

FOR REFLECTION

- * Can we be peacemakers and still be disruptive?
- * Are we willing to give up peace in our own place, for the peace of others in their place?
- * How can we make peace an absolute value in our everyday living?
- * How is The Salvation Army making strides to achieve peace in our community?

PEACEMAKING

SERIES: TAKING A STAND

EXPLORING THE ARMY'S INTERNATIONAL POSITIONAL STATEMENTS

Members of the International Moral and Social Issues Council (IMASIC) reflect on The Salvation Army's International Positional Statements.

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The Salvation Army believes it is God's intention for all people in all their relationships to experience peace that is just, sustainable and leads to fullness of life. The causes of violent conflict are always complex and multifaceted.

The Salvation Army disagrees with those who argue that violence is inherent to religious belief. Jesus proclaimed a gospel of peace.

Despite knowing that there would perpetually be troubles in this world, Jesus declared that human peacemaking in a troubled world is blessed by God.

The Salvation Army recognises the moral complexity inherent in issues of war and peace and the policing of civil order, and the difficult choices faced by governments and individuals.

The Salvation Army itself is committed to peacemaking. It calls on everyone it can influence, especially Salvationists, to pray for peace, conscientiously pursue peace and equip themselves to become effective peacemakers. It recognises that even those who bear military or policing responsibilities can make peace and justice their goal.

The Salvation Army affirms that pursuing and sustaining peace requires communal effort. The Salvation Army will be a persistent advocate for social justice. It will encourage the building of cultures that intertwine peace and justice in the family, the Church and society. The Salvation Army supports global peacemaking efforts and will collaborate with others who share our objectives.

Download the complete International Positional Statement on Peacemaking at salvationarmy.org/isjc/ips

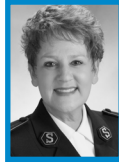
IT CAN BE just within reach, yet so far away. It can be difficult to grasp, yet easy to lose. It can be extremely private, yet refreshingly communal. But it cannot be bought or sold, demanded or obliged. It can only be prayed for, sought after, worked towards and freely offered.

It is *peace*, made possible by God and brought to the world by peacemakers.

We would likely agree that Jesus was a peacemaker, bringing the gospel of peace to mankind. He calmed storms. He comforted spirits. He consoled souls. But some say Jesus was also a disruptor of peace. He offended people in high places. He called religious leaders frauds. He 'rearranged' furniture in the Temple that was blocking the Gentiles' access to God, and he confronted narrow-mindedness by healing on the Sabbath.

So does peacemaking simply mean quelling struggle, or can peacemaking require the presence of a different kind of struggle? Was Jesus a disruptor of peace or a disruptor of the status quo to obtain peace? What is he calling us to be?

The Salvation Army International Positional Statement on Peacemaking seeks to clarify our



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role of peacemaking – referencing dedication to praying, pursuing, advocating, encouraging, collaborating, advancing, strengthening and fostering – in order to achieve peace. These proactive verbs are intentionally used to reflect the commitment, sacrifice and passion needed to realise one of the world's greatest needs for today – peace.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

*It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,
A beautiful day for a neighbor,
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?* **Fred Rogers**

These idyllic words from the American children's TV show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* seem much more idealistic than realistic in our world today, don't they? To truly be a good neighbour, we must first be at peace with God and ourselves so that we can then be at peace with others.

As a child I had the privilege of being nurtured in a loving home, and we lived peacefully with our neighbours. So, I confess to believing that peace was something everyone enjoyed, not just a select few. Later, as a Salvation Army officer, I was blessed with living in cultures and communities different than my own, with each new neighbourhood bringing its own joys and challenges, as well as varying degrees of peace.

Although we experienced some political unrest in Chile, living and serving 15 years in that beautiful country was a spiritual highlight for our family. Recently, peace has seemed even further out of reach there, as we have seen images of the political unrest in Santiago which has resulted in conflict, destruction, violence, confusion and desperation among the Chilean people. The endless examples of similar political and social unrest in our world today are a vivid reminder that many of our brothers and sisters do not live in peace.

Peacemaking is a priority for Jesus. He is the Prince of Peace, he offers peace to his children and he challenges his followers to be peacemakers. Peace is a manifestation of divine grace, and not to be taken for granted. Rather, we are to seek after and pursue it, as 1 Peter 3:11 (TLB) reminds us, 'run after it to catch it and hold it!' Those are spiritual fighting words for God's peacemakers, wherever we are in his world!

Catherine Booth seemed to understand well those words when she said: 'If we are to better the future, we must disturb the present.' If I am to truly be a peacemaker in the neighbourhood where God has placed me, I must be willing to be disturbed! While others I know are not reconciled, how can I be complacent? The Church, our traditions, our narrow-mindedness, and our hearts must also be willing to be disturbed as we make strides to be at peace with others.

God's peace is his 'grace gift' to me, and being a peacemaker is my 'grace gift' to him!

LORD,
...help me to surrender privilege, comfort and position for the greater peace of others,
...help me to relinquish peace in my place for the greater peace of others in their place,
...help me to pursue peace as an uncompromising value in my life.



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PERSONAL REFLECTION

I recall when our headmistress gathered all the students in the hall for an urgent meeting; it was in 1993, in Rwanda. She said: 'My girls, we are no longer in a period of peace. Our country is facing war and our area is under attack!' Before she could finish her statement, we heard the sound of guns. We quickly evacuated the school and walked 50km until we found a church. We camped there for two days, without eating. On the third day, I left for my home and walked for three more days.

Nine months later, we resumed our studies. Excitedly we went home for holidays but were faced with a horrifying reality – the genocide, which eventually took more than one million innocent Tutsi in Rwanda, had begun. During this period of war, I saw people eat weeds that were considered inedible and drink muddy, contaminated water to quench their thirst. I saw refugees, carrying their belongings, heading to unknown lands like sheep without a shepherd.

The war had changed everything – neighbours fought, burned houses and killed. What a sad scenario to witness! Were these not the same people who had always lived together in peace? Were they not the ones who used to share meals and invite each other to harvest celebrations, social events and ceremonies? But seeds of hate had been planted, and once peaceful communities now suffered hunger, thirst and homelessness. Life in

Rwanda, without peace, became hell.

As a Rwandan, I am proud to recognise The Salvation Army's significant role in restoring peace in Rwanda in the post-genocide years that followed.

Intentional conversations about peace and reconciliation took place with neighbours, business owners and parents, and youth clubs were formed to help young people process the atrocities they had witnessed. Tragically, our young people had been forced to see themselves only through the mirror of ethnicity. In Salvation Army youth clubs, they once again learned to play, dance and sing together, and peace of mind eventually resulted.

The Salvation Army also provided households with clothing and food; shelters were built for genocide survivors; wells were dug to provide clean water to communities; sponsorship programmes helped get students back to school and spiritual counselling was received by many traumatised citizens.

More than 25 years have passed since the genocide took place, and Rwanda has worked hard to overcome this devastating past through strategic peacemaking efforts that include community conversations, mediation, reconciliation, forgiveness and conflict resolution. True peacemaking involves everyone, both young and old, as each of us takes ownership of this privilege and responsibility.

Mahatma Gandhi said: 'You must be the change you wish to see in the world.' All of us are called to be peacemakers in our daily lives. We can do this by intentionally responding to social injustice through non-violent approaches, even in the most prolonged, violent circumstances.

May each of us strive for peace by speaking of it often and by being peacemakers wherever we are, wherever we go.

'As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone' (Romans 12:18).

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PERSONAL REFLECTION

*Make me a channel of your peace.
 Where there is hatred, let me bring
 your love... (SASB 608, v 1)*

This adaptation from a prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi was one of my favourite songs as a teenager. In times of economic growth and when every aspect of society is peaceful, it is easy to sing this song and agree with its teaching. However, it might be different when you live in a society full of hatred, conflict and despair.

On 16 June 2019, nearly 2 million protesters flooded the streets of Hong Kong and eventually forced the government to withdraw a controversial extradition bill. But this protest was just the beginning of a nightmare. In the following six months, I saw students building roadblocks to paralyse the traffic. I saw police fire hundreds and thousands of tear gas canisters, rubber bullets and beanbag rounds to disperse demonstrations. Water cannons were always standing by where protests took place.

On 1 October, the National Day of China, an 18-year-old protester was hit in the chest by a live bullet fired from close range by a police officer. Gasoline bombs were thrown at the police by protesters. Lennon Walls – messages written on Post-it notes by passers-by – could be found everywhere, expressing anger, frustration and despair. People were crying and the heart of this beautiful city was broken.

The whole society was just torn into two opposing camps. Quarrelling and fighting were commonly seen on all news media. Relationships became fragile when you entered into a political discussion. Young students wandered the streets after participating in a protest, not going home, because they were no longer welcomed by their parents who had different political views. Facebook friends were unfriended because people were no longer on the same page.

Believers, especially in the younger generation, left the corps (and other churches) because they didn't see the leaders supporting them in the movement. In my own corps, where a hundred people of different ages and educational backgrounds attend the holiness meeting every week, we have not been spared. Young people whom I have known for years were arrested. Some younger Salvationists stopped attending the meeting because they felt frustrated.

I remember, however, when one of our young people was released on bail and came back to our corps. There was no judgement; no questions of why – just care, love and empathy.

The Bible states: 'Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins' (1 Peter 4:8). Love is always the answer to situations that we cannot control. When we put down our judgement and replace it with listening and caring, dialogue can

start. Creating a peaceful, trusting and caring environment is key to enabling people to stay.

The International Positional Statement on Peacemaking clearly states that 'pursuing and sustaining peace requires communal effort... [The Salvation Army] will encourage the building of cultures that intertwine peace and justice in the family, the Church and society'. As I write, the movement is ongoing and there is no end in sight. Let our love be seen in our actions so that we can bring peace to the community. The plans Jesus has for us are 'plans for peace and well-being and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope' (Jeremiah 29:11 AMP).