



# POSITIONAL STATEMENTS OF THE SALVATION ARMY

*Issued by authority of the Territorial Commanders of the Australian Territories*

**July 1997**

These Positional Statements define Christian ethics within the context of our rapidly changing social environment.

They are prepared primarily for Salvationists and come with the approval of our General as international leader of The Salvation Army.

We are happy to share them with our Christian friends and with the community leaders who so readily support our work in Australia.

Salvation Army teaching is based on the Bible and looks to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we recognise that Scripture does not supply detailed and clear-cut rules of behaviour for every situation.

In a world that presents us with complex moral issues we try to bring our intelligence and experience to bear upon its problems without losing our dependence on the guidance of God by His Holy Spirit.

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# ABORTION

The Salvation Army believes in the sanctity of all human life from the moment of fertilisation. It considers each person to be of infinite value, and each life a gift from God to be cherished, nurtured and preserved.

The Salvation Army supports efforts to protect and promote the welfare of the weak and defenceless person, including the unborn. It takes seriously the rights and needs of both the foetus and the mother. It accepts that termination of a pregnancy may be justified on certain limited grounds; that is, where, in the judgement of competent medical and allied staff, the pregnancy poses a serious threat to the life of the mother, or could result in irreversible physical injury to the mother. In cases of proven rape or legally defined incest an abortion may be justified because of the extent to which rape and incest violate the whole person. Termination of a pregnancy may also be justified where reliable diagnostic procedures determine that a foetal abnormality is present which is incompatible with life other than brief post-natal survival or where there is total absence of cognitive function.

It is The Salvation Army's experience that, where unwanted pregnancies occur, in most instances it is best to counsel acceptance of the situation by all involved, and for the foetus to be carried to term, and for all possible supportive help to be given.

When our counsel has not been accepted and an abortion has taken place, The Salvation Army will offer loving and compassionate pastoral care.

A serious commitment to the protection and care of the unborn calls us equally to promote and work for a society in which all those born into it find loving acceptance and the resources necessary to enable them to reach their fullest potential.

## **For further reading:**

Watson, Bernard: *The Salvationist in a Secular Society*; S P & S Ltd, 1974.

Clifton, Shaw: *Strong Doctrine, Strong Mercy*; The Salvation Army London, 1985.

**IHQ March 1990**

## **HIV/ AIDS**

The Salvation Army believes that every individual is important in the sight of God, and has the potential to be whole in body, mind and spirit. Persons who suffer from any illness, including human immuno deficiency virus (HIV), should not experience rejection at any level from the society in which they live.

Unconditional acceptance applies regardless of how the virus was contracted.

Through inclusive care, The Salvation Army endeavours to bring about personal and community change in attitudes, behaviour and environment. We seek to promote quality relationships between those infected and other persons involved, including family, friends and community members.

The vision of The Salvation Army is that all persons have the capacity to care for one another, to change and be continuously transformed in terms of quality of relationships and sensitivity towards God. All have the capacity to know that grace of God in Christ which is the foundation of transformation and hope.

**Approved by the General – 5 January 1999.**

## ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS

The Salvation Army encourages a healthy spiritual, emotional, mental and physical Christian lifestyle, without the use of and/ or dependency upon any damaging drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.

### Alcohol

Recognising the dangers of the use of alcohol, a common drug of addiction, The Salvation Army requires that its soldiers and officers do not drink alcohol.

We believe the only certain guarantee against harm and addiction is total abstinence, while not condemning others who use alcohol.

We therefore actively support legislation likely to reduce the consumption of alcohol.

### Social Drinking

Alcohol is accessible in many homes and at social functions. There is pressure on non-drinkers to please others by accepting a drink and also to offer alcoholic beverages in return.

Although an occasional social drink does not inevitably lead to alcoholism, alcohol always impairs judgement and is a contributing factor in many personal and social tragedies. Salvationists, whose work frequently brings them into contact with the victims of such tragedies, believe that abstinence is the most effective way to set an example of personal responsibility in their private lives.

### Tobacco

The use of tobacco has always been discouraged by The Salvation Army and its soldiers may not use tobacco in any form.

The Salvation Army accepts the evidence presented by medical science of the harmful and addictive effects of tobacco on the body. This fact confirms for the soldier that this requirement is in accordance with scriptural teaching that the body is God's temple.

### Other Drugs

The Salvation Army strongly opposes the misuse of mind-altering, mood-changing and/ or physically damaging drugs of any kind, whether addictive or not, and whether illegal or not.

There are many drugs beneficial to health but even prescription drugs can be harmful or addictive and therefore need to be monitored by an aware physician, weighing the advantages and risks.

The Salvation Army takes a compassionate view of any persons who have become victims of any of these substances and continues to provide avenues for those people to endeavour to regain physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health with God's help.

### **For further reading:**

Watson, Bernard: *The Salvationist in a Secular Society*; Salvationist Publishing & Supplies Ltd., 1974.

**Approved IHQ July 1992**

## **CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

The Salvation Army believes in the sanctity of all human life. It considers each person to be of infinite value, and each life a gift from God to be cherished, nurtured and preserved.

The Army believes that forgiveness and transformation are possible for each human being, regardless of his/ her past. Christ's death is redemptive for all who have faith, making it possible for the worst of offenders to find new life in Christ Jesus if they are truly repentant. Long experience in rendering service within the criminal justice systems of many lands, and in ministering to both offenders and victims, and to their respective families, has confirmed the

Army's belief in the possibility of forgiveness and redemption for all through repentance toward God, faith in Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Because of these beliefs, it would be inconsistent for the Army to support efforts to continue or restore capital punishment. While agreeing that wrongdoing should be adequately dealt with, Salvationists do not support the death penalty.

**Approved by IHQ, November, 1996.**

## **CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS – MILITARY SERVICE**

The Salvation Army respects the right of individuals to arrive at their own decisions, based on personal conviction, on the question of military service. Without seeking to influence any individual in either direction, The Salvation Army offers a full spiritual ministry to those arriving at either decision, with all possible help and guidance.

Based on scriptural teaching concerning respect for properly constituted civil authority, The Salvation Army counsels those who object to military service to accept the legal alternative, where such exists.

**For further reading:**

Clifton, Shaw: Strong Doctrine, Strong Mercy; The Salvation Army, London 1985.

**Approved by IHQ, July 1992.**

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – VIOLENCE WITHIN THE FAMILY**

The Salvation Army recognises that violence within the family is the abuse of power, the more powerful member abusing the less powerful. It is a serious problem within the community and the Church, and occurs in every socio-economic group.

### **Violence within the family may take the form of:**

- Physical assault
- Sexual violence
- Verbal abuse
- Psychological and emotional abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Social abuse

The Bible teaches that all people are equal in value to God and should be treated with respect and dignity. Every instance of domestic violence is contrary to this teaching and is unacceptable.<sup>1</sup>

We recognise that many people, including some within the Christian Church, are victims of violence within the family. As part of the Christian Church, we are motivated by the mission of Jesus "...to bring good news to the poor... to proclaim liberty to the captives... to set free the oppressed...." (Luke 4:18 GNB). All Salvationists should be ready to help those who are victims, either directly or through referral and support.

The Salvation Army is also concerned to ensure that the perpetrators of violence within the family acknowledge their wrongdoing, accept responsibility for it, receive help to deal with those factors which are resulting in violent behaviour, and receive support in working towards the development of new behaviours.

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<sup>1</sup>Ephesians 4: 31,32 (GNB)

"Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ."

**Approved IHQ 11 July 1995**

# RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

## **The Salvation Army believes that:**

As people made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), we have a responsibility to use the resources of the earth in a way that ensures that people in this and future generations do not suffer from poverty or injustice. This is part of our stewardship of the earth and our love of others. In the modern world, Christian stewardship implies large scale and permanent changes in attitude and behaviour towards God's creation, so that we begin to 'replenish the earth' (Genesis 1:28)

Responsibility was given to humanity to 'cultivate and keep' the earth (Genesis 2:15), but humanity has destroyed or is destroying much of God's creation (Isaiah 24: 4-5).

God's instruction to 'subdue' the earth and rule over every living thing (Genesis 1:28) cannot be interpreted to justify exploitation. God gave His people rights and privileges, but these included duties and responsibilities.

Given the finite resources of the world and its expanding population, together with the impact of industrial and rural activities, development must take account of the need to preserve the earth – an exercise in responsible stewardship.

## **Therefore Salvationists believe the following principles:**

- i. Concern and regard for all life forms, not only human life.
- ii. A striving for a more responsible lifestyle in order to do less damage to the environment.
- iii. Investment in regeneration, taking a long term view rather than short term expediency in thought and action.
- iv. Care for those who become the victims of the need for environmental stewardship, or who are the victims of environmental vandalism.

Salvationists are encouraged to consider seriously their personal responsibility for the environment by taking practical steps to regenerate and conserve God's creation.

**Approved by the General, March, 1992.**

# EUTHANASIA

Modern medicine allows people to survive illnesses and injuries which would previously have proved fatal, though possibly with long-term or permanent disability and impaired quality of life. This could be as a direct result of the initial pathology or as a consequence of side effects of the treatment given.

Since the Bible displays so clearly that every person is important to God, The Salvation Army, like other Christian communities, places great value on the life of all people. For this reason Salvationists oppose actively taking or shortening human life through rational choice, with or without medical assistance.

In non-emergency situations medical workers have a responsibility to ensure that patients clearly understand the likely benefit of any treatment offered and the possible risk or cost to quality of life. This would allow patients, or their legally designated representative, to make informed decisions regarding their management. Refusal to undergo treatment is not the same as deliberately sanctioning death.

Full palliative care should be available to those with terminal illness. Optimal pain control and the overall comfort and dignity of the individual should be the goals, even though this could shorten life. The Salvation Army accepts that where brain death, as defined by the relevant authorities, has already occurred, the next of kin is justified in agreeing with medical advice to terminate life support systems.

**For further reading:**

Clifton, Shaw: Strong Doctrine, Strong Mercy: The Salvation Army, London, 1985.

**Approved by the General 30 October, 1992.**

## **GAMBLING**

Gambling is seeking gain at the expense of others, solely on the basis of chance. The Salvation Army is acutely aware of the suffering and deprivation experienced by many people as the result of this practice. Our social welfare experience, indicates that many of those who gamble tend to disregard their primary responsibilities, and not infrequently bring embarrassment and hurt to those dependent on them. The inherent evil in gambling tends to make the financial arrangements of a person or a community dependent on chance rather than upon a reward for labour.

Since gambling is motivated by selfishness, it runs counter to the Christian expression of love, respect and concern for others. Often it begins in an apparently harmless way, but its continued practice may lead to dependency that undermines the personality and character of the gambler.

Official sanction and public acceptance of this practice is, in the opinion of The Salvation Army, contrary to the Christian principles to which we subscribe.

The Salvation Army requires its soldiers to abstain from gambling. It follows therefore that The Salvation Army does not find it acceptable for a soldier to have a proprietary interest in the gambling industry.

**Approved by I.H.Q. 21<sup>st</sup> May 1991**

# HEALING

Healing means being made well, physically, emotionally and spiritually. All healing is a gracious gift of our Creator. This may be by direct divine intervention, human agency, or a combination of both.

Salvationists are encouraged to pray for healing through both direct intervention and human agency. Though such prayers are offered with complete faith in the love and power of God, Salvationists do not claim, demand, or expect all sickness to be healed in this life.

Salvationists gratefully witness that God in His love and mercy does intervene and heal in ways beyond medical understanding. When this occurs they desire that God be glorified exclusively and that the healing be reported factually without exaggeration of the circumstances or its effects. When sincere prayer is offered and healing does not occur, Salvationists should never account for this by accusations of sin or lack of faith in the lives of any persons, but rather endeavour to accept it as the permissive will of a sovereign God.

The Salvation Army acknowledges that some people may be especially gifted by the Holy Spirit in the ministry of healing. They should be encouraged to exercise their gift, and to do so in the spirit of faith and humility. This kind of healing ministry, where present, should be integrated into the life of the corps but not be the central focus. A sensational and central emphasis on healing deflects attention to the outward, visible and temporary, to the possible neglect of the inward, invisible and eternal.

The Salvation Army is vitally concerned with the healing of people who have been damaged psychologically, so that they are enabled to overcome the past and grow emotionally and spiritually.

Wholeness, holiness and health are related. Wholeness includes the fostering of a balanced life-style of work and leisure, good human relationships, appropriate nutrition and nourishment of the spirit through prayer, worship and Christian meditation.

**Approved IHQ 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1994 .**

# HUMAN SEXUALITY

## **A. Marriage and Family Life**

In spite of changing lifestyles and values, the family unit – father, mother and children – is still the ideal social institution in contemporary Australian life.

By marriage the family remains the basic source of nurture, of love, of economic and other life supports, of fundamental education and socialisation and of spiritual and moral development. Other social institutions serve best as supportive resources.

In the face of emerging alternative lifestyles and modes of living, which in recent years have grown in incidence and open acceptance, The Salvation Army affirms its absolute conviction that the marriage of one man to one woman is a sacred institution ordained by God and that a traditional good-faith commitment to an indissoluble union is one of the most rewarding of life's decisions for any man or woman, providing the optimal conditions for family life.

We encourage married couples to continually seek ways to enrich their relationship and to seek counselling quickly should difficulties arise.

We encourage parents to discover how best to develop a close relationship of mutual trust and respect with their children and to accept responsibility for their children's physical, moral and spiritual growth and well being.

The Salvation Army acknowledges that many people today find themselves in situations outside the ideal stated above. Persons in such circumstances should always be encouraged to feel totally accepted within The Salvation Army.

Thus The Salvation Army, through all its programs and services, seeks to strengthen marriage and enrich family life.

**Approved by IHQ, January 1992.**

# HUMAN SEXUALITY

## **B. Sexuality and Singleness**

Singleness is a part of every life. Every marriage begins with two people who have experienced singleness, and usually ends with at least one partner beginning a new single life.

The Salvation Army as a Christian movement, believes that human sexuality is a gift of God and that the Bible presents sexuality and its proper expression as a privilege, created, ordained and blessed by God. We believe in chastity before marriage and fidelity within the marriage relationship.

The Army acknowledges that, in believing that sexuality is designed by God to lead to an expression of love within the marriage relationship, it requires restraint and control of natural desires from all, married and single alike.

Singleness may be chosen or not. Whichever is the case, the single life can be lived in a positive spirit. Celibacy should not be a negative state but a positive one. Singleness is neither especially blessed, nor a sign of God's disfavour. There are unique ways in which single Salvationists can serve God and there are special opportunities for married Salvationists, so that

Paul might well have added "single and married" to his list in Galatians 3:28.

The Army encourages single people – whether previously married or not – to maintain a positive attitude to their singleness and a healthy and balanced social life, and to recognise that God can use all people effectively in His Kingdom.

**Approved IHQ 15<sup>th</sup> October 1992**

# HUMAN SEXUALITY

## C. Homosexuality

The Salvation Army seeks to understand, accept, and lovingly minister to all people, recognising the depth and intensity of feeling about sexual identity, as well as the attendant pain and difficulties sometimes experienced in living in harmony with God's standards.

Homosexuality is broadly defined as being sexually attracted to, having a definite sexual preference for, people of the same gender. It is The Salvation Army's belief that, whilst recognising the possibility of such orientation, (the origins of which are uncertain), the Bible expressly opposes homosexual practice<sup>1</sup>, seeing such activity as rebellion against God's plan for the created order.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible teaches<sup>3</sup> that God's intention for humankind is that society should be ordered on the basis of lifelong, legally sanctioned heterosexual unions. Such unions (marriages), having the potential for procreation, lead to the formation of social units (families), which are essential to human personal development and therefore to the stability of the community.

We firmly believe that obedience to God together with the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, make it possible for all to live a lifestyle pleasing to Him. This may include celibacy or self restraint for those who will not or cannot marry.

A disposition towards homosexuality is not in itself blameworthy nor is the disposition seen as rectifiable at will. The Army is sensitive to the complex social, emotional and spiritual needs of all people including those with homosexual inclinations. We oppose vilification of, or discrimination against, anyone on the grounds of sexual orientation. No person is excluded from membership, fellowship or service in the Army solely on the basis of sexual disposition.

Homosexual practice, however, is, in the light of Scripture, clearly unacceptable<sup>4</sup>. Such activity is chosen behaviour and is thus a matter of the will. It is therefore able to be directed or restrained in the same way heterosexual urges are controlled. Homosexual practice would render any person ineligible for full membership (soldiership) in the Army. However, practising homosexuals are welcome to worship with, and join in the fellowship of The Salvation Army.

Regardless of sexual orientation, any person who yields to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and determines, by God's grace, to live in accordance with the Scriptural principles outlined above, is welcomed and accorded all the benefits and privileges of membership in The Salvation Army.

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<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 18:22

“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable” (NIV)

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders... will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:23-25

“... and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.” (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:27

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (NIV)

Genesis 2:21-24

“So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ for she was taken out of man.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (NIV)

<sup>4</sup>Romans 1:26-27

Also highlights bi-sexual practice as unacceptable.

**Approved by IHQ, November 1996.**

## MULTI-FAITH EVENTS

Multi-faith events acknowledge the presence of different faith groups in the community and provide an opportunity for the Christian faith to be represented in a multi-faith environment.

In Australia, there are occasions when peoples of different faiths may be invited to participate in community events. These may be initiated in contexts such as school ceremonies, civic celebrations and trauma situations. They provide opportunities for people to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of life.

The Salvation Army supports co-operation in events which celebrate our shared humanity, such as relief work, community development, and civic celebrations. When Salvationists are present at such events, they affirm what they believe to be true about God and their relationship with him and give witness to God revealed to the world through Jesus Christ.

**Note:** When called to participate in multi-faith events, Salvationists should be guided by the procedures set out in the **Guidelines for Salvationists - *Multi-faith Events***.

**Approved IHQ 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004**

# PORNOGRAPHY

The Salvation Army believes that sexuality is the gift of a loving Creator. Therefore, concerned that human dignity should be preserved, we deplore all forms of pornography.

The Salvation Army accepts the definition of pornography given in the 1972 Longford Report:<sup>1</sup>

“Pornography is that which exploits and dehumanises sex, so that human beings are treated as things and women in particular as sex objects.”

“The present liberalisation [of anti-pornography law] is leading to a distorted view of human relations - the abnormal is presented as normal, the violent as acceptable, the perverted as healthy, the trashy as desirable.”<sup>2</sup>

Pornography focuses on the indulgence of individual desires, becomes addictive and excludes the needs of other people.

The Salvation Army’s belief, confirmed by what we know because of our involvement in the community, is that commercialisation of sex is detrimental to the way people seek and perceive love and self worth.

We seek the promotion of biblical values, especially unselfish love.

Above all, The Salvation Army believes that these values are attained by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and continual guidance by the Holy Spirit.

Approved IHQ 26 November, 1999.

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<sup>1</sup> Longford Report: 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Barclay, William in John Court, *Changing Community Standards*, 1972, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, p.40.

# THE SACRAMENTS

## Introduction

The Christian Church is made up of people who have responded in faith and repentance to the call of Jesus Christ. That, and that alone, is the basis of membership. They are born “not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). No more, but no less, is asked by The Salvation Army of those who would be enrolled in its ranks as soldiers. In this we are on firm New Testament ground. (From “The Salvation Army in Relation to the Church” by General F. Coutts.)

Whilst the Army respects those who have found these Sacraments helpful as means of grace, it holds the view that nowhere does Scripture teach that the observance of a particular ritual is essential to salvation or Christian living. It is to the inwardness of true religion that The Salvation Army seeks to testify.

The Salvation Army is not opposed to the Sacraments, but positively asserts that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are the only essentials of Salvation.

**Approved I.H.Q. 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1994**

# THE SACRAMENTS

## ***A STATEMENT ON BAPTISM***

After full and careful consideration of The Salvation Army's understanding of, and approach to, the sacrament of water baptism, the International Spiritual Life Commission sets out the following points regarding the relationship between our soldier enrolment and water baptism.

1. Only those who confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord may be considered for soldiership in The Salvation Army.
2. Such a confession is confirmed by the gracious presence of God the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and includes the call to discipleship.
3. In accepting the call to discipleship Salvationists promise to continue to be responsive to the Holy Spirit and to seek to grow in grace.
4. They also express publicly their desire to fulfil membership of Christ's Church on earth as soldiers of The Salvation Army.
5. The Salvation Army rejoices in the truth that all who are in Christ are baptised into the one body by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).
6. It believes, in accordance with Scripture, that 'there is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:5,6).
7. The swearing-in of a soldier of The Salvation Army beneath the trinitarian sign of the Army's flag acknowledges this truth.
8. It is a public response and witness to a life-changing encounter with Christ which has already taken place, as is the water baptism practised by some other Christians.
9. The Salvation Army acknowledges that there are many worthy ways of publicly witnessing to having been baptised into Christ's body by the Holy Spirit and expressing a desire to be his disciple.
10. The swearing-in of a soldier should be followed by a lifetime of continued obedient faith in Christ.

# THE SACRAMENTS

## **A STATEMENT ON HOLY COMMUNION**

After full and careful consideration of The Salvation Army's understanding of, and approach to, the sacrament of Holy Communion\*, the International Spiritual Life Commission sets out the following points:

1. God's grace is freely and readily accessible to all people at all times and in all places.
2. No particular outward observance is necessary to inward grace.
3. The Salvation Army believes that unity of the Spirit exists within diversity and rejoices in the freedom of the Spirit in expressions of worship.
4. When Salvationists attend other Christian gatherings in which a form of Holy Communion is included, they may partake if they choose to do so and if the host church allows.
5. Christ is the one true Sacrament, and sacramental living – Christ living in us and through us – is at the heart of Christian holiness and discipleship.
6. Throughout its history The Salvation Army has kept Christ's atoning sacrifice at the centre of its corporate worship.
7. The Salvation Army rejoices in its freedom to celebrate Christ's real presence at all meals and in all meetings, and in its opportunity to explore in life together the significance of the simple meals shared by Jesus and his friends and by the first Christians.
8. Salvationists are encouraged to use the love feast and develop creative means of hallowing meals in home and corps with remembrance of the Lord's sacrificial love.
9. The Salvation Army encourages the development of resources for such fellowship meals, which will vary according to culture, without ritualising particular words or actions.
10. In accordance with normal Salvation Army practice, such remembrances and celebrations, where observed, will not become established rituals, nor will frequency be prescribed.

\*Terminology varies according to culture and denomination, and is not always interchangeable.

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Salvation Army as an international movement and an evangelical branch of the universal Christian Church, believes that all people are made in the image of God and that each person, in the eyes of God, has worth and dignity.

The Salvation Army has from its inception applied Biblical principles to the social problems presented by humanity and society, and this continues to be our work. We believe that Jesus Christ is the answer to humanity's deepest need.

## **The Bible consistently emphasises justice, and particularly social justice:**

- in how people are treated
- in the just division of resources
- in how people relate to one another
- in caring for others

Zechariah 7:9-10

Jesus taught the two-fold responsibility – to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and your neighbour as yourself.

## **The Bible teaches against:**

- the luxury of the rich and the deprivation of the poor
- pride and arrogance
- indifference to the need of others
- oppression and exploitation of the poor
- institutional corruption

## **It teaches:**

- responsibility and accountability for others out of our love for God.

Romans 13:8-10

The Salvation Army recognises that poverty can never be completely eradicated, but acknowledges its Christian responsibility to the powerless and those suffering economic hardship. We therefore have as our purpose, to glorify God, to bring others to know Him and to so live and work in society that each person has the opportunity to live with worth and dignity.

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## **Scripture texts:**

- Zechariah 7:9-10 (NIV)

“This is what the LORD Almighty says, ‘Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.’”

- Romans 13:8-10 (NIV)

“Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule: ‘love your neighbour as yourself’. Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

**Approved IHQ 11 July 1995**

# SUICIDE

The Salvation Army believes that every person is of infinite value to God and that life is to be cherished, nurtured and preserved. The Christian gospel offers hope and a new life lived in the strength and grace of God through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, The Salvation Army believes in the sanctity of human life. It believes human life is a gift from God, and to reach fulfilment every human life needs to be worked out to its natural end.

No person has the right to voluntarily and intentionally terminate their life. God alone has the right to determine the end of life.

It is acknowledged that suicidal thoughts do invade the mind of Christian and non-Christian alike. The Salvation Army encourages any person troubled by suicidal thoughts to immediately seek the help of a trained counsellor, preferably one with professional expertise in this area. Some people as a response to an overwhelming feeling of helplessness, depression, anxiety, grief, loneliness or the cares and difficulties of life do commit suicide.

Where a person suicides, The Salvation Army commits that person to the grace and mercy of God and extends sensitive counsel and pastoral care to the loved ones and friends.

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**See also:** Guidelines for Salvationists on this subject.  
Positional Statement on *Euthanasia*.

## **Further reading:**

William Barclay	<i>The Ten Commandments for Today.</i>
Robertson McQuilkin	<i>An Introduction to Biblical Ethics.</i>
H.J. Rose	<i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.</i>
Suicide Prevention Australia	<i>Here for Life. A National Plan for Youth in Distress.</i>
John Macquarie (Ed.)	<i>A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics.</i>

**Approved IHQ 19 July, 2001.**

## **SUNDAY OBSERVANCE**

Sunday is the day on which Salvationists especially enjoy opportunities for worship and witness. The Salvation Army accepts that the observance of a day of rest is taught in the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) and confirmed by the example and teaching of Jesus. In its recognition of Sunday as this day of rest, The Salvation Army aligns itself with what came to be the custom of the early Church in joyful celebration of Christ's resurrection.

The Salvation Army affirms that all people need a balance of work and rest. Rest is needed on a regular basis for the maintenance of health.

In any highly organised society some forms of labour will be essential on Sunday. The Salvation Army considers that activities such as commercialised sport, political meetings and unrestricted trading secularise the day intended for renewal and spiritual refreshment. It is recognised that legislation itself – in a multi-cultural and secularised society – cannot safeguard Sunday as the Lord's day.

The Salvation Army believes that the legalising of unrestricted retail trading on Sundays will have adverse social and cultural effects. We support the efforts of groups opposed to unrestricted Sunday trading.

Those whose beliefs or consciences will not permit them to work on Sundays will be particularly harmed by unrestricted trading. Where Sunday trading is permitted, there should be legal safeguards against unreasonable discrimination in recruitment or deployment of staff.

Whatever changes may be made in the secular regulations relating to Sunday, Salvationists will continue to use the day for worship and the proclamation of the Gospel. They will demonstrate by their own use of Sunday that it is a recognisably different day in which the worship of God has priority.

**Approved IHQ July 1992**

# SURROGACY

The Salvation Army recognises the anguish experienced by involuntarily childless couples. Some couples have been assisted in overcoming infertility through the new reproductive technologies such as IVF. For other couples the problem is that the wife is unable to carry the developing child from the time of conception through to viability. For such couples, surrogacy would seem to provide an opportune solution. In surrogacy, another woman (the surrogate or birth mother) carries the child until delivery or soon after, when the social or commissioning mother takes over. Whilst appearing opportune, surrogacy is fraught with legal, moral, ethical and spiritual difficulties.

Surrogacy takes several forms. The genetic material may be derived from both of the commissioning parents through IVF processes, the husband's sperm may be used along with the birth mother's ova, or both male and female genetic material may be donated, again through IVF processes. Also the surrogate mother may act either for payment (commercial surrogacy), or out of love for the infertile couple (altruistic surrogacy). Often a sister or special friend may do this, though through IVF technology, mothers have acted on behalf of daughters (ie. women have given birth to their own grandchildren). Currently, commercial surrogacy is illegal in all Australian states, although altruistic surrogacy has a less clear-cut status and is difficult to regulate in any case.

The concerns about surrogacy are several. Christians would accept that marriage is exclusive, monogamous and permanent. Scriptural teaching reveals the Creator's intention that children should be born into the exclusive context of the mutual intimacy of a husband and wife. Surrogacy, along with other technology such as artificial insemination using donor sperm (AID), is a significant intrusion into that exclusivity.

Surrogacy also risks the exploitation of some in order to meet the needs of others. It is a process that involves the deliberate use of one woman's womb to produce a baby for the would-be mother. The growing foetus is intimately attached to the birth mother sharing the air she breathes and the food she eats. The language of surrogacy tries to deny this relationship by emphasising the 'ownership' of the 'product' – the child. The birthing mother's experience is made invisible, rewritten for her. Birth mothers have been described as 'incubators' or 'just a suitcase'. This does not take into account the trauma experienced by the relinquishing mother.

Birth mothers are often chosen because they have already proved their fertility by having a child. Serious emotional trauma is possible to siblings who helplessly watch as their baby brother or sister disappears from the family. They may carry a tremendous burden, wondering if they will be given away as well. Children would be especially vulnerable in altruistic surrogacy where family members are involved.

Altruistic surrogacy often seems more acceptable than commercial surrogacy, but power dynamics operate in families. These bonds can be more formidable than money. The currency is love – love and gratitude will be exchanged for the child. Where infertility is such a painful experience, it can be difficult, even in the closest relationships, to distinguish between an act of surrogacy out of love and one out of guilt.

And then there are concerns regarding the child. Surrogacy has been described as people thinking of their own desires and not of the child. This is in sharp distinction to adoption

where the child's need is paramount. In adoption prospective parents are carefully selected to meet those needs. For fertility practitioners it is the needs of the parents and the donors of sperm and ova that prevail. Society should be concerned for children deliberately created in order to be separated from their gestational (birth) mother.

The Salvation Army find surrogacy an unacceptable practice. However, it will continue to provide compassionate pastoral support for couples who decide to make use of this technique and, of course, attaches no stigma to the children born as a result of such decisions.

**Approved IHQ 28<sup>th</sup> June 2001**

# WORK

The Salvation Army regards work as honourable and God-ordained. In caring for creation, in producing food and the other necessities of life we are partners with God. Therefore, every person should participate, as far as possible, in work and do so, conscientiously.

It is equally vital that society be structured so that there is a worthwhile role for each member. Although we as individuals are not defined by work roles, those roles are important to our self-esteem. We all need to feel that we are filling a worthwhile role in society. People without work often suffer a loss of confidence in themselves and their abilities.

In all societies, there are valuable members whose contribution is unpaid. This group includes not only family carers but also the elderly, the very young and those who choose to work in a voluntary capacity. Society throughout government and other action should see that every person is adequately recompensed for the contribution each makes.

In the more usual work situation of an employee who contracts labour to an employer there are obligations on both sides. Both groups should recognise their own responsibilities and the rights of the other. Employees should give a fair day's work and in return employers should see that employees receive a fair day's pay.

**Approved IHQ 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2003**