



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 1

January 2025

Priorities announced for Central Territory

by Commissioner Evie Diaz
Territorial Commander

I am pleased to announce the new Territorial Priorities which will guide the focus of the Central Territory: Spiritual Life, Youth and Leadership Development.

These areas were chosen primarily as a result of the 2024 corps and divisional review process which used the Territorial Mission Imperative as the focus. Divisional and territorial leadership teams held conversations at both corps and divisional levels where they celebrated strengths and identified areas which needed attention and support.

From these discussions, listening to the territory and after much prayer, it became clear that these three focus areas are where we need to direct our energy and resources.

The Spiritual Life Territorial Priority is foundational. I believe individuals across the territory long for ongoing spiritual transformation. Helping people live every day open

and obedient to God's Holy Spirit will be priority number one. This year's corps and divisional reviews will include time to consider how we can intentionally strengthen the spiritual lives of individuals, congregations and our communities.

Prayer is essential to this priority which led to the creation of "United in Prayer," an initiative designed to help us grow in intimacy with God, connect with what He is doing and pray together across the territory. Commit to praying with me and look for God to move in the territory as we unite in this way.

Later in 2025 the next two Territorial Priorities, Youth and Leadership Development, will be presented.

The Youth emphasis will focus on strengthening our connections with youth attending our programs, while reaching out to young people in our communities. Helping children and young people experience and deepen their relationship with Jesus and find a place of belonging within our

congregations and community centers are two important aspects of this priority.

Leadership Development will focus on training and support of local leaders, soldiers and officers. Training, equipping and supporting individuals to become effective leaders will impact their own spiritual development, as well as those they interact with, and will make a difference for the sake of the Kingdom.

This month a podcast, "All We Need," will be launched where you can hear more about the Territorial Priorities. The podcast uses 2 Peter 1:3 (NIV) as its scriptural basis: "His

divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." You can find the "All We Need" podcast starting January 15, 2025, at salvationarmymedia.org/allweneed and wherever podcasts are available.

During the Belonging Congress, June 6-8, 2025, stories highlighting Spiritual Life, Youth and Leadership Development from across the territory will be celebrated. I hope you plan to join in the celebration.

And there is more to come! Please join me in praying for our territory.



ARCs flip stores for mission

In the world of thrifting, few things are more important than product turnover. A thrift store that moves product quickly and consistently displays new items will be a popular place for thrifters to visit.

"The thrifting community is pretty tight," said Lt. Colonel Lee Ann Thompson, who leads the Adult Rehabilitation Center (ARC) Command with her husband, Lt. Colonel Greg Thompson. "Word gets around to

where the good stuff is."

Working off this knowledge, exciting things are happening in ARC thrift stores across the territory. Over the past year, each store has been "flipped" with processes and procedures getting an overhaul to increase the rate of donations from backroom to store floor to sold. The Flip the Store initiative has been an immense success, with stores reporting higher morale, positive employee feedback and an immediate uptick in product movement and sales.

"The beauty of this is that it doesn't cost anything," said Colonel Lee Ann. "It's a new and improved way of processing donations that gets them out on the sales floor more quickly."

A method developed by Envoy Tom

Canfield, administrator for business at the Minneapolis, Minn., ARC, called "power sorting" and a formula for determining key indicators and efficiency standards was the basis for flipping the stores. In most locations, shifting a few things around in the backroom and training the staff in the power sorting



Power sorting helps stores move 75 percent more product!

method is all that was needed to process 75 percent more product for the floor each day resulting in an instant increase in revenue. Some stores are seeing an increase in sales of as much as \$1,000 per day.

"The reality is that the ARC overall has been struggling with funding. Administrators are doing the absolute best they can do to keep expenses down, so the only way you can address that is to adjust production and pricing," said Envoy Jacquelyn Idzior, who with her hus-



Lt. Colonels Greg and Poppy Thompson help with a flip at the Des Moines, Iowa, ARC.



Continued on page 5

New Year, New Purpose

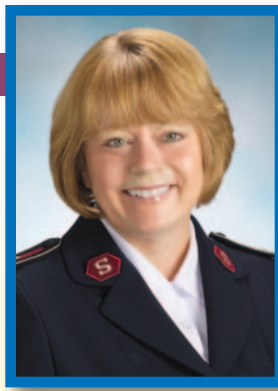
by Lt. Colonel Darlene Harvey
Territorial Officer Resource and Development Secretary

How do you want to start 2025? I love new beginnings and fresh starts. Many of us begin a new year with new year resolutions. We set goals for ourselves in health, spiritual life and relationships. Sometimes these goals are accomplished, and sometimes not. As we begin a new year, we can think about how we want to live with a purpose. We can have a new purpose.

Isaiah 43:18-19 (ESV) says, "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold I

am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

This year in the Officer Resource and Development (ORD) Department, we took time, as staff, to discuss the questions, "Why does ORD exist?" and "What is our purpose?" As a department, we brainstormed our function and role, while thinking about our partners. We desire to help officers fulfill their dreams and purposes in their callings through



classes, certificate programs, seminars, and educational trips.

We defined our purpose statement as: *The ORD Department exists to support The Salvation Army mission in the USA Central Territory. Its purpose is to equip with essential, effective, and edifying educational benefits and to facilitate development opportunities for officers, their children, and Salvationists for calling and mission.*

God's Word reminds us He has a purpose for each one of us. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) tells us "we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

As you enter this new year, ponder how God has created you and given you specific gifts. He has laid a foun-

ation. What is His purpose for you and how will you serve Him this year? How can you use your gifts or talents to make a difference in your corps?

Think about what relationships are most important to you, your family and friends, and those who are vulnerable and need your support. Ask God what His purpose is for you in serving them and helping them to grow this year. As I begin this new year, I want to be more intentional in how I use my time, in my spiritual disciplines, in my relationships, in my ministry, and with my health. I want to live with a new purpose.

Proverbs 19:21 (NIV) reminds us, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." We see that God's purpose for us is to glorify Him. He wants us to be unified in sharing His love with others. We want to live with a new purpose, fulfilling His purposes! As we focus on His purposes, we know that our plans are more likely to be accomplished!

A Fisher of Men

And He said unto them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."—Matthew 4:19



Helping people, especially men, come into a saving relationship with Jesus and grow in their Christian faith has been at the heart of Major Bob Gauthier's life. He not only devoted four decades to this mission as an officer, it has remained the focus of his days since his retirement in 2018.

Like a world-class fisherman, his extraordinary patience, knowledge and skills have been honed over a

lifetime and now bless individuals at the Jefferson, Mo., Corps, where he leads Bible study and prayer meetings, serves on the corps council and assists with the Christmas effort, and in the Midland Division where he serves as divisional men's ministry secretary.

He has been able to resume the service he loves through extensive effort, including months of physical therapy, following a sudden, harrowing and life-threatening illness which sidelined him in 2023.

"In the last year and a half, I have seen him at some of his lowest and most vulnerable points. There were times when he couldn't even speak; his only communication was through groans of pain. But after all he went through with his health, the first thing he would bring up, when he could finally speak again, is men's ministry. In particular, the men of this division and men's camp," said Major Justin Windell, who not only serves as Major Bob's current corps officer but was disciplined by him as a young man.

For his dedication, exceptional service and continued sacrifice, Major Bob Gauthier was recognized as Midland Division Man of the Year in 2024. We can't think of any one more deserving and extend our heartfelt congratulations as well on this honor.

Majors DeJesús return



Majors Cassandra and William DeJesús, who have been serving in the South America East Territory since 2021, are returning to the Central Territory in February. While overseas, they have served as Divisional Mission Secretaries and Bahía Blanca Central Corps Officers, then Major Cassie as Training Principal

and Major Will as Education and Finance Officer at the Training College in Buenos Aires. Back in the Central, they each will be taking up newly created positions. Major Cassie shall serve as Director of Strategic Implementation at Territorial Headquarters, while Major Will shall serve as Director of Training Pathways at the College for Officer Training.

Central Connection

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

KENNETH ROMIN
Graphic Design and Production

VISIT OUR WEBSITE—

www.salarmycentral.org

1-800-SALARMY

Stay Connected

FOLLOW US

[facebook.com/
SalArmyCentral](https://facebook.com/SalArmyCentral)

[Instagram.com/
salarmycentral](https://Instagram.com/salarmycentral)



A new chapter for Echelon Chicago

by Brian Duewel

The Salvation Army in Chicago recently marked an exciting milestone as eight young professionals were installed on its Echelon Executive Board by National Commander Commissioner Kenneth G. Hodder. It marks a new chapter for Echelon Chicago, a group of young professionals dedicated to supporting The Salvation Army's mission through community involvement, modern outreach, and passionate volunteerism. The installation ceremony at the National Advisory Board dinner, hosted by the North & Central Illinois Division, was filled with excitement as these young professionals, who had been preparing for this moment since last February, were officially welcomed into their roles.

Commissioner Hodder's induction was awe-inspiring and deeply personal for new executive board members Katie Sopic (Echelon Chicago President), Kwame Crawford, Alex Karasik, Mia Riese, Sianna Smith, Dallyn Stubbs, Grace Sylvester, and Claire Durkin.

Other highlights of the evening included a heartfelt message about hope in Chicago by Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz and a moving testimonial from WGN Radio personality John Williams, a loyal Salvation Army supporter. The Central Territorial Staff Songsters added a beautiful touch of music to the evening, and

everyone was fully immersed.

But the biggest highlight of the night came when the Echelon board and Commissioner Hodder



Commissioner Hodder presents Dallyn Stubbs with a birthday bouquet.



The new Echelon Chicago chapter dedicated to "Doing the Most Good." (Board member Kwame Crawford not pictured.)

with the Chicago Advisory Board, keeping their efforts aligned with The Salvation Army's mission while introducing new, creative ways to engage the community.

Echelon members bring a wide range of experience and talents—from legal and graphic design skills to data analytics and project management. These will be crucial in creating an effective approach to community service that resonates with younger demographics. A few priorities of Echelon Chicago are increasing public awareness of The Salvation Army through social media, events, and outreach; improving marketing efforts to build a more robust support network; recruiting volunteers to serve at Salvation Army activities; and organizing events to engage Chicago's young, emerging leaders.

Through their work, Echelon Chicago hopes to bridge the gap between seasoned leadership and the next generation of supporters. Together, they embody the Army's timeless mission and are motivated by Commissioner Hodder's charge to "Do The Most Good," for those in need.

met in person. Having memorized details about the board members' backgrounds, the National Commander spoke to each with a personal message of encouragement. With compassion, he shared his vision and concluded with a powerful message for the group to continue The Salvation Army's work.

A delightful surprise of the evening came when Commissioner Hodder learned it was the birthday of one of the new board members and led the room in singing "Happy Birthday" and presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

Echelon Chicago will work closely



National Commander Commissioner Kenneth G. Hodder gives a charge to Chicago Echelon Board members as he installs them. Pictured (l to r): Katie Sopic, Alex Karasik, Mia Riese, Sianna Smith, Dallyn Stubbs, Grace Sylvester, Claire Durkin.

Conference to feature nearly 90 workshops

by Lt. Colonel Paul Smith

In June people from across the Central Territory will gather in Milwaukee for the Belonging 2025 Conference and General's Congress.

The conference, which kicks off the week, will include opportunities for worship, fellowship, networking and learning. It begins on Tuesday, June 3, with a reception, dinner and keynote address by internationally recognized Christian speaker, author, business executive and entrepreneur Nona Jones, who currently serves as Global Ambassador for YouVersion. Many of you will be familiar with the YouVersion Bible app which is commonly used on phones and tablets. An acclaimed inspirational speaker, Nona is known to inspire audiences through her personal insights, scientific research, biblical wisdom and humor. She will challenge our hearts and minds as we consider what it means to belong and to invite others to belong.

During the conference, nearly 90 workshops will be presented, providing learning and growing opportunities as we consider how we each belong to God, the Body of Christ, community, and the mission. More than 150 proposals were received and evaluated by a committee considering the theme Belonging, the target audi-

ence and the potential for individual and organizational growth. The workshop presenters will come from educational, professional and ministry partners, vendors, officers, employees and soldiers.

Six workshop blocks are planned for Wednesday and Thursday, June 4-5, with one additional workshop block on Friday morning, June 6. A few workshops will be presented in Spanish, and a limited number of others will be translated based on the delegate need noted during registration.

In addition, a Preparation for Soldiership course is planned for those who wish to be enrolled as soldiers. With their corps officers' and Pastoral Care Council's approval, individuals may participate in this class and have an opportunity to be enrolled by the General during the Congress.

A high caliber of care and ministry programs will be provided for children and youth. Kids' Congress, for children ages 12 and under, will be active in the Miller High Life Theatre during the conference. For youth, ages 13-17, a

Peer-to-Peer Discipleship workshop is scheduled during the workshop blocks on Wednesday and Thursday with an offsite activity on Friday morning. The Central Territory Youth department is gearing up to have exciting activities for this event.

Our goal and prayer for the Belonging 2025 Conference and General's Congress is an inspired, equipped, energized and Spirit-filled Army in the Central Territory.

To register, visit www.belonging2025.org

WWW.BELONGING2025.ORG

JUNE 3-6
WORKSHOPS

JUNE 6-8
GENERAL'S CONGRESS

JUNE 8
ORDINATION AND COMMISSIONING
OF THE CHAMPIONS OF THE MISSION

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

USA CENTRAL TERRITORY

BELONGING 2025

CONFERENCE AND
GENERAL'S CONGRESS

HOSTED BY
COMMISSIONER EVIE DIAZ

SPECIAL GUESTS
THE GENERAL AND COMMISSIONER BRONWYN BUCKINGHAM

FEATURING
BELONGING: THE MUSICAL

A holiday tradition to cherish

by William Himes

One of the great holiday traditions is the Chicago Staff Band's (CSB) *Sounds of the Seasons* concert which has been held since 1993 in Wheaton College's Edman Chapel, where an enthusiastic crowd recently gathered to hear the band and guest artist, Sara Groves.

At first, the opening title of Peter Graham's "Summon the Dragon" could cause one to wonder if this was in response to the frantic holiday shopping season. However, from the opening fanfare from cornets and trombones to the full band's majestic conclusion, all fears were allayed.

Following a welcome and invocation by CSB executive officer Lt. Colonel John Pook, the program progressed through a variety of repertoire, beginning with bandsman Marc Smith's soprano cornet solo, *The Forest Grove* by Norwegian Salvationist Philip Hannevik. Played with beautiful lyricism and finesse, even the highest notes sounded effortless. His masterful performance received an ovation.

The band then presented two contrasting pieces: *La Fe el la Victoria* (Stephen Kellner), a high-energy setting of "Faith is the victory" in a Latin style, featuring extended percussion breaks. Individual sections stood and joined in the exuberant celebration of sound, with the entire band on its feet by the end. This was followed by *Faith Walk* (William Himes). Originally composed for a wedding processional, the music unfolds quietly, with a gradual crescendo reaching a majestic conclusion.

Sara Groves, a well-known Christian recording artist and songwriter, has appeared with the CSB on several occasions, but this time the audience was treated to a bonus—Sara's daughter, Ruby, who added her voice in duets. As they began "Miracle," it was evident "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" for their voices blended perfectly.



Assisted by a rhythm section from the CSB (Carlos Navarro on guitar, Isaac Leka on bass, Sam Leka on drums), the set included three original songs: "Shine" and "Enough," with the entire CSB joining in on one of Sara's best-known songs, "He's always been faithful."

Chief Secretary Colonel Thomas Loudon effectively transitioned

into his devotional in which he emphasized the theme of faith which was woven throughout the program. He asked listeners to "push the pause button," and remember "there's only One who can see tomorrow" and to put their trust in Him.

He said, "When you see those strings and ribbons wrapped around the Christmas gifts under the tree, may they be a reminder of God's love surrounding you."

This led into the evening's major work, *Deus Solus* (God Alone) composed by staff bandsman Andrew Wainwright. Written for the 130th anniversary of the Melbourne Staff Band, the music begins quietly with a sense of the unknown, referring to the hymn, "O God, our help in ages past." It transitions into the central section, featuring the chorus, "Faithful God." This exciting and technically demanding music grows in intensity, reaching a brilliant conclusion featuring the chorus, "God and God alone."

Following intermission, the concert focused entirely on Christmas, starting with Leroy Anderson's classic, "A Christmas Festival," with the audience humming along throughout the familiar songs and carols. Then came Barrie Gott's charming intermezzo, "Deck the Hall," which surprised the audience with its brevity.

While audiences expect the CSB to perform brass music at the highest standard, they always seem a bit surprised when the band sings.

This occasion was no exception as the band sang "While shepherds watched their flocks," led by CSB chorus leader, Matt Woods. The traditional



text of Nahum Tate (1652-1715) has been given a new life in this fresh contemporary setting by Craig Courtney.

Trained musicians would be impressed by the band's choral mastery of this challenging music, with its complex textures and harmonies, which the band performed with beautiful balance, blend and expression. Enhanced by the supportive piano accompaniment of Caroline Wajda, it was one of evening's highlights.

Sara and Ruby Groves were welcomed back for their second set which included two Groves' originals, "It's true" and "Toy packaging." The latter is a humorous take on the challenge parents face when attempting to extract toys from seemingly impervious containers at Christmas. As Sara belted out, "Nothing makes me lose my cool like toy packaging!" the audience laughed heartily (perhaps in empathy).

The Groves duo ended their set with the CSB joining the accompaniment to Sara's original melody to "It came upon the midnight clear" (arranged by Andrew Wainwright). Once again, the lovely voices of mother and daughter were in perfect sync. Behind the scenes, Emily Aukes provided visual support with lyrics and artwork throughout the program

As the band played the rousing march, "Christmas Rejoicing" (William Gordon), CSB alumni, representing seven decades, gathered on stage to join in singing the CSB's "Choral Benediction," with its opening lines defining the evening's mission: "May these moments spent together give praise to Jesus' name, May the message of our music bring joy because we came."

Mission accomplished!



To see many more photos, visit the gallery on our website salarmycentral.org

A new creation in Christ

by Envoy Jesse Links

On the night of March 14, 2017, after 27 years of addiction, I hit rock bottom. Homeless and hopeless, I was arrested in Indianapolis for multiple dealing and possession of drug charges. I was thrown into a jail cell, alone, afraid and with no way out. I was facing the rest of my life in prison. With no one to turn to, I cried out God. I finally realized I couldn't do it on my own. God's grace drew me to Him. Through multiple appearances in front of the judge, I was given the chance to get the help I desperately needed.

Released from jail, I checked into the Indianapolis, Ind., Harbor Light Center's detox program where I

spent the next 10 days drug free—the longest I'd been clean in my adult life. I then checked into the center's Residential Treatment program, and my life changed forever. After a Bible study one evening, I was given the opportunity to ask God for forgiveness and to invite Jesus to come into my heart. I began to have an inexplicable peace. Little did I know my journey with Jesus and The Salvation Army was just beginning.

That May I was accepted into the Indianapolis Adult Rehabilitation Center (ARC). It provides a highly-structured, intensive drug and alcohol program that focuses on spiritual, social and emotional regeneration and rehabilitation. I began to experience what a relationship with Jesus means. I learned that through grace we are saved, and there is no faith without obedience and no obedience without faith. I was becoming a new creation like it talks about in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (CSV): "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!"

Through God's Word and the ARC, I found my sense of purpose. I was able to understand what a real relationship with Jesus is all about. On completion of the program I was offered a job in the ARC warehouse, processing donated

goods that fund the program. Then I was given the opportunity to become assistant resident manager, and soon I became full-time lead resident manager.

Becoming a new person in Christ changed everything for me. Following God's teachings, I started living by God's Spirit. Breaking free from old habits, I started having a positive influence on those around me. I found my true calling: serving others in Christ's name and helping others recover from addiction.

I became a soldier at the Indianapolis Fountain Square Corps where I deepened my relationship with God, found community and served others. I gained a profound understanding of what self-control should be because of what a covenant relationship with Him entails. Walking by the Spirit and living by this covenant was—and still is—instrumental in keeping me on a clean and steadfast path.

The Salvation Army played a crucial role in facilitating and supporting me in acquiring national peer support certifications, essential for becoming a manager of rehabilitation services at the ARC. In this role, I was entrusted with the responsibility of

leading and steering the program toward a Christ-centered approach to recovery. I obtained certifications as an alcohol and drug addiction consultant. As a result, I assumed the position of director of rehabilitation services, overseeing and advancing our rehabilitation program curriculum and program staff. I even went back to college and earned the Adult Rehabilitation Center Leadership Certificate from Indiana Wesleyan University.

Instead of serving a life sentence in prison, I had a second chance at life because of The Salvation Army. My relationship with Jesus has given me inexplicable peace and joy and, out of that, an indefinable love for my brothers and sisters in Christ which allows me to serve others in His name. Today I am the man, husband, father, son, brother and friend God intended me to be.



Envoy Jesse Links with Store 8 manager and employees in St. Louis, Mo.



Envoys Jesse and Samantha Links

ARC flip store Continued from page 1

band Envoy Bob Idzior leads the Southeast, Mich., ARC. "The question was how to do that without adding to the plates of administrators that are already full."

Envoys Bob and Jacquelynn came up with the idea of sending teams with experience using the new method out to other ARC locations for a week of training and mentoring their administrators and store employees on not only power sorting, but also the important metrics needed to determine daily production goals. That way, instead of seeing it work somewhere else, they could see

the possibilities in their own contexts.

"By training administrators in their own centers, we were able to show them that hey, you can do this, and it can be fun! It can be energizing. And when you take that energy and spill it out onto your staff it's contagious," she said.

In addition, weekly check in meetings with assigned coaches from the ARC Command were implemented. Coaches, administrators, ARC staff and store managers from each center gather virtually to discuss how things are going.

"We're very honest in our feedback," said Colonel Lee Ann. "Each week we look at stats, celebrate successes and talk about challenges. The success of the teams is really driving them to want to do more."

"It builds so much confidence having the leaders of the command in the trenches with us," said Envoy Jesse Links, who leads the St. Louis, Mo., ARC. "That call puts everybody on cloud nine. It sets the week."

While there were growing pains, administrators report overwhelmingly that adopting the new process has reenergized staff, increased morale and motivation, and brought them into a more cohesive team.

"It helped change the culture. It got everyone in the store involved in what is ultimately the most important thing, which is the mission," said Envoy Jesse.



USA CENTRAL TERRITORY

BELONGING

2025

UNITED IN PRAYER

WEEKLY PRAYER TOPICS

Paul writes in Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV), "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Week of January 5th: New Year Commitments

Week of January 12th: Youth Character-Building Programs and Teen Ministry

Week of January 19th: Advisory Boards & Councils, Women's Auxiliaries, Echelon

Week of January 26th: Feeding Programs

✂

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 _____

Sports program builds character, faith in Topeka

With soccer, basketball, boxing and an in-the-works archery program, the Topeka, Kan., Corps' sports program continues to blossom and serve the community as a ministry of its own.

"Each one of our coaches invests in young people's lives beyond the hour that they might be in the gym or on the field. They all take the approach that it's far more than teaching youth to be good athletes. They want to help them develop character and strengthen their faith in the Lord," said Major Tom McDowell, who leads the corps, along with his wife, Major Julie.

Heath Seitz, who attends services at the Topeka Corps, is the youth soccer coach. Prayers are said before and after each game, and every practice is closed with a prayer.

"The kids know the church is always open to them," Heath said. "The Salvation Army makes a difference."

About 25-45 students, from kindergartners to those in high school, take to the basketball court several days a week.

"You teach them to put God first, and everything else follows," said Tony Barksdale, who has coached the basketball program for six years. "We teach accountability, discipline and understanding and overall being a better person. That is more important than playing basketball. Let them have fun,



Basketball coach Tony Barksdale and Major Tom McDowell

but character is the main goal, because that is what is going to last."

John Alcala, who leads the boxing program, has been a coach for 31 years. He currently has 80 registered members, ages 8-20, who are learning how to box and/or compete in boxing six days a week. The Three Shields Boxing Academy has two rings and 19 punching bags, all donated by the community.

Over the years, Three Shields has produced close to 70 multi-tournament champions, including two national champions.

"We encourage Christian-based values. Our coaches are our ministers," John said.

During monthly family nights, boxing students can bring their families to an evening of boxing-related movies or pay-per-view boxing. Everyone digs into hot dogs, hamburgers and side dishes.

"Families from different walks of life sit and visit with one other—they never would have crossed paths if not for our boxing program. Some parents have never had get-togethers like this with their kids," John said.

Major Tom often attends the family evenings.

"It's the sort of event where it is appropriate to share a brief devotional



Topeka's soccer program now has 60 players and three teams.

thought and a prayer," the major said.

He maintains a relationship of faith with each coach, as well as athletes and their families.

"We make it clear we want to have a Christian message. I realize the best way I can impact these programs is to foster and encourage the faith of my leaders," the major said. "It begins by establishing your credibility and building trust and relationship with the coaches. And if families are standing right there, we'll have conversations with them."

William Sherley, youth ministries coordinator at the corps, also spends time with the coaches, encouraging them in their faith.

"That is how these (sports) programs work best—to simply be present," the major added.

The soccer program has grown rapidly. It began with eight youngsters and now has about 60 participants, ages 8-15, who play on three teams.

Heath takes the soccer players out for a meal after every winning game. And once a week, he takes them through the corps' food pantry for a bag of food. Sometimes a child will come to him and say there is no food at their home. In those instances, the corps officers are contacted to assist the family.

"It breaks your heart. We are extending a loving hand to help these kids," he said.

Heath and his assistant coaches, Manuel and Brenda Bautista, who recently joined the soccer program, oversee as teams play in about four leagues per year and in tournaments during the summer.

"All through life, it's all about teamwork—it's about your job, your family, etc.," Heath said. "The kids on the corps' teams come together and support each other. It's a blessing for me to be involved in this program and see how it is changing lives."



John Alcala (center) leads the boxing program at Three Shields Boxing Academy.

Promoted to Glory

Major Paul Howard

Major Paul Howard was promoted to Glory on September 22, 2024. Paul was passionate about evangelism, preaching, teaching and visiting ill or homebound soldiers. A conscientious student of Scripture, he also was a voracious reader of books on theology and doctrine.



Paul was born on August 4, 1935, to Clarence and Martha Howard. The family began attending the Decatur, Ala., Corps, in his childhood. After the death of his mother when he was 13 and additional challenges as a teen, Paul moved to Kalamazoo, Mich., to live with his sister Ola in 1953, where he was mentored by men at the corps.

The summer after his high school graduation in 1954, Paul worked at Little Pine Island Camp, where he surrendered his life to Christ and accepted the call to ministry.

Entering officer training in 1955, Paul was commissioned in 1956. He married Lt. Evangeline Payton in 1958. Together they served in corps and divisional appointments throughout the Midwest. They retired from the College for Officer Training, where Paul was assistant principal and taught Old and New Testament, evangelism and doctrine.

In retirement, Paul taught Bible study at the Grand Rapids, Mich., Adult Rehabilitation Center and adult Sunday school at the Fulton Heights Citadel Corps.

Paul is survived by his wife of 66 years, Vangie; children Shari (Bill) Luhn, Tim (Julie), Tom (Karen), and Amy (John) Grindle; 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.



MAN OF GOD
TERRITORIAL MEN'S CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 17-19, 2025

Guest speaker:

BRANT HANSEN

Podcaster and author of

The Men We Need: God's Purpose for the Manly Man, the Avid Indoorsman, or Any Man Willing to Show Up



MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!

Green Lake Conference Center | Green Lake, Wisconsin



How I belong



Ben Dial

Territorial Youth Department

What do you do with The Salvation Army?

As Territorial Christian Education Director for Outreach, I help train, resource and develop outreach methods to bring more youth into our buildings and ultimately bring them to Christ.

Why do you do it?

Youth are a crucial part of the church yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

How did you become involved with the Army?

I was working as a part-time youth pastor but needed to supplement. Through Indeed.com, I found a job as Heartland Youth Discipleship Ministries Coordinator. God provides.

What's the best part about your ministry?

Meeting new people and sharing Jesus.

What podcasts are you listening to?

The BEMA Discipleship Podcast, Ninjas Are Butterflies, and Youth Ministry Hacks.

In the last year, what's been your biggest blessing or challenge?

My first year of fatherhood has been both the greatest blessing and challenge.

What one word sums up your testimony?

Healing.

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

Time!

The Salvation Army

PRAYER CENTRAL

USA Central Territory

February Prayer Calendar

My Prayer List	Day	Bible Reading	Pray for The Salvation Army
	1 Saturday	John 3:16	Adrian, Mich., Corps
	2 Sunday	Romans 5:8	Beatrice, Neb., 360 Life Center
	3 Monday	1 John 4:8	The Netherlands, Czech Republic and Slovakia Territory
	4 Tuesday	1 John 4:16	Brainerd, Minn., Corps
	5 Wednesday	1 John 4:18	Chicago Englewood, Ill., Corps
	6 Thursday	1 Corinthians 13:4-7	Cicero Templo Laramie, Ill., Corps
	7 Friday	1 Peter 4:8	Decatur, Ill., Corps
	8 Saturday	1 John 3:16	Excelsior Springs, Mo., Red Shield Center
	9 Sunday	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	Freeport, Ill., Corps
	10 Monday	John 15:13	Grandview Southland, Mo., Corps
	11 Tuesday	Luke 6:27	Sri Lanka Territory
	12 Wednesday	Romans 8:35	Hillsdale, Mich., 360 Life Center
	13 Thursday	Jeremiah 31:3	Jackson, Mich., Corps
	14 Friday	1 John 4:9-10	Kewanee, Ill., 360 Life Center
	15 Saturday	Ephesians 2:8	Logansport, Ind., 360 Life Center
	16 Sunday	Matthew 5:43-48	Marshalltown, Iowa, Corps
	17 Monday	Ephesians 5:25	Minneapolis Temple, Minn., Corps
	18 Tuesday	Romans 12:9-10	Taiwan Region
	19 Wednesday	1 Corinthians 13:7	Dubuque, Iowa, Corps
	20 Thursday	1 Corinthians 13:13	Newton, Kan., Red Shield Center
	21 Friday	Proverbs 10:12	Omaha North, Neb., Corps
	22 Saturday	Colossians 3:14	Porter County, Ind., Corps
	23 Sunday	Titus 3:4-5	Saginaw, Mich., Corps
	24 Monday	Romans 5:5	Streator, Ill., 360 Life Center
	25 Tuesday	John 15:12	St. Paul Citadel, Minn., Corps
	26 Wednesday	Galatians 2:20	Democratic Republic of Congo
	27 Thursday	Zephaniah 3:17	Watertown, S.D., Corps
	28 Friday	John 13:34-35	College for Officer Training

Go to www.salarmycentral.org
If you follow the prayer calendar during the year,
you will have read through the Bible!

--Mustard Seeds--



Following Jesus in a fractured world

by Captain Karen B. Felton

Transformation in our global Army begins with transformation of individuals. Change in a fractured world

begins with change in me," said Major Cyndi Shiels, who represented the Central Territory at an International Theological Symposium in Bali, Indonesia.

The five-day symposium included 70 delegates representing territorial and divisional leaders, corps officers, soldiers and employees from the Salvation Army's five zones worldwide. Major Cyndi, who was selected as a delegate by Central Territorial Leadership, felt that her master's in theological studies from Asbury Seminary suited her well for the assignment.



Each day began with presentations of papers written by Salvationists on the theme, "Following Jesus in a Fractured World," which explored contemporary challenges in the light of biblical truth and included the broad topics of reconciliation, holiness, and stewardship of creation. After each paper, delegates offered responses, including different perspectives, before breaking into groups of 10 for roundtables.

Major Cyndi said she appreciated the deep discussions, as well as the glimpse into the everyday life of Salvationists from different parts of the world.

"It was a blessing to be reminded that we are a global Salvation Army,"

she said, "and such a blessing to learn from other Salvationists."

According to the major, the dialogues were meant to help delegates grow in their understanding of theology as "iron sharpens iron" and consider how they can apply it personally, in their ministries, and to The Salvation Army globally. At the end of each day of discussion, each table wrote on a Post-it® note one thing they wanted to say to The Salvation Army. These were collected by the International Theological Council (ITC) and will be shared with the General.

General Lyndon Buckingham and Commissioner Bronwynn Buckingham joined the symposium to present "Compass: The Salvation Army's Global Strategic Framework." During a Q & A, delegates asked the



Major Cyndi Shiels with some of her tablemates

General wide-ranging questions from the strategic plan to his spiritual life, self-care and how he and his wife manage ministry together.

Since she was profoundly impacted by the symposium, Major Cyndi hopes discussions can be held in each territory and division.

"Theology is something we need to be discussing within The Salvation Army," she said. "I am motivated to continue similar discussions here in the territory for the purpose of centering on Christ, that our efforts would be born out of living in loving union with God."



A Q & A with the General

Ministry in the messiness

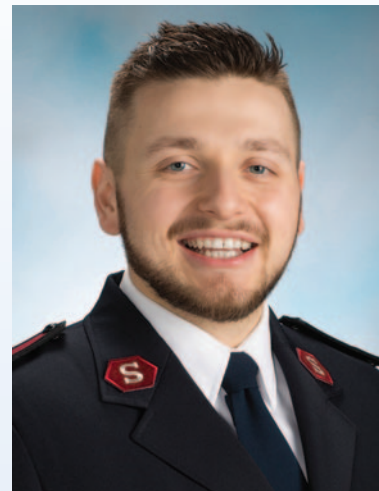
by Captain Joshua Hubbard

Working with people is messy. With life comes pain, sorrow, excitement and joy. We don't get one side of the spectrum without the other. It's in life's messiest moments that I have found the deepest satisfaction of my officership.

In our first appointment we were thrown into the world of immigration and asylum seeking. Our community was full of families whose home country no longer was safe, and The Salvation Army was perfectly positioned to be the safe place for many of those individuals. I had the privilege of walking a journey I would never have known as my own.

A family relocated from their home country because of political turmoil which led to the death of the husband, the attempted murder of the wife, and three young children needing safe refuge. After traversing country lines and finding settlement in the neighborhood, the mother of the family eventually found herself at The Salvation Army's doorstep looking for support. It's when places of need meet a desire for change that I step into the greatest role God can gift me.

What started as help with food and rent, turned into proofreading asylum documentation, connections with lawyers, and providing transportation to attend the corps' worship services. I experienced so much with this family who trusted us through the process. Celebrating life through the journey of transformation reinforces the work God called me to do. It's slow, and messy, but it is the most rewarding.



Memories of phone calls about the children, news about employment opportunities, and the walkthrough of the family's first home in the U.S. always bring a smile to my face, and a prayer of gratitude that God would give me such a blessing as to walk through life with people so intimately.

I want to do more of this as a Salvation Army officer; spending time with people who find themselves in a place where need and a desire for change meet. Wading through the messiness of life with someone is the privilege we have, and the uniform gives me access to people in a way I wouldn't have without it.

International College for Officers Delegate

Session 260

January 15 – February 24, 2025

Major Valerie Carr

Corps Officer

Dearborn Heights, Mich.



Major Trevor McClintock

Divisional Leader for Leader Development

Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Division



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