

REFLECTION

The revolution
that is Christmas

FAITH TALK

Hope has
a name

LIFESTYLE

Kids in the
kitchen at
Christmas

Light in the darkness

The unchanging story of Christmas



SALVOS

MAGAZINE



A small, potted Christmas tree with warm white lights, a lit candle, and pine branches on a wooden surface. The tree is in a white pot and is decorated with warm white lights. A lit candle is placed next to it, and pine branches are scattered around the base. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

*May the Christmas
season fill your home
with hope and joy, your
heart with peace and
your life with love
and laughter.*

*From all of us
here in the Salvos
Magazine team.*



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

Salvos Magazine

Founders William and Catherine Booth

General Brian Peddle

Territorial Leaders

Commissioners Janine and Robert Donaldson

Secretary for Communications and Editor-In-Chief

Lieut-Colonel Neil Venables

Publications Manager Cheryl Tinker

Assistant Editor Simone Worthing

Designer Ryan Harrison

Cover Photo Jonnelle Yankovich on Unsplash

Editorial ph. (03) 8541 4562

Enquiry email salvosmagazine@salvationarmy.org.au

All other Salvation Army enquiries 13 72 58

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Restoring hope

We are about to celebrate Christmas – a season that helps restore hope and joy in a world worn out with the seemingly relentless disasters, personal tragedies and global heartbreaks this year has brought.

Thankfully, even as we struggle with all that life holds for us, we can have a deep hope and assurance of change – present and eternal – as we celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas and all that his life, death and resurrection mean for us, and for all humanity.

The coming of Jesus, as a vulnerable baby born in a barn at a chaotic and dangerous time in history, changed the world profoundly and permanently. He came to restore brokenness and make us whole. This is definitely worth celebrating!

As the features in this edition discuss, the Christmas season does not take away the pain in our lives, the challenges we face or global tragedies. Christmas, though, gives us hope and helps us to see our struggles in context as we celebrate God's love towards us, the daily strength he gives us and his promise of new life.

Simone Worthing
Assistant Editor



Light in the darkness

WORDS JANINE DONALDSON



Warmest greetings!

For author Emily Dickinson, hope is the thing with feathers.

In my present world, hope is the small things. Never has this been more pronounced than

this year of 2020, when hope is definitely celebrated in small, but significant steps.

As we look towards Christmas, you, like me, may have a mix of emotions. There is pain from this year – things not able to be achieved, separation from family and friends, isolation and loss of income and employment.

Along with these feelings, Christmas can be a reminder of unresolved conflict, painful relationships and stress around affording gifts for the important people in our lives.

Yet, when I hear Christmas music, see a lighted tree, take in the beautiful decorations or smell a delightful Christmassy smell, there's a feeling of wonder, awe and hope. Christmas inspires hope most of all for me. The stories and symbols that speak to the Christmas story whisper, "Keep going, don't give up."

The Christmas story draws me to the star of hope that led the wise men to Jesus. Just as they were guided towards the baby, so Jesus promises to guide us. We can trust him on our journey of life.

The Christmas story draws me to believe – to believe the impossible. Jesus, born of Mary in a stable filled with farm animals. The Saviour of the world born in a simple, smelly stable. Yes, I believe.

Lastly, Christmas draws me to the light that persists in the darkness of whatever circumstance I find myself in. That light is what the Christmas story is all about.

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The stories and symbols that speak to the Christmas story whisper, 'Keep going, don't give up'.

”

This Christmas message is unchanging. It's a message for a world in trouble. It's a personal message. Light shines brightest in darkness.

That's the heart of the Christmas story – love, light and hope.

Christmas reminds us that even when things seem dark, we can trust the everlasting light.

"A light that thrives in the depths of darkness ... It cannot and will not be quenched" (John chapter 1, verse 5).

Commissioner Janine Donaldson is co-leader of The Salvation Army Australia



Living in the moment

WORDS 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. This year, more than ever, we are longing for a joyful Christmas full of all those familiar, pre-coronavirus celebrations that we remember so well. 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. 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.

In the Bible, the Apostle Paul put it this way: "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 chapter 4, verses 11-13).

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.

Captain Nicola Poore is a Salvation Army officer (pastor) in NSW.



PHOTO BY BEN WHITE ON UNSPLASH



Christmas hope and love come full circle

Rosemary once struggled through many festive seasons. Now she helps others during this special time, and beyond.

WORDS NAOMI SINGLEHURST

Rosemary is passionate about her work as a Salvos Christmas coordinator supporting those in need, because she knows what it is like to struggle during the festive season.

Leading up to Christmas last year, Rosemary, who has served as the Christmas coordinator at Nambour Salvos (QLD) for more than 22 years, knew there were about 300 people in her community who would need extra support.

Rosemary says, "I thought, 'How on earth are we going to do this?'"

But soon, regular supporters and new donors started dropping off food, gifts, cards and money.

"It was like a miracle of endless provision," says Rosemary. "Christmas time is the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus and, honestly, it's a time when miracles really do happen."

Rosemary shares that one of the highlights last Christmas was giving a donated pushbike to a struggling family who had been through desperately tough times.

"When I told [the] mum we could give her son a bike, she just cried and cried and hugged me. After Christmas she came back and said how much her son loved the bike and what a great day it had been."

Rosemary is passionate about supporting those in need because she knows what it is like to struggle. Her own marriage broke up more than 30 years ago and she was left to raise four children alone.

She had married at 17 and soon discovered her husband struggled with alcoholism.

“

Christmas is a time when miracles really do happen.

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Living with family and domestic violence, she says, "I was frightened. I know what it is like to wear long sleeves, so people don't see the bruises.

"My husband would tell me that I'm good for nothing and you just get to the point where you believe that."

Not knowing where to turn, Rosemary and her children felt trapped. She had no idea that the Salvos could help until a friend invited her to take her son to a Salvos youth program.

After a harrowing family and domestic violence



Helping others at Christmas time is the highlight of the year for Rosemary.

incident, Rosemary arrived at the Salvos where the officer (pastor) and welfare worker quickly found her and the children a place to stay.

“They opened the family store to get clothes and organise food,” says Rosemary. “They put me through a course to build up my self-esteem and work through my years of abuse. They continued to work with me for a number of years, helping with Christmas gifts and food, camps, and in many other ways.

“The Salvation Army not only saved my life, but the life of four children who were given the chance to have a really good, happy childhood.”

Rosemary went on to volunteer and then to work in a number of roles with the Salvos. Helping others at Christmas time, though, is what she loves most.

“Ever since two of my granddaughters have been able to walk, they’ve been coming in and helping me at the Salvos every Christmas

too,” she shares. “My daughter always told them how our family used to get help, so they wanted to help and give back.”

Rosemary says she has not only discovered a passion for supporting others, but also discovered God’s deep love through her life experiences.

“I used to be scared, but I’m not now. I used to feel unloved, but now I know I’m loved. I used to feel alone, but not anymore. It used to feel as though I was standing on sinking ground, but now I feel like I stand on solid rock.

“God was with me, and what he’s done for me, what he’s given me, he wants me to share with others so they can know the same sense of peace that I do.”



Scan here for more on family and domestic violence.

Christmas toys bring cheer to outback kids

WORDS DARRYL WHITECROSS

Christmas for the tiny outback Queensland town of Thargomindah will be a little brighter again this year, thanks to the Salvos.

Major Mark Bulow, chaplain for the Salvos Flying and Rural Services in South Queensland, recently dropped into the town's police station, with his four-wheel-drive ute loaded with toys for the town's children.

He handed the toys to the local policeman, Sergeant Vaughan Collins, and his wife, Deslie, who gladly accepted them.

Deslie said the donation would put a smile on the many faces who had been doing it tough over the past eight years when crippling drought had gripped the state.

"Every year for as long as I have been in Thargomindah [since 2010], The Salvation Army has travelled the distance delivering gifts to let this little town, in the middle of nowhere, know that they are not forgotten," she says.

Deslie shared that, most years, the Salvos also come to Thargomindah with a brass band leading up to Christmas.

"The community would come together to see the band and hear all about Christmas from Mark and his crew," she says.

"One of the greatest gifts his visit brought to the community was the message that Christmas



PHOTO BY DARRYL WHITECROSS
Sergeant Vaughan Collins and his wife, Deslie, accepted toys from the Salvos for the town's children.

was for all people and not just for little children waiting for an imaginary man in a red suit."

For the past two years, the Salvos have been unable to do the annual pilgrimage to Thargomindah for their Christmas visit, so the town had to rely on its own resources.

We decided that it was time to get the community into gear and make sure that what the Salvos had brought to us was not lost," says Deslie. "Now that COVID-19 is preventing them from coming again, we know that we can still carry on."

Thargomindah will again host an outdoor Christmas Carols by Glowsticks event this year, and donated toys from the Salvos will be given out.

"We aim to make sure that the children know that Christmas doesn't just stop when you stop getting presents from Santa, but that giving to others is showing someone that we are here and we love them."

Despite being unable to bring his Christmas crew out for the past two years, Mark has still organised gifts for the children.



A sincere and loving gift

WORDS BRYCE DAVIES

Every year, the Salvos have Christmas lunches and dinners all over the country as we have connections and relationships with hundreds of hurting and lonely people who come to see us for support throughout the year.

One of my favourite Christmas party stories is about my friend Michelle.

Michelle is a busy single mum and has all the reasons in the world to just look after 'Number One'. However, she often turns up to community meals at the Salvos in Villawood (Western Sydney), and has often cooked for us and shared the table with us.

Michelle has taken the time and made the effort, often after a busy day at work or on her day off, to get to know the people who we meet with each week. She regularly sees people like Fiona, Robbo, Douggie, Saty and Leah and her young son. She has listened to their stories and understands something of their pain and struggle. She has laughed with them and become friends. She has beautifully taken the time to foster a proper relationship that is often quite lovely. They look forward to seeing her whenever she can make it.

When Christmas came around last year, Michelle rocked up to our Christmas party with gifts – thoughtful gifts, specially chosen, each with a card and nicely wrapped. They were carefully selected at a shop for a person with a unique personality and given with a genuine smile and a hug to people who perhaps didn't get a gift from anyone else. People who perhaps don't think or feel much about Christmas at all. Given with sincere

love and the hope of joy for the recipient.

This was one of the most beautiful things I've ever witnessed. It was the culmination of a year of intentional connection with a hurting community and the sharing of love respect and intimacy.



PHOTO BY MEL POOLE ON UNSPLASH

That right there, is what Christmas is all about. A sincere and loving gift.

Major Bryce Davies is team leader at Salvos Villawood Community of Hope in Sydney.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

A people of peace

Jesus brings peace in the storms of life and invites us to share it with others

WORDS GENERAL BRIAN PEDDLE



The year 2020 has been unique, interesting and challenging. We have lived through a global pandemic, the ramifications of which continue to impact our lives. We have witnessed the best of humanity as communities came together to care for the vulnerable. We have seen the worst of humanity as racism cost lives and led to violent protests by demonstrators from varying viewpoints. All of this has combined to both exhilarate and exhaust us throughout this year.

It is into our messed-up, complex, ever-changing, uncertain and perplexing world that Jesus comes as the Prince of Peace. Jesus was familiar with prejudice, oppressive political regimes, institutionalised religion and suffering. So, although the man Jesus lived 2000 years ago, his words still have relevance because he, as the Son of God, has an eternal perspective.

So, what did Jesus teach us about peace?

In the Sermon on the Mount, as he began his teaching ministry, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew chapter 5, verse 9). Then, in preparing his disciples for his departure and the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John chapter 14, verse 27).

This is the same Jesus who spoke to the wind and waves, and said, "Peace, be still!" (Mark chapter 4, verse 39). To the woman who anointed his feet at Simon's house, Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke chapter 7, verse 50). After explaining many things to his disciples, Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John chapter 16, verse 33).



Peace distinguishes the earthly existence of Jesus. In announcing his birth, the angels declared, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests" (Luke chapter 2, verse 14). As Jesus appeared to his followers after the Resurrection, he would declare, "Peace be with you!" (John chapter 20, verse 21).

If Jesus was so intent on sharing the peace of God with others, we must do the same, but we cannot share with others what we do not first have for ourselves. Consequently, we need to ensure we are living in relationship with God and receive his peace that is beyond our understanding, yet which keeps our hearts and minds secure in Christ Jesus (Philippians chapter 4, verse 7). It is from this position of peace, of keeping our focus upon God (Isaiah chapter 26, verse 3), that we can experience the peace of God in the storms of life and share that peace with others. We are

called children of God when we are peace-makers, peace-bringers and peace-builders because we share the very essence and nature of God with others.

So, in this Advent season and beyond, let us be people of peace. May our very presence bring peace into rooms, situations and lives because we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. May our words be words of peace because we share the words of God. Wherever you are and whatever situation you find yourself in, may you experience the peace of God today.

General Brian Peddle is world leader of The Salvation Army.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.



The revolution that is Christmas

Jesus changed the world and we're still celebrating that today

WORDS LAUREN MARTIN

Just thinking about Christmas is really exciting! It makes me think again – why do I follow Jesus?

The birth of Jesus was revolutionary. Radical. Unorthodox. Mind-blowing! If we think about it – we celebrate Christmas because the God of the universe decided to visit the world in a way like no other. Without fanfare. Without an entourage. Without power and might.

The most powerful being in the universe came into our world as the most helpless. In the weakest, most vulnerable and powerless way possible – as a baby. Isn't that just crazy?! And he wasn't even born as a royal baby, a baby that would grow up to rule the world. No, Jesus was born in poverty. A 'nobody' (an illegitimate nobody, from a town of 'nobodies').

Then this Jesus, whom we still celebrate every Christmas Day, grows up to be a nomadic tradesman, starts his ministry with a bunch of ragtag friends (who are also 'nobodies'), does a few healing miracles and feeds a few thousand people with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. He is then put to death because he's saying crazy things about being the king of an alternative kingdom – a kingdom ruled by love, a kingdom where it doesn't matter if you're poor, or a 'nobody', or have done things wrong, a kingdom where you are loved and valued and worthy. That sounds like a world that I want to be a part of!

This 'nobody' baby turned peaceful revolutionary, dies on a cross at Easter (yes, millions

around the world not only celebrate his birth, but also his death!) and the story is over. What?

But that's where it gets interesting. People who celebrate the true meaning of Christmas every year do so because they know that the God of the universe, who came to earth as a 'nobody' baby, came to bring a new kind of way of living for everyone. His death on the cross was actually just the beginning of the masterplan. He gave his life as a sacrifice, to pay for the sins of all of us 'nobodies' and give us eternal life. Jesus changed the world, and we're still celebrating that today.

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The birth of Jesus ... gives me a huge sense of hope.

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When I celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas, I thank God that he came as a 'nobody'. Do you know why? Because his life shows me that it doesn't matter how much of a 'nobody' I am – even without wealth, or much power and with all my flaws, I, too, can be a world-changer. This happens when I follow Jesus and try to live the way he did – showing love, grace and compassion to others.

Being a person of peace and a bringer of joy, love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,



PHOTO BY PHIL HEARING ON UNSPLASH

gentleness and self-control (except on those mornings when I haven't had my coffee, of course!) – these are all ways Jesus brought his kingdom to earth, and ways that we can do the same.

By making a commitment to follow Jesus, I've joined his exciting plan to transform the whole world to the way it's supposed to be – free of fear, sadness, anger, doubt, worry and all the things that weigh us down. I don't need to be powerful. I don't need to be rich. I don't need to be strong, or even good-looking.

The birth of Jesus – the God of the universe – as a baby in a stable, gives me a huge sense of hope. God invites us to come to him just

as we are and allow him to transform us and, through us, others, into the people of peace we are created to be.

Maybe that's why we say "peace on earth" at Christmas time.

Will you accept his invitation this Christmas?

Lauren Martin is Assistant Editor of the Salvos' Others magazine.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

Hope has a name

The same hope that appeared that first Christmas is still with us today

WORDS SANDRA PAWAR

The year 2020 has been a doozy, hasn't it? A worldwide pandemic, nationwide lockdowns, a ban on hugs and handshakes, quarantine, financial hardships, restrictions, isolation and sorrow. Sadly, this past year has not brought very much hope our way.

The word 'hope' is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as, "a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen". *Webster's Dictionary* defines it as, "to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true".

I think this year we have all waited in anticipation for some good news, whether that be for borders to reopen, family members being allowed to visit, restrictions lifted, employment gained and COVID-19 infection rates decreasing. We have all looked for hope.

We are now heading into the Christmas season. At this time of year, the stores and shopping centres are beginning to put up their Christmas decorations, sparkly lights and tall Christmas trees. Songs will soon be playing on the radio with joyful voices singing, "Joy to the world!" and "'Tis the season to be jolly!". Christmas is usually seen as a season of hope but this year, these traditions could seem a little shallow.

I encourage us all, though, to approach this season with hopeful anticipation because, thankfully, it is not the season that brings hope, but *who* this season represents that matters.

His name is Jesus, and he is our hope.

In the Bible, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah wrote, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6). This prophecy came true,



PHOTO BY ADRIA BERROCAL FORCADA ON UNSPLASH



and the greatest miracle possible happened that very first Christmas. Hope arrived in human form and entered an imperfect and suffering world. He appeared in flesh, as a baby, the one we call Jesus.

The book of Matthew in the New Testament shares, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which is a Hebrew name that means 'God with us')" (Matthew chapter 1, verse 23).

Friends, hope is found in the truth that Jesus is Immanuel – God with us. God is not 'out there', God is here. We can celebrate

Christmas not because of the carols we sing, the gifts we buy or the trees we decorate, but because Jesus is with us, right here, right now. Jesus did not just give us hope that first Christmas, but his presence gives us hope today.

Jesus is hope – to the person who has lost their job, to the single parent fighting to provide for their children, to the person who feels isolated and alone, to the one who is fighting secret addictions and to the one who is struggling with depression and anxiety. Jesus is your hope today.

I pray that these lyrics from 'Above It All' by the band *Phillips, Craig and Dean*, will bring some hope and encouragement to you this Christmas:

There is freedom in prison.

There is a light in the dark that will swallow the shadows and carry the night from our hearts.

There is a peace in the chaos.

There is a grace for the flame.

A strength for the battle, a shield for the arrow, a faith that endures everything.

Our hope, our hope has a name.

Jesus, Jesus is with us.

Sandra Pawar is a Salvation Army officer (pastor) in New South Wales.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.





Christmas cooking with kids

Engaging the mind and the senses in the kitchen

WORDS SIMONE WORTHING

For millions of families around Australia, cooking special treats in the lead-up to Christmas Day is an annual tradition. Although an abundance of delicious Christmas foods are available ready-made, some of us still enjoy an occasional few hours or more in the kitchen, dusting off the recipe books – or searching online – and preparing some festive delights.

Majors Cathryn and Mark Williamson, award-winning bakers and Salvo officers (pastors), say that the Christmas season is often an opportunity for families to cook and connect at home. “Maybe it’s preparing a special meal together. Maybe it’s baking something to package as gifts. Maybe there’s something your family has as a Christmas tradition, and so the tradition continues.”

Cathryn, who has also authored several cook-books, adds that preparing a meal or treat with children also teaches practical life skills.

“Cooking is an activity that everyone can participate in,” she says. “Parents can make it fun and meaningful for their kids by engaging in the tasks themselves. They can give the kids appropriate task, such as choosing the recipe or reading the list of ingredients. Measuring, chopping and mixing can be shared.

“As you cook, have conversations about Christmas and ask the kids what they like about the season. It may also give opportunity to share the true meaning of Christmas.

“There are so many benefits of families



PHOTO BY HANNAH TASKER ON UNSPLASH

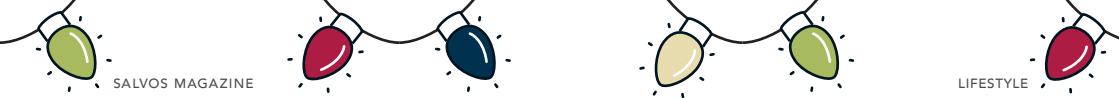
cooking together, but I think the main ones are connection and building relationships. Cooking is also the only activity that uses all the senses and engages the mind as well.”

GINGERBREAD FUN

Gingerbread is a fun Christmas treat to make with kids. It’s versatile too, and can be made into biscuits, cakes, bars and the ever-popular little houses.

“Gingerbread is easy to make and everyone can be involved from making the mixture, rolling and cutting it, and then decorating before eating it!” says Cathryn. “And the making, cooking and decorating don’t all have to be done on the same day.”

The Williamsons are ‘both’ passionate about cooking. “We both started baking as children,” shares Mark. “I think there’s something almost magical about baking which



Salvation Army officers, Majors Cathryn and Mark Williamson, have made a ministry out of cooking.

appeals particularly to children – you take a bunch of basic ingredients such as eggs, butter, flour and sugar, and, by combining these in the right way, you produce a cake or some biscuits. It’s amazing! I guess I’ve never really grown up!”

For Cathryn, cooking is about “recharging”. “When I’m cooking, I’m not thinking about everything else that is going on,” she says. “I also get to be creative and, at the end, I have something to show for it and to eat!”

For the Williamsons’ gingerbread biscuits recipe, go to page 20.

Cathryn has also developed the Salvos Kids in the Kitchen program, a 10-week course that takes school-age children from grades three to six and teaches them to cook 10 different dishes. As part of the course, the children learn food-safety tips, budgeting, healthy meal planning, kitchen cleanliness

and teamwork. For more information, email missionsupport@salvationarmy.org.au

Cathryn’s cookbooks featuring “brilliant biscuits” and “sensational slices” can be purchased for \$10 each, plus postage. Proceeds go towards Salvo projects for vulnerable women. For more information, email two.thumbs.up@hotmail.com



Scan here for more on finding meaning.



Difficult roads lead to beautiful places

Amanda finds new purpose in life

One of Amanda's first jobs was at the Doveton Salvos in south-east Melbourne, sorting and distributing toys for children at Christmas time.

Today, Amanda is the team leader for emergency relief at nearby Pakenham Salvos. She is well-known for her professional and warm approach, her understanding of client needs and her work with volunteers, local agencies and surrounding businesses.

Below, Amanda shares her story:

Mum's dad was an alcoholic and her mum was abusive. Sadly, Mum became a heroin addict through the 1990s and my sister and I were taken from her care.

We lived with my father's parents and had a great life. I always knew, though, despite everything, that Mum loved us.

I stayed with my grandparents until I was 13 and was expelled from school. My sister and I moved back to Mum's and lived the party life for many years. We also became homeless and lived with a bikie gang in a factory in Dandenong.

I wanted my life to be different.

I went to TAFE and completed years 11 and 12, and then started a Diploma of Community Services. Due to my background, I had so much insight into different issues and how

people coped with them. I was a natural debriefer. I knew where people could get help and could assist them with the best avenues to take.

For my placement, I contacted The Salvation Army's Doveton Community Services Centre. I didn't know much about the Salvos, but I knew they were there, some of what they did, and that this was the work I wanted to do. Major John Farquharson – now my mentor – was the manager there and was so encouraging.

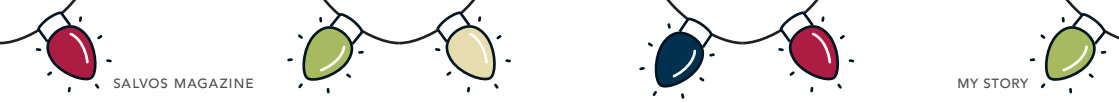
After my initial Christmas work, I continued with the job throughout my second year of studies. It was just where I needed to be. I worked in emergency relief and everyone was so supportive.

My second-year placement was at the Salvos in Dandenong. The role was a mixed one, and I worked with the youth minister in a homeless feeding program. It was through this program that I met John, a long-term Salvation Army volunteer and employee who now works with me here at Pakenham.

In one of the most eye-opening work experiences I've had, I became involved in the PIVOT youth crime prevention program run from the Dandenong Salvos. The kids could relate to me because I knew what it was like to be drunk, hungry, not able to rely on family, and surrounded by drugs. I had a deeper understanding of what they needed and how they wanted to be treated. I became more of a role model to them.

I finished my diploma in late 2018. It took me almost three years and two attempts, but I did it!

Having been on 'the other side' has made me an emotional person with massive empathy for others. I love doing special things for



Amanda with her mentor, Major John Farquharson, preparing grocery packs for emergency relief.

people and for the kids of clients. I am professional and have boundaries, but am very human too.

I love that the Salvos care for the whole person. We can offer them food, crisis assistance, referrals and a faith pathway if they are curious.

I tell Mum that she did the best she could at the time, and you never fail until you stop trying. I keep encouraging my family, our clients, everyone – if I do this, my job is being done.

Through the pandemic, I have felt the need to belong somewhere, to have that feeling of family and community. My colleague John sent me the link to Berwick Salvos online church, and my partner, Greg, and I have been going for a few months now.

In the context of 2020, it has been easy for me to join church online. I can be in the background, in my home environment and I feel really comfortable and enjoy being there.

I have found people to be friendly, open and accepting. I want to be a part of this, to get to know the congregation. The format allows people to share and we get insight into others.

The sense of belonging is phenomenal. I didn't think that was out there. There is a sense of a wider experience, that someone is there looking out for us. I have a community of support for hope and inspiration, and someone to sit in the good and bad times with.

Church online also brings meaning to the work I am doing. I want to align this with who I want to be as a person.

I feel like this is the start of really nice journey for me. Difficult roads definitely lead to beautiful places.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.



Biscuit Advent calendar



PHOTO BY ANDREA REDFORD

Ingredients

3 pkts Malt-O-Milk biscuits (or similar), 1 egg white, ½ tsp lime juice (or water), 1¾ cups pure icing sugar, piping bag or ziplock bag, lollies to fill the calendar, extra decorations (optional).

Method

In a medium bowl, whisk egg white and lime juice. Gradually add sifted icing sugar, whisking until smooth.

Spoon icing into piping bag or ziplock bag (with corner snipped off to create a very small hole).

Find a chopping board or large platter big enough to fit the Advent calendar. The finished creation will be about 4 Malt-O-Milk biscuits wide, and 6 long (as pictured).

Take one biscuit and pipe icing along one long edge. Carefully position onto board or plate towards the top left. Hold in place for a couple of seconds to let the icing hold.

Take a second biscuit and pipe icing along the bottom long edge and side, and carefully place next to the first biscuit. Continue until you have a row of 4 joined, horizontal biscuits.

Attach the next biscuit at right angles to the first biscuit to start a vertical line of biscuits.

Continue until you have a row of 3 joined, vertical biscuits.

With the top and side edges as a guide, continue to ice and attach biscuits (4 across, 3 down) creating a grid of 24 boxes. As you get to the last row, you will probably need to trim the biscuits down with a sharp knife to fit.

Place the finished grid of biscuits in the fridge while you ice the lids.

Take 24 biscuits and ice the numbers 1 to 24 on top. If you like, add some extra Christmassy decorations.

Fill each box of the biscuit grid with lollies, treats or other surprises. Place the numbered lids on top. Each day of Advent you can lift the biscuit lid to enjoy the treats inside – and even eat the lid, too!

Hot chocolate on a stick



PHOTO BY ANDREA REDFORD

Gingerbread biscuits



Ingredients

125g butter, ½ cup caster sugar, 1 egg yolk, ¼ cup honey, 2 cups plain flour, 2 tsp ground ginger, 1 tsp bicarbonate soda

Royal icing: 1 egg white, 1½ cups pure icing sugar, approximately.

Method

Beat butter and sugar until light and creamy. Add egg yolk and beat until combined. Mix

in honey. Stir in sifted flour, ginger and soda. Form dough into a ball. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 180°C. Line oven trays with baking paper. Roll dough between sheets of baking paper until 5mm thick.

Using Christmas biscuit cutters (or gingerbread men cutters), cut the dough into shapes. Place on trays 3cm apart. Re-roll remaining dough and repeat cutting.

Cook for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned. Transfer to wire racks to cool.

To make Royal icing:

Whisk egg white with a fork until foamy. Add sifted icing sugar a spoonful at a time, mixing well until mixture is thick and creamy. Spoon into piping bag to decorate biscuits.

Ingredients

350g milk chocolate, wooden sticks or stirrers (you could also use plastic spoons), decorations (such as mini marshmallows and assorted Christmas sprinkles).

Method

Break up chocolate and microwave at 20 to 30-second intervals until smooth.

Using a metal spoon, fill each hole of mini-muffin tray with the melted chocolate.

Freeze for three minutes.

Remove from freezer and decorate. Return to the freezer for another three minutes.

Remove from freezer and insert the wooden sticks into the centre.

Return to the freezer for 30 to 60 minutes until completely set.

If you used a metal tray, hold the stick at the base and gently wiggle until the chocolate loosens. (The chocolates should easily slide out of a silicone tray.)

These make great Christmas gifts, wrapped in a plastic treat bag and tied with a ribbon.

The chocolate sticks can be eaten as is or stirred into a mug of warm milk to make a hot chocolate! Makes 12.



Spot the difference

Can you spot the 8 differences between these pictures?



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

- Answers:**
1. Yellow star is now orange
 2. Yellow and orange lights switch places
 3. "Merry" changed to "Happy"
 4. An extra holly berry appears
 5. Red candy cane changes to blue
 6. Happy gingerbread man changes to sad
 7. Strings disappear from the gift
 8. An extra star appears on the stocking



Have a laugh

How did Mary and Joseph know Jesus' weight when he was born?

They had a weigh in a manger ...



What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney?

Claus-trophobia!



What do Santa's little helpers learn at school?

The elf-abet!



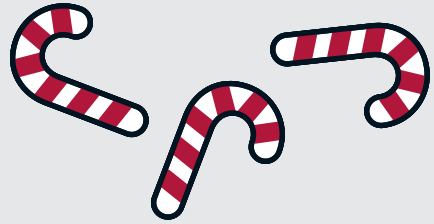
Wordsearch

S O R S T A R P S P A F U Z L
 U N K E R J E U A C E Z I J E
 N F O A G A V Y M S A J X M S
 W A W I C N L U T E F R E N N
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 I U F T A I Q O H W R E A T H
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 K A V J I J G K S C S N G C C
 I C R Q H N L D Q K K X P U M
 H V F Y C V E J K W H O L F H

ANGELS	JESUS
BETHLEHEM	JOY
BIRTH	LOVE
CAROLS	MANGER
CHRISTMAS	MARY
DECORATIONS	NATIVITY
FAMILY	PEACE
FESTIVE	SAVIOUR
GIFTS	STAR
GOODWILL	TINSEL
HOPE	WREATH

Answers: 1. Turkey 2. 'Jingle Bells' 3. Carols by
 Candlelight 4. Hansel and Gretel 5. 364
Tum-Tum: is hiding in the presents behind Rosemary on
 page 7.

Quick quiz



1. In what modern-day country was St Nicholas born?
2. What was the first song ever broadcast from space in 1965?
3. What Christmas tradition began in Melbourne in 1938?
4. In the early 1800s, the first gingerbread houses were reportedly inspired by what famous fairy tale?
5. How many gifts in total were given in the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' song?

Tum-Tum

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



Did you know?

- The first artificial Christmas tree was crafted from goose feathers.
- Twenty-eight LEGO sets are sold every second during the Christmas season.
- During the Christmas season each year more than 1.76 billion candy canes are made.



The Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal

The Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal, with founding charity partner, The Salvation Army, launched its annual appeal last month.

This year, the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal is needed earlier and more than ever before in its 33-year history. The collective impact of the Black Summer bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic across Australia has led to an exponential increase in the number of Australians experiencing hardship, with many people having to seek assistance for the first time.

The theme for this year's appeal – Big Heart, Small Gift – encourages Australians to give what they can, however big or small.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Here's how you can get involved in a few simple steps:

Choose a practical gift that will go beyond Christmas time and leave it under the Wishing Tree in-store at Kmart.

When shopping in-store at Kmart, click on the Wishing Tree logo on the self-serve checkout screen to add to a transaction or drop a gold coin into a collection box at the registers.

Donate online by scanning a Wishing Tree QR code that will be found in-store at Kmart.

For more information, or to donate, go to: salvationarmy.org.au/christmas/kmart-wishing-tree-appeal/