



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)



Nicole Gosia serves guests.

Volume 54, Number 3

March 2024

New center encourages living life fully

On the southwestern shore of Lake Michigan, just shy of Milwaukee, in the city of Oak Creek, Wis., The Salvation Army has opened a new senior center. It is the culmination of several years of research and prayer by the Oak Creek Corps about how they could expand their ministry and make a significant difference in their community.

Complementing the Booth Manor senior residence next to the corps, the new program is dedicated to help-

ing address the growing crisis of senior isolation and lack of resources to prolong independence among older adults. In designing it, the corps looked at gaps in service and had touchpoints with the local government, other agencies and families. It is fully accessible and inclusive.

"The center is designed to meet the needs of our area's aging population who may or may not have financial resources to participate in other programs," said Captain Dana Bigelow, Oak Creek corps officer

with her husband, Captain Jason Bigelow. "The main objective is to enhance and enrich the lives of seniors in our community."

Open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., the center offers a full calendar of opportunities. Older adults may participate in educational and financial lectures, health and nutrition workshops, arts and crafts, music therapy, support groups like a Memory Café, Bible studies and book clubs, and a weekly hot lunch with the captains called Soup for the Soul.

"The center is the door through which seniors and their families can discover the broader array of what the corps offers," said Captain Dana, indicating as well how the staff work seamlessly together to have the most impact.

For instance, an onsite food pantry is available for those who suffer from food insecurity and there are additional opportunities for fellowship

with women's or men's ministries, more Bible studies, and joining in the corps' Wednesday evening family dinner led by Corps Sergeant-Major Ken Tregellas.

According to Nicole Gosia, senior ministries program manager, the



Major Jennifer Woodard greets guests at the grand opening.

senior center program is flexible and responsive to what the older adults say they want and need. Each person's voice is heard and valued.

"For me, it's all about building relationships," she said. "I want them

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The final word at Easter

by General Lyndon Buckingham

Several of the main characters in the crucifixion and resurrection story of Jesus did not agree about much of anything, but they did agree about this: the story of Jesus was over.

Pontius Pilate believed he was the final word on all things that happened in his region. It was a troubled part of the Roman world but, despite the challenging situation, Pilate was accustomed to having unquestioned authority. If he decided an innocent man needed to die to keep the peace, so be it. He handed Jesus over to be crucified, and the oft-practiced theater of killing on a cross was performed on his orders. Later, after hearing of Jesus' death, Pilate issued his final instructions to the religious leaders. "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how"

(Matthew 27:65). There was essentially a triple lock on Jesus' tomb: a large stone was rolled in front, an official seal served as a powerful warning and armed guards watched to ensure that no one interfered. Pilate was certain that he was the final authority on the story of Jesus.

Mary, mother of Jesus, understood the anguish of seeing a loved one suffer. She watched as opposition to Jesus grew, and she would have worried day after day that something terrible would happen. Eventually, the powerful enemies of Jesus moved against him. Following his arrest, rumours probably circulated about the beatings, the torture and the humiliation he was enduring. She would have felt so helpless, so broken to know that her son was experiencing such pain. Mary would have given her own life to save his, but that was not possible. The best his mother could do was to stand

close by until the bitter end, not wanting him to face those final painful moments alone. She was there, near the Cross, as Jesus took his last breath (John 19:25). Filled with despair, Mary was certain that his excruciating death was the final chapter of the story of Jesus.

Peter knew his ministry was over and, in truth, he knew it deserved to be. After all, he had denied Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times. Right when Jesus needed him the most, he had failed miserably. After the cock crowed, and Peter remembered Jesus' words—that before the cock crows, Peter would disown Jesus three times—he bowed his



head in defeat and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75). Peter had never known utter despair like this. Despite promising his friend and rabbi that even if others denied him, he never would, it had taken only a persistent servant girl to make him unravel and fall apart. In denying Jesus, Peter had lost the min-

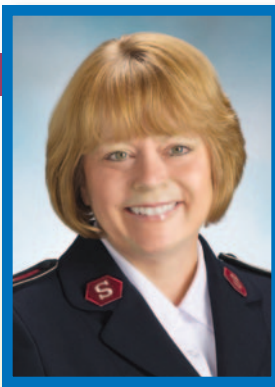
istry that had become his life and joy over the past three years. With his friend's public death on the Cross, combined with his own repeated denial of being one of his disciples, Peter believed his part in the story of Jesus was now over.

But the story of Jesus was not over. They each forgot one very important thing: God always has the final word.

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Let peace begin with me

by Lt. Colonel Darlene Harvey
Officer Resource and Development Secretary



This month the Territorial Officer Resource and Development Department should have been traveling to Israel for the Biblical Education Tour to the Holy Land. Unfortunately, it has been cancelled for 2024 due to the conflict in the Middle East. Hopefully, it will be more peaceful soon for the people in this region, and 2025 will allow safe travels to the Holy Land again.

As we continue to focus on Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz's emphasis on the Fruit of the Spirit, in March we are looking at peace. Peace can be described as an absence of conflict or a period where there is no war or when war

has ended. As we look at our world, we certainly are praying for peace between countries. We see how many innocent people are hurting. Our hearts go out to them. We are praying for God's intervention and for wisdom for world leaders.

We not only pray for peace in our world, but we pray for unity and harmony within our communities, corps and families. Matthew 12:25 says a "household divided cannot stand." To have peace and unity, we need to focus on others—being sensitive to listen and understand. We also need to make sure we are seeking God's will from His Word, and that love is our primary goal.

Furthermore, to have peace with others, we need to have peace within ourselves. I tend to be a worrier, which can impact my personal peace, as well as peace with others. Philippians 4:4-8 is my go-to whenever I feel the enemy is attacking my peace. Paul reminds us not to be anxious but to pray about everything with thanksgiving. If I start with thanksgiving—whether about myself, others or a situation—it helps me be more positive in remembering how God has worked in the past or seeing how He already is at work. Paul goes on to say the peace that transcends all understanding will guard our hearts and minds. Lastly, he says we need to focus our

thoughts on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

I pray that you will experience more peace within yourself and with others. While it is hard for us individually to impact wars and affect world peace, we can make a difference right where we are. As the familiar song lyrics beautifully put it, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." Remember to pray with thanksgiving when you feel anxious and follow Paul's instructions from Romans 12:18 (NIV): "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Ministering in war-torn Ukraine

by Major Mike McKee

As the war in Ukraine rages on, The Salvation Army continues to faithfully minister to the needs of people there in the name of Jesus. While there are challenges, Salvation

Army officers, soldiers and volunteers continue to quietly serve families and individuals affected by the conflict. Untold thousands of families have fled the fighting; some have left the country, and others have been displaced within Ukraine. The Salvation Army serves them all.

Last October International Headquarters sent me as part of a two-person team with Major Brad Watson from the Australia Territory to Ukraine to assess the relief efforts, ensure the coordination of The Salvation Army's work with government and non-governmental organizations (NGO), and help its strategy as the conflict continues to drag on. As of January, The Salvation Army continues to operate in eight community centers in Ukraine.

Findings from the assessment demonstrate what

we've seen so many times before in International Emergency Services. Local Salvation Army officers typically rise to the occasion when people need help. Without any specific training for what has been thrust upon them, Ukrainian Salvationists are performing with distinction. They're great at identifying the most vulnerable people in their communities and quick to provide whatever is necessary to meet the most pressing needs. They write realistic and effective projects and implement them well, including accurate and transparent reports.

And very significantly, they don't neglect the spiritual and emotional needs of the people they're serving. Our denominational meetings and Bible study groups are thriving and well attended, but they are never a



At International Headquarters in London, England, Major Mike McKee (center) and Major Brad Watson meet with General Lyndon Buckingham; Damaris Frick, coordinator for International Emergency Services (IES)—on end right; and Alina Popsui, IES employee who consults on Ukraine.

prerequisite to receiving assistance. In keeping with our mission statement, our humanitarian aid comes without discrimination.

More than merely providing relief items, The Salvation Army in Ukraine has been busy ramping up afterschool programs for displaced children and support groups for their parents. Officers will be receiving additional training in psychological first aid and linked with professional trauma counselors to help displaced families deal appropriately with the trauma that far too many of them are experiencing. These programs will be expanding as the need continues to rise.

Throughout our time in Ukraine, we saw God blessing The Salvation Army's work every day.

Just one example of His blessing happened when we were having a meeting with another Christian NGO about ways our groups could work together to serve more people, more efficiently. We were just finishing the meeting by deferring a decision on specific projects when air raid sirens

went off, and we all went directly to the building's bomb shelter. While sheltering underground, Mark (country director for the other agency) and Major Brad discovered they had attended the same college in Melbourne, Australia, and had mutual acquaintances and friends. Upon further conversation, we realized Mark and I had done relief work in many of the same places within Iraq during the second Gulf War. During the prolonged air alert, we had the opportunity to discuss the possibility of additional projects in the current crisis. When the "all clear" signal was finally given three hours later, we had agreed on working together on a specific project in Dnipro, Ukraine, with more to follow. Coincidence? I doubt it. God is good.

Ukraine remains a very insecure place. During our almost two-month visit, air raid sirens sent us to bomb shelters no less than 24 times. But amid all the chaos and suffering in this war-torn country, The Salvation Army is doing some remarkable work, all in the name of the Prince of Peace, our Lord, Jesus Christ.



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Serving others, sharing Christ

Omaha youth volunteer their time and talents for ministry

What's better than hanging out with friends and enjoying a shared interest? According to the youth at the Omaha Citadel, Neb., Corps, it's combining those with serving others in the name of Jesus.

"I love doing things such as volunteering and playing in the band," said Maddie Walter, who attends the corps with her family. "I get to grow in my faith, and all the while my best friends are doing everything with me."

The teens are a close-knit group, but they are not closed off. Members maintain an open invitation for others to join. Git Gatluak, corps program director, said that as more teens show up, the existing group warmly accepts them.

"We have a lot of new people coming in," he said. "It's good to see the group's example to them and how welcoming they are so the new kids don't feel alone."

Highlighting Git's observations, youth group member Nyamal Chut said, "What motivates me to be active at the corps is sharing God's Word with my friends and peers; that's what I love to do."

Despite busy schedules with school and extracurricular activities, the corps' youth dedicate a significant amount of their time and energy to ministry-related activities from participating in corps cadets and character-building programs to playing their instruments in the senior band on Sunday morning. They also volunteer to assist with the younger children on youth nights.

"They are giving their time and effort to serve God any way they can," said Git. "Their dedication and willingness to serve is incredible."

Throughout the year, the teens volunteer their talents in Omaha Metro area events as well as at divisional and territorial gatherings. Last spring they played their instruments at the



Omaha Citadel Corps youth band plays at the D.J.'s Hero Award luncheon.

Western Division's annual D.J.'s Hero Award luncheon which congratulated 16 high school seniors who received scholarships from the foundation through the division. Many of the corps' youth also participate in the Territorial Youth Band and were honored to play with the Chicago Staff Band during the commissioning 2023 weekend.

During the holiday season, they traveled to several corps to play familiar holiday tunes at the kettle kick-off events. They also participated in community care ministries, visiting care facilities to distribute gifts and spread joy through music.

Tyler Thiede concluded, "I love to play my instru-

ment at the corps because I get to have fun while worshipping God and spreading the gospel and awareness of the good things The Salvation Army does."



Members of the Omaha Citadel Corps youth group volunteer to play at kettles.



Git Gatluak leads devotions on youth night.

Someone had to die

by Stephen Garrington

Having come to the hospital to visit her brother-in-law who'd just received a lung transplant, Major Debbie Sjögren stood in the family waiting area. Glancing around the room, she noticed a small group sitting in the uncomfortable chairs, wringing their hands and talking in soft, worried tones: "Where is he? We have called for the chaplain three times. Isn't he ever coming?"

The word "chaplain" caught her attention, so she moved closer. "Excuse me," she said. Pointing to the shield on her sweater, she explained, "I'm a chaplain with The Salvation Army. May I help you?"

They turned and stared. Finally, one of them spoke up, "We have called for a chaplain three times, and no one has come."

Their brother, Eddie, had been waiting for a lung transplant, but the doctors had just told them his heart was not strong enough for the operation. In fact, a decision about life support would need to be made soon. The family wanted someone to pray with him.

One of the brothers led Major Debbie into Eddie's room. She saw a thin man with tubes in each arm and heard soft steady beeps emitted from half dozen machines.

"Hello, my name is Major Debbie. I am an ordained chaplain with The Salvation Army. May I pray with you?" she asked, holding her breath as the man's dark eyes opened and studied her. Being intubated, he couldn't speak but smiled weakly as she put her hand on his.

Gently she said, "There is something I want you to hear. My brother-in-law is in a bed just two doors down. Three days ago, he received a left lung that has saved his life, but for him to receive a new lung, someone had to die. Our family is happy to receive the lung as a gift, and we do not take that gift lightly, but we are sad that for him to live, someone else had to die."

"Eddie, your brother told me you were mad at God." His eyes turned from hers. "It is ok to be angry, but I want you to understand one thing. God loves you very much."

She continued, "Before they found a lung that was a match my brother-in-law was afraid his time was about up, and he was on his way to Heaven. But for him to live in Heaven, someone had to die. Jesus had to die to take away our sins so we could have life in Heaven."

"They tell me you are in hospice and facing eternal life. For you to live in Heaven, someone had to die, and die for you He did. Do you know that the person who died for you was Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus loves you that much?"

With wide eyes, Eddie gave her a thumbs up.

"Then let's pray." After the prayer, Major Debbie saw a sparkle in his eyes, felt a light squeeze of her hand, and, as she turned to leave, noticed a weak smile.

The next day she heard the decision had been made to end life support and Eddie had passed from this life to the next. There, he will live forever. But for that to happen, Someone had to die.

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A peaceful president

A young Salvationist follows his calling and leads by example

Elijah Stouder, 21, was born while his parents, Majors Jeremiah and Rachel Stouder who are currently officers in the Indiana Division, were in their second year at the College for Officer Training (CFOT).

Now Elijah's calling also is to become a Salvation Army officer.

A senior at Asbury University majoring in Christian ministries, he said he is on track with plans to enter the CFOT in the fall.

"I know I have a strong calling for leadership," Elijah said. "I'm not sure if I will be the leader of a corps or if I will become the General someday. Actually, I hope I don't become General. That seems like a lot of responsibility," he said through laughter. "But I am sure that I am called to inspire some sort of change."

Elijah is already a leader, serving as president of The Salvation Army Student Fellowship at Asbury. He estimates there are about 50 students—Salvationists and others—who are in the fellowship. Every student on campus is welcome.

"We try very hard not to be exclusive," Elijah said. "It's a place on campus where we can just be ourselves. It's a safe place. A home away from home."



Elijah speaks at the Norridge Citadel, Ill., Corps on a recent SASF band trip.

As president, Elijah works with Majors Paul and Alma Cain, directors of the Moulton Student Center, to help choose guest speakers (confirmed by the student cabinet which Elijah leads) and oversees the planning of events, making sure the fellowship runs smoothly.

Dinner is served at 6:00 p.m. every Sunday at the center, followed by a social event. Worship services make up half of the Sunday events. Other activities include things like movies on the lawns and trivia nights.

Last fall, the 40th anniversary of the Moulton Student Center was celebrated and featured National Commander Kenneth G. Hodder who spoke at the event. Elijah also spoke.

"They [National Headquarters] support all of the funding. We were trying to show them how thankful we are and how much the center means to us," Elijah said. "In my speech, I said, 'It's a place where students can go where they can be fully known, without having to worry about if they are fully loved in return.'"

Elijah has grown more comfortable speaking publicly since an internship last year in Holland, Mich.

"I am always nervous leading up to any speech," he said. "But while I'm giving a sermon or a speech, that just melts away. I don't have to worry about it anymore. It's like a godly peace comes over me."

Peace is an important component of Elijah's faith. His email signature plate even features the words "In the spirit of peace" before his name.

"I hate conflict. One of my main theological strivings is to be at peace with my brothers and sisters in Christ," he said.

When asked about last year's revival at Asbury, which made international headlines and saw people from around the globe flocking to the university to share in the Holy Spirit's outpouring, Elijah said it was "amazing."

"In keeping with the theme of peace, one of the most noticeable things was that all of the barriers that



At the 40th anniversary celebration of the Moulton Student Center are (l to r) National Commander Kenneth G. Hodder, Asbury University President Kevin Brown, Elijah Stouder, Major Donna Green (student center director from 2000-2006) and Majors Alma and Paul Cain, current student center directors.

kept people from hearing the voice of the Spirit were broken down," he recalled. "Denominational barriers and anger were left at the door. You could not tell what denomination a person was when they entered the room. I did not know if the person next to me was a Catholic or a Lutheran. It did not matter. It felt a bit like heaven."

For relaxation, Elijah enjoys playing video games and chess.

"The National Olympic Committee recognizes chess as a sport. So, chess is my favorite sport," he said. "I was 10

when my dad taught me how to play."

Along with his parents, Elijah's family includes his younger sister RJ and younger brother Josiah. Captain Samantha Nolan-Jones, who lived with the Stouder family for a time, is considered a sister.

"We share the oldest-sibling role," he said of Captain Samantha.

As he looks to the future, Elijah thinks about his leadership skills and how he might bring people closer to Christ.



Major Paul Cain and Elijah decorate the grounds of the Moulton Student Center for the holidays.

"In my studies and observation, I feel that something has been lost on the common Christian of today—the necessity to have a real living relationship with Christ," he explained. "We need to fully surrender our lives to Him. Maybe that is what I have been called to change."

This Kind of Fruit

**by Commissioner Evie Diaz
Territorial Commander**

Pace is "the way things ought to be." Peace with God begins with a right relationship with Him. It is evidence of the Holy Spirit working in us. Peace comes as we live life with God, loving and knowing Him. God's peace comes because we trust who He is.

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord.

"And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so my ways are higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8, 9 (NLT)

Because we have peace with God, we can know peace within our own lives. Our worry, resentment and cares can be given to Jesus. "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (NLT) Peace even when we face troubles because of the Holy Spirit in us.

Peace with God and within us is the foundation of peace with others. "And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace." Colossians 3:15 (NLT)



Paul reminds us in Romans that we belong to each other. Shalom, the peace of God, brings wholeness to relationships, the way things should be.

This month, allow the Holy Spirit to bring peace in your life. First, be sure your relationship with God is right. Cast your cares on Him, knowing He will bring peace within your life. Finally, work for peace with others. Where there is discord, ask God to bring wholeness. Where there is misunderstanding, ask for God's wisdom. Pray for peace in our world.

Depend on the Holy Spirit for this kind of fruit. And if you have a story to tell about how God's peace is at work in you and around you, share with us by visiting salarmycentral.org or emailing bearingfruit@usc.salvationarmy.org

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

Food for the mind

Inside the Salvation Army Fox Cities, Wis., Social Services Center, a two-tiered cart loaded with books sits beside the food pantry door. The cart carries a homemade sign, "Our Little Library."

Books for adults are on the top.

Children's books are on bottom, where little hands can easily reach.

"It's known as Our Little Library since all of the volunteers here helped make it possible," said Amy Johnson, the volunteer who spearheaded the mobile library effort in the summer of 2022.

At the time, clients had been asking about available reading material. The local library was being remodeled, and the only places people could access free books were in little libraries set up outside of people's homes.

Inspired to get books into clients' hands, Amy wondered if a little library could be created at The Salvation Army. The reaction from the pantry volunteers, a dedicated and creative group, was an over-

whelming "yes!" They set to work fixing up an old cart that was kept in a storeroom just collecting dust. One volunteer power-washed and reconditioned the cart, while another designed the "Our Little Library" sign.

The mobile library has proven to be a big success, said Kristal Knudtson, Fox Cities development director. Clients can return the books to the cart after they read them, or they can keep them for good.

"It's really exciting. Whether you are younger or older, you know what it's like to receive a book," Kristal said. "People are taking these books, reading them and loving it."

Cost is a factor for many families.

"So many people are living paycheck to paycheck. Many people cannot afford to buy books," Kristal added.

The cart is often wheeled into the cafeteria for people in the noon meal program.

"Reading is food for the mind and will last a lifetime," said Pat Leigl, social services director for The Salvation Army in the Fox Cities. "Get a parent engaged in reading to their child, and that will be with that child for the rest of their life."

Books not only come from pantry volunteers but from other groups and organizations like the American



Volunteers Amy Johnson, Martin O'Donnell and Madison Parker

Association of University Women (AAUW), which now donates books to the center after they hold their own book sales.

Getting books in languages other than English is helping the center reach clients coming in from other countries. They recently acquired some children's books written in Spanish. They are looking for books written in Chinese and other languages to serve the immigrant population in the community.

Amy said she sees a lot of smiles from people who stop by Our Little Library for a book and, during the holidays, an ornament as well.

She added, "Those books bring much joy."

A new life in Chicago

One family's story of starting over



The Venner family found a community of faith and support at the Irving Park Corps.

When Marwin and Harleimar Venner left their family, friends and careers in their home country of Venezuela, they hoped to find a better life for themselves and their two children, Axel and Melany. They could not have known where their journey would take them during those years of fear and uncertainty, but now are able to testify to God's goodness and provision in their time of greatest need.

"Our life took a total turn when we least expected it," said Harleimar. "We were in the middle of a difficult political conflict. Many families were politically persecuted, [there was] a lot of hunger, robberies, violence, a lot of need."

When she was threatened at gunpoint while working in her position at the Caracas Metro, the shaken family began to look for a way out of Venezuela. With the help of her sister, they were able to make their way to Cancun, where they started over. Harleimar began working as a street vendor and Marwin as a carpenter. Life was beginning to improve. Then the whole world shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Since we were in a tourist area, the jobs disappeared," said Marwin. "With broken hearts we left...for the United States."

Arriving at the border, the Venners were joined with 16,000 other migrants. They waited out in the open with no hygienic facilities, shelter or food. With the little money they had, they bought what they could—a tent and a few necessities—and waited, not knowing how long they would be in this holding pattern.

Finally, on the sixth day, they entered the United States, and on the eighth day, reached Chicago. Within the week they had been connected with The Salvation Army for assistance. At the Irving Park Corps, they found physical and spiritual support in the open arms of corps administrators Carlos and Kerman Moran.

"We fell in love with the church," Harleimar said. "She [Kerman] spoke with such love that we wanted to come on Sundays. We found the 'family' we left. They have given us friendship, love, physical, emotional and spiritual support."

The entire Venner family now participates at the corps every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday.

"We feel very grateful and have been involved in helping other people," concluded Harleimar. "On Sundays we leave church inspired, united and encouraged."

Oh the possibilities

The more that you read, the more things you will know.

The more that you learn, the more places you'll go. —Dr. Suess

March is National Reading Month. First celebrated in 1994 in honor of beloved children's author Dr. Suess, it continues to be observed as a time to focus on reading and literacy. According to the National Literacy Institute, the United States is in a literacy crisis, with nearly 50 percent of adults living below the poverty line and 70 percent of low-income fourth graders unable to read at a basic level.

Mission: Literacy is an excellent resource Salvation Army units can use to minister to those in their communities while helping to combat the illiteracy epidemic and set people up for success.

Originally developed by the American Bible Association (ABA) as a pathway to both Scripture and literacy for children, Mission: Literacy expanded to include curriculum for adults. Participants learn to read using evidence-based methods that have been applied to Scripture so that they become familiar with the Bible as they are developing the essential life skill of reading. The ABA has established an agreement with The Salvation Army to utilize these materials through February 2026.

"Mission: Literacy is a great way to not only promote literacy, but also serves to connect students with the Word (John 1:1-5) and corps programs through the help of soldiers," said Mark Bender, territorial corps and community mission director.

The curriculum is comprised of

two levels with 30 books in each. With beautifully illustrated Bible stories and hands-on learning activities, it draws and keeps the interest of participants. A manual and additional resource materials provide tutors with everything they need to help participants learn to read well with confidence and lays a foundation to help them succeed.

In the years since it was introduced, Mission: Literacy has been utilized by officers and program leaders to help children and adults learn to read or improve their reading skills. Reports from those who have used the curriculum have been overwhelmingly positive.

"We love Mission: Literacy and have used it in nearly all of our appointments," said Major Randall Summit, who currently leads the Decatur, Ill., Corps with his wife, Major Sue. They plan to introduce it to the corps' after-school program this year.

With built-in versatility, Mission: Literacy can easily be added to existing programs at the corps, including afterschool programs and summer day camps, as well as in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults. It also can serve as an excellent way to create connections with local churches and schools.

Materials free of charge are available from the Corps and Community Mission Department.

To get started, contact USC.THQ.CorpsandCommunity Mission@USC.Salvationarmy.org



Women's conference speaks to the heart

At the Abide Territorial Women's Conference, October 11-13, 2024, women will have the opportunity to develop a deeper connection with God, find a renewed sense of purpose, and be encouraged and equipped to engage with their communities through Bible teaching, worship and fellowship.

The territory's first in-person women's conference since 2018, Abide will be held at the Green Lake Conference Center. Situated on 900 acres in south central Wisconsin and on the shores of the state's deepest lake, this venue offers a myriad of recreational and contemplative opportunities for delegates. Housing options include hotels and homes for larger corps delegations or families, on a first-come, first-served basis.

A new format for the conference will give delegates more flexibility to craft their days as they'd like, whether keeping them free-form or scheduled with many activities. They will be able to choose from numer-



Sharon Irving

ous options from hiking to enjoying coffee with friends to attending a myriad of workshops specifically targeted to enrich women's lives and enable their ministries. In the evenings all delegates will come together for a time of powerful praise and learning from God's Word.

Guests will include:

- **Ann White**, well known author, speaker and Bible teacher and founder of the global ministry Courage for Life. Anne's authenticity and openness about her spiritual journey and God's restoration to her life and marriage will bless you. Her passion to empower individuals with God's Word and help them live lives of courage and abundance will inspire you.
- **Sharon Irving**, a singer/songwriter, worship leader, spoken word artist, actress. Sharon's great talent came to the attention of the nation on Season 10 of "America's Got Talent" where she earned the rare golden buzzer. She's known

for her strong, soulful voice that makes an impact. She is currently on staff and a worship leader at Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Ill.

- **Laura Story**, Gospel Music Association (GMA) Dove Award and Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter. Among her many credits, Laura received a Grammy for Best Contemporary Christian Music Song in 2012 for "Blessings," and penned a 30-day devotional on this best-selling song, in addition to authoring three other books about her life and faith and what she's learned.
- **Selah**, the well-loved award-winning Christian vocal trio, featuring Allan Hall, Amy Perry and Todd Smith. Their music is powerful and has wide-ranging appeal, crossing generations. Selah has won 11 Dove Awards, sold more than 4 million albums and had more than a half-billion streams of their songs. You won't want to miss them!

Early bird registration runs from March 1 through March 31, 2024.



Laura Story

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Anne White



Selah

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Women's Conference



The Salvation Army USA Central Territory

John 15:4 (The Voice)

October 11-13, 2024

Green Lake Conference Center Green Lake, WI



A well-spent dollar

It's a typical evening at Grace Place shelter in New Richmond, Wis. Some residents gather to watch television. Others are taking a class with a dietitian in the kitchen. Some are busy mopping floors. There is no janitorial service, so residents clean the shelter themselves.

Life at Grace Place is very "homey," said Randy Calleja, advisory board chairman for the St. Croix Service Extension Unit which encompasses Grace Place. "It's like being in a family—a very big family."

In 2014, The Salvation Army purchased a vacant nursing home from Presbyterian Homes to be used for Grace Place. With that purchase, Grace Place, formerly located in Somerset, Wis., expanded from a 24-bed to a 64-bed facility.

The cost of the building was \$1.

Today, Grace Place continues to be a home for those temporarily without one.

"In our area, we are the only 24-hour staffed shelter within five counties," said Duana Bremer, service extension unit director.

Each family gets its own room. Singles share a room with another person. All meals are provided. The average stay is 38 days, but people have stayed up to 120 days, Duana said.

It took eight months from its purchase to the shelter's opening day.

More than 200 volunteers brought the building back to life. Randy was



Jennifer Salaba, lead case manager; Laura Bryan, housing navigator for Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP); Scottie Ard, housing navigator for Grace Place; Cameryn Matson, YHDP case manager and Gretchen Westphal, case manager Grace Place.

part of a committee that raised \$265,000 for Grace Place in just six months.

"The whole community got involved," Duana recalled. "The entire building, inside and outside, was painted by volunteers. More than 7,000 community hours of volunteerism were given for things like painting, plumbing and electrical work. A sprinkler company donated labor to put in a sprinkler system."

A \$90,000 boiler was donated by a family foundation, Randy recalled.

"All of the mattresses were donated; all of the pillows were donated. We just wrote letters to companies, and box trucks showed up," he added.

Community members, businesses and other organizations were asked to sponsor rooms and handle all of the furnishings and decorating. Every room is custom-designed.

The New Richmond Running Club sponsored the kids' playroom. Club members painted a colorful, nature-themed mural in the room.

"Every year we call our sponsors and say we need new bedspreads or new blankets, etc.," Duana said. "Almost all of the sponsors who originally sponsored a room come back and paint their room and fix it so it stays nice-looking."

Grace Place is unique, according to Duana.

"We have a computer lab with six donated computers," she said. "A local school district came in and set it all up for us."

Students from Northwoods College volunteer their time to help residents with resumes and other projects that require computers.

"And we have a children's tutoring program. We work with retired teachers who come in three days a week to tutor the kids. The tutors will also go [with parents] to school conferences or assist children with Independent Education Plans at school. Our whole goal with tutoring is to get them uplifted out of poverty," Duana said.

The meal program is supported by volunteers, different church or civic groups which purchase, prepare and deliver dinner to Grace Place each night—everything from turkey dinners to spaghetti and casseroles.

Residents always dine together.

"We require them to be there at mealtime unless they are working," Duana said, adding that it helps create a sense of camaraderie. "We say grace together and eat together."

Perhaps one of the most unique programs is foot-care. Nurses from three local



churches in the community come to the shelter once a month to provide medical treatment.

"Many of the residents' feet are in horrible condition. They are a mess, and they hurt," Duana explained.

Grace Place is involved in a number of community events throughout the year. One of the highlights is "Shop with a Cop."

Families-in-need get assistance with buying school clothes. Kids also receive backpacks with school supplies. There are bicycle giveaways, hot dogs to eat and much more.

"We wanted to help develop a good relationship between law enforcement and low-income kids," Duana explained. "This is a huge community event."

It's one of the many ways The Salvation Army is making a difference in St. Croix. Regardless of the event or program, Grace Place has a daily mission to provide hope.



Former Grace Place resident Glenn Row stops by for a visit with lead case manager Jennifer Salaba.



Kari Clark, media manager at Grace Place, at left, with Duana Bremer, service extension unit director.



Volunteer Marianne Skifstad delivers supplies which are accepted by residents Anthony Kralewski and Angela Hoisington.

Bringing relief and hope after the hurricane

The challenge and blessings of being an IES officer

by Captain Matthew Beatty

One wouldn't expect a late-night call from the territorial commander (TC) of the Mexico Territory, but for an International Emergency Services (IES) program officer, it's all in a day's work. The TC, Colonel Ricardo Fernandez, said the people of Acapulco urgently needed help.

I had just returned home to London from an almost three-week assignment in Papua New Guinea and had been monitoring, what was at the time, Tropical Storm Otis. However, in 24 short hours Otis had become one of the most lethal weather engines on the planet, a category 5 hurricane.

On October 26, around 1:00 a.m., Hurricane Otis slammed into the beautiful seaside city of Acapulco with sustained winds of 165 mph and reported gusts of 205 mph. The Salvation Army in Mexico, supported by IES from London, immediately responded.

I arrived in Mexico City late Tuesday evening after a 12-hour flight

from London. Flying directly into Acapulco was not possible as the airport had been destroyed. I met with Salvation Army leadership for the territory immediately and then headed off to bed for just a few hours sleep before departing at 4:00 a.m. for the five-hour drive.



Once I arrived, a rapid assessment commenced. Fallen trees, along with collapsed and damaged structures and buildings, had disabled life-giving services such as electricity and roads and had even destroyed the entire cellular network. The humanitarian situation was dire. The security situation was even worse, as violent looters plagued the city. People were desperate. The good news was, under the local leadership of Captains Danny and Lila Yáñez, a positive response had already started.

In the immediate aftermath of the hurricane, Captain Danny had forged a relationship with La Marina and Armada de Mexico (Mexico Marines and Navy of Mexico). Due to the still unsafe conditions, The Salvation Army began providing food and aid to first responders inside a command center on Acapulco Bay. As the security situation slowly stabilized, and under the armed protection of the Marines and Navy, only then were



we able to get more into the community to meet the needs.

In the mornings, we did physical labor clearing the property of debris at the Acapulco Corps and Salvation Army Children's Home. Additionally, we headed out into the community to help remove power lines, trees and other debris from the roadways. In the afternoons and evenings, we distributed hot meals and food boxes, and later, a supermarket voucher distribution program for 1,500 families.

All in all, our small IES team of two people (joined later by Bob Meyers of the USA Eastern Territory) along with the amazing officers and volunteers from Mexico, were on the ground for about six weeks giving much needed aid and support to thousands in the community. Indeed, God is good.

I feel extremely blessed to be a part of such an amazing international team. My travels thus far have taken me to the continents of Oceania, Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. We work in the most difficult environments for extended months at a time with little or no warning. It is only through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the support of a loving spouse, that I not only survive but thrive in this unique appointment. To God be the glory.



Always prepared



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Contact Marty Rueter

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Contact Michelle Sanders

Michelle.Sanders@usc.salvationarmy.org

For the most recent updates and to explore online training opportunities year round, visit www.edscentral.org

The final word at Easter Continued from page 1

On that first Easter morning, when everyone assumed that the whole story of Jesus had already been written, the heavenly father wrote the most powerful chapter yet. The large stone was rolled away, the seal was broken and the guards were overcome with fear (Matthew 28:2-4). This all demonstrated that no people or power on earth can prevent God from having the final word. Jesus was risen, alive again, and because of that powerful truth, everything had changed. Pilate and the circumstances he dictated did not have final authority over God's Son or his followers. Mary was able to see her son's death not as the end, but as part of the continuing story of God's compelling grace for humankind. And in the days that followed, Peter discovered that his post-denial ministry would be even greater than he dared hope or imagine (John 21:15-19).

Perhaps you are facing challenging situations in your life right now. Be assured of this: God will have the final word, and no enemy or circumstance can stand against the word of our Almighty God.

Perhaps someone you love is suffering deeply, and you feel inade-

quate to relieve their pain or heal their hurt. Remember, God will have the final word, and that word will be filled with grace, and hope, and ultimate victory.

Perhaps, like Peter, you no longer feel worthy to be used by God. Possibly at one time you abandoned him and are convinced he has now abandoned you. Be certain of this: God will have the final word, and it will be a powerful word of restoration and renewal. And who knows? Perhaps, like Peter, you will discover your most impactful ministry is yet to come.

My prayer for you, and for the whole of The Salvation Army, is that this Easter will proclaim anew that the story of Jesus is not over, and that God always has the final, victorious word. It will be a triumphant word that reminds us that God is greater than any foe that stands against him. It will be a powerful word of grace and hope for the broken-hearted and hurting. And it will be a restorative word, reminding us that no sin is greater than his redeeming grace.

God will have the final word, and it will be a word of victory!

Happy Easter, and God bless you.

A journey of love and loss

Captain Shannon Forney knows about loss. She knows about grief. And she knows about finding some peace once again.

The fourth-generation Salvationist and associate corps officer at the St. Louis, Mo., Gateway Citadel Corps lost both of her parents, Majors Jerold and Carol Forney, in the span of five months. Major Jerold passed away in August 2022. Major Carol died in January 2023.

"My father was a big personality. He was loud and he would work the crowd. He loved to talk to people and was always cracking jokes," Captain Shannon recalled. "Mom was the opposite of my father. She was very set and intentional. She was behind-the-scenes, and she was OK with that."

Major Carol also had what Captain Shannon calls a "card ministry."

"She loved sending cards to people—for birthdays, for getting-well, holidays—and she loved receiving cards. She instilled that in my brothers and me; always send a card. Something so small can mean so much," the captain said.

The captain has been stationed in the Midland Division for eight years, beginning in Chillicothe, Mo., then being appointed to Granite City, which was closer to her parents. She was appointed to St. Louis in June 2022.

With her two brothers both living out of state, Captain Shannon shouldered most of her parents' care and helped whenever she could as she ministered at the corps. After her father died, she spent weekends with her mother, taking her to medical appointments, preparing meals, doing laundry and more.

"You learn along the way, being a caregiver. You do what you can for the people you love," she said.

She was with her mother when Major Carol passed. It happened quickly and was unexpected.

"I stayed home for a week," the captain recalled. "I did not answer the phone. I had to process my grief and communicate with my brothers."

She tried to return to her work at the corps, but realized she was not emotionally ready.

"God bless my corps family for being patient with me. I had spent so much time taking care of my parents, I had neglected to take care of myself."

She took an approved month-long leave of absence.

"My [associate] corps officers said, 'Take this time. You have our blessing and support,'" she recalled.

Her leave of absence was filled with therapy, rest, talking with family members, reading books and sitting outside in the sunshine. She also began to take care of her own health, seeing doctors about issues she had ignored for years.

She headed back to her corps with some sense of peace returning to her life.



Speaking at the St. Louis, Mo., Gateway Citadel Corps

"Although I am still grieving, I am coming back with a completely different attitude," Captain Shannon said.

The captain has been able to use her own experience with loss to help others at her corps with their own grief. Recently, several corps members passed away, including a single mother of two teens.

"Everyone experiences grief in different ways," Captain Shannon said. "As I still go through it, I can talk with those who have experienced loss and say, 'I get it.' Just being there with them is a ministry of presence. There is a comfort to be with someone who has walked through it before."

She concluded, "Experiences we think are the worst thing ever—God takes those and uses them to help someone else. I have to remember that, and let God work through me."



Corps members Major David Atkins confers with Captain Shannon Forney



Celebrating 140 years in Michigan

by Merri Bennett

To commemorate the 140th anniversary of The Salvation Army beginning its work in Michigan, the Army recently cleaned and refurbished a plaque memorializing the site in Amway Grand Plaza in Grand Rapids.

At the unveiling ceremony, the Grand Rapids Fulton Heights Citadel Band played "Onward Christian Soldiers," before Major Tim Meyer, Grand Valley area commander, read a brief historical account. It all started with Mr. James Lowe, a Christian businessman in Grand Rapids who came across a War Cry magazine while vacationing in Canada. After reading its contents he was convinced The Salvation Army was needed in his hometown.

Following the plaque unveiling, the Grand Rapids Advisory Board held a William Booth Society (WBS) luncheon to thank annual donors of \$5,000 or more. The event was emceed by well-known local TV news anchor and meteorologist Terri DeBoer, who shared how The Salvation Army helped her family when she was a child after a flood.

Advisory Board member and chair of the WBS Committee, Dr. Ray Vander Weele, was joined by Major Tim to thank WBS members for their commitment and generosity.

"It takes a special type of person to give selflessly. William Booth was that kind of person, as are all of you here today," said Dr. Vander Weele. "You are a blessing to the mission of

The Salvation Army, and your support impacts the lives of thousands of children, families and seniors here in Kent County every year."

Members received a WBS pin and certificate and two books authored and autographed by DeBoer.

Today, in addition to a Ray and Joan Kroc Corps

Community Center and the Fulton Heights Citadel Corps, there is also an adult rehabilitation center and a Harbor Light Center, plus comprehensive centralized social services, including the Pathway of Hope initiative, for Kent County, emergency disaster services including a SATERN (Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network) hub, and Little Pine Island Retreat Center which is available for rentals including church camps and educational / corporate training.



Attending the plaque unveiling ceremony (l to r): Grand Valley Area Commander Major Tim Meyer, Great Lakes Divisional Commander Lt. Colonel Steve Merritt, Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz, and Great Lakes Divisional Leader for Officer Development Lt. Colonel Christine Merritt



TV news anchor and meteorologist Terri DeBoer speaks at the luncheon.



Members of the Grand Rapids Citadel #1 Corps in 1895



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

The In-ness of the Resurrection

"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen." Rev. 1:18 (NKJV)

"You died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" Col 3:3 (CEB)

"Give to my son Solomon a heart of peace." 1 Cor. 29:19 (LEB)

by Dr. Bill Ury
National Ambassador for Holiness

I shall never forget the moment a troubled young Christian woman blurted out, "We don't need the resurrection. Jesus did everything for us on the cross!" I was so stunned by her blunt assertion that all of my years of training got lost in a flurry of emotion, and I didn't respond. But countless times since then I have responded to her in my heart.

E. Stanley Jones described my life before sanctification when he noted that we Christians would rather celebrate Christmas than Pentecost; we would rather have God "with us" than "in us." And that is what I failed to say to my friend.

Easter is the vindication of all that Jesus did to pardon my sin. He did pay the price for my rebellion, but He also took my death and gave me His resurrected Life. The cross was a necessary act of judgment. But the victory over the death that my sins produced is won by His being raised from the dead.

Now, by the power of His risen life and through His Spirit at Pentecost (our next major celebration) the One Who is Eternal Life is offering not only to pay my debt but to dwell in me in all of His fullness. That is why the earliest disciples couldn't stop talking about Jesus being raised from the dead. What they offered was not a program or a plan of salvation but the Person—Jesus of Nazareth—who was dead but now is alive. They weren't merely describing a set of good and true ideas; they actually believed in the living presence and power of Jesus. They introduced everyone to Him just as if He were standing there.

I wonder if we live that way. Paul says we are hidden in Christ. To be "in Christ" is to dwell completely in Him. We are chosen in Him, born again in Him, grow in Him, walk in Him, live in Him. "In" indicates we live through Him, by means of Him, through His agency. We are so lost in His life that it is not clear where we stop, and He starts. I think of this every time we sing, "This is the air I breathe."

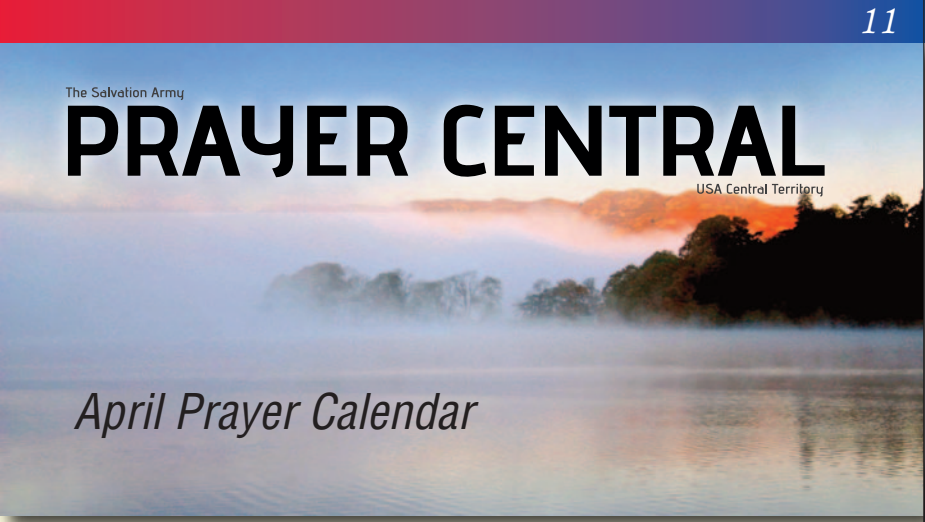


Jesus was not merely fixing a problem on the cross, He was offering His very Life, eternal in quality to all of us. Where we had forced alienation, He offered an intimate reconciliation, a oneness. That is why we emphasize the full personal work of the Savior. Everybody loves peace. What joy when someone who has opposed Jesus finds by grace that there is no

more enmity between him or her and Christ. But many Christians live with deep anxiety about ongoing self-interest and failures.

There is a phrase in Hebrew that has helped me to connect justification and sanctification. It is "to have a whole heart." Literally, it is to have a heart at peace (lev — heart, shalem — peace). He has come to bring our nature, our desires, our drives into an inner harmony. But that moral tranquility can only come if He is present in the power of His risen Life. He is my Peace because where He is all conflict must be dealt with. He is with us and in us in every battle of life, but if I insist on disobeying Him then I risk the rejection of the Life He is.

Perhaps my friend was unwittingly expressing a limited view of Who Jesus is, that sadly is quite widespread. The Army's best evangelism and service is offering Jesus, the Life of the world. And we share that most effectively when our hearts are not filled with self-love but with the Savior whose undefeatable Life informs every response.



My Prayer List	Day	Bible Reading	Pray for The Salvation Army
	1 Monday	Jeremiah 4-6	Bangladesh Territory
	2 Tuesday	Exodus 1-4	Alma, Mich., Corps
	3 Wednesday	1 Samuel 16-20	Belvidere, Ill., Corps
	4 Thursday	Psalms 39-41	Chicago, Ill., Harbor Light
	5 Friday	Job 27-28	Duluth, Minn., Corps
	6 Saturday	Jeremiah 7-11	Fergus Falls, Minn., Corps
	7 Sunday	Mark 7-8	Garden City, Kan., Corps
	8 Monday	1 Corinthians 11-12	Indianapolis Eagle Creek, Ind., Corps
	9 Tuesday	Exodus 5-8	Kankakee, Ill., Corps
	10 Wednesday	1 Samuel 21-25	Australia Territory
	11 Thursday	Psalms 42-44	Blaine, Minn., Anoka County 360 Life Center
	12 Friday	Job 29-30	La Crosse, Wis., Corps
	13 Saturday	Jeremiah 12-16	Macomb, Ill., Corps
	14 Sunday	Mark 9-10	Michigan City, Ind., Corps
	15 Monday	1 Corinthians 13-14	Coffeyville, Kan., Red Shield Center
	16 Tuesday	Exodus 9-12	North Platte, Neb., Corps
	17 Wednesday	1 Samuel 26-31	Dodge City, Kan., Corps
	18 Thursday	Psalms 45-47	Nigeria Territory
	19 Friday	Job 31-32	Superior, Wis., Corps
	20 Saturday	Jeremiah 17-21	Racine, Wis., Corps
	21 Sunday	Mark 11-12	Sheboygan, Wis., Corps
	22 Monday	1 Corinthians 15-16	St. Charles Tri-City, Ill., Corps
	23 Tuesday	Exodus 13-16	Fremont, Neb., Corps
	24 Wednesday	2 Samuel 1-4	Indianapolis, Ind., Harbor Light
	25 Thursday	Psalms 48-50	Chicago, Ill., ARC
	26 Friday	Job 33-34	Green Bay, Wis., Corps
	27 Saturday	Jeremiah 22-26	Brazil Territory
	28 Sunday	Mark 13-14	Kansas City Prospect, Mo., Corps
	29 Monday	2 Corinthians 1-3	Character-Building Programs
	30 Tuesday	Exodus 17-20	Grandview Southland, Mo., Corps

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

--Mustard Seeds--



Finding peace with pain

by Keith Hewson

Growing up, I had my share of bumps and bruises. At 22, I was in a terrible car accident. In the following years, I suffered a compound leg fracture, and an accident on my bicycle caused more stitches and a concussion. By my late 30s widespread chronic pain had settled into my body. Now at 64, I struggle with chronic headaches and pain in my face muscles and jaw, back, feet and ankles. I've been to many specialists, but there is no long-term relief.

One of the hardest things has been feeling alone in my pain and suffering. Even though I have wonderful Christian friends, a community of faith at the corps, and a loving family, as my pain grew worse, so did the feeling of isolation.

But I'm not alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health, anywhere from 100 to 133 million Americans suffer from some form of chronic pain or illness.

When I couldn't find a support group for chronic pain and illness in my area, I started asking, "Where do hurting and wounded Christians go to find help and support?"

A little more than two years ago, the Holy Spirit put on my heart that I should start a support group at my corps, Dearborn Heights Citadel, Mich. To address my own situation, I'd researched and read many Christian authors on the topic and had in-



advertently become specifically equipped for this ministry. I still wasn't sure I could lead a group but made a plan and shared it with my corps officers at that time, Majors David and Shannon Martinez, who enthusiastically gave their support.

So, in 2021 I started the Chronic Pain and Illness Ministry at my corps. We have weekly meetings attended by both corps members and people from the community. The group has been more successful than I could have imagined.

Studying God's Word, we have been on a journey together to gain a better understanding of suffering. We have been learning to use that to strengthen us and regain our often-lost hope. Our group is a safe space where we can share our deepest hurts and pain without judgment; we pray for each other earnestly. God knows our pain and suffering on an intimate level and wants us to come to Him for help and comfort.

We've learned another important aspect is the opportunity for those in the church with chronic pain to serve. Though they may be physically limited, they can still do many things. For instance, they can be part of a prayer team, be greeters or make caregiving phone calls. They want and need to give and feel useful.

The most beautiful thing about this group is that we have learned to love each other and share our burdens as the Bible encourages us in Galatians 6:2 (NIV): "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."



Promoted to Glory

Major JoAnn Ashcraft

Major JoAnn Ashcraft was promoted to Glory on January 2, 2024. JoAnn loved people and gave freely of herself to minister to others. Her warm and welcoming personality was comforting, and she became a motherly figure to many.

JoAnn was born on April 9, 1953, in Kokomo, Ind., to Charles and Edna Suits. She was a tenacious child, but after a period of youthful rebellion became a caring and powerful follower of Christ. After high school, she attended the Indiana College of Business, earning a certifi-



cate of business in 1972.

On March 14, 1975, JoAnn married Ralph Ashcraft. Together they entered officer training in 1976 and were commissioned in 1978 as members of the "Disciples of Jesus" session. They served in corps appointments throughout the Midwest for 33 years before retiring in 2011.

In retirement, JoAnn loved to spend time with her family, especially her granddaughters. She was an active participant at the Kokomo Corps, where she continued to minister to people.

She is survived by her son, Joshua (Noelle); two granddaughters, Tayla and Dana; brother, Phillip "Ed" Suits; sister-in-law, Connie Schoby; and three nephews. She was preceded in death by her loving husband of 38 years, Ralph, and brother-in-law, Bill Schoby.

730... AND BEYOND



1,355 days and counting

"I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service."
(1 Timothy 1:12, ESV)

by Lt. Kenesa Debela

In almost four years of being an officer, I have often come back to these words of Paul to Timothy. In knowing a lot of fellow officers, I am well aware that ministry can be stressful. There seems, at least from my perspective, to be an unfortunate focus on the challenging side of ministry—long hours, budget woes, neglect, conflict, burnout, etc. Is that all ministry amounts to? Far from it!

I think we need to be intentional and resist the temptation of letting the challenges extinguish the joy we ought to have for the vital calling Jesus has entrusted to us: loving Him and loving others while serving Him and serving others! As officers, we experience particular joys that people in other vocations may not experience. Can I get an "Amen?" Joining The Salvation Army in my mid-40s and leaving behind a well-established career, I am, undoubtedly, a firsthand witness! There truly are so many blessings and joys that accompany ministry in The Salvation Army.

It is a privilege and a joy to pray with and for folks. Prayer is such a vital part of ministry. The physical and spiritual battle people face is a daily reminder that prayer is necessary. One of my favorite requests as a pastor is: "Please pray for me." It is



not only a pleasure to draw near to God in prayer, but there is a wonderful spiritual fellowship when we get to intercede on behalf of others. As an officer, I have opportunities to experience such sweet fellowship daily.

It is also a joy to sit with someone in need and engage in conversation, getting to know them as people beyond what brought them to our doorstep. It lets them know that they are seen, heard, respected and valued. They become hopeful. "God did it!" were the words of a gentleman with tears in his eyes as he turned the key to enter his one-bedroom apartment after experiencing homelessness for over a year. All it took was for someone to acknowledge him as a person first, not just another homeless guy. What a reminder of Romans 5:8 (NIV): "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Officership provides countless opportunities to demonstrate the unconditional love of God to a suffering humanity. How joyful!

Oak Creek Continued from page 1



Captains Jason and Dana Bigelow, Oak Creek corps officers, with Wisconsin State Senator Chris Larson

to feel important, to know they are seen and loved."

Nicole envisions the future could include fun-themed events at the center and outings to places like farmers markets.

"There is still a lot of life to be lived," she said.

Eventually, Captain Dana said they would love to add a program aide and nurse on staff and offer transportation for older adults not only to the program but to their appointments.

The program is partially funded by a Thomas Lyle Williams Fund grant which is awarded by the terri-

tory to outstanding new Salvation Army endeavors each year throughout the Midwest. Funding must be matched locally at a certain amount, showing both community need and support.

"Thanks to a variety of our community partners, we were able to demonstrate and verify the need for this sort of programming for seniors in our area and able to raise the matching funds required for eligibility for a Thomas Lyle Williams grant," indicated Captain Jason. "We are thrilled to include this program alongside the other services we provide to people of all ages all year long."