

**The Salvation Army**  
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**GLOBAL CONVERSATION SESSION 1B**

**“How does The Salvation Army work together as One Army?”**

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**1. Introduction: One Mission**

We share one mission – “Reaching people in today’s world, by all means, with the transforming message of Jesus, bringing freedom, hope and life.”<sup>1</sup>

When Colonel Lyell Rader in 2005, as part of an integrated working group, wrote some Biblical themes related to Integrated Mission, he started his notes with a reference to this picture, Michael Angelo’s famous painting *‘The Creation of Adam’*. Michael Angelo painted his own imagination of the ‘creation moment’, the moment of the life-giving touch by God, whereby the dust became man, in the image of God.



When you look at Salvation Army pictures from the first days of our organisation, you will see William Booth and other preachers with their hands raised, with pointed fingers, with their whole body language trying to reach out to lost souls.

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<sup>1</sup> One Army, One Mission, One Message Vision Statement - 2011



The soul-saving mission of The Salvation Army is reaching out, wanting to touch people with the transforming and life-giving message of Jesus.

But The Salvation Army also reaches out to touch people's lives in other ways: the caring touch, drying a tear, touching the 'untouchable', not only from a distance, or from a platform, but coming alongside, bending down, kneeling to serve.



As a church organisation, we soon got our very specific 'raison d'être': serving suffering humanity, with a definite bias to the poor and marginalised.

## 2. It's all about relationships

So there are different pictures of what our mission is all about – reaching out and touching people's lives. It's all about relationships, life consists of relationships. If we look at our social engagement, we realise that poverty is not only lack of money, means or opportunities. Poverty is the result of broken relationships.<sup>2</sup>

- with oneself – lack of self-esteem
- with others – being marginalised
- with God – in despair, without hope
- with God's creation – lack of stewardship, not caring for the environment

Therefore our mission is about relationships:

- The gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation is the power to restore relationships,
- Evangelism is carried out through building relationships,
- And community engagement, transforming society, is building deeper relationships – which is the title of the faith-based facilitation manual.

In the middle of the reflective processes we go through in our pastoral relationships, or in our community relationships, there are these 'Kairos' moments, the divine touch, the moments of eternity where the work of God's Holy Spirit becomes 'tangible', touching hearts and lives.



(The woman who touched the hem of his garment)

## 3. The unity of One Army

One Army – with many different expressions of ministry – but how do we remain united? Our true unity is not through being 'in step and in line', as the military metaphor would suggest, but rather through being in relationship first with God; second with suffering,

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<sup>2</sup> Myers, B "Walking With The Poor", 2011

broken, lonely, dispossessed and lost people and, thirdly with each other.

### **3.1 In relationship with God**

The first and second One Army Mission priorities are “We will deepen our spiritual life, and unite in prayer”. We are by nature activists, but tending to our spiritual life is more important than running more programmes, more activities. The World Wide Prayer Meeting on Thursday morning is not just to have an extra prayer meeting, but it is a time to be intentional about praying for each other, praying through the mission priorities for our Salvation Army around the world. Prayer for me is not a magic alternative to hard work, but acknowledging that we need God’s Spirit, guidance and provision. Any lasting results of our efforts are due to God’s grace. Prayer is creating a frame work for God’s activities in our lives.

Deepening our spiritual life also influences our relation to Christ and the cross: the true mark of Jesus in our lives is our willingness to serve, suffer and sacrifice. This leads us to the second point:

### **3.2 In relationship with ‘suffering humanity’**

Whenever we talk about poverty, we should not forget that in many parts of the world our Salvationists *are* the poor, living under the poverty line and being a marginalised minority.

In other parts of the world The Salvation Army has become a middle class church and, though well-known for our social engagement, many Salvationists have no direct contact with the marginalised. Some may even be worried about the dangers of ‘preaching a social gospel’, considering it to be ‘less spiritual’. Take a look at the car-park outside some large Salvation Army corps hall on a Sunday morning, and then ask yourself the question: “Who is actually communicating a ‘social gospel’?”

Social involvement is rooted in the character of God, and in a sinful world where life is biased towards the wealthy and the powerful, God’s action will always be perceived as counter-bias. The gap between rich and poor is widening, and while recognising the deeper needs of spiritual poverty in all layers of the population, we must retain our contact with ‘the marginalised’. And we must be good stewards of our riches, in order not to be separated by wealth from our poorer Salvationist brothers and sisters.

A new trend in the western, post-modern world is the marginalisation of Christendom itself. The church has moved out of the corridors of power. The local pastor no longer has an authoritative voice, and in the world of the ‘un-churched’ we have no platform. Instead of bemoaning the lost privileges of the past, we should look for the new openings this trend offers.

Is this our chance to recover our true calling in the world, and take our place with the poor and marginalised? We need less ‘platform’ and more ‘walking alongside’. There are opportunities as governments understand the importance of ‘people movements’, of Faith-Based Organisations’ role in cultural and civic life. Yet, we must be motivated by love of neighbour, not by self-interest, not even by the corporate self-interest of The Salvation Army or the evangelical movement. We should simply seek opportunities to serve the world, go the way of the cross, and stand with the weak and powerless. We need to learn again what it is to be ‘outside the camp, where our Saviour died” (Hebrews 13:13).

God is at work in society beyond The Salvation Army and beyond the church. The Kingdom comes secretly through grace, through God’s spirit, blowing where he wills, and through God’s Word and the new community. In today’s world we will attract marginalised sinners by celebrating grace and living by grace, as Jesus did (Luke 15:1-20). This is an opportunity for the church – though it may take place outside the church building. God made us stewards of his creation, to contribute to community life. Through marginalisation and exclusion the poor have become non-contributors, forced to be passive, losing dignity, confidence and hope. The most important thing the church can do for the poor is being church, in other words being an inclusive godly fellowship. When we witness God’s activity in the world, we can explain and put words from the Lord to the work of grace that is taking place. We may even be birth attendants to a new community growing out of such acts of grace.

Bryant Myers writes, “By ‘changed people’ I mean people who have discovered their true identity as children of God and who have recovered their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of the gifts from God for the well-being of all.”<sup>3</sup> Participation in decisions and actions that affect people’s own lives is a key factor in programmes that have worked well. Participatory reflection processes are at the basis of our Faith-Based Facilitation approach.

### **An example**

Let me share an example of close relationship with the Lord and close relationship with broken lives and a broken society, with an example of work I witnessed in Puli, Taiwan.



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<sup>3</sup> Myers, B “Walking With The Poor”, 2011

There was a terrible earthquake here on 21 September 1999. 200,000 people lost their homes. The Salvation Army provided emergency relief with the distribution of rice and built 145 temporary houses and classrooms in the Puli area, including 6 community activity halls.

A year later, a Salvationist couple who were officer candidates, sold their business and were appointed to this small Taiwanese town as envoys. It is a place where idol worship flourishes and the area boasts the largest Buddhist Temple in South East Asia. Fifteen years later there are 200 soldiers, a home for 92 boys, community work linking the corps with schools, universities, nursing homes. Many boys with criminal pasts have become Salvationists with a number of quality officers coming out of that corps.

### **3.3 In relationship with each other**

I have not forgotten my topic: “How do we work together as one Army?” I have talked about, in order of priority, our relationship with God and with the ‘poor, broken, dispossessed and lost’ – and now I come to our relationship with each other.

One of the unfortunate things in the Army’s history of the 20th century has been the separation of evangelistic and social work. I will not attempt to deal with neither the reasons for that, nor the consequences, but just rejoice that we seem to have understood the need to work together, the need for integrated mission. The danger of ‘them and us’ is not only regarding social and corps, but in many other sectors including

- Youth and older generations
- Health and schools
- Grassroots and administration
- Women and men
- North and South
- Officers and soldiers/employees

‘Integrated mission’ raises the practical question how different already existent expressions of Salvation Army ministry can find ways of working together. But the deeper issue is how we all understand our mission as integral or holistic and how we can build up new ministry expressions in a holistic way.

They say “actions speak louder than words” and “a picture is worth a thousand words”. May I suggest that a picture with a caption, action accompanied by the appropriate words, may in fact be the best way we can communicate the gospel. Likewise several pictures linked together will open new dimensions and new perspectives. This is synergy,  $2+2 = 5$ .

It is amazing to see what is happening when different expressions of ministry are brought in touch with each other. As leaders are together in one room, getting to know each other, learning to develop and appreciate their mutual relationship, inspiration flows, new ideas

surge and people become energized and enthusiastic. We are excited at IHQ to hear of new models of collaboration developing around the Army world. For example:

- The Pathway of Hope in USA Central Territory and now being extended across the USA. You can hear more about this initiative at this conference.
- In Australia East a lot of work has gone into the development of a Hub-model that I believe we, as time goes on, will see widely replicated. The Hub project marks a key step for the Territory in bringing their mission priorities into action. A hub in a particular area is the focal point of collaboration, assuring that regular meetings of the leaders of all the expressions of Army working a given locality are held. Thereby all should be informed about each other's work, be able to share resources, and be mutually supporting leadership. The programme has four key values:

**1. Holistic missional engagement**, holistic mission being undertaken in every expression of The Salvation Army, with every expression focused on leading people on a journey of freedom through action, through community, and ultimately and most importantly freedom through Jesus.

**2. Unity**, as every expression, every service, every place where the Army Shield is seen, are unified to see holistic mission released. Partnering also takes place with other stakeholders who join in to holistically serve the communities of the missional areas.

**3. Bravery**, being brave in innovation and creativity, brave in our accountability and relationships, brave in our trust of the Holy Spirit.

**4. Strategy**, offering a challenge for The Salvation Army to be strategic in their undertakings, their sacrificial sharing of resources and in their prayers.

Finally, I share an example of a new holistic mission expression in Denmark. Naskov is a small town where, there once was a small, vibrant Salvation Army. However, industry closed down, property prices went down and people moved away, except for victims of substance abuse or other marginalised who could now find cheap accommodation. After years of struggling, The Salvation Army had to close the dying corps. That would have been the end of story, had it not been for the local authorities who approached the Army, begging them to stay: "You cannot leave, we need you!"

Negotiations with the authorities led to a plan - a community day centre, providing cheap meals, combined with a night shelter for the homeless, run by the Army and 90 per cent subsidised by the local authorities. At the same time a second hand shop and a recycling centre were set up by The Salvation Army to provide job training for unemployed and creating a surplus income that would help the Army cover the missing part of the financing. The 10 per cent own contribution was intentional for the Army to have a chapel, a spiritual identity and ministry in the centre. A team was appointed, two young families moved to Naksov in response to a clear call from God. One couple was employed for the centre, and of the other couple the one spouse was engaged in the recycling centre and the other

spouse had a job at the local hospital. There were no 'corps' but as a team, and with their young children, they formed a worshipping community with plenty of corps-like activities – prayer and Bible study, cell groups, alpha-course, youth clubs, dance group, outings, weekends, camps ... nothing permanent, constant changes and experiments, but people got saved.

Over time, things have developed. Children and family work made it desirable to have facilities outside the centre, outside the drug environment, and they now have a corps on top of the second hand shop, although 'the power room' in the centre is also being used. This model works because of the *number* of different relationships, as people get linked to each other and to the Army in various ways. What is the secret behind success? It is the *quality* of the relationships and a deep spiritual life that makes Jesus the centre of our fellowship. Yes, clients who were addicts have been saved, but also people who link up with the services as volunteers or employees are finding their new identity and destination in a personal relationship with Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

You may find this 'messy' and even chaotic, but for me integrated, holistic ministry means lots of relationship and deeper relationships.