

The Salvation Army
International Positional Statement

SABBATH OBSERVANCE

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The Salvation Army values and proclaims the scriptural teaching that God, our Creator, established a rhythm of life for our benefit. This is reflected in the Creation narrative (Genesis 2:2-3), the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15) and in the teachings of Jesus regarding a balanced approach to life. Therefore, regardless of the day of the week on which it is observed, the principle of Sabbath observance provides that opportunity to rest, to give thanks and to worship.

The Salvation Army believes that individuals have the responsibility and privilege to live according to this scriptural framework. Furthermore, The Salvation Army holds that those whose religious beliefs will not permit them to work at certain times should be protected against unreasonable discrimination in recruitment, deployment or advancement of staff. In its recognition of Sunday as the Sabbath, The Salvation Army aligns itself with the custom of the Early Christian Church, which chose that day on which to commemorate and celebrate Christ's resurrection.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Human beings require adequate rest if they are to thrive in their work, meet their obligations and enjoy all that God has provided. Conversely, the absence of a day of rest denies the human need for physical rest and spiritual renewal. In the midst of increasing commercialism and an accelerating pace of life, the observance of a Sabbath, whether on Sunday or otherwise, reinforces the natural rhythm of rest and activity that the Bible endorses for the benefit of God's entire creation.

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF THE SALVATION ARMY

The Sabbath was ordained by God at creation and set aside as a holy day (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 23:3; Nehemiah 13:15-22; Psalm 92). Its observance became the fourth commandment, which was to be observed from generation to generation (Hebrews 4:9-11).

In the Old Testament, trade on the Sabbath was forbidden (Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15-22) because it diminished the spiritual importance of the day of the Lord. The Sabbath was considered a joyful opportunity to 'delight in the Lord' (Isaiah 58:13-14) and not simply another opportunity to pursue our own interests.

Within this historical Christian context, The Salvation Army holds that:

- Sunday is 'a day of sacred assembly' (Leviticus 23:3) for corporate worship, praise and prayer, to enrich the lives of believers and strengthen their fellowship one with another and with God. It is also an opportunity for the gathering of families, friends and worshipping congregations.
- Sunday is a time of resting in God apart from the anxieties and challenges of life. It is part of being human. As Scripture indicates, 'the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27).
- Keeping Sunday holy does not only entail the cessation of secular work for the purpose of honouring God, but also may include performing deeds of love and kindness toward fellow human beings. Jesus cautioned against legalism in the observance of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Mark 3:4; Luke 13:10-17; John 5:1-15).
- Observing Sunday as a day of rest is an evidence of our obedience to, and reverence for, God the Creator (Exodus 20:8-11).

PRACTICAL RESPONSES

1. Salvationists will exert every influence possible to make and keep Sunday as a day of worship, rest and family.
2. The Salvation Army also encourages all people to consider how they can promote a weekly day of rest and renewal for others.
3. In support of those who must work on Sundays, The Salvation Army will always seek to provide multiple opportunities for Christian worship and fellowship.

Approved by the General, February 2012

The views expressed in this international positional statement constitute the official position of The Salvation Army on the issue addressed, and they may not be modified or adapted in any way without the express written permission of International Headquarters.