

FEATURE

Holiday survival guide

FAITH TALK

The gift that keeps on giving

NEWS

The joy of sharing

The gift of resilience

Effectively facing the challenges of the season, and beyond



SALVOS

MAGAZINE

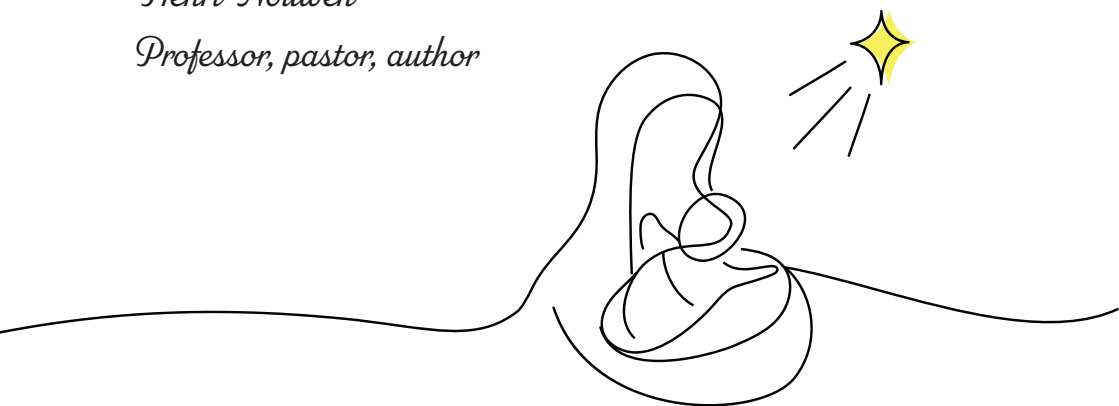
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“Christmas is the renewed invitation not to be afraid and to let him – whose love is greater than our own hearts and minds can comprehend – be our companion.”

Henri Nouwen

Professor, pastor, author





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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Pre-schoolers
learn the joy of
sharing toys

You are not alone

This time last year, our country was in the grip of the worst bushfire season in decades and was followed, only months later, by a global pandemic.

Despite all the hardships that 2020 brought, Christmas can be a time of love, hope and joy to us all.

The message of Christmas is timeless, and shows us that we do not have to face any challenges or hardships on our own. God gave the world his son, Jesus Christ, to show us that we are not alone, and that we are forever loved by him.

In this week's 'Faith Talk', The Salvation Army's leaders in Australia reflect on the story of Christmas and God's gift to the world, a gift that not even a global pandemic can take from us.

My prayer is that you may find hope and encouragement in this edition, and know that this year more than ever, the Salvos are here to give hope and love where it is needed most.

May you experience the grace of God during these days.

Lieut-Colonel Neil Venables

Secretary for Communications and Editor-in-Chief

The gift of resilience

Effectively facing the challenges of the season, and beyond

WORDS LYN BEASY



Every year, Christmas seems to come around sooner than the year before. By the time December arrives, we are already feeling rushed, unprepared and juggling too many commitments – cramming in end-of-year parties, school graduations, family gatherings, Christmas shopping, carol services and house guests.

Our resilience has been tested in many ways during 2020, and even the lead-up to Christmas this year is feeling a little different, with many of the usual traditions either missing or restructured.

The Christmas season also brings expectations, whether they be the expectations imposed by other people and situations, or expectations that we place upon ourselves. In a society that reflects a consumerist worldview, we can get caught up in the commercialisation of Christmas. This is expressed in our gift purchases, decorating, and even our Christmas table.

Managing extra demands at this time of year requires a level of resilience to not only survive the festivities, but also to have reserves to really enjoy all that it brings.



MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Being resilient is having the ability to overcome or bounce back from difficult circumstances. It requires a level of mental toughness and stress tolerance. It doesn't mean we can avoid stress or difficulty, as we can't always plan or predict when we will experience stress, but it does help us minimise the effects of the situation, recover and get back to feeling our best self.

Everyone has a different level of stress tolerance. What is overwhelming for one person may not seem that difficult for another. The good news is that resilience can be developed at any time to help you increase your tolerance for stress and the ability to bounce back. However, if you wait until you are overwhelmed with stress before you implement some strategies to do this, it is much harder to see any real effect.

RESILIENT PEOPLE

Resilient people generally tend to have similar characteristics that help them overcome adversity. Being optimistic helps us recognise that while things might be hard right now, they will improve.

Resilient people are flexible and adaptable,

so they can adjust to change and move things around if something isn't working. Additionally, they tend to have good problem-solving skills and self-belief that they can rise above their circumstances. This year has tested our ability to be flexible and adapt to changing circumstances that are often out of our control.

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Learning resilience is an ongoing process, but one worth investing in.

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Finally, and often most importantly, resilient people tend to have good social skills and seek out support from others in times of difficulty. Relationships where there is mutual support, care and encouragement help boost a person's resilience.

BETTER PERSPECTIVE

In the lead-up to Christmas, consider giving yourself a gift by adopting some resilience-building strategies. Learning ways to become more resilient and less prone to stress will help us throughout the year, not just over the summer holiday season. Keep an open mind and commit to practising these strategies to develop better resilience.

One way to build resilience is by getting a better perspective. When we are stressed, we often lose focus on what's important and get caught up in the minor details. At Christmas time, these details can be in trivial things such as coordinating our wrapping paper and ribbons! If something doesn't match perfectly, who cares? How important ►



will it really be in one, five or 20 years? Will people really remember the year you forgot the pudding?

In other words, put things in their right perspective and let small things go. If you tend to be someone for whom perfectionism is a struggle, put effort into decreasing your effort and self-imposed demands, and watch if anyone notices a difference.

Additionally, we need to lighten up and see the funny side of situations. A sense of humour in difficult times is really helpful.

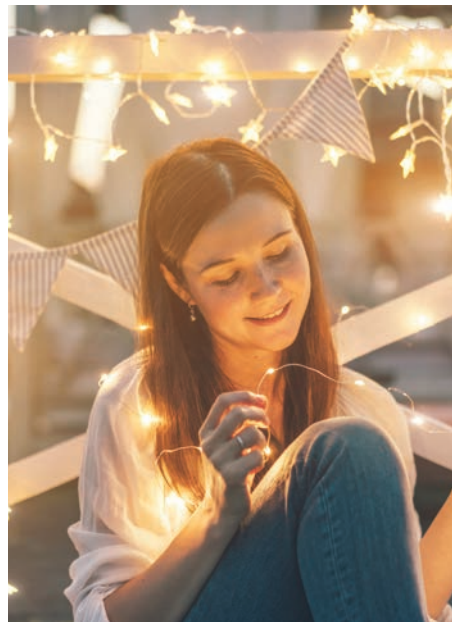
ASK FOR HELP

Recognise the signs of overload and implement some self-care techniques. These could include setting aside a few minutes each day for relaxation, stretching or getting outdoors and doing something enjoyable.

Don't neglect your own needs. Ask for help, and if others are putting unrealistic expectations on you, be prepared to find your voice

and express your needs. Offer an alternate solution. Maintain an optimistic outlook. The holiday season only lasts a few weeks, and once the busyness of December passes, look forward to doing some relaxing and fun things in January. Find ways to include family and time for you to unwind and recharge.

Sometimes our biggest stresses come from people closest to us, such as those who upset everyone around them, or when rifts between family members occur. When misunderstandings happen, try to reframe the meaning of what has happened. Consider a few different ways of looking at the situation. Instead of imagining the worst, think of a more palatable explanation that can help defuse hot feelings.





AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

At the same time, it's important to maintain those social and family connections that provide support. Recognise those people that add to your life and include them in this time. A wonderful gift you can give each other is to affirm friends and family for who they are, what they mean to you and how they add value to you. It's a simple yet priceless gift in which you can both reap the rewards.

In our family, we have adopted a practice of setting aside a night to come together where each person shares the highlights of their year, things they are thankful for and a prayer request. It has become a special time of bonding and gratitude – another aspect of developing resilience.

Gratitude helps shift our perspective and prevents us becoming bitter, resentful, or losing focus on what's important. Adopting an attitude of gratitude and making it a daily practice keeps our eyes fixed on the positive.

While becoming a more resilient person will help you manage your own stress levels, it may also help those closest to you. When they see you managing your stress levels and

developing resilience, they are more likely to feel secure and confident.

If you have young children, try to see the awe and wonder that is Christmas through their eyes.

Take time to share with them the Christmas story – the gift of Jesus to the world – and reignite the child within as you share with them the fun parts of the season. Listen to them and validate their feelings. Develop their strengths by engaging their help in the preparations and build their confidence by encouraging their efforts. Accept them for who they are, avoid constant fault-finding and see mistakes as an opportunity to learn.

Learning resilience is an ongoing process, but one worth investing in. It will equip you to navigate the difficult times and to recover to fully embrace all you have been created to be.

Lyn Beasy is a psychologist in NSW.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

Five ways to survive the holidays

How to make it through, and even enjoy, the festive season

WORDS JESSICA MORRIS



It's that time of year when everything comes to a head. While the holidays are meant to be enjoyed, it's often not the case for many of us. Frayed relationships inevitably cause conflict over the dinner table, stress is at an all-time high, finances are tight, and grief is a constant friend.

Cultural norms suggest we should all be happy over December and enjoy the carols and lights. But this is not always easy when we are hurting and in pain.

If that's you, and Christmas is something you're dreading or are anxious about, we hope these five strategies will help you to survive the holidays, and maybe even enjoy them.



PRIORITISE WHAT'S IMPORTANT

The sense that we have to do everything and please everyone is very high this time of year, so it's best to start by sorting out what you want and need to do, and then get rid of the rest.

Make a list of everything you feel is expected of you this season, add what you actually want to do and tasks you already have booked in. Then, one-by-one, go through the list and ask yourself, "Do I want to do this? And do I need to do this?"

If the answer is yes, consider if there is a way to make that task or activity easier. You could

ask a friend or family member to help you set up or cook, order food in or eat out, talk to a local charity and ask for help, or sit something out while the rest of the family, or your friends, participate.



HONOUR YOUR PAIN

There is a difference between being consumed by your pain and honouring it. When our pain consumes us we feel depressed, lethargic, and allow negative thoughts to cycle in our head. This flows into our conversations and we become the 'negative' or 'angry' family member who always complains and makes everyone else feel sad.

Your pain is valid, and the best way to recognise it is to honour it. This could be as simple as telling a friend that you are struggling with illness or finances or relationships and talking about how to care for yourself over the season.

If you are grieving the loss of a loved one, or a relationship, it's important to give yourself space to feel this. You might consider holding a memorial for them, or put their picture on the mantle during family festivities.

Whether you're grieving someone who has passed on or a relationship, try not to completely disengage because in these times, you need community more than ever. Let yourself feel the love of the people around you and show your love to them in return.



ORGANISE CLEAR EXIT STRATEGIES

If you feel yourself struggling during particular events or on Christmas Day, consider removing yourself from a situation. To do this, organise an exit strategy for yourself before the event.

This could look like scheduling in a certain amount of time for each event so you have an

excuse to leave, wording up a friend or spouse with a code word so you can go outside and get some air, or taking an impromptu bathroom break to catch your breath and refocus.



DON'T PUNISH YOURSELF FOR MAKING MISTAKES

The holidays are hard, and no one can 'do' them perfectly. If you find yourself slipping, don't mentally punish yourself. Have grace and start again.

So, if you respond with anger or negativity, take a breath, apologise, and start again. If you sense yourself drinking or eating too much, take a breath, go outside, and start again. And if you feel yourself overwhelmed by emotions and are near tears, take some time for yourself, let someone know you are struggling, and, when you are ready, start again.



IDENTIFY YOUR 'SAFE' PEOPLE

Before you go to an event or have people over, make a mental note of who your 'safe' people are. These are the friends or family members who you feel comfortable around and know you can trust. You might speak to them prior to the event and let them know about your stress so they can help, or seat yourself at the table next to them.

These people can be your buffer in awkward conversations, when conflict arises, or when you feel yourself breaking down. Chances are they may be feeling the same way, and you can also become their 'safe' person over the festive season.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

The gift that keeps on giving

In this changing world, God's gift to us remains the same

WORDS JANINE AND ROBERT DONALDSON

In just a few days' time, it will be Christmas Day! No one can deny that 25 December is one of the most significant and anticipated days of the year. Children start counting down the sleeps – often from 26 December the year before! People spend months preparing and planning for what they hope will be an unforgettable day where families will come together to celebrate, over-indulge in festive food and activities and, most important of all, exchange gifts – usually spending well beyond their allocated budgets to try to find the 'perfect' gift that will express their love and gratitude!

The months leading up to Christmas are usually frantic. Shopping centres are crammed full of people looking for the right present. There are work parties, friends to catch up with and an endless list of pre-Christmas celebrations to attend. It all adds to the Christmas atmosphere.

However, Christmas 2020 will look very different for most of us. COVID-19 has changed the way we not only prepare for Christmas, but will also impact how, and with whom, we can celebrate. Online buying has replaced many visits to shopping centres. Family gatherings will be restricted, social distancing will need to be adhered to – somehow – and so many of the traditional pre-Christmas events that we have come to love and enjoy, have been put on hold for this year.

Many people have a sense that Christmas has been changed forever, and that it may never look or feel the same again. We are having to

think about new ways to celebrate and keep the joy and spirit of Christmas alive.

“

Many people have a sense that Christmas has been changed forever ...

”

The way we celebrate Christmas may be different for many of us this year, but one thing that has not changed in this changing world, is God's astonishing gift to us! I like to refer to it as the 'gift that keeps on giving'.

The story of Christmas continues to amaze us, and draws us to our knees with a sense of humility, gratitude and awe – that a holy and eternal God would come to earth in the form of a baby, in order to save his own creation. What a gift! What an amazing display of love. Nothing – not even a global pandemic, can take that from us.

But how can we describe this gift of God?

In the Bible, in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 15, the author, the Apostle Paul, at first is writing about human gifts. The church in Corinth is taking up offerings to give to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He commends them for their eagerness to help, and then he



shifts his attention to God’s gift of sending Jesus to earth for us. He cannot find the words to adequately describe it. And so, he simply says, “Thanks be to God for his gift that is too wonderful to describe.”

The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, says it this way: “Now thanks be to God for His Gift, [precious] beyond telling [His indescribable, inexpressible, free Gift]!”

And that gift is ours, undeserved, unsolicited,

but an expression of his amazing love for us. It is the gift that keeps on giving. It comes at great cost and is ours for the taking!

Janine and Robert Donaldson are the leaders of The Salvation Army Australia.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

Pre-schoolers learn the joy of sharing toys

Students at a pre-school in Helensburgh (NSW) took the opportunity during Children's Week last month to give to others by donating toys for The Salvation Army's Carinya Women and Children's Services in the Illawarra.

The theme of the week this year was: 'Children have the right to choose their own friends and safely connect with others'. "We talked with the children about some kids having lots of toys and others not being so lucky," said Educator Marti Lancaster.

The result was a toy drive, with the Salvos 'Shieldy' mascot arriving at the pre-school to pick up many new, donated toys.

Sonya Button, Program Manager of Carinya Women and Children's Services, was delighted to receive the donation, saying that from what she has seen, the severity of family and domestic violence has increased in 2020.



Program Manager Sonya Button with just some of the toys donated for children this Christmas.

"When women and children come in and they have nothing, or only one bag of belongings, and they go into their rooms, what they [will] find is a beautiful little gift box for them and a toy for each of their children ... many of them haven't received a gift in a long time. The smile on their faces, it just means a lot."

– Lauren Martin



Scan here for more on family and domestic violence.

NEED HELP THIS CHRISTMAS?

The Salvos are offering assistance this Christmas, in a COVID-19 safe environment.

FOOD HAMPER AND GIFT ASSISTANCE

If you have fallen on tough times, your local Salvos is here to help so you can experience joy this Christmas.

FEELING LONELY THIS CHRISTMAS?

Your local Salvos may be hosting a Christmas meal and we welcome you to share Christmas with us.

REQUEST PRAYER

We realise not all situations are joyful at Christmas. As we celebrate Jesus' birth, our prayer team would love to pray for you.

For more information and contact details, go to salvationarmy.org.au/christmas/need-help-this-christmas

If you're seeking support for another concern, visit salvationarmy.org.au/need-help/

Cairns 'party bus' drives home spirit of Christmas

Salvation Army brass bands traditionally spend the Advent season on the streets playing Christmas carols in a variety of settings.

From shopping centres and malls to city streets and even on the backs of trucks, our communities are reminded of the birth of Jesus through music in a variety of ways.



Top deck performance: Cairns Salvos' officer (pastor), Major Ben Johnson, brushes up on his carols in preparation for a different approach to Christmas carolling this Advent season.

Major Ben Johnson, leader of the Salvos in Cairns, said his congregation had reimagined its usual carolling efforts due to COVID-19 restrictions, and is doing "something a little bit quirky" – carolling from the top deck of a double-decker bus.

Ben said the "big, red party bus" was usually a mobile nightclub, but was being transformed into a mobile Salvos centre to criss-cross Cairns streets on Monday evenings



Hitting the high notes: Cairns Salvos has hired a double-decker bus for its COVID-19 Christmas carolling.

during December, with Salvos playing and singing carols and Christmas songs.

"It's our way of thanking our community for all their support in these tough times," he said.

The Cairns 'party bus', which does not have a roof, has not been seen on the streets much throughout 2020 as COVID-19 social-distancing restrictions had reduced to almost zero the number of events for which it could be hired.

After a year of upheaval, Ben said that "people just need something to celebrate", and going into the streets and playing carols in front of someone's house "has the ability to really just change people's lives."

Along with the brass ensemble, a choir has been rehearsing to be part of the carolling.

Ben said that while being "quirky" and "a little bit audacious", the aim was to be "visible" to remind people about the meaning of Christmas. – **Darryl Whitecross**

Gingerbread fudge



Ingredients

400g white chocolate, 1 tin condensed milk, 2-3 tsp ground ginger, ½ tsp ground nutmeg, ½ tsp cinnamon, ½ tsp vanilla extract, 125g icing sugar, 1-2 cups chopped gingerbread (or gingerbread biscuits), Christmas sprinkles.

Method

In a medium saucepan, place the chocolate (broken into pieces), condensed milk, vanilla, ginger, nutmeg and cinnamon. Melt together on low heat, stirring continuously.

Remove from heat. Add sifted icing sugar and combine well.

Set aside about ¼ cup of gingerbread pieces, then tip the rest into the mixture and stir to combine. Spoon mixture into lined tin, spread to the corners and smooth over the top.

Decorate top with Christmas sprinkles and remaining gingerbread pieces.

Place in fridge to set for at least 3-4 hours or overnight.

Once set, remove from tin and cut into squares. Store fudge in the fridge.

Did you know?



- In the approximately 9 hours and 43 minutes of darkness across Australia on Christmas Eve, Santa only has 3.5 milliseconds to spend at each of the 9,901,496 households across the country!
- The top three things Aussies want for Christmas are spending time with friends and family, health and happiness, and peace!
- If Santa eats one biscuit at each household in Australia on Christmas Eve, he will consume 1.5 billion calories in one night!
- Residents of Darwin will have the hottest Christmas Day, at 35°C. Aussies in Hobart will have the coolest temperature for Christmas Day at 20°C.
- Christmas Day is the least popular day to get married, with only 34 couples tying the knot across the country on 25 December 2017.
- In Australia, 23 per cent of the population regift, which means if regifters over the age of 15 regifted just one present this Christmas, there would be seven million recirculating presents!

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

Sudoku

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

Tum-Tum

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



Answers: 1. Austria 2. Do you hear what I hear? 3. Hope, peace, love and joy 4. Mexico 5. The Nutcracker 6. Jimmy Stewart 7. Thomas Edison in 1880 8. Bethlehem.

Tum-Tum: is hiding in the toys on page 12.

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

Bible byte

“And she will have a Son, and you shall name him Jesus (meaning ‘Saviour’), for he will save his people from their sins.”

Matthew chapter 1, verse 21
Living Bible translation

Quick quiz



PHOTO BY KAROLINA HOTYUR ON UNSPLASH

1. In what country did *Silent Night* originate?
2. What popular holiday song was written during the Cuban missile crisis and was a plea for peace?
3. What are the four traditional themes of Advent?
4. What country is the poinsettia, with its red and green foliage, native to?
5. What Christmas-themed ballet premiered in Saint Petersburg, Russia, in 1892?
6. Who played George Bailey in the Christmas classic *It's a Wonderful Life*?
7. Who invented electric Christmas lights, and when?
8. Where was Jesus born?

Turn hurt into *hope* and fear into *joy*



“We lost everything we owned. Everything I’d spent my life working for.” – Susan

While many Australians are enjoying the joy of Christmas, there are shattered families with hurt and fear in their hearts.

Domestic violence gets worse at Christmas. Many women and children are forced into homelessness as they escape.

You can turn a mother’s hurt into hope, and her children’s fear into joy this Christmas. Please send your urgent Christmas Appeal donation today for a mother like Susan, and help **leave no one in need** this Christmas.

Donate at salvationarmy.org.au/susana
or call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)**



**CHRISTMAS
APPEAL**