



Central Connection

The Salvation Army / USA Central Territory
News and Views from the Midwest

"We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future." Eph. 4:3,4 (NLT)

Volume 55, Number 11

December 2025

Joy: the constant of Christmas

by Captains Matthew and Haylee Winters

Five years of ministry at Christmas. Each has been different. The first Christmas we were officers was during Covid. The second was getting back to normal. By the third, we'd perfected our system (or so we thought). The fourth saw us in a new appointment. The fifth brought perfecting and growing in the new system and context. Five years, five Christ-



ent numbers of families and kids who needed assistance, different procedures, and different partnerships. Days are long and can feel like weeks.

And yet, we are reminded there is no better place to serve others than The Salvation Army. When we lose the joy, tasks become checklists, people become burdens, and schedules become rigid. We even might count the number of Christmases left as officers because they expend so much time and energy.

But as new captains—with 35 Christmases until retirement—our heart is focused on more time to be catalysts of hope.

Romans 12:11 reminds us, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord."

mases—the constant has been the joy of the Lord.

We love the Christmas season and the opportunity to see society embrace the Kingdom values of love, generosity and compassion, and to become the conduit through which so many people give.

True, at times, the work at Christmas can be exhausting. Each Christmas, we have had different people helping with kettles, differ-

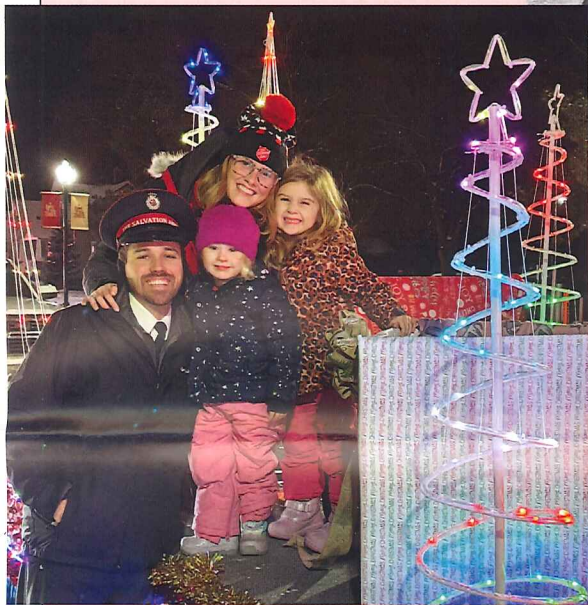


Colossians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

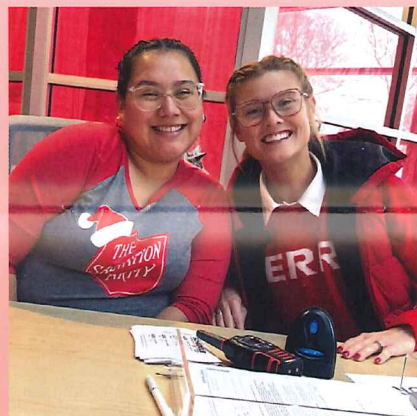
Christmas is humbling. We are reminded that we are a team, and there is no job too low for us. Each is crucial to the ministry. You will find us hosting parties for families, jumping in the dumpster to make sure all the trash fits, unloading toys from Toys for Tots, setting up the toy shop, meeting the Gideons as they hand out Bibles at the toy distribution, running from Angel Tree site to Angel Tree site to pick up toys, thanking donors and volunteers, marching in holiday parades, and offering coffee to guests who come into the building to get out of the cold and listening to their stories and praying with them.

While this list might seem exhausting, it's by no means comprehensive. We find that keeping our focus on why we do everything encourages us because the joy is not just from the Christmas season. It runs deeper. It is from our faith. We take delight in

Continued on page 6



Captains Matthew and Haylee Winters with their daughters Addison and Amelia.



The light has come!

by General Lyndon Buckingham

As a young boy, I suffered from chronic bronchial asthma. Often, asthma attacks would come in the dark of the night. The result: fear of the dark, panic and, as I recall, a sense of desperation as I struggled to catch my next breath. Cue Mum to the rescue: calming, reassuring, helping, embracing.

"Mum, can you leave the light on?" I would ask. The passage light was left on, my door was pulled to. The light, shining through the crack in the door, signified so much to me: I could see, the dark was not nearly as oppressive and the light represented the reality of my mother's presence. It calmed, reassured, reminded and, most of all, it dispelled the darkness and my fear. The light has come!

Over the centuries, light and dark

have been used by cultures and religions to differentiate between good and evil, pure and impure, right and wrong, life and death. Light overcomes the darkness, good triumphs over evil, right prevails over wrong, hope wins over hopelessness. "Mum, can you leave the light on?"

Light and dark is a recurring theme in Scripture from the very beginning. Early in the first book of the Bible, these memorable words are noted: "Then God said, 'Let there be light'" (Genesis 1:3 NLT).

The prophet Isaiah, writing at a time of political turmoil and spiritual despair, shared a message of hope and light. Against a backdrop of un-



certainty, fear, oppression and spiritual hunger, the prophet declared, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine"

(Isaiah 9:2 NLT). "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end" (Isaiah 9:6-7 NLT).

Light symbolises the presence of God. The prophesy is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ, God's Son, sent to be the Light of the World! He comes to bring the light of God's presence into the darkness of our

world. He brings forgiveness, redemption, healing, hope, comfort, courage and purpose—life in all its fullness. He reveals the nature, character and heart of God. He introduces a kingdom that will have no end, and He invites all of us to step into the light.

In John's Gospel we read, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it" (John 1:5 NLT). God's light for our world today is the revelation of himself in the person of Jesus Christ—the Light of the World who conquered the darkness of death with a radiant resurrection, vindicating everything He taught about His Father, the Kingdom, Himself and us as both true and trustworthy. Jesus reveals God's intention and

Continued on page 2

Moving? Send the attached label with your correction to:
Circulation Manager, 5550 Prairie Stone Pkwy, Hoffman Estates, IL 60192

THE SALVATION ARMY
5550 Prairie Stone Pkwy
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192