



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 41, Number 12

December 2011

Abundantly, immeasurably more through ONE

by Karen Young

Informative." "Formative." "Transformational." This is how delegates described ONE, the Territorial Multicultural Ministries Conference this fall led by Major Mary Hammerly.

It started Friday evening with the praise and worship team from St. Charles, Ill., and the TSA Madison St. Mark DeYmaz, founding pastor of the Mosaic Church in Central Arkansas, walked us through a biblical model of the multiethnic church in contrast to the homogeneous unit principle. Citing Revelation 2:4-5, Mark maintained that the warning to return to the love of the first church was not primarily about love for Christ but love for each other—a diverse community of individuals living, working and worshipping together.

Through teaching, preaching, and humor, the Rev. Efrem Smith built upon the need for a new vision in

order to advance the Kingdom of God. He said each person has challenges to work through and baggage to

be liberated from to become effective in this multicultural, multiethnic ministry.

"God is killing me softly with His love," said Efrem. "We must die daily in order to live fully for Christ." Conversations between delegates and guest presenters were frequent during meals, book signings, and workshops. Matthew Soerens and Jenny Yang, co-authors of *Welcoming the Stranger*, led a workshop on a biblical response to immigration. Dana

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Photos by Rick Vogney

For Such a Time as This

by General Linda Bond

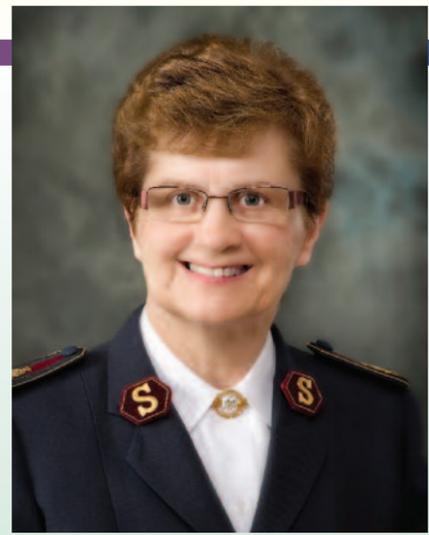
How relevant is the Christmas story for the 21st century? It is celebrated every year with carols, trees, glitter, lights and gifts, but is the coming of Jesus into the world of any significance for such a time as this? More than two thousand years separate us. Where are

the points of connection? The answer becomes clear when we look at two groups that played a central role in the first Christmas—the wise men and the shepherds. The two groups have often been contrasted, emphasizing the differences of occupation, religious background and learning. However, what they have in common may be what relates to us now.

Both groups were men of reflection, the wise men studying the heavens, looking for signs; the shepherds with their long evening hours thinking of their occupied homeland and wondering when the promised Messiah would come. Surely there was an expectation that something would happen, must happen, to bring peace to the

world. Would such reflection give birth to hope? I think so.

Both groups experienced a divine intervention—a revelation. The shepherds were visited by an angelic host announcing the birth of the Savior of the world. The wise men saw a star which became their guiding light to lead them to the Christ child. These two groups of very different men responded to the supernatural events and moved out of their comfort zones. Both shepherds and wise men took the divine signs seriously.



An action of faith was needed and they took it.

God never disappoints. For both groups, the realization was all that God had promised. The Savior King was born. And

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The best job in the world

by Lt. Colonel Jeffrey Smith
Territorial Secretary for Personnel

Somewhere there must be a competition for the best job in the world. If so, I would like to submit Salvation Army corps officer for consideration. I think it would win easily, especially if the judging happens around Christmastime. (I am probably about to lose officer readers at this point. They are thinking, "He's been out of the corps so long he can't remember how busy December is." Relax and read on!)

Officers are blessed to stand at the critical junction between generous donors and people with real

needs. This intersection is never more apparent than during December. Literally every day during the month we come face-to-face with people who like our work and demonstrate their trust in us by giving us money. Many times I have been handed cash, usually with a story of some Salvation Army worker who reached out to them or a family member at a crucial moment in their lives. The fact that they have repaid the cost of that service hundreds of times is simply not important to them. They just want to help.



What could be better than being the object of so much public goodwill? Good thoughts and gratitude for the service of others directed toward me always made me more proud than usual to wear the uniform.

Besides all of the donors' goodwill, we also hear the voices and see the faces of people in need who are grateful to be remembered and helped. Giving out toys and food baskets, visiting the elderly in nursing homes, holding parties for children, working with volunteers on Thanksgiving or Christmas Day

dinners for the homeless or lonely. Each would be enough to keep a person encouraged and blessed, and corps officers tend to be there for *all* of them.

If that weren't enough, corps officers get to stand in the pulpit each Sunday and proclaim the best possible news during a season when people are more apt to listen: *A Savior has been born. He is Jesus Christ, our Lord!*

Add in children's musicals, live manger scenes, and Christmas caroling and consider corps officers do it all not only because they want to but because it's their job, surely the best job in the world!

"As for the rest of you, dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good."
(2 Thessalonians 3:13, NLT)

Carving out Christmas

During the Christmas season an elderly gentleman toils day and night making toys for children who might not otherwise receive anything under the tree on Christmas morning. If you're thinking he's Santa Claus, well, guess again.

Ninety-one-year-old Sidney Johnson of the Fremont, Neb., Corps makes about 200 wooden toys each year to donate to the corps' toy shop. His record year was 300 toys!

"When he was at home we limited him to one a day otherwise he would stay up until all hours of the night getting each toy done," said his son, Randy. "He feels badly to think any child has to go without toys for Christmas."

Growing up on a dairy farm near Grantsburg, Wis., in the 1930s, Sidney received few presents on Christmas morning.

"Many years he was lucky to receive an orange and a pair of gloves," shared another son, Bruce.

When Sidney became a parent, he saw to it that all five of his boys, and his wife, never experienced the hardships of poverty.

Of course, his generosity didn't end with his own children. As they grew older, and he had more time, making and donating toys became a wonderful way to give even more children a happy Christmas.



Applause for Mrs. Claus

by A/Captain Dana Cook

Every Christmas The Salvation Army in St. Joseph, Mo., receives a visit from a very special guest: Mrs. Claus.

Marjory (Cox) Smith was brought to The Salvation Army by her parents, Lloyd and Mabel Cox, at the tender age of six-weeks-old. Marjory became involved in the corps as a child, and more so as a young adult and young mother. She proved a natural leader, and eventually she began working for the Kansas City Westport Temple, Mo., Corps planning and implementing senior programs twice a week that included a hot meal.

In 1975 Marjory borrowed a Mrs. Claus costume from her good friend, Betty House, and Mrs. Claus came to be a regular guest for Christmas parties and a vital part of bringing cheer to residents in community care visits for the corps.

Since relocating to a senior living community in the St. Joseph, Mo., area in 2004, she's been a faithful witness and prays for those in her building. As Mrs. Claus she continues to bring Christmas joy to others through community care visits for the corps and is a regular guest at the annual community Christmas dinner for 300 seniors and special



Marjory Smith, aka Mrs. Claus, with her former corps officer Major Ron Lemirand.

needs adults.

I asked Marjory why she continues to bring Mrs. Claus alive every year. She responded, "Cause I love the Lord, and I want to do what pleases Him."

Editor's note: Marjory is Major Charles Smith's mother.

Central Connection



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(ages 18-29)

February 17-19, 2012
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Christmas cheer delivered

by Amanda Waters

While most of us celebrate the joyous season of Christmas with parties, family, food and fun, many of our elderly friends and neighbors spend the season alone, lonely and depressed.

The first Sunday of each December, The Salvation Army in Kansas City reaches out to spread the love of God and holiday cheer to nearly 1,000 homebound, elderly and disabled people in an annual event known as "Shut-in Sunday."

"We are trying to reach people who are unable to leave their homes, for whatever reason," said Major Phyllis Blinks, Kansas and Western Missouri divisional com-



munity care secretary. "Our volunteers bring each person a Christmas gift, check on their welfare and let them know someone cares about them. For many of them, it's the only visit they'll receive during the entire holiday season."

Each volunteer makes several stops during the day, spending time to pray and talk with each person. Every recipient receives a small gift, such as a pair of comfortable slippers or a warm blanket and can sign up to have Christmas dinner delivered to them.

Many volunteers have come back year after year to assist with this project. "I look forward to this every year," said Martin Vargas. "I bring my grandchildren with me and make it a family volunteer day. It's so heartwarming to see the faces of those we visit, how happy it makes them. And it's a great lesson for my grandkids, to help people less fortunate than them."



Inspired through song

A new tradition has taken root at the Omaha, Neb., Adult Rehabilitation Center (ARC) for the Christmas season, reported Majors Larry and Judy McPherson, ARC administrators.

Omaha's historic Christ Community Church has partnered with the ARC in spearheading an annual donation drive at the large, prominent church and presenting a gala Christmas concert for ARC beneficiaries.

The church's 60-voice strong choir presents Christmas favorites and timeless songs of faith, which inspire reverence and awe in the audience,

reported Larry. And, the donation drive for the ARC completely fills a large Salvation Army truck.

"The choir's performance was unparalleled in talent and richness," Larry continued. "We look forward to partnering again with this talented and entrepreneurial church."

Christ Community Church was founded in 1921 by Dr. R.R. Brown of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. In 1923 he began broadcasting the renowned "Radio Chapel Service," which amassed a weekly national audience of millions and became the world's longest, continuous radio program on any one station for almost 75 years.



Elvis lives (and rings)!

Clad in a sparkling-white jumpsuit with slicked-back hair and trademark sunglasses perched over a half-snarled lip, it looked like "Elvis had left the building" to ring bells for The Salvation Army! Moving to Elvis Presley classics at the kettle stand, Jeff Johnson enjoys "taking care of business" (Presley's motto) for the Army in Detroit.

A member of the Eastern Michigan Division's planned giving board, Jeff began bell-ringing three years ago. After brainstorming ideas for how to raise more money, Jeff decided to ring on Christmas Eve as Elvis from his "later years" in a costume complete with pillow!

"The Elvis-look draws people in,

and they have fun with the interaction. People weren't just donating change in their pockets; they gave \$5, \$10 and \$20 bills," said Jeff. "The amount of giving was amazing."

People brought him hot chocolate, candy and even gloves to keep warm. But what impacted Jeff the most was the giving spirit of young people.

"It's incredible seeing the willingness young people have to give. It's a different perspective when you're ringing the bell. I even found teenagers didn't hesitate to give, even though their resources might have been limited," he added.

This year Jeff hopes to shake up even more donations for The Salvation Army as "The King!"



25 years of warmth!

This winter The Salvation Army in Indianapolis, Ind., is celebrating 25 years of local WTHR-13 NBC meteorologist Bob Gregory's Coats for Kids, the broadcast affiliate's longest running community service campaign. With the Indiana poverty rate over 16 percent, this program is more crucial than ever in keeping kids in the Hoosier state safe from the elements. This year nearly 10,000 coats were distributed.

Each fall Channel 13, Tuchman Cleaners and The Salvation Army collect new or gently-used coats from Labor Day through October. Community members donate winter coats of all sizes—from coats for babies to teens—at the 24 Tuchman Cleaners locations throughout the Greater Indianapolis area. In addition, new coats could be purchased online at the division's website.



This year the Indianapolis Colts held a special Coats for Kids collection at the main gates of the Lucas Oil Stadium before they took on the Pittsburgh Steelers. Despite intrepid weather, WTHR personalities and volunteers from Tuchman Cleaners and The Salvation Army were on hand to accept coats and cash donations from Colts fans.

The distribution took place the last Saturday in October at the Marsh Agricultural Building at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. Leftover coats were

distributed to area schools and other agencies.

Indianapolis' Coats for Kids is a great example of how one person can make a difference. Jim Dunn, retired CEO of Tuchman Cleaners, came up with the concept and asked WTHR to help promote it, with Bob Gregory as the face of the program, and The Salvation Army to handle the logistics. Over the last 25 years about 150,000 coats have been given to children in need.



Miracles at Toy Town

Each holiday season The Salvation Army in St. Louis transforms an empty store into a wonderland called Toy Town and helps families in need celebrate Christmas. In addition to toys and food, they're offered the gift of prayer. Here Major Kris Wood shares his observations last year from the prayer chapel.

Toys were piled high on tables. Stuffed animals waited anxiously to be adopted. Ornaments, tinsel and garland twinkled, expressing the excitement of the season. It was the setting for miracles.

Volunteers, adorned in Christmas sweaters and sparkling Santa hats, smiled and laughed as they escorted shoppers from table to table to pick out toys for their children. The last table was labeled "Prayer Chapel." It sat in front of a room created from broken down cardboard boxes covered in festive wrapping paper.

Its purpose was simple: offer a prayer with and for visitors to Toy Town. No one was asked their denominational background, religious preference, or even if they believed in a loving God. A simple offer was made,

"May I pray with you today?" That's when the miracles started to happen.

The first was a woman who'd been in the hospital the day before having surgery on her spine. Though she really should not have been out of bed, let alone driving, there she stood smiling through the pain and asking for prayer. She'd been injured at work and had needed a fusion of two vertebrae in her neck. When the volunteers asked what she was doing at Toy Town, she said, "My kids need to know the joy of Christmas this year." She'd always worked and provided a blessed Christmas for her children, but the accident had changed everything.

"I want to thank God for a successful surgery, a great family and continued blessings," she said. "I want to pray for you,

too." She continued, "I want to pray that God will help you. I know that you are in pain. I see it in your eyes."

She was right, the volunteer was struggling to stay positive due to her own back pain. She took the volunteer's hands and prayed earnestly for God's healing. She prayed for the blessing of a pain-free Christmas Day and then finished by asking for a blessing on the volunteer's family.

"I was here to pray for you," whispered the volunteer, wiping tears from her eyes.

"But I was here to pray for you," said the woman, ending their time together with a warm hug and a friendly, "Merry Christmas!"



Almost immediately, another woman sat down dejectedly. "I don't think I can do this anymore," she said. A volunteer asked, "What can't you do anymore?"

"I can't keep pretending," she spurted out as tears cascaded down her face. "Pray that I can handle the funeral, the family, Christmas."

"I'm so sorry," the volunteer said. "Did you have a death in your family?"

The woman sobbed. After several minutes she said, "They killed my brother in my car two days ago. He was a simple boy, just going to the store to get me some things for supper. They robbed him, and all he had was the \$5 I gave him. They killed him for my \$5."

The volunteer, her own tears falling uncontrollably, respond-

ed, "I don't know what to say, but God knows. He cares. He loves you." She held the woman in a warm embrace and prayed for comfort and peace....

"You don't know how much you've helped, just letting me cry. I have to be so strong for everyone," said the woman. They spent another 20 minutes praying and talking together.

Next was a man who'd just endured his third surgery after an accident. He was walking with a cane, a limp holding back his right leg and a sling on his arm. He was tall with a strong face and proud eyes. "Before you say anything," he declared, "I'm here to pray a prayer of thanks for my girls."

"Your girls? What's happening with your girls?" asked a volunteer.

A huge smile spread across his face. "They are good! They have been through so much with my surgeries and

have been my caretakers, my nurses and friends, and most of all they have prayed me back to health."

"You sound blessed," the volunteer responded. "I am blessed," he boomed back. "My girls are my wife and my twins. Did I tell you they believe in the power of prayer?" "Yes, you did. That is so wonderful," encouraged the volunteer. "I got me two teenaged girls who go to church, read their Bibles and pray with some kinda power!" he said even louder.

On and on the stories and prayers went from sorrow to praise, from pain to joy. God transformed that empty store and pieces of old refrigerator boxes taped together into holy ground. Lives were changed; miracles took place.

One of the greatest was near the end of the second day. A woman arrived without an appointment, not quite sure why she'd come. She wandered over to the prayer chapel and asked for help. After picking out toys for her children with a volunteer, she said, "If anyone needs prayer, it's me!" She shared her story.

She and her four children were living in a house without heat, gas or elec-

tricity and with only one working toilet. All the rest of the pipes in the house had frozen. Though she worked fulltime, this mother had to choose between heat and medicine for her two-year-old.

The volunteer stopped her mid-sentence, "We can help you get your heat turned back on!" she exclaimed. "How?" the woman asked. "We're The Salvation Army. That's what we do!"

Soon a social service caseworker began making telephone calls. Fifteen minutes later the woman ran across Toy Town. "You did it! You got my heat back on. My babies won't have to sleep with me in my bed tonight. My babies won't freeze!" she said.

The mother had walked into Toy Town not knowing why she was there, wondering if someone could possibly help her. She left with food, toys, heat and much more. She left with the joy of Christmas in her heart.

Editor's note: Representative toy shop photos courtesy of the Northern Division (by Craig Dirkes) and the Midland Division.



Multicultural Conference

Continued from page 1

Baker, multicultural ministries director of Grace Chapel in Boston, spoke on ways to "listen" and to include diverse voices in the church's ministries. Brothers, Marcos and Sergio Gomez led a discussion on multicultural worship. Robyn Afrik talked about ministry with this multicultural generation of youth. And Pastor Naeem Fazal spoke about ways to effectively engage Muslims with the gospel.

Saturday evening featured dinner, worship and celebration around the theme "EveryOne has a Story" with presentations through art, dance, music and storytelling. Naeem, born and raised as a Muslim in Kuwait, told of a supernatural experience with Christ that changed his life. Robyn



shared through a beautiful patchwork of story and poetry her journey from being a Korean adoptee to discovering a fuller identity of herself and helping her children to form healthy multi-ethnic identities.

The conference culminated

Sunday with music by the Mayfair Praise Team, cadets from the College for Officer Training, and a presentation by Captain Stephen Na, corps officer of the Houston International Corps, affirming the ministry of many different ethnic groups serving and worshipping together.

Territorial Secretary for Personnel Lt. Colonel Jeff Smith's message both challenged and encouraged delegates to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to God and trust

the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's work in them.

After a rendition of "Jesus is the Best Thing" by the ARC Gospel Choir, one guest exclaimed

"Awesome!" Many who attended the conference agreed. We serve an awesome God, the ONE, who is able to do immeasurably and abundantly more than we could ever ask or think.

Mission-and-purpose-driven lives

by Kirsten Gorton

More than 160 people from the territory gathered at the Grand Rapids, Mich., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center for the Mission and Purpose Conference.

Speakers, primarily featuring soldiers, gave a variety of perspectives on the Army. They included John Kim (Chicago Mayfair Community Church), Jason and Kelly Pope (Eastern Territory), Shawn Okpebholo (Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., Corps) and Commissioner Carol Seiler, territorial president of women's ministries. Each meeting also included worship led by the territorial praise band, The Singing Company.

In the keynote session, John Kim gave a moving message from Hebrews 12:1-3 about perseverance. "Whether you're an officer,



local officer or soldier, the word that you need to hear is this: 'persevere,'" said John. "We must persevere in the calling placed on our lives."

Saturday morning featured Jason and Kelly Pope, who shared their Army leadership experience and challenged delegates with thought-provoking ideas on what it means to engage in creative Kingdom-building. The morning also included a handful of workshops explor-

ing topics from youth development to world missions.

Delegates spent the afternoon participating in an I'll Fight Day event. With the purpose of



sharing God's love, they split up into groups and infiltrated the surrounding neighborhood to rake leaves, give away donuts and hot chocolate, provide quarters at laundromats, and visit children from the Kroc afterschool program at their homes. That evening, delegates testified how God had worked through them, and Shawn Okpebholo shared his story of how God led him as a child to The Salvation Army, where he received music lessons that changed the course of his life.

Commissioner Seiler closed the weekend on Sunday morning with a word from Exodus 13:17-14:22. Relating the Israelites' detour in the wilderness, she encouraged delegates to consider how God might be recalculating their plans.

"Keep going and you will find how God is leading you out of the desert," the commissioner said, bringing the weekend full circle.

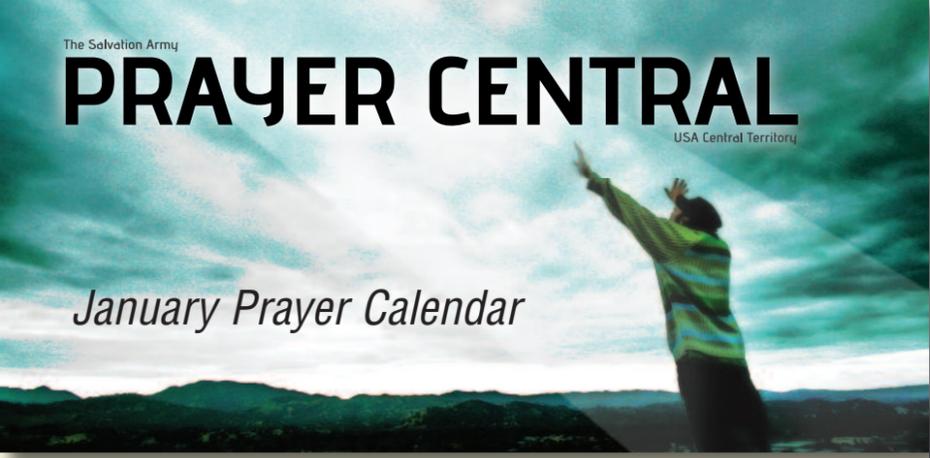


COME  JOIN OUR ARMY

New Commitments

July - September 2011

133 Senior Soldiers
84 Adherents
79 Junior Soldiers



My Prayer List	Day	Bible Reading	Pray for The Salvation Army
	1 Sunday	Genesis 1-3	Soldiers in 2012
	2 Monday	Joshua 1-5	Mankato, Minn., Corps
	3 Tuesday	Psalms 1-2	Mitchell, S.D., Corps
	4 Wednesday	Job 1-2	LaPorte, Ind., Corps
	5 Thursday	Isaiah 1-6	Menasha (Fox Cities), Wis., Corps
	6 Friday	Matthew 1-2	Captains Sergey & Tanya Katchanov (Canada)
	7 Saturday	Romans 1-2	Romulus, Mich., ARC*
	8 Sunday	Genesis 4-7	Stewardship Sunday
	9 Monday	Joshua 6-10	Mt. Clemens, Mich., Corps
	10 Tuesday	Psalms 3-5	Moline (Heritage Temple), Ill., Corps
	11 Wednesday	Job 3-4	Logansport, Ind., Corps
	12 Thursday	Isaiah 7-11	Northern DHQ**
	13 Friday	Matthew 3-4	Manhattan, Kan., Corps
	14 Saturday	Romans 3-4	Elgin, Ill., Corps
	15 Sunday	Genesis 8-11	Cultural Awareness & Reconciliation Sunday
	16 Monday	Joshua 11-15	Mattoon, Ill., Corps
	17 Tuesday	Psalms 6-8	Minneapolis (Central), Minn., Corps
	18 Wednesday	Job 5-6	Newton, Iowa, Corps
	19 Thursday	Isaiah 12-17	Ludington, Mich., Corps
	20 Friday	Matthew 5-7	Milwaukee (Citadel), Wis., Corps
	21 Saturday	Romans 5-6	Grand Rapids (Kroc Center), Mich.
	22 Sunday	Genesis 12-15	Zimbabwe Territory PIM
	23 Monday	Joshua 16-20	St. Louis, Mo., ARC
	24 Tuesday	Psalms 9-11	Owosso (Citadel), Mich., Corps
	25 Wednesday	Job 7-8	Muscatine, Iowa, Corps
	26 Thursday	Isaiah 18-22	Madison, Ind., Corps
	27 Friday	Matthew 8-10	Olathe, Kan., Corps
	28 Saturday	Romans 7-8	Evanston, Ill., Corps
	29 Sunday	Genesis 16-19	Majors Robert & Rae Doliber (Haiti)
	30 Monday	Joshua 21-24	O'Fallon, Mo., Corps
	31 Tuesday	Psalms 12-14	Minneapolis (Parkview), Minn., Corps

Go to www.prayercentralusa.org for prayer updates.
 If you follow the prayer calendar in the next year, you will have read through the Bible!

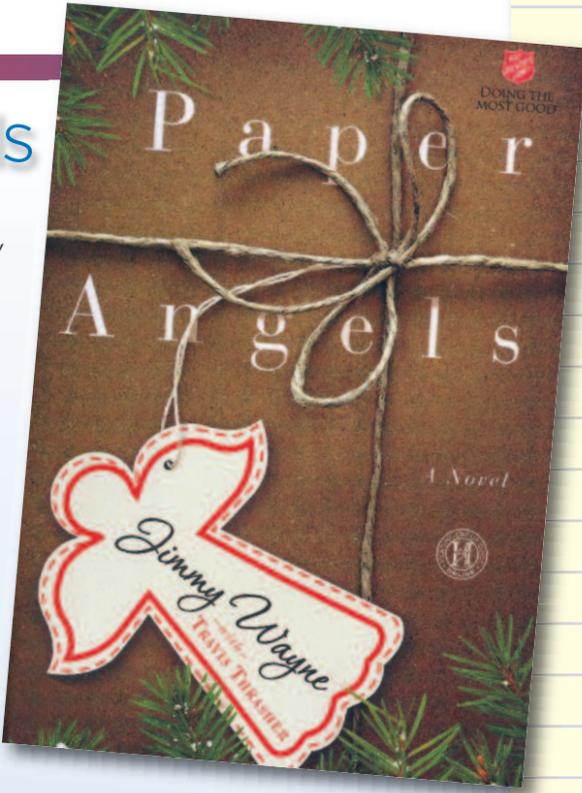
* = Adult Rehabilitation Center
 ** = Divisional Headquarters
 PIM = Partners in Mission

Paper Angels

A new book, *Paper Angels*, about The Salvation Army's Angel Tree program is being released just in time for the holidays by popular country music singer and songwriter Jimmy Wayne. It's a program near to Wayne's heart since he received gifts through it when he was a child.

Through this compelling novel, written with Travis Thrasher who's been labeled as the "Nicolas Sparks of Christian literature" by *Christian Retailing* magazine, Wayne hopes to raise awareness of the Angel Tree and how it makes a difference.

The plot revolves around Kevin Morrell, a 43-year-old husband and father who runs a design and marketing firm that's crashed in the suffering economy. Attempting to navigate the busyness of the mall at Christmas, Kevin is humbled when he stumbles across The Salvation Army's Angel Tree program. His wife insists that he take a paper ornament. The name on the ornament is Thomas Brandt, a 15-year-old still reeling from the implosion of his family. After years of verbal abuse from an alcoholic husband, Thomas' mother finally leaves, only to find herself and her children penniless and struggling. The only thing that allowed her to survive is her faith. Thomas shares that faith, but he also wonders why God has seemingly abandoned them. It's a story about a man and a boy one December: a man whose life is



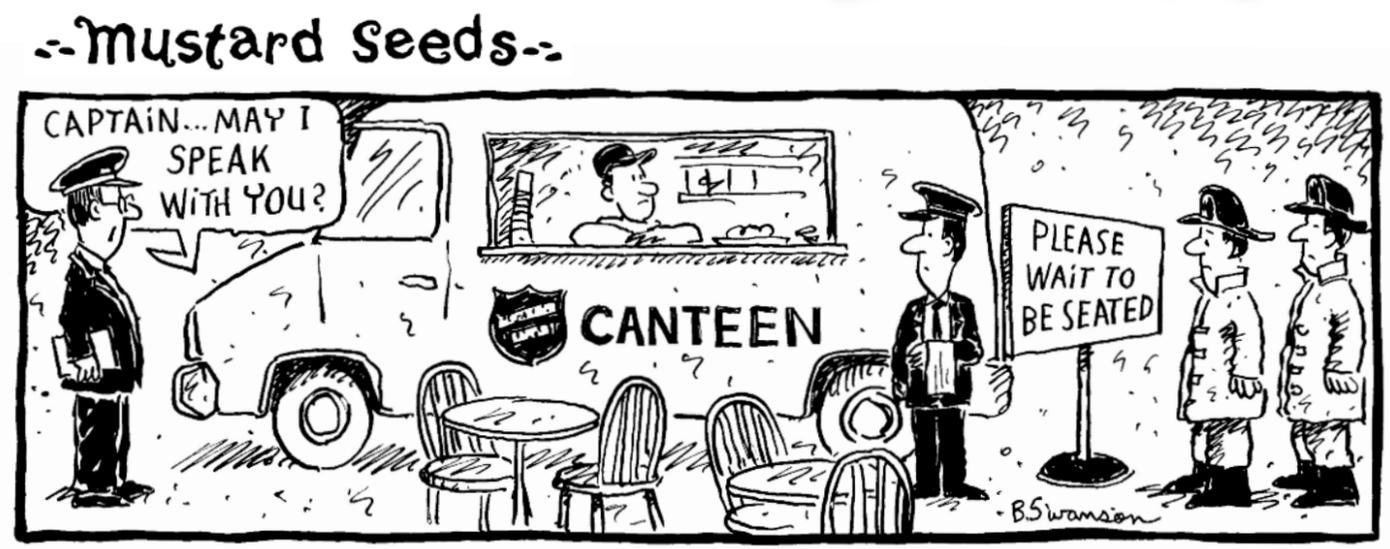
changed by a simple expression of kindness, and a boy who takes that expression of kindness and shows the true meaning of Christmas.

Paper Angels features the Army's logo and branding. It can be purchased through Resource Connection (1-800-937-8896 or shop.salvationarmy.org) or your local bookstore or online.

You can watch a video of the song, "Paper Angels." Just go to Get Connected and we'll link you!

Employment Opportunity

Divisional Music Director and Multi-media Specialist—Intermountain Divisional Headquarters, Denver, Colo. (USA Western Territory). Reporting to the divisional secretary, the divisional music director plans, implements and coordinates the music and worship arts department and prepares materials for multi-media projects. Fulltime, salaried position with attractive benefit package. Must be active, uniformed Salvationist. Send letter of introduction, salary requirements and resume to cannon.bundy@usw.salvationarmy.org



Hockey scores at Christmas

Connected in 1991 by then-team owner Bruce Saur, the AAA Peoria Rivermen hockey team supports The Salvation Army's Christmas toy shop and coat ministry every year through Peoria's Tree of Lights Campaign. Bruce, who spearheaded the first year's Rivermen and Army combined activities, was also an honorary Salvation Army chairman for the campaign at the time.

"Now, it's built into their mindset to help," reported Rich Draeger, Heartland divisional community relations director. "Every year they call and ask what we need from them to help make another successful Christmas campaign."

The Rivermen support the Army in many traditional, and some unique, ways. For the last four

years they've encouraged kettle bellringing at the ice arena before games, and from the start, they've hosted an annual Coats for Kids donation night where fans are given the opportunity to donate a coat in exchange for free tickets. Over the years they've helped the Army collect more than 4,500 coats!

They also host a Salvation Army hockey game each Christmas season, including a "Teddy Bear Toss" where fans throw teddy bears on the ice after the Rivermen score their first goal. "It took us five minutes to clear the ice of the generous amount of toys last year," said Rich.

The Rivermen also promote Salvation Army Christmas events. Starting in the middle of November, they encourage contributing to Coats for Kids, red kettles and toy shops in the area. They host a

"puck drop," an on-ice thank you, where an officer or employee thanks everyone publicly who contributed to the campaign.



Rich Draeger conducts the ceremonial pregame puck drop.

Trusting all the way

Major Shirley Espersen retired in October after 43 years of service as an officer.

Shirley met The Salvation Army after high school graduation when her family moved from their horse ranch/truck farm outside of Hayward, Wis., in order for her and her siblings to attend Wisconsin State University at Superior.

Ordained and commissioned as an officer in June 1969 as a member of "The Evangelists" session, Shirley served 21 years at corps, the College for Officer Training and Territorial Headquarters (THQ) in the Central Territory; eight years at the training college and THQ in the Caribbean Territory; and the last 14 years in the national chief secretary's office at National Headquarters (NHQ). Fittingly, Commissioner William A. Roberts, national commander, conducted her retirement ceremony at a luncheon at NHQ attended by fellow officers, coworkers and friends.

The 30 years she was stationed at THQs and NHQ allowed her to be involved in various ministries at the Chicago Belmont/Lakeview, Ill., Corps, the Kingston Allman Town, Jamaica, Corps and the Alexandria Citadel, Va., Corps.



Among the privileges she's especially grateful to have had as an officer were attending the International College for Officers in 1983, visiting several islands in the Caribbean while sponsorship director, and serving as recording secretary for the International Doctrine Council.

Her home in retirement will be in Waukesha, Wis., where she looks forward to doing short-term mission trips to the Caribbean Territory, volunteering at the local humane society, and, of course, being involved in the Waukesha Corps.

She says that Proverbs 3:5-6 has proven to be true throughout her life, that if you "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; [and] in all your ways acknowledge Him, He will make your paths straight."

A rich heritage celebrated

Hundreds of Salvationists of Scandinavian descent from across the country gathered at the Rockford Temple, Ill., Corps for the biennial Scandinavian Jubilee. This year marked the 125th anniversary of the beginning of Salvation Army work by Scandinavians in the U.S. Special guests for the weekend were retired Commissioners Hasse and Christina Kjellgren from Stockholm, Sweden. God's faithfulness echoed throughout the weekend as participants celebrated their rich heritage through music, testimony, fellowship and God's Word. Pictured are Eden and Rachael Sjogren from the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Corps.



A life of service

Major Marie Ellsworth is almost as well known for her artistry in yarn as for the many years of faithful service she's given in the territorial commander's office for nine different commissioners over 26 of her almost 47 years of officership!*

Central Territorial Headquarters was the site of her retirement service this fall with Colonels Thomas C. and Mary Lewis conducting the ceremony. Marie's sister and brother-in-law, Majors Joseph and Lois Wheeler, performed vocal duets and nephews Stephen and Andrew Wheeler played a horn duet. Niece Sarah DiMaso gave a tribute, as did friend and co-worker Linda Faye Jones, and Norridge Citadel, Ill., Corps Officer Major Morag Yoder. (Norridge has been Marie's corps for the last decade.)

"This is just retirement from active duty," said Colonel Mary Lewis upon presenting Marie her framed certificate of retirement knowing that she would continue her life of selfless service to others.

A native of North Dakota, Marie was commissioned as a lieutenant in 1966 with the "Defenders of the Faith" session. She served in corps in Omaha, Neb., and Fargo, N.D., then spent eight years at the Booth



Hospital in St. Louis, Mo., followed by eight years at the Chicago, Ill., Booth Hospital. She came to territorial headquarters in 1984. For the last eight years, she's served in the women's ministries department as well as in the territorial commander's office.

Over the years Marie has crocheted or knitted countless blankets, lap robes and scarves for others. Her fingers fly as she works, rarely needing to look down at what she's doing! Her grandmother taught her the basics; the rest was self-taught, which is how Marie also learned to play the accordion for open airs and Sunday morning Booth chapels when they didn't have a pianist!

* The territorial commanders were Nelting, Ditmer, Rightmire, Shoults, Hinson, Moretz, Baillie, Swanson and Seiler.

For Such a Time as This

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whether it was kneeling at a manger or giving gifts to the child, shepherds and wise men all saw the face of God, the face of love in Jesus, Savior of the world!

This past year has been a time of unparalleled natural disasters, economic troubles and political upheavals. For such a time as this, reflecting on this world and perhaps even our own needs, there could be cause for despair. Yet Christmas is about hope, as it was two thousand years ago. Jesus not only came, He lived and died for the world. And he lives today! That gives us hope.

We may not see a host of angels this Christmas or a guiding star, but

God will come to each one of us in a discernible way, as He did to the shepherds and the wise men. We may choose to conclude that it is just the annual *spirit of Christmas* but it is God making Himself known to us. How we react to it will be a matter of faith, a case of rising from our watch in the fields or following the star, so to speak. And if we do leave our comfort zone to seek the God who seeks us, we will discover that He is real, just as the shepherds and the wise men did.

He is love. We are loved. The Savior of the world came to earth many years ago but He also comes today to us, to you, to me.