



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Branding & Identity Guide 2023

A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Fellow Vincentians.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international lay Catholic charitable organization composed of ordinary men and women seeking to grow in holiness through friendship with each other and in service to the poor. No work of charity is foreign to us; this is who we are and what we do. This is our identity.

We use branding as a visible manifestation of our shared identity. Some examples of this include our logo, the name of our organization, the name we call ourselves (Vincentians). Such outward signs let others know who we are, and should be cherished and protected.

The branding guidelines outlined in this document are required at the National Council level, and also *recommended* at the local Conference level.

We recognize that many local Conferences already have a brand identity in their community, and we don't wish to supersede that. Our goal, however, is twofold:

1. To develop a national brand and identity that will strengthen your local Conference's impact
2. To provide local Conferences without a clear brand identity with a simple toolkit you may use to save you time while strengthening your visual identity within the community you serve.

Please use these brand guidelines as a symbol to foster and unite the good work we all do together.

Yours in Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Barringer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dave" and last name "Barringer" clearly legible.

Dave Barringer, CEO

BRANDING AND IDENTITY

Protecting Our Identity

Our Vincentian identity, a unique expression of who we are and what we do, is deeply rooted in the history of the Society.

We must remember that the way we present ourselves to the public at any given time can affect the impression that others have of us, either reinforcing or undermining the positive value of our Vincentian identity.

Seemingly trivial aspects of our self-presentation can have a powerful and lasting effect. To ensure that we are always enhancing, rather than damaging, our public image, we should continually monitor and safeguard our organizational identity.

Brand guidelines help the Society show the world who we are and who we serve. When local Conferences and Councils consistently use the same logo, colors, fonts, imagery, and wording, we create a nationally identifiable face — for fellow Vincentians, for our donors, for the media, and for those we serve.

We at the National Council recognize that some Conferences and Councils have developed their own unique branding. This document is not meant to impose upon or dictate to those Councils and Conferences. Rather, these guidelines are for use by the National Council, and may be adopted by Conferences and Councils who do not have their own brand identity, *if they so choose*.

What Is Our Identity?

“Vincentians serve the poor cheerfully,” the Rule tells us, “for we are all created in God's image.” And we try “to establish relationships based on trust and friendship.”

As an integral part of our organizational identity, our special relationship with the poor must be communicated consistently in words and pictures and branded with our unique Society of St. Vincent de Paul logo, typeface, color, etc. The following sections take us through these key elements.

Branding: Words and Deeds

Branding is simply the establishment of the Society's unique identity. We express this identity in a couple of different ways. First, we convey our Vincentian identity through our words and deeds.

With our long history and our carefully defined mission, vision, and values, it is easy for Vincentians to know and understand who we are and what we do. The Rule and the Manual are the repositories of our brand positioning statement and our catalogue of values.

The Rule provides insight into the Essential Elements of the Society (Spirituality, Friendship, and Service), as well as our Cultural Beliefs (Spiritual Growth, One Society, Servant Leaders, Today's Society, Embrace Accountability, Inclusive Planning, Advocate for Justice) and our Vincentian Virtues (Simplicity, Humility, Gentleness, Selflessness, and Zeal). All Vincentians promise to accept and live the Rule of the Society. Both the Rule and the Manual also help to keep us “on brand.”

Branding: Look and Feel

The second way we communicate who we are as Vincentians is via consistent use of our logo, as well as colors, fonts, graphics, tone of voice, and other identifying traits that make the Society easily identifiable for both our members and the community at large.

These brand guidelines ensure consistency from one application (stationery, banners, websites, social media, etc.) to the next. For applications not covered here, or for answers to other questions you may have about usage, please contact the National Council communications team.

Our Logo

The Society's logo is an essential identifier of the organization. Acceptable usage includes a Vincentian Blue logo on a white background, or a white logo on a Vincentian Blue background.

Correct use of our logo helps us protect the Society's trademarks and intellectual property. Please do not modify the colors, words, or design of the logo without express permission of the communications committee or the National Council communications team.

Signature

Our signature, combining our logo and the type treatment of our name, is a key building block of the Society's identity. As a unit, our logo and name have a fixed relationship that should never be embellished, diminished, or altered in any way.



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Multiple Logo/Logo Usage

When the St. Vincent de Paul logo is used in combination with those of other organizations, the images should be equal in size.

They can be placed side-by-side with the St. Vincent de Paul signature on the left ...



... or stacked with the St. Vincent de Paul signature on top.



Color Palette

Vincentian Blue #006BA8 0 107 168 647 C	#3E99CE 62 153 206 7689 C	#19ABFF 25 171 255 2925 C	
	#A86CA7 168 108 167 7655 C	#EBD6E0 235 214 224 677 C	#5A2A85 90 43 133 268 C
	#365C4C 54 92 76 5477 C	#FFD966 255 218 102 121 C	#6B9E7E 107 158 126 556 C

The Society has developed a color palette with our Vincentian Blue as its focal point. Vincentian Blue should have a place of prominence in any SVdP branding, including but not limited to: website, social media, mailings, and email signatures.

Vincentian Blue has a HEX code of #006BA8 (suitable for web usage) and a Pantone/PMS code of 647 C. To recreate Vincentian Blue in Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, use the RGB code 0, 107, 168. Use Vincentian Blue for large areas of color fill and main typographic treatment.

While Vincentian Blue should be at the heart of any SVdP branding, designers may also choose an accent color (or colors) from the approved color palette above. These accent colors complement Vincentian Blue by adding energy and emphasis, and allow it to remain the focus of SVdP branding. HEX and RGB codes are included with each swatch.

Typography

Consistency in typography enhances the effectiveness of our communications, reinforces public recognition, and strengthens the Society's identity. We use a combination of two fonts, chosen for their clean readability.

Century Gothic

Century Gothic should be used for headers and any other text you want to highlight or emphasize.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Arial

Arial should be used for body text in emails, letters, correspondence, or fundraising materials.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Photography

Photography is a key element of our visual identity. We differentiate the Society from other nonprofit organizations by focusing on our members, showcasing them in an honest, open, and caring way. Such photos show the result of our charitable work.

What makes the Society different from other charitable organizations? Our primary purpose is the spiritual growth of our members, by personally going to, and serving, those most in need. No work of charity is foreign to the Society, because in the poor, we see the Face of Christ.”

Donors make contributions to the Society and new members join because they have been struck by our generosity, our fellowship, and our spirituality, all celebrated through our photography and branding.

Close-up, tightly framed pictures of actual Vincentians serving the poor cheerfully — that’s the kind of photography that will capture the essence of the Society. Don’t be afraid to get close to your subject. A photo taken from too far away will result in a loss of details, and end up filling the image more with space, than with the faces of Vincentians.

When taking a photo, turn off your flash and look for the light. Try to avoid taking photos in a space with overhead fluorescent lighting — this can lead to unflattering shadows and amateur-looking images. Have your subject face a window so that the quality of light coming through is soft, shaded, and even. Even on an overcast day, natural light is often preferable to overhead fluorescent lighting. Avoid having the window behind your subject, though, or they’ll be hidden in shadows.

If you plan to take photos outdoors, consider the time of day. The glare of the sun at noon will cause those harsh shadows again. Early in the morning, or in the hour before sunset, will result in photos with soft, flattering lighting.



When taking photos or video, get written permission from those whose images you may be using. Here’s a link to a [Media Release Form](#) you can use. In order to not be exploitative (even accidentally), try to focus your images on Vincentians as much as possible, rather than those we serve. If your photo does include neighbors in need, the Society prefers to use images of upbeat, smiling faces — a downtrodden image can feel exploitative. And consider sharing your images with the National Council communications team, so that they may be highlighted for a larger, nationwide audience.

While taking good photos is easier than ever with a smartphone, that doesn't mean your images still won't benefit from a bit of editing. We're not talking about Photoshop here. But Instagram and Snapseed (both free apps you can download right to your phone) offer a variety of filters and easy-to-use editing tools that will take your photo from good to great. Don't forget to crop, too! Cutting off the dead space at the sides of a photo, or cropping out the overhead lighting, gives your photo a stronger, more impactful composition.

Social Media

Social media can be an important (and cost-effective) tool in sharing the Society's mission with your local community. By regularly posting to social media, you're increasing the Society's brand recognition while connecting with your members and those you serve, as well as future members or donors.

Social media posts should be consistent. If your team is lean, choose just one or two social media channels to start. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are all good choices, as are LinkedIn, and increasingly, Instagram. Share the good work being done by your local Conference, as well as news and information from the National Council.

Photos, inspirational quotes, and news updates are all part of a well-rounded social media feed. Videos are also a great way to boost engagement. You don't need a camera crew and professional lighting; these days, people are used to videos shot on a smartphone. Seeing your Conference's work in action will inspire others to volunteer and donate.

While it's okay to ask for donations sometimes, your social media should focus more on sharing your Conference's good work than on a continuous appeal for funding. You want to show donors how their money is helping the poor before immediately asking for more.

svdpusa.org

Svdpusa.org is the National Council's website. It's there to serve a variety of purposes, including connecting the poor with our local Conferences; sharing our mission with donors and potential members; linking Vincentians with the resources and references they need; and providing an easy way for people to donate to those in need.

If you have information to share via svdpusa.org, please contact the National Council communications and IT teams, as well as the Web Oversight Committee, who can help you share your content in the appropriate location.

Other National Council Websites

- fopwalk.org
 - It is against the official policies of the Friends of the Poor® Walk to duplicate or recreate the website.
- svdpusa.careasy.org
 - Replicating or duplicating, in whole or in part, our National Vehicle Donation Program website or program is not allowed, and violators will face legal action. There is only one true National Vehicle Donation Program managed by the National Council, with Charitable Adult Rides and Services (CARS) as the national third party vendor.

Email Signatures

Consistent email signatures are a simple but effective way for National Council staff to communicate our brand to donors, vendors, and friends of the Society. Please use the sample below as a template to create your own email signature, or contact the National Council communications team if you need help replicating this in your own email signature:

Your Name Goes Here

Your title goes here

National Council of the U.S., Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.

66 Progress Parkway

Maryland Heights, MO 63043-3706

Phone: (314) 576-3993 Ext. [xxx]

[Tagline here; will periodically change based on campaign or season]

This email and any attachments hereto is intended only for use by the addressee(s) named herein and may contain legally privileged and/or confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient of this email, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, or copying of this email and any attachments hereto, is strictly prohibited by law or otherwise. If you received this email in error, please notify immediately the National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc. at (314) 576-3993 or at usacouncil@svdpusa.org and permanently delete the original and any copy or printout thereof.

Brand Alignment

Your local Conference has a unique role and relationship with the community you serve, and is also part of the larger Society. Unified branding can create a consistent identity for our organization and our communities at both the local and national levels. If you have questions regarding brand guidelines, contact the National Council communications team.

Diction

In external communications, it is important that all National Council employees and representatives use a common choice of words. As such, we speak in the same voice when conveying the important and impact of our work to serve the poor.

Preferred Words and Phrases Include

- neighbors in need and friends in need — always written in lower case, unless at the start of a sentence. The National Council tends to use “neighbors in need” as a matter of consistency, though “friends in need” is also acceptable.
- Friends of the Poor® — be sure to use the registered trademark
- National Vehicle Donation Program — the official name of the car/auto donation program is the National Vehicle Donation Program, which is sometimes shortened to NVDP.
- Vincentians — should be capitalized, and is preferable to simply “volunteers.” You may also say “Vincentian volunteers.”

Writing About the National Council

The National Council does not provide direct assistance to neighbors in need. Rather, we provide leadership, technical assistance, management training, resource development, and fundraising support for the growth and health of the Society’s Councils, Conferences, and Special Works.

For additional sample language, including phrasing for direct mail, development communications, and Friends of the Poor grants, please contact the National Council communications team.

Words and Phrases to Avoid

- poverty stricken
- impoverished

Feel-Good Phraseology

When writing to donors and volunteers, it is important to consider word choice and phraseology that makes them feel good about their contributions to the Society.

Be grateful. Expressions of gratitude should be prolific in every communication, for example:

- appreciate
- appreciative
- because of you
- can't thank you enough
- it means more than you know
- grateful
- gratitude
- many thanks
- repay your kindness
- thankful
- thanks
- thank you
- thank you so much

Be positive, not negative. Try to describe what something *is* instead of what it *is not*. Also, avoid words with negative connotation, such as:

- but
- cannot
- loss
- unfortunately

Make it about them. Second-person-voice words “you,” “your,” and “yours” should be used as often as possible, especially in lieu of first-person-voice words such as “I,” “me,” “us,” and “we.”

Society jargon and acronyms may be easy for you to understand, but many donors will not understand you. Therefore, use the following in your communication with donors:

- Depending on context, “Society of St. Vincent de Paul” or “The Society” or “National Council” instead of SVdP or SVdPUSA
- Back2Work instead of B2W

Keep it simple. Use short sentences and simple words whenever possible. We do not need to impress people with how smart we are. We work to inspire people with the Society’s mission and the good work of the Vincentians we support.

Use active words. Choose verbs that describe the work and the impact. Often, avoiding “to be” verbs will help you accomplish this. Doing so will also help you avoid using passive voice.

Capitalization. While it may not be grammatically correct, we capitalize specific words for emphasis, including:

- Conference and Council, when referring to the Society's structure
- Mass, when referring to the liturgy
- Will, when referring to an estate document
- Trust, when referring to an estate document
- Estate, when referring to a person's combined wealth

Friends of the Poor. The Friends of the Poor® Walk is a trademarked brand, and must be respected as such. Please remember to use the official name as "Friends of the Poor® Walk", or if abbreviated, "FOP® Walk." The registered trademark symbol (®) should always be used after the word "Poor" (or after the letter "P" in "FOP") within the title. It is important to follow these branding requirements, including the official FOP® Walk logo, when creating brochures, banners, social media sites (including, but not limited to, Facebook and Instagram), all walk-day materials, etc. Because this event is branded as the "Friends of the Poor® Walk," please use this as the official title, not to be confused with a myriad of other spin-off titles, including "Walk for the Poor." In order to maintain our brand, please use only the official title "Friends of the Poor® Walk" when referring to this event.

Grammar

In keeping with the Society's brand, we have made the decision to use specific grammatical elements with consistency. For example:

- use Oxford commas
- use parentheses in phone number area codes, e.g. (314)

Society of St. Vincent de Paul Glossary

Here are some commonly used terms at the Society:

- **The Society of St. Vincent de Paul.** Founded in Paris in 1833, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is an international organization of lay Catholics seeking spiritual growth through person-to-person service of the poor and marginalized, in whom we see the Face of Christ.
- **Conference.** The Society's basic unit of organization, there are 4,428 Conferences in parishes across the U.S. The term "Conference" is in honor of our founding as the "Conference of Charity." Conferences are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action.
- **Council.** Conferences are supported by a structure of geographically-based District and (Arch)Diocesan Councils, which serve and support the Conferences, primarily by promoting the sense of belonging to a Society which encircles the world. (*See Rule 1:3.6*)
- **National Council of the United States.** The National Council brings together all the organizational strands, serving as the Society's voice by translating the views and actions of Vincentians into Society policy.
- **National Board of Directors.** The National Board of Directors includes the elected National President and officers. Their role is to manage the Society's resources and ensure organizational planning and implementation.
- **National Foundation Board.** Working under the direction of its elected Board Chair, the National Foundation Board raises and invests funds solely for the purpose of financially supporting the mission of the National Council

- **Council General International (CGI).** Sometimes informally referred to as the “International Council”, the Council General is the highest governing body of the International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Headquartered in Paris, France, the Confederation unites the Society internationally in its spirituality and governance. All Superior (National) Councils are represented on the CGI by their respective Presidents.”

A Final Note

These brand guidelines will continue to evolve as we work together to create and strengthen the brand. Please check back regularly for updates, and feel free to share suggestions and ideas with the National Council communications team.