

# salvos

magazine

## The cat's out of the bag

Confessions of an ex-crazy cat lady



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Reconstructing my identity

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Light at the end of any tunnel

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Peddalling for a purpose

“SOMETIMES WE NEED SOMEONE TO SIMPLY BE THERE. NOT TO FIX ANYTHING, OR TO DO ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR, BUT JUST TO LET US FEEL THAT WE ARE CARED FOR AND SUPPORTED.”

- UNKNOWN





## 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 wellbeing of people of all ages, particularly children.

# Salvos Magazine

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## What defines us?

When you think about who you are, what criterion do you use? Do you think in terms of what you do – as a parent, student or employee? Or perhaps it's a relationship – you identify as a spouse, child, sibling or grandparent. It could be your belief and value system, financial circumstances, culture or future goals that define you, or perhaps you see yourself as others define you.

In this edition of *Salvos Magazine*, we look at how we can define ourselves, and how God defines us. Faye Michelson shares her history with her beloved cats, and how an unexpected decision changed how many people saw her. She reflects on how God sees us, and the encouraging perspective that can give us on how we view ourselves.

Kirralee Nicolle continues this theme, sharing how character and making a difference in the world is key for her.

Irina Shvab from Ukraine bravely shares how her identity and faith in God sustains her as she helps others through a devastating war.

For these stories and more, go to [salvosonline.org.au](http://salvosonline.org.au)

Simone Worthing **Editor**

# What happened to the crazy cat lady?

How we can be defined by perceptions of others

**WORDS** Faye Michelson



From their round furry faces to their pointy little ears, what's not to love about cats? I've

loved all the pussycat people who have been part of our family – from my childhood tomcat, Milton, to the various long-lived felines

who have purred their way through life with us over the past four decades.

There was Jaffa, the tortoiseshell; Oliver, the scruffy cat who adopted us from next door; Possum, given to us by a neighbour after 16-year-old Jaffa died; Nichi, found by one of our daughters in an abandoned house 17 years ago; and Ra, another daughter's cat who came to live with us when her new rental didn't allow pets.

It's true – I did call all of these cats my "precious bubbas". It's true – I did speak to them in a high-pitched baby voice. And it's also true that I occasionally (maybe more than occasionally) kissed their furry

little heads between their little pointy ears. During COVID-19 lockdowns Nichi and Ra became my constant companions, curled up close by while I worked in the spare bedroom.

I guess it's not surprising that I've been slyly referred to as a crazy cat lady for years by my family and friends. This has been borne out by the range of gifts I receive – cat mugs, pictures, salt and pepper shakers, ornaments, plates, aprons, cushions, earrings, necklaces, brooches, scarves, even cat Christmas decorations. At least three-quarters of the birthday cards I receive have a cat on them. Nothing wrong with that – I owned being a cat lady. Until, quite suddenly, I was a cat lady no longer.

## DECISION TIME

Last year, Nichi and Ra died within seven weeks of each other just after their 17th birthdays. I would have gone to the local pound and chosen our next cat co-habitors quickly, except that we were packing up to





move. So we decided to wait a few months until we settled into our new house. We packed up the cat beds, blankets and bowls – and then it happened. Or rather, didn't happen. The hay fever symptoms I thought I'd suffered from for the past 40-odd years, kept under control by daily antihistamine tablets, simply disappeared. Completely. I was allergic to cats!

To be honest, this possibility had crossed my mind before, but I had chosen to ignore it. But now that we were cat-free, and I was itchy-eye-runny-nose-sneeze-free, I had a decision to make. I'd been the cat lady for so long ... so, do I remain the cat lady and allergic – or do I not?

(Big breath) I've chosen not. My family couldn't believe it – just take the tablets, they said. But I've decided; I am officially no longer a crazy cat lady.

It's interesting to consider how something that has defined you for a long time, even in a jokey way, can change so quickly. And I think it happens regularly throughout our lives because we are often defined by how others perceive us.

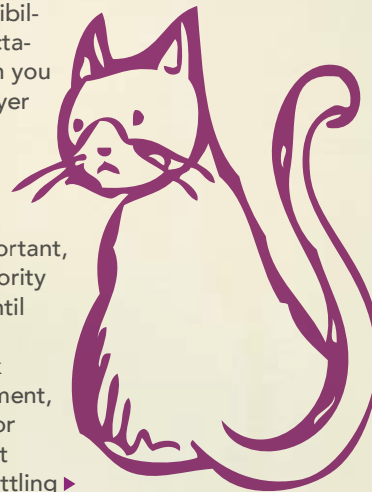
The flip side to that is that we, of course, also define others by how we see them. I think of some of the boxes I mentally put people in because of how I've identified them – this person is so talented and generous with their knowledge; this one is inexperienced but thinks they know

everything; this one is kind and hospitable; this one is inflexible, and so on.

### CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

We also define ourselves in all sorts of ways and that's often a changing landscape, too. Are you defined by being a parent? You're someone's mum/dad around school, footy and netball clubs, church and extended family. It's a busy role that takes up a decade or so of your life, a hectic time of juggling the demands, joys and struggles of a growing family. And then – the kids grow up. Your identity as a parent changes, because being a mum or dad of adults is necessarily a different relationship altogether.

Are you defined by your career, when the hours of each day are consumed by the responsibilities and expectations placed on you by your employer and your own ambitions? Everything about your work is so important, such a high priority in your life – until it's not. When you leave work through retirement, retrenchment or other reasons it can be an unsettling ►



feeling to realise that life at your former workplace simply goes on without you.

Maybe you are defined by your appearance, your sporting or musical abilities, your wealth, your health. Perhaps you feel defined by mental health issues or your constant search for regular employment, a place to live, for financial security.

How others see us is a part of life, but it's so good to remember that God sees us, too.

### SELF-PERCEPTION

I love the biblical story of David, the shepherd boy who went on to defeat the huge warrior Goliath. He was defined by his position in the family as the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, so he was seen as rather insignificant. When God directed the prophet Samuel to go to Jesse to choose the next king of Israel from his sons, David was so inconsequential that he wasn't even there to be introduced to the prophet.

But God rejected all Jesse's other sons, causing Samuel to ask if there were any more. David was fetched from the fields where he was tending the family's sheep, and Samuel knew straight away that this

young teenager was the one who would be king.



God said to Samuel, "The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel chapter 16, verse 7).

We don't have control over many of the life experiences, attributes and perceptions that may define us but we do have control over how we think of ourselves.

God knows what really defines us – the good and the not so good. But more than that, as the first book in the Bible tells us, God made us all in his likeness.



Scan here for more stories of hope.



## Volunteers offer food relief in Mount Gambier

Salvos volunteers in Mount Gambier (SA) are uplifting the spirits of those in need through a chat, a warm meal and ongoing care.



Mount Gambier Thrift Shop manager Shauna Wood, right, with one of her volunteers.

Salvos Thrift Shop manager Shauna Wood says she has seen a stark increase in people reaching out to the Salvos for assistance this year, sometimes up to 45 people a week, especially for food relief.

Shauna says she relies heavily on her volunteers, who cook a sausage sizzle for the community every Friday at the Thrift Shop in town, with food parcels also given out.

"Our volunteers ... love to give back to the community," she says.

*This is an edited version of a story that appeared in [The Border Watch](#) (Author Charlotte Varcoe).*

## Pedalling for a purpose on the Sunshine Coast

Salvos Matt Seaman, David Donaldson and Dean Morrison, rode 165km around the Sunshine Coast last month to raise money for the Nambour Salvos Red Shield Appeal.

"We witness firsthand the hardship within our community, and this is a way for us to raise awareness and needed funds to help serve those who need it most," says Matt.

David says that since the beginning of this year, Nambour Salvos have seen an increase in the number of people requiring assistance from The Salvation Army.

"Homelessness, basic food needs, domestic violence (both male and



From left: Matt Seaman, Captain David Donaldson and Dean Morrison pedal for a good cause.

female), family breakdown and child welfare are some of the situations to which we serve," David adds.

"Without our volunteers, employees and the financial help of the Australian public, we would not have the same impact, and we are very grateful."

## Mel's camper helps the homeless in Far North Queensland

The donation of a camper trailer to Atherton Tablelands Salvos in Far North Queensland will enable The Salvation Army to better support people experiencing homelessness in the area.

Early last month, Atherton Tablelands ministry worker Miriam Newton-Gentle received a phone call "out-of-the-blue" through her local Family Store. A couple was moving to Western Australia and wanted to donate their quality camper trailer to assist people in need.

"It's large enough to house a family," said Miriam of the donated camper.

"We support quite a few families experiencing homelessness in the area, and this will be a valuable asset to assist them. It was such a blessing to receive that phone call!"



'Mel's Camper' is named after Geoff and Alexis Ward's daughter, Melanie, who passed away in 2022.

A few days later, Geoff Ward came to meet Miriam and drop off the camper. For him, the donation was personally meaningful – his daughter Melanie struggled with experiences of homelessness throughout her life. She passed away last year, and Geoff and his wife Alexis wanted to see the camper used for others in similar circumstances. Their only request was that the camper have a plaque on the outside naming it, 'Mel's Camper' and a sign on the inside so that those who use it can read a bit of Mel's story.

The sign on the inside reads as follows:

### **"MEL'S CAMPER**

*This camper has been donated to the Tolga Salvation Army Branch at Tolga [Tolga is near Atherton]. It is in memory of our darling daughter who passed away in 2022 and is missed every day. Melanie found accommodation so hard to find that she always kept a tent in her car. If she were alive now, I would be donating the camper to her instead. Alexis and Geoff (me) are relocating to West Australia and wish the occupants of the camper all the best for their future and the sincere thanks to the Salvos for their work helping people find accommodation. Being homeless can happen to anybody young or old. Nobody wants it. Having this chance will boost your morale and hopefully lead to finding a permanent home.*

*Regards from Alexis and Geoff Ward.  
Melanie Louise Ward 1984 to 2022"*

The camper will be used to house people experiencing homelessness in the



Atherton Tablelands area for four to six weeks before being returned, cleaned and lent out again. The Salvos will also pay for the campsite rental and work with the family or individual on ways that they can adjust to their new way of living, with the aim of securing stable accommodation in the medium to longer term.

Miriam said the corps (church) and Family Store was giving away two to three tents a week to people experiencing homelessness, and she had recently put a request out to the community through the local newspaper for more tents to be donated.

**SOMEONE CARES**

She said the number of people living in cars or tents was increasing. "I had a family of five kids and mum and dad, and there was grandma, but grandma passed away sadly while they were living in tent accommodation," she said. "They have been in tents for 15 months in the back of one of the local caravan parks.

"Those kids haven't missed a beat for school. We secured an extra small tent for their boy in high school so he can sit in it and do his homework and study. They are such amazing and resilient people."

She said the family was being supported by the Salvos and The Salvation Army's



Geoff Ward donates his camper to Atherton Tablelands Salvos leader Miriam Newton-Gentle.



Doorways (emergency response) team and had just last week moved into a home they are house-sitting for a year while the occupants are away.

"I am so glad they are getting into a house," said Miriam. "Throughout it all, they have been so stoic, but what is important for them to know is that they are not alone. They just need to know that someone knows that they are there and someone cares. So, when it gets tough, they can pick up the phone and have someone who cares to listen to them." – Lauren Martin



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army services.

# Reconstructing my identity

Character is key to shaping our future

**WORDS** Kirralee Nicolle

When I was growing up, I shaped my ideas of identity mostly on people I admired for their adventurous or courageous actions. I collected pictures of heroes while other children my age were collecting Pokémon cards.

While some of that natural tendency set me on paths I am grateful to still be following, the actions of many of my heroes eventually left me baffled, confused and unpacking the remnants of what I had once believed.

“

**Our limitations needn't  
define who we are ...**

”

Whenever I found a new person to admire, whether they were a sports person, a pastor or a professional in some other area, I found myself throwing away all my previous ideals to adopt every value and feature they held. Not to mention, I tried out some strange hairstyles and hobbies! This was destabilising to say the least, and it made decision-making on any important topic a constantly changing arena.

As I grew older, more and more people in my life betrayed or disappointed me. Again and again, I was lost in a whirlpool of ideas, grasping for new role models.



Gradually and thankfully, as I watched my heroes fall, I came to a new realisation.

### VALUES AND INTEGRITY

In the Bible, Colossians chapter 3, verse 12 talks about how God's people are to be clothed with "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience". Those words have a lot more to do with who we are than our career or what kind of car we drive.

I grew to realise that identity is less about our roles in the world or level of privilege, and more about our values and our integrity. What connects me with another person should not be about how many children we each have, what we do for work or how much money we have.

“

**My identity is ... more about how I use what I am given to best fit into the world and make a difference where I can.**

”

While we've spent our whole lives thinking such choices are within our control, in many ways they are not. Infertility is real. The cost of living is high. Sadly, in much of the world, factors such as where we come from, our skin colour, our gender and our health still affect the kind of work we can access and the kind of money we can make. This is not how it should be, and it is something to grieve and work to change.

However, our limitations needn't define who we are and, in fact, I have come

to believe that how we work within the limitations we have and make use of our unique opportunities is key to our integrity.

### AN UNEXPECTED OUTCOME

One thing I thought I would never do is have children. Most of the role models I looked up to were childless, and the way I planned to live my life did not involve family. I was determined to chase goals that would make such a lifestyle impossible. However, life brings unexpected trajectories, and one of those, a happy relationship and marriage, led to me having children.

If I had chosen a different path, that would also be okay. But I had to confront my perceived limitations. I had to come to terms with the fact that not all women everywhere naturally love everything about children – me being one of them – but that doesn't mean I won't enjoy raising my kids to be responsible adults and seek to build meaningful relationships with them.

As it turns out, I love being a parent! While I'm not likely to spend my spare time listening to parenting podcasts, shopping online for nursery decorations or reading books on sleep patterns – those things bore me to tears – I do love watching small people grasp new concepts and build their awareness of the world around them.

I've come to realise that my identity is less about what I set out to do, and more about how I use what I am given to best fit into the world and make a difference where I can. While so many choices are out of our control, our character is something over which we have ultimate sway. I look forward to developing mine, and surprising myself with who I can be.

# My light at the end of any tunnel

Hope in God sustains Salvos leader in Ukraine

**WORDS** Irina Shvab

I never thought I would live through a war – me and my family, of course. But that’s what happened. On 24 February 2022, I was back in Ukraine after I had spent holidays with my children in Poland.

“

**I stayed in Ukraine to do what I can do.**

”

I remember the first few days when the war started. It is hard to imagine that you can calmly react to the information that comes to you – what to do, how to behave, where to go with your children, and what steps to take.



Irina congratulates new Salvation Army officer (pastor), Marina Egorova.



Irina shows the tiny gift made for her which has brought so much encouragement in the tough times.

Parents of the teenagers who attend activities at the Vinnytsia Salvos telephoned me and asked when we were going to leave. I don’t know why they decided that we were going to leave. Apparently, they were also very worried about it. For me, this question did not arise. I stayed in Ukraine to do what I can do.

It is very difficult now, both for me personally and as a pastor. It is difficult to see thousands of needy people who simply do not know where they can find a piece of bread for today, where they can find housing and how they can plan their lives. This is especially difficult for those families with children who require some special care. We face that every day on the phone and in our life. I praise God that there is hope in him. I know that he is my light at the end of any tunnel.



Irina with General Brian Peddle., world leader of The Salvation Army. The photo frame says 'Faith and Wisdom'.

I want to show you a small piece of craft (pictured left), which encouraged me very personally. It was brought by a woman who came here from the east of Ukraine. She said that her daughter, who came from the Donetsk region, makes such items. I am very grateful that she encouraged me a lot with this. She said, thank you very much for what you are doing. It is very good for us when there are people waiting for us, especially in Vinnytsia, especially in The Salvation Army, where we can see hope.

I am very happy when I see our youth and teenagers who are now mobilised to do good things in their lives. They don't know what challenges they will face in the future, what choices await them, but they are also doing what

they can do. For example, they serve, they help us pack products, they help us organise programs for children who are temporarily staying, for example, in different cities – in Vinnytsia or in Kropyvnytskyi. They are really doing well and that encourages me a lot.

I believe that there is a great future for our country and for The Salvation Army in Ukraine. That makes me very happy.

*Major Irina Shvab is a Salvation Army officer (pastor) and a leader of the Salvos in war-ravaged Ukraine.*



Scan here for more stories of hope.

## Toasties



Toasties can be an inexpensive and creative way to use up leftovers. They require minimum brainpower to make and – best of all – are delicious. Let go of any attachment to the standard ham, cheese and tomato. The ingredients you can use in a toasty are limited only by your imagination.

Below are some of our favourite savoury and sweet flavour suggestions.

### SAVOURY

- Cheese and basil pesto
- Spinach, canned tuna, capers and mayo
- Salami, smashed olives and feta
- Leftover lamb and pickles or relish
- Leftover sausages, fried egg, cheese and chutney
- Cream cheese and green capsicum

### SWEET

- Peanut butter and strawberry jam
- Nutella and sliced banana
- Chocolate and marshmallows
- Nutella, strawberry jam and desiccated coconut



1. In which city does the 2023 Tour de France start?
2. Who is Australia's first and only winner of the Tour, winning in 2011?
3. Who is awarded the polka dot jersey (maillot à pois rouges)?
4. Why was Maurice Garin, winner of the 1903 Tour, disqualified in the following year's event?
5. Although the Tour course changes every year, where does it always end?

## Bible byte

"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1  
*New International Version*

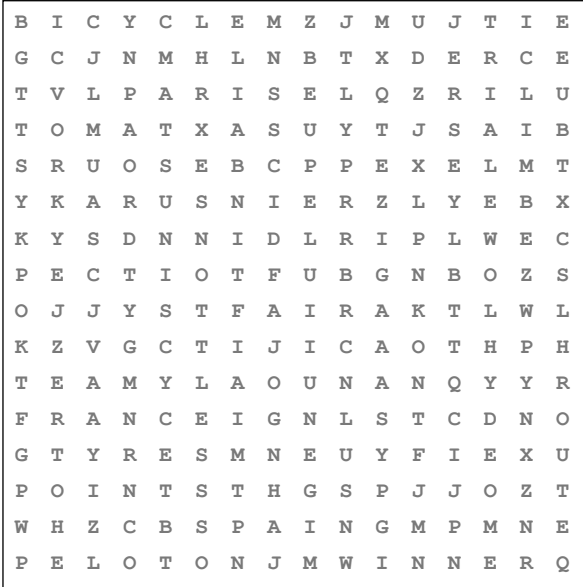
## Tum-Tum

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



# Wordsearch

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



- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| Bicycle   | Racer     |
| Bilbao    | Route     |
| Climb     | Spain     |
| Cycling   | Sprint    |
| Endurance | Stages    |
| France    | Team      |
| Jersey    | Tour      |
| July      | Tradition |
| Mountains | Trial     |
| Paris     | Tyres     |
| Peloton   | Winner    |
| Points    | Yellow    |

## FUNNY THINGS KIDS SAY

**Nine-year-old:** The hardest thing about learning to ride a bike is the pavement.

**Five-year-old:** I'm not cheating, I'm helping myself to win.

**Dad:** How many wheels are on a tricycle?  
**Eight-year-old:** I don't know. I don't know Spanish.



## DID YOU KNOW?

**The first Tour de France was established in 1903 to increase sales for the newspaper *L'Auto*.**

**The 2023 Tour de France will be held from Saturday 1 July-Sunday 23 July.**

**The longest ever Tour was held in 1926, covering 5745 km.**

**Quiz answers:** 1. Bilbao, Spain 2. Cadel Evans 3. King of the Mountains 4. For catching a train instead of riding his bike for part of the course 5. On the Champs-Élysées, Paris  
**Turn-Turn:** is hiding behind the frame on page 13.



# Be an influencer.

Be ready to minister where  
God has called you.

Why not explore more about ministry in The Salvation Army? You can do this by speaking to your local corps officer for more information or by filling in the Expression of Interest form today!

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