

## Decatur Corps reaps a harvest

A grain wagon might not be the kind of thing you'd expect to see emblazoned with the Salvation Army shield, but in Macon County, Ill., that's exactly what draws local farmers' attention to a unique opportunity to support the Decatur Corps, led by Majors Randall and Sue Summit.

"It gives farmers a simple way to help others in need," said advisory

board member and farmer David Goebel, who is instrumental in leading the annual Harvest Grain Drive that asks farmers to donate a portion of their crop, which The Salvation Army then sells to help fund vital programs and services.

For the third harvest season, this year the grain wagon made its rounds to participating farms for a fill up. Farmers also could donate by working with one

of 20 grain elevators in central Illinois to give a percentage of their crop's proceeds to the corps.

During the Farm Progress Show, the largest trade show of its kind in North America, the grain wagon brought curious visitors' attention to The Salvation Army's interest, involvement and support of the farming community, while also highlighting this easy and convenient way for farmers to donate during one of their busiest seasons.

In addition to learning more about the mission and work of the Army through informational brochures and knowledgeable volunteers manning the booth, visitors also were able to purchase Red Kettle Blend coffee (available year-round at a local coffee shop) or donate money in a red kettle.

David Goebel, Decatur, Ill., advisory board member and farmer, represents The Salvation Army at the Farm Progress Show.



"It's a great opportunity to get in front of farmers and companies," said Jeff Daly, Decatur Corps development director. "We had people from all over the world stopping by to thank us for what we do."

The grain wagon was donated to the corps in 2023 and has been used to collect donations and promote giving to The Salvation Army each fall since then in conjunction with the Macon County Fair. Last year's income was just shy of \$10,000, with increases expected as the drive gains traction and word spreads.

## A Joyful Challenge



Colonels Thomas and Julie Anne Louden and Major Marc Johnson join Captains Heidi and Kory Strand and corps and advisory board member Doug Duggins as Santa in New Albany, Ind., for the 2024 National Commander's Red Kettle Challenge, which they won thanks to the donated gold nugget (pictured).

The joy of giving is taking centerstage this Christmas season, encouraging donations but also volunteerism during the Red Kettle campaign in order to help our neighbors in need during the holidays and throughout the year. This year's national campaign, *Give with Joy*, recognizes the warmth and hope generosity can bring to both those who give and those who receive.

To better support the growing programs and mission of each corps, Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz this year is introducing the Central Territory Red Kettle Challenge, inviting corps to compete and boost their gross kettle income. Joining with others in your corps and community can make the difference.

The top three corps in each division achieving at least 5 percent growth over the prior year will receive missional support awards.

"This is an opportunity to strengthen community impact and celebrate those

who go above and beyond to reach their goals," said Karla Clark, territorial executive director of development.

Income eligible for the challenge includes cash, checks (up to \$1,000), Tap to Give, PayPal, and Apple/ Google Pay. Donations through the national QR code also qualify. Excluded are register round-ups, counter kettles, and mailed appeal checks. All income must be recorded through Register to Ring.

If a corps raises at least 5 percent more this season and secures a spot in the Top 10 of the National Commander's Red Kettle Challenge, the number one corps in the territory will receive an additional missional support award.

Last year, Captains Heidi and Kory Strand of New Albany, Ind., earned first place in the "Highest Dollars Raised" category after a unique donation—an unrefined gold nugget auctioned for nearly \$70,000—captured both local and national media attention.

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## Consultation expands ministry horizon



The 13th Americas Korean Ministries Consultation, held September 15-18, 2025 at the Chicago Mayfair Community Church (Corps), with the theme "Beyond Boundaries: Expanding the Horizon of Ministry" (Isaiah 54:2), was a significant gathering for fellowship, spiritual encouragement, and growth. By God's grace, 63 officers, retired officers, and auxiliary captains from across the U.S. and Canada came together to reflect on ministry strategies and explore new

approaches for extending The Salvation Army's mission in today's context.

Through workshops, panel discussions and shared times of prayer, participants examined ways to move beyond traditional boundaries. The consultation concluded with renewed vision and Spirit-led inspiration, equipping attendees to contribute more effectively and meaningfully to the mission and to advance God's Kingdom through Spirit-empowered strategies.



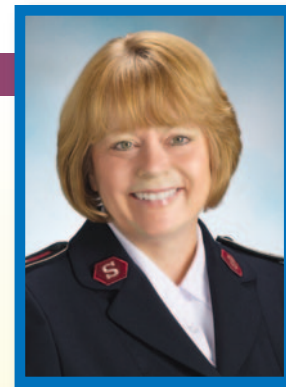
# A message of life and peace

by Lt. Colonel Darlene Harvey  
Territorial Secretary for Officer Resource and Development

At the end of November, we will enter into the season of Advent, celebrating Christ coming into the world. But according to the American Psychological Association, 89 percent of adults say the holidays cause them stress. They cite concerns like not having enough money, missing loved ones, and anticipating family conflict. In The Salvation Army, we are even busier during the holidays with fundraising and service which can give us added joy but also cause stress. I know sometimes stress has gotten the best of me when I've worried if we'd have

enough toys for distribution, meet our kettle goal or have enough food at the corps Thanksgiving or Christmas potlucks and enough volunteers for special events. Add to that concerns about my own family gatherings and gifts.

When I find myself concerned, Philippians 4:4-9 is my "go to." Paul reminds us to rejoice in the Lord and that He is always near. We are reminded not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, to present our requests to God. His peace will guard our hearts and minds. When my thoughts start to



spin out of control, I recollect how God has been faithful. I thank Him for His faithfulness in the past and bring my concerns to Him, with thanksgiving, and it is true, He gives me peace.

Thanksgiving especially gives us an opportunity to reflect, with gratitude, on our blessings. Colossians 3:15 reminds us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, since as members of one body, we were called to peace. *And to be thankful.* It is through praising the Lord, being grateful and thanking God for our blessings that He gives us peace.

Recently, I read Malachi 2:4-6 in my devotions, "My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace," which is a warning to priests to the covenant with Levi. It stresses how we have the privileged opportunity to tell people about life and peace. To be able to do this, we must demonstrate life and peace in our own lives. Our world needs to hear this message of peace as so many people have conflict within themselves and with others.

I pray as you celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day in the coming months that your heart is full of gratitude and peace, and that you're able to share this with others.

## New corps plant has big impact

The 6000 block of Prospect Avenue in Kansas City, Mo., is a lively place to be on a Sunday evening. The doors are open, allowing gospel music to drift onto the street. Corps officer Lt. Donald Cooper talks with people and invites them in with a contagious energy that clearly says, "You belong here."

Things look a little different at the Prospect Corps, a recent plant on the south side of the city where there is a desperate need for physical and spiritual support. A unique combination of a traditional worship service and dinner church draws a group averaging 120 people from different walks of life.

"When I knew I was going to a corps plant, I began to pray," said Lt.



Lt. Donald Cooper and soldier Preston Wages

Donald, commenting on how the ministry took shape. "Lord, what would work in this community? I just followed the leading of the Holy Spirit."

The afternoon begins with a tight-knit group which gathers to set up and cook. They come not only to put on a community meal, but to get to know and minister to the people who attend.

"We represent Christ," said Pamela Konetzni, divisional donor relations director who has been a part of the ministry for the past year. "People feel loved when they come. It's a privilege that I can share Jesus with them."

Before dinner is served, everyone

gathers in the chapel for worship, including live music, a short Bible lesson, prayer and testimonies. Reflective of the Army salvation meetings, it's a precious time of connecting with God and one another.

"It's really refreshing. There's a sense that everybody wants to be there," said Derek Gjovig, Olathe, Kan., corps sergeant-major who has been assisting with everything from transportation to running the audio/visual for worship since the start. "You get this incredible energy that's clearly the Holy Spirit moving."

As guests move from the chapel to the fellowship hall, collect their plates and take their seats, fellowship continues around tables with questions printed on cards to guide discussion. Scripture is shared again, and music plays in the background as Salvationists join groups of families and friends to help answer questions and keep the conversation focused.

"I think the really special thing is early on we saw that ministry and discipleship was happening around

the tables," said the lieutenant. "I went to the other area corps and asked soldiers to come help. Several now sit at the tables to move conversations to Jesus."

For Preston Wages, the ministry is personal. A graduate of the adult rehabilitation center (ARC) program, Preston was the first soldier to be enrolled at the Prospect Corps and seizes every opportunity to share Christ and the freedom found in Him with others.

"The calling that God placed upon me was to give back," said Preston. "The Salvation Army is very different than any other church I've been to. This was the first time I saw a church stepping out into the community and inviting them in. It made me want to be a part of it."



THE SALVATION ARMY  
5550 Prairie Stone Pkwy • Hoffman Estates, IL 60192  
847-294-2000

WILLIAM AND CATHERINE BOOTH  
Founder

LYNDON BUCKINGHAM  
General

COMMISSIONER EVIE DIAZ  
Territorial Commander

ELIZABETH KINZIE  
Editor

TWYLA STEINSLAND  
Writer/Editor

LAURA STEWART  
Publications Coordinator/Writer

TREVOR DARAGO  
Digital Media Coordinator

HELENA TURNER  
Administrative Assistant

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Graphic Design and Production

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See your corps officer for more details.





# Proclaiming a God who transforms

*The welcome of the new session of cadets and auxiliary captains*

An uplifting rendition of the praise song "Holy Forever" by the Chicago Staff Band (CSB), led by bandmaster Brett Tolcher, opened the public welcome for the "Proclaimers of Transformation" session at the Norridge Citadel, Ill., Corps.

"God Himself has put a call out for the 'Proclaimers of Transformation'" said Chief Secretary Colonel Thomas Louden in his opening remarks. "Tonight, we will see those men and women who answered His call to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to this lost world."



Lt. Colonel Gerardo Góchez

then welcomed the cadets and the six new auxiliary captains. The crowd cheered loudly when she asked, "Can we all agree that this is a great session name?"

She continued, "I think this is a description we all want to take on tonight. We can identify with this session name, for each of us can be a proclaimer, not a whisperer. We are The Salvation Army and are proclaiming a God who transforms by the blood and fire."

Cadet Jonquilla Colbert, Cadet Elijah Stouder and A/Captain Zarina Singh shared their testimonies of calling through a short Q&A led by Major Peter Mount, CFOT vice principal for personnel.

Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz introduced the guests for the meeting and the Ignite Conference, Lt. Colonels Agripina and Gerardo Góchez, Mexico territorial leaders, who bring rich experience having served in seven countries and who have a connection with the Central CFOT, as Colonel Gerardo spent his second year of training here. Colonel Agripina was recognized for being the first Mexican-

born territorial commander of Mexico and also the first married woman territorial commander there.

Reading scripture and giving a response, Colonel Agripina told the crowd that being a proclaimer of transformation is not an easy task.

"To be a proclaimer, you

must be curious and courageous," she said.

Basing his message in Joshua 1:6-7, Colonel Gerardo said, "Transformational leadership begins with trusting God. When God called Joshua to lead Israel, He charged him to be strong and courageous, not through his own self-confidence but his faith in the presence and promises of God. The 'Proclaimers of Transformation' must have a foundation of faith, and so must we all.

"If we want our ministry to transform others, we need to be people who trust God to em-

power our words and actions. It's not something we can do by ourselves. Joshua needed courage so deeply embedded, deeply rooted in faith, that he could take on God's mission. Likewise, proclaimers today must have a resilient faith in God's power to transform lives by faith and having courage in God's promises."



The new session of cadets



Commissioner Evie Diaz

The entrance of the "Proclaimers of Transformation" was led by Cadet J. T. Colbert, who proudly carried the session's flag. The new cadets include five first-generation Salvationists and one sixth-generation Salvationist.

Major Cassandra DeJesus, territorial candidates' secretary, introduced them, saying they bring a wealth of experience and excitement and beautiful testimonies of transformation in Christ.



The new auxiliary captains

She charged them, "May others see in you what a new creation in Christ looks like...Others will be drawn to how you live, how you speak because they can see Christ working in you and through you."

College for Officer Training (CFOT) Principal Major Catherine Mount



CFOT Principal Major Catherine Mount

During a time of reflection while Captain Grant Holloway and the Territorial Worship Collective (TWC) sang, "Spirit of the Living God," many individuals knelt at the altar and gathered together in prayer.

Earlier in the evening, Commissioner Diaz installed Mark Bender as the new territorial sergeant-major, acknowledging with gratitude the importance of soldier leaders in our Army. She thanked Rochelle Holman as the territory's first sergeant-major. Introducing Mark, the territorial commander said he is a follower of Christ who is totally committed to the Army's mission. She charged him to ensure the Territorial Soldiers' Forum is in a position to hear from the field and represent them to leadership.

Music was woven throughout the meeting. In addition to pieces and accompaniment by the CSB,



Lt. Colonel Agripina Góchez



Territorial Sergeant-major Mark Bender

the CFOT United Chorus shared "I Worship You," the TWC presented a worship medley, and the meeting concluded with Colonel Julie Anne Loudon leading all in singing the glorious hymn, "And can it be."





# Young leaders reflect

Two Ignite delegates share their witness and perspective on the Territorial Priorities and theme of Belonging and Beyond.

## My testimony

by Lydia Robinson



Finding my identity in Christ has been one of my greatest blessings, and The Salvation Army helped me find it. If not for the Army I would still be a lost soul. As a biracial woman, I struggled to fit in. Some people viewed me as deprived; some thought I was too civil. Finding a community that would accept all of me, not just part of me, was a struggle. Because of this, I developed an identity crisis at a young age.

To save myself, I'd escape through my imagination to a place where people looked like me, a place where I found community. As I got older, I

could no longer go there, of course. It wasn't real. But I did find something that was real—Jesus!

Through The Salvation Army, I found the love of Jesus and the community I'd longed for, for so long. Christ accepted and loved me completely.

Initially this year, I had a hard time embracing the theme of "Belonging" because for so long I thought I didn't. But over the months I connected with it. Then, it began to mean more to me than I anticipated. It became a daily reminder that I belong to Jesus.

Jesus loves me—and you! We belong to Him, and through that, we are united. It doesn't matter the color of our skin or the texture of our hair. Jesus loves each of us, and our identity is found in Him. I hope that we can go beyond ourselves to share this Good News with others so that they can find that they belong to God too.

## My take

by Ethan Walker

I think the territorial priorities are crucial to our success, not just individually, but as an organization.

A strong spiritual life is fundamental, especially during seasons that are stricken with grief, stress or other hardships. Having a deep-rooted con-

nection with God, a consistent prayer life and a community of believers who will not only pray with us but challenge us to go deeper in our relationship with God is essential no matter where we are in our walk.

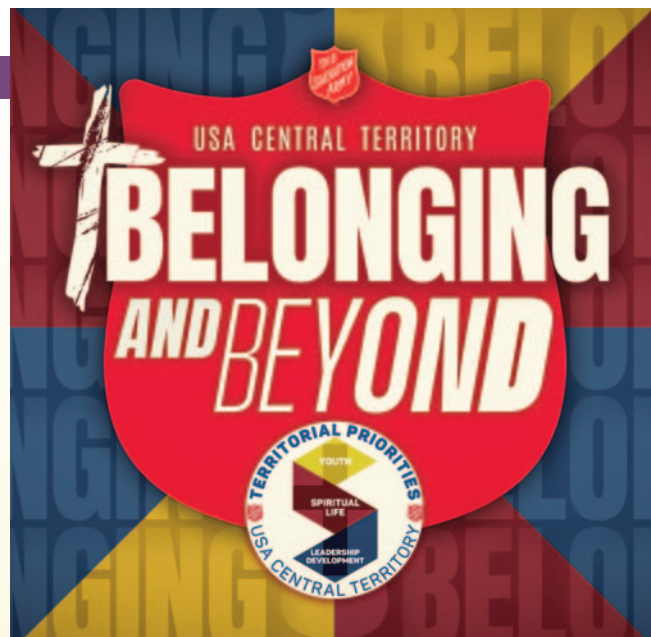
Youth are a vital part of our network and our future leaders. We have an obligation to pour into them and develop young men and women who will grow into what God has for their lives. I think we're doing an amazing job cultivating an atmosphere for them to grow spiritually, mentally and emotionally and preparing them for real-life challenges.



I love the emphasis on leadership development, whether through mentorship and coaching or by cultivating mindsets like emotional intelligence and a desire for continuing education. When we take the time to focus on these, they will overflow and spread into different areas that can blossom in unimaginable ways.

My internship at Echo Grove Camp prepared me for my journey into ministry, and I can say, without a doubt, these priorities also were an essential part. Everyone from my corps officers to camp leaders invested themselves in me, and it's had a huge impact on my life and on my current internship at the Kalamazoo, Mich., Corps.

I am grateful to be part of an organization that is Christ-centered and dedicated to providing support and guidance not only to youth but to current leaders in the territory. I can't wait to see what lies ahead!



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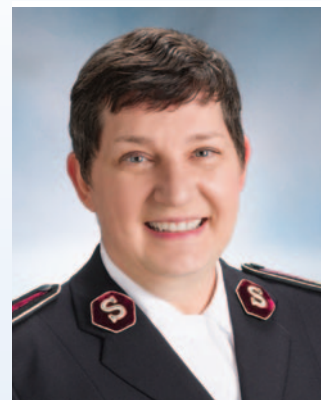
## Territorial Priorities update

by Commissioner Evie Diaz  
Territorial Commander

As we move into the new program year, my hope is that we will continue to focus on the Territorial Priorities of Spiritual Life, Youth, and Leadership Development. I want to provide an update on what that looks like for the territory.

We start with the theme for the coming year, "Belonging and Beyond." We believe God wants us to go beyond simply belonging to become much more. Individually, He wants us to become more like Jesus and fulfill His plans for how we serve Him in our communities and ministry, to find out how we can help others belong to Jesus and, for many, how they belong to The Salvation Army. As a territory, God has more for us to be and do as well. I believe the Holy Spirit wants to move among us in more and more ways to change lives, to see more people come to know Jesus and to see communities transformed by the love of Jesus.

The theme "Belonging and Beyond" is directly connected to our Territorial Priorities. As we put our focus on the priorities, we have created a taskforce for each that is composed of a variety of individuals from the territory. The Youth Taskforce is headed up by Major Ronnie Amick, territorial youth secretary, and Peggy McGee, assistant territorial youth secretary. The Spiritual Life Taskforce is led by Major Debra Pascoe, territorial secretary for spiritual life. The Leadership Development Taskforce is spearheaded by Lt. Colonel Darlene



Harvey, territorial officer resource and development secretary. Each group includes soldiers, officers and employees who have been selected in consultation with divisional leaders and a great amount of prayer.

The purpose of these taskforces is to gain perspective from the field on what can be done across the territory to enhance the priorities. They will guide Territorial Leadership on how to provide resources and support to the frontlines.

We also are continuing the podcast series "All We Need," which you can listen to wherever you get your podcasts. This podcast series is based on 2 Peter 1:3. In each episode I am joined by a guest or two from the territory to see how the Territorial Priorities relate to their lives and their role in The Salvation Army.

I am convinced God is moving throughout the territory. This theme and our priorities will help make us ready to respond to the Holy Spirit as He moves and directs us for His Kingdom's sake.



# Putting the Lord first

Sarah Nottle believes she is exactly where God wants her. She and her family belong to the Peoria Citadel, Ill., Corps, and she is the director of the Canton 360 Life Center.

were crazy. But we had clear sunny days and good roads, and the Lord has opened up so much for us here."

Sarah began attending the Tacoma Corps when she was in her early 20s after meeting the corps sergeant-major and youth director when she worked at a Christian bookstore. She met Mark, whose family had a long history with The Salvation Army, at a youth weekend event. Sarah became a soldier in 2001.

In June, Sarah received the Territorial Award of Excellence for Spiritual Life at the Belonging Conference.

"I was honored because I work hard at the things we do," Sarah said. "I try to put the Lord in front of everything."

Her attendance at the recent National Seminar on Holiness (NSH) further inspired Sarah about God's purpose for her in this world.

"It reaffirmed that the Lord's Kingdom can be seen here, now," she said. "We really are here for the Lord's purpose. There is joy and



Sarah and daughter Hannah at kettle time

peace in understanding that."

At her corps, Sarah is a member of the worship team, along with leading corps cadets and teaching girl guards.

At the center, she helped establish a weekly Thursday night meal program, run by volunteers. About 60-80 people attend the community meal where hearty dishes like pulled pork and chicken casserole are served.

"We always start with prayer," Sarah said. "People can sit down and be served and enjoy time eating, along with fellowship. It's a safe, good, encouraging place."

She was also part of a team that began a neighborhood garden two years ago where the produce is used for the food pantry and community meal. That garden has grown well. This year, kale, cabbage, broccoli, tomatoes, onions, and potatoes have been harvested.

This summer, Sarah and the Life Center staff dipped their toes into meal distribution out in the community—breakfast and lunch were provided five days a week for 100 children. Many parents told her it was a lifesaver.

With Sarah's leadership, the center also started Pathway of

Hope, and the Emergency Disaster Services (EDS) team has been re-energized. She was recognized with a Community Partnership Award from the Illinois Emergency Services Management Association last year. The center also helped found and holds an outreach called Jesus Fest (see sidebar).

Although she has been active in developing and over-seeing many new programs and increasing the Army's service and visibility in Canton, Sarah is quick to give all the credit to God.

"I just prayed the Lord would show me what He had for this community," she said. "And that is what He has done. We have some amazing volunteers doing fabulous things. Through what the Lord has put in place in the three years I have been here, He has shown me I need less of me and more of Him. His plans are better than my plans."

# Faith shines at Jesus Fest

It started with the vision of just a few people to bring their community together and culminated this fall in more than 400 people converging on the town square in Canton, Ill., for Jesus Fest, a day filled with worship music, food, and family activities—all free of charge.



The enthusiasm of that handful of volunteers spread so that, in partnership with more than a dozen churches of all denominations, the Canton 360 Life Center hosted the second annual event.

"For me, the ministry of The Salvation Army is that we are not just an island, we are part of the community," said Sarah Nottle, Canton 360 Life Center director. "And we can only serve the community if we work together."

Over the past year, Sarah and her team worked diligently to make connections with other churches, hold fundraisers and promote the event through fliers, social media and the local radio station. These efforts paid off. Between the fundraisers and a few generous private donors, Jesus Fest was fully covered and included two praise bands, a professional balloon artist, Mini Moo's miniature highland cows, games, goodie bags, a cookout, and more.

The day of the event, people from all over Fulton County came to see what Jesus Fest was all about, while passersby were drawn to the festi-

ties. Many people brought lawn chairs to sit and enjoy the music, while families made rounds to activities to children's delight.

"We had a really good mix of people," said Sarah. "Everyone I talked to loved it and was really appreciative of everything."

Keeping the focus on representing Christ, Jesus Fest began and ended with Scripture reading and prayer. Visitors also were encouraged to visit a table where they could receive information on local resources and pray with one of several volunteers.

In a beautiful testament to God's hand at work, the event resulted in connections made with new community members, as well as relationships forged with several churches which committed to volunteering at the center, including help with holiday activities.

"We will definitely be doing Jesus Fest again," said Sarah. "We're hoping that it grows. It's a cool, tangible way to reach the unchurched community."



Taking part in a community parade

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# Ignite: a call to be courageous and obedient

by Captain Grant Holloway

The Ignite the Spirit of Leadership weekend was more than just a three-day event. It was an opportunity for each delegate to listen and respond to God's call to make an impact in their community and the world for Jesus. Through times of worship, workshops, fun activities and conversations, delegates were encouraged to experience a deeper awareness of what God is doing in their lives and were challenged to walk "By Faith" as they step up to lead in their corps and communities.



In his testimony, Lt. Colonel Dan Jennings, territorial secretary for personnel, shared that God will "break down barriers, as long as you say 'yes'." Ignite became a sacred space to experience the Holy Spirit moving, leading people to say "yes" to ministry in their corps, and beyond, in all the diverse ways it can take shape. From the moment people arrived until they departed, it was evident the Holy Spirit was motivating and enabling people to say "yes" in faith to how God is asking them to serve and lead.



The weekend began at the Cadets' Welcome with Lt. Colonel Gerardo Góchez urging Salvationists, "God doesn't call us to remain, but He calls us to step out and go forward," and concluded with a challenge by Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz who said, "Decide who you're going to be...It looks different for everyone, but answer the Holy Spirit's leading by saying 'yes' to Him." Woven throughout Ignite was a consistent challenge and theme: leadership is not passive. It requires courage, intentionality and trust in God's leading in your life.

ever God is asking them to do. She said Christ has won the battle but requires His people to participate faithfully, no matter the cost.

Delegates had the opportunity to attend several breakout sessions that further challenged them to dream big and be the leader God has equipped them to be.



Lt. Colonels Agripina and Gerardo Góchez spoke throughout weekend on the life and ministry of Joshua in the Old Testament. They emphasized the importance of moving forward in faith and utilizing the gifts, talents and skills God has equipped each of us with. Colonel Agripina encouraged delegates to be courageous and obedient to what-







Photos by Katelyn Church

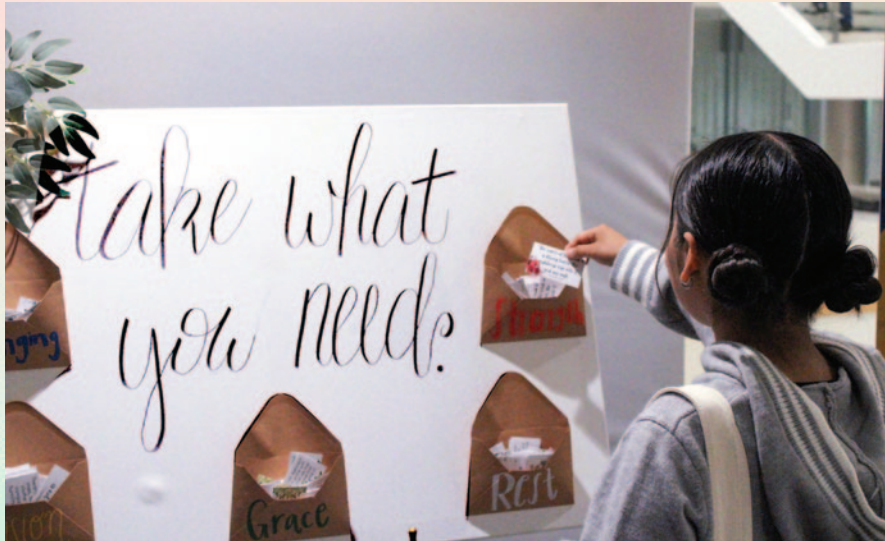


their calling in the body of believers, developing an active prayer life for effective leadership, a glimpse of the candidate process, life at the College for Officer Training, and officership. These sessions not only shared information but provided opportunities for delegates to share stories, ask questions, and discover new ways to support one another in their leadership journeys.

For many delegates, the weekend provided a renewed sense of purpose in their ministry and calling.

"We have each been equipped to lead," said Sean James from the Waterloo, Iowa, Corps. "It's not to be the loudest, but to be the most faithful."

Workshops provided practical tools as delegates explored creative ministry ideas, leading youth by faith, discipleship strategies, Bible study,



"This weekend provided an opportunity to learn about my ministry and future ministry," said Amanda Hanton from the Norridge Citadel, Ill., Corps.

Zee Rainey from the South Bend, Ind., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center shared, "I was challenged to go and invest in my community and those who will come after me. I have a responsibility to be a light and beacon for others."

During Sunday worship people shared their testimonies, heard from God's Word, and were given an opportunity to make a covenant with God in response to His call on their lives. Testimonies underscored God's presence so His children should not be afraid to fulfill their calling. One person shared Jesus was asking them, "Why are you stalling?" Another reflected they'd always thought they were too old to be a leader or make a difference, but God showed them He still wants to use them.

The meeting concluded with a challenge from Colonel Agripina who said, "Joshua recognized that he was chosen by God and chose to serve the Lord...Choose today whom you will serve."

Choosing to serve God isn't always the easiest choice. It goes against culture. It means overcoming fears and insecurities. It requires facing obstacles. However, God already has declared

victory and called each believer, so the response must be to follow. Many delegates returned home with a renewed purpose: to step forward and be the leader God has called and equipped them to be.





# How I belong



**Orlando Macias**  
Milwaukee, Wis.

## What do you do with The Salvation Army?

As a soldier at the Cold Spring Corps, I volunteer to help people in different ways with food, clothing and most importantly sharing the Word of God.

## Why do you do it?

I do it because I like to help others and serve God.

## What's the best part about your ministry?

I think the best part of my ministry is being able to share God's Word with others and direct them to Him.

## How did you get involved with The Salvation Army?

I got involved with The Salvation Army because I had a need for food to feed my children, and I was looking for a church to attend. Now I am here serving the Lord.

## What are you currently reading?

I am reading my Bible every day.

## In the last year, what has been your biggest blessing or challenge?

My biggest blessing is walking now with Jesus and seeing how He blesses me every day..

## What is your favorite scripture?

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV): "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

## If you could have an unlimited supply of one thing, what would it be?

Jesus!

*Orlando was enrolled as a soldier with 52 other junior and senior soldiers by the General at the Belonging Congress in June.*

# Helping hands and hugs

It's the hugs that Nancy Leslie remembers the most. Nancy, a soldier at the Duluth, Minn., Corps, provided social services at the corps for just shy of 38 years. She helped people with critical needs like housing, utilities, food, and transportation to a job. And she often received a hug for the care she put into each person's case.

"Yes, I have gotten a lot of hugs," she recalled fondly.

Initially hired to answer the telephone at the Duluth Corps in 1987, Nancy never imagined handling social services but stepped in when a colleague was on vacation. She found herself learning the "ins and outs" on the go.

"I have always said that God has a sense of humor. He threw me into this with no training. But it was the best way for me to learn," she said.

Born and raised in North Dakota, Nancy was introduced to The Salvation Army in 1977 when she got a job at its thrift store in Minot, N.D. There, she met Steve, a second-generation Salvationist, whom she married the next year. She became a soldier in 1982. Four years later she and Steve moved their four children to Duluth where they became very active in the corps.

"I taught girl guards and corps cadets," Nancy said. "We were here all the time for Bible study. Our children attended all the corps' activi-

ties. They were always right alongside of us."

Today, Nancy's daughter, Major Michele Harms, is the corps officer in Kirksville, Mo., and Nancy's son, Doug Leslie, is Northern divisional sergeant-major and its representative on the Territorial Soldiers' Forum.

Although she's not keen on having her photo taken, Nancy sometimes has found herself on local television for food drives and corps' programs. People often recognize her when she is out and about in town.

"Some will stop and ask me for a prayer, so I just stop and pray with them," she said.

Though Nancy retired this year, she is still active in her corps—particularly in women's ministries.

"I am retiring from work, not from life," Nancy concluded, saying she'll always be involved with the Army. It's where she belongs.



# Long Service Awards

*We salute the following officers on their service milestones.*

## 25 Years

Lt. Colonel Brian Davis  
Lt. Colonel Johanna Pook  
Lt. Colonel John Pook  
Lt. Colonel Barbara Rich  
Lt. Colonel Jonathan Rich  
Major Linda Barker  
Major William DeJesus  
Major Fred Mead  
Major Nancy Mead  
Major Shanda Minks  
Major Teri Nauta  
Major Timothy Nauta  
Major Charles Pinkston  
Major Kathleen Pinkston  
Major Sally Sell  
Major Timothy Sell  
Major Jolinda Shelbourn  
Major Scott Shelbourn  
Major Rebecca Simmons

## 30 Years

Major Matt Grindle  
Major Patricia Grindle  
Major Steven Koehler  
Major Jacqueline Palmer  
Major Angela Wandling  
Major Monty Wandling  
Major Jennifer Woodard

## 35 Years

Lt. Colonel Lesa Davis  
Major Marlys Anderson  
Major David Gorton  
Major Alan Hellstrom  
Major Kimberly Hellstrom  
Major Brenda Pittman  
Major Catherine Thielke  
Major Todd Thielke  
Major Carol Wurtz

## 40 Years

Major Lucille Gates  
Major Karen Johnson  
Major Marc Johnson  
Major Julie McDowell  
Major Thomas McDowell  
Major James Mungai  
Major Penny Mungai  
Major Gregory Voeller

## 45 Years

Commissioner Ralph Bukiewicz



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# Beattys hold out a lifeline

Captain Matthew Beatty travels the world, helping people who need immediate aid in the aftermath of natural and man-made disasters. His duties have kept him away from home for more than 300 days over the last four years.

"When he is away, I always tell him, 'Make sure and let me know when you land—let me know that you are OK,'" his wife, Captain Rona Mutch, said.

Since 2021, Captain Matthew has worked at International Headquarters for Emergency Services as program officer for strategy, security and project support, while Captain Rona has been associate corps officer at the Regent Hall Corps in downtown London. She also has served as the chaplain at the No. 10 Drop-In Centre and St. Ann's Lifehouse—part of Westminster Homeless Services.



Captains Rona Mutch and Matthew Beatty



Captain Rona shares at Belonging.

At first, Captain Rona was a bit uncertain about her duties, particularly about being a chaplain.

"I was nervous, but I was excited too," she recalled. "I said, 'Lord, show me the beauty of this.'"

Having been deployed on teams to serve after disasters in Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Indonesia, Captain Matthew increasingly felt called to minister fulltime in International Emergency Services.

"It's nice to be a beacon of hope, let people know they are not alone," he said. "We are there to bring comfort and support; for our officers and staff too."

In October 2023, when Category 5 Hurricane Otis hit Mexico, Captain Matthew flew immediately from London. For weeks, his days were spent clearing debris, including fallen power lines and trees, and distributing meals to

people who had lost everything.

"We work with people when they are at their lowest," Captain Matthew said. "I try to 'stand in the mud' with them as best I can."

He recalls being in Poland within four days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"We were in an active war zone," the captain said. "I was tasked with getting supplies. We worked with UPS. I threw together a quick plan and worked with The Salvation Army's Germany, Lithuania and Poland Territory; we got a Sprinter van of supplies—the first official shipment of supplies into Ukraine."

Captain Rona works with many people who are experiencing homelessness or vulnerable housing. "Homelessness in London is growing. It is heartbreaking," she said.

She's found her niche by building strong relationships and sharing the gospel. "My platform is sharing God's Word," she said.

The captain created a weekly "karaoke church" featuring spiritual songs, and often a secular song or two.

"Some people might say, 'I don't believe in God,' so when they hear the word 'church' they may not want to come. But my programs include everyone. We sing, and we worship."



Captain Matthew reviews water quality samples with officers in Zimbabwe.

My only rule is the words are appropriate," Captain Rona said with a smile.

She indicated birthday celebrations at the drop-in centre and at St. Ann's are one way to make people feel special. During the Christmas season, Captain Rona oversees the holiday dinner at the centre. Another holiday meal is served at St. Ann's for residents and staff.

Both Captains Matthew and Rona feel comfortable in their roles and are grateful to be serving in The Salvation Army.

"God showed me the beauty of this appointment and His faithfulness through the lives of the people I minister to," Captain Rona said. "Some are experiencing homelessness, but they can still smile. God uses that as my encouragement."

"I've been to 40 countries in four years," Captain Matthew concluded. "It has been a privilege to see The Salvation Army at work all over the world."

## Hope is in the house

by Major Julie Aren

Ten Central Territory Salvationists were part of a Global Mission Team earlier this year to Sri Lanka. Armed with cleaning supplies, paint brushes, electrical, plumbing and carpentry materials, we helped restore four apartments in a Salvation Army housing complex called "Hope House."

New air conditioners were installed, and minor carpentry and plumbing needs were addressed. Walls were prepped and painted. The team members worked well together and enjoyed seeing daily progress. The apartments soon will have guests, and the proceeds from rentals will help meet budgetary and fiscal needs in the Sri Lanka Territory.



The Sri Lankans are very warm, friendly and hospitable. They enjoyed preparing our daily tea times and encouraged us to take breaks. This helped build friendships as we shared our joys and struggles. Their love for the Lord and us was evident. As partners in mission, we were re-

minded that we belong to a global Salvation Army family.

In the evening, visits were made to child development centers and corps. Team members shared from scripture and provided music, games and crafts. One member, proficient in soccer, instructed the children in the sport. Another member (a Sri Lankan now living and raising a family in the United States) helped with translation and cultural etiquette. Members also collected donations of flip flops and T-shirts from people throughout the Central Territory to share with children in Sri Lanka.

The team's weekly ministry focus, "Transformed by Love, Called to Shine," was based on Sri Lanka's territorial theme for 2025-2027, "Transformation" based on 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Preparing for our trip, we looked at Exodus Chapter 3 where the Lord instructed Moses to take off his shoes as he was on holy ground. During our two Sunday worship opportunities, we had the privilege to take off our shoes as we entered the chapel for worship. While this is a cultural expectation and expression in



Sri Lanka, it became symbolic for us. We were on holy ground.

On our last Hope House work day, Colonel B.G. Prakash, secretary for program and incoming chief secretary, said, "The walls you have painted may someday need repainting, the repairs may one day need attention again, but the love you have shown, the friendships we have built, and the example of service you have left will remain forever."

After nearly 20 gallons of paint, sore muscles, lots of sharing, and new friendships formed in the Lord, we have been forever changed. Our faith has been strengthened, our spirits have been encouraged. We are blessed to be part of the worldwide Salvation Army family.





# A sweet, sweet sound

Five years of Spirit-filled ministry by Central Territorial Staff Songsters

by Evie Polsley

**I**n the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy,'" Acts 2:17-18, NLT.

How can we not get excited when Peter shares this prophecy from Joel? I never thought five years ago when I joined the Central Territorial Staff Songsters (CTSS) that it would give me a new vision for what this looks like in our Army today. Singing in a choir might not be the first place you'd look for the realization of this prophecy, but it's exactly where it's happening.



in our understanding of who God is through His Word and in service to Him in all that we do. We are a community demonstrating God's love and mission to each other and those to whom we minister. It is a call to exemplary musicianship and hard work, as well as vulnerability and compassion.

Together, we've joined our voices to be a source of peace and comfort during a global pandemic. We've experienced a taste of heaven singing with other staff songster brigades from the U.S., Canada and Bermuda, and the United Kingdom and Ireland territories in an enormous church

overflowing with listeners. We've seen Christ in the face of a man at an adult rehabilitation center praising God with tears streaming down his face as we sang. We've met Jesus while singing with an 8-year-old who had been afraid to even say "Hello" but by end of the performance was singing with all his might in adoration to God.

In a world where disunity seems to be ripping people apart, the CTSS is a model of what unity in Christ can look like. The beauty of a choir doesn't come only from its individual voices, but in the listening, the blending and the coming together of each voice into a unified sound. A sound that brings others to the throne of God. We not only do this in making music but also in our interactions and encouragement of each other.



The idea for a group of singers to come together and not just make beautiful music, but to be instruments for the Lord began with the innovation and dedication of Dr. Harold Burgmayer. Now, under the creative and enthusiastic leadership of Matt Woods, the group is growing and reaching younger singers so that as a multigenerational brigade, we are challenged not only to sing with excellence but to grow and be united



General Brian Peddle (Ret.) with CTSS members in Canada.



Though we represent multiple generations, different parts of the territory, different career paths and interests, we are united in bringing glory to God through our music. And that connection spills over into our interactions with each other. The dreams of the older members and the vision of the younger are lovingly shared through prayer partners and small groups as we study God's Word, listen to and encourage one another, and pray together.

Matt has an incredible, Holy-Spirit anointed vision for the power of vocal music to break

down barriers. This year, singing with the Territorial Youth Chorus was an amazing experience of the Body of Christ coming together in worship. We genuinely connected and shared a common purpose to praise God with all of our being.

Seeing 70-year-olds and 13-year-olds singing side-by-side and the laughter and joy that flowed from those moments was a glimpse of what's to come. We are united in a goal to praise God and love each other. That's how we live out, "I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice to worship you." It is indeed a "sweet, sweet sound" in His ear.



## A journey of faith and music

**I**t's not being in the spotlight or receiving accolades that drives Matt Woods, director of vocal music for the Central Territory and conductor of the Central Territorial Staff Songsters (CTSS). It's a passion to see musicians develop, strengthen and utilize their talents as vessels for the Lord.

"My primary goal is to encourage, to give them the opportunity to be involved in music ministry, and through the CTSS then channel that out to the territory and inspire singers," he said.

Matt's musical journey commenced during his formative years while attending the Portsmouth, England, Corps, following a family legacy of several generations of Salvationists. There he discovered his deep-seated love for music and the spiritual significance it gave to his life. As he pursued his passion for voice and trumpet, he honed his musical skills.



A significant chapter in Matt's life unfolded when he started working in The Salvation Army's music ministry. This has taken him to Los Angeles, Seattle and now Chicago. Throughout this journey, Matt has shared his musical talent, uplifting spirits and touching hearts.

ing spirits and touching hearts.

"I express myself best through music, whether through singing or directing," he said. "As a director of any musical group or as a leader in the church, we are Christians, we are meant to be vessels, so I make sure that I'm willing and open to be able to hear the Spirit's moving amongst us."

As director of the CTSS, Matt's faith is central to his leadership. He is intentional about the choice of music, focusing on numbers with a strong scriptural component and timely and relevant messages.

"My personal faith is part of who I am," he said. "So everything I do is, I hope, a reflection of God's love for me and for others."



# Worthy to be praised!

by Dorothy Nancekievill  
International Staff Songsters Leader

From its earliest days music ministry has proved vital to the Salvation Army's mission. Music has the ability to touch the soul, and it is clear that the desire of the Central Territorial Staff Songsters (CTSS) is that their songs will allow the souls of listeners to both rejoice and reflect. Inaugurated only five years ago in 2020, under the leadership of Dr. Harold Burgmayer, the CTSS has developed into a fine vocal ensemble, especially given the initial frustrations of COVID-19 restrictions.

This debut album, *Worthy to be Praised!* has been carefully curated over two years, resulting in a recording that showcases the group's versatility, integrity, and ability to communicate. The repertoire included will appeal to a wide audience, as it includes familiar songs, new works and great arrangements.

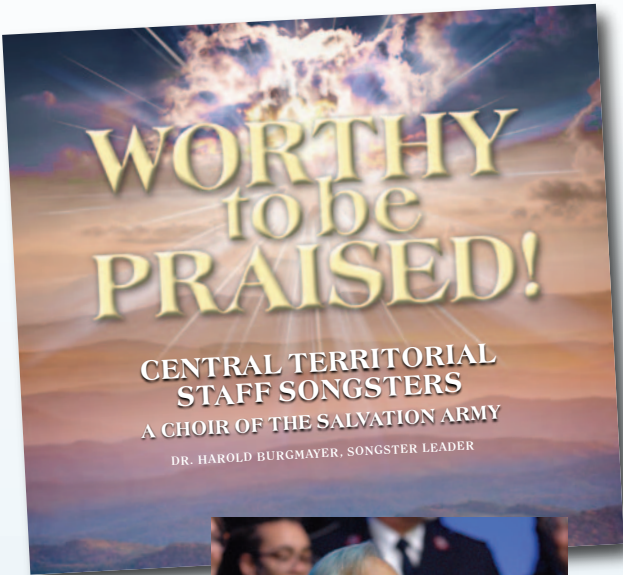
"Worthy to Be Praised," the title track, has a short and sensitive a cappella opening, which moves into an energetic and joyful section. Rhythmically very tight, you can feel the excitement emanating from each singer and each instrumentalist through to the exciting conclusion.

The inclusion of songs like "Jesus Paid It All," "How Sweet the Name," and "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" pays tribute to the great legacy we have as Salvationist singers, and it is a delight to hear them sung with such intensity and warmth.

"How Wonderful" has a Broadway feel which brings cheer and optimism to the listener in equal measure. Harold's ability to interweave "More Than Wonderful," "I Stand Amazed in the Presence," and "The Wonder of His Grace" is seamless with all the songs reminding us that we do not have enough words to express how marvelous and wonderful Jesus is to all who believe. "Just Like John," by Lt. Colonel Norman Bearcroft, was long enjoyed as an Salvation Army band piece. Harold's vocal setting is both technically demanding and great fun for singers and listeners alike.

Throughout the album many of the songs are enhanced by the addition of a range of instrumentalists. In the case of "O Love," the inclusion of the cello obligato, written by Elaine Hagenberg, adds to the plaintive nature of Scottish minister George Matheson's beautiful poetry. Written in 1882, these words have been a source of inspiration to many generations.

I thoroughly enjoyed listening to the entire album. Diction is clear, and each song has good musical intentions, creating an environment for personal worship. If I was pushed to choose two personal favorites, they would be "Stranger" and "Salvation is Created". The former certainly lifts your spirits due to the vibrant, gospel styling of the piece, and total commitment from singers



and instrumentalists. It made me smile from beginning to end. The second is often heard as a wind band arrangement but is presented here in its original vocal setting. This beautiful, almost hypnotic, song allows us to reflect that God has created salvation for all. We must therefore praise His name.

Much care and thought has gone into the preparation and production of this recording. From the initial concept, repertoire choices, arrangements and rehearsals, to all the operational matters and design ideas, all involved should be commended for their devotion and commitment.

It is a joy to know that the CTSS are continuing the tradition of singing heart songs that inspire and challenge both vocalists and listeners. Recorded ministry has the potential to reach so many more people than we can imagine, and I know that every member of the CTSS is praying that their listeners will come to know and experience the presence of God in an ever-deepening way through this album.

This collection of songs will bring blessing, comfort and encouragement to many, and I thank God for the CTSS, its members, leaders and supporters.

Available on Apple Music, Amazon Music and Spotify

The Salvation Army

# PRAYER CENTRAL

USA Central Territory

## December Prayer Calendar

My Prayer List	Day	Bible Reading	Pray for The Salvation Army
	1 Monday	2 Corinthians 9:15	Chicago, Ill., ARC
	2 Tuesday	Isaiah 7:14	Battle Creek, Mich., Corps
	3 Wednesday	Isaiah 11:1	Blue Island, Ill., Corps
	4 Thursday	John 1:14	Nigeria Territory
	5 Friday	Luke 2:11	Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Corps
	6 Saturday	Luke 2:14	I'll Fight Day
	7 Sunday	Matthew 1:21	Davenport, Iowa, Corps
	8 Monday	Romans 6:23	Dodge City, Kan., Corps
	9 Tuesday	Luke 2:6-7	Evanston, Ill., Corps
	10 Wednesday	Galatians 4:4-5	Fort Wayne, Ind., Corps
	11 Thursday	Matthew 1:18-25	Grand Rapids, Mich., Kroc Center
	12 Friday	1 Timothy 1:15-17	Henry County, Ind., Corps
	13 Saturday	Matthew 1:18-25	Mexico Territory
	14 Sunday	Titus 3:3-7	Iowa City, Iowa, Corps
	15 Monday	Isaiah 9:6-7	Kearney, Neb., Corps
	16 Tuesday	Luke 2:8-12	Lincoln, Ill., 360 Life Center
	17 Wednesday	Luke 2:13-14	Marion, Ind., Corps
	18 Thursday	Luke 2:15-16	Minneapolis, Minn., Harbor Light Corps
	19 Friday	Luke 2:17-18	New Albany, Ind., Corps
	20 Saturday	Luke 2:19-20	Finland and Estonia Territory
	21 Sunday	Micah 5:2	Omaha Citadel, Neb., Corps
	22 Monday	Zechariah 9:9	Pontiac, Mich., Corps
	23 Tuesday	Isaiah 40:1-11	Rockford, Ill., ARC
	24 Wednesday	Isaiah 9:6	Springfield, Mo., Corps
	25 Thursday	Luke 1:46-47	St. Louis Temple, Mo., Corps
	26 Friday	John 3:16	Washtenaw County, Mich., Corps
	27 Saturday	Matthew 4:16	Rwanda and Burundi Territory
	28 Sunday	James 1:17	Kansas City Area Command
	29 Monday	I John 4:7	Quincy, Ill., Area Command
	30 Tuesday	I John 5:11	Midland, Mich., Corps
	31 Wednesday	Luke 1:78	Port Huron, Mich., Corps

## --Mustard Seeds--





*A column on holiness*

## Restore Us Again

by Envoy Diane Ury

National Ambassador for Holiness

Entire sanctification is the Life of God in our whole beings. To be entirely sanctified is not merely a way of living life; it is God Himself living in us. Entire sanctification, which is God's work of grace in our lives, is the Triune God of holy love offering Himself entirely to us. He pours Himself into our hearts, minds, souls and bodies. This transforms who we are. From persons captive to a sinful nature, God restores His image within us. He fills us with His own holy Life. That *alone* is what makes us holy.

His Life and character *loves* us into who He truly intends us to be.

I've always loved Psalm 80. Three different times this idea is repeated: O God, restore us again and cause Your face to shine upon us; only then will we be saved (Psalm 80:3, 7, 19).

Why is the Psalmist crying out for God's face to shine upon us in order for us to be delivered? It seems like He ought to perform something more powerful than that! God's people are living in horrendous sorrow, enduring mocking scorn and utter destruction by those who've conquered them. However, "They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance" (80:16). The reason for this is because they have abandoned God; they've turned back from Him (80:18).

All humanity is created for continuous face-to-Face dependence upon the Life of God—His Breath, the Holy Spirit, providing His life-giving Presence within us. Sin is turning our face away from Him in defiance of His ways and the only real Source of life. This self-sufficiency destroys our nature.

The phrase "restore us" actually means, "turn us back again to Yourself." I picture the face of a rebellious child being held in the hands of a loving parent, being turned upward for full eye contact and spoken to, "Hey honey, look at me. I love you. Now let's try that again in the way I told you."

Jesus is the Face of God. He has come to turn us back again to Himself (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

The tear of separation from God caused by turning our face away from our Source of life left every person a decaying, unhealable wound. That's what sinful nature is. This wound of separation was restored, healed in the Person of Jesus—Who is fully God and fully human. To be "saved" is not only to have our problems fixed. Jesus is our Savior because He offers His life to us; to be our Life (Colossians 3:1-4)!

Have you allowed Jesus to love you into the person you truly are? He invites you to posture your being, to turn your face, to Him. This will require everything about you—your time, money, relationships, goals and dreams. It also will require you to release your past, your wounds, unforgiveness, bitterness, secret sins, and self-righteousness. With open hands and uplifted face, make the exchange—all of you for



all of Jesus. He longs to pour His Life into yours so that you may be saved.

Yes, Jesus is the Answer for our self-destruction. Let Jesus pour Himself into you. He will give you joy for sorrow, peace for anxiety, love for hate, forgiveness for bitterness and resentment, goodness for evil, others-orientation for self-absorption.

Holiness is restoration to the fullness of being, the fullness of God Himself (Eph. 3:19).

## Promoted to Glory

Major Melvin James

Major Melvin James was promoted to Glory on July 14, 2025. Gregarious, passionate about people and in many ways larger than life, Mel loved nothing more than serving others in the name of Christ.



Born on July 17, 1937, in Iowa, to Ralph and Marian James, Mel grew up in a farming community. He enlisted in the military after graduating from high school and served for three years before continuing his education at Vennard College. There, Mel met Esther Johnson when they both were sent to the corps as part of their coursework. Before long, they fell in love with one another and with the mission of The Salvation Army.

Mel and Esther entered the School for Officers' Training and were commissioned in 1971. They served for more than 30 years in corps, divisional and territorial appointments, retiring in 2002 from Western Divisional Headquarters where Mel was general secretary.

Mel's work leading the territorial correctional services department, developing an accredited training program for prison ministry, was the highlight of his officership.

In a beautiful culmination of their

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ministry, post-retirement the Jameses spent more than seven years in New Orleans helping people rebuild their lives after Hurricane Katrina.

Mel is survived by his wife of 57 years, Major Esther James; children, Melissa and Brian (Heather); grandchildren, Megan, Madeline, Lauren and Wyatt; and two great-grandchildren, Beckham Rose and Charlie Belle.

Major Sandra Rick

Major Sandra Rick, 78, was promoted to Glory on August 23, 2025. Sandy's life was a reflection of her deep love for Jesus and a testament to her faith, love for family, and servant's heart.



She was born on March 3, 1947, in Minneapolis, Minn., the daughter of Paul and Edith Lundquist. She graduated from high school in 1965 and married the love of her life, Douglas J. Rick, on March 1, 1969.

After starting their family, the Ricks entered officer training in 1982 and were commissioned in 1984. They served in adult rehabilitation center, Harbor Light and corps appointments for 28 years.

A gifted singer, Sandy used her voice to share her faith in church

and in prison ministry. She loved and cherished time spent with family, especially in traditions like celebrating Lucia and baking Swedish treats. Sandy loved to travel and found rest and happiness in the warmth of the sun.

She was preceded in death by her parents and brother Paul Ridgeway. She is survived by her husband; children, Stacy (Larry, Jr.) Monroe, Tera (Savvas) Aivatosoglou, Jeremy (Heather) and bonus daughter Lorene Bojanczyk; and four grandchildren.

## A Joyful Challenge

Continued from page 1

A strong kettle season begins with a public kickoff and continues with active engagement from local celebrities, elected officials, Miss Teen and Miss Volunteer America titleholders, advisory board members, and others who ring bells alongside us. These efforts strengthen media coverage, while frequent social media posts build momentum and inspire giving.

"This is more than a challenge—it's a chance to bring joy to those we serve at Christmas and beyond," said Karla. "Let's rally our teams, inspire our communities, and show the nation the strength of the Central Territory."

See your corps officer for more details.