



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 54, Number 11

December 2024

Indiana celebrates traditions of giving

by Dan Haugh

For three decades, two traditions have defined the holiday season for The Salvation Army in Central Indiana: the WIBC Radiothon and the Circle City Toy Run. Both events, now in their 30th year, represent the heart and soul of community giving to make a lasting impact for their neighbors in need.

The WIBC Radiothon is the largest fundraising event for The Salvation

Army in Central Indiana and stands as a testament to the power of partnerships and the community. For 36 hours, the airwaves of WIBC 93.1 come alive with powerful stories of hope, resilience and the essential services that are provided by The Salvation Army. Listeners not only hear about the critical needs of their neighbors but are given an opportunity to help, donating live to make a difference.

"The funds raised by Radiothon for the community are unrestricted. That means The Salvation Army is prepared to serve the most immediate needs first," said Mel McMahon, executive producer of radiothon.

"This fundraiser gives Hoosiers the opportunity to not only care for their neighbors but pay it forward themselves."

Over its 30-year history, the WIBC Radiothon has raised more than \$5.1 million, funding vital programs that provide shelter, food and financial assistance to Hoosiers in need. With a goal of \$430,000 set for 2024, The Salvation Army of Central Indiana once again will be calling to the community to help us help their neighbors.

"As the needs of Central Indiana

continue to grow, so too does Radiothon's goal and the effort poured into its planning and execution," said McMahon. "By embracing new technologies, expanding our outreach and staying attuned to the causes that matter most to our listeners, we've been able to grow and adapt. This flexibility has allowed the Radiothon to become the largest and most impactful fundraiser in the region."



On the other hand, the Circle City Toy Run brings an entirely different kind of energy to the holiday season. Organized by a

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The Good News of Christmas

by General Lyndon Buckingham

I had the privilege earlier this year of attending the *Testify* Congress in the Salvation Army's USA Western Territory. There were many highlights that weekend, but what stood out for me were the amazing stories of transformation. Men and women whose lives had been radically transformed when they encountered God's love for them in the person of Jesus Christ. "For God so loves the world..."—yes, I changed the tense. The verse actually reads, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16, NIV).

Yet God's love is as real, true and deep today as it was on that first Christmas Day. This remains the greatest evidence of God's love and his plan for all people—the gift of his Son, the gift of our salvation—not just in the past, but for the present as

well. This is the good news we celebrate at Christmas.

That news was first declared by the prophet Isaiah long ago: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7, KJV).

It was declared again by the angels at the birth of Jesus: "And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of



the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests'" (Luke 2:8-14, NIV).

The Bible tells us the shepherds immediately went to where Jesus was, and having seen him they right



away began to spread the word. I love that! They immediately began to share their experience. The shepherds recognized Jesus for who he was—their Savior—and they lost no time in going out and sharing the good news. What a testimony!

Believers ever since have carried on the mission of spreading the word of God's saving, forgiving, redeeming work through his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. I saw and heard evidence of this at *Testify*—

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Christmas at Camp

For so many of us, camp is synonymous with summer. Sunshine, campfires, hiking, swimming and fishing come to mind. But at Camp Mihaska, tucked away in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains in rural central Missouri, when summer fades to fall and winter is on the horizon, another camp season begins.

Since 2018, Terry and Joanie Mahurin, who direct and care for the Midland Division's camp, have created a storybook Christmas on the grounds of Mihaska. Starting in November, thousands of Christmas lights are hung, reflecting beautifully off the natural spring and stream waters near the highway and along the main road into camp. The rustic log and stone dining hall is decked out in festive decorations, and preparations are made for two nights of community building and ministry just before Christmas.

"One of the reasons we started it was because so many people in our area don't know about The Salvation Army or camp, even though we've been here for 75 years," said Terry. "It's a good way to get the community in and to build that relationship with them."

It has become a tradition for locals to drive by with family and friends



Majors Lisa and Robert Mueller, Midland divisional leaders, join the festivities.

to take in the lights which brighten the two-lane highway in front of camp. Then, the weekend before Christmas, camp is opened on Friday and Saturday evenings for a time of fellowship and holiday activities for people of all ages.

Driving through the iron gates and past the light display to the parking area, visitors enter the dining hall to the sounds, smells and sights of the season. Live music creates a peaceful backdrop while the delicious scent of cookies, coffee and cocoa wafts through the air. All is bright and cheery. Children decorate cookies in "Grandma's Kitchen" and write letters to Santa. Round tables welcome visitors to sit and enjoy the atmosphere, along with a hot drink and refreshments, perhaps over a friendly game of checkers.

A feature that was introduced last year and instantly became a favorite is the Bethlehem Room. Located



Welcome to Grandma's Kitchen.

off the dining hall, it takes visitors back to the days of the Bible with displays which prompt them to contemplate the birth of Christ.

"People love it," said Terry. "Even those who aren't Christians appreciate the Bethlehem Room."

Averaging 250 people each evening last season, *A Mihaska Christmas* has become a popular event. In addition to local community members, St. Louis area corps bring groups to enjoy the festivities. During the evening testimonies are shared, Santa reads the Christmas story from the Bible,

and children are presented with small gifts. Each family leaves with information about The Salvation Army and Camp Mihaska.

"The community is getting to know and experience camp," concluded Joanie. "It grows every year."



The Good News of Christmas

Continued from page 1

people sharing the good news of God's transformative power in and through their lives, just as the shepherds did on that night so long ago.

In his book, *Sacred Risk*, General Shaw Clifton (Rtd.) writes: "Christmas is summed up in Jesus. The

very name of Jesus serves through all history to declare that there is a Saviour. It follows logically therefore that if there is a Saviour it is because we need to be saved. However, even before we realise our need the Saviour is there. It is he who reveals to us our deepest needs, gently urging us by his Holy Spirit to make a response to his offer of salvation. Christmas is therefore discovering or rediscovering or reaffirming Jesus as Saviour, and in discovering him we discover ourselves and our true condition."

God can still change the hearts of men and women and make them live again. And like the shepherds, we can testify of that good news with those around us.

This Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of the Saviour, let's ask God to empower us with Holy Spirit zeal to spread the word concerning Jesus, that still more might come to experience the love of God as revealed in the gift of his precious Son and our Saviour, Jesus, the Son of God.

Commissioner Bronwyn joins me in praying God's blessings for you this Christmas season.



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Creative Christmas connections

A hallmark of Salvation Army ministry is making connections through pop culture and icons, and at Christmas opportunities abound. Here are just two.

A grinchy morning

Each December for the past three years, the Sioux City, Iowa, Corps has welcomed the community to enjoy a free pancake breakfast with one of the most beloved characters in children's Christmas stories. No, not Santa Claus. The mean ol' Grinch.

"We wanted to do something different that would appeal to families," said Tiffany Lines, corps youth director and young people's sergeant-major. "After the first year was so much fun, we decided to do it again. Now it's become a tradition."



Corps members Jason Uhl and Janice Stoddard take a break from serving breakfast to pose with the Grinch.

"The masked singers are community members who have a significant relationship with some group in the area, which makes it fun because they can reach out to their church or club and invite them to come," said Kyle Karsten, development director. "We also had a news personality participate and use their platform to promote the event."

Held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church to accommodate the hundreds in attendance, this year the evening was headlined by three local bands in addition to the half-dozen masked singers, whose identities were revealed at the end of the show.

"This is a free event to the community, backed by sponsors," said Kyle. "During the show we take up a freewill offering and pass the plate church-style. All sponsorships and donations are matched up to \$50,000 by an anonymous donor who has a heart for The Salvation Army's mission and ministry."

In addition to the bands and masked singers, corps officers Majors Randy and Sue Summit make an appearance to share about The Salvation Army and how donations are used to fund programs and services, like the Pathway of Hope initiative, that make a difference in the community throughout the year.

"The approach is super important. We wanted to bring people in to enjoy a fun event," concluded Kyle. "Anytime you get people gathered you have the opportunity to talk about what we're about and why their donation at Christmas-time is important."



Soldier Rich Fisher poses for hundreds of photos as the Grinch.

The brainchild of Tiffany, alongside former corps officers Captains Zachary and Karissa Zumwalt, the event is enthusiastically supported by current corps officers Majors Bryan and Teri Ellison.

In preparation to welcome nearly 500 visitors from the community, the corps is transformed with the help of corps members. Every available space in the small building is utilized, from the chapel to the gymnasium. Activities include a hot breakfast of green pancakes and sides, carnival games and a grinch-themed craft. Enhancing the experience, soldier Rich Fisher transforms into the Grinch, interacts with guests and sits for hundreds of photos with them throughout the event. A short devotional also is shared.

"It's a lot of work, but so worth it," said Tiffany. "The families are so gracious and grateful."

In addition to food, games and crafts, information about the corps' programs and services is made available to each family at registration, along with an invitation for follow-up contact if they'd like.

A masked evening

Community engagement is the name of the game at the Decatur, Ill., Corps, where "Decatur Un-Masked," a Christmas fundraiser and outreach based on the popular show "The Masked Singer" brings people together for an evening of music, laughter and fun.



Development Director Kyle Karsten with Santa and the masked singer Shieldy.

A family tradition

by Craig Dirkes

For Sam Wolff and his grandkids, ringing bells for The Salvation Army is a longstanding family tradition.

They started ringing 12 years ago when Sam was a missionary in Africa. He'd come home to Minnesota for Christmas and wanted to ring bells out of appreciation for the good things he'd seen The Salvation Army do overseas.

"I admire the work of The Salvation Army," said Sam, who spent more than three decades ministering in Kenya, Tanzania and other countries with his wife, Cindy. "I saw The Salvation Army make wheelchairs and crutches for children with polio. I've seen the work they do, and I wanted to support it."

After Sam signed up for his first bellringing shift in 2012, his oldest grandchild, Max, then about 6, asked if he could join. They had so much fun that they signed up to ring again the following Christmas—and the one after that.

As the years passed, more grandchildren joined the fun, and Cindy started ringing too. A tradition was born.

For the past two years Sam and Cindy have rung bells with five of their grandkids, including Max who is now 18. During one of their bellringing shifts, Cindy witnessed a touching moment between Max and a passerby as temperatures plummeted to four below.

"I remember somebody asked Max, 'Why do you do this?'" Cindy

recalled. "Without missing a beat, he said, 'Because I know I'm doing something good.' As his grandmother, that was one of the nicest things I've ever heard."

Sam also has experienced stirring moments at the kettles. One of his favorites occurred several years ago.

"A man came up and donated \$20 to my kettle, and you could tell he couldn't afford it," Sam said. "Then he told me, 'I was on the receiving end of this for many years.' That almost brought tears to my eyes."

The family plans to ring together for many years to come.

"Volunteer bellringers like Sam, Cindy and their grandkids are an inspiration to the The Salvation Army and the people we serve," said Lt. Colonel Randall Polsley, Northern divisional commander. "We are grateful to all bellringers for the time they spend—often in the bitter cold—helping us raise money to provide food, shelter and care for people and families who need our help."



 **compass**
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People • Mission • Legacy

To learn more about the Global Strategic Framework recently launched by The General to empower people, enhance mission impact and establish an enduring legacy, visit our website salarmycentral.org.

Abiding in Christ

Conference fills hearts, inspires hope

by Major Catherine Mount

What happens at Abide does not stay at Abide. Seven hundred women from the Central Territory gathered to worship God, learn and grow in their faith at a retreat in scenic Green Lake, Wis. However, the message to remain in Jesus and bear the fruit of His love did not stay at Green Lake but has been dispersed throughout the Midwest.

Music

Throughout the conference worship was led by the Sharon Irving Praise Band. Women lifting their voices in song declared the greatness and presence of God. Sheena Marquis shared her heart through the ministry of music by gently leading moments of reflection throughout united sessions. Acclaimed recording artists Laura Story and Selah gave mini-concerts. Laura's testimony of God's faithfulness through a family health crisis was poignant and relatable for many women who walk similar roads of suffering and joy. Selah's musical harmony and stories brought the crowd to its feet in praise. Every musician shared their gifts beautifully and their hearts vulnerably. God was glorified through their ministry which inspired women to fix their eyes on Jesus, regardless of circumstances.

"I loved the whole weekend," said Captain Liza Ayala. "Finishing with the song 'Firm Foundation' was a great way to end our time because 'He won't fail! Everything was just as He planned, and it was all so good.'"

Testimonies

During each session inspirational and powerful women shared their testimonies. Becky Thompson of the Midnight Mom prayer ministry shared her experience of uniting moms through prayer on social media. Colonel Anne Kiama, Kenya East territorial president of women's ministries, shared about the Gracious Empowerment Program that supports widows with fellowship and financial support. Her mov-



Major Carla Voeller



Selah brought delegates to their feet in praise.



Commissioner Evie Diaz

ing message of hope presented a Spirit-filled challenge for women to abide in Jesus. During the conference, \$17,857.89 was raised, and then matched by Territorial Headquarters for a total of \$35,715.78, to support the Gracious Empowerment Program in Kenya, our Partner in Mission.

Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz bravely shared about her challenging health journey over the last year, celebrating God's faithfulness and highlighting the encouragement she has received from others. Each testimony was a testament to God's faithfulness and the powerful impact of loving others.

Teaching

Abide was replete with teaching moments. Women encouraging women through their experience and skill was evident throughout the programming. Speaker Anne White invited women to know God more deeply through an in-depth study of John 15. Saturday morning workshops also offered the opportunity grow in faith and ministry. They covered topics touching all areas of life: Bible study, parenting, prayer, trauma-informed practices, tools for mental health, making all work sacred, and spiritual disciplines.

In John 15:5 (NIV), Jesus says: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Every workshop and session address reinforced the message to draw near to Christ, whether in a season of pruning or of bearing fruit.



Becky Thompson



Laura Story



Colonel Julie Anne Loudon



Workshop leader Robin Smith



Colonel Anne Kiama talks about the Gracious Empowerment Program in Kenya.



The Sharon Irving Praise Band led conference worship.



Sheena Marquis



Anne White



Workshop leader Major Beth Desplancke and Delfina Chandra



Prayer

The ConnectUp prayer ministry provided sessions with trained facilitators with the vision of reconciling women to God. These were powerful encounters for those who participated. In addition, opportunities for altar ministry and impromptu prayer conversations were present each day and night.

As noted by Major Carla Voeller, territorial secretary for women's ministries, whose department planned and implemented the event, there were "powerful moments of surrender, transformation, healing, and grace" throughout Abide.

There was precious fellowship praying with and for one another. These moments of vulner-

ability built trust, encouraged hope and set a path toward healing for many.

Fellowship

Where there is women's ministries, there is joy and abiding in Christ that bears the fruit of great fellowship. Friday and Saturday night, afterglow opportunities included young adult and unplugged lounges, karaoke, campfire s'mores and games like Bingo and Bible Jeopardy. During free time delegates shopped at the Abide store, Thrift Express bus and a craft fair. They could participate in creative outlets like card making, journaling, painting, knitting/crocheting, and a prayer walk. A coffee ministry, sponsored by the Northern Division, was popular.

Saturday evening, women got decked out for a Denim and Diamonds Banquet which was preceded by photo booth fun showcasing friendships old and new.

"We have bonded in incredible ways, and we have witnessed the beauty of vulnerability and openness in our discussions," said Colonel Julie Anne Loudon. "There was such a beautiful and tangible sense of community at Abide, and everyone is leaving with their hearts full of inspiration and hope."

Abide was thoughtfully and excellently planned, and for many women will mark a mountaintop experience in their faith. Those who attended were challenged not only to Abide in Christ but to love others. What an impact this can have on our territory.

To view more photos of the conference, visit the gallery on our website salarmycentral.org

Sweet Silver Bells

Donnie Powell is an older adult who looks forward to Christmas every year. As part of the Green Bay Wis., Corps' Silver Bells program, Donnie usually jumps up and down and calls out joyfully, "Merry Christmas to me!" when he is given a gift.

"It is such a privilege to give them something that lights up their eyes,"

said Major Melody Hamelund, Green Bay corps officer. "It's a fun way to share God's love."

Last year, Donnie requested and received a Snuggie blanket through Silver Bells. He now leaves the Snuggie on a specific chair in the corps' chapel to save his seat each week.

"Everyone knows it's his," Major Melody said.

The corps has run its Silver Bells gift program for senior citizens and disabled adults for the last several years. About 100 people took part last year, and more are expected this year.

"I have heard many times that this is the only gift some people get at the holidays," Major Melody said. "We have many people in their 90s. For some, many of their friends and loved ones have passed away. They get more isolated. Sometimes they can go about Christmas day as if it's just another day."

While many Silver Bells recipients are part of the corps, local agencies and community members also refer people to The Salvation Army.



Major Carol Lemirand wraps gifts for Silver Bells.

In conjunction with the Angel Tree program, Silver Bells gift requests are placed on trees at local organizations and businesses like the Bay Park Square mall. Fox 11 News requests Silver Bells wishes to grant. All donors are anonymous.

Gift categories include items like clothing, games and puzzles, personal hygiene products, and home-cleaning supplies. A staff member from the corps picks up donated gifts at the businesses. Sometimes, donors will drop off the gifts right at the corps.

The most popular item requested?

"Any Green Bay Packers gear," the major said, with a gentle laugh.

"I like to help people fill out their

applications, because they might only ask for necessities [like cleaning supplies]. But they deserve to have something fun," Major Melody said.

Laurie Perez takes part in the senior programs at the corps. She said this year, she will be requesting a long cotton nightgown on her Silver Bells application.

"Silver Bells is something people love," Laurie said. "A lot of people don't have anyone to give them a gift. To think that someone is thinking of you—it does the heart a lot of good."



Laurie Perez receives a holiday gift from Major Melody Hamelund as part of the Green Bay Corps' Silver Bells program.

Indiana celebrates Continued from page 1

group of passionate motorcyclists, the Circle City Toy Run shows the spirit of giving in a festive way. Riders decked out in Christmas-themed costumes such as Santa, the Grinch or elves ride through the city of Indianapolis carrying toys for The Salvation Army's Angel Tree Toy Shop program.

"It's truly an amazing sight to see when hundreds of motorcyclists are riding around and end up right at our front door," said Major Malinda O'Neil, divisional secretary for the Central Indiana Area Command. "They even dress up their motorcycles, so they are bringing a ton of holiday spirit."

Once they make it to Indiana Divisional Headquarters, the riders empty their truckloads of toys that eventually

will end up under trees for children in need. In the end, thousands of toys are donated to help bring Christmas joy to 5,000 children.

The longevity of both the WIBC Radiothon and the Circle City Toy Run is a direct reflection of the community's support. Without the commitment of donors, volunteers and local businesses these events wouldn't have reached the 30-year milestone.

Together, these two events represent the heart of community tradition, uniting people across Central Indiana in the spirit of giving. They are more than just annual gatherings; they bring thousands of people together to accomplish a goal of spreading joy and hope year after year.

The power of a Post-it® note

by Captain Jennifer Polanco

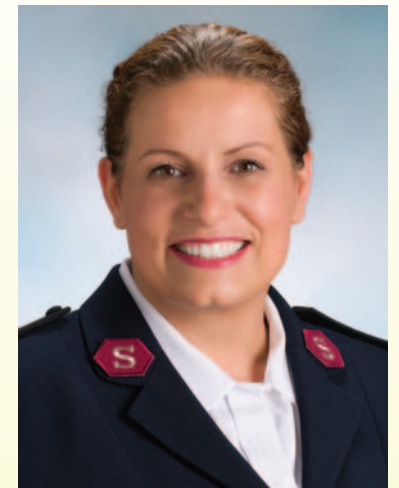
As Northern divisional program secretary, I found the past year filled with opportunities to craft councils, retreats and other events. One of them was an older adult camp, or as we lovingly renamed it, "Forever Young Retreat," a four-day getaway for those over 55 filled with fun, fellowship, nature and God's Word.

While our committee had a great plan of activities, we sensed from God that we should go deeper to address key issues this population faces. We talked about how loneliness is an epidemic in society, but especially for our "Forever Young" friends. We had heard from several in our division that they feel invisible and find it hard to cultivate new relationships.

We developed our Bible study sessions around the *Purpose Driven Life* material by pastor and author Rick Warren, with one of the morning sessions called "Cultivating Community and Experiencing Life Together." Since practical application was important, everyone received a stack of Post-it® notes when the teaching ended. We encouraged them to write words of affirmation or how they viewed others in the room and then put it on that person's shirt. This challenged them to get up, walk across the room and be honest and vulnerable with their new friends, hopefully creating meaningful connections.

I gave the instructions, and nobody moved. I could sense the discomfort in the room, but I knew that this was the direction that the Lord had prompted me. So, we waited in silence.

Then slowly they started getting up and moving around the room. They wrote things like, "I see Jesus in you," "You made me feel wel-



comed," and "Your smile is infectious."

Soon, the entire room was engaged in the activity. People were embracing, their faces lighting up with joy as they received words of affirmation. Tears streamed down the faces of some who did not realize how people viewed them. Though I had scheduled 10 minutes for this activity, it lasted 40.

When it ended, many delegates carefully placed their Post-it® notes inside their Bibles for safekeeping, while others wore their notes as a sweet reminder of how others viewed them.

Proverbs 16:24 (ESV) says, "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body."

It was a beautiful time of ministry and encouragement, one that I will never forget.



To learn about becoming an officer, visit salarmycentral.org/candidates

Congratulations!

We thank the following Central Territory officers, who retired in 2024, for their dedicated service.

Lt. Colonels Lonneal and Patty Richardson

Lt. Colonels Collette and Robert Webster

Majors Dale and Sandra Brandenburg

Majors Rae and Robert Doliber

Majors Butch and Lisa Frost

Majors Heather and William Holman

Majors Eric and Patricia Johnson

Majors James and Valerie McDowell

Majors Allen and Pamela Otto

Majors Cindy and Jeffrey Strickler

Major Tricia Taube

Captain Linda Faye Jones

As of October 9, 2024

January Prayer Calendar

My Prayer List	Day	Bible Reading	Pray for The Salvation Army
	1 Wednesday	Genesis 8:13	Blessings in the New Year!
	2 Thursday	2 Corinthians 5:17	Aberdeen, S.D., Corps
	3 Friday	Jeremiah 29:11	Bay City, Mich., Corps
	4 Saturday	Isaiah 43:18-19	Pakistan Territory
	5 Sunday	Ephesians 4:22-24	Boone, Iowa, Corps
	6 Monday	Lamentations 3:22-24	Champaign, Ill., Corps
	7 Tuesday	1 Peter 1:3	Chilton, Wis., Bread of Life Service Center
	8 Wednesday	Philippians 3:13-14	Dearborn Heights Citadel, Mich., Corps
	9 Thursday	Genesis 1:1	Downriver, Mich., Corps
	10 Friday	Ezekiel 36:26	Evansville, Ind., Corps
	11 Saturday	Revelation 21:5	Fox Cities, Wis., Corps
	12 Sunday	Ecclesiastes 3:11	Grand Rapids, Mich., ARC
	13 Monday	Isaiah 65:17	Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand Territory
	14 Tuesday	Revelation 21:4	Hibbing, Minn., Corps
	15 Wednesday	Lamentations 3:22-23	Jacksonville, Ill., Corps
	16 Thursday	Ezekiel 11:19	Kenosha, Wis., Corps
	17 Friday	John 1:1-14	Livingston County, Mich., Corps
	18 Saturday	Malachi 4:2	Marquette County, Mich., Corps
	19 Sunday	Colossians 3:9-10	Minneapolis Parkview, Minn., Corps
	20 Monday	Isaiah 58:12	Congo (Brazzaville) Territory
	21 Tuesday	2 Chronicles 7:14	Newton, Iowa, Corps
	22 Wednesday	Romans 12:2	Omaha, Neb., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center
	23 Thursday	Lamentations 3:22	Port Huron, Mich., Corps
	24 Friday	John 3:3	Royal Oak, Mich., Corps
	25 Saturday	Psalms 40:3	Sterling Rock Falls, Ill., Corps
	26 Sunday	1 John 1:9	St. Louis, Mo., ARC
	27 Monday	Romans 6:3-4	USA Central Territory
	28 Tuesday	Genesis 12:1-9	Waterloo-Cedar Falls, Iowa, Corps
	29 Wednesday	Isaiah 41:4	Indiana DHQ
	30 Thursday	2 Corinthians 5:1-21	Columbus, Ind., Booth Manor
	31 Friday	Genesis 2:3	Black Creek, Wis., Bread of Life Service Center

Go to www.salarmycentral.org

If you follow the prayer calendar during the year, you will have read through the Bible!

*A column on holiness
by Dr. Bill and
Rev. Diane Ury*

Peace on Earth...really!

—Luke 2:14

by Dr. Bill Ury
National Ambassador for Holiness

Peace is a powerful idea in all of Scripture. It has to do with restoration, wholeness, integrity. The beauty of the harmonious communion we were created for was decimated by the discord of our rebellion. The peace offered to us is far deeper than the cessation of hostility. Peace had to come and assume our "dis-ease." And peace always involves two parties.

Biblical peace is never merely a concept. It is tangible. Every word that pertains to our salvation had to be enfolded. It is important for us to know that even though God is sovereign, power alone can never save. God could not simply declare peace because His salvation is always and only personal.

I heard recently that a theology professor could not find a Christmas card in her city with a picture of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The only ones available were those with the words joy, love and peace. There is no true peace without the Son of God incarnate. God had to become peace. At Christmas, the Word became the Man of Peace.

Our Peace, Jesus, offers real peace, really!

Have you ever noticed that real peace permeates the stories surrounding Jesus' birth which show His commitment to our full reunion? To barren Elizabeth a "way-paver" was given to "guide our feet in the way of peace" (Luke 1:79). The reunion of God with humanity was revealed to a group of despised blue-collar workers with words from heaven, "...on earth peace among men" (Luke 2:14). A week-old Jewish baby brought to the Temple by an insignificant teenage mom is placed in the hands of an expectant man whose response is, "let me depart in peace" (Luke 2:29). Why? Because He physically received God's saving Peace, a squirming baby.

Everything changes when a person meets God made flesh, the Eternal Son who became Mary's baby. We can come out of hiding, we can stop pretending, but best of all we can let our guard down and let the weakest creature of all, this baby, reveal to us real peace—Himself.



One and us rebels. He wants to remake our hearts by pouring in real love, joy and peace, Himself. If our hearts are divided, He alone can bring oneness, peace, wholeness.

If our hearts are divided, He alone can bring oneness, peace, wholeness.

Biblical descriptions of true believers use words like sincere, wholehearted, wholly committed or devoted. But did you know that quite often in Hebrew those words are the phrase "a heart of peace?" David prays for Solomon to have a "heart of peace" (I Chron. 29:19). Asa is described as having a "heart of peace" (II Chron. 19:9). My first response when I hear the word "peace" on the news is of the One who alone offers lasting peace. But I also think that true peace can only occur if the hearts of those involved are made one in peace. Residual selfishness in the heart destroys peace. Holiness enables an undivided heart that is free of self-centeredness. Our Peace, Jesus, offers real peace, really.

What is the essence of Christmas? It is distilled in a Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became the Son of Mary. The promised Prince of Peace brings perfect personal wholeness to every receptive heart.

--Mustard Seeds--



Into the light

Lt. Amy DeLonis doesn't remember having a lot of dreams for her future as a child. "I wanted to be a football player, but that wasn't going to work," she recalled with a gentle laugh. "I had a rough childhood though," she added. "I grew up very fast."

The lieutenant, part of the "Defenders of Justice" session commissioned in June 2024, now serves as the corps officer in Oshkosh, Wis.

Raised in Michigan City, Ind., by an alcoholic mother, Amy began drinking and using drugs at age 12. At 16, she was a single mother; she had a second child at age 19. Later, after moving to South Bend, Ind., Amy found work and was able to support her children—but she refused to get any treatment for her addictions.

"I was afraid of losing my children, my home, my job," she said. "I was a functioning dopehead. I was in a dark place."

Years went by, and Amy, who had become a mother for the third time, was miserable with her life. At her "bottom place," she called out to God.

"He led me to the Kroc Center," she recalled. "On the tour there, the first thing I was shown was the chapel. I had not realized it was The Salvation Army's Kroc Center. At that point, I felt that God was answering my prayer."

In 2012, Amy began attending worship at the South Bend, Ind., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center. After two weeks, she went to the altar and gave her life to Christ, asking Him to heal her from addictions.

"He did that right away," she said. "And I felt the Holy Spirit pushing me to go to the women's group and to Bible study."

Kim Van Sandt, leader of the center's women's ministries at the time, soon became a mentor to Amy.

"I ended up being Kim's assistant," the lieutenant said. "And although neither one of us realized it, she was preparing me for officer-ship—teaching me how to do Bible studies, leading different groups."

Some years passed before Amy felt God urging her to become an officer. In 2022, she entered the College for Officer Training in Chicago. At first, she struggled as a cadet, feeling a bit overwhelmed, as she only had a GED while many of her sessionmates had college degrees.

"I did not even know what a syl-



Lt. Amy DeLonis receives the Commissioner Andrew Miller Evangelism Award from Commissioner Evie Diaz.

labus was," Lt. Amy recalled. "I had to get used to writing papers and doing all of the reading. But you have to work for what you want. I was commissioned with honors."

She also received the Commissioner Andrew Miller Evangelism Award.

"I can't say I was expecting the award. But I was known for reaching out to people. I would walk through the neighborhood and talk to homeless people, trying to shine the light of Jesus. I have a huge passion for homeless people."

That passion is a perfect match for her appointment in Oshkosh, where according to the lieutenant, there is a large population of people experiencing homelessness.

"I just love the Lord has called me to this appointment. I look at the community that comes here as my flock and make sure I am tending to them."

She especially likes to mingle with people at the corps' community breakfast and lunch, served five days a week. A number of visitors are experiencing homelessness. Many seniors also attend and enjoy socializing.

"We talk about all kinds of things," Lt. Amy said. "We can joke. They might talk about their health or what they learned at church. Sometimes I'll talk about my life experience."

She is joined in the work by a number of dedicated volunteers and the corps' staff which includes a receptionist/administrative assistant, two social workers, a kitchen coordinator, an event/volunteer coordinator and a maintenance man.


"The staff are absolutely amazing," Lt. Amy said. "They are very team-oriented and are willing to take part in anything that goes on at the corps."

The lieutenant also helps wherever she is needed. In fact, it's not unusual to find her in the kitchen, singing while she washes trays after a community meal.

Laughing, she said, "Anyone who knows me knows I sing."



Lt. Amy DeLonis chats with Mary Ann and Tom Barlow, two of the many older adults who attend the community lunch for good food and fellowship.



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BELONGING

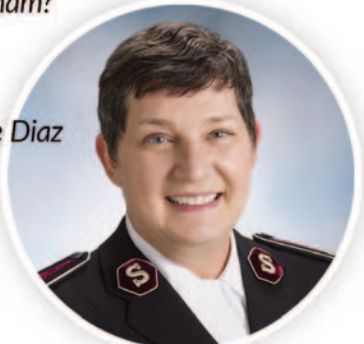
2025

UNITED IN PRAYER

My dear comrades,

Prayer is a powerful gift, wouldn't you agree? I'm calling on all who BELONG to this Salvation Army movement to join forces in prayer. Our beloved Army is composed of so many different facets that unite us in one mission under One God! Our different programs and ministries exist to bring Christ to the people and the people to God.

*We want to pray for God's continued guidance, blessing and provision as we move forward into 2025. Would you commit to praying with me as we plan and anticipate **BELONGING 2025** with General Lyndon Buckingham and Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham?*



Your servant,
Commissioner Evie Diaz

WATCH FOR WEEKLY PRAYER TOPICS COMING IN JANUARY!

WWW.BELONGING2025.ORG

"THIS IS THE COVENANT I WILL ESTABLISH WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AFTER THAT TIME, DECLARES THE LORD. I WILL PUT MY LAWS IN THEIR MINDS AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY WILL BE MY PEOPLE." -HEBREWS 8:10 (NIV)

UNITED IN PRAYER

I commit to...

- Praying for **BELONGING 2025**.
- Praying for the different programs and ministries of The Salvation Army.
- Praying for those entering our doors to feel like they BELONG.
- Praying for myself and my relationship with Christ.

Signature _____ Date _____