

WOMEN In touch



THE GIFT OF
JESUS

Christmas Mosaic ■

Reflections on the festive season

Raelene Steep ■

Being Jesus to women behind bars

About this issue – from the editor’s desk

As the *Women in Touch* team have been putting together this Christmas issue, I have found it both encouraging and inspiring to read the personal reflections on the meaning of this season that women around the world have sent in.

Reading these stories motivated me to pull out some Christmas articles that we had published over the years in the Russian War Cry and I found one by the late Colonel Bo Brekke, part of which I would like to share with you here.

In his article “How do we know it’s Christmas?”, Colonel Brekke writes: “... if you had no calendar, if there were no decorations, no trees, no gifts in the shops – how would you know it is Christmas? The answer must be found in that which gives Christmas its meaning. When Jesus was born, there came a new way of understanding God. God expressed himself visibly. Through the acts and words of Jesus emerges a clear picture of the mind and purpose of God. All we ever need to know about God is now available in Christ.

“The Bible says about Jesus: “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). There is no need to be guessing anymore. God has made Himself known.”

Colonel Brekke continues: “You know it is Christmas – real Christmas – when you meet for yourself the Christ who was born to be the Saviour of mankind. That encounter can take place any time of the year... It happens whenever men and women open their hearts to Jesus.

“Christmas, then, can be any time... But that will not stop us from enjoying this special time of year – the lights, the glitter and the gifts. We will enjoy it all the more, because we know for ourselves the One whose birthday we celebrate.”

You can read and enjoy all of these reflections in **Christmas Mosaic** on pages 6-9.

In this special Christmas issue you will also find our regular columns including **Team Talk** by Colonel Jan Condon, who writes about just what a day it was when Christ was born!

Kent Rosenthal, News Editor and journalist for *Pipeline*, shares his interview with Captain Raelene Steep on her role as a prison chaplain in western Sydney. Captain Raelene daily faces the challenge of “being Jesus” to women behind bars and she speaks openly about the unique challenges and rewards that brings.

In our resources section, pages 10-11, Major Vicki Clarke pays tribute to the old testament prophet Habakkuk, and the late Christian author Barbara Johnson, showing us how we can make the decision to find joy in the Lord, whatever circumstances we may be facing. Major Maree Strong takes a look at a book whose title will have instant appeal to many women, we feature our winning Christmas recipe, and also introduce the new Women’s Ministries Territorial Project for 2010.

Scott Simpson, Managing Editor of *Pipeline* and supplements, brings us another inspiring story from neighbouring PNG – that of Dawn and Malcolm Beeson, who followed the Lord’s lead to serve him in a developing country. Dawn talks about her arrival in PNG, her steep learning curve, and her passion for the Army’s Projects.

Continuing our series on “negative” emotions, Major Julie Metcher candidly shares her ongoing journey with depression, and how God’s grace and strength is giving her the focus she needs to become the person God intended her to be.

In *Young Women in Touch*, we take a closer look at some Christian websites, including MORE, the Salvos website for young people. There’s a Christmas gift idea you can make yourself, a recommended read, and some random quotes just to make you smile! We’re also thankful to Narelle Meldrum for sharing her testimony in these pages, and writing about the lessons God has taught her in the areas of self esteem, true beauty and godly perfection.

There is also plenty of news from around our territory and information on *Captivated*, the upcoming women’s ministries conferences taking place in both Sydney and Brisbane.

For those looking for the third and final instalment of Captain Simon Smith’s series on women in the Church, this will be published in our March edition, 2010.

Thank you for your comments, feedback and contributions throughout the year, and I look forward to hearing from you again in the new year.

I pray that Christmas will be a peaceful, joyful and motivating season for us all as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour and make him known to others!

Simone Worthing,
Editor

Team Talk

From the desk of the Women’s Ministries Department

WHAT A DAY!

Have you ever spoken or thought those words? I’ve said it and thought it many times – at the end of a long, tiring day in the office, or at the end of an historic occasion or great celebration.

It could even be said after trying to weave through peak hour city traffic or at the end of a day’s shopping. It might also be said after a day of invasive health checks or a day of constant interruptions.

But it could also be stated with a sense of exhilaration following a day of true pleasure and enjoyment – or following an adventurous experience.

One could also use these words as an expression of gratitude and excitement when referring to the day that Jesus was born.

What a day!

- Prophecy was fulfilled
- Light overcame darkness
- Great rejoicing and happiness
- A message of peace to replace fear
- Hope because the Messiah had been born
- Herod’s instructions were disobeyed
- Enlightenment for the wise men who took a new direction
- Insignificant shepherds received a message from God

- Shepherds who later praised God for all they had seen
- The good news of the birth of Jesus was shared and people were amazed
- Mary the mother of Jesus – honoured to be chosen to be His mother
- For Mary to treasure “all these things in her heart”.

What a day when Christ was born!

Worth celebrating isn’t it? And I trust that your celebration this year will be such a special occasion that you will comment at the end of Christmas Day – “What a day!”

Grace and peace to you all.



Colonel Jan Condon,
Territorial Secretary for Women’s Ministries

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WOMEN In touch

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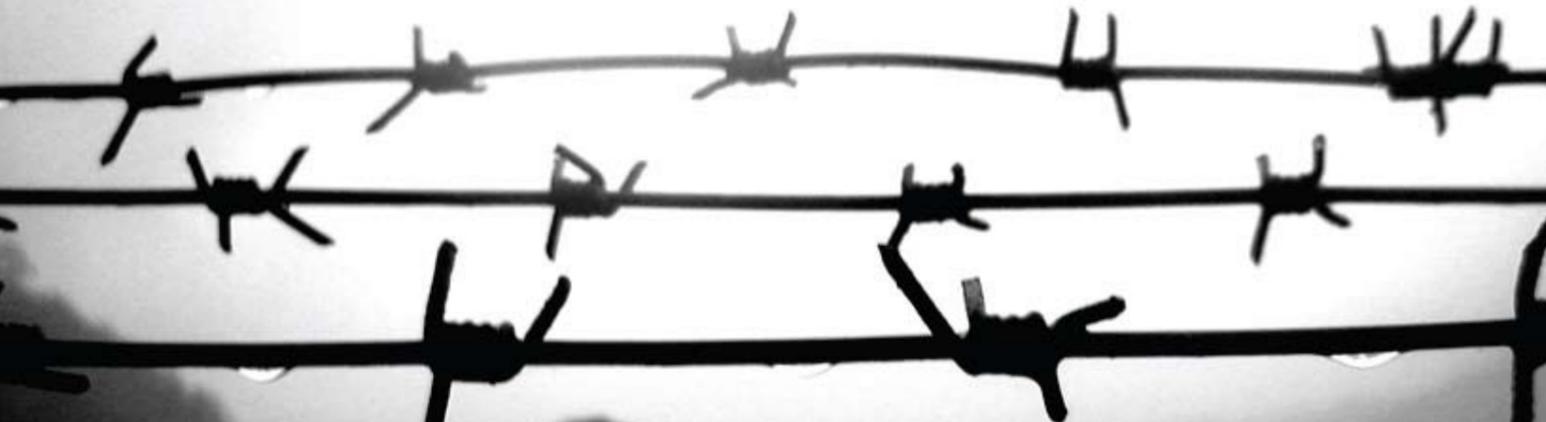
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Jesus behind bars

Stripped of all whizz-bang ministry resources, prison chaplains face the challenging yet freeing territory of being themselves in a radical way. Captain Raelene Steep talks to **KENT ROSENTHAL** about her job “being Jesus” to the women she serves in western Sydney’s prisons.



Captain Raelene – or “chappy” as she’s affectionately called – knows that these women have a natural sense of human authenticity. Any hint of pretence from a lofty chaplain would turn them away.

Most of them have witnessed the extremes of grief and pain, so the task of revealing Jesus to them is very personal and challenging.

“I feel that my role is to be Jesus in the place in which I find myself – and at the moment that’s within the women’s prisons.”

Strict prison security regulations mean Captain Raelene can’t bring in the resources and technologies she was accustomed to using as a corps officer, so her ministry relies mostly on interpersonal communication.

“If I can love them unconditionally, value them, accept them for who they are, take time to listen to them...then I feel I am doing what I have been called to do, and that’s to be Jesus in that place – to bring light in a world that can be very dark.

“If somebody feels comfortable with you, they are going to share a lot more. They are going to be more interested in what you have that they could benefit from. It’s very confronting I suppose to some people, but I find it very freeing, because I don’t have to carry all this extra stuff.”

Captain Raelene says she doesn’t preach in the conventional sense and doesn’t feel the need to explain her purpose. “But they come and ask so many questions because they can see something different – and that something, I would suggest, is Jesus in me...”

Her western Sydney chaplaincy covers four very different facilities – two goals and two transitional centres – with each location detaining different types of inmates.

“Most people have the image of prisoners as – young, addicts, cropped hair, butch, gruff voice – but I always say to people – ‘Look in the mirror or look at the person sitting next to you! That’s what an inmate looks like... you and me! The only difference is they all wear prison greens.’”

Ring the bell

Ring the bell when a soul is saved is a powerful gesture when working in prison ministry. For Captain Raelene it involves a lot of soul-searching about what it means to be saved and how to best communicate an authentic message of salvation.

“What defines what having faith means anyway? Is it only (bums on seats) sitting in a church on Sunday?”

Captain Raelene says she sees examples of transformation in women’s lives every day. “We could ring the bell every single day of the week because people here are at their lowest point – they’ve got nothing else – they’ve been stripped of everything. They’ve probably had their property taken from them, their house, their family – their everything. Who have they got? God - they turn to God.”

She detects a disturbing cynicism from some outsiders when they hear of inmates suddenly finding God in prison. But she sees their desperate and genuine yearning for faith, and she’s confident the women will remember the positive faith experiences and return to them later in life.

Chapel services on the inside are a levelling encounter. “The women get so involved. They are so sincere – they are at that gut level. There are no airs and graces because they are not trying to impress anyone. All the layers are stripped away. It’s humbling. I almost feel like I’m looking up to them when

I’m with them because they inspire me – they encourage me and they deepen my faith.”

Captain Raelene says hearing the women’s stories makes her realise how unpredictable life can be and how faith is a lifetime journey rather than something to be grasped. “I just think how much different life could have been if I hadn’t chosen the path I chose.”

Becoming bitter or better

“It all comes down to choices. And sometimes it comes down to what’s been offered to you in your life. I’m not saying that I’ve had an easy road or anything like that but I always say to the girls that you can choose two paths. You can become bitter or you can become better, and I just happened to choose the options in my life where I chose the better path – because I could have been bitter.”

Effectiveness of ministry is measured in different ways for Captain Raelene – sometimes through a text message from a woman newly-released wanting to say she’s all right, or maybe telling her about some unfortunate circumstances on the outside. But establishing a connection is the key, she says.

In the four prison centres, Captain Raelene comes into contact with about 450 women every week. “I might not have one-on-one conversations with all of them but I have access to that many women. My association with them is on all different levels.”

Called you by name

Even the simple gesture of referring to a woman by her name can have a profoundly positive impact.

“I’ve never been really good at remembering names. It’s something I’ve really had to pray hard about – because I realise



Captain Raelene Steep

continue supporting them on their road to rehabilitation.

Judge not

She gets angry when she hears people complain about so-called “luxuries” for prisoners, like television.

“When they are locked up, that is their punishment for that crime – it’s not to have everything else stripped away from them. Their loss of freedom means they don’t get to choose when they have meals, go to bed, what to eat, what to wear or where they can go.

We in society want to do all this other stuff to them – because (we think) they’re bad. Like Mother Teresa says – ‘If you judge people you have no time to love them.’”

Captain Raelene says part of chaplaincy is bringing a human face to the harsh reality of prison – through prayer, chapel services, sewing hems, chatting, listening, exchanging anguish and tears. And in her ministry she also comes into contact with the face of Jesus through the women she meets.

As she and others working in The Salvation Army’s social services continue to work inside and outside prisons, Captain Raelene prays that the bitterness and brokenness that imprisons people will be released by love and forgiveness – “And that, I would suggest, can only be found in Christ.”

“I don’t go in there thinking I’m going to work to be like Christ today. I’ve always prided myself on the fact that who I am at work is who I am at home.

“In the prison if there are any discrepancies between what you say you are and who you really are, they’ll pick it to pieces straight away. You’ve got to be authentic - they pick it – as I do with them – I’ll just pull them up.”

On the outside

The first six months after release from prison are the toughest. Captain Raelene often holds memorial services on the inside for those who didn’t make it on the outside.

“Often they get out and they can’t cope. It’s too overwhelming. It’s just too hard because they haven’t been taught anything. They don’t know how to pay the rent, fix a meal, get clothes for themselves or interact normally in society.

“They’re given around \$300 by Centrelink, and sometimes they might get a bed-sitter somewhere, and they’re sitting there with nothing. The areas where the bed-sitters are located are usually very troubled areas.”

Captain Raelene says she feels empowered to love, value and respect the women in her care, but powerless in being able to

how much it means to them. In prison they are not a name – but are a number.

“One of the women burst into tears once. After she got herself together she said to me ‘You remembered’. Now she’s coming in again to see me and talking about how her court case went and then she’s talking about going to rehab – choosing to go to rehab after she comes out.

“I said to her: ‘You know what? You’re going to do all right because you’re choosing to do that.’ She’s someone who’s been in and out of jail for the last nine years – every year. But I think she met with Christ right there.

“In some way I believe that through my attitude and the way I interact with her and through the way I remember her name – which is not easy for me – there was part of Jesus in that – she met with God.

“Why did she turn up again yesterday to tell me more? Because I was interested – I valued her and I told her I believe in her – and that there’s something better.

“It’s the whole thing of being like Jesus, but I think we’ve gotten away from that – we are trying too much to over-analyse it. If we could just be humble...”

For Captain Raelene, striving to be like Christ – wherever she finds herself – involves being authentic and not putting on an act.



Kent Rosenthal is News Editor and journalist for Pipeline.

Christmas Mosaic

Women from around the world share what the Christmas season means to them

Celebration of hope

Christmas has always been my favourite time of year. Being away from home for the preparations of Christmas, I miss so many things that other people would probably take for granted. These are things like the tantalising smells of Christmas cakes cooking and fresh summer fruit salads; Christmas lights around the streets; the sounds of children playing in the streets all day; having family together again; making that perfect gift for the ones I love; and of course, the Christmas Eve Carols by Candlelight in Melbourne.

What impacts me though, no matter where in the world I am, is that it is a time of celebration of hope for the world. It is a time, more than any other time in the year, when people are drawn back to their families, when hurts are healed, when people go back

to church (even if for only one service) and they hear the message of hope spoken once again into their lives. It is a time, more than any other in the year, when people are open to hearing about the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is a reminder that the normal, seemingly insignificant, birth of a boy would change the course of the world on that day, and forever more. The message of Christmas is so wonderful.

God not only blessed me with four wonderful children, but also grandchildren, and I now look forward to spending Christmas with them and telling them all about Jesus Christ and the hope that they can share in. May you all have a very blessed Christmas season.

Major Julie Alley,
Administrator – Boroko Primary School,
Papua New Guinea Territory

Healing the hurt

“Holidays make what’s bad even worse.”
Ryan, *The OC*

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10 *English Standard Version*).

I grew up in a family that could best be described as dysfunctional. Anyone who can relate to this will know that if you take one dysfunctional family, combine with the silly season and stir rigorously, what you get is the cliché, straight from a sitcom, drama-filled Christmas – the yelling, the crying, the manipulation (Who knew the debate over star versus angel on tree top could get so heated?).

What results is a lot of stress, and the subsequent counselling can end up costing more than the event itself. It’s no wonder I

came out of the whole thing jaded. I won’t lie. I don’t like Christmas. In fact, I dread it. In my family, Christmas is something you endure.

So what does Christmas mean to me? In the midst of the mess and worry, Christmas to me means hope; a promise of something better. God sent His only son into the world to shine a light into the mess; to bring healing and restoration and to tell us that he has something better for us. The light of the world, Jesus, came to bring hope into all areas of our life, to bring beauty into the ugliness.

Christmas can have a way of reminding us of all of the worst bits of life, accentuating the ugliness and the dysfunction. But as much as this world can be ugly and painful, that’s how much Christ came to bring hope. That’s what Christmas means to me.

Mel Cotton,
Contributing youth and singles writer,
Women In Touch

An indescribable gift

When it comes to expressing what Christmas means to me, I am ever so grateful that Paul has already “said it all” when he described the birth of Jesus as an “indescribable” gift (2 Corinthians 9:15). Other Bible translations describe this gift as “unspeakable” (*King James Version*), “No words can ever tell it all” (*Worldwide English, New Testament*), “Too wonderful for words” (*New Living Translation*) and, “No language can praise it enough” (*The Message*).

So, I find it helpful to move beyond words to some of the well-loved and long-held traditions that surround Christmas celebrations.

The Christmas Tree has always featured high in our Pobjie family traditions. In the weeks leading up to Christmas it helped to build a spirit of anticipation. It was central in creating an environment of expectation and excitement. As gift upon gift was added, the stage was progressively set for the grand finale of Christmas morning.

And I think rightly so! Surely the celebration of an event that is “indescribable”, “unspeakable” or “too wonderful for words”, is worthy of thoughtful and careful preparation.

We have had many trees. You see, it is not the tree itself that is important. The tree is important only in that it is used to create the atmosphere.

Our creativity and resourcefulness was severely tested for a number of years when we celebrated Christmas in Moscow. With our beautiful tree stored safely in Sydney we had to resort one year to a cut out tree of green crepe paper “blu” tacked to the wall. Perhaps our most ingenious effort, however, was for our final Christmas in Russia when we created our tree using nine 21-litre empty drinking water bottles, three layers high and covered with a green sheet which was then duly decorated.

What a sight!

This tree though, directed our attention to the Christ Child, it helped us to enter more fully into the spirit of worship and wonder and to celebrate the “unspeakable, inexpressible Gift of God”. In that sense it was perfect!

It is not in the money spent, nor in the



latest elaborate décor created, but in the desire to give ourselves again to set the stage, to create an environment, to build a spirit of expectancy that is worthy of the Christ Child – God’s gift that is “too wonderful for words”.
The Christmas tree does it for me!

Commissioner Raemor Pobjie,
Zonal Secretary for Women’s Ministries,
Europe

Just the beginning

Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, garage parties, Christmas trees, Santa Claus and presents in pretty paper. Oh, and don’t forget about the baby Jesus. What do all of these have in common? Well for me, they were what Christmas was all about as I grew up in a non-Christian home. I remember hanging out for the school holidays as I looked forward to endless days on the beach.

I loved walking around the shopping centres with all their lights and decorations and everyone so happy. My Nan and Pop used to have all the neighbours over for a Christmas Eve garage party, even the ones they didn’t like who lived across the street. So, I always thought Christmas was a magical time when everyone was kind to each other and smiled a lot more at you in the street. Christmas to me was all about the fun, the parties and the great lunch with everyone wearing their Christmas bon bon hat.

I never knew that the baby Jesus was the son of God, or what he could mean to my life. We didn’t go to Church and so I only ever saw Jesus as the baby in the *The Greatest Story Ever Told* movie that was always shown around Christmas.

I never realised that he grew up and did so many miraculous things, or that he went to a cross and died a horrible death, or that he rose again. I never knew that He came to give me life in all its fullness, and that the little baby in that manger nativity scene symbolised a life so precious.

Now that I know and have experienced Jesus as my personal Saviour, the story of his birth is even more special because I know what that baby became – the light of the world. Christmas for me now is spent thanking God for the gift of his son and sharing in worship and service in my appointment. Our home is always filled with family and friends that have no where else to go as we share around the table. I hope with each passing year that I tell as many as I can that the Christmas story does not stop with a baby in a manger – that’s just the beginning.

Captain Tracy Briggs,
Divisional Youth Secretary,
Sydney East and Illawarra Division

The urgency of Christmas

I love Christmas. I get excited about the decorations, the buying and receiving of gifts, spending time with family and friends and the general party atmosphere. I love the ideal of Christmas – celebrating God's gift of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. I get excited at the possibilities of lives challenged and changed during this season.

When I am in the Christmas section of a store I marvel at the wonder and awe that children show at the decorations, and their sense of excitement as to what Christmas will bring. Then, as I look to the parents, I see some of that same wonder for some, but for many I see a sadness or a frustration of what cannot be for their family because of financial constraints, broken relationships, or simply a lost belief that life can be any different.

The message of God with us, hope, freedom, and a new purpose is not something that they will be able to make space to hear.

So for me, in the midst of all the joy and excitement, there is a sense of urgency. The urgency that there will still be many homeless this Christmas season – not simply without a roof over their head, but with no entry into their eternal home.

For many people, the Christmas season is the only time they even think of God and His Son Jesus. The challenge for me is, "How will I respond in a way that allows them to hear the voice of God?"

How exciting it will be, when people open the door of their hearts to God's gift of Jesus this Christmas. My prayer is: "Use me O God to act on this sense of urgency you have placed within my heart. May I not miss the opportunities you place before me to share your truth. Amen."

Major Chris Reid,
Corps Officer, Bayside Community Church

Focusing on the light

It's another cold, grey day outside and the wind is blowing the last of the autumn leaves off the trees. The Christmas markets are filled with local people and tourists enjoying the smells and sights of traditional pre-Christmas goodies. But despite the lights and the colours it's a relief to get home and come inside out of the bone-chilling wind. There's a fragrant smell of pine branches filling the house, and the first three candles are already burning on the Advent wreath.

We've come to enjoy the German customs of candles, pine wreaths and incense for Christmas – of being able to make our home cosy, fragrant and friendly, regardless of what the weather is doing outside and how short the days are becoming. For me, it is always strongly symbolic of what it means that Jesus is the Light of the World. November is always so dismal in this part of the world and sometimes we go for days without seeing any sunshine. As soon as Advent begins though, houses, shops and marketplaces are filled with light and colour and I feel my spirits lifting.

While here in the former East Germany

most people are thinking very little about the true meaning of Christmas and are simply revelling in the foods and treats of the season, for me it is very much about light and warmth and the change they make to a cold and darkened world. Sometimes here for Christmas we've had family with us; other times we have sat alone on Christmas Eve and had to really think about what Christmas is. Even for us, who know the true meaning of Christmas, the season is so strongly associated with family that it feels strange to be alone.

Then we have focused on the Light – the light that shines out warmly from the candles on our table, and the Light that has shone into our hearts and transformed our lives. And though I would always prefer to celebrate Christmas surrounded by the people we love, it's also good to sit in quietness and to really know that whatever else is going on around me, Jesus is the Light of the World – and most definitely the Light that gives warmth and hope to my life.

Major Jo-anne Brown,
Leipzig Corps Officer,
Germany Territory

The time for Christ

Christmas is such a joyful, happy time. It's a time filled with presents and laughter, friends and family. Christmas can also be a time where we are lost and caught up in the moment, focused way too much on trying to make the day perfect.

Christmas can be a day where we worry about the food, how clean the house is, and if we have remembered at the last minute to put everyone on the Christmas card list.

Throughout all of this, Jesus should be the focus of our concentration. Without Jesus there would be no Christmas. Although

we already know this, it still is awfully easy to get caught up in the time and moment of Christmas. How can we not, with all of the distractions?

Christmas to me is the majority of the above. The biggest time during Christmas though, should be reserved for Jesus.

I may struggle to remember that, especially with all my surroundings grasping for my attention. Through everything though, I will remember that Christmas is the time for the Christ.

Ellyse Brooks,
Greater Liverpool Corps,
Contributing youth writer

A great light

Some years ago I had the opportunity to go on safari to central Australia. We camped in tents, some nights in quite remote areas. On the last evening we put up our tents after dark (as usual). There were no lights! Most of us made our way to the shower block, more than 250 yards away. I was the last to leave that block and so made my way alone back to camp.

I have never experienced such darkness – no houses around, no street lights, just darkness. I had only a small torch. I thought I might never again find our tents. And I thought I might not ever be found. I just kept walking in the darkness, hoping I was going in the right direction – and then I saw some flickering torch lights at the tents – and I was filled with relief, joy and hope.

Isaiah says that, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" – not a flickering torch!

And, in John 8:12 Jesus said: "I am the light of the world."

As we consider Scripture we see the initiative of light – it was God's idea. It was

not a result of us turning a switch, or even lighting a candle – it was God's wonderful initiative.

This wonderful light is full of power.

In John 1:5 we read that, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

There are certain things I really appreciate about a Northern Hemisphere Christmas and Advent time. It is the light and the darkness – the way the bright white lights penetrate the darkness.

The lights enter the darkness and the darkness is gone. Because there is so much darkness, you notice the lights all the more. For some reason, these lights stir something in my heart – joy and hope and wonder.

When a light shines, it is impossible for darkness to take over! It all makes one so thankful for Jesus!

All of this – and I could go on much more – helps to compensate for having Christmas away from home!!

Commissioner Lyn Pearce,
World Secretary for Women's Ministries,
International Headquarters

Christmas revisited

I've had 73 Christmases, so far. I look back on Christmas when I was a child and recall the excitement as the big day drew near. It wasn't easy to go to sleep on Christmas Eve, and yet I knew I must, for Santa wouldn't come if I was still awake.

Then, years later, my children experienced a similar dilemma – and also the joy of discovery as they explored the contents of their Santa sacks on Christmas morning.

Over the years our family developed various Christmas traditions – décor, cards, food and music which each made their contribution to the delights of the season.

Now I am retired and a widow. All but one of my family live overseas. The traditions, in simplified form, remain and are precious for they remind me that Christmas is a time for thanksgiving as we celebrate the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ, to our world. I know the Christ of Christmas, and experience his presence with greater reality these days.

So on 25th December 2009, I will again join with millions of other Christians around the world in giving thanks to God for Jesus who has brought to us all new life, hope, joy, peace, and a relationship which surpasses all others. How rich I am!

Colonel Margaret Martin (ret.)

The gift of family

The past

The first 12 years of my life were spent in Northern Ireland. I'm a born and bred Irish girl! Christmas in Ireland for me meant: snow or sleet (the snow often came later in January); family – all the grandparents and cousins and aunts would get together; new toys to play with; loads of food and plenty of laughter; Santa and the unbelievable bursting of excitement as I went to bed on Christmas Eve; Military – I was born in the 70's at the height of the troubles and still remember images of soldiers on the street corners. It was like a security blanket, really, letting you know they were there to protect you.

The present

Honestly? This coming Christmas for me revolves around passports, luggage, US dollars and winter woollies. For five years now, the Robinson family has been saving and planning for THE trip – Disneyland! As I write, we have exactly 89 sleeps to go!

The IMPACT!

Family matters! My fondest memories as a child revolve around family. This Christmas is THE family holiday. The birth of Jesus signifies family – "For God so loved the world (his family) that he gave his one and only son ... (John 3:16). And, regardless of our situation, God says in his word that he provides families for the lonely (Psalm 68:6).

As I join my church on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of Christ, I will treasure the gift of the family of God.

As I spend Christmas squashed between rows 26 and 28 on Korean Airlines, I will treasure the gift of family. As we walk through the gates of Disneyland, I will treasure the gift of family.

Captain Deborah Robinson,
Corps Officer, Tweed Heads

So, stick a geranium in your hat...



Using both scripture and examples from the life of the late Christian author, Barbara Johnson, Major Vicki Clarke shows how we can make the decision to find joy in the Lord, despite the circumstances we may face.

“Yet, I will” are three words hidden in the Old Testament book of Habakkuk and come at a challenging time for the prophet. He describes it like this:

“Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty ...” Habakkuk 3:17 (*New Living Translation* used throughout).

Have you ever faced a time in your life where you could relate to Habakkuk's experience? No flowers on the trees, no fruit on the vines, only a geranium to stick in your hat! Or perhaps for you it has been a sense of hopelessness, thinking only negative thoughts, or feeling so depressed you simply didn't want to get out of bed and face the day!

Habakkuk makes a decision beginning with those three words, “Yet, I will ...”. Even though his circumstances aren't changing Habakkuk says: “Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:18).

Splashes of joy

Journey into the life of the late Barbara Johnson. Often known as “The Geranium Lady”, Barbara was an award-winning Christian writer of humorous self-help books that have sold millions of copies around the world. She was a popular speaker at Women of Faith conferences throughout America and has guided millions of hurting women through the tunnel of despair. Barbara is famous for her words, “Pain is inevitable but misery is optional”.

Both Habakkuk and Barbara Johnson came to the same conclusion: make a decision to find joy – joy in the Lord.

Barbara married Bill after graduating from college, and says her life was sprinkled with the normal stresses of life until 1966. Bill was then involved in a car accident that left him in a condition the doctors described as “un-rehabilitatable.” Two years later, after caring for her husband and four sons full time and struggling financially, Bill was healed. But, Barbara says, the pain had just begun.

In the next five years two of her sons were killed – one in Vietnam and one by a drunk driver. It was at this desperate time that Barbara pleaded with God for whatever she needed to get through and received a “bubble of joy ... that came to replace the elephant I felt sitting on my heart.” Like Habakkuk, Barbara made a decision to live, love life and rejoice in the Lord at one of the most traumatic times of her life.

Misery is optional

In 1975 Barbara discovered that one of her sons was a homosexual. It was this dizzy revelation, she said later, that nearly prompted her to drive over the edge of a cliff, caused a seven year estrangement from her son, and motivated her to do much soul-searching and write her first book, *Where Does a Mother Go to Resign?*, which sold a million copies. Her next book, *Stick a Geranium in Your Hat and Be Happy*, sold five million copies. Barbara went on to write many books which were printed in 32 languages and spent months on the Christian best seller lists.

Barbara found reconciliation with her son, and wrote *Thank You For Telling Me what I Didn't Wanna to Hear*. Spatula Ministries was born in 1978 for “parents who had hit the ceiling when they heard the word ‘homosexual’ and needed to be scraped off with a ‘spatula of love’”.

In her later years, doctors diagnosed Barbara with central nervous system lymphoma, a brain tumour, and adult onset diabetes. Her husband Bill died, leaving her a widow after more than 40 years of marriage. As a result, Barbara wrote a poignantly humorous book entitled “Plant a Geranium in Your Cranium” showing us that, despite the pain that is inevitable to us all, we can choose to see the flowers instead of the weeds.

Barbara Johnson died on 2 July 2007. Her eldest surviving son, David, set up The Barbara Johnson Foundation to continue her ministry.

Make the decision

In her book, *Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life*, Barbara writes, “The rain falls on the just and the unjust, but chiefly on the just, because the unjust steals the just's umbrella”.

This is a humorous picture of how the prophet Habakkuk might have been feeling. He had received a message from God, but he just couldn't understand the why, the when and the what! What happens when you feel like this – like life has taken a spectacular dive, or you're just feeling low?

From scripture and from the example of Barbara's life, we can learn to live by making the decision to find joy in the Lord and not in the circumstances that come our way.

For more information, titles of Barbara Johnson's books, videos and podcast, browse through www.barbaraspatulajohnson.org

Major Vicki Clarke,
Corps Officer, Gold Coast Temple Corps

“When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us.”

Helen Keller

Recommended Read!



When You're Running on Empty – Hope and Help for the Over-Scheduled Woman
Cindi McMenemy
Harvest House Publishers, 2006

Do you ever feel as if your life is going in a million directions, or that you never seem to have enough energy to meet the demands on your time and attention? Do you ever feel overwhelmed, exhausted and frustrated by a load of demands and responsibilities? Then the title of this book, *When You're Running On Empty* will certainly resonate with you! This book aims to help women realise that there is HOPE and HELP for the over-scheduled woman.

Speaking from her own personal experience in endeavouring to juggle life as a wife, mother, professional woman in ministry and an award-winning author, and supplementing this with wise insights gained from other busy women, Cindi McMenemy shows women how they can renew their energy and passion and press on.

The book is only 176 pages long, which is a bonus if you are a busy woman! It is broken into three main parts: Keeping Focus (with your mind), Keeping Fit (with your body) and Keeping Fresh (with your soul).

McMenemy touches upon every area of a woman's life, offering practical advice on such topics as: knowing when to say 'no'; serving to please God and not people; maintaining good health habits that recharge one's energy; simplifying one's priorities and taking time to rest and play.

The use of pertinent Bible passages shows that the Lord has much to say about burnout, dedication, priorities, self-fulfilment and time management.

Every chapter concludes with a “Pick-Me-Up Prayer” designed to help women do all things in the Lord's power.

Any woman who feels burdened physically, emotionally and spiritually will find practical help in this book.

On a personal note, *When You're Running On Empty* has been by far one of the most readable and practical books I've ever read and has made an indelible impact upon my own energy! This book has helped me to rise above feelings of listlessness and recharge, refuel and replenish.

I would recommend this book to women of all ages who recognise their need to be refreshed, refuelled and re-energised!

Major Maree Strong,
Divisional Mission and Resource Team Leader,
and Candidates Secretary,
Act and South NSW Division

Christmas Delight

No fuss Christmas cake

1kg mixed fruit
600ml of iced coffee or iced chocolate (make your own, or available from supermarkets)
2 cups of self-raising flour
Nuts (optional)

- Soak the mixed fruit overnight in 600ml of iced chocolate or coffee. The next day add the flour and mix through the fruit with a wooden spoon.
- Line a large round tin with baking paper and spoon in mixture.
- If desired, decorate with your choice of nuts such as macadamias, pecans or almonds.
- Bake in a slow to moderate oven (160°C) for approximately 1 ½ hours, or until cooked when tested.



Teina Gough,
Coffs Harbour, NSW

Our winner!

Thank you to those readers who sent us in their special Christmas recipes! Our winner, Teina Gough from the Coffs Harbour Corps, has won a copy of the *4 Ingredients* recipe book by Kim McCosker and Rachael Bermingham. Thanks to Teina for her quick and easy-to-make Christmas cake recipe.

Women's Ministries Territorial Project 2010

Our sisters in Malawi



Women's Literacy and Savings project provides an
Oppportunity to empower women and
Reduce poverty through
Training in literacy and business management skills, bringing
Hope and Health

Our goal - \$90,000



IGNITING A PASSION FOR MISSION

Dawn Beeson has long harboured a desire for missionary service. But, as she tells **SCOTT SIMPSON**, when the opportunity came it took her completely by surprise.



Dawn and Malcolm Beeson have a strong sense from God that PNG is where they're meant to be.

There's an enthusiasm to Dawn Beeson when she talks about Papua New Guinea that is contagious. Her eyes shine, her face lights up and the pace of the conversation increases. You're left in no doubt that since arriving in Port Moresby earlier this year to work for The Salvation Army, she's made a relatively smooth transition to her new way of life.

Her new-found passion for the country and its inhabitants is all the more remarkable considering that less than two years ago, Dawn's knowledge of PNG was restricted to "it's somewhere near Australia," and the idea of missionary service there was completely off her radar.

Out of the blue

Dawn and her husband, Malcolm, Salvationists who were almost part of the furniture at Chatswood Corps in Sydney, had got a taste of missionary life in a developing country when they spent three weeks in the African nation of Zambia in 2001.

"Since then we always felt that one day we'd like to do service in a Third World country," says Dawn. "When the invitation eventually came, however, it was totally unexpected.

"In January 2008 we got a phone call from The Salvation Army in PNG asking if we'd be interested in a two-year appointment there. It came completely out of the blue – it was Malcolm who took the call and, being a bit stunned by it, he said something like, 'I can't believe you're asking me this, can you please call back later tonight'. But from that moment on we never turned back," she says.

"We'd never considered going to PNG – we'd always thought it would be Africa – so it was a bit of a step into the unknown for us. But it really only took us a few weeks to decide to take up the offer.

"Everything just fell into place and that's why we believed the Lord's hand was in it.



Dawn is passionate about her role in Projects, including building schools for PNG children. All Photos: Shairon Paterson

"We're quite strong believers in doors opening and doors closing – that's how we've led our lives and that's how we believe the Holy Spirit leads – and doors just kept opening for us."

Equipped for the challenge

In February this year, after a frustrating delay in obtaining work visas, Dawn and Malcolm arrived in Port Moresby; Dawn as the PNG Territory's Secretary for Projects, Literary Secretary, and Editor of *Tokaut*, and Malcolm as Property Secretary.

Their knowledge of the country was still basic, limited to what they had picked up in conversations with people who had spent time in PNG.

Thrust into an unfamiliar environment – a new country, new culture, and new employment – they embarked on a steep learning curve.

Yet, says Dawn, never once did they feel that God hadn't equipped them for the challenge.

"I've got to admit that I haven't found it daunting at all," she says.

"I think that's because we came with an open heart. We didn't go on the web and research much before we came – although we spoke to a lot of people who had lived in PNG – we just had a strong sense from God that this was where we were meant to be. We knew The Salvation Army was strong here and that appealed to us.

"We've got a really good team of people here, both expats and nationals, and we've made some great friends already which I love. Actually, developing friendships with the locals is something that Malcolm and I are both keen on.

"We enjoy having nationals in our home to share in fellowship and we also value being able to work alongside them."

As is the case for most expats in PNG, personal security remains an ever-present concern.

In an impoverished nation where, subsequently, crime is endemic there is naturally going to be some restrictions on freedom of movement.

Dawn, while accepting of the need to exercise a heightened level of caution, takes this change of lifestyle in her stride.

"Security is an issue, yes, but we live in a compound and we have security guards at each end so we feel quite safe," she says. "But the lack of freedom is probably the thing we find hardest. We have to be sensible about where we go and what we do.

"Having said that, I walk around Boroko [the neighbourhood surrounding THQ] by myself during the day, although I never walk through a crowd, I always walk around it. I also take myself off in our car to go shopping at the supermarket on my own. But yes, there is a lack of freedom here compared to the life we lived in Australia."

Passion for projects

As Literary Secretary, Dawn is responsible for producing the PNG Territory's *Tokaut* magazine. It's a job she loves and she is gradually building a professional editorial team.

What Dawn has become particularly passionate about, however, is her role as the territory's Projects Secretary.

"It's exciting seeing and being involved in the projects the Army is operating here in PNG," she says.

"There are water projects – putting a well into a village or a complete irrigation system – feeding programs in schools, building schools and motels, health education, there's a whole range of things the Army is doing.

"I love the contact I have with the nationals on these projects and also that it allows me to get out into the country and see the beauty of this place.

"We're almost halfway through our term and there's still so much we want to do. Already we know that two years here is going to go very quickly."



Scott Simpson is Managing Editor of *Pipeline* and supplements. He recently spent time on assignment in Papua New Guinea.

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Major Julia Metcher shares her ongoing journey with depression, and how God's grace and strength has helped her focus on who she is becoming rather than what she can do.

I had it all. I was the consistent achiever: awards for public speaking, a university degree, a diploma in Ministry, and dux of my session. I became a Christian at 8 years old, I had a strong faith and a single minded commitment to the will of God. I became a junior soldier at 12, was called to be a Salvation Army officer at 13, was a corps cadet at 13, a senior soldier at 16, a cadet at 21, and a corps officer at 23.

I was a part of a love story equal to any recorded in Booth's annals: the Sally lassie on her weekly War Cry rounds in the hotels meets an ex-bouncer with a schooner in one hand and a bar maid in the other, prays for him to get saved for two years, he gets saved 10 days after she goes to College, they fall in love, he is called to officership, and they marry five years later!

By 1995 I was a mother with two sons, six and four and the wife of an evangelist who was planting a new corps. Yes, I had it all.

Then it all went black.

It was as if someone had turned the light off in the middle of the night, and no matter how hard I fumbled to find the switch to turn it back on, I couldn't find it.

Emotional battering

I cried for days on end, alternating from silent tears to uncontrollable sobbing. I couldn't face another human being. I withdrew from everything. My bedroom was the only place where I felt safe, although it also became my dungeon and my own personal jail cell as I waged between fear and shame.

My husband tried to get me to seek help, but I was too afraid of becoming a pill zombie and stuck in a psych ward like in the movies.

In the centre of the darkness was a fireball: red, raging, scorching at every movement of my heart. Anger consumed me. It was as if every moment of anger I'd ever felt in my 34 years had congealed to here and now. I hated the tidal waves of emotions

pounding me but, just as when I was little, I was powerless to withstand the swell and was battered over and over and over again.

It took me 8 months to make a doctor's appointment. I was diagnosed with major depression. So began the merry-go-round of medications and therapy. I remember sobbing on the floor in the shower one morning, "If this is as good as it gets, I don't want it!"

God disappeared

Worse than anything for me was that I lost God. He just disappeared. I couldn't find Him in all of this. The bulletproof thread of faith I had held for so long unravelled in my hands and now they were empty.

Why had He called me if this is what I was to become? Had I sinned really badly or something? Why didn't He answer my prayers to heal me? What was the point of being an officer like this? Where was the comfort, the joy, the purpose? Where had God gone? Why had He left me?

I searched for the next three years. I discovered that I have clinical depression – not a depression brought on by a single event, but a build-up of a lifetime full of pain, grief and emotions not dealt with. I look at it as a jar of my life experiences. I have been fat since I was a child and all the taunts and shame and isolation went into the jar. Three of my grandparents died when I was 12, and the grief and loss I felt and didn't know what to do with went into the jar. Every time I felt hurt or angry or unheard or isolated or emotionally adrift, it went into the jar and I slammed the lid on tight. Eventually the jar was full and the lid blew off.

Rest in me

One weekend Gary Raymond* was speaking at Emerald Corps. I had an overwhelming sense that I had to talk with him. It was the afternoon he was leaving. I rang. He came. I told him everything. I lost sight of Gary and heard God talking in his place: "Stop the

struggling. Rest in your depression. I am not going to take the depression away. I want to use you in it. I repeat, top struggling! Rest in Me! I want to use you as you are now."

Instantly I stopped struggling. The burden lifted. The healing I had longed for was not going to come, but what did come were the words, "My grace is sufficient for you". In those words has been my healing.

In *The Message* Paul says it this way: "... I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty!

"At first I didn't think of it as a gift and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, then He told me, 'My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness.'

"Once I heard that I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:8, 9).

The journey continues

It is an ongoing journey for me to focus on my depression as a gift rather than as a handicap. The gift is wrapped in my need for his grace to live with my depression and let him use me because of it. I have learnt that God called me all those years ago, not because of what I could do, but for who I would become as I let His grace be enough.

* Gary Redmond, (APM OAM) is a retired Chief Inspector of NSW Police.



Major Julia Metcher, Corps Officer, Coffs Harbour Corps

Single women & touch

Don't worry.
 Be happy.
 Trust God

I want to write about trusting God with the most secret and personal desire of every little girl and every 24-year-old woman; the dream of being swept off her feet by her very own real life prince charming.

If you're single and twenty-something in a sea of happily marrieds, you probably have Psalm 37:4 on a post-it-note on your bathroom mirror (and you know what it says without having to look it up). You've both claimed in prayer and relinquished to God your future marital bliss too many times to count. You own at least one book by Joshua Harris, but you would never be seen in the singles section of Koorong, for fear of seeming pathetic. You make jokes about being "on the prowl" and the level to which you're actually serious is directly related to the level of your self esteem that day. You know you should trust God. You forget to trust God and then you remember that you need to trust God, and then you trust God again.

Don't panic!

I've met some people who believe that there is one person out there whom God has pre-chosen for them, with whom they are meant to be. They believe that it is just a matter of waiting for God to bring that person into their lives. Others I've spoken to take a different view; use wisdom in selecting potential partners, and work hard at making it work. I'm still working out the theology of my dating doctrine, but I have figured one thing out. It is not God's will for me to panic.

I have a friend (not me ... someone else ...) who tends to get a little shiver of fear every time a birthday hits and she finds herself still single. My friend knows full well that she can trust God with her finances, that He hears her prayers for her unsaved sisters, and that He has her future firmly in control. There's one area I ... I mean she ... has a little trouble handing over to him, though. She enters every church event, meeting and conference with

antennae raised and mental "what I want in a husband" checklist in hand.

The Bible has some advice for my friend. She doesn't always like to hear it; agonising over what we don't like about our lives can be more comfortable than accepting it; but sometimes she needs to hear it. Here it is: Stop worrying. Relax. Trust God. I know that you know that. I'm telling you again, anyway.

Beyond imagination

In theory, my friend knows that God has her future all under control. But in spite of what she knows, she can't help but feel a pang of concern every time she hears of an engagement in her social circle, every time she takes a look at her peers and notes how few of them are of the eligible bachelor variety. Hopefully she'll figure out someday that what God has planned for her, whatever her future looks like, is better than anything she could hope for herself. Once she does, maybe she'll stop worrying.

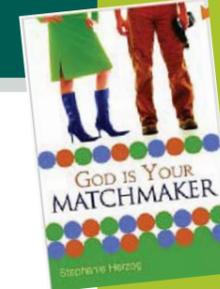
In the meantime, here are just a couple of things to think about while we're all still trusting God:

1. Don't let yourself feel pathetic. As with anything you don't particularly like about yourself, the trick is to wear your lack of partner with pride. Own it and people will be too impressed by your confidence to think any less of you. If J-Lo can rock that giant booty of hers, you can rock your independence. Self pity is only cool if you're Seth from *The OC*.

2. Don't own more than one cat. It may be just me, but I don't want to find out whether or not my fear of becoming a crazy cat lady is irrational. I'm joking! You and your cats are fine.

Mel Cotton, Program Resource Officer, Greater West Division

Recommended Read!



God is Your Matchmaker
 Stephanie Herzog
 Destiny Image Publishers
 Shippensburg, PA, USA
 2008

Have you ever dreamed about your own personal "happily ever after" but questioned the possibility of this actually becoming a reality? Have you heard multiple opinions regarding relationships, dating, singleness and marriage, yet feel unsure about what God says in His Word about these?

Countless books claim to have the answer to the world's questions regarding relationships and finding your perfect match. The difference with Stephanie Herzog's book, *God is Your Matchmaker*, is that it contains a vital truth we all need to acknowledge and apply: our heavenly Father created us and knows everything about us, so why wouldn't we each allow God to be our own personal "matchmaker"?

In this easy-to-read book, Stephanie Herzog gives wise insight into the amazingly detailed plans God has for each of His precious children, regardless of whether those plans involve singleness or marriage as both are gifts from Him!

Herzog exposes the lies of the enemy evident in the worldly views of relationships and dating which have subtly crept into the Body of Christ and created belief systems contrary to God's original plans. She outlines practical steps for both men and women to help them discover God's will for their life, rejoice in the season of singleness and prepare for marriage if this is part of God's divine plan. The book provides biblically based hope and encouragement to trust God completely in both present and future circumstances.

If you're hoping for some magic formula to "catch" a man or woman then this book is not for you. If, however, you want to receive all that is promised to you by your heavenly Father, then *God is Your Matchmaker* will help renew your mind according to God's way of thinking.

This book will equip any single, engaged or married couple with God's truth and help you to offer sound biblical advice to others also seeking to understand God's plan. As Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

When we trust in our God, we can be sure He is faithful and will fulfil us according to His glory and purpose!

Sisters in Christ Sarah and Emily McColough, Menai Corps

more

The Salvos website for young people

www.salvos.org.au/more
same mission, new generation

Have you checked out the Salvation Army website for young people in the Australia Eastern Territory, and beyond? Based on Ephesians 3:20, the MORE name, logo, design and positional statement have all been created to help young people (new generation) to engage with the (same) mission and vision of The Salvation Army to save souls, grow saints and serve suffering humanity. The mission underpins every aspect of the site, and all content must be related to one or more of these three statements.

The founders of MORE (meet the team on the website!) say that MORE is about us placing our trust in God's promises and committing to seeing a generation raised up

who believe in, expect and fight for MORE – more to life, more justice, more love, more faith, knowing God more, and becoming more like him!

Most importantly, it's a shout of praise to a God who is without limits, without fault, without sin, without weakness and is able to do immeasurably MORE than we could possibly imagine.

The website is constantly updated and is bursting with resources for young people, youth leaders, and those wanting to connect personally with their Saviour, and with their local communities. A large component of MORE is giving young people the opportunity to share their testimony. These are the save, grow, and share stories you will

find on the home page.

Check out LIFE, the new youth discipleship program; browse blogs on the dangers of sexting, giggly girls, failure, service, transforming lives, and much more; and read articles on all the wrong places, hiding behind the mask, homelessness and heaps of other relevant and challenging topics.

View MOREtv for all things video related, find out what ministry and training opportunities are coming up, learn how you can get involved, and become a part of this dynamic ministry!

A couple of other Salvo sites . . .
www.justsalvos.com
www.salvationarmy.org.uk/alove

Soul Purpose

<http://www.soulpurpose.co.nz>
"Our goal simply, to communicate Jesus to the internet generation."

This site is relevant, honest, challenging, full-on, and focused. It's also friendly, funny, and full of hope.

Read some life changing articles on faith, community and mission; be challenged by some upfront stories on image, relationships, and lifestyle; and be inspired and encouraged by some amazing testimonies and real life stories.

There's plenty of news about music, movie reviews, a developing interactive page, and videocasts.

Although geared more to a New Zealand audience, this website also aims to reach young people around the world and is certainly relevant to young Christians in Australia!

A great site to keep coming back to!

Ignite Your Faith

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/iyf>
Although directed more to an American teenage audience, this site covers topics that are still applicable to most teenagers in other western countries.

Hot Topics talks about issues such as knowing God's will, friends and family, defending your faith, sex and abstinence; Faith and Life features some honest articles on sport, youth groups, friends, mercy, God's top 10, and what Christians believe; and there are discussions and advice on school violence, faith and doubt, love, sex, and dating.

Humour and Fun looks at the lighter side of life, and there are questions and answers, articles on music, book reviews and much more.

This is a site you might want to bookmark!

Creative Corner

Christmas gift idea: Easy-to-make photo board.
Celebrate special memories!

Christmas is a time when memories are made. I often think about the times when I've gathered together with family and friends to share and celebrate special occasions like Christmas. I have many happy memories of these times and value my friends and family and the memories I make with them.

I recently made a photo board for my bedroom as a way of displaying photographs and other reminders of the special people and events in my life. It's a great way of celebrating happy memories, the relationships you value and the people you love. This is why it makes for such a great Christmas gift!



Making the photo board

What you'll need

- A cork board (any size you like)
- Fabric (enough to cover the front of the board and secure to the back)
- Ribbon (co-ordinated with your fabric)
- Drawing pins
- Staple gun
- Piece of chalk

What to do

1. Lay the fabric on a flat working surface with the wrong side facing upwards. Put the cork board face down in the middle of the fabric.
2. Staple the fabric to the back of the cork board. Pick a side as a starting point. Pull the fabric tightly and secure the fabric onto the wooden frame with a staple gun. Go to the side directly opposite and do the same. Do the third side, and the fourth side, continuing to pull the fabric tight. Make sure the corners are neat before stapling the fabric to the board.
3. Cut the ribbon at appropriate lengths so that they can be placed diagonally across the board, starting from one corner and working towards the opposite corner. Decide how far apart you want the ribbon to be spaced. It is a good idea to make light chalk marks on the edge of the board approximately where each piece should go.
4. Turn the board over so that it is face down and slide the ribbon under the board, lining it up with the chalk marks. Staple one end of the ribbon to the back of the board and pull tightly before stapling the other end. Do this for all the ribbon pieces.
5. Turn the board face up and measure out more ribbon pieces so that they are crossing over the ribbons already stapled. Mark with chalk. Turn the board over. Staple the ribbon down. Neaten the back by trimming any excess ribbon or fabric.
6. Turn the board back over and place a drawing pin at each ribbon intersection. Display your special memories!

Lauren Smith

Recommended Read!

A Lineage of Grace

By Francine Rivers
Tyndale House Publishers, 2002



This book is one of my all time favourites. I love it when authors write

a fictional book but base it on real and factual events. This is what Francine Rivers has done with *A Lineage of Grace*.

In this book Francine Rivers – one of my favourite authors – brings to life five women who have changed the world. The book follows the stories of real women in the Bible, women from whose line came Jesus.

These women had courage, they took risks. They were not perfect in any way, in fact they made HUGE mistakes and yet God, through His grace, used them to bring a Saviour into the world!

How awesome is that?!

A Lineage of Grace follows the lives of:

Tamar, a woman of hope.

Rahab, a woman of faith.

Ruth, a woman of love.

Bathsheba, a woman who received unlimited grace.

Mary a woman of obedience.

Although some of this book is fiction, a lot is true!

It gave me a hunger to know more about the amazing women of the Bible, and my passion for the Word grew incredibly after reading this book.

These stories are based on actual biblical accounts! READ THIS BOOK – the concept of how merciful God really is will blow your mind, and you will understand that God really can use ANYONE – no matter their past, if they are just willing to live for HIM!

Leah Robinson,
Social Justice Co-ordinator,
Central and North Queensland Division

Randomly Speaking

"If at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it."

Albert Einstein (theoretical physicist, author, Nobel Prize winner, 1879 - 1955)

"Strength is the capacity to break a chocolate bar into four pieces with your bare hands - and then eat just one of the pieces."

Judith Viorst (author, newspaper journalist, psychoanalysis researcher, 1931-)

"If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room."

Dame Anita Roddick (humanitarian, businesswoman, Founder of The Body Shop, 1942 - 2007)

"If the person you are talking to doesn't appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear."

Winnie the Pooh (cuddly, caring and absent minded bear, 1966-)



GIVING CHILDREN A HOPE AND A FUTURE

I want to share with you a piece of my heart called Child Sponsorship. Many of you would know about or be involved in it, but I want to share with you just how life changing child sponsorship really is!

I first started sponsoring a child when I was 13 and, somehow, I managed to save up my money to put towards my little girl. I was blessed to receive a little girl from Soweto, South Africa. She had just turned four when I welcomed her into my heart.

I cannot describe the incredible joy that came from knowing I was being the hands and feet of Jesus to this little girl. We would write to each other and she would send me pictures. She became a part of my world.

God called me to be a missionary in Africa one day, so I always knew that some day I would get to meet her. And I did! When I was 18 I went to Africa and, while there, had the chance to meet my little girl – Bo as I called her. She ran and jumped into my arms as I hopped out of the car. She was quite shy at first, she didn't really say much but she didn't need to. I could see instantly what my sponsorship was doing for her.

Bo showed me around her school – The Salvation Army school. What an incredible experience to be able to see that my sponsorship was paying for her education. Education is power. In a developing country if you receive an education you have the chance to turn your life around.

I was also able to meet Bo's grandma who was confined to a wheelchair and cared for Bo and her four siblings in a one room shack. Bo's mother had died of AIDS and her father had gone off to find work but had never come back.

Once a month the family received a food hamper, including rice and maize. The grandmother told me that, without that hamper, Bo's family could not survive. I also heard about the medical care that Bo and her

family had received since my sponsorship.

That day was life-changing and completely heartbreaking. I didn't want to leave Bo. Any sacrifice on my part to provide the \$25 per month was totally worth it.

I've since learned that, tragically, Bo has gone missing. I wait and pray, believing that some day God will bring us back together and that, until then, that God will keep her protected from the horrors of the streets.

I have since sponsored two more little girls, and in January I will have the chance to meet and spend a month with them.

My two girls are beautiful, and already you can see the improvement in their writing as they receive an education. One is from Uganda and one from Kenya. Both have tragic stories but are so grateful and honoured that their "Australian mum" helps them to survive and to give them a future.

Child sponsorship really is life-changing. It not only changes the life of your child and their family, but it changes your life too!

For around \$25 a month you can help

bring hope to those who have very little. They will receive an education, food and medical care, and will also hear about the God who loves them so much. If you can't afford it, try getting a group or your family together and do it that way!

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord in Jeremiah 29:11, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future".

God has come so that we can have a hope and a future through his son. What an incredible privilege to bring this verse to fruition for the life of a precious child, to allow God to use us to give them a "hope and a future".

For more information about child sponsorship with The Salvation Army go to <http://salvos.org.au/donate/overseas-child-sponsorship/>

Leah Robinson,
Social Justice Co-ordinator,
Central and North Queensland Division

Social justice world tour

Hi all!

I'm heading off on very exciting social justice world tour and will be travelling for four months. I'll be spending time in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe and Africa, seeing all the different work The Salvation Army is doing to fight injustice around the globe.

I'll be writing a blog every few days and would really love for you to follow my journey and see what God is teaching me along the way. Perhaps God may use my experiences to inspire and challenge you, too! Just type in this address and follow my blog: <http://leahsworldtour4justice.blogspot.com/>

If you have trouble finding it, go to blogger.com and type in Leah Naomi Robinson - Leah's world tour 4 justice.

See you on my blog soon! May God bless you incredibly!

Leah Robinson,
Social Justice Co-ordinator,
Central and North Queensland Division



My story...

that God had never intended me to battle. I spent a year insulting his creation. God was so far from my heart and mind. I began to believe that partying and the live-for-the-moment lifestyle was normal. I searched for affection in the wrong places to feel validated.

In August 2008 I decided to go out with a bunch of girlfriends. It was a typical night out with plenty of alcohol. The next morning I woke up in a hospital bed on a drip with various cuts and bruises, smashed teeth and police telling me my drink had been spiked. I was in a dark place and I knew it.

God uses sorrow

By October 2008 I had moved back with my parents. I had a new job and was surrounded by Christian influences again but I continued to deny God. I was out with friends one night and someone asked me to go to night church with them. I found myself laughing at them, but I also found myself getting ready for church the next day.

On the short drive to church I received a phone call telling me that a friend had passed away. I knew there and then that if I had a car accident, I would not go to heaven. It was the scariest moment of my life.

I walked into church and found God's Holy Spirit touching my heart and mind like it never had before. I never realised walking with God was a commitment that I had to make myself, it wasn't an inheritance I could easily receive because my parents were Christians. I gave my heart to the Lord that night. God led me to the scripture 2 Corinthians 7:10 – "For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow" (*New Living Translation*).

God can overcome anything because He is greater than everything. The past is just that - the past. The enemy will try to bring issues and situations up in our lives to remind us of this past to weaken us, but we always need to remember that we are strong in God. God has already won this battle for us so we needn't walk in shame or fear. I have learnt that God does better than overcome our pain.

He works through us to transform the lives of those who cause us such injustices.

God's perfection

God has now taught me that there is a different type of perfection that is worth aspiring to – His perfection. In Song of Songs 6:9 it says, "There's no one like her on Earth, never has been, never will be. She's a woman beyond compare. My dove is perfection ..." (*The Message*).

Self esteem issues are a toxic disease plaguing nations of women and it's a disease planted by the enemy. As Christian women, we need to be the generation to stand up and witness to young women as to what real beauty is. It isn't starving yourself, it isn't what magazines say, it isn't comparison. Perfection and beauty is having God in your heart and being the women which God created us to be – strong, loving, compassionate, forgiving, wise, nurturing and overflowing with the Spirit. We are God's treasures and there is nothing more beautiful than that. I want us to stand and fight for God's perfection and not pass this disease on to our daughters and granddaughters.

I believe that just like me, my parents have a story to share as well. Not only did God impact my life in such a profound way but theirs too. They never left me, never stopped loving me and were a support to me through every challenge I experienced. They are a witness to the unfailing love that God intends for parents to have for their children.

I am now living in Brisbane attending the Centenary Corps, and studying Youth Ministry at Bible College. Within two weeks of praying and making the decision to move, God provided me with a new job (I'm a Registered Nurse) and a Christian flat mate.

With God we can reach the unreachable, achieve the unachievable and maintain a strong faith in the wonders we cannot see. Psalm 18:32 says, "It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect".

Narelle Meldrum,
Centenary Corps,
Brisbane, Queensland

Rally celebrates, and challenges, motherhood

North NSW Division

Over 75 ladies travelled from Lismore, Ballina, Grafton, Kempsey, Maclean, Nambucca River and Port Macquarie to join with the ladies of Coffs Harbour for the recent Coast Celebration Rally.

The ladies raised \$300 for the Territorial Missionary Project in Myanmar during this event.

There was a lovely atmosphere of praise and worship as Captain Nicole Viles led the singing, and a hushed silence as Mrs Hazel Barret shared her story and the wonderful way in which God had answered her prayers during some difficult times.

Commissioner Linda Bond shared from God's Word and, reading about Moses' mother, challenged women to express their mothering skills so more young children can come to know the Lord.

There was great fellowship over morning tea and lunch which was provided and beautifully presented by the Coffs Harbour ladies.



Commissioner Linda Bond and Prayer Warrior Edith Rolfe enjoy fellowship during the lunch break.

Celebrating love and forgiveness

North NSW Division

About 60 ladies from Armidale, Barraba, Glen Innes, Gunnedah, Inverell and Narrabri joined with the Tamworth ladies on Tuesday, 29th September for a Celebration Rally.

There was a lovely atmosphere of praise and worship as Lieutenant Paula Glover led us in worship. A guest pianist and soloist blessed us with their presentation of *You raise me up*, and our thinking was challenged through "The Argument" drama.

A special offering of \$211 was received for the Territorial Missionary Project to help improve the quality of health of the women in Myanmar.

Territorial Secretary for Women's Ministries, Colonel Jan Condon, shared from God's Word, using the story of Joseph to show the need for each one of us to forgive when we have been wronged or betrayed. A number of women came to the Mercy Seat and received prayer.

Everyone enjoyed getting together and informed Major Judith Baker, Divisional Director of Women's Ministries, that we'd like to do this more often!



Colonel Jan Condon addresses the rally.

Refresh conference inspires and challenges

North NSW Division

What happens when 95 women from across North NSW converge on Darlington Park for a weekend? REFRESH 2009! What a privilege to gather together, escape the chill of winter and share in friendship and the warmth of the coast.

Under the leadership of Major Judith Baker (DDWM), guest speaker Captain Robyn Black (Glebe corps officer) and worship leader Leigh Forrester (Life Community Church), the REFRESH delegates had a weekend of worship, learning, laughter and community. The focus of our fellowship was to acknowledge God's purposes for us and be the women He intends us to be. We were encouraged by God's Word and the testimonies of the women around us. Electives and prayer were also a source of challenge.

As part of the weekend, there were numerous activities unfolding which included a silent auction to raise funds for the Territorial Women's Missionary Project. Everyone entered into the spirit of generosity, and almost \$1000 was raised.

Saturday evening was a hilarious life auction and women could bid for crazy things like "perfect memory", "unlimited shopping money for a lifetime" and "lasting energy and agility". After all the hilarity, three women were honoured as "Women of Purpose".

Mrs Margaret Bull (Tamworth) and Mrs Lynn Gilbert (Grafton) had shared their testimonies during the day, but Mrs Joyce Lodge (Gunnedah) was put on the spot by being interviewed about her life. Each one of them shared how they had needed to rely on God for their strength during the trials and experiences of life.

Major Judith Baker shared comments from others who acknowledged their commitment and faithfulness over many, many years and then presented each lady with an individually engraved glass plaque and a small gift to honour them as "Women of Purpose". Each of these women are also Silver Star mothers.

Sunday morning included a "Creative Prayer Journey" prepared by Major Julia Metcher, where ladies had time for spiritual reflection. We then met for our final worship time together and many women responded to God's call on their lives.

REFRESHed, we all left with a deep resolve to live within God's purpose with joy.



Mrs Margaret Bull, Mrs Lyn Gilbert, and Mrs Joyce Lodge with Major Judith Baker.

General Eva encourages women to make a difference in the world

ACT and South NSW Division

Almost 200 women and a sprinkling of men gathered at the Canberra City Oasis Corps on Wednesday 23 September for the divisional Women's Ministries' Floriade Rally.

General Eva Burrows (ret.) was special guest speaker and Graeme Press, Territorial Music and Creative Arts Director, was guest soloist and worship leader.

During the morning Graeme interviewed General Eva and much was gleaned about her life, her calling and work in Africa, as well as some insight into her years as General of the Salvation Army.

During the rally Christina Cameron, Queanbeyan's newest soldier, gave her testimony, sharing how she had experienced God's power in her life and had been set free from smoking.

"Moving forward - developing your Potential" was the title of General Eva's challenging message. General Eva emphasised that, today more than ever, women can have a significant role in society and can move forward in every area of life to influence the lives of others.

"In this depersonalised computerised world, Christian women need to emphasise that people really matter", she said. "God has given women the potential to have compassion, love and the ability to connect with people."

General Eva emphasised the importance of building strong Christian homes where our children are taught values and standards that in turn will help to make the world a better place.

"Women have the potential to be women of influence in the world. Therefore, we must not be afraid, but we must take the opportunities that God provides to make a difference," she said.

Following the rally, the women travelled to Commonwealth Park to see the magnificent displays of tulips, other flowers and plants, and pavilions exhibiting a variety of displays.



General Eva (ret.), delivers her message at the Floriade Rally, encouraging delegates to fulfil their potential and so make the world a better place for all.

"Chocolotherapy" reinforces God's truth

Sydney East and Illawarra Division

Inspired by the writings of Karen Scalf Linamen, (*Just Hand Over the Chocolate and No One Will Get Hurt*) the women of Shellharbour Corps gathered for a bit of "Chocolotherapy". It was a girls' get-together that featured chocolate taste testing, chocolate trivia, chocolate fashions, worship, sharing, and some interesting insights into the reasons we seek out chocolate as the "solution" to life's ups and downs.

Corps Officer Captain Tracy Payne led this special mini retreat, with the teaching focused on the issue of counterfeit comfort and the

habits that we form when it comes to personal problem solving. A study of Philippians 4 provided a reminder of what it means to find God's joy and God's peace; a truth reflected in the theme song for the day, Darlene Zschech's *Jesus is all I need*.

The chocolate eaten, the stories shared and the fun dinner that concluded the day, all helped to reinforce the truth that with God and good friends, mountains can become molehills and life can be truly joyful.

Displaying his splendour

South Queensland Division

“God always intended to display himself in more than just a beautiful sunrise or magnificent mountain view – he meant to dwell in the hearts of his redeemed people,” said Major Robyn Maxwell, Divisional Director of Women’s Ministries, South Queensland. “If we are to be women who ‘display his splendour’, then we need to know our identity in Christ. I believe God is calling women to rise up and embrace their God given identity, and to align themselves with the eternal purpose of making God’s name great throughout the earth.”

So began **Embrace**, the South Queensland Division Women’s Conference on 29 August.

Pastor Amanda Best, Leader of the Worship & Creative Arts Department for Dreamcentre Christian Church, Gold Coast, led the first session of the conference. From the very beginning, the women responded to her encouragement to be open, receptive and sensitive to what the Lord would do during the conference.

Pastor Amanda shared from her troubled teenage years and the many destructive decisions she made around drugs, alcohol and relationships.

“I treated my body like a theme park”, she said. “Somewhere though, deep inside, was a belief that I was made for something more than this.”

Pastor Amanda’s twin sister was born again and her Mum also became a Christian. They invited Amanda to church, God began to do amazing things in her life, and just before her 22nd birthday, she surrendered her life to Christ.

In January 2006, Pastor Amanda was one of only two survivors in a plane crash. One her friends was killed in the crash and she was in hospital for a month.

“These days were not easy, but there is a peace when you go through hard times with God at your side”, she said.

Pastor Amanda encouraged the women to acknowledge their

brokenness, commit it to God, and surrender to him. “Become a trophy of his grace”, she said.

Each woman was then invited to take a piece of broken glass (square glass tile) and place it at the cross, representing their broken lives given to Christ.

“In the midst of challenges and hard times, you can still face your life, and grow”, she said. “We need to declare the power of God, the healing power of God, and praise him no matter what our circumstances”, Pastor Amanda concluded.

A powerful testimony from Narelle Meldrum, a young nurse and Bible College student, began the afternoon session. Narelle, who attends the Centenary Corps, Brisbane, shared her journey from the “toxic” world of body and fashion obsession, anorexia and destructive relationships to finding peace, love and acceptance in a relationship with God. To read her testimony, see *Young Women in Touch*, page 19.

Major Maree Strong, Leader of the Divisional Mission & Resources Team & Candidates Secretary, ACT & South NSW Division, continued the afternoon session, sharing her moving and powerful testimony to show the destructive power of low self esteem and the transforming power of Christ to heal our brokenness, give us a new identity, and completely restore us.

Major Maree based her message on 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Major Maree’s testimony will be featured in the next issue of *Women in Touch* – March 2010.

The Embrace conference concluded with an unveiling of a beautiful mirror – pre-made with the same pieces of broken glass the women had taken to the cross that morning. “This is representative of what God can do when we bring our brokenness to Him”, said Major Maxwell.

Forgiven, freed and fulfilled

Newcastle and Central NSW Division

The weather was brilliant and the setting absolutely stunning! The crystal blue waters and white sands of Shoal Bay were the backdrop for a weekend of worship, teaching and fellowship 15-16 August.

There had been considerable prayer leading into, and covering the divisional Women’s Retreat, and this was evident as Sandra Koutnik and the all-girl worship team from Eastlakes Corps led the women in worship. This first session set the scene for a Holy Spirit-filled and God-glorifying weekend.

The divisional Women’s Ministries events in 2009 have revolved around Daniel 2:22, “He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with Him.” With this in mind Major Shelley Soper (corps officer, Earlwood) based her teaching for the weekend on the themes of Forgiven, Free, and Fulfilled.

In her introductory session, Major Shelley related to the women the stories of three people who, through the grace of God, had experienced forgiveness, freedom and fulfilment in difficult circumstances.

It was a highlight and a privilege to listen to the honesty of those who shared God’s leading in their lives. Through tears of joy and pain, women shared the journey that had led them to know forgiveness through Christ, and the way in which He was working in them so that they would know freedom and fulfilment.

Shelley’s love for God and sense of humour was the perfect catalyst as she challenged and equipped those who gathered for the retreat. Many women responded to the call to reach their full potential through Christ’s amazing love and forgiveness.

As part of the weekend, the women were given the gift of a necklace with a silver cross to remind them of God’s extravagant grace.

Women worshipping and experiencing God’s grace! What an incredible experience!



The all-girl worship team from Eastlakes Corps lead the praise and worship time.



Major Shelley Soper teaches on being forgiven, free and fulfilled.

Pamper night blesses community and corps

Newcastle and Central NSW Division

The church was beautifully decorated according to the pink and white “touch of love” theme. The scrumptious food was prepared and delicious coffee ready to flow. Standing by ready to bless every woman who walked through the door were 6 hairdressers, 6 masseuses, a chiropractor, 6 manicurists, 6 foot washers, three mini facial providers, Mary Kay consultants, two eyebrow waxers, 8 talented musicians, 40 beautiful table hostesses and 10 handsome waiters!

At 7:30pm, 14 September, the doors of Eastlakes Corps opened and Pamper Night 2009 began. Over 180 local women were shown the love of Jesus in a practical way, and treated like princesses for the

evening. The Eastlakes’ Women’s Ministries’ vision is to see hundreds of women thriving in their faith, filled with the love and power of God, and radically impacting every person in their community with the love of Jesus. Pamper Night is an obvious example of that vision in practice.

While the appreciation and joy of the women as they left at the end of the evening clearly showed they felt blessed by the experience, it was really Eastlakes that received the blessings. On an individual level each volunteer felt uplifted by the act of serving others. The greatest blessing was the unity of the church, a powerful and wonderful thing. Praise God!



The Embrace team girls served at the conference throughout the day.



Women from the Forest Lake Corps enjoy fellowship with Majors Maree Strong and Robyn Maxwell.

Keeping the door open

North NSW Division

The Moree Corps' Army Sisters began as a response to a need for healing and sharing. The group's development over the past five years has been a fascinating learning curve for me, focused around the women whose stories I have gathered.

Army Sisters was formed as a women's group but, as much as it was open to the whole community, it was clearly an Aboriginal women's group. The spiritual reality of this "program" has become amazingly clear, although it doesn't really fit with our western perception of reality and how a program should look and function.

We did all the correct things – setting out goals, methods, and measurement of outcomes. We were also very fortunate in having a professional counsellor to listen, advise and give therapeutic exercises.

We pulled out our papers to journal, everyone agreeing on the desperate need for healing from depression, addiction, abuse, violent behaviour, and – you name it, we tagged it. However, as soon as it was time to look at issues, the women went out for a smoke or got caught up in any distraction rather than sit in their pain. The women came, and the women fell away. "You can talk about healing but don't take me there", seemed to be the approach.

My conflicts and stumbling blocks were my own boundaries, my inadequate perception of urbanised Aboriginal women and their specific cultural needs, and my inadequate discernment of spiritual activity.

Belonging in heart

Moree has a history, which I see as misconceived, around racial discord. There is also a history of decades of drug abuse which has led to many of the sad situations in the town today. The community wants healing – healing of historical memories and present pain.

The government wants to help and has provided over 20 Aboriginal agencies in Moree, most of them for women. So why do women still come to me and ask about our struggling program, The Army Sisters? Why do I have this sense that they belong in heart even if the things of the world keep them from coming? Why, when we offer them something good, do sickness, funerals, jail, and general catastrophe keep them from our organised meetings?

I believe that they do come – spiritually. They ask about The Army Sisters because they need to believe in its existence. Government agencies don't heal, God does. In asking about the program, they are connecting and they desperately want to connect and heal. God is doing the work, I can't. It isn't my program and it isn't my job. My job is to keep the doors open.

We meet regularly with different participants. Four women come regularly, but unknown numbers know we meet, know they are loved and included, and I'm sure feel God's prompting. The regulars are different from our other women in that they have a much healthier foundation in life, although they too have been isolated from mainstream society.

God's Timing

What have Army Sisters accomplished? Well, in the "program" days we tried to talk about loss and grief, addictions, and family issues. We planned to go into the community to help struggling women but that never eventuated. Money was raised catering for different Christmas events, but that initiative collapsed. There were so many things we might have done, but they were my ideas.

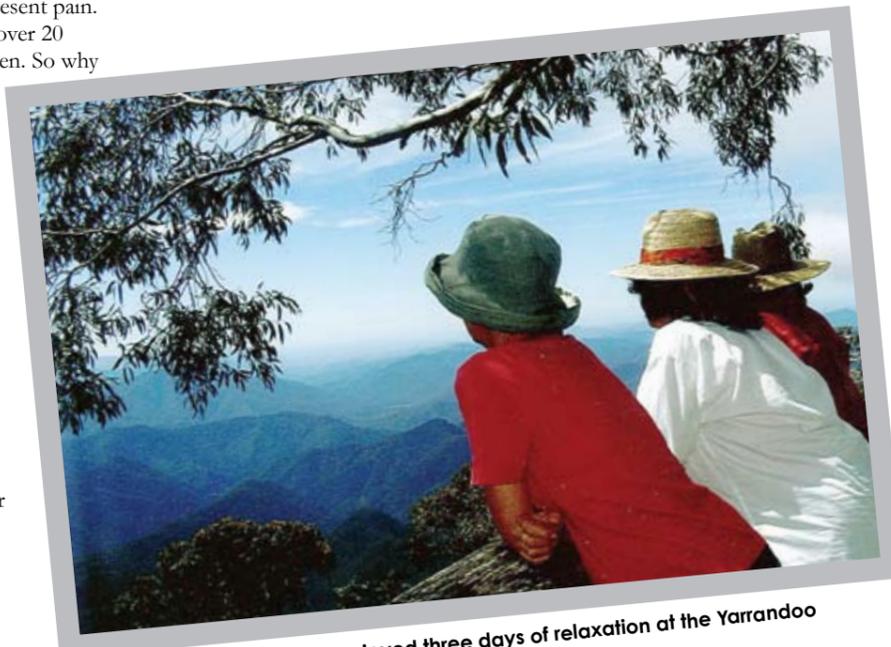
Change can only come from the women themselves.

I felt that a safe environment might offer the right basis to allow God's voice to come through and that a cooking and nutrition class might be that non-threatening space. So Army Sisters became a social gathering around food. We spend our time cooking, and laughing as much as possible. For me, it's a time to build vital relationships. When there is a sadness to share, we grab a sandwich and cry together. I have discovered the difference between thinking I am doing God's work and truly allowing God to move us. At times this takes time – God's timing versus my impatience.

Who knows what spiritual work is happening which the women don't understand? That spiritual work can be measured, even if it isn't in our terms, because their response to Jesus' love is their continued attraction to The Salvation Army and The Army Sisters. I keep praying that God will continue to soften and draw people to him through His love.

It's all about keeping the door open and letting God do the work.

Lt. Linda Woodbridge (ret.)
Moree Corps



The Moree "Army Sisters" enjoyed three days of relaxation at the Yarrandoo Ecological Resort

Freedom in Christ

ACT and South NSW Division

There was great excitement and anticipation as 62 women from throughout the division arrived at Greenhills' Camp and Conference Centre for our annual Divisional Women's Camp, 26-29 October.

Building on our divisional theme for the year, "Moving forward in freedom and victory," guest speaker Major Sheina Davies (ret.) chose the theme, "Freedom ours, victory Christ's". Major Howard Davies (ret.), wrote the song "Freedom and victory" especially for the camp, which greatly enhanced the theme.

There were a variety of activities that the women could choose throughout the week, including timbrels, line dancing and craft. "Time out" activities included board games, puzzles, and free time.

The miniature village of Cockington Green provided a lovely setting for a picnic lunch, followed that evening by a formal dinner and movie night.

The camp concert on the final evening was one of the highlights of camp, where a group from every corps presented an item, from the hilarious to the sacred.

Another highlight was our early morning prayer meetings, which saw more than half of the women at camp in attendance.

Our times of worship and teaching were truly inspiring and many women personally responded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Burdens were lifted, chains were broken and many experienced healing during these days. In our final meeting many women testified to what God had been doing in their lives throughout the week, and a number of women moved forward and knelt at the cross.

It was a wonderful camp, where love and acceptance was freely given and received.

Major Sheina Davies (ret.) addresses those gathered for the women's camp.



Making patchwork samplers was one of the many activities at camp.

More than a program!

Central and North Queensland Division

It has been a ground breaking year for women's ministries in Central and North Queensland with 12 divisional events held at 10 different venues, ranging from as far north as Lake Tinaroo (near Atherton) to Chaverim (near Childers) in the south and Emerald in the west.

The 449 women who took part in these events discovered that as far as God is concerned, they are all priceless stars creatively involved in women's ministry.

The six *Priceless* nights, lead by Divisional Director of Women's Ministries Major Simone Robertson, aimed to challenge the women to look to God for their value and to never forget that in his eyes they are priceless. The comments on the feedback forms from those who attended confirmed that the nights had achieved their purpose. These special ladies' nights out (featuring exquisite décor) took place in corps buildings at Emerald, Cairns, Townsville Riverway, Capricorn Region, Mackay and Bundaberg.

The two *You're a Star* retreats held at Lake Tinaroo and Chaverim encouraged the women to allow God's love and power to continually flow through them so that they could realise the potential he has placed within them. The northern retreat at Lake Tinaroo included 20 Salvationist women from Papua New Guinea (PNG). The PNG Salvationists were also involved in a week-long personal development and training program conducted at Centennial Lodge in Cairns. The program included team building, organising events, personal confidence, health issues, Bible studies and basic counselling skills.

Three *Celebrate '09* women's rallies held at Cairns, Townsville Faithworks and Capricorn Region focused on Creative Women's Ministry, with the DDWM emphasising that women's ministry is more than a program, it is women ministering to other women through the building of genuine caring relationships.

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Celebrating in style at the Capricorn Region Women's Rally.



Salvationists from Papua New Guinea, with Major Simone Robertson, wave their Aussie flags!



Missionary morning at Coffs Harbour

North NSW Division

Almost 100 ladies from local Coffs Harbour churches and surrounding corps gathered for a morning tea to support the Territorial Missionary Project in Myanmar. After the DVD of Myanmar was viewed and bookmarks were distributed asking for prayer for the women and children, a variety packed program was enjoyed. Each of the churches and corps were asked to present an item which ranged from a humorous original piece written by the Catholic ladies specifically for Myanmar, to a skit of a Mother's hilarious letter to her son, to some old favourite sacred hymns. A moving highlight was a mother and daughter piano and violin duo who were visiting from Perth. Interspersed were community sing-alongs of Christian words to old-time tunes.

Attendees enjoyed a Devonshire morning tea and shopping at the Missionary trading table. A total of \$1044.65 was raised for the project, the greatest blessing being the spirit of fun and love and fellowship in which it was raised.



Ladies from Coffs Harbour Corps and local churches enjoy fellowship at the missionary morning.

Reflections: a time of renewal, hope and healing

South Queensland Division

A chocolate fountain, strawberries, marshmallows and black and pink helium balloons greeted delegates on the opening night of "Reflections" – the Gold Coast Women's Conference, held 6-7 November at the Gold Coast Temple.

The chocolate and treats were for eating and the balloons were for letting go – symbolising the burdens and worries on the hearts of the women that prevented them opening their hearts to God and from having a close relationship with him.

During the evening, Nicole from the Gold Coast shared some of her past mistakes, and spoke of how she had again found God, and his great love. Kelly also spoke, basing her testimony on Jeremiah 29:11. "There are no limits to what God can change in your life, in his perfect timing", she said.

The next morning, after energetic and joyful worship, Denise shared her moving testimony on the amazing power of forgiveness and how she had recently been freed from a sense of guilt that had burdened her throughout her life.

Major Chris Reid, Bayside Community Church Corps Officer, spoke about how, as women, we experience and carry pain, hurt and guilt, and our "tank of coping" gets drained. "God doesn't promise us life without difficulties, but he does give us all we need to cope and to grow," she said.

Major Chris read from 1 John 3:9, emphasising that "we have God's DNA within us, all we need to be perfect. Our sense of wholeness, belonging, identity and sense of value needs to come from him."

After lunch, the women chose from four electives for the next session: Inspire to Love, Ignited by Love, Ignite for Mission, and Instil the Discovery.

Merlene then shared her recent difficulties as a Christian, the anger she had felt towards God, and how the Lord had brought her to the point where she could rest in the words of a much-loved song,

"God gives and takes away, blessed be his name."

In the final session, Major Valmae Holland, Corps Officer at Caloundra Corps, spoke about releasing our faith – verbally, by standing on the promises of God; in prayer; through our actions; and in our attitudes.

"Choose to trust God even when you don't like what is happening," Major Valmae said. "Have faith that whatever happens, he will always love you."

The conference concluded with prayer and worship around the cross.



Celebrating every stage of a woman's life.



The young dancers were an energetic and enthusiastic part of the conference.

Women like us

Captivated
by the word



International Guest Speaker: Major Carole Bate accompanied by her daughter Heather Bate

with Commissioner Linda Bond

 Women's Conference organised by Territorial Women's Ministries Department

Registration forms will be available in October

When:

12th - 14th February, 2010 - Brisbane (Watson Park)

19th - 21st February, 2010 - Sydney (The Collaroy Centre)

Day conference 17th February, 2010 - Campsie



"The very purpose of Christ's coming into the world was that he might offer up his life as a sacrifice for the sins of men. He came to die. This is the heart of Christmas."

Reverend Billy Graham

John 10:10b

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."