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A day in the life of ...

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MY STORY

The life-changing power of a tea set

An honest look at Christmas

Why the birth of Jesus is an invitation to be real



SALVOS

MAGAZINE





“The manger is not only a reminder that God is with us, but a challenge to live in a way that brings God more fully and radically into our world.

The Christmas story is a subversive story. It erases the lines we draw between ourselves and others. It turns our values and our ways of thinking upside down.”

– Joe Kay
Resistance in a Manger
sojo.net (2016)



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



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.

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My favourite Christmas gift

Restoring hope

As another tumultuous year draws to a close, we are about to celebrate Christmas. For some, the day will be one of family gatherings, parties, gifts and celebration. For many others, though, it will be a tough time as they face illness, family breakdowns, natural disasters and spiralling living costs.

In the middle of struggle and pain, Christmas is a season that helps restore deep hope and lasting joy, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and all that his life, death and resurrection mean for all humanity.

The Christmas season does not take away the challenges we face, but the birth of Jesus brings grace, freedom, strength, life and hope. His life and death restore brokenness and make us whole. They assure us that we are not alone in whatever circumstances we are facing and, if we are honest with ourselves and each other, we can share those gifts of love, acceptance, compassion and strength.

This is usually not easy, often uncomfortable and challenging, but reflects the life and purpose of the one whose birth we celebrate.

Merry Christmas!

Simone Worthing **Assistant Editor**

An honest look at Christmas

Why the birth of Jesus is an invitation to be real

WORDS Natasha Moore

I don't send Christmas cards. I think it's just one of those adulting memos I missed. I'm always pleased to get one, but it never occurs to me to reciprocate.

I mean, what do you say? The same thing 50 times? Something unique to everyone? How long does that take! And, millennial moment: what kind of Herculean labour goes into knowing your friends' actual postal addresses?

So, it's with a kind of anthropological curiosity that I note the social phenomenon known as the Christmas letter. This is next level: an annual reckoning, a family portrait crafted from the odds and ends of the year. Having two kids in the gifted and talented program makes life so much busier ... that European river cruise was everything we dreamed it would be ... this year, the whole family went keto – we've never felt better!

Experiences of loneliness or despair, that marriage is hard, that children disappoint, are entirely absent.

For obvious reasons, of course. You don't bare your soul to all 75 of your closest friends. But is it not an odd combination – a performance for people who are close enough to require an update, but not close enough to be trusted with an honest one?

A RACE TO THE TOP

In this, Christmas merely ramps up the social media arms race of the rest of the year.

"One in three people ends up being unhappier at the end of spending some time on Facebook ... and I am that one person of the three," complains writer and comedian Mary Walsh. "You are judging your insides by other people's outsides – by other people's curated outsides."

“

Christmas is God breaking ranks and doing vulnerable first – making it safe for us.

”

The irony of Christmas as a race to the top – a series of envy-inducing Instagrammable moments – is its direct inversion of the baby-Jesus-in-a-manger story. We can easily give that story the Christmas-letter treatment: add a nice filter to the scene, linger on the shepherds and angels, skip over Mary and Joseph as refugees fleeing King Herod's massacre of local kids, and it's cosy enough. The airbrushed version of the incarnation.

The spirit of that 'incarnation', though – the alleged enfleshment of God – is not positivity but vulnerability. That the invulnerable Creator of everything opts to enter the chaos and fear involved in being human. To submit to danger and



constraint in order to redeem. To go low in order to lift up.

A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

The grown Jesus will go on about this upside-downness quite a bit. The last will be first, and the first will be last, he'll say. Whoever wants to be great must become the servant of all. The birth of Jesus fires the starting gun on a race to the bottom.

Vulnerability is a risk, but also an enormous relief – a release from the various arms races we didn't sign up for but find ourselves running anyway. Christmas (and Christianity) invites me to be honest about all the ways that I am not

Insta-ready, all the ways my life is not fit material for a Christmas letter.

"I think there is a terrible anxiety in contemporary culture about being fallible, vulnerable, or wrong about stuff," muses British writer Francis Spufford. "And unless you've tried the daring experiment of saying you're in the wrong, you're not quite sure it's survivable necessarily. You think that the battlements will fall, the walls will collapse, the castle of yourself will implode, and there may be nothing left but a stain on the pavement – which is not the case.

"In fact, a fallible self can be a kind of well-founded self, a self which has room ▶



for failure, and therefore room for much more as well."

What would Christmas look like as a moment of vulnerability rather than a competitive sport? As a time to acknowledge that life is not so shiny after all? A time to say I messed up or I didn't think my life would turn out this way or I need help ...

“

What would Christmas look like as a moment of vulnerability rather than a competitive sport? As a time to acknowledge that life is not so shiny after all?

”

It takes someone brave to break the silence, to break ranks in the arms race, to own up to failing at what everyone else seems to have sorted ages ago.

But just as the race to the top becomes a vicious circle, the race to the bottom can begin a virtuous one. Vulnerability calls forth vulnerability; confession calls forth confidences, and mutual trust.

Christmas is God breaking ranks and doing vulnerable first – making it safe for us. There are few more absolute pictures of vulnerability than a newborn. Christmas invites us into a new honesty – with ourselves, with one another, and (if you credit the story) with the God who chooses to be vulnerable.

Natasha Moore is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Public Christianity and author of For the Love of God: How the church is better and worse than you ever imagined.

This article first appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 December 2019. Reprinted with permission.



Scan here for more on mental health.

A day in the life of ... Jesus

Connecting ordinary people with a loving God

WORDS Jo-anne Brown

The night sky is just beginning to glimmer and a faint glow soon appears in the east. The man rolls over, stands to his feet and stretches, gazing out the window at the still-sleeping world.

He covers his head and steps out into the pre-dawn stillness toward the mountain on the edge of the village. He pauses on the mountain, looking down at the world below, noticing the first streaks of sunlight touching the tops of the trees. There is something beautiful in this early morning stillness.

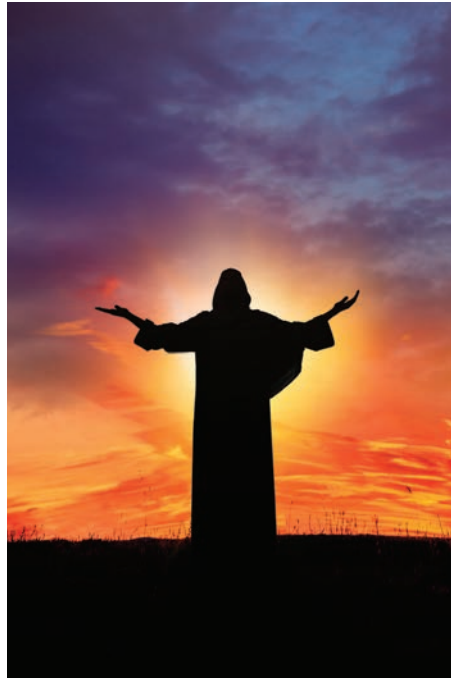
“

**Be gentle and compassionate
to all those you meet.**

”

This is his time. His time for silence, for solitude, for spending time with his Father. Life has been so full lately, with many demands on his time and many people needing help. He finds a smooth rock and settles down to watch the sunrise. He talks to his Father, telling him all that is on his mind, wondering about the day ahead, and thinking about the people he is close to.

Then, as the sun fills the sky, Jesus walks back to the village, filled with a sense of peace and purpose. People hear he is coming their way and rush to meet him.



Some want to hear what he has to say, some want to be healed from sickness, some just want to see who this person is that everyone is talking about. And, of course, some have come to criticise.

CHILDREN ARE PRECIOUS

The street is crowded, and people are jostling each other out of the way. A small child is pushed to the ground and, losing sight of her mother in the hubbub, begins to cry.

Jesus crouches beside her, and smiles into her face. "It's okay," he says ▶



gently. “You’re safe now. Your mother’s coming,” as he sees an anxious woman hurrying toward them. The little girl leans into Jesus’ arms, then smiles shyly as her mother picks her up and hugs her.

“

Be kind to each other.

”

Jesus says to the crowd, “You know, little children are precious. Such innocent hearts are close to the heart of God. Look after them and learn from them.”

He gets to his feet and gathers his closest friends to him. “Come on, we need to find

a quiet place where we can hear ourselves think.” He smiles again at the little girl in the arms of her mother, and he and his friends turn to go up the mountain.

Their quiet time doesn’t last long and soon the crowds are following him. They have so many questions, and they want to hear more of the stories Jesus tells.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

He finds a grassy spot on the side of the hill and sits down. Small children rush to sit at his feet, followed closely by their mothers. “Be kind to each other,” he says. “Be gentle and compassionate to all those you meet. Don’t fight and squabble over unimportant things – be people of peace. Spend time with me and discover the peace that I can bring you.”

Jesus tells them stories ... stories about ordinary people, about being generous, about how to love those who treat us badly, and not to judge others. He teaches them how to find peace instead of worrying about the difficulties they face, and how to truly connect with the God who loves them.

He reminds them each of how special they are, that when they show kindness, compassion and justice they are like bright lights, making a difference in the world.

As Jesus talks, and children play, the shadows grow longer, and the day starts to cool down. His friends point out to him how late it is getting, that people are a long way from home and have nothing to eat. Something needs to be done, but what? There is nowhere nearby where they can get food for the thousands of people who have been with Jesus all day!

JESUS PROVIDES

One of them sees a boy pull out some food for himself. He has a few small fish, and some pieces of bread. Okay, that is nowhere near enough to feed even the children in that crowd, but maybe Jesus can do something with that. And he does!

The little boy gives Jesus what he has and Jesus takes it gratefully. He asks his Father to bless it, and then gives it to his friends to share out among the crowd. Now, there are thousands of people there but somehow that little boy's meal is enough for everyone to have plenty to eat, with enough leftovers for people to take some away with them.

After they've eaten, the parents gather the children and begin the journey home. Jesus and his friends start down the mountain and as they get to the shore of the lake, he suggests they find a boat and cross over to the other side, where they can find a resting place for the night.

As darkness falls, and the men row the boat across the lake, Jesus rests in the back, thinking about the experiences of the day, the conversations he's had, the people he's met, and the little child he comforted. It has been a good day and he smiles.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

If you need help at any time, especially over the holidays, please contact:

- For emergency assistance if your life, or that of someone else, is in danger: **000**
- Salvation Army general enquiries: **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)**
- National Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Helpline (24 hours): **1800 737 732 (1800 Respect)**
- Lifeline: **131 114**
- Kids helpline: **1800 55 1800**
- Beyond Blue: **1300 22 4636**
- Suicide Call Back Service: **1300 659 467**
- MensLine Australia: **1300 78 99 78**

Christmas streaming wrap II

Movie mood enhancers for the holidays

WORDS Jessica Morris

Last week we wrapped up seven great new Christmas releases available on streaming platforms. But, as we know, there is no shortage of holiday-related content. Don't stress, though, *Salvos* writer Jessica Morris has reviewed another set of flicks that will put you in the mood to roast chestnuts over the fire.

CHRISTMAS AT MISTLETOE FARM

Young families will love this film, detailing the chaotic life of a single dad and his kids after they move from the city to their inherited Mistletoe Farm. Naturally, with five children under the age of 10 and raucous farm animals, chaos ensues. But it is the quirky community they enter into that brings the most change to this family. Don't expect great acting for this one, but you will laugh at the slapstick humour and cringe a lot.

Rated PG. Streaming on Netflix.



Hartley (*This is Us*) as a successful but grieving writer, and Barrett Doss as a 30-something woman looking for her birth mother, their paths cross at (you guessed it!) Christmastime. In some ways, this film gives us a taster of real-life issues – we see how the tragic death of a child impacted a marriage and created estrangement, observe how social norms kept a young mum and her child apart, and see how an affair plays out. But therein lies my one criticism because, while all their circumstances are believable, the celebration of infidelity leading to true love leaves a lot to be desired.

Rated G. Streaming on Netflix.

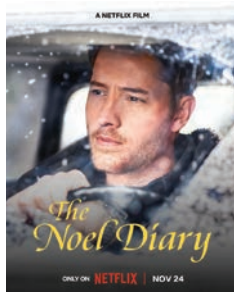
THE HIP HOP NUTCRACKER

The beloved story of Princess Clara falling for the Nutcracker is given new life in this spin on the traditional ballet. And we see the talented cast and crew morph it into a hip-hop musical set in modern-day New York City. Fitting into a tight 44 minutes, lovers of the creative arts and any budding dancers



THE NOEL DIARY

The romance reached #1 on Netflix the same week it was released, and with good reason. It delivers on the clichéd holiday happily-ever-after we all want. Starring Justin



will be enraptured by the variety of dance styles and the performers' ability to communicate without words. The music is fun and vibrant while still paying homage to the original, and the sets are immaculate.

Rated G. Streaming on Disney Plus.

A WEDDING FOR CHRISTMAS

When wedding planner extraordinaire Haley has to plan her sister's dream wedding in just three weeks, she is forced to return to her small hometown. But with her boss breathing down her neck, she is torn between a successful career in Los Angeles and returning to her roots. Naturally, the fact that she has to work with a handsome hotel owner (and childhood friend) makes the decision even more difficult. This film is full of quintessential Christmas fluff, magic and feel-good moments, and is best paired with slippers and Christmas lights.

Rated PG. Streaming on Netflix.



THE GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY HOLIDAY SPECIAL

The tongue-in-cheek wit of Marvel's Kevin Feige knows no bounds, and in this 45-minute Christmas special we see rascal heroes, the Guardians of the Galaxy, try to celebrate Christmas. Try being the operative word because, unlike their leader Peter Quill who grew



up on Earth, the rest of the motley crew have no concept of the holiday. So, when alien empath Mantis and Drax the Destroyer go on a mission to give Peter the best Christmas present ever, they take it to new ... depths. Knowing how much Peter loved actor Kevin Bacon as a child, they search the world for this alleged hero, resulting in a hilarious and comedically violent short film. And surprisingly, they don't do too badly on the Christmas cheer either. Heads up for parents though – the movie does show characters drinking to excess.

Rated PG. Streaming on Disney Plus.

THE CHRISTMAS BALL

If you are after a holiday-based romance with a touch of class, look no further. In this love story, our leading lady Clare (Deirdre Mullins) is a professional ballerina. On the verge of retirement, she travels to see her Aunt Bridget in England, and while staying at her aunt's manor meets an awkward yet charming historian bent on making the location a historical landmark. As it goes, the only way to save the manor is to hold a ball – where Clare's dancing skills come in. She and historian Liam (Nick Hendrix) form an unlikely team which may lead to something more – if she is willing to change her path in life.

Rated G. Streaming on 9Now.



Scan here for more reviews.

My favourite Christmas gift

The life-changing power of a tea set

WORDS Josie*

I came from a family of 13 children and was the fifth youngest. We grew up in poverty in a family of verbal abuse and violence, but I hid it all from my friends.

For years we lived in a corrugated iron house with no glass in the windows, just wire and pieces of corrugated iron that folded down at night or when it rained.

By the time I was seven years old, I was suffering from serious malnutrition. Food was scarce in those days, and I would live on Vegemite sandwiches and sweet drinks to fill up. My body and my teeth suffered from this.

It was a sad childhood for all of us. One of my sisters died of cancer.

Our life was a constant worry about when we would be slapped next. I would be hit for doing nothing wrong except being in the wrong place when my dad was in a bad mood.

My brother lost his hearing in one ear, as he was always hit on the one side of his head. He and I had a great bond during childhood, and we tried to protect each other. We are still the best of friends.

A RAY OF LIGHT

Every year it was embarrassing going to school after Christmas, as the other children were talking about what they received, and I couldn't say anything.

One day I looked out of my bedroom window to see a man in a navy blue uniform come up the footpath and sit

down to speak with my father. He was from The Salvation Army. He was a wonderful person who did not judge and was there to make sure we had a Christmas like everyone else did.

That year, I received my favourite Christmas gift and have remembered it ever since. It was a glass tea set, and I loved it. That was the day I said to myself that I would make it up to The Salvation Army for giving my family a Christmas to remember.

After that, the Salvos delivered gifts to us every year. It was so wonderful to receive the gifts and tell my friends what I got for Christmas. The feeling of belonging was, in many ways, the greatest gift of all.



Josie, left, volunteering with Captain Pauline Middleton at Beechworth Salvos.



Josie has never forgotten her first Christmas gift – a pink glass tea set.

And it was not only the gifts that made such a difference but also the hampers we received to make sure we had a wonderful Christmas lunch. Usually, we had baked beans with mashed potatoes, but after The Salvation Army started delivering their wonderful hampers, we had roast chicken, baked potatoes, pumpkin, peas, gravy and for dessert pudding and custard.

HELPING OTHERS

Over many years, I never forgot my desire to help others and pay back the Salvos.

I finally started volunteering with the Beechworth Salvation Army Thrift Shop in May 2012 with the officer (pastor) Captain Pauline Middleton. Pauline made me feel so welcome that I have been there ever since and enjoy what I do to help out.

And while I love being busy through the Salvos, I also have many other projects on the go.

My latest project is to collect Christmas decorations. We never decorated our

house at Christmas when I was a child, so I make sure people can do that.

My husband Brian and I have two adult children – Sophie and Shane. During COVID, we agreed not to buy big Christmas gifts anymore, as being together at Christmas is a gift in itself.

Looking back, my life was hard to start with, but it is what you make it, and it is thanks to people who cared, like the Salvos, that I have a beautiful family that I love, and a happy life.

Thanks to what the Salvos did when I was young, I have spent my life helping others. I love seeing their smiles and the tears they shed when they realise someone cares.

** As told to Naomi Singlehurst*



Scan here for more on the need for community.

Angel meringues



Ingredients

Edible marker, white chocolate balls, mini meringues, 100g white chocolate, yellow Lifesaver or Fruit Tingle lollies, pretzels, white crystal sprinkles.

Method

- Draw an angel's face on each white chocolate ball.
- Cut a small amount off the top of a meringue to make it flat.
- Melt the white chocolate in a microwave, at 10 to 20 second intervals, stirring with a metal spoon until smooth.
- Dip the bottom of each ball in the melted chocolate and attach it to the flat top of the meringue.
- Use a small amount of white chocolate to attach a yellow lolly to the top of the angel's head as a halo.
- Use a fork to dip and cover a pretzel in white chocolate. Drain off excess chocolate and immediately lightly cover with crystal sprinkles. Allow to dry/set.
- Use a small amount of melted white chocolate to attach the pretzel 'wings' to the back of the angel's body. Hold in place for a few seconds until set.

Quick quiz



1. Which real-life person is Santa Claus based on?
2. How many gifts in total are mentioned in the song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'?
3. When did Carols by Candlelight begin in Melbourne?
4. If you decorated your house with some *Ceratopetalum Gummiferum*, what would you use?
5. What does modern-day Christmas celebrate?

Bible byte

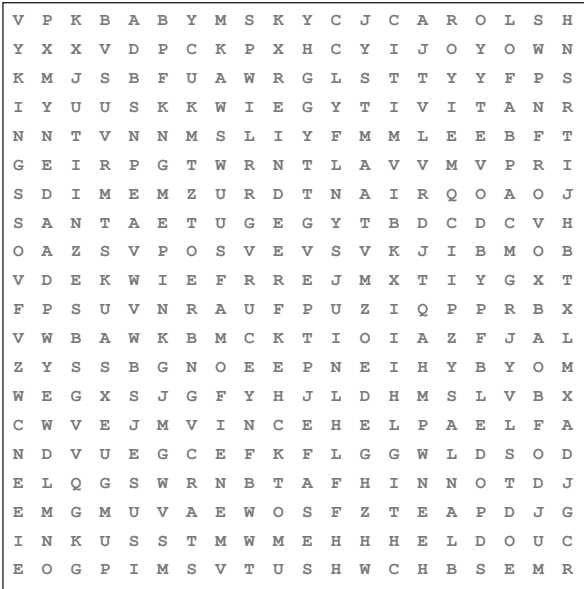
"The Saviour – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Luke chapter 2, verse 11
New Living Translation

Tum-Tum

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





Wordsearch

Words are hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, forwards and backwards. Enjoy!

- Angel
- Baby
- Bethlehem
- Carols
- Christmas
- Elves
- Festive
- Gifts
- Hope
- Jesus
- Jolly
- Joy
- King
- Love
- Manger
- Mary
- Nativity
- Peace
- Reindeer
- Rudolph
- Santa
- Saviour
- Sleigh
- Star
- Tradition
- Tree

FUNNY THINGS KIDS SAY

What did the wise men say after they offered up their gifts of gold and frankincense?
Wait, there's myrrh.

What do you call Santa when he stops moving?
Santa Pause.

What happens if you eat Christmas decorations?
You get tinsel-itis!



DID YOU KNOW?

32 per cent of Australians are planning to 'get away' this Christmas.

There is a broad cultural shift in Australia towards sustainable gifts for Christmas. Stocking stuffers are out, shared experiences are in.

Over 1.7 billion candy canes are made each year around the world.

Answers: 1. Christian bishop Saint Nicholas. 2. 364 gifts. 3. 24 December 1938. 4. Christmas Bush. 5. The birth of Jesus. **Turn-Turn:** is hiding in the stocking on page 12.



**The *Salvos Magazine* team wishes you,
and those whose lives you touch,
a Christmas full of peace,
compassion, laughter and love.**