

Position Statements



**The Salvation Army
Canada & Bermuda Territory**

**Position Statements of
The Salvation Army
Canada & Bermuda Territory**

as at November 2009

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A positional statement briefly sets out the considered view of The Salvation Army on a moral or social issue of current relevance. The statement should clearly articulate the gospel values and principles on which the Army takes its stand.

Positional statements are not binding on individual Salvationists, but are published for their guidance, and for the information of the general public.

Orders & Regulations for Officers of The Salvation Army, Vol 2, Part 1, Chapter 12

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Position Statement on

Abortion

The Salvation Army believes in the sanctity of human life because human beings are made in the image of God. Each person is of eternal value and each life a gift from God worth cherishing, nurturing, and preserving.

The Salvation Army therefore takes seriously the needs, rights and responsibilities of parents and unborn children when considering the matter of abortion. We are committed to the protection and care of the unborn, and to the promotion of societal systems that promote wholeness, freedom, quality of life and the development of the potential of all persons.

The Salvation Army supports responsible measures necessary to avoid unwanted pregnancy and is opposed to abortion as a means of birth control. We are concerned about a growing social acceptance of abortions and believe that a genetic abnormality in the unborn child is not generally sufficient to warrant a termination of pregnancy.

When an unwanted pregnancy occurs, The Salvation Army counsels that the parents receive caring support for their emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs, and that the unborn child be carried to term.

The Salvation Army recognizes tragic and perplexing circumstances that require difficult decisions regarding a pregnancy. Such decisions should be made only after prayerful and thoughtful consideration, with appropriate involvement of the woman's family and pastoral, medical and other counsel.

Women who have had an abortion deserve care and respect, and The Salvation Army will offer them its services in a loving and compassionate manner without discrimination.



Canada and Bermuda
2003

Position Statement on

Capital Punishment

Because Salvationists believe in the sanctity of all human life and in a Christian gospel that offers the hope of redemption to fallen mankind, The Salvation Army in Canada would never campaign for the re-introduction of the death penalty as an ultimate punishment for any crime. It is contrary to our convictions to declare anyone hopeless and deny the possibility of reclamation.

However, Salvation Army territorial administration acknowledges there are Salvationists who very sincerely would uphold the state's right to execute in certain circumstances.

Long experience of rendering service within the criminal justice systems of many lands, and in ministering both to offenders and the victims of crime, has confirmed The Salvation Army's continuing belief in the possibility of redemption for all through repentance toward God, faith in Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

The Salvation Army affirms that society must be protected from the violent criminal. Church, judiciary and medicine must together further explore crime prevention and treatment. Society itself must honestly examine what it now tolerates in mass media communication and courageously legislate against all that reduces the dignity of man, corrupts moral values and incites the worst of human passion.



Canada and Bermuda
1990

Position Statement on

Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide and Care at the End of Life

Human life is a sacred gift from God. Dignity is neither conferred nor withheld by human choice; it is inherent in each person. As individuals and communities we are called to respect the sacred value of human life and at all times to show each other care.

It can be a challenge to know how to do this for a person who is suffering profoundly or living with disease that is incurable and progressing. We know that death cannot be eliminated. Even with the most advanced medical science and attentive caregiving, cure is not always possible, and pain and suffering cannot always be overcome. Never, however, must we judge that a person's life is not worth living or use anyone's suffering as a justification for causing their death.

The Salvation Army believes that euthanasia and assisted suicide are morally wrong, and holds that they should continue to be illegal under Canadian law.

Euthanasia, which involves the direct and intentional ending of another person's life as a means of relieving their suffering, undermines human dignity, as does assisting another person's suicide.

The Salvation Army believes that respect for the dignity of human life demands quality care for all persons at the end of their lives. We, therefore, promote access to palliative care that provides holistic care (physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual care) when cure is no longer medically possible. We also believe care extends beyond the individual. Human beings exist in social relationships; what happens to one person has a deep impact on others too. The complex needs and the suffering of the family, direct care providers and the social community of concern also deserve support.

Decisions about medical treatment should focus on the benefits and burdens to be experienced by the patient, and should not be intended to hasten death or delay it. As far as possible, decision-making around end-of-life concerns should remain in the hands of the dying person in collaboration with competent health care professionals, assisted by loved ones whom the patient wants to be involved. If the dying person is no longer capable of being involved in decision-making, others who know him or her well should be empowered to act as substitute decision-makers. Good management of pain and other symptoms is not euthanasia; and it is not euthanasia to withdraw, withhold or forgo treatment that would only prolong the dying process.

Because human life is a divine gift, Christians seek to treasure it. Because human history shows how readily the life of others can be devalued, Christians fight vigorously to protect the vulnerable. But because human beings have an eternal destiny, Christians say that death is not to be denied or resisted at all costs. As the imminence of death becomes more evident, it is important to communicate to dying persons that they are worthy of respect, that they are loved and that they will not be abandoned.



Canada and Bermuda
2009

Position Statement on

Family

The Salvation Army believes the family, as the basic community in society, ought to be the principal way in which values and morality are nourished. In an environment of love and respect, children and adults find security and wellbeing. Here they are free to develop morally, spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally.

We believe that the family is ideally rooted in the biblical concept of a marriage covenant of one man and one woman. An enduring commitment to loving care reflects God's design for family life which allows no justification for abuse.

The Salvation Army acknowledges that families of all types struggle, and at times fail to be communities of love. In following the example of Jesus Christ, The Salvation Army seeks to strengthen marriage and enrich family life, extending appropriate ministries of a caring Christian community to all people in all types of family relationships.



Canada and Bermuda
2004

Position Statement on
Gambling

The Salvation Army takes a stand against gambling that involves the act of risking money, property or something of value on an activity that gives material advantage based on chance and at the expense of others. The Salvation Army opposes gambling on spiritual and moral grounds and because of its tragic social implications.

The Salvation Army is deeply concerned that gambling, used by governments and organizations to raise revenues, has become an accepted aspect of our daily lives. Gambling undermines the true spirit of charitable giving. The Salvation Army's experience confirms that there are those who disregard personal and family needs to indulge in gambling and may become addicted. Even in its simplest form gambling can lead to excess and undermine the personality and character of the individual. The Salvation Army therefore cautions governments and individuals of the inherent dangers of gambling.

Salvation Army soldiers pledge to abstain from gambling, based on our belief that all our resources belong to God and that we depend on Him through faith and work. This position is supported by Scriptural teachings* concerning the responsibility to use money productively, to guard against greed, and not to gain at the expense of others.

*e.g., 1 Timothy 6:3-10; 17-19, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, Amos 6:1-6



Canada and Bermuda
2006

Position Statement on

Gay & Lesbian Sexuality

The Salvation Army upholds the dignity of all persons. For this reason, and in obedience to the example of Jesus Christ, whose compassionate love is all-embracing, The Salvation Army does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in the delivery of its services.

The Salvation Army believes that God's will for the expression of sexual intimacy is revealed in the Bible, and that living fully in accordance with biblical standards calls for chastity outside of heterosexual marriage and faithfulness within it. We do not believe that same-sex attraction is necessarily blameworthy and we oppose the vilification and mistreatment of gays and lesbians. We believe that we are accountable for the ways in which we express our sexuality. While recognizing the challenge that this presents, The Salvation Army believes firmly in the power of God's grace to enable all to live in a manner that is pleasing to Him.

In keeping with our mission, we are committed to proclaiming the good news of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and transformation by the Holy Spirit. We welcome all seekers of faith in Christ to explore Salvation Army church life.



Canada and Bermuda
2002

Position Statement on

Human Diversity

The Salvation Army believes that all people are made in the image of God and are thus of equal intrinsic value.

We seek to treat all people with dignity and respect in response to Jesus' call to love our neighbors as ourselves. We oppose oppression or unjust discrimination based on such differences as race, gender, age, belief, lifestyle, economic status, or physical or mental ability.

We believe that diversity strengthens and shapes community and ministry. Therefore, in our community services, employment practices and church life, we will seek to actively promote sensitivity, understanding and communication in both intent and practice.



Canada and Bermuda
2004

Position Statement on

Justice Through the Legal System

God is the ultimate power and authority in the universe, so justice best occurs on Earth when power and authority are exercised in conformity with God's standards of moral excellence.

Injustice occurs when power is used wrongly to take from others what God has given them, namely their life, dignity, liberty or the fruits of their love and labour.

The Biblical concept of justice reflects special concern for protecting vulnerable people from victimization by the powerful. It brings judgment on the wrongdoer but also works to restore the victim, the offender and the community.

The openness of Christian love to the unlovely is a principle of behaviour cutting across the distinctions of society. Biblical justice combines affirmation of the worth of each person with sensitivity to his or her needs and is most concerned with those who are on the fringes of the community.

The Bible teaches that government, courts, law enforcement and other agencies of the state are expected to bear significant, though not exclusive, responsibility for justice.

The Salvation Army believes that:

- In a democracy, the state's responsibility for justice is legitimately determined through legislation, assessed by elected representatives, applied and interpreted by an independent judiciary. This does not mean that justice so determined is perfect, and therefore, citizens have a responsibility to work peaceably for improvements.
- Teaching the meaning and importance of justice is foundational to the development of healthy relationships and responsible citizenship.
- In all areas of law, a credible, transparent, adequately resourced, accessible, impartial and accountable justice system with an independent judiciary is essential for a healthy society.
- Legal Aid, Pro Bono services and legal insurance are needed for many people and must be preserved and expanded in our increasingly complex legal structures. Access to a complex legal system is extremely difficult without proper legal advice. Self-represented parties are faced with a daunting array of legislation, regulations, procedures and forms.
- In areas of **Civil Law**, creative alternatives to litigation such as a collaborative approach or mediation should be encouraged and a strong system of support for families, and especially children, should be provided through the Family Courts to those involved in family and child protection matters.

- In **Criminal Law**, the establishment and maintenance of a just society requires the involvement of individuals, communities and the justice system working together to address issues of crime, conflict and marginalization.
 - ◆ A restorative approach to criminal justice, which seeks to hold the wrongdoer accountable while working to bring healing and wholeness to the victim, the offender and the affected community, is a more productive approach for all parties concerned than one based primarily on retribution.
 - ◆ Persons charged with criminal offences must be protected from wrongful conviction while respecting the interests of all affected parties including the community and victims.
 - ◆ Young persons charged with criminal offences are entitled to the same rights and protections as adults during the adjudication process and to have their unique needs addressed in sentencing through an adequately resourced youth justice system.
 - ◆ The development of special resources to deal with the issue of domestic violence is needed and encouraged.

The Salvation Army believes the challenge to all persons is:

- to practice justice in their dealings with others, respect the dignity of all, exercise power and authority over others judiciously, and work for improvements to the justice system when required;
- to work together with those of like mind to minister to the spiritual and personal needs of individuals, families and communities involved in or impacted by the justice system, and
- to facilitate community based involvement in preventing and addressing the consequences of crime, supporting families in crisis, and providing creative alternatives to resolve disputes in appropriate family and civil matters.



Canada and Bermuda
2006

Position Statement on

Marriage

The Salvation Army believes marriage is the covenanting together of one man and one woman for life in a union to the exclusion of all others. This union is established by an authorized ceremony.

Marriage is a unique reflection of God's faithful love for all humankind. The relationship of husband and wife reflects the covenant of self-giving love between Christ and His church, central to a Christian understanding of marriage.

The pledge of mutual faithfulness is not tentative or conditional. The permanent nature of the marriage bond gives security and promotes the development of a trusting relationship. The Christian community has a responsibility to care for, nurture and prayerfully support the marriage relationship.

The Salvation Army affirms that marriage is the basis of sound family life and foundational to a healthy society.



Canada and Bermuda
2001

Position Statement on

Pornography

The Salvation Army believes that all persons are created in God's image. As Christians, we are called to care for the vulnerable, uphold human dignity and maintain family integrity. For this reason, we abhor the prevalence and accessibility of all forms of pornography, whether in publications, theatre, cinema, videos or the Internet.

The Salvation Army affirms the sanctity of sexual relationships based on the teaching of Scripture. The Bible presents sexual intimacy as a gift from God that is ordained and blessed exclusively within the context of heterosexual marriage. Pornography attacks and distorts God's design by depersonalizing sex and emphasizing the gratification of selfish desires to the neglect of loving, committed relationships. Instead of providing satisfaction, pornography only intensifies lust and may even become addictive. Christians, no less than others, are vulnerable to the pervasive presence of sexually explicit materials.

Pornography is not only an issue of private morality, but of public concern. It erodes the physical, moral and spiritual wellbeing of society. The commercialization of sex is detrimental to the way people seek and perceive love and self worth. It demeans those who are portrayed as sexual objects, as well as its users and purveyors. Pornography is often linked with prostitution, sexual abuse and other forms of sexual exploitation. The Salvation Army particularly deplores child pornography, which harms the most vulnerable in our society.

The Salvation Army urges those involved with pornography to renounce this injurious lifestyle and promotes healing through Christian counselling and professional help. We believe that freedom can be attained by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, continual guidance by the Holy Spirit and the caring support of the Christian community.

The Salvation Army stands against this evil that threatens the quality of personal relationships and national character. We therefore seek to provoke the public conscience and to encourage involvement in the struggle against pornography.



Canada and Bermuda
2005

Position Statement on

Poverty & Economic Justice

The measure of any society is how well it cares for its weakest citizens. The persistence both of widespread poverty and indifference to that poverty in Canada and Bermuda is morally unacceptable. Jesus Christ motivates us to love our neighbour in practical ways. Our response to the poor is a measure of our obedience to and love for God.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ should free us from the enticements of consumerism and desire for individualistic gain. As Salvationists, we remain committed to The Salvation Army's historic mission to care for the poor and marginalized. Therefore, individually and corporately, we will work to eliminate poverty by:

- ◆ Providing empowering practical assistance to people who are poor—both in our personal, family and vocational lives and in our congregational and organizational practices—through prayer, listening and dedication of our time and resources.
- ◆ Making relational and financial choices that promote economic opportunity and justice for those in poverty.
- ◆ Evaluating public policies by how they respond to people who are poor.
- ◆ Challenging racism and other attitudes that promote inequality and seeking reconciliation among all groups in our society.
- ◆ Building community capacity, nurturing the bonds of family and community, and protecting the dignity of each person.
- ◆ Partnering with other denominations and agencies in common commitment and action to overcome poverty in our own communities, our nation and our world.



Canada and Bermuda Territory
2001

Position Statement on

Reproductive Technologies

Current advances in research are opening doors to possibilities in reproductive technology that were undreamed of less than a generation ago. Numerous applications based on this new information are already available to us; many more are certain to follow in the near future. Gaining knowledge is important and valuable, but it does not follow that using the tools that this new knowledge provides is invariably the right thing to do. In evaluating the use of any of these new tools, it is critical that ethical considerations be part of the process, and that the sanctity of all human life be recognized in all situations. The Salvation Army believes that these ethical considerations should be based on principles established in Scripture.

While the Bible does not speak directly to issues raised by technologies emerging in the 21st century, it does establish principles that we believe to be relevant guidelines in the evaluation of all areas of life, including our response to new technologies. Based on this belief, The Salvation Army affirms the following principles and their implications:

Human reproduction is complex. Beyond the physical component are factors that are emotional, spiritual, economic, social and moral. The Salvation Army believes that as a consequence:

- the wellbeing of the prospective children should be at the forefront of decision-making.
- comprehensive counselling for couples considering use of reproductive technologies needs to be an essential part of the decision-making process. Counselling about emotional, spiritual, economic, social and moral matters needs to be just as thorough and reliable as the medical counselling.
- people should be enabled to consider adoption or living without children to be true and fulfilling options.

The transmission of life is sacred. The Salvation Army believes that as a consequence:

- reproduction must not become a commodity – one more thing to be bought and sold. Application of reproductive technology should take place within the field of health care, not in the marketplace.
- regulations are needed both to establish standards for the development of emerging technologies and to closely monitor their application. Reproduction and genetic manipulation are far too important to society to allow a free-for-all approach. A place for controlled, well-regulated groups that legitimately assist couples who are experiencing infertility is recognized, but reproduction for profit, whether in the form of the selling of eggs, sperm or embryos, or through such practices as commercial surrogacy, violates the sacred nature of the transmission of life.
- medical treatments for infertility that are ethically justifiable ought to be available fairly. Society should not allow them to become an instrument for widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

- from the earliest moments of their existence, human embryos have a moral worth and cannot be treated simply as tissues or reproductive materials to be used or disposed of as others see fit. The Salvation Army opposes the use of embryos purely for research purposes.

All life is granted and valued by God. The Salvation Army believes that as a consequence:

- society must vigorously protect against the danger that the medical treatment of infertility will succumb to the values of “technology”. While the language of quality control and selection for desired characteristics fits the world of manufacturing, it does not fit here. It is wrong to destroy human embryos because they are of “insufficient quality” or because they lack some desired quality. An example of this is gender preference.
- the use of this technology in ways that will reduce the range and variety of human existence needs to be met with rigorous opposition. God’s creation is amazingly diverse. This diversity has been a major strength of life on Earth. While the use of genetic engineering to address problems related to any number of congenital weaknesses or abnormalities may have the potential to reduce human suffering and improve the quality of life for many, society needs to proceed with great caution.
- in a world with large numbers of abandoned, malnourished, suffering and parentless children, adoption needs to be considered as a positive alternative to reproductive technologies for adults desiring to become parents. The Salvation Army believes that the nurturing of children through fostering is another option to be considered by more families.



Canada and Bermuda
Approved 2007

Position Statement on

Responsibility for the Earth

The earth is an interconnected whole, each part interdependent. As an intricately ordered system it must be kept in careful balance. Human sinfulness continues to contribute to destruction of the earth and cause significant degradations: increased global temperature, unnatural changes to biodiversity, air and water pollution, ozone depletion, land and habitat destruction. These imbalances have consequences for the poor, our global neighbours and future generations, as more and more people are unable to meet their basic human needs. Environmental concerns are part of the broader reality of injustice and economic inequity in our world. Individuals, communities, religious organizations, businesses and governments must work to change this.

The Salvation Army believes that God created the earth and all living things. We believe that God delights in each part of creation and fills it with intrinsic value, regardless of its utility. As such, caring for creation is an act of worship to God, while neglecting or abusing it is an act of disobedience.

The Salvation Army believes that degradation of the earth is in part the result of human activity which has not adhered to the rhythms and regulations of biblical stewardship. We believe that human beings, created in the image of God, have a responsibility to care for all living things in a manner that reflects God's own relationship to creation.

Humans are called to careful stewardship of the earth and its resources. The call to stewardship must be seen as an invitation to inhabit God's garden, to tend to this bountiful planet, care for it and help it to flourish, joining with all creation in witnessing to God's glory. Proper stewardship ought to follow Christ's pattern of humility, service and sacrifice in the world.

The Salvation Army anticipates the day when God will make broken creation whole again, redeeming all created things and renewing the earth. However, this does not absolve us of the responsibility to be good earth-keepers. We believe that good earth-keeping is essential to the Christian faith. Salvationists as individuals and The Salvation Army as an organization resolve to accept responsibility for this world we live in by taking practical steps to conserve and regenerate creation.



Canada and Bermuda
2009

Position Statement on

Sabbath

Salvationists desire to worship God at all times and in all we say and do. By gathering regularly for public worship each week they bear witness, in a world rich with many cultures, that God ordained a weekly holy day for rest and worship.

The Salvation Army affirms:

- ◆ the observance of a Sabbath day, as established in the Old Testament — keeping one day a week holy, by laying aside the normal activities of daily life, in order to discover the presence of God and corporately participate in the creation's worship of the Lord;
- ◆ that entering into God's rest involves loving humanity, as demonstrated by the works Jesus performed on the Sabbath;
- ◆ the celebration of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week, following the practice of the Christian church since its early times;
- ◆ the blessing of God on those who rest in Him.

The practical need of humankind is to rest from regular work and study for physical, social, and emotional well-being. The Sabbath principle also embraces the land and all working animals.

The Salvation Army encourages those who work on Sundays to find another day each week for rest, worship and family time, and urges all to consider how through their own actions, they can promote a day of rest and renewal for others in society. In this way, the divinely instituted weekly cycle of work and rest may be lived and proclaimed.



Canada and Bermuda
2005

Position Statement on

Substance Abuse

The Salvation Army encourages a healthy spiritual, emotional, mental and physical lifestyle. The misuse of many substances and drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, has the potential to harm the body, impair judgement and lead to addiction. Therefore, we actively support legislation and policy that encourage healthy lifestyles.

Guided by Christian faith and practice, we hold to the Bible's wisdom regarding the destructive consequences of alcohol misuse. Scriptural principles also inform us about the misuse of other harmful substances. Salvation Army members (soldiers) make a covenant to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and the harmful use of other substances.

The Salvation Army is committed to excellence in working with individuals, families and communities whose health, relationships and social well-being have been damaged by misuse of and addiction to harmful substances. We place a high priority on education, treatment and counselling that offer spiritual, emotional, mental and physical healing for persons affected by addiction.

We believe that abstinence is the most certain way to avoid and overcome dependencies on harmful substances. Regardless of the choices people make, we are committed to loving and supporting individuals through to recovery.

We support Christian communities as places of fellowship, help and healing for all who face these challenges and we believe that by the grace of God people are freed from substance abuse to lead healthy lives.



Canada and Bermuda
2004

Position Statement on

World Peace

The Salvation Army believes that the plan for creation is that all people shall live in a harmonious relationship with God. It acknowledges that only within this relationship can perfect peace be fully known, and that this peace transcends the circumstances of this life. Greed, selfishness and injustice, however, have entered human lives and often result in conflict and, at times, armed aggression.

Therefore, in the light of the Gospel and in obedience to the one who declared, "Blessed are the peacemakers," The Salvation Army through its ministry around the world confronts the poverty, injustice and the inequalities that so often give rise to disharmony and unrest, and seeks to foster mutual respect and understanding between peoples of all races, ethnic origins, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions and cultures.

Recognizing the appalling character of modern warfare, The Salvation Army urges nations to eliminate all weapons of mass or indiscriminate destruction and divert those expenditures into measures that will benefit society, and especially into providing services that promote the welfare of the poor, suffering or disadvantaged, and bring about a more just society.

The Salvation Army is ready to work, alone or in partnership with others of goodwill, to bring about an end to armed conflict and to promote reconciliation between opposing factions. It also undertakes to extend in Christian love its practical care to those who suffer because of war, civil unrest or other forms of violence, without discrimination except on the basis of the need being met and its capacity to meet it.

The Salvation Army calls upon all within its influence — members, friends and fellow Christians — to pray for peace, to love their enemies and to work for the betterment of society, witnessing to God as the source of lasting peace and to a right relationship with God as the only path to perfect peace.



Canada and Bermuda
2005