

FEATURE

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FAITH TALK

Reflections on the Advent season

MY STORY

A lifetime of Christmas care

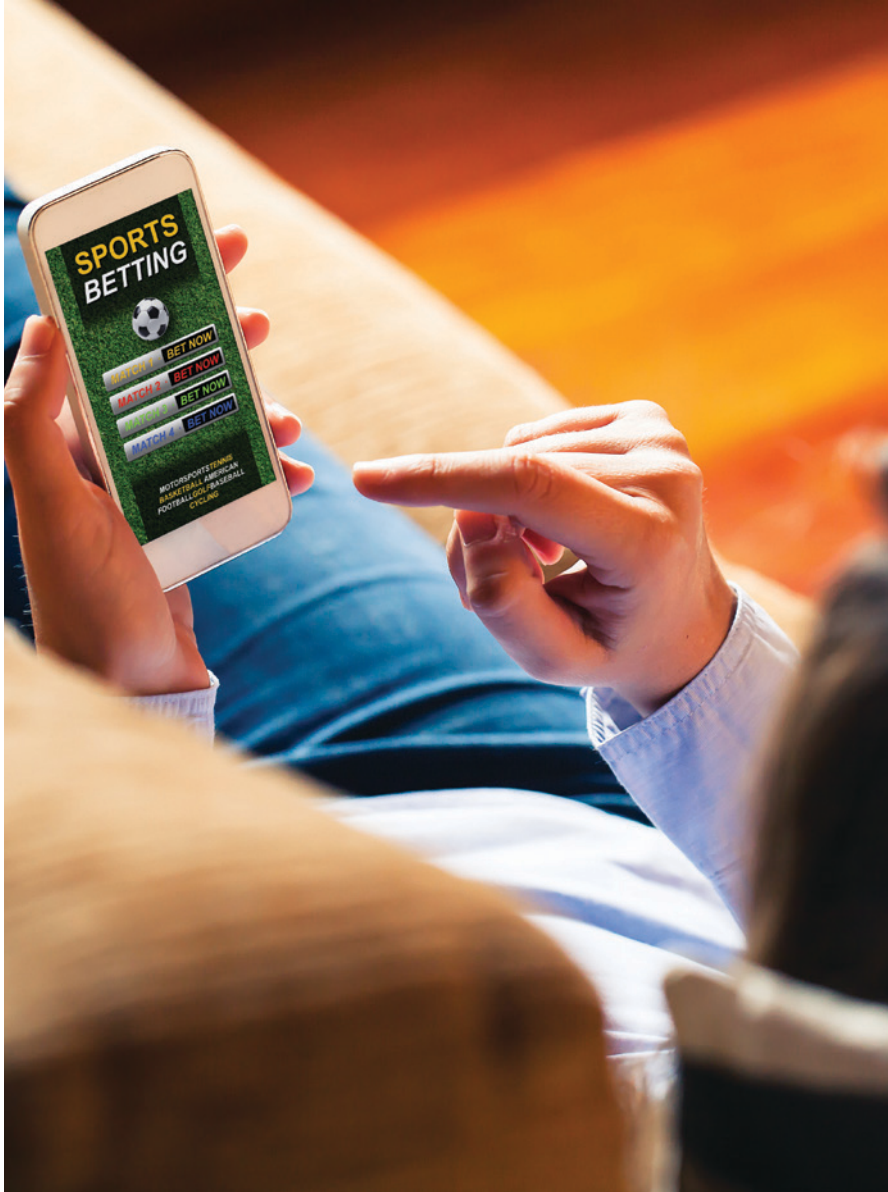
Australians taking a gamble during lockdowns

Working group formed to combat gambling harm



SALVOS

MAGAZINE





The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.

- Helen Keller



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

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A lifetime of Christmas care



Christmas is coming

As we move around our communities, the signs that Christmas is on its way are everywhere – decorations, tinselled trees, supermarket shelves stocked with seasonal fare, and even an occasional nativity scene.

In Faith Talk this week, Amanda Hart begins her four-part series on Advent, the lead-up to Christmas where we prepare, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually, for Christmas. This is a time where, despite what is happening in our lives, we remember the true meaning of Christmas – that God sent his son, Jesus, into the world to bring peace, hope, love, and joy.

Many of us are looking forward to Christmas as we prepare to reunite with family and friends. For others, though, Christmas is a lonely and challenging time. In My Story, Brayden talks about the work of the Salvos in assisting those doing it tough financially, but also emotionally, as Christmas approaches.

And Jessica Morris reviews some Christmas movies with fun and festive themes, but that also touch on some of the more challenging issues often faced this season, such as grief, forgiveness, and family dynamics.

For these stories and more, check out salvosmagazine.com.au

Simone Worthing **Assistant Editor**



'Tis the season for Christmas movies

Five new films to get you in the holiday spirit

WORDS JESSICA MORRIS

We've reached the end of November, and it's now acceptable to say I've watched Christmas movies year-round. Now, I'm aware not everyone can hold that much commodified Christmas spirit. But thankfully, that's where my obsession/excellence in watching Christmas films pays off – I've stumbled on some delightful new holiday films that will perfectly accompany your rewatch of *Home Alone*.



1. CHRISTMAS TOWN (NR)

Actress Candace Cameron Bure is known for two things: her role on *Full House* and her love for Jesus. In this Hallmark film, her family values and faith come together. Bure stars as a teacher who is moving across the country. On the way, her train stops in – you guessed it – Christmas Town. Here, she learns more about her late father and meets a single dad and his foster son. The depth of this film surprised me, and the themes around faith, fostering, and grief are timely. Don't be put off by the NR (Not Rated) rating – that's typical for Hallmark films. I'd classify this easily as PG for mature themes.

Available digitally on iTunes and YouTube.

Available on DVD at Koorong.

2. A KIWI CHRISTMAS (PG)

Fed up with the world's materialism, Santa throws in the towel and crashes his sleigh in New Zealand. Upon meeting an estranged family on holiday, he starts to reclaim his Christmas spirit. Along the way, parents are reunified, and a family heals. With some slapstick humour and a little magic, this is the perfect film for a late summer evening.

Available for free on 7plus.

Available on DVD.





3. THE CLAUS FAMILY (PG)

This family comedy drama is full of holiday magic. Set in Belgium, we meet a young family grappling with the death of their father last Christmas Eve. It means that son Jules hates Christmas. But things become complicated when his grandpa, who looks suspiciously like Santa, has a fall. Don't pass on this film because it is dubbed in English – it depicts grief with nuance and integrity, and you'll be captured by the whimsy of the story.

Available digitally on Netflix.

4. A SUNBURNT CHRISTMAS (M)

There's nothing quite like an Australian Christmas – especially when it's portrayed with our trademark banter and wit. Suited to an older audience, this film tells the story of a convicted criminal on the run. Naturally, he wears a Santa costume. Hiding out at a family farm in remote South Australia, he convinces the kids he is Santa Claus. But, things get complicated when the oldest daughter meets the protagonist and learns about his connection to her late father. I enjoyed this film's commitment to diversity, female empowerment, and the tenacity of Aussie farmers. Keep this one from little eyes and ears, though.

Available digitally on Stan.



5. THE CHRISTMAS CHRONICLES 2 (PG)

Directed by Chris Columbus (*Home Alone*), this sequel follows the magical story about the Pierce children hitchhiking a ride to the North Pole. This time, the kids are older and on a family vacation with their mum's boyfriend and his son. With an engagement on the horizon and the onset of puberty, real-life themes mix nicely with fun and fantasy. A corresponding storyline about an elf gone rogue and the power of forgiveness is also a nice touch.

Available digitally on Netflix.



Australians taking a gamble during lockdowns

Working group formed to combat gambling harm

WORDS JESSICA MORRIS

Australians have found different ways to cope through COVID-19 lockdowns. While many have been positive, there has been a worrying increase in the number of people gambling.

While playing the pokies or buying a lotto ticket has become part of our culture, online gambling has also become an insidious problem as people try to 'escape reality' while sitting on their couch at home.

The ease of signing up for online gambling is thought to be behind the increase in people gambling, and it's no wonder an estimated 50 per cent of Australians regularly gamble when all you need is a mobile phone, a betting app, and a credit card.

In 2018-19, it is estimated Australians lost \$24 billion in gambling, which doesn't include

consequences such as homelessness and relationship breakdown.

"I've seen first-hand the harm that gambling can cause, and it's devastating," says Major Claire Emerton, Salvos officer (pastor) in Melbourne. "I've seen gambling drive people to the brink of suicide because it can impact every area of their life.

"As a student social worker and a Salvos officer, my eyes were opened to the nature of the gambling industry and that it's quite predatory. With poker machines, you're losing money, but the machine plays upbeat music that tells you you're near a win. That triggers a dopamine release and can create an addiction."

HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES

'Gambling harm' is defined as any negative consequence caused or made worse by gambling, and Claire's passion for combating this comes from frontline experience.

Through her work with the Salvos Moneycare, Domestic and Family Violence, and Doorways (emergency relief) teams to support everyday Australians, she observed that gambling harm was intrinsically linked to financial stress and poverty, homelessness, relationship breakdown, family violence, addiction, and mental health issues.

Claire was motivated to co-create The Salvation Army's first Gambling Harm Working Group. Still in its early stages, it exists to bring awareness to the issue, provide training, act as a sounding board for officers and employees, and create systemic change through policy.

CHANGING OUR LANGUAGE

The first step in creating change involves changing our language, according to Jeffrey Milne, Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor for the Salvos.

"People and policy commonly refer to 'problem gambling services' and say that people are 'problem gamblers', but that language has now changed. We call it responding

to gambling harm or people experiencing gambling harm issues," he says.

Claire adds, "It highlights that the 'problem' is broader than the gambler, including predatory products and normalisation of gambling culture in Australia, and in government policy. Therefore, responsibility needs to be put on products, the industry, and government to create an environment where harm doesn't flourish."

Over the past year, Jeffrey and his fellow policy advisor, Alejandro Navarrete, have developed three major submissions to the federal and state governments related to gambling harm.

Their expertise in the area has given the Salvos a voice in the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, the Gaming Control Amendment (Future Gaming Market) Bill 2021 in Tasmania, and the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Prohibition on Credit Card Use) Bill 2020.

"The figures show that the pandemic has made an impact on gambling behaviour," says Alejandro. A survey undertaken by the Australian Gambling Research Centre showed that "even with limited access to venues, overall, participants gambled more often during COVID-19. The proportion who gambled four or more times a week increased from 23 per cent to 32 per cent [between June and July 2020]." ►





LIVE, LOVE AND FIGHT

Given that state governments made a combined total of \$6.5 billion revenue from gambling in 2018-19 – before we witnessed the spike in online gambling due to COVID-19 – the work of the policy team has given the Gambling Harm Working Group extra clout as they meet with politicians seeking to balance power with the common good.

Major Brad Watson, Head of Community Engagement based in Tasmania, is another member of the Gambling Harm Group and is advocating around recent legislation in Tasmania – the Future Gaming Market Project.

For Brad and his team this work goes hand in hand with The Salvation Army’s mission to live, love, and fight alongside all people.

“As Salvos, it’s essential we talk about gambling harm because we’re talking about people who are affected by an industry that deliberately preys on people and creates mechanisms to entrap, addict, and fleece people,” says Brad.

“Our role is to live with, love and fight for these people where they may not be able to fight for themselves – whether it is through the financial counselling service, policy and advocacy, financial assistance, or helping find a safe place for their family. That, of course, is the love of Jesus in action.”

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

We all have a role to play in breaking the stigma that surrounds gambling harm. Because it’s not all winners and grinners like gambling is portrayed on the ads.

“The more that we can raise awareness about how predatory the gambling industry is, and how intertwined it is in terms of government funding and reliance, the more we can show that gambling isn’t about personal weakness. [We can show] they’ve actually been caught in this big predatory machine, and knowing that can begin to break down the stigma.”

Contact Gambler's Help
on 1800 858 858 or
gamblinghelponline.org.au





Promising to reuse to rejoice this Christmas

Christmas is a joyful time of giving, but when research shows that Australians receive more than 20 million unwanted gifts each year, it could be time to rethink the way we do it.

That's the idea behind Salvos Stores Preloved Promise, a movement across the nation to redefine second-hand giving.

Matt McMahon, Salvos Stores customer campaign partner, says research they conducted last year showed that 63 percent of us would consider shopping second-hand over Christmas to support the environment. Their research also found 72 per cent of Australians made a commitment last year to create more sustainable habits, confirming the groundswell of community determination to live and shop sustainably. And that, says Matt, is the beauty of the Preloved Promise.

Salvos Stores launched the Preloved Promise campaign this month on billboards, online TV and in partnership with *Frankie* magazine, encouraging people to post their Preloved Promise on social media. This can be done by using the imagery on the Salvos Stores website to announce that second-hand presents are high on their wish list this year, explaining why they've made this choice.

"I can understand there could be some hesitation in shopping second-hand for Christmas gifts," Matt says. "Gift giving

comes from a generous heart, and perhaps there is a concern that second-hand gifts appear stingy. But by making the promise, you are removing any negative connotations associated with preloved gifts and empowering those purchasing gifts for you to shop second-hand with confidence."

As well as creating a more sustainable Christmas, Matt says there are other benefits to buying preloved gifts.

"Financially speaking, with a second-hand gift you can usually buy a better gift with the same budget, compared to shopping new.

"Not only that, when you shop at Salvos Stores, you're helping to spread hope and joy to those in need, with 100 per cent of profits supporting the work of The Salvation Army."

Finding quality second-hand gifts poses no problems, with 350 stores across the country and an online store that lists more than 1000 items every day, on average.

"There's a real beauty in the uniqueness of a second-hand gift selection," says Matt.

There is also real beauty in helping to reduce waste this festive season.

Go here to be part of the Preloved Promise: salvosstores.com.au/prelovedpromise

- Faye Michelson

Preparing our hearts

Reflections on the season of Advent

WORDS AMANDA HART

Most of us are familiar with Advent calendars – the calendars of all shapes, sizes, and materials that involve opening a little drawer, box, cardboard window, or envelope with a surprise treat inside. These ‘treats’ range from chocolates to tea, toys, perfumes, Bible verses, crafts, and the list goes on.

In the Christian church calendar, Advent is the period of four Sundays and weeks before Christmas. Advent means ‘coming’ in Latin and is a time of preparation and expectation – for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas and the second coming of Christ. There is a range of traditions around Advent, including Christmas wreaths, candles, prayers, and even fasting.

Over the next four weeks, Amanda Hart will share her thoughts on the Advent season and how we can use this time to prepare for, and focus on, this special season of the year and the real meaning behind it.

Do you have a set routine to prepare for each day – breakfast, shower, teeth, hair, clothes? Or is your preparation a case of everything that needs to happen happens at some point? Whether we have a set of routines or we’re a bit more all over the place, we all have our own ways of preparing for the things ahead.

Preparation isn’t always easy; a lot of work can go into one single moment in life. Think of how much work goes into performing a stage show, for example, when all that most people see is a perfect performance on one night. The Bible – Scripture – is filled with stories about preparation and what is to come. One such story is that of John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin.

It had been an incredibly long time since the Israelites had heard from God when suddenly, amid their oppression under Roman rule, John the Baptist breaks onto the scene and proclaims that the time has come to prepare – to prepare for the coming Messiah!

I imagine the Israelites experiencing a whole range of feelings – from frustration to anticipation – because they had been living for so many years under Roman oppression, but



now they were able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. They had read over and over the story of the coming Messiah, they had waited expectantly, and now they were being told he was on his way.

The people were already excited when Jesus commenced his outreach and ministry because John had prepared their hearts.

Advent, the lead-up to Christmas, is a time of preparation. It's a time when we prepare our hearts as we remember the true meaning of Christmas – that God sent his son, Jesus, to the world to bring peace, hope, love, and joy. It's also a time when we prepare our hearts to receive what God has in store for us in the days, months, and years to come.

What are you preparing to receive this Advent season?

Captain Amanda Hart is a Salvation Army officer (pastor) in Victoria



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

- Matthew chapter 3, verses 1-3

A lifetime of Christmas care

Making a difference in the lives of others

WORDS NAOMI SINGLEHURST

“

Christmas to me is about connecting with people, with family, and with God

”



Clockwise from top left: Brayden has been volunteering for the Salvos all his life; Brayden with his bass guitar; distributing to those in need is part of Brayden's volunteer work; Brayden shares his story at church; setting up for the 'Lavish' Christmas program; Christmas food hampers ready to go; Brayden and his family worship at the Salvos.



Very few people could say they had been a Christmas volunteer all their lives, but for 17-year-old Salvos volunteer Brayden, that is close to the truth. As a baby, Brayden came to the Salvos with his parents, who volunteered with the Salvos every Christmas. As soon as he was old enough, Brayden began unpacking and sorting toys.

Last Christmas, Brayden supported hundreds of community members by helping at the North Brisbane Salvos' 'Lavish' Christmas support initiative. "We are really community-driven, and I love being involved and helping out," Brayden says.

"I loved seeing and meeting all the different people that came through for 'Lavish'. I was taking the toys out to their cars in wheelbarrows, and I really liked talking to them [and] hearing their personal stories."

Brayden says that what struck him most was that so many of those he met had lives much like his own, but whose circumstances, such as illness and unemployment, meant they were struggling.

"They were all just everyday people," he says. "It was lovely connecting with [those] who just needed a bit of extra help because of their situations. Seeing people with smiles on their faces coming through and getting presents they may not have been able to get otherwise was amazing. That little bit of extra just helped them out so much. What I could do helped make a real difference to others and meant a much happier Christmas."

Brayden gets great joy from volunteering and the sense of camaraderie with other volunteers. He also plays in the Salvos worship team on bass guitar or drums and sings.

"I love serving not just [at the Salvos] but also in school," Brayden shares. "I just love serving the community in different ways and hope maybe to be a musician or music

teacher one day and [also] stay involved with the Salvos as a youth leader and in the band into the future."

EXPLORING FAITH

Christian faith is a deep motivator for Brayden, and Christmas is a time he feels he can respectfully share his faith with others who may be interested, without pushing it on them in any way.

He says: "Christmas to me is about connecting with people, with family, and with God and celebrating the birth of Jesus. Helping others and sharing why I help at Christmas is a great way to live out and communicate my Christian faith."

Brayden encourages anyone looking to reconnect with their faith, or to explore it, to consider attending church at Christmas-time.

He says: "I would say to anyone interested, 'give church a go'. There will be heaps of different people there who find Christmas a really good time to connect. Everyone [is] learning about God, reconnecting with God, or connecting with God and learning about Jesus. It can be life-changing!"

Salvos Youth Minister Brett Scotland says it is exciting to have an age range of volunteers, including teens, helping at Christmastime.

"It is really exciting to see the future of our church being carried forward in not just words, but real actions, by young people [including Brayden]," he says. "In all the busyness of their world – school, family, music, sport – they are engaging in church stuff and reaching out to help others. And they are not just doing it but doing it and enjoying it".



Scan here for more on the need for community.

Gingerbread latte



PHOTO: STOCK / GETTY IMAGES

Ingredients

2 cups water, 1½ cups granulated sugar, 2½ tsp ground ginger, ½ tsp ground cinnamon, ½ tsp vanilla extract, ½ cup fresh espresso or instant coffee to taste, 225ml steamed milk (with foam), whipped cream, nutmeg.

Method

- Combine water, sugar, ginger, cinnamon and vanilla in saucepan.
- Bring to boil, then reduce heat and simmer the resulting syrup for 15 minutes, uncovered. Remove from heat and cover.
- Make a double shot of espresso or instant coffee. Steam the milk.
- Pour espresso into a large mug, add ¼ cup gingerbread syrup, followed by the milk.
- Top it off with a dollop of whipped cream and sprinkle with nutmeg.

CAN YOU GUESS?

1. What begins with T, finishes with T, and has T in it?

2. I'm a bird, a person, and a fruit. What am I?



3. Where does today come before yesterday?

4. What can't talk but will reply when spoken to?

SIGNING IN



Sudoku

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

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

Tum-Tum

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



Bible byte

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew chapter 1, verse 21
New Living Translation

Quiz answers: 1. 50, 2. Marie Curie, 3. Tea, 4. The wall, 5. Canada, 6. Tendons.
Can you guess? Answers: 1. Teapat, 2. A kiwi, 3. In the dictionary, 4. An echo, Tum-Tum: is hiding on page 11.



PHOTO: STOCK/GETTY IMAGES

Quick quiz

1. How long is an Olympic swimming pool in metres?
2. Who was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize (in 1903)?
3. What is the most consumed manufactured drink in the world?
4. In the poem Humpty Dumpty, where was Humpty when he fell?
5. Which country has the most natural lakes?
6. Which tissues connect the muscles to the bones?

DID YOU KNOW?

Each year around 1.6 billion candy canes are made.

An eye is composed of more than two million working parts.

The life expectancy of a housefly is 14-30 days.

There are 7106 living languages in the world.

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

How the Salvos helped over the Christmas 2020 season

The Salvos:

- Provided over 130,000 meals through their homelessness services.
- Made available over 66,000 bed nights to people.
- Distributed over 26,000 toys and gifts to families in need.
- Emergency services assisted more than 13,500 people and provided more than 38,000 episodes of care to people in need.



If you need help this
Christmas, go to
salvos.org.au/christmas