The Salvation Army's Role in Advocacy

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The Salvation Army is a unique gift of ministry to the world. Operating in 109 countries, using 175 languages, it preaches the gospel, makes disciples, and ministers holistically to people experiencing a variety of physical, emotional, spiritual and social ills. Service ranges from emergency food, shelter and clothing to palliative and rehabilitative therapy in an institutional setting, from meeting individual spiritual needs to proclaiming Christ to the world, from representing good to speaking on behalf of the poor in the halls of government. Awesome responsibility accompanies our position as a large Christian charity.

This monograph will summarize the ethical basis for our social services, emphasizing our role in advocacy as an integral part of it. Advocacy is action on behalf of individuals or communities to secure or retain social justice. Included in this role is surfacing the capacity, developing it and empowering individuals or communities to act on their own behalf. Most would opine that advocacy is important, but allocation of time, money, knowledgeable staff, will only be seen as a viable commitment when it is understood to be central to the organizational mission.

BIBLICAL MISSION

Our mission obligates us as empowered disciples to transmit the Word and to “meet human needs” as unto Christ Himself. Therefore, today we serve in the context of scriptures:

- Psalm 82:3 – (KJV) “Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy.” This is based on the assumption of Psalm 12:5 that God Himself defends the oppressed, the poor and the needy.
- Proverbs 31:9 – (LB) “Speak up for the poor and needy and see that they get justice.”
- Matthew 25:40,45 – (J.B. Phillips) “I assure you that whatever you did for the humblest of my brothers, you did for me. ...I assure you that whatever you did not do to the humblest of my brothers, you failed to do for me.”
• Luke 4:18,19 – (NKJV) “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor...to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” As Jesus preached in the synagogue with this allusion to the Old Testament Jubilee Year, which liberated the obligations of the poor, He proclaimed a greater liberation. He used this quote from Isaiah to announce His ministry, describing six aspects of it – one of which was advocacy for the poor and oppressed.

• John 4:4 – (LB) “[Jesus] had to go through Samaria” to meet the spiritual and social needs of a despised Samaritan woman. His advocacy elevated those despised and second-class people to equality with those already affirmed by society.

• Acts 2:1-45 – (NIV) “When the day of Pentecost came, [the disciples] were all together in one place.” (of one heart and mind – see chapter 1:14 and 4:32); “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.” (spiritual power – see also 8:17-19); “and began to speak in other tongues” (bridging through communication to non-Jews, i.e., new evangelistic fervor – see vs. 5-11); “and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (inclusive-ness in the church – vs. 41); “They devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer” (they began acting like a church – see vs. 42-43); (beneficence, compassion, altruism -- results of being filled by the spirit of God – see vs. 44-45).

• Ephesians 4:11-13 – (NIV) “It was He who gave some to be prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for the works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”

As an integral part of the Christian church universal, The Salvation Army is committed in love to this call.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Our mission is grounded in our theological perspective. From the Wesleyan tradition, we believe that spiritually dead humankind, separated from the Father, is awakened through prevenient grace to the realization that God has made a plan of redemption and invites their appropriation of it in faith. Through prevenient grace, universally given, freedom of choice, responsibility and worthiness of per-
sonhood are restored in the individual. Therefore, through grace, people can decide to accept God’s redemptive plan with the premise of restoring righteousness. All people are deserving through Christ’s supreme sacrifice. They are not subject to a predetermined, exclusive selection of God.

God often uses redeemed individuals to extend grace and communication directly to those still unsaved. Redeemed individuals are those justified by God; restored to a never-having-fallen relationship with God; and given a nonpreferential, non-prejudicial love for all of humanity. Divisions established in human society are broken down in the Kingdom of God. This love provides the impetus to minister to others with compassion and inclusiveness in the same way that a parent would lovingly accept responsibility for family.

Needs made apparent ignite the interest of the redeemed to be used of God in extending grace and nonjudgmental service equal to those needs. Extending God’s grace through care and compassion are natural and required responses of those regenerated to righteousness. The Salvationist displays the love of Christ, witnesses to this power to restore and serves without discrimination. Such service is intrinsic to (part of) the nature of those living in the spirit of God (not apart from or in competition with). We model the incarnational ministry of Jesus, who was engaged not distant, “God became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” (John 1:14)

Further, it is incumbent upon a Salvationist as a disciple of Christ to work for the development of the Kingdom of God. This implies extending the responsibility of Christ’s mandated mission beyond individuals to suffering society (Luke 4:18-19). “The commitment to the Kingdom motivates us to strive for social reform or perhaps, more appropriately, social re-creation.”

**SALVATION ARMY HERITAGE**

In the context of our organizational heritage, we continue to follow the principles of William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army. Put forward in 1890 to guide our social services ministries, they guide the practical application of our social mandate. Paraphrased, they are:
1. Programming must lift up and facilitate change at the personal level whenever matters of character or conduct are at the root of individual or familial dysfunction;
2. Effective intervention must include strategies that alter social circumstances and outside forces as they contribute to suffering;
3. The scale of the intervention must, by design, be commensurate with the human outcomes and life changes sought;
4. Effort must be sustained over time, sufficient to support long-term growth;
5. Efforts must be specific, measurable, realistic, feasible, and motivating yet practical in every sense;
6. Intervention must not unintentionally injure those it is intended to benefit;
7. While assisting one individual or population, our intervention must not negatively impact the well-being of others.²

Notice particularly the second of the seven essential principles for program design. To William Booth, advocacy for change in social systems was imperative to his vision. When speaking about the development of his social work plan, he often used the metaphor of an ambulance at the foot of the precipice of human failure, noting that he also intended to erect a fence at the top.³

CONTINUUM OF CARING

From the mandates of Holy Scripture, the heritage of the Church universal, and our own heritage, we respond today by reaching out to the poor and needy offering care, compassion, counsel, capacity development, and hope for change. This includes intervention at the personal, group, and societal levels. The Founder's principles inform today's delivery of social services ministries. They operate along a continuum and can be succinctly summarized as follows:

Amelioration:
1. Food
2. Shelter
3. Clothing
4. Emotional, Spiritual, and Physical Harbor

Affirmation:
1. Counsel
2. Education & Rehabilitation (emotional, spiritual, and character)
3. Inclusive Atmosphere (seeing saint potential in each person we serve)
4. Case Management and Supportive Services (welfare to work mentoring)

**Achievement:**
1. Training
2. Empowering
3. Job Referral
4. Management and Success Mentoring
5. Spiritual Guidance & Support Groups

**Advocacy:**
1. **Prevention:** Spiritual nurture rendered in our corps and youth character development programs strongly advocate for our constituents to avert life crises and dysfunction.
2. **Client Advocacy:** Helping to develop the capacity of those we serve to access and obtain the provisions and fairness to which they are entitled by law;
3. **System Change:** In the tradition of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Jesus, defending the cause of those in need.

Advocacy is an intrinsic component of the continuum of social services that has made The Salvation Army the important organization it is today. It is worth noting that we are seeing a rediscovery and reemergence of advocacy aimed at preparing people for opportunities and changing faulty systems.

**CONTEXT FOR ADVOCACY**

William Booth initiated the mandate for system change, explaining that picking up the fallen only begins recovery. Altered conditions are required to sustain it. Led by The Salvation Army in 1890, a campaign prevailed in changing English law. Simple and straight forward, it was called the “Cab Horse Charter.” Booth declared:

“These are the two points of the Cab Horse’s Charter. When he is down he
is helped up, and while he lives he has food, shelter and work. That, although a humble standard, is at present absolutely unattainable by millions of our fellow men and women in this country."  

Twenty years later, as Booth was aging, his great vision for human freedom in Christ for this world and the next was gaining considerable acceptance. He fore-saw no slack in the Army’s needed response to the compelling needs of the poor, even in his final years. In addition to nonjudgmental, compassionate caring, he committed himself and those who would follow to system advocacy, by stating:

"While women weep, as they do now, I’ll fight;  
While little children go hungry, as they do now, I’ll fight;  
While men go to prison, in and out, in and out, I’ll fight;  
While there yet remains one dark soul without the light of God,  
I’ll fight – I’ll fight to the very end."  

The USA Commissioners’ Conference of contemporary America saw the value of putting forth an official Statement on Advocacy in 1976. It affirms the necessary involvement of Army personnel in (1) facilitating change at the personal level, and (2) effecting strategies to improve government welfare policy (see appendix).

The International Conference of Leaders, which met in the spring of 1998 in Melbourne, made six statements of commitment, three of which involve advocacy:

1. To encourage in all ways possible the vigorous exploration of the Army’s God-given freedom to worship Christ in every culturally appropriate way.
2. To lead people to be sacrificially involved in the creation of a world free of racism, tribalism and culture imperialism, making of our Army an example of community in which such barriers no longer exist.
3. To wholeheartedly embrace any change necessary in structure, procedure, or regulation where these appear to impede the achievement of the Army’s God-given mission (see statement of mission on the back cover).

Similarly, in our new doctrine book, Salvation Story, advocacy for the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized is admonished by including the text of “The Lausanne Covenant,” from which we read:
“We affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression, and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice whenever they exist.”6

The weaker the culture of human security, the greater the vulnerability for community instability and violence. Advocacy campaigns can be effective in preventing breakdowns in the established gains toward greater human security and in enhancing healthy social, ethnic, and religious environments that together ensure collective security.

Advocacy has always been at the core of professional social work practice. “Often our neighbors in distress need a ‘cup of cold water’—a bag of groceries, subsidized child care, or some other service. Sometimes, however, they need a defender and advocate—someone who will challenge the powerful on their behalf,” or empower them to take action. “Charity is no substitute for justice, and service is no substitute for advocacy and action.”7

**ADVOCACY – INTRINSIC TO WHO WE ARE**

Advocacy requires the involvement of The Salvation Army at all levels.

A. Role of the Corps/Social Institution

Advocacy in my perspective is presented in three forms on the local level:

**Prevention:** I believe that our character development programming for youth and adults offered every day in our corps and institutions is indeed advocacy; that is, the development of capacity through education, nurture, and practice. The purpose of our educating young people is so that they will flourish and be empowered to avoid, or to learn how to cope with life’s crises. We teach redemption in Christ as the key to celebrative living. Additionally, we encourage social sensitivity—to serve with a nonjudgmental heart; to stand tall for civil freedoms and morality; to defend the
cause of the weak, vulnerable and oppressed; and to enhance the dignity of broad-based opportunity.

**Client Advocacy:** Worthiness is the foundation for human dignity. To achieve our Biblical mandate, people must be lifted to the level of dignity, not only worthy of their humanity, but to the level at which they can flourish as secure individuals and take the responsibility required for their place in civil society. The lifting process is very participatory. Many we serve can reach the heights of developmental capacity as they appropriate the service and rehabilitation received.

We recognize that some whom we serve and represent, e.g., children, handicapped and dependent elderly, cannot be fully empowered to secure that which is rightfully theirs. Individual and group assessment must determine the degree to which a client needs intervention and support.

**System Change:** Influencing macro-level change in socioeconomic systems that have proven to be faulty or inadequate is required of all human services professionals involved in Salvation Army ministry. From the USA official *Statement on Advocacy*, the Commissioners’ Conference noted possible accompanying discomfort because advocating for change can label the agent an adversary. Like our immune system, any organized system of policies will vigorously defend itself from requests for change. If such does not deter the change agent, threats of reprisal can follow. The larger cause, however, will motivate those charged with the responsibility to risk rendering support, defense and seeking ethical fairness.

**B. Role of Divisional and Territorial Headquarters**

Divisional and Territorial headquarters have jurisdictional authority and responsibility for all work within their boundaries and also for Christian witness and moral influence beyond those boundaries. They exercise delegatory administration of Salvation Army polity and mission. Within parameters, they create, sustain and oversee all programming; secure, train and supervise all personnel (officers, employees and volunteers); exercise pastoral care and spiritual authority over all members and outreach efforts to clients and the community at large; fund all programs and activities, account for funding and programming; market the organization and fulfill
the organization's self-directed mission to society.

Therefore, they are directly responsible for speaking out on behalf of the organization and those for whom it exists, including their personnel (statement 3 from the 1998 Melbourne International Conference of leaders includes internal advocacy). They oversee community collaboration and partnership initiatives and the general charitable responsibilities congruous with our mission.

C. Role of National Headquarters
National Headquarters exists to serve the four USA Territories, to coordinate, represent, monitor, report, develop resources, advocate and consult. Its location close to our nation's capital enhances visibility, representation, and efficiently enables us to pursue the role of public policy advocacy. Careful oversight ensures adhering to our simple purpose of representing the poor, vulnerable and marginalized, and transcending political comprise.

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY—A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT

Public policy advocacy has resulted in advancing causes and directly impacting the lives of individuals in groups of special need. First, it has been the force behind new legislation (tougher penalties for drunk drivers, accessibility for handicapped individuals, and protection for victims of sexual trafficking). Second, public policy advocacy helps make and shape laws and policies that have directly affected the mission of The Salvation Army (welfare reform, emergency food and shelter funding, comprehensive work training programs, and utility assistance for low-income people). Third, involvement in public policy advocacy is part of our responsibility to the full achievement of democracy. As America's Favorite Charity, The Salvation Army is obligated to advocate for those we represent, because democracy means little unless it extends to the least among us.

Churches, charities, nonprofits, civic, service, and community organizations working in partnership are the primary vehicles of civic participation in the United States. They play a critical role in the democratic process. They have information, experi-
ence, and the networks so important to policy formation and change. Through them, individuals are empowered to take their responsibility in civic involvement. The United States Constitution encourages and protects efforts to influence government and those elected to represent us. Our cause is buttressed by knowledge of our rights. Be reminded that:

- “The terminology ‘separation of church and state’ appears nowhere in the Constitution of the United States. The ‘wall of separation between church and state’ is a metaphor used by Thomas Jefferson in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802, referring to the First Amendment.”

- “The First Amendment, the first article of the Bill of Rights, provides the boundaries so that government does not establish religion, and gives those of religious persuasion the freedom to practice religion, to speak and petition the government for redress of grievances. This balance means that The Salvation Army can assemble, worship, provide services from its own point of view, and can petition the government. This does not mean the government has to listen, nor act in accordance with The Salvation Army’s, or any other religion’s point of view. It does mean that in this democracy, all voices may be heard; any and all options may be voiced; and, that by lobbying, one’s constituency has opportunity to be heard.”

- “The term, ‘charitable’ in Section 501(c)(3) of the tax code is broad and includes relief of the poor, advancement of religion, education or science. It is not limited to handout assistance or bricks and mortar. Advocacy is included within the scope of the definition of charitable. IRS Regulation, Section 1.501(c)(3)-1(d), states: The fact that an organization, in carrying out its primary purpose, advocates social or civic changes or presents opinion on controversial issues with the intention of molding public opinion or creating public sentiment to an acceptance of its views does not preclude such organization from qualifying under section 501(c)(3).”

The Salvation Army’s civic involvement is extensive. Our role in public policy advocacy is complex and challenging because of the broad range of service sectors and the diversity of our constituency. Broad-based coalitions enable The Salvation Army’s voice to be prominent and efficiently delivered. Examples of hundreds of coalitions in which we participate are:
International: The Salvation Army is a registered NGO (nongovernmental organization) of the United Nations. Our representative is active on a variety of committees.

National: The Salvation Army is an active member of many coalitions. Prominent are the Independent Sector, a coalition of one million United States nonprofits, and the National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations—a coalition of 70 organizations, peer to The Salvation Army.

Regional: Midwest Partners is a coalition of advocacy organizations, human service agencies, and individuals from six Midwestern states—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

State and Local: The Salvation Army is a partner with hundreds of churches, faith-based and community organizations that coalesce on a permanent or ad hoc basis to represent constituencies and solve community problems locally and statewide.

CONCLUSION

 Appropriately then, we clearly enunciate issues on behalf of our constituency from foundations in the Bible, our heritage, and our United States Constitution. Such action is imperative to fulfilling the broad parameters of our mission.

Amelioration and safe harbor (food, shelter, and clothing) extend the grace of God in time of great need. Therapy, instruction, and nurture enable spiritual and social redemption. Identifying community needs, coalescing with like-minded organizations and advocating for system change is a clear calling of God. It is all part of our mission. We outreach in service, open our congregational fellowships to potential saints, and achieve for those in need the full rights of personhood. Nothing short of full service can suffice when we acknowledge all people as neighbors and family.

We continue to follow in the footsteps of our founders and leaders who have preceded us. Only passion for the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized will effectively promulgate who we are and what we seek to achieve. Conversely, however, evil can easily triumph if good people keep silent (adopted from an original quote by Edmund Burke).
1 *Creed and Deed*, edited by Commissioner John Waldron. Published by The Salvation Army, Canada and Bermuda Territory, 1986. Thoughts and quotes from contributor: Donald Burke, Ph.D., Catherine Booth Bible College, Winnipeg.


5 *While Women Weep...* On Thursday night, May 9, 1912, General William Booth made his last public appearance in the Royal Albert Hall in London. It was the celebration of his eighty-third birthday. Old, frail, almost blind, the General concluded with these stirring words.


8 Jefferson's *Wall of Separation Letter* – The U.S. Constitution online USconstitution.net.

9 *Lobbying for Change in Government Social Service – or – Yes, We Can Lobby*, a paper presented to the 1996 Salvation Army National Social Services Conference, St. Louis, MO, by Alice Skirtz, ACSW, then Divisional Social Services Director, Cincinnati, OH.

10 *The Law Encourages Lobbying by Charities and Other 501(c)(3) Groups*, a training tutorial by Kay Guinane—NPAction.org, a project of OMB Watch, Washington, DC.

Additional Reading:

APPENDIX

THE SALVATION ARMY
STATEMENT ON ADVOCACY

Background

The Salvation Army has a rich history and tradition in the advocacy role, beginning with William Booth and his “Darkest England” scheme. This tradition must be continued if the Army is to be a leader in the social welfare field.

Role of the Advocate

The advocate has two roles, the first of which is to act as advocate for a client to be assured that said client receives the services to which he is entitled under the social welfare delivery system. The second role is to change the system when that system has proven faulty or inadequate. Officers and social workers of The Salvation Army have generally done well in fulfilling the first role. Clients are made aware of the various services and resources which are available. It is often found necessary to intercede with other private and public agencies to ensure that a client receives the proper care.

It is with the second role that Salvationists are apt to feel uncomfortable. Any system resists change, and one who advocates change will almost inevitably find that the advocate role will become the role of an adversary.

Inhibiting Factors

Some of the inhibiting factors to the advocate of change are:

1. Fear of reprisal from those in charge of the system, from superiors, board members, and the general public;
2. Lack of information about laws and legislation;
3. Limited available time for this type of activity; and
4. Insufficient funds for costs incurred.
In order to minimize inhibiting factors and be an effective advocate for change, the following procedures should be observed:

A. **Be Informed**

The day-to-day working with clients and social welfare delivery systems will make one aware of the need to initiate and advocate change. Often, however, changes have already been suggested by others, and these suggestions are being considered by local, state, and national legislative bodies. In order to be informed about pending legislation, subscription should be made to a service that provides information on social welfare matters usually by a careful reading of local newspapers, as well as contact with other social workers and city officials.

B. **Establish a Position**

Once a matter is considered important enough to advocate change, this matter should be thoroughly discussed with staff, board members, and administrators. Consideration must be given to every pro and contrary view before the final position is established. When it has been determined that it is in the best interest of the clients and The Salvation Army, a course of action should be established.

C. **Take Action**

Several courses are available, such as individual testimony before a legislative committee, support of other groups interested in the same matter, and personal contacts with officials who have authority to make change. However, any action must conform to the officially established position. Action on national issues should be taken only after being cleared by National Headquarters.
MISSION STATEMENT

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian church.

Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.

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