

Creating Faith Pathways: Local Mission Delivery



Creating Faith Pathways: taking a holistic approach to the human condition that values spirituality, we graciously share the Good News of Jesus and grow in faith together.

Creating faith pathways is an essential element of our holistic mission. This document seeks to provide an overview of practical examples for this across the different mission expressions. The examples are not intended to be exhaustive but to prompt reflection and conversation about practices and possibilities. Linda Bond, a former General of The Salvation Army, suggested that wherever there is a Salvo Red Shield on the door, that a pathway to faith is accessible and affirmed.

We appreciate that not everyone who works for The Salvation Army identifies as Christian. We welcome people of all faiths and none. At the same time, there is an expectation that everyone who works with The Salvation Army will respect and support our mission. This includes our mission to create faith pathways. We seek to do this in culturally appropriate ways that encourage exploration of the Christian faith without coercion, force or manipulation. We also respect other faith traditions of the staff and people in our care.

We share the love of Jesus by helping people develop their spiritual life, or to use the language in our statement, create a faith pathway. The idea of being on a pathway with and toward God is not new.

'Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways'. (Proverbs 4:26)

'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls'. (Jeremiah 6:16)

'You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' (Acts 2:28)

A pathway is a means of getting from one place to another. Some pathways are straight, direct and smooth. Others are circuitous and difficult. Often there are multiple ways of getting to the same destination - and we get to choose the path we take.

Moving along that pathway involves a series of steps as we put one foot in front of the other and keep moving forward. If we stop moving forward, we never get to the destination. At times, we venture on paths that simply stop and take us nowhere. Other times we have stopped because there was an obstacle or hurdle that was too difficult for us to navigate.

The Bible encourages us to take care in our life journey and to seek pathways that lead to a full and flourishing life. The Christian faith sees this in following Jesus, who said that he had come to bring life, and bring it to the full (John 10:10).

This is a lifelong process of transformation for all that includes growing in maturity, service and love for others. This process of holistic transformation is integral to all that we do.

'The development of Local Mission Delivery has been driven by the understanding that holistic, integrated mission is an essential part of The Salvation Army's DNA. In short, it is the national structure for intentional collaboration in holistic mission and the outworking of the wider organisational framework of The Salvation Army, including our vision, mission and values.'

(Local Mission Delivery Handbook, p. 1)

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‘Holistic mission cannot conceive of spiritual salvation without a concern for the needs of this world, nor indeed a stand for social justice and reform that ignores spiritual concerns . . . Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel’.

(**Local Mission Delivery: Theological reflections on holistic ministry** by Lieutenant-Colonel Lyn Edge, National Secretary for Mission, 2019, p. 3).

‘Extensive research has established a link between spirituality and enhanced wellbeing and psycho-social outcomes. Spirituality provides an approach to the universal needs of individuals in an evidence-informed and holistic manner. It is incumbent on us to provide a pathway to holistic spiritual wellbeing that invites individuals to explore Christian spirituality but is equally respectful of personal choice regarding religious beliefs’.

(**Spirituality Framework**, Alcohol and Other Drugs: Connect, Grow, Live. Salvation Army, 2020., 11).

Common foundations for creating faith pathways across all mission expressions include:

- All people are respected and treated with dignity – made in the image of God. There is no ‘us and them’.
- People are unconditionally accepted – regardless of gender, race, sexuality, disability and religion – and building relationships of trust is essential.
- All people are warmly and appropriately welcomed, listened to and cared for.
- Officers, volunteers and staff embody our values and mission to care for people, build healthy communities and work for justice.

Creating faith pathways that involve the following are unacceptable:

- Use of coercion; manipulation; compulsion; force; conditionality of care, acceptance and service.

Social Mission and Community Engagement

In social mission and community engagement contexts, the following practices are examples of opportunities for creating faith pathways, and do not contravene government contracts. This is not an exhaustive list. Where COs and faith community members visit services, this is in consultation with managers and in ways that are safe and trauma informed for community members.

1. Centre managers meet with faith leaders to discuss appropriate ways of engagement.
2. Centre has well displayed Bibles and Christian literature freely available.
3. Centre offers voluntary, regular small group times to explore faith and pray.
4. Chaplains and CO's are welcome / invited to the site to meet with staff and community members.
5. Centre offers regular, voluntary chapel service led by chaplain, CO, staff member or appropriately trained corps member.
6. A chaplain, CO or staff member offers to pray for a community member.
7. Community members are warmly referred & connected to chaplains, and the local CO / faith community.
8. Members of the local faith community are welcomed / invited to cook a BBQ or morning tea for the staff and community members.
9. Community members from different faith or religious traditions are offered contact and support from their faith leader and their celebrations are respectfully recognised.
10. Community members are seen holistically, understood to be made in the image of God and offered opportunities to serve others.

Corps and faith communities

In corps and faith communities, the following practices are examples of opportunities for creating faith pathways. This is not an exhaustive list. These are mission expressions that intentionally provide opportunities for people to explore the Christian faith, experience generous Christian community, and grow in discipleship as followers of Jesus. These include:

1. Small groups and discipleship huddles established to help Christians grow in their faith journey and discipleship process.
2. Small groups and community tables established to build relationships, facilitate faith conversations and invite people to explore the Christian faith.
3. Sunday worship meetings where community members are warmly welcomed.
4. COs and faith community members pray for and actively look for opportunities to build relationships and serve those involved in our social mission centres.
5. Faith community members pray for and actively look for opportunities to build caring relationships with community members engaging with our community services (e.g. Doorways and Moneycare).
6. Regular prayer meetings are available for community members.
7. Courses like ALPHA, Christianity Explored are regularly made available for people to intentionally explore the Christian faith.
8. Community meals, ESL classes, playgroups and community gardens are held to serve, connect and build relationships with community members.
9. COs and faith community members visit and explore appropriate opportunities with local Mission Enterprises such as Salvos Stores, Aged Care, and EPlus.
10. Faith community members are intentionally trained and equipped for missional engagement with the wider community, including other mission expressions.
11. Faith communities and leaders look to collaborate with other mission expressions in the area through Area Leadership Teams and Local Mission Delivery.
12. Faith community members express generous hospitality to community members in their homes.
13. Faith communities engage with community partners and other mission expressions to work for justice and advocate on behalf of others including refugees and asylum seekers, and people experiencing family violence, homelessness, addictions, poverty and unemployment.

Mission Enterprises

Our different Mission Enterprises provide a variety of opportunities for creating faith pathways. The following provides some examples but is not an exhaustive list.

Aged Care

- Provision of regular voluntary chapel services, Christian literature and prayer.
- Chaplains available to provide pastoral care and pray with and for residents, families and staff.

Salvos Stores

- Provision of spaces for faith community members to build relationships with community members.
- Chaplains available for conversation, pastoral care and prayer with staff.
- Collaborate with local corps leaders to explore ways to engage with the local community.

Employment Plus, Salvos Housing, Salvos Funerals

- Managers and chaplains actively look to collaborate with corps leaders and faith communities in the area.
- Chaplains available to provide pastoral care and prayer with staff and community members.