

THE SALVATION ARMY: UNITED KINGDOM TERRITORY WITH THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND ENVIRONMENT POSITIONAL STATEMENT

The Salvation Army's concern for the environment arises from moral and biblical convictions. We acknowledge God as Creator, Preserver and Governor of the universe. All creation belongs to him¹ and all he is pleased with all he has made². He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, relational in his triune nature. His purpose is that every part of creation, including human beings, should exist in harmonious relationship with him as Creator and with every other part of creation. In fulfilling this purpose, creation rightly brings praise and glory to God³ and his handiwork inspires wonder and humility.⁴

As human beings uniquely made in the image of God, we are called to be co-workers with him in his creative and sustaining activity.⁵ In caring for his creation we recognise that ultimately we are responsible and accountable to God. We should use wisely the earth's resources he has entrusted to us for future generations. God's command to 'work' the earth and 'take care of it' implies service and watchful care on our part.⁶ The biblical command to humanity to 'subdue' and 'rule over' every living thing should not be misinterpreted as justifying abuse of the earth's resources.⁷

Individually and collectively, humanity's response to God's creative purpose is mixed - sometimes productive and caring but sometimes unrestrained, ignorant and sinful. Affluence provides opportunities for positive choices which sustain and protect the environment. Negative choices of wastefulness, unrestrained consumerism or financial systems that put profit before the needs of people can all contribute to environmental damage. This is evident in the pollution and degrading of the environment and the exploitation of people and resources. Consequences can fall disproportionately and unjustly on poorer nations whose poverty may be both the cause and a result of environmental damage.

God's loving purpose for his entire creation never ends. It is the mission of Jesus to bring healing, wholeness and reconciliation to broken lives and a broken world.⁸ The Bible looks forward to the renewal of the earth through the liberating energy of the Holy Spirit at work in people and in creation.⁹

The Salvation Army is compelled by love for God and for humanity and is concerned about the implications of environmental damage on future generations as well as the present. It speaks out for social justice and for poor and oppressed people; also, for responsible management of the earth's resources which sustains the environment while protecting and improving the quality of human life.

As an organisation it has in place a policy of good environmental practice.¹⁰ Individually, everyone, is encouraged to take small but far-reaching steps which any individual can take to help care for, protect and repair the environment this begins with changed priorities and a simpler lifestyle. Practical actions may include reducing consumption, use of environmentally friendly products, waste reduction and recycling, energy conservation, ethical purchasing and ethical investment. In these and other environmentally sustainable ways, we can show our love for God and for his creation.

Footnotes

1. 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters' (Psalm 24:1-2).
2. 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day' (Genesis 1:31).
3. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them' (Psalm 19:1-3).
4. 'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them' (Psalm 8:3-4)?
5. 'Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27-28).
6. 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it' (Genesis 2:15).
7. '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).
8. 'For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross' (Colossians 1:19-20).
9. 'The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God' (Romans 8:19-21).
10. The Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory (UKT) Environmental Policy (29 June 2010).

All Bible references are taken from Today's New International Version.

Approved by the Chief of the Staff in the absence of the General: July 2013