

WOMEN InTouch

DECEMBER / 2015 / VOLUME 16 / ISSUE 4

Christmas:

RESTORING THE BROKEN



AWE AND WONDER | LIVING IN THE MOMENT | DIAMOND GIRLS | A LIFE-CHANGING INVITATION

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Team talk

FROM THE DESK OF THE TERRITORIAL
PRESIDENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Christmas is almost here. And what a season of JOY it is! Families come together in celebration, corps and churches celebrate with special services, people volunteer to serve meals for those who are alone or lonely, gifts are exchanged. I also recognise that it is not always a joyful time for some people and we pray that in their situation, they will find some measure of joy.

Christian author Joyce Meyer writes: "JOY is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. However, it is released only by making the decision not to allow adverse circumstance to rule your emotional and mental attitudes. Through JOY, you can receive strength to do things that would otherwise be impossible." Paul reminds us that JOY is not dependent upon circumstances and encourages us to be content with what we have in life. JOY is not found in the accumulation of things but in a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

When the angel visited Mary to tell her that she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, I think she was very surprised and wondered why she was chosen. But Mary established JOY and worship as the rightful response to the news that a Saviour would be born. Although at first she may not have fully understood the angel's message, her response was one of glorifying the Lord and rejoicing in God her Saviour.

Then the angels appeared to the lowly shepherds with a message of JOY. This must have been a shock to them as they were quietly minding their own business. But they also responded and hurried off to Bethlehem to see the baby. Then they spread the news about the birth of Jesus.

The Magi did not miss out on JOY either, as Scripture records they were OVERJOYED when they saw the star and followed it all the way to the manger where they fell down and worshipped the Christ Child. Each of these snippets of the Christmas story highlight the importance of JOY. It is so vital to living. The only true JOY is in relationship with Jesus and obedience to God. Anything less than obedience brings barriers, reservation and guilt. We have a message of JOY to share with the hurting broken, lonely and lost of the world – it's all about JESUS. Let's talk about Jesus – the JOY giver.

It has been a joy to greet you each quarter through *Women in Touch* and you may be aware that this is the last issue of the magazine. So I want to thank you for your support of Salvos Women through *Women in Touch* and we look forward to see what the new format will mean for us all.

Simone Worthing has been responsible for producing *Women In Touch* each quarter and we are grateful to her for her diligence and dedication to this task. I pray that women of all ages will experience a JOY-filled Christmas as we focus on Jesus whose presence fills us with joy.



COMMISSIONER JAN CONDON
Territorial President of Women's Ministries



About this issue

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It is fitting that in this, our final printed issue of *Women in Touch* magazine (see page 4), we are focusing on the birth of Christ – the greatest gift to all humanity – and our response to the forgiveness, freedom, strength and life that precious gift brings with it.

Christmas is a highlight of the Christian calendar and a season that helps restore hope, joy and purpose to many in a world weary from suffering and a sense of hopelessness in the face of relentless personal tragedies and global disasters.

As we read in the biblical accounts of Jesus' birth, wise men, shepherds and indeed, the heavenly realm, openly and in awe celebrated this universe-changing event. Jesus came to earth in challenging, uncomfortable and life-threatening circumstances to make salvation and eternal life possible for all humanity. He came to restore brokenness and make us whole.

In this, our concluding issue, we look at how we, too, through Christ's love and grace, can restore hope to the broken and rebuild damaged relationships in our own lives. This involves, as our authors discuss, getting out of our comfort zones, focusing on those in need in our communities – physically, emotionally, spiritually – and doing what we can to respond to the needs of others. It's usually not easy, is often uncomfortable and challenging – but reflects the life and purpose of the one whose birth we celebrate.

The team here at *Women in Touch* would like to thank you for your support and encouragement over the years. I am certainly grateful to our editing and design teams, photographers, particularly Shairon Paterson, and our many contributing writers who have all worked so creatively and consistently to bring you the magazine each quarter. We look forward to serving you in again the future, albeit in a different format, and to continuing to bring a message of help, hope and encouragement in Jesus' name.

SIMONE WORTHING
Editor

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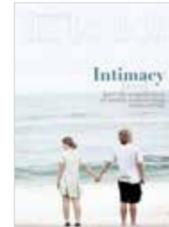
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WOMEN IN TOUCH MAGAZINE IS CLOSING ITS PAGES...

For the past 15 years, *Women in Touch* magazine has been working to help keep the women of this territory connected and in touch – with each other, with changes and trends in society, with resources available in our Christian walk and, most importantly, with our great God as we grow in our relationship with him.

Throughout these years, the magazine has published a range of articles – from personal testimonies and stories of transformation; to pieces on faith, grace, prayer and spiritual direction; as well as profiles on issues such as domestic violence, divorce and human trafficking.

Many writers have shaped these stories – from editors Major Jeanette Woodbury, Captain Susan Young, Major Margaret Sanz, Scott Simpson and Simone Worthing; photographer Shairon Paterson and to numerous contributors who, in both words and images, have walked alongside women in their spiritual journeys, have highlighted the impact women are making in ministry around the world, and have helped raise awareness in the social justice arena.

While *Women in Touch* magazine in its current form will end, our commitment to covering these stories remains undiminished, and they will continue to find expression within *Pipeline* and online through mySalvos.org.au and the upcoming new *Pipeline* website. So, to mark the end of this chapter, we present a brief look at some of the magazine's covers over the years as a tribute to the history of *Women in Touch*. Enjoy!



AWE AND WONDER

A MESSAGE FROM THE WORLD SECRETARY OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Christmas always creates for me an atmosphere of awe and wonder! The miracle of that first Christmas still continues to grip my imagination and stir my emotions. It was a HOLY night as the Christ Child made his entrance into the world bringing peace, love, joy and hope. What an entrance it was!

Who does God announce the birth of his son to? Who does he invite to come and see the new baby? A bunch of uneducated, smelly, low class, social and religious outcasts, and despised shepherds scattered on the hillsides of Bethlehem looking after their sheep. Shepherds were poor; they were not in a position that would set the world on fire and they were known as a class of people that could not be trusted. Yet it was to them that God announced the arrival of his son.

INDISCRIMINATE LOVE

You would expect an event like the birth of Christ to be announced to the most important people of the nation. That was not God's plan. He wanted to show that his love does not discriminate on the basis of class, wealth or social standing. Jesus was not coming to be the Saviour of only kings and governors and priests, but to be the Saviour for the whole world. His love is offered indiscriminately to anyone who will believe and trust in him as Saviour. That is the message we celebrate!

The shepherds played such a significant and influential role in the Christmas story. They are the perfect role models for

us to emulate as we celebrate the birth of Christ. Can we even comprehend the reaction of these shepherds when the angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around them? I am inspired and motivated once again in their response to what they heard and saw.

ACTIVE RESPONSE

The shepherds BELIEVED what the angel had told them. While they were being attentive to the responsibilities given to them as shepherds, they were suddenly enthralled by the angelic announcement. Filled with awe, they accepted this message of good news of great joy (Luke 2:9-15). The shepherds ACTED on the message received. They didn't just believe and enjoy the message given to them, they acted upon it. They wanted to see with their own eyes what they had been told. So they left their sheep and made the journey to find the Christ Child (Luke 2:15-16).

The shepherds PROCLAIMED the good news! When they had found him, they "spread the word" concerning what had been told them about this child. They didn't hang around the manger because they knew that they were now proclaimers of the gospel message. They came to him, adored him and then they moved out to herald the good news. It was now their responsibility to "Go and tell!" Let us do the same, especially at this time of the year, for all who are still waiting to hear the good news!

"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told" (Luke 2:20). The shepherds, filled with JOY, returned to their sheep and their responsibilities, but their lives would never be the same again. May our celebration this Christmas be a life changing, transforming experience.

Commissioner Silvia Cox, World President of Women's Ministries, joins me in sending you Christmas blessings.

Commissioner Rosalie Peddle
World Secretary for Women's Ministries



CHRISTMAS – A SOCIAL JUSTICE NARRATIVE

WHAT BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE JESUS' BIRTHDAY THAN BY HAVING A PARTY WITH THE KIND OF PEOPLE HE WOULD INVITE!

WORDS * CAPTAIN GENEVIEVE PETERSON

I was at a SAGALA camping trip, and a young girl was trying desperately to point out a turtle she could see sitting on a rock in the distance. I could not see it. She gestured, described the physical location, attempted to frame the turtle with her hands as a viewing box, held my head in the right position – but nothing worked and I missed seeing the turtle. I find this a wonderful allegory to describe my attempts to point out the social justice narrative within the Bible to others, in particular, the mission implications within the Christmas story.

In my mind, God could not have made the lesson any clearer. A young un-wed girl is pregnant, gives birth in a dirty stable, in a city foreign to her and away from any family or social supports. She is visited by shepherds and foreign, star gazing gentiles, both groups of whom were despised, or at least avoided in that day, and then is forced to flee with her vulnerable child as a refugee. This is the moment of incarnation, when the Son of God is introduced into the world – and the Holy ground is a place we don't want to visit, the worshippers are those we wish were not among us, and the vessel God uses to birth Jesus is a woman so "shameful", her own people wanted to stone her.

Jesus, in his distasteful birth, his humble life as a carpenter, and in his death as a criminal, reveals to us what true worship and mission look like. It involves the people society ignores, includes those we consider unworthy and it embraces and elevates those who've been rejected and excluded. And yet, too often, we fall into the same trap that ensnared the Israelites. We make worship of God and the celebration of the Messiah a place of privilege, exclusion and wealth.

For most of us, celebrating Christmas will mean a lavish lunch, excessive gifts surrounded by those we know and love and possibly a short worship service in a clean and secure church building. While this occasion may genuinely please the Lord, it is a vastly different picture to the one God orchestrated in the birth of his son. When I think about some of the single mums I work with, those who

didn't have a Joseph who stuck around, I wonder if they know how much Jesus loves them, and how, on his birthday, he would probably choose to hang out with them rather than go to the big fancy church service and extravagant family lunch. I wonder if they know that his life was probably more similar to theirs than it was to mine. This isn't to say that our Christmas celebration is wrong or an affront to God. I will be celebrating Christmas with the fancy presents, food and church service. But I wonder how powerful it could be if we as Christians embraced and included those who feel just like Mary as she carried and raised Jesus. I wonder how significant it would be for them to be invited to a family dinner and to receive gifts that are personalised, and for their children to be included and celebrated. I hear people respond, "But I can't invite a stranger into my home, it wouldn't be safe for my children". I agree. The challenge then, is how does the stranger become a friend you invite to dinner?

I will be inviting a 15-year-old mum I met through youth group to "one" of our Christmas celebrations – someone who has become very dear to my children and whose son plays with my son. I will also be inviting her mum, who is only a couple of years older than me, and someone who has become an inspiration to me – A strong woman whose life has been filled with hardship and disappointment; a woman who possibly feels she has failed at life, but who, in my company, can be genuinely celebrated as a mum who is present in her child and grandchild's life. In my house, she is loved and she is important. I believe this helps her understand how truly valued she is, not just to me, but to God. And that in being loved, she might come to understand the love of God.

As Christians, we often think our response to those in need is to donate toys or possibly serve food to the homeless, and this is good and helpful and should continue. But I am sure that's not exclusively how Jesus engaged in ministry. I think he saw people no one else did and involved himself in their lives. Jesus talked to people others would ignore and validated their position in the world. He saw them, because he was one of them and knew their pain. That's the power of the incarnation.

Do you think Mary ever lost the shame of Jesus' birth? Do you think the rumours about the identity of Jesus' father stopped? Were other parents happy for their child to play with him? Was he chosen to be trained as a pharisee? Did he have friends among the privileged in Jerusalem or did he grow up in a city "nothing good could come from"? While the world has changed in many ways, we know that it is the children and families born in shame and poverty that continue to be ostracised, and that's a life Jesus can relate to.

So how can we be more like Jesus? I think it starts by loving and valuing the people he loved and valued. And what better way to celebrate his birthday than by having a party with the kind of people he would invite! So take the time to visit and befriend someone the world chooses to forget. Who knows, maybe the young person in need you visit and befriend might have a life-changing salvation gift just for you, and you will find yourself praising God with both strangers and angels and being part of a whole new world.†

HAVE YOURSELF AN UNCOMFORTABLE CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME OF FAMILY, FRIENDS, CELEBRATION AND LOVE, FOR SOME. FOR OTHERS, IT IS A TIME OF LONELINESS, SADNESS, PAIN AND REGRET. *WOMEN IN TOUCH* CHALLENGES READERS TO GET OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONES THIS CHRISTMAS TO RENEW THEIR WALK WITH GOD AND SERVE THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING

WORDS * WHITNEY HOPLER / PHOTO * LENA POBJIE



I nearly choked on the Christmas cookie I was eating when one of my friends blurted out, “My husband just left me. He’s been having an affair”. My friend continued to unfold the shocking story of how her marriage had fallen apart, and how that crisis was causing tremendous suffering for her and their three children. As she spoke, tears ran down her face and fell onto a stack of Christmas cards piled up on her kitchen counter.

This friend was someone who was known for hosting a fun, festive Christmas party every year – an event that many neighbours looked forward to attending to enjoy Christmas cheer together. There would be no party that Christmas for my friend and her family.

I faced a choice in my friendship with her that year: Either I could avoid her because she made me feel uncomfortable with her raw emotions and serious needs, or I could draw closer to her in the midst of her suffering. Setting my cookie down on a napkin, I reached out to embrace her.

TOUGH BEGINNINGS

Our culture often emphasises ways to feel comfortable during the Christmas season, like creating a cosy atmosphere at home and indulging in expensive gifts to celebrate. But when Jesus came to Earth on the first Christmas in Bethlehem, he chose to do so in extremely uncomfortable circumstances. His birth occurred in a smelly stable, miles away from his family’s home, in an overcrowded place. Soldiers roamed outside, enforcing

their government’s requirement that everyone who travelled there for a census pay the taxes they owed.

Jesus chose to enter our fallen world in a way that drew attention to the suffering in it. He didn’t look away from difficult circumstances such as poverty and conflict. When we celebrate his birth at Christmas, we shouldn’t look away, either. The Bible urges us in Galatians 6:2 to, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ”.

There’s nothing wrong with celebrating at Christmas. After all, Jesus is the best gift the world has ever received! The problem comes if we let our celebrations turn inward on ourselves, acting as if we live in bubbles that are separate from the uncomfortable realities of the world around us. Although the classic Christmas carol *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* declares that Jesus’ birth should bring us “tidings of comfort and joy,” we should still allow God to make us feel uncomfortable at Christmas.

If we dare to look beyond our bright lights and shiny ornaments out into the darkness of the suffering that surrounds us this Christmas, we can join God in his work redeeming that suffering. If we’re willing to face the problems that bother God about this fallen world – no matter how uncomfortable they may make us – God will empower us to help solve them.

BEYOND THE COMFORT ZONE

Here are some questions to think and pray about as

you consider how to break out of your comfort zone this Christmas season:

- What’s on your December calendar? Is it so full of events and activities you enjoy – such as concerts, parties, baking, and shopping – that there’s no time left for you to say “yes” to God when he brings a hurting person into your life to help? If you’re too busy to respond to God’s interruptions, clear your calendar enough so you’ll have some free time this month.
- How much are you planning to do this Christmas season to serve people you already know about who are in need? This can be anything from volunteering at an organisation like your local hospital or food bank to donating funds to a charity. When you compare the time, energy, and money you plan to use to serve others this Christmas to the resources you plan to spend on your own enjoyment, is the amount equitable? If not, how can you increase what you give to people in need this Christmas?
- Who do you know personally who is going through a crisis this Christmas season? You can probably think of at least several people among your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbours who are struggling with some sort of crisis, such as grief over the death of a loved one, unemployment, or an illness or injury. Make a list of the people you know who are going through a crisis right now. Then pray over your list, asking the Holy Spirit to let you know specific ways you can

encourage them and or help them in practical ways this Christmas.

- What sins do you need to confess and repent of this Christmas? Pray about the sins in your life and turn away from them, toward God. Thank God for his blessings to you by renewing your commitment to honouring him and pursuing a closer relationship with him – in every part of your life.
- Who do you need to apologise to or forgive this Christmas? Don’t ignore the broken relationships in your life this Christmas season. Even though it will be uncomfortable to reach out to people you’ve hurt or who have hurt you, risk doing so, since Jesus has reached out to you with the ultimate forgiveness.

This year, do more than just having yourself a “merry little Christmas” where “troubles will be out of sight” as the carol says. Dare to have yourself an uncomfortable Christmas – just like Jesus himself did when he entered our world. In the process, you’ll discover a deeper Christmas joy than you ever could otherwise! †

This article first appeared in crosswalk.com in December, 2014 0 www.crosswalk.com/faith/women/have-yourself-an-uncomfortable-christmas.html

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REFLECTION

CALLED FROM BROKENNESS

WORDS * MAJOR DANIELLE STRICKLAND

I was speaking with someone today about why women's rights are a big deal. I answered quickly, "Because Jesus is a feminist and empowerment is what he does". But as I thought about it, I realised that it's much more amazing than that. The things Jesus does are for all of us, but especially for those who lack equality. He literally calls out of our brokenness, shame and inequality, a worthiness that is intrinsic to each of us. It's mind-blowing when you stop to think of it.

Imagine if we all woke up to the reality of how this plays out in real life? How would it change the way we treat people? The way we construct our societies? The way we "do life" together?

Musician and songwriter Jon Foreman has this song called *All of God's Children* and he says we're all

"shining underneath". And I really like it. I like it because there is something so essentially right about it. God made us good. And I know and recognise that sin/brokenness/evil has marred and scarred us – many of us [are] unrecognisable – but if we were able to see beyond the "covering" of our sin – we are shining with value and dignity and worth.

What if we really saw people that way? Saw them for who they are underneath the pain, suffering, sinful rebellion and covers of a dirty, broken world. What if we saw the glory of God inscribed into their true selves when Jesus knit them together in their mother's womb? What if we could catch a glimpse of the breathtaking goodness of God in every person we meet?

I have this little thing I do with my youngest son at night. I say, "Who made you?" And he says, "God made me". And I say, "How did he make you?" And he looks and smiles at me and says, "He made me good". It takes my breath away.†

This blog first appeared on 30 October 2015, at www.daniellestrickland.com/blog/. Reprinted with permission.

"The meaning of Jesus' coming is key, not only to our everyday lives, but to everyone's life. There is now living hope that this isn't all there is. There is some glimmer in the distance, but a glimmer just the same, that we were born for more than this – that there exists some possibility that all the brokenness and lostness and emptiness will be matched by hope, truth and life."

– Major Danielle Strickland, "The revolution that is Christmas".

RECOMMENDED READ

THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION – LET GO OF WHO YOU THINK YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE AND EMBRACE WHO YOU ARE

WORDS * LIEUTENANT VANESSA HUNT



The Gifts of Imperfection – Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed To Be and Embrace Who You Are. Brené Brown. Hazelden Publishing, 2010

I came across this book after listening to Brené's TED talks on shame and vulnerability. I was really struggling with these topics at that time. This book, based on research with many personal stories threaded through it, makes for a thought-provoking and heart-searching read.

The issues Brené addresses are quite universal and include: the desire to fit in, shame, authenticity, perfectionism, resilience, hope, addiction, and power. At first, what Brené states may seem obvious or too simple, but I found myself returning to these simple sentences later on at key moments and saying, "Huh, it's not as obvious or as simple as I thought at first".

You should read *The Gifts of Imperfection* if:

- You are suffering from depression, anxiety, stress, or insecurities. These are sometimes symptoms of an unhealthy emotional, spiritual, and or, physical life. This book focuses mostly on the emotional side. It has some really valuable things to say about practising healthy emotional habits.
- You desire to be genuinely seen, known, and loved. I think we all want these things. But for many of us, or for me at least, having genuine relationships (which result in being seen, known, and loved) doesn't come easy. Brené does a great job of addressing the struggles and fears involved in developing genuine relationships, and she gives good, practical advice on how to begin "moving gently" past fears and insecurities and towards honest relationships.
- You want something "more", something deeper, from life. Brené writes this book as a result of researching people who live "whole-hearted" lives. This book won't give you the "more" you desire, but it will point you in the right direction. Some of the directions it points to are pretty unexpected, but I think they are right on target.

Win a copy of this book! Simply send your name and email address to simone.worthing@aeu.salvationarmy.org to win our giveaway copy of *The Gifts of Imperfection*.

Congratulations to Denise Gittoes who has won last issue's giveaway – *Searching for Sunday: loving, leaving and finding the church*.



SOUFFLÉ CAKE

Recipe and photo courtesy of Lena Pobjie

INGREDIENTS

cake layer

- 100 grams butter at room temperature
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp vanilla essence
- 1 cup flour

soufflé layer

- 2 tbsp powdered gelatine + 100ml water to dissolve
- 180 grams butter at room temperature
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- ¼ cup condensed milk
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- 2 egg whites
- ½ tsp lemon juice or vinegar

chocolate layer

- 100 grams dark chocolate

DIRECTIONS

CAKE LAYERS

Preheat the oven to 220°C. Put butter and sugar in a bowl. Mix with electric mixer on medium speed for around three minutes, or until soft and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla essence, then mix in flour until well combined. Using the base of a 20cm springform cake tin, draw circles on two sheets of baking paper. Spread butter mixture evenly over the two circles. Bake for 10-12 minutes or until lightly golden. Set aside to cool.

SOUFFLÉ

In small bowl dissolve gelatine in water. Set aside for 20 minutes. Beat butter, vanilla essence and condensed milk together until fluffy. Set aside. Place sugar and water in a saucepan. Bring to the boil on medium heat while mixing constantly. Boil for about five minutes. Set aside. Beat egg whites with lemon juice until fluffy peaks appear. Slowly add hot sugar syrup while mixing.

Stand the bowl with gelatine in a heatproof bowl of hot water and stir until the gelatine dissolves. Add egg whites mixture to butter and condensed milk, then mix in gelatine. Mix until well combined. Place one cake layer at the bottom of the springform cake tin. Add half the soufflé mixture. Place the second layer of cake on top and pour in the rest of the soufflé mixture. Place the cake in the fridge for at least three hours or until set.

CHOCOLATE

Melt the chocolate. Spread over the set soufflé cake. Refrigerate until set. Decorate with cherries and shredded coconut. Enjoy!

SET FREE BY THE TRUTH!

MAY WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO EMBRACE AND SPEAK TRUTH WITH GRACE
AS JESUS DID, SO THAT WE AND THOSE WE ENCOUNTER MAY
KNOW FREEDOM.

WORDS * MAJOR JO-ANNE BROWN

“What is truth?” retorted Pilate, when Jesus stood before him, condemned by the Jewish leaders. Pilate received no answer that we know of, but perhaps he had an inkling of what that truth might be, for he saw no reason to condemn Jesus (John 18:38).

“What is truth?” ask countless people today, as they have over the centuries. Today, perhaps more than at any other time, truth is relative and somewhat elusive. Is it my truth, your truth or *the* truth that is being sought?

Before we get too abstract about truth, it is good to remember that Jesus defined truth for us. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” said Jesus (John 14:6). Truth is not something to be sought in discussions, forums, debates or philosophy. Truth is to be found in a person—in a person who is actually God himself. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the spoken word of God (1:1). In the past, God had spoken through prophets, then there came a time when he spoke his word directly by his son, Jesus. As the Son of God, Jesus is the exact representation of God (1:3) and therefore a reliable source of truth.

As Christmas approaches, we celebrate the birth of Jesus—the Son of God, born in flesh to a world in darkness and a world that doesn’t always recognise or welcome truth. John proclaimed that the Word Eternal took on flesh, and that this Word was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In fact, he declares that grace and truth “came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Truth was a significant theme in Jesus’ teaching. When he was about to say something important or something that would be difficult for his hearers to grasp, he often prefaced it with the words, “Truly, I say to you ...”

Often these statements were counter-cultural and perhaps this was one way of drawing attention to the significance of what he had to say.

What does it mean that Jesus is “full of grace and truth”? How do we see this in his life and ministry? How do we recognise Jesus as “the Truth”?

AUTHENTIC LIFE

We see in Jesus a man of integrity: He was true to himself and his purpose on earth. He knew who he belonged to and what he was meant to be. It seemed he had no need to prove anything: He knew he was the Son of God who had the power to forgive sins, heal those who were sick, and point the way to the Father. It appeared not to bother him that people doubted and questioned him or his motives. He continued to speak and live truth boldly.

Neither did he seem to need to defend his actions when others disapproved of him healing on the Sabbath, or forgiving sin. He lived an authentic life and never deviated from it—this is Truth. He lived it and showed it.

He also spoke it. Jesus had a way of speaking truth without condemnation to those ready to see truth. He simply spoke truth to the woman at the well, without condemning her for her lifestyle, and she recognised him as the Messiah and hurried to share the truth she had come to know and believe (John 4).

He spoke truth to Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to Jesus at night, when he spoke those mysterious words about being born again (John 3). He spoke truth when he

wondered out loud that a teacher such as Nicodemus did not understand the things of the Spirit (John 3:9). Yet Jesus’ bluntness did not push Nicodemus away and we later see him defending Jesus and preparing his body for burial (John 7:50-51; 19:39). For those who were truly seeking, the hard truth that Jesus sometimes spoke did nothing to deter them. Perhaps it was partly what drew them to Jesus?

When a woman caught in adultery was brought to the attention of Jesus, it wasn’t her sinfulness that he focused on, although it would have been within the parameters of the law to do so. He focused on the sinfulness of the “righteous” crowd assembled to condemn her (John 8:3-11). The truth he spoke then spared the woman’s life and silenced her opponents.

He spoke truth in strong, graphic words for those who weren’t prepared to see beyond their own righteousness: “You belong to your father, the devil”, he said to some of those who questioned him (John 8:44). He points out that his language is not clear to them because they are unable to hear what he has to say (v43). This was a frequent theme in Jesus’ teaching: people were unable to understand because they were not able to truly hear what he had to say; they were not willing to truly listen. Jesus does not back down from speaking the truth about who he is, even to the point when the crowd is ready to stone him (v58). He is not afraid to rebuke them for their unbelief, no matter what it might have cost him.

BLUNT HONESTY

Jesus didn’t seem to care who he might offend. When many of his disciples grumbled about his “hard teaching”

(John 6:60), Jesus obviously felt no need to defend himself or soften the truth. “Does this offend you?” he asked. And when many of his disciples walked away, he did nothing to stop them. He seemed to know that truth draws seekers of the truth; speaking truth, no matter how hard it may be, draws those who seek truth because they won’t be satisfied with anything else.

Even to his closest disciples he sometimes spoke the truth quite bluntly when they misunderstood him. He called Judas Iscariot a devil (John 6:70-71). When Jesus revealed the suffering and death that lay ahead of him, Peter protested against that. To our ears, Jesus’ response was harsh as he once again referred to one of his disciples as the Devil: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns” (Matthew 16:23). For Jesus, his mission and purpose were always clear and he wasn’t afraid to speak that out or to rebuke others for wanting to water that mission down.

Jesus showed us the truth of the Father, the true Word of God. He spoke truth, he lived truth, because he is the Truth. And Jesus knew that it is the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). May we have the courage to embrace and speak truth with grace as Jesus did, so that we and those we encounter may know freedom.†

“Truth is not something to be sought in discussions, forums, debates or philosophy. Truth is to be found in a person, in a person who is actually God himself.”



BREAKING THE SIEGE

THE GOD WHO TOPPLED DAVID'S GOLIATH AND CRUMBLLED THE WALLS OF JERICHO IS THE SAME GOD WE PUT OUR HOPE IN TODAY.

WORDS * LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CAROLE BATE

It is early spring and I woke this morning to snow. We live in Moscow, so snow is something we are used to by now. However, this morning I did not look at the snow with joy. Earlier in the season, the tree branches covered in snow made me think of sleigh rides and snow globes. Now they just make me weary.

Have you ever been in a season that seemed as if it was never going to end? Some have called these "the dark nights of the soul". Others refer to difficult years that drag on as "winter seasons". Sometimes it is not a spiritual darkness or internal struggle, but maybe an illness that we wake with every day, or a situation or person we have prayed for with passion, only to see no change year after year. It is not that we do not believe! We know God hears us; we cling to his promises and often come this far through trials like these only because of our hope in our Lord. So how can we, people of faith and hope, fall into depression or despair or grow weary in doing good? It goes against everything we profess and it contradicts every great effort of faith we have fought to make. Is it possible for a person of faith and hope to experience despair?

In 1994, we moved to St Petersburg, Russia (known as Leningrad during Soviet times). It was there that I learned about the Great Siege of Leningrad, a tragic period in the city's history. The "Blokada" (Siege) of Leningrad is an important part of the city's heritage for every resident, and a painful memory for the population's older generations.

SEASON OF DESPERATION

Less than two and a half months after the Soviet Union was attacked by Nazi Germany in 1941, German troops

approached Leningrad. On 8 September they fully encircled Leningrad and the siege began. The siege lasted for a total of 900 days, from 8 September, 1941 until 27 January, 1944. The city's almost three million civilians, including about 400,000 children, refused to surrender and endured rapidly increasing hardships. Food and fuel stocks were limited to a mere one or two-month supply. Public transport was not operational and by the winter of 1941-42, there was no heating, no water supply, almost no electricity and very little food. In January 1942, in the depths of an unusually cold winter, the city's food rations reached an all-time low of only 125 grams of bread per person per day. In January and February of 1942 alone, 200,000 people died in Leningrad from cold and starvation. There are stories told by the older generations about some people giving in to cannibalism just to survive those most desperate of days.

The book of Lamentations contains a similar account of another city under siege and the desperate things its people did to survive. According to Lamentations 4:10: "With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed". That same passage in the *New Living Translation* reads: "Tender-hearted women have cooked their own children. They have eaten them to survive the siege". It is interesting to me that these women are described as "compassionate" and "tender-hearted", yet in the very same sentence we read that they sacrificed their own children for survival. Is it possible that people who are tender-hearted and compassionate can be in such desperate situations, surrounded by the enemy for so long, that even the best of them do the unthinkable to survive? Give up hope? Give in to certain defeat? Sacrifice their own for survival?



The Siege of Leningrad did end. Though many did not survive, 27 January 1944 is the date recorded in history as the end of the enemy's blockade. And as I look out my window on this day and see snow accumulating, I know in my head that spring will come. It is the way our Lord has set up the seasons. Winter may be long, but even the enemy cannot stop spring from eventually arriving. In these seasons, when our winters seem to be never-ending, we need to remember that the adversary is hoping we will lose hope. He wants us to be discouraged, to feel defeated, to believe that every day will be winter and that every dark night will last forever. So if tender-hearted and compassionate women in desperate situations can give into sacrificing what is most dear to them, I believe people of faith and hope can also experience despair and even depression when under a siege by our adversary. Have you ever experienced this kind of despair?

SEASONS OF HOPE

In *Streams in the Desert*, L.B. Cowman writes, "The Adversary attempts to push God's people toward despair and hopelessness over their condition or the condition of the church. It has often been said that a discouraged army enters a battle with the certainty of defeat." Then she continues, "We need to better understand these attacks of the Enemy on our spirit and how to resist them. If he can dislodge us from our proper position, he then seeks to 'wear out the saints of the most High' (Daniel 7:25, *King James Version*) through a prolonged siege, until we finally, out of sheer weakness, surrender all hope of victory."

Our enemy has a plan – a plan that includes discouragement and despair. He wants to wear us out, wear us down and

make us so discouraged that we are more sure of defeat than of victory. What is our response to his battle plan? In these moments, we cannot spend time beating ourselves up that we "feel" discouraged or grow weary in our siege. We must not succumb to the thought that we are not people of faith and hope, when we are! We must use all the strength we have left to remind ourselves that seasons will change and sieges do end. The God who toppled David's Goliath and crumbled the walls of Jericho is the same God we put our hope in today.

God is the creator of all seasons and breaks through our darkness like the morning light. Will we wait on him? Will we trust in him, when it seems as if the snow will never melt and spring will never come? Among the many promises God has given to reassure us at such moments is Psalm 30:5b, "Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes with the morning" (*New Living Translation*). Perhaps your faith will be renewed, too, as mine has been, by the lyrics of Donald Lawrence's song, *Encourage Yourself*: "God is present help. The enemy created walls, but remember giants, they do fall." †

EDITOR'S NOTE

Lieut-Colonel Carole is the Social Justice Consultant for The Salvation Army Eastern Territory in the United States. She has been guest speaker at two Captivated by the Word conferences in the Australia Eastern Territory. Carole wrote this blog when she and her family lived in Moscow, Russia, serving with The Salvation Army. To read more of Carole's blogs, go to carolichka.blogspot.com.au. Printed with permission.



A LIFE-CHANGING INVITATION

Abbey hadn't thought much about her faith before two friends from her Year 8 class invited her to youth group at the Tweed Heads Corps. That was more than five years ago. Today, Abbey is a youth group leader, attends the corps and a Connect group each week, and has just left for six months to study at the Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Discipleship Training School in Tennessee, USA. "None of this would have happened and my faith wouldn't have grown if my friends hadn't asked me to youth," she said.

Abbey loved going to youth from the beginning. "Everyone was so welcoming; it was fun and just a great atmosphere," she shares. "It made me want to explore my faith as it was a safe place to ask questions and just felt like another home to me."

After three years of attending youth and participating in different events at the corps, Abbey wanted to get more involved and started going to Sunday meetings. "It was good – different to youth, but the same welcoming atmosphere, the same caring environment, the same focus on God," she says. "I'm loving learning about Jesus and developing my relationship with him."

Growing up in New Zealand, Abbey saw her extended family go to church and went with her grandmother a few times as well. "I remember watching the Veggie Tales

there," she laughs. "It was a good connection and did influence me. My best friend also went to church, which added to that. Occasionally I would go on my own to see my friends. My own family believed in Jesus but didn't go to church."

Abbey knows firsthand the importance of personal invitations when it comes to attending youth group and church, and encourages young people to ask their friends. "My life wouldn't have taken this path without my friends," she explained. "I would've known God was out there, but it wouldn't have gone further. Definitely invite your friends to youth!"

Abbey finished high school in 2014 and decided to take a gap year. She eventually wants to go to Bible College and was looking for something when she heard about YWAM. She planned to go to the Hawaii chapter, where her aunt and uncle serve, but through a contact on Instagram, much prayer and discussions on where God was leading her, she made the decision to go to Tennessee. "I kept praying about it and Tennessee and it wouldn't leave my mind," Abbey shared. "I felt this was the right choice, that it was where God wanted me to go, and I hadn't had an experience like that before. It was really cool."

The first half of the school is mission training. The second half is mission or outreach, either within the USA or to overseas locations. "I believe God wants me there, and I am also excited about coming back to my church and sharing all I have learned," Abbey said. "I want to build my faith and really connect with Jesus. This has been more of a spiritual year for me and I've been trying to focus on what is happening, what God is saying to me. When I come back I want to be able to evangelise, to pray over kids and really help them with their spiritual journeys." †



LIVING IN THE MOMENT

WORDS * LIEUTENANT NICOLA POORE

Sometimes it feels like there are five seasons – summer, autumn, winter, spring and Christmas. Just like with the conventional seasons, the Christmas season has definite markers. Seasonal foods and festive colours, Christmas lights and special songs – not to mention many weird and wonderful Christmas traditions.

We know when Christmas is coming. We mark off the days with chocolate calendars, adorn our houses and send cards. We feel it – the excitement, the longing, the hope – all building and building towards one day.

One. Day.

That's why Boxing Day can really pack a punch. The lull. The nothingness. Utter chaos, but then ... nothing.

No more presents to receive, no more Christmas events, and nothing to do because the shops are closed and there's nothing decent on TV. It can feel empty. We can feel empty. Sigh.

Here's the thing – we can't live off hype. Christmas will never live up to the hype. No matter how full our Santa sack, we will still want more. No matter how much we eat, we will not be fully satisfied. No matter how much hope we have for peace and goodwill for humankind, people will still disappoint us.

The Christmas season is full of highs and lows. It won't all be a high. Life can't always be "up". But if we can learn to embrace the moment, to delight in the high points and to lean in to the low points, we will truly learn to be content whatever the circumstances. Paul puts it this way in the Bible: "I've found the recipe for being happy, whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am" (Philippians 4:11-13) *The Message*.

I don't want to live always wanting more, always longing for the next season. Embrace the present. Learn to love the "now". God is with you in this moment and in this season. †

FIND YOUR
MINISTRY

Radical acts of
Christmas kindness

“Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind,” said author, Henry James. Good advice. Everyone, regardless of age, stage in life or circumstances, can always benefit from a genuine act of kindness – especially, perhaps, at Christmas time.

A radical act of Christmas kindness could be defined as anything you do, sacrificially, to encourage or help another person, regardless of who they are, at this special time of year. The sacrificial part is the key. Kindness is not about being nice, polite or simply doing something to assist another person, just because you can. “Rather, it is a radical generosity of spirit that doesn’t condemn, but seeks instead to know and be known through compassionate consideration,” said author Kristen Michaelis. Michaelis goes on to say that who you are kind to doesn’t matter. Whether that person needs your generosity is irrelevant. Neither does it matter whether they deserve your generosity. “The point is to be kind,” she says. “To be radically kind in a way that our society views as unusual.” She encourages people to step out of their comfort zone, be radically kind and watch it transform those around you, as well as yourself.

Without giving you, our readers, a list of ways to be radically kind, the *Women in Touch* team encourages and challenges you to think about ways you can be radically, sacrificially kind – in your family, church, the wider community and with others you come into contact with this Christmas. Have a radically kind and transformational Christmas!



“... What else does the Eternal ask of you but to live justly and to love kindness and to walk with your True God in all humility? Micah 6:8 *The Voice*. #compassion #mercy #selfless

Shining in the dark places

WORDS * LIEUTENANT RACHAEL FARTHING

I love Christmas! It is by far my favourite time of year. I love the carols, the decorations, baking gingerbread, giving beautifully wrapped gifts and spending time with family and friends. I love the spirit of goodwill and joy! As I’ve become an adult, I’ve grown to realise that this is very much the perspective of a person who has had a privileged life. Christmas for me as a child was such an exciting time! But I have come to know that this is not so for many in our community.

For some, Christmas is a reminder of what they do not have: the loved ones who are no longer with them; the lack of money to provide gifts and a special meal for their family. For many, the thought of gathering with relatives is stressful; a reminder of conflict or trauma. It’s not all tinsel and twinkle lights for our people.

I love twinkle lights; the soft warm glow that fills me with a sense of awe and wonder and peace. I think of the bright star which led the shepherds and the wise men to the place where Jesus was born and signalled the hope, the peace, the freedom that had come to earth. Philippians 2:15-16 says that we, too, can “shine like stars in the universe, as we hold out the word of life ...” As we live out our salvation and the truth that we have in Jesus, we, too, bring to the world around us a sense of awe and wonder and peace.

The incredible message of Christmas is that God loved us and loves us still; that he sent his son Jesus to earth for us, to heal us and change us. And this message is not lost amidst the pain of the season but lives in us and through us as we reach out to others with hope and love. Christmas presents us with the need to shine in the darkest of places.

So where can you shine this Christmas? How can you bring the beauty of God to the broken world around you? I pray that as you shine, you, too, will lead people to see Jesus.

MUSIC
REVIEW

Lets go–Planetshakers

Recorded live in Melbourne, Planetshakers’ latest album *Lets Go* offers high-energy worship that stays true to their past style of passionate and celebratory praise songs. The titled track, *Lets Go* and *Nobody Like You* are both upbeat, catchy praise songs which encapsulate the praise-focused message of the album. The hero of this album is *Just One Touch*. This worship anthem has passion-infused lyrics which will most certainly lift your spirit.

Like all generations of music, worship music evolves with the current musical styles of the day. Planetshakers has moved into the arena of electro-pop songs, a current musical style that is becoming quite common in Christian music circles. *All About You* is a prime example of this.

In saying that, this album has a mix of different styles. This is what makes *Lets Go* quite unique. While most of the tracks are distinctly congregational worship songs, there are a couple of tracks that fall into the item or personal listening category, including *Glorious Collision* and *Born To Praise*. *Jesus Is Lord (Prayer)* is another unique song. There’s no singing on this track. Rather, it’s a spoken declaration to God that ultimately magnifies his name.

While this album was made available in early September, there’s a unique factor to the release of this album. On September 22 (AEST) Planetshakers performed their new album live on the US television network Daystar – this network has a global audience. The event not only celebrated the new album but was an opportunity to broadcast the gospel message in countries across the world.

The deluxe CD and DVD version of *Lets Go* can be purchased for \$21.99 at Koorong. Go to koorong.com



win our giveaway copy!

Simply send your name and email address to simone.worthing@aue.salvationarmy.org for a chance to win our giveaway copy of *Lets Go* by Planetshakers.

BLOG
REVIEW

Spend quality YouTube time with God

How much time do you spend surfing YouTube for funny cat videos? According to YouTube, across the world, every day, people spend hundreds of millions of hours on YouTube. It’s easy for us to waste our lives away online. This challenge will only become more difficult as technology progresses. If we are spending a big part of our lives online, then it’s important to consider what we consume.

Don’t get me wrong, watching cat videos is entertaining. However, it is important to spend time watching online content that is God-honouring. *GodTube* is a good place to start. Here you will find funny videos, the latest Christian music videos, Christian movie trailers, video sermons and devotionals. You will be surprised by what is available on *GodTube*. If you are a music buff, there will be artists you might have never heard of but find inspiring. Make sure you check out Lily and Madeleine’s cover of *Holy, Holy, Holy*. It is truly captivating. Like everything online, not every video or song will relate to you. In saying that, make use of the *GodTube* search engine to find content that interests you. Go to godtube.com

Congratulations

Congratulations to Cait McKenzie who has won our giveaway copy of last issue’s CD, *Owl City* by Mobile Orchestra.



DIAMOND GIRLS

"IT'S ALL ABOUT BEING WHO WE ARE, BEING POSITIVE IN LIFE AND ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER."

WORDS * SIMONE WORTHING

Mind, body and spirit is the focus of Diamond Girls, a new group for teenage girls in Brisbane that is attracting up to 30 girls each week, and close to 100 interacting on its closed Facebook page. The group, run by The Salvation Army at Forest Lakes, west of Brisbane, is also seeing the girls growing in their care for each other and for the community; understanding that they are precious to God; developing emotionally, intellectually and spiritually; and having lots of fun together!

"Our vision for this group, and for the whole corps, is transformation through belonging, hope and freedom," said Karen Sagala, Cadet in Appointment and Senior Mission Leader at the corps. "The girls belong to each other and are accepted, there is hope in the purpose and future God has planned for them, and they are learning that they can be free from sin and negativity."

Two volunteers from the corps, Peta Cunningham and Linda Fernandez, run the group, with Karen assisting on occasion. Linda, a former aircraft electrician who has been running her own hairdressing salon for the past ten years, had been volunteering at the corps' Lakesalvos Café and, through getting to know the girls, had gained their trust.

"These girls really needed some positive guidance in their lives so I spoke to Peta, one of the youth leaders, and we both had the same feeling within that we needed to start something for the girls in our community," says Linda. "We really just picked a date to start and Diamond Girls took on a life of its own." A group like Diamond Girls had been on Peta's heart for quite some time.

"Deeply, I wanted young girls to discover the value and beauty they have been created with," she explains. "I wanted to help them discover that they are worth more than they know, there is a good plan for their life and that should they choose it, they have a Heavenly Father who loves them dearly and will be their strength, protector and rock more than any other man or attempt to fill those needs."

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Within the group, Linda focuses on her passion of building the girls' confidence, self-esteem and positive body image. Peta focuses on the spiritual growth of the girls, helping them to understand just how precious they are to God and how he is refining and developing them for his purpose. "Peta and Linda are a beautiful partnership as they lead this group and disciple the girls," said Karen.

Diamond Girls takes place on Tuesday afternoons. At the first group meeting Linda and Peta asked the girls to help create a "Diamond Girls" code – a way of living that reflects who they want to be. The code includes showing respect, being positive and encouraging, and participating in group activities. "It's all about being who we are, being positive in life and encouraging one another," said Karen.

"The girls also win and lose 'diamond tokens' by being positive or negative about themselves or others, and for adding 'glitter and sparkle' to someone's day – both in person and on the Facebook page. They can exchange these tokens for prizes at the end of the year, or to access different rewards. Each week, Peta and Linda try to weave certain topics into the group discussions including

relationships; body image, health and wellness; goal setting and decision making; dealing with tough issues; and helping others. There is also an 'Awkward Questions/Suggestions/Positive Quotes' box so the girls have an opportunity to ask the questions that may be hard for them to verbalise. "There is strong focus on responsibility, empowerment and hope for the future as well as access to practical support structures and tools relevant for where each girl is at in life and the challenges they are facing to grow into confident, strong, independent young women who can make a difference in the community and in the lives of those around them," says Peta.

LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS

Linda, Peta and Karen tell the girls to think of them as "aunties" – people they can trust and know will always be there for them. "I see the girls as my nieces and that we are just doing life together," says Linda. "Wherever possible we also love to connect with the girl's family and be there as an additional support network if needed. I feel blessed to be trusted by our girls and hope to maintain relationships with them into the future." Peta explains that, balancing the social and community need to help grow healthy young women with the desire to see spiritual needs nurtured, is a fine line. "We do want to see life and life in all its fullness for these precious young girls - therefore I can't not share the love, hope and freedom that is in Jesus and that ultimately helped shape and refine me from a rough uncut diamond into the woman I am today."

SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Some of the activities the group has engaged in include making jewellery and developing a social enterprise through selling it, mindful colouring, learning to do hair and nails, and craft projects. The father of one of the girls has also recently started teaching self-defence to the group.

The girls have served at Brisbane Streetlevel Mission, volunteered at the Lakesalvos Cafe, and occasionally clean the corps as a way of giving back the cost of using the facilities. "They are learning to look outwards, to give back, and are developing a sense of responsibility," said Karen.

The group is dynamic and diverse and includes girls from a wide range of backgrounds. "Once the girls get into the room, any social or economic boundaries disappear and they are learning to relate to and care for, one another," said Karen. Some of the girls attend the dance group at the corps, others connect through the café, the "Soul Food" group (spiritual nourishment for teens), and four or five now come to the corps.

"This group has a major impact on me on a number of levels," said Karen. "I've known some of these girls for years, and to see them come from being very shy and socially isolated, to laughing and really engaged with the others is powerful. Another girl is learning to be part of a group without dominating it. I see amazing energy and life in the room, with lives being impacted. This is a space where girls can sit with their peers and talk about being in foster care, not living with parents, or living with parents and rally around each other. They support each other with prayers, Scripture, support. I see that and I see the kingdom and it's beautiful." †



"I love that I can be myself and that you don't get judged. It has built up my confidence to make friends. It is pretty hard for me to make friends so it has really helped. I go to Diamond Girls to have fun, to get advice - especially about girl problems; you know, the stuff that you can't ask around boys. Diamond Girls has helped me be more able to see God in my life. Before Diamond Girls, I didn't really believe in God, but Diamond Girls has helped me a lot. Now I believe God is very real and I know that he loves me and that he has plans for my life." Josephine Retschitzegger 15.



"I love Diamond Girls because we all help and support each other if we are struggling with school or relationships with family or friends. I love being with the group because we all can be truthful and be ourselves around each other. It's a good place to go to chat about anything." Ashleigh, 18.



"You get to know other girls with different personalities that you may not interact with at school. I love that there is no judgment and you get to talk about topics that some people may not get a chance to talk about. And it is just lots of fun!" Caity, 13.



Together Peta Cunningham (left) and Linda Fernandez lead Diamond Girls.

LADIES FIND ENCOURAGEMENT AT RETREAT

CENTRAL AND NORTH QUEENSLAND DIVISION

Thirty-five women from northern areas of the division gathered at Genazzano Conference Centre on the banks of Lake Tinaroo, Yungaburra, for the annual retreat weekend. Commissioner Jan Condon, Territorial President of Women’s Ministries, was guest speaker for the weekend.

“Bringing out the God colours” was the theme for the weekend, based on Matthew 5:14: “Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill” (*The Message*).

Major Sue Cox, Cairns Corps Officer, led worship for the weekend. “Activities for the retreat included study of God’s word, a bonfire, stories of changed lives, fun and games, a visit to Yungaburra markets, a craft stall, a prayer walk and good food, fellowship and quietness for rest and worship,” said Lieutenant-Colonel Elaine Rowland, Divisional Director of Women’s Ministries. “There was also an auction to raise money for the territorial women’s project supporting girls leaving orphanages in Ukraine.

“The Centre was a place remote enough to make as much noise as you like and also to be as quiet as you like. It was a time for the ladies to experience a place of retreat and encouragement in their spiritual journey.”



01



02

01 Women from corps, centres and communities north of Bowen and out to Atherton gathered for the annual retreat and enjoyed a weekend of worship, encouragement and good fun.

02 The ladies participated in a prayer walk during Sunday morning, giving them time to spend with the Lord and reflect on his Word.

WEEKEND RETREAT A TIME OF REVIVAL

NEWCASTLE AND CENTRAL NSW DIVISION

“Kaleidoscope of Colours” was the theme for the divisional “Revive” weekend, held recently at Monte Pio in Maitland. Major Kerrie Farthing, Booth College Vice Principal, was guest speaker, and Envoy Sandra Koutnik led worship. Seventy-six ladies from around the division attended.

As the retreat opened, Major Kerrie “invited us to come into God’s presence and meet him personally on our journey of life through healing, great love and just being in his presence,” said Major Beatrice Kay, Divisional Salvos Women Coordinator. Captain Sharon Allen, Divisional Mission and Resource Director - Corps, organised “The Carnival” for the Saturday night, with the ladies dressing up for a night of games, fun, and much laughter.

During the Sunday morning worship, many ladies knelt in prayer, made significant commitments to Jesus, and lives were changed. The ladies also participated in a prayer walk – guided by a prayer booklet while enjoying their beautiful surroundings. “We gathered back together for a final time of celebration and were inspired by Kerrie to draw closer to God using different kinds of prayer, during our prayer time at home,” said Major Beatrice. “The whole weekend was a great time of spiritual enrichment and blessing.”



01



02

01 Jenny Stanger, National Manager for The Salvation Army’s Freedom Partnership to End Modern Slavery, was a guest speaker and spoke to the ladies about modern-day slavery.

02 The ladies dressed up in festive red and white for the “Carnival” night.

SAID PROGRAM BRINGS HEALTH AND SAFETY TO MALAWI FAMILIES

Thanks to the support of generous Australians, a Salvation Army International Development (SAID) program has improved the lives of more than 7500 families in the small African nation of Malawi. As part of the Malawi Sustainable WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Program, a borehole was drilled in 2013 in the rural community of Chiringa. This borehole is not only giving families sustainable access to clean water, but children can go to school, domestic violence against women is decreasing and fewer women are being sexually assaulted.

Women from The Salvation Army’s Chiringa Corps describe the program: “Before the borehole, we were leaving the house at 3am to collect water. We had to walk five to 10 kilometres every morning. The distance and time taken to do this resulted in us being beaten by our husbands, who thought we were cheating on them. Some of us had been raped on our walk to collect water and now have HIV/AIDS. Our children were also late to or not attending school, as we would sometimes not get back in time to get them ready. Since this borehole was drilled, we can get our children ready for school and we are no longer fighting with our husbands. We also don’t risk being raped when going to collect water.”

The Malawi WASH program is in its second phase. Supporters can donate through the SAID gift catalogue – Clean Water for a School: salvos.org.au/said/give-a-gift/. The SAID office is also establishing the WASH program in Kenya and has been working there for three years.

For more information on the program in both Malawi and Kenya, go to salvos.org.au/said/. To make a donation to the Kenya WASH program, go to salvos.org.au/said/become-a-sponsor/



WOMEN’S RALLY INSPIRES THOUSANDS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

More than 3000 women from across The Salvation Army’s Southern Africa Territory – as well as representatives from Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique – have taken part in a lively and joyful weekend rally with Commissioner Silvia Cox, World President of Women’s Ministries. Supported by Major Margaret Booth from International Headquarters, Commissioner Cox led the “Go And Tell” rally, held in Soweto, South Africa, amid much celebration, singing and dancing, as delegates gave testimony to God’s goodness and joy in their lives.

Following a powerful praise-and-prayer meeting on the Friday night, Saturday saw an ocean of colour and splendour as the women, clothed in traditional dress, marched into the hall with banners of all eight Southern Africa divisions represented. The divisions sang and danced their way one after another towards an offering table, having raised over 600,000 rand (\$45,000) through the Home League Helping Hand initiative in the territory.

Two guest speakers spoke eloquently – Mrs Weziwe Gcotyelwa Thusi, Member of the Executive Committee in KwaZulu-Natal Province with a remit for Social Development; and Sibongile Mokoena, Education Outreach Coordinator, South African Environmental Observation Network. They challenged the women to be practical and active in their communities, sharing that their locality needs women of God with vision and insight. The celebration lasted right into the evening with testimony and praise.

During the Sunday morning meeting, numerous women spoke of their personal experience of God’s grace. His goodness was celebrated through brass band music, lively singing and timbrel displays. Commissioner Cox picked up the “Go And Tell” theme in her Bible message, encouraging the women to each live and share their faith. She exhorted the women that their “lives must reflect the presence of God in their homes, corps and communities”.

Hundreds of women sought God during the altar call and many responded to the invitation to officership. Everybody present went away with the realisation that The Salvation Army in Southern Africa is well resourced with educated and committed women, ready to “Go and Tell”.

– Major Carin Holmes
Public Relations Secretary, Southern Africa Territory





IT IS A GENTLE REMINDER OF THE PLOT TO THIS WHOLE STORY CALLED LIFE:
THAT WE ONCE WERE LOST AND ARE NOW FOUND, ONCE BROKEN AND NOW
RESTORED. THE GOSPEL OF THE SECOND CHANCE BROUGHT BY THE HELPLESS
BABY-KING BORN IN A BARN IS A GIFT FOR ALL OF US ...

- MIKE FOSTER