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I really am

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to inclusion

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a traumatic life

Finding a place to call home

Where misfits fit in and belong



SALVOS

MAGAZINE





“IF WE HAVE NO PEACE,
IT IS BECAUSE WE HAVE
FORGOTTEN THAT WE BELONG
TO EACH OTHER.”

- MOTHER TERESA



The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

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Where all are included

Our world is not a place where everyone feels they belong and are accepted, no matter what they look like, the gender they identify with, their challenges in life, and the list goes on. And the physical, emotional, and psychological toll that shaming, excluding, and bullying takes is deep and long-lasting.

Tragically, we also see the result of centuries, decades, and years of abuse and violence against certain cultures, peoples, races, and other groups – much of which continues today.

Most of us long for a loving world where everyone is welcome. The Church, especially, should be a place that absolutely anyone can access at any time and become part of. This is what Jesus talked about and modelled throughout his life.

In this edition, we look at inclusion. Spencer tells his story of coming out as a transgender man, Belinda shares her vision of a Church that is open to all, and the Salvos present their official commitment to inclusion. Two very wise women also share their perspectives on belonging and liberation and how we need each other in the journey towards achieving that.

We are fellow human beings, so it really shouldn't be that difficult.

Simone Worthing **Assistant Editor**



Becoming who I really am

Coming out as a transgender man gives Spencer an authentic life

WORDS Spencer Viney

Life began for me in the regional Victorian city of Ballarat. My parents are Salvation Army officers (pastors), so we moved several times as I was growing up.

My early childhood was spent in Ballarat and Melbourne. When I was four years old, we moved to Alice Springs and spent the next eight years there. The climate and the culture were very different to Victoria, and I felt very out of place in many ways there.

At around the age of six or seven, I felt that something wasn't quite right with being seen as female. At school, whenever the boys and girls would be split up, there was a sense that I was standing on the wrong side. It was also the same at church camps.

“

But their love for me went beyond the boundaries of gender.

”

I was ashamed of the conflict between my brain and my body. I didn't understand it or have the words to explain it. It wasn't really talked about then, and there weren't the resources available that we have today. I tried to block it out as much as I could, which really impacted my life.

We moved to Darwin at the time I was starting high school. I had an inkling by then of

what was going on with my gender identity, but I didn't want to accept that at all. It was scary and unknown. I just tried not to ever think about it and to live as a female.

This was not good for my mental health. Through this time, I was also horrendously bullied at school, which was another reason not to deal with the mixture of feelings I was experiencing. I was very good at hiding it from my family and my church.

INITIAL SUPPORT

In 2015, we were back in Victoria. I started going to a house church in Bendigo led by a couple who were part of the Salvos. More than half of this group belonged to the LGBTQIA+ community. It was an eye-opening experience and made a huge difference in my life. It was a church for me, where I knew people were loved by God exactly the way they were.

Looking back, I can see that this was a huge step forward for me in being accepted as I am. It was a safe place to learn about God and that has inspired me to be a part of the conversation of moving the LGBTQIA+ community forward in the Church.

In 2016, I went on to study 3D animation at the SAE Institute in Melbourne. I was secure enough in life to finally explore what all my feelings were about. When I came out to my house church, they fully supported me.

The university had free counselling, which I took up. I told the counsellor that I thought I was transgender and didn't know what to do next. The counsellor arranged an appointment with a GP [general practitioner] who ►



Spencer is now medically transitioning, working, and using his skills to tell people about God.

specialised in trans health. For the first time, I felt understood and that there were words to explain what was going on for me.

COMING OUT

Coming out is terrifying for most people, especially in their church community, because you feel unsure of how people will react. I started with my sister, as I knew she would be supportive. She helped me come out to my parents, and I knew deep down they would be okay. It was a bit of a shock for them at first, which was to be expected as I'd never talked about it before. But their love for me went beyond the boundaries of gender.

“

I felt like I was actually living, not just being alive.

”

Most of the Salvos community supported me. I heard that some people were concerned with what I was doing, but I think that was due to lack of education about transgender people. At the Bendigo Salvos, where I go, everyone is very accepting.

I was blessed to be accepted. Sadly, I am aware this is not the case for everyone. I appreciated I had my house church as a good support system.

“

... you are actually okay the way you are.

”

Once I had come out, I had a sense of freedom. I was so relieved. I could finally be authentic to who I was created to be, and I started recognising myself more.

Changes in my study meant I attended a new university. I began using my male name there, as well as male pronouns. It was refreshing at this uni to hear people being asked what pronouns they used. I also began medically transitioning. Once this process started, I felt like I was actually living, not just being alive.

EDUCATION

Both the Church and society are getting there with gender-diversity education and acceptance, but more is needed. The most important thing is to have the voices of trans people at the front of the conversation.

Education can include just listening to someone's story, being willing to accept that people are different and learning the history of trans and gender-diverse people. Just because I'm different doesn't mean God didn't create me this way.

Without education, terrible damage can be done. I had a few incidences with people from other churches telling me that what I was doing was an abomination and I needed Jesus to 'cure me'. That was very hurtful and traumatising. But I am saved by God already.



Spencer attended a house church group, led by a Salvos couple, that gave him understanding, acceptance and support.

I stopped going to mainstream churches for a while because I didn't want to put myself in those situations.

Sadly, not everyone will understand. God created me this way for a reason, and that's okay. There are many people who are accepting and are trying to make a difference, which is good, but we still have a long way to go, and we must keep going. The suicide rate alone in the trans community is horrendous.

For trans and gender-diverse people struggling, I would suggest finding a really good support system, whether in a church or not, and with people who understand and accept you the way you are. And also, to believe that you are actually okay the way you are. You're created a certain way and are trying to live an authentic life.

I want to remind you that you are 'fearfully and wonderfully made'. Jesus is willing to leave the 99 sheep to find the one who is missing, and to bring you back to a community who loves and accepts you.

And to the Church – we need to do better. It's education. It's being like Jesus and standing up for those who don't have voices. Sometimes doing that puts you on the outside, but isn't that what Jesus did? He was always on the outside with the outcasts.

I've always been interested in video games and animated films. That was an outlet for me when I was growing up, and I knew I wanted to end up in the creative industry.

One of the things I want to do now is use my creative skills and reach out to tell the story of God and how he loves and accepts us all. I want to tell people about him and that love.

If you or anyone you know needs help, call Lifeline on 13 11 14, or go to [lifeline.org.au](https://www.lifeline.org.au).



Scan here for more on the need for community.

Salvos take stand against discrimination



In 2021, The Salvation Army Australia issued its first national commitment to inclusion by releasing an official statement.

The Inclusion Statement reinforces The Salvation Army's values and international mission statement: To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination.

"This inclusion statement stands alongside and in alignment with our existing mission, vision, and values and publicly declares that we welcome all people in every engagement they have with The Salvation Army, and we are committed to each of them feeling respected and safe," said Colonel Winsome Merrett, Chief Secretary, The Salvation Army Australia.

The statement reads:

"The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders past, present, and future. We value

and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and well-being of people of all ages, particularly children."



Alongside this statement, five icons visually represent key groups that often experience isolation, exclusion, or discrimination, or who face barriers in accessing programs and services. Icons are helpful symbols of welcome and say immediately, "We see you. You are welcome here."

The icons have been adapted to meet the Salvos' needs and express their commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Church without walls

Salvos officers (pastors) in Tasmania are bringing church to people who can't come to church.

Since January 2021, Majors Linda and Stephen Miller have led Tasmania's East Coast Mobile Mission initiative, driving 177km from Orford to St Helens, and taking in the communities of Triabunna, Swansea, and Bicheno.

"Our ministry involves meeting people where they are at," says Linda. "Some of the people we meet are referred to us by a doctor in one of the towns we visit. Mental health challenges, isolation, loneliness, affordable housing, domestic violence, alcohol and other drug issues, and suicide are just some of the issues we are met with daily.

"We are thankful for a network of other



Major Stephen Miller enjoys fellowship with the seasonal workers from Vanuatu, supported by the East Coast Mobile Mission initiative.

Salvation Army services and other agencies who we can also refer people to for further support and assistance."

The East Coast Mobile Mission ministry team has also supported seasonal workers from Vanuatu who want to connect with the Salvos. The Millers often join them for prayer and worship services at their backpacker accommodation. They also provide Bibles and donated a guitar.

– Jessica Morris

Have you taken care of your Will?



A gift in your Will can help The Salvation Army create a long-lasting impact in the lives of those experiencing hardship.

Together, we can give hope where it's needed most and you can start or continue your legacy of generosity.

For information or a free a copy of Your Will booklet



Please contact:

salvationarmy.org.au/wills
or scan the QR code



Finding a place to call home

Where misfits fit in and belong

WORDS Belinda Cassie

It might be surprising to hear this, but I don't often feel like I fit in.

In high school, when all the other girls had NKOTB (New Kids on the Block) and Brad Pitt posters on their walls, I had posters that mapped out the career paths I could take by studying chemistry, biology, and physics.

Right alongside those, I had a pinboard that held a bunch of quotes I'd pulled from Bertolt Brecht plays and a ticket stub from the first time I saw his play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

I guess it is fortunate that I was somewhat of a chameleon in high school and would shape myself to at least look like I fitted in there – or perhaps it's not so fortunate when I really think about it.

I'm not entirely sure that much has changed. I still don't necessarily fit in. I'm just learning to embrace it better. I mean, the church world isn't exactly busting at the seams with heavily tattooed pastors with a bunch of piercings. But even with that in mind, the fact that I am a white, university-educated, cisgendered woman already opens doors for me in many places, including church circles, that are more often than not closed to people of colour or those without access to education or our transgender siblings.

A friend of mine was visiting earlier this year, and sometimes she needs to use a wheelchair. On one particular day when the chair was necessary, we drove to another town nearby to go exploring. Or at least we would have liked

to have explored this stunning locale, with its phenomenal scenic views and quaint shops and cafes. Except, as it turns out, nothing was wheelchair accessible. Nothing. The doors were all too narrow for the chair, and even if they hadn't been, they all had stair access only.

So, we got back in the car and drove home again. I think I was more disappointed and angry for my friend than she was. In fact, she seemed resigned to it, having not been able to cross thresholds because of lack of access so many times in the past. That day was not a new experience for her.

SIMPLE INCLUSION

We hear the term 'inclusion' a lot these days. And it seems it is often turned into this big complex concept with clashing ideologies and theologies and a bunch of other 'ologies'. And perhaps I am naive, but I don't think it needs to be. I don't think it's hard at all. In one of the stories in the Bible, Jesus said this, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, birds come and make nests in its branches" (Matthew chapter 13, verses 31-32, New Living Translation).

It's one of my favourite of Jesus' analogies – that a tiny seed can grow into a tree for all the birds to come and find a space, with branches large enough to provide shade for all as well. There is room in the branches, and





ILLUSTRATION: G. PAGES/MALJUK

on the ground beneath, for every type of bird to come and safely nest.

If Jesus described the Kingdom of Heaven like that, as a space for all to find a place to call home, to belong, shouldn't our spaces, our community places, our places of worship, our workplaces, be the same? Shouldn't they all be places in which anyone, regardless of whether they look like us, or speak like us, or love like us, can find a place to belong?

I want to be part of something where the doors are wide and open and accessible to all. Where the misfits find a place where they can be themselves, where people from the LGBTQIA+ community are affirmed and celebrated, where those on the margins know they have a seat at the table – because they helped prepare it. Where a weird teenager who loves science and controversial German playwrights and tattoos could grow up to be a pastor who believes that when the Bible says that "whosoever may come", that whosoever really means everyone – no matter what.

That, to me, feels a lot like the Kingdom of Heaven that the Jesus I know talked about.



“

I want to be part of something where the doors are wide and open and accessible to all.

”



Scan here for more on the need for community.

Freedom from a traumatic life

Salvos a 'godsend' for Nicole

WORDS Darryl Whitecross

Nicole Collins describes her life now as wonderful. She has a full-time job, her own apartment, regularly volunteers with the Brisbane City Salvos Open House program, and worships at a Salvos missional church.

It is a far different life from what she was experiencing just a few years ago.

For most of her adult life, Nicole has had to deal with addiction, domestic violence, and homelessness, but she says she now finds herself in a "fantastic place" thanks to the help and support of The Salvation Army.

In her first relationship, Nicole says she was subjected to verbal abuse and the impacts of her partner's addiction to the drug ice. She says she also suffered physical abuse.

FINDING SAFETY

Her second relationship was not much different. "Twice in my life, now, I've just walked away with a backpack and my makeup – I always took my makeup!" she shares.

After leaving her first relationship in western Queensland, Nicole caught a bus to Brisbane, where she couch-surfed and lived on the streets before checking in to Moonyah – The Salvation Army Recovery Services Centre.

"I've been there three times, but that place has been an absolute godsend for me," Nicole explains. "I knew it was my safe place. I knew that if I could get there I could get support and counselling and would be okay.

"That's how I became involved with Open House at Brisbane City Salvos. Now I hand out emergency relief cards on a Wednesday morning, help feed the homeless, and support those seeking assistance there." She also attends God's Sports Arena church where she has found a spiritual home.

Nicole says she called out to God when she walked away from her second relationship. "I said, 'Well, God. Here we go. What are we going to do?' He said: 'Let's walk', so that's what we did. I didn't even put on shoes. I walked in a pair of thongs until I totally wore them out."

“

Any one of us could be homeless tonight.

”

Penniless, couch-surfing, sleeping rough again, vulnerable, and in fear of her life, Nicole felt lost but knew she could rely on the support of Open House and contact counsellors at Moonyah.

GIVING BACK

She picked up the phone and called the Salvos. She recognised the voice, help was at hand, and her life began to turn around from that moment.





Nicole Collins shares her story of transformation at the inaugural Salvos Sleepout in Brisbane last October.

"Now I have my own place that I'm very, very protective about," Nicole says. "I have a full-time job, and I still volunteer for the Salvos because they gave me so much. I just feel so grateful and blessed that I'm in a position where I can give back.

"I have come through [a lot]. It might sound a bit terrible, but I'm grateful that I did. I came out alive, and now I have women and men who come in [to Open House], and they're in situations that I was in back then. I've just got so much more knowledge for them now, and I can help advise them where to go and who to contact. I find that such a blessing.

"Please don't look down on the homeless. They're broken, [they] don't choose this life, and there is a reason they're on the streets – usually trauma or domestic violence. Have empathy for them and help them connect with support services.

"We need services like the Salvos. Any one of us could be homeless tonight."



Scan here for more on the need for community.

Cornbread



PHOTO: STOCK/GETTY IMAGES

Ingredients

1 tbs oil, 1½ cups cornmeal, ½ cup plain flour, 2 tbs sugar, 4 tsp baking powder, ¾ tsp salt, 2 eggs, 1 cup milk, ¼ cup vegetable oil.

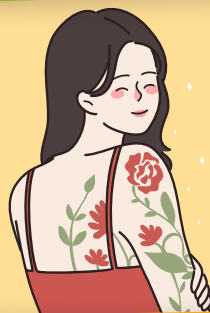
Method

- Preheat oven to 220°C.
- Add 1 tbs oil to baking pan and heat for a few minutes.
- Mix cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a bowl.
- Beat eggs in a separate bowl and add milk and oil. Mix.
- Add wet ingredients to the dry ones and mix until just combined. Don't overmix.
- Pour batter into the hot pan.
- Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden brown on top.
- Cut into wedges and serve hot.

FUNNY THINGS KIDS SAY

My favourite colour is ice cream.

Mummy, why do you always wear the same tattoos?



Have you been to kindergarten?
You're behaving like you haven't.

I'm going to miss my life when I'm a grown-up.

Daddy, are you going to get handsome, or are you wearing that?

SIGNING IN



Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

2		7	5		8		4	6
8				6			1	3
	3				4			2
7					5	1	9	
	8	3						
		1	7			3		
5								
1			8					
	7				9			1



Quick quiz

PHOTO: STOCK/GETTY IMAGES

1. Which is the highest waterfall in the world?
2. Which is the only vowel on a standard keyboard that is not on the top line of letters?
3. In which country is the city of Prague?
4. Which country produces the most coffee in the world?
5. Which is the only edible food that never goes bad?
6. The unicorn is the national animal of which country?

Tum-Tum

On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?



Bible byte

"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble."
Psalm chapter 46, verse 1
New Living Translation

DID YOU KNOW?

A cow gives nearly 200,000 glasses of milk in a lifetime.


One quarter of all your bones are in your feet.

At least one of the colours of the Olympic flag appears on all the national flags.

Australia is wider than the moon.

3	7	8	4	2	9	6	1
1	8	9	5	3	7	2	4
5	4	1	7	2	3	6	8
9	5	1	7	4	2	3	6
4	8	3	9	6	5	7	2
7	2	6	8	9	3	4	5
6	9	8	1	4	2	3	7
8	4	5	6	1	2	3	7
2	1	7	2	3	4	5	6

Quiz answers: 1. Angel Falls, Venezuela. 2. A. 3. Czech Republic. 4. Brazil. 5. Honey. 6. Scotland. Tum-Tum: is hiding on page 15.



“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

– Lilla Watson

Lilla is an Aboriginal elder, visual artist, activist, and educator working in Queensland.

(Lilla Watson grew up in the Dawson River region of Central Queensland, pictured here.)