



THE SALVATION ARMY UNITED KINGDOM TERRITORY
WITH THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

POSITIONAL STATEMENT

THE FAMILY

The family is God's provision for human flourishing as well as for the giving and protection of life. Biblical accounts of the creation of humanity recognise that male and female are of one substance.¹ Family solidarity and commitment are expressed as they come together in one flesh.² Through this union, male and female together also fulfil God's imperative to be fruitful and multiply and to populate the earth.³ Jesus, God incarnate, became a member of a human family, thus identifying with and affirming family life.

Both in its nuclear and extended forms, the family is the primary social relationship and the foundation of a stable society. It provides a context for the care, development and well-being of children. Within the family there should be love, support, protection, acceptance and commitment. The family provides a framework for relating to other people. It is the place where values are shaped, attitudes and behaviours are learned and faith can be nurtured through the generations.⁴

Family life can be threatened by a variety of pressures. These may stem from sociological challenges such as the breakdown of community, unemployment and poverty. Personal challenges – including health issues, money problems, unfaithfulness, addictions, neglect or domestic violence – can severely strain family relationships. Some families remain resilient despite such pressures. However, for other families, relationships can be fractured seemingly beyond repair.

It is the experience of The Salvation Army that family breakdown may lead to a variety of other problems ranging from isolation and rejection to social exclusion or homelessness. Negative experiences of family life may also leave a harmful emotional legacy which sows the seeds for spiralling problems and patterns of living when damaging attitudes and behaviours are handed down from generation to generation.⁵

Christians believe that sin entered the world through the Fall, bringing in its wake hostility and separation between people. However, the Gospel affirms that through the saving work of Christ peace and reconciliation are made possible. Relationships with God and with each other can be restored.⁶ It is with this positive hope that The Salvation Army seeks to minister healing for hurts. In the context of today's changing structures of family life, it is committed to standing alongside families, offering support and protection, without prejudice or discrimination.⁷ Through the provision of its services and programmes, The Salvation Army seeks to demonstrate the loving acceptance which mirrors God's grace revealed in Christ.

At the heart of The Salvation Army's ministry is the firm conviction that everyone can belong to God's wider family. All may know the unfailing love of a heavenly Father and the fellowship of being brothers and sisters in Christ.⁸

¹ 'The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" '(Genesis 2:23).

² 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24).

3 'God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" ' (Genesis 1:28).

4 'Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them' (Deuteronomy 4:9).

5 Bonner, A. & Luscombe, C, 2008. *The Seeds of Exclusion*. London: The Salvation Army.

6 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

'For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility' (Ephesians 2:14).

7 The Salvation Army's Territorial Children and Families' Strategy Group In the United Kingdom and Ireland aims to support family life. It regularly evaluates changing sociological perspectives, government initiatives and legal implications.

8 'The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children' (Romans 8:15-16).

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