are using this because all the submitted responses drop into one place so we can easily and quickly see the preferred choice. We will try our best to go with the majority choice.

Here is the link: [DOODLE POLL](#) for preferences as to timing. XXX

After we arrange the timing of the meeting you will hear from me again for RSVP's. At that point a short questionnaire will also be shared with you all and we ask that you do take the time to provide as much information as you are able to and to ask for your feedback on what Diocesan support we are seeking.

Thank you!!

DIOCESE SSVP QUESTIONNAIRE

(Copied as text)

Hamilton Diocese SSVP Data Collection

What is the name of your Particular Council

Your answer

How many conferences do you have?

Your answer

In the past year how many new conferences have opened?

0

1

2

In the past year how many conferences have closed?

0

1

3

Other:

Do you have a SSVP store?

Yes

No

If yes to previous question describe the store's mission and purpose
Your answer

How many Store volunteers do you have in total?

Your answer

How many Store employees do you have in total?

Your answer

What are the challenges faced by SSVP operations?

Your answer

How many SSVP members were reported to ONRC in 2016 in total in the PC.

Your answer

How many members were reported to ONRC in 2017.

Your answer

How many members were reported to ONRC in 2018

Your answer

How many of your conferences do home visits?

All

Most

October 2019

Some

Hardly any

None

Other:

How many home visits were done in 2018 (from year end report totals for Councils)

Your answer

What kind of assistance do your conferences provide to the neighbours in need?

Food Voucher

Grocery gift cards

Groceries

Transport tickets

SSVP Store card

Contribution to RESP's

New Beds

Dental assistance

Recreation assistance/summer camp

Used furniture

Refurbished laptops

Voucher for store items (clothing and household)

Other:

Please note any other Special Works carried out by your conferences that have not been noted above.

Your answer

How many of your conferences do addresses to their congregations each year

All

Most

October 2019

Some

Hardly Any

I don't know

Other:

How often do you have Particular Council meetings?

Bi-Monthly

Monthly

Other:

How many conferences are represented at the PC meetings?

All

Most

Other

Other:

What are the major challenges faced by the conferences?

October 2019

Your answer

Are the pastors supportive of the SSVP conferences?

Agree

Neutral

Strongly disagree

Other:

How many of your conferences promoted World Day of the Poor last year?

All

Most

Hardly any

Not aware of World Day of the Poor

Other:

Do you discuss Social Justice issues at the HPC meetings?

Yes

No

If you answered yes to the last question please share which Social Justice projects you discuss.

Your answer

Does your Particular Council have a Spiritual Advisor?

Yes

No

What aspect of SSVP would you like to share with Bishop Crosby?

Your answer

Submit

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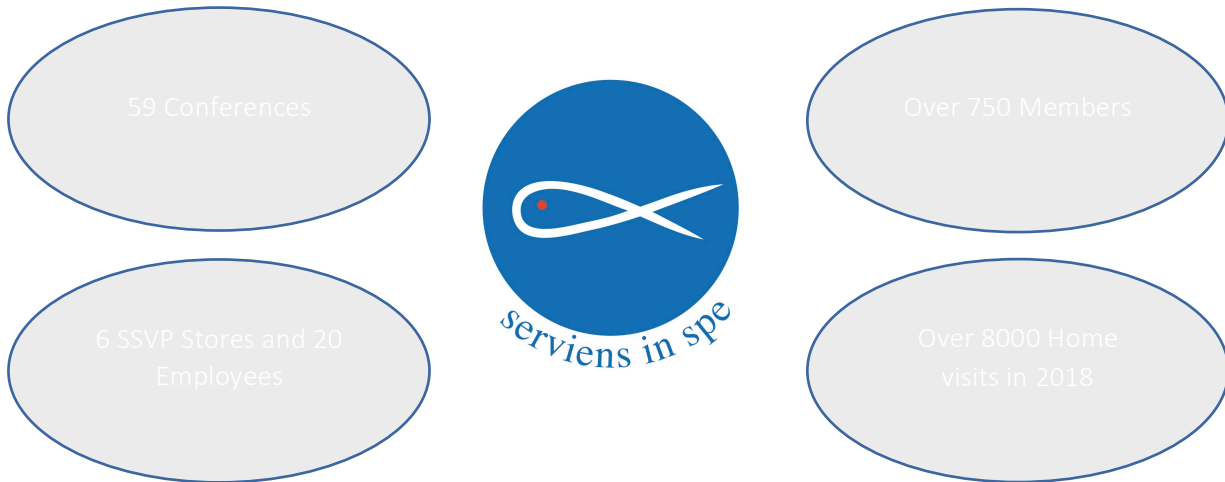
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FACT PAGE AND AGENDA

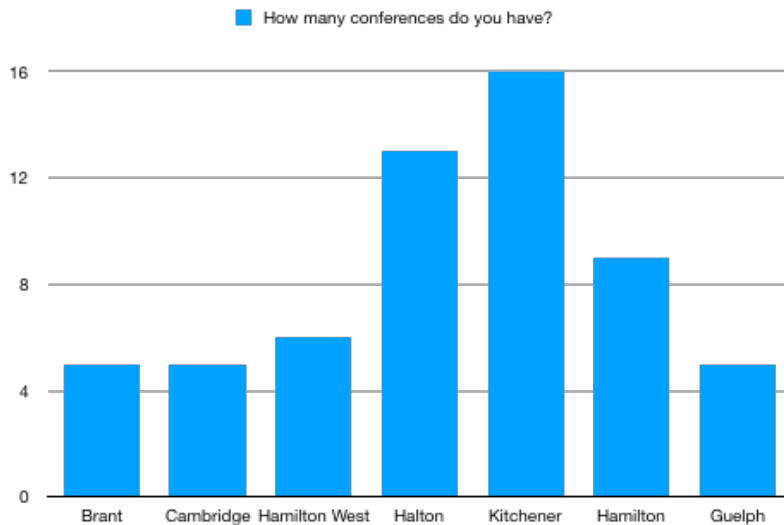
SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

OCTOBER 30 2019

PAGE 1 FACT SHEET FOR DIOCESE OF HAMILTON:



WHERE IS SSVP?



MISSION:

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:
To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

VALUES:

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we:

- see Christ in anyone who suffers

- come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
 - help in all possible ways

PAGE 2 DISCUSSION AGENDA

Brief Introduction, thanks and overview (Judith)

Home Visits (Judith)

Stores: (Pat)

Rejuvenation (Pat)

Renewal at SSVP – Recruitment and Social Justice (Judith)

Additional Comments from other PC leaders.

Closing Requests: (Pat)

OUR REQUEST FOR BISHOP CROSBY TO USE HIS ECCLESIASTICAL INFLUENCE WITH THE PASTORS IN THE FOLLOWING THREE AREAS:

One: Help us build awareness through annual addresses to the congregation

Two: In particular, support SSVP as we leverage World Day of the Poor Weekend, 33rd Sunday of the Year

Three: Openness for SSVP to build connections in the schools.

LETTER FROM BISHOP CROSBY



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

November 4, 2019

Dear Reverend Monsignor,
Dear Reverend Father,

Re: The Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The St. Vincent de Paul Society, present (as Conferences) in many of our Parish communities, is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is: To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor, with love, respect, justice and joy. They strive to see Christ in anyone who suffers, to have personal contact with the poor, and to help them in all possible ways as they might any family member!

In the Hamilton Diocese there are over 750 members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. They visit over 8000 homes each year, reaching out to provide assistance to those in need as they are able. Additionally, there are six St. Vincent de Paul Stores and 20 employees.

As you are aware, poverty issues challenge people in all areas of our Diocese. The work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is always a blessing when other forms of social assistance are often difficult to access.

Please encourage parishioners to consider volunteering as a Vincenitian in your Parish, or in the neighbouring Parish. Inform them that the Society accepts donations of clothing, furniture, and finances, which help our neighbours directly.

Finally, I also urge you to support the Society by your prayers and those of your Parish. We are the primary partners of the Society in the Diocese of Hamilton. Give them the encouragement they so rightly deserve!

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton

/cd

700 King St. West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

The opportunity to address the pastors at a Deanery meeting enables the PC president to enlighten the pastors of the SSVP conferences of the pulse of the Society in the area.

A simple update can encourage the pastors to be supportive and enlighten those without a SSVP presence in their parish.

It can be informative of what has taken place in the past while and can include some goals for moving forward. A few statistics helps to get a flavour of the work of SSVP in the Deanery area.

DEANERY NOVEMBER 2019 UPDATE :

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

HALTON PARTICULAR COUNCIL

CONTEXT:

It has been two years since we came to the Deanery to speak about SSVP.

Thank you to Father John for welcoming us back to speak to you all today. Thank you to all of you for your support for our ministry in your parishes. A few things have changed in 2 years both in HPC and here in the Deanery!

A SUMMARY ABOUT SSVP:

We are a lay Catholic organization and we serve anyone regardless of their faith or background. We serve families within our parish boundaries.

MISSION:

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

VALUES:

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we:

- see Christ in anyone who suffers
 - come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
 - help in all possible ways

WE HAVE 13 HPC CONFERENCES

Burlington	Oakville	Milton
St. Paul the Apostle St. John the Baptist St. Patrick Holy Rosary St. Raphael St. Gabriel (new)	St. Andrew St. Domenic St. Matthew St. Michael Mary Mother of God St. James	Holy Rosary St. Benedict

Each conference has the same mission and values but each conference is different in the type of activities they do and their membership size. We continue to ‘seek and find the forgotten, the suffering or the deprived...’ as our prayers states and there is an unending number of families we can serve in our areas.

We have St James now up and running and St Gabriel’s currently launching.

There has been a lot of change in leadership. 8 of 12 conferences have new Presidents as well as with St Gabriel’s, our newest conference, we now have 13 in total.

New presidents are exciting for SSVP as most are open to change and forward motion.

However many are experiencing the role as challenging and that is why we have taken measures to ensure they feel supported as much as possible. As with most volunteer ventures, it is sometimes hard to get people to step forward to lead.

OUR FOCUS

Building Strong Teams to serve the families in need.

FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS WE HAVE BEEN FOCUSED ON BUILDING THE SSVP TEAMS.

FOUR YEARS AGO SOME TEAMS WERE EXPERIENCING HAVING NO NEW MEMBERS JOINING THE TEAMS, BLAMING AGING PARISHES.

TOGETHER WE HAVE ADDRESSED THIS AND CONTINUE TO DO SO.

FOR RECRUITMENT WE HAVE A SAYING THAT IS TAKING HOLD: ALWAYS BE RECRUITING. ABR! EVERYONE WHO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT SSVP HAS A ROLE TO PLAY.

CONSTANT RENEWAL IS KEY FOR US AND THIS WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE MESSAGING. IF WE ARE NOT MOVING AND DYNAMIC WE ARE STATIC AND IN DECLINE AND WE KNOW THIS IS A WIDER PROBLEM FOR OUR SOCIETY WHICH WE ARE TRYING TO STAY ON TOP OF HERE IN HALTON.

Home Visits remain a key and unique aspect of the work we do at SSVF

SPIRITUALITY IS KEY TO THE WORK OF SSVF. THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH THAT COMES FROM STEPPING INTO PEOPLE'S VULNERABLE SITUATION IN THEIR HOME AT THEIR KITCHEN TABLE MAKES SSVF UNIQUE.

HOME VISITS ARE HOW THIS CAN HAPPEN AND IT REMAINS OUR CORE WORK.

SINCE THERE IS SUCH A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION IN OUR WORK, ALL CONFERENCES HAVE TO HAVE A SPIRITUAL ADVISOR. IN MOST CASES THIS IS A LAY PERSON. THEY HAVE ACCESS TO TRAINING RESOURCES AND MONTHLY REFLECTIONS TO SUPPORT THEIR WORK. IN SOME CASES AN ASSOCIATE PRIEST STEPS INTO THE ROLE AND WE WELCOME THIS WHERE THERE IS CAPACITY TO JOIN THE CONFERENCE MEMBERS IN THIS WAY.

Building Awareness of the needs of those we serve.

- SINCE WE AS MEMBERS ARE CONSTANTLY LEARNING I WANT TO SHARE SOME INFORMATION WITH YOU. OUR MAIN FOCUS IS LOCAL POVERTY. THAT SAID, MANY CONFERENCES MIGHT TWIN WITH A SISTER CONFERENCE INTERNATIONALLY AND ONE CONFERENCE IS FOCUSING ON THE CANADIAN PROJECT CALLED NORTH OF 60 ASSISTING OUR INDIGENOUS BROTHERS AND SISTER ON RESERVE.
- THE FUNDS WE RECEIVE FOR SSVF HAVE TO STAY IN SSVF AND IT IS AGAINST OUR "RULE" (CONSTITUTION) TO USE THE MONEY FOR OTHER CHARITIES OUTSIDE THE SOCIETY. THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS WE CAN ASSIST AND USE EVERY DOLLAR TO DIRECTLY HELP A FAMILY.
- WITH 1 IN 10 PEOPLE IN HALTON EXPERIENCING POVERTY THERE IS PLENTY FOR SSVF TO BE DOING TO HELP THE FAMILIES. WE ALWAYS START WITH FOOD BUT IN HALTON WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT STRETCHING PAST FOOD FOR FOUR YEARS.
- WE ARE SEEING A HIGHER NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT FAMILIES SEEKING HELP FROM SSVF. MANY FROM SYRIA, IRAQ, EGYPT AND VENEZUELA. MANY WILL BE RELYING ON FRIENDS TO SUPPORT THEM WHILE THEY ENDEAVOR TO SET THEMSELVES UP AS BEST THEY CAN.
- WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED: 6 OUT OF 10 CHILDREN STILL ARE NOT BENEFITTING FROM FREE GOVERNMENT FUNDS FOR EDUCATION. THEIR MONEY SITS ON THE TABLE UNUSED.
- KIDS CAN ACCESS FREE DENTAL CARE UP TO THE AGE OF 17 BUT MOMS STRUGGLE TO INCLUDE THIS ON THEIR DAILY PRIORITIES AND NEGLECT LEADS TO COSTLY AND PAINFUL PROBLEMS LATER ON.

- ADULTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PAY FOR DENTAL CARE AND TREATMENT ARE SUFFERING BEYOND WHAT WE ORIGINALLY IMAGINED. IMAGINE EATING ON ONE SIDE OF YOUR MOUTH FOR OVER A YEAR.
- CHILDREN HAVE A LOVE OF SPORT OR SOME PARTICULAR ACTIVITY BUT DO NOT KNOW THEY CAN ACCESS THIS TOO LIKE THEIR FRIENDS AND SO MANY MISS OUT ON THESE SELF-ESTEEM BUILDING PASTIMES.
- THE HEALTH OF THE FAMILIES IN POVERTY IS HARMED BY THE DIET THEY CAN AFFORD. EVEN THE FOOD BANKS PROVIDE FOOD WHICH IS OF A LOWER NUTRITIONAL VALUE AND HIGH IN SODIUM. OFTEN PEOPLE WILL PASS ON THE FOOD THEIR FAMILIES DON'T LIKE TO THE FAMILIES IN NEED, ESPECIALLY UNUSED HALLOWEEN CANDY.

Stretching past immediate assistance and seeing our roles as informed navigators.

WE WANT TO HELP THE FAMILIES BEYOND JUST IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE. WE ARE ABLE TO AND WE WOULD DO THE SAME FOR AN ELDERLY MOTHER, AN ADULT CHILD, A DESPERATE FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER.

OUR FOCUS OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS HAS BEEN ON THREE KEY SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS IN HEALTH EDUCATION AND WELLBEING. THIS IS CONTINUING GOING FORWARD.

1. RESP SAVINGS FOR EDUCATION THROUGH CONNECTING KIDS TO THE CANADA LEARNING BOND.
2. DENTAL CHILDREN ESPECIALLY AND TEETH CLEANING FOR ADULTS.
3. RECREATION ACTIVITIES INCLUDING THE LOCAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE TOWN AND THE NATIONAL JUMP START PROGRAM.
4. WE HAVE BEEN EXPANDING OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HALTON FRESH FOOD BOX IN A FEW OF OUR SSVF LOCATIONS AND THIS HAS ALLOWED US TO PROVIDE HEALTHY LOCAL PRODUCE TO FAMILIES WHO WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ACCESS SUCH FOOD FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

SSVF NATIONAL IS ENCOURAGING ALL CONFERENCES TO HAVE A SOCIAL JUSTICE FOCUS. IN HALTON WE ARE UNIQUE IN THAT WE HAVE COMBINED ALL THE REPS TOGETHER INTO A TEAM TO WORK ON SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS TO MAKE THEM ACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE.

THE MODEL WE HAVE BEEN WORKING ON HERE IN HALTON IS BEING REPLICATED IN OTHER PARTS OF ONTARIO AND WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE THE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES WE HAVE EXPERIENCED.

RENEWAL THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE IS A THEME IN SSVF REGIONAL AND NATIONALLY AS WE HAVE A NATIONAL THREE YEAR FOCUS ON THE HOUSING CRISIS WHICH WE ARE HOPEFUL WILL LEAD TO MANY COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE.

ABR ACTIVE GROUPS ARE ATTRACTIVE GROUPS. THIS HELPS US WITH RECRUITMENT AS YOUNG WORKING PARISHIONERS WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH IMPACTFUL WORK TO HELP FAMILIES MOVE AHEAD.

YOUNG VINCENTIANS:

We have three groups, Holy Rosary, Burlington (the first) St Matthew, with St Patrick following close behind. Involving young Vincentians in social justice work builds awareness and a sense of belonging to young people eager to make a difference. This is an area where we find it challenging to keep the groups and to grow them. With dedicated adults to help runs the groups anything is possible and we will continue to do our best in this area.

BUILDING AWARENESS WITHIN OUR PARISHES:

This is how we are getting the word out to our congregations.

- Congregational addresses. World Day of the Poor weekend is our preferred time of the year. It's a really strong message to send to have all the SSVP groups talk on the same weekend.

Sign up Sunday

- Monthly Poor box Collections
- SSVP envelopes and pre-authorized monthly debit
- Use of the Bulletin/noticeboard/website
- Collaborating with outside organizations like the Halton Peel Dental Association, EDSC and Halton Fresh Food Box, SmartSaver.
- Using the HPC website for the online PayPal donation facility
- SSVP events and partnering with the neighboring schools to get students involved.

LOOKING AHEAD:

- Year of engagement in 2020. We have been challenged to find solutions to the problem of attracting and retaining good volunteers. This year we will collaborate to help each other find strategies to engage our members better.
- Continued focus on renewal keeping the groups actively working on the projects in the areas of Education, Health and Wellbeing.

PLEASE...

1. Encourage your SSVP groups **to build awareness of the needs of the poor.**

2. Be aware of the Spiritual advisor in each SSVP, and if there is not one in place, encourage this as best you can.

A huge thank you to allowing us to be present here today. If you have any questions please reach out to me. Judith Nunn