

The History of the Salvation Army



William Booth embarked upon his ministerial career in 1852. His crusade was to win the lost multitudes of London to Christ. He went into the streets of London to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the poor, the homeless, the hungry and the destitute.

Booth abandoned the conventional concept of a church and a pulpit and took his message to the people. His fervor led to disagreement with the leaders of the church in London. They preferred traditional measures. As a result, he withdrew from the church and traveled throughout England conducting evangelistic meetings. His wife, Catherine, was a major force in The Salvation Army movement.

In 1865, William Booth was invited to hold a series of evangelistic meetings in the east end of London. He set up a tent in a Quaker graveyard and his services became an instant success. This proved to be the end of his wanderings as an independent traveling evangelist. His renown as a religious leader spread throughout London. His followers were a vigorous group dedicated to fight for the souls of men and women.

Thieves, prostitutes, gamblers and drunkards were among Booth's first converts to Christianity. His congregations were desperately poor. He preached hope and salvation. His aim was to lead them to Christ and to link them to a church for further spiritual guidance. Even though they were converted, churches did not accept Booth's followers because of what they had been. Booth gave their lives direction in a spiritual manner and put them to work to save others who were like themselves. They too preached and sang in the streets as a living testimony to the power of God.

In 1867, Booth had only 10 full-time workers. By 1874, the numbers had grown to 1,000 volunteers and 42 evangelists. They served under the name "The Christian Mission." Booth assumed the title of a General Superintendent. His followers called him "General." Known as the "Hallelujah Army," the converts spread out of the east end of London into neighboring areas and then to other cities.

Booth was reading a printer's proof of the 1878 Annual Report when he noticed the statement, "The Christian Mission under the Superintendent's of the Rev. William Booth is a volunteer army. He crossed out the words "Volunteer Army" and penned in "Salvation Army" From those words came the basis of the foundation deed of The Salvation Army which was adopted in August of that same year.

Converts became soldiers of Christ and are known as Salvationists. They launched an offensive throughout the British Isles. In some instances there were real battles as organized gangs mocked and attacked soldiers as they went about their work. In spite of the violence and persecution, some 250,000 persons were converted under the ministry of the Salvationists between 1881 and 1,885.

The world

The Worldwide Salvation Army

International Headquarters, in London, England, is the international administrative center of The Salvation Army. From International Headquarters, the General, the Army's international leader, provides spiritual and administrative guidance to Salvation Army units around the world.

Divisions

Territories are divided into divisions, with a divisional commander, the division's spiritual division encompasses a number of corps and other Salvation Army centers. Where it is not possible for a corps to have its own full-time commanding officer, non-commissioned local officers (lay leaders) are often asked to accept some responsibility for local leadership.

Area Commands

Salvation Army operations in large metropolitan areas are often administered by an area commander. Under his command, there may be a number of Salvation Army officers commanding corps community centers and social service centers.

Corps Community Centers

This is the local Salvation Army center of operations seen in most towns and cities across the country. Each week a variety of people will meet here for worship, cross-cultural services, fellowship, musical activities and other events.

There may also be a variety of community outreach activities, as well as character building activities for youth and adults. Services and so on which are part of the corps program. All are welcome to attend Salvation Army meetings.

Emergency relief, emergency shelter or other social services may also be available at the corps community center, though they often are offered at one or more separate nearby Salvation Army facilities.

Other Salvation Army Centers of Operation

Large social services centers, senior citizens' housing, domestic violence and children's shelters, camps and rehabilitation centers may operate independently of an area command or corps community center. These facilities are administered directly by divisional headquarters or by territorial headquarters.

What is a Salvation Army Officer or Soldier

The General

The General, based at International Headquarters in London, is the international leader of The Salvation Army and travels widely wherever the Army is active. He or she is elected by the High Council (a group of senior Salvation Army officers) for a term of five years or until the 68th birthday is reached, when he or she must retire. The Advisory Council to the General assists The General in policy making.

Officers

Salvation Army officers are ordained ministers serving in The Salvation Army in a professional capacity and on a full-time basis. They are members of The Salvation Army who commit their lives to doing God's will and serving others.

Officers may be single or married. If married, both husband and wife must undertake the same training, and both are ordained and commissioned upon completion of training. Single officers wishing to marry must marry within the ranks or resign their officership. Officers resigning their officership to marry may remain in The Salvation Army as soldiers and may resume their officership if the non-officer spouse elects to undertake officer training.

Officers come from all walks of life - from varying backgrounds and occupations - to complete a two year residential course at a Salvation Army Training College. Concurrent with ordination they are commissioned to the rank of captain. After fifteen years of satisfactory service they are promoted to the rank of major. Higher ranks are at the direction of the General.

The majority of officers are responsible for a Salvation Army corps community center (church), with pastoral and community service responsibilities. Officers may also serve in other Salvation Army facilities or in an administrative capacity at headquarters.

All officers receive a small standard allowance according to rank, with an added stipend calculated on the number of dependents. The amount of allowance does not vary for different appointments or levels of administrative responsibility. Quarters and transportation are provided and remain the property of The Salvation Army.

Becoming a Salvation Army Officer



Auxiliary/Captains

Auxiliary/Captains are persons who undertake Salvation Army officership after they reach the maximum age for acceptance into the college for officer training. After five years, an auxiliary/captain may receive a full commission. An auxiliary /captain has the same responsibilities and receives the same allowance as a regular officer.

Sergeants

Sergeants are Salvationists (active lay members in good standing for at least two years) who elect to work full-time for The Salvation Army in a pastoral or administrative capacity. Sergeants are employees and are not ordained or commissioned, but they may be appointed to a corps community center, where they will perform all pastoral duties except those reserved to ordained clergy.

Soldiers

Lay members of The Salvation Army are called soldiers. As do lay members of other churches, Salvation Army soldiers have secular professions and are typical members of the community. Upon enrollment, soldiers sign the Articles of War, which state the Army's beliefs, and they accept certain moral standards, e.g., Salvation Army soldiers do not smoke or drink alcohol. Soldiers are expected, but not required, to wear the uniform as a witness to their faith.

Children may be enrolled as Junior Soldiers. Junior Soldiers sign a covenant in which they make a confession of faith and agree to obey God, pray and read the Bible. While adults make a commitment to The Salvation Army when they become soldiers, the Junior Soldier covenant does not include this provision.

Local Officers

Salvationists who accept particular lay leadership responsibilities in a corps are called local officers; their positions are similar to elders in other churches. Local officers may undertake such responsibilities as corps treasurer, Sunday school teacher, youth leader and other leadership and service positions. Local officers are required to wear the uniform when carrying out the responsibilities of their position. As with volunteer lay leaders in other organizations, they receive no pay for these activities.

Adherents

Adherents choose to make The Salvation Army their spiritual home and place of worship, but who do not wish to make the commitments of Salvation Army soldiership. While they may participate in all corps community activities, they may not assume official leadership positions. Adherents do not wear the uniform.

Why does The Salvation Army use military structure and uniforms?

The Salvation Army's military style is rooted in the militaristic spirit prevalent in the mid-1800s, when William and Catherine Booth founded the organization. This organizational style has proven effective in making the Army a highly disciplined and mobile organization, able to respond quickly and efficiently to human need whenever and wherever it arises.

The uniform also finds its roots in the culture of its founding and continues to serve as a witness to the Salvationist's commitment to serving God and man. Today, The Salvation Army's uniform is recognized as a symbol of commitment and a sign of availability and accessibility in times of need or crisis. Salvation Army officers always wear the uniform when they are on duty in the corps, the office or the community.

What The Salvation Army believes



The Salvationist believes that:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

There is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.

There are three persons in the Godhead - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and coequal in power and glory.

In the person of Jesus Christ the divine and human natures are united so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness; and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

Repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.

We are justified by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

Continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

It is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.



The Flag



The first Salvation Army flag was presented to Coventry Corps in 1878 by The Army Mother, Catherine Booth. Until 1882 the central shape was an image of the sun, but with the commencement of the Army's work in India it was changed to a star in deference to the Parsees, an Indian religious group, who regarded the sun as sacred. The Army flag itself is not sacred but is a symbol of the beliefs held by Salvationists.

The flag consists of a blue border surrounding a red background in the center of which is a yellow star. The Army's motto 'Blood & Fire' is also inscribed on the flag together with the name of the corps, center or section to which the flag belongs.

The blue border represents the holiness of God and the holiness of the life Christians are called to live. The red background is a reminder of Jesus' blood shed on the cross that all may live lives that are free from sin. The yellow star symbolises the power of God's Holy Spirit.

In the early years the Salvation Army and its' officers and soldiers suffered much persecution and the Army flag was often the target of anti-Salvationist groups such as the Skeleton Army. On many occasions in towns such as Folkston and Worthing, the flag was strongly defended from attack, often at great personal risk.

Today, however, the Salvation Army Flag is regarded with reverence and respect wherever in the world it is flown.

The Salvationist's Uniform



While many denominations of the Christian Church have a distinctive form of dress for the clergy, The Salvation Army is almost unique in its allocation of its distinctively martial apparel for clergy and laity alike. Salvationists advocate the priesthood of all believers, thus the uniform (which relates to a priestly garb) is also worn by non-officers. In a sense, a Salvation Army uniform is a Salvationist's "working clothes" for mission.

Uniforms have been worn in many forms since the Army's earliest days. The first evangelists of the Christian Mission (early name of The Salvation Army) wore suits of clerical cut, with frock coats, tall hats and black ties. Women evangelists wore plain dresses and small Quaker type bonnets. After the Mission became the Army (1878), it was agreed that a military type uniform should be adopted.

The first captain of The Salvation Army, a former chimney sweep name Elijah Cadman, is credited with instigating the wearing of the military-style uniforms after declaring at an early meeting, "I should like to wear a suit of clothes that would let everybody know I meant war to the teeth and salvation for the world. "The original Salvation Army uniform was modeled on Victorian military garb, but has evolved over the years. For example, in Australia, bonnets for women were replaced by felt hats in the 1970s and the high military-style collars were dropped for both men and women about the same time. The Army is continually reviewing the style of the uniform to ensure it is up to date.



The Salvationist's uniform currently serves three purposes: internally its use provides a sense of identity and indicates membership; externally it provides a widely recognised symbol of availability and service; internationally it is the most recognised and recognisable cultural icon for Salvationists, part of the glue that holds the denomination together. The effect of uniform-wearing is to give an extraordinarily high visibility and visual impact in public.

The negative effects that Salvationists have to guard against are exclusivity within the Army's congregations and a sense of smugness or spiritual superiority, and complacency (mistaking the wearing of particular garments for being in a right relationship with God).

Our Symbols

The Red Shield

The Red Shield is an internationally recognised symbol of Salvation Army service to those in need. It represents the shield we provide to people in need of help, whether it be spiritually, physically, financially or emotionally.



The first orders and regulations for Field Officers of 1886 encouraged every Salvation Army Soldier to wear uniform, even if it be but the wearing of a shield, so that they could be identified as Salvationists. During the First World War, a shield symbol was used on Salvation Army huts for servicemen. This shield was probably red lettering on a white background, although this is by no means certain.

It is unclear as to when the design changed to the red shield with white lettering that we know today, but it was probably around the end of the First World War as in 1918 The Red Shield Club was founded for Salvationist servicemen throughout the world. In 1919 Bramwell Booth declared that the Salvation Army Naval and Military Homes would in future be known as 'The Salvation Army Red Shield Homes'. In the United Kingdom Territory the name change did not take place until 1947 when the Naval Military and Air Force League were renamed 'Red Shield Services League Hostels.'

In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, the War Emergencies Department was re-named the British Red Shield Services Department.

The symbol of the Salvation Army's Red Shield has become known and respected by service men and women of many nationalities wherever in the world they served.

The Crest

In 1878, when The Christian Mission became The Salvation Army, Captain William Ebdon submitted his design for a Salvation Army Crest that was the forerunner of today's Crest. He explained his design thus:-

The center point in the Cross, the universal symbol of the Christian faith.

Twined around it is the 'S' for the Salvation which Christ has given by his death on that cross.



The swords are those of the war against sin. The roundels are the shots which represent the truth of the Gospel.

The crown is that of Glory and is the reward for faithfulness. The surrounding rays are those of the Sun of Righteousness and they also remind us of the fire and the light of the Holy Spirit.

'Blood and Fire', the Army's motto, refers yet again to Christ's sacrifice and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

The design must have found favor almost immediately as it was noted on headwear soon after the 1878 Congress. In 1884 William Booth applied to register the crest as a Trade Mark on a number of items including knives, soap and buttons. Since the submission of Captain Ebdon's first design the Crest has been adapted for use throughout the world, most notably perhaps, in the U.S.A. where, around 1890, due to copyright problems, the crown was replaced with the American Eagle. The U.S.A. copyright on the original crest expired in the early 1980's and The Salvation Army in the U.S.A. reverted to using the original crest.

The symbolism of the present Crest is explained in the 1997 Orders and Regulations for Officers as follows:-

The round figure 'the sun' represents the light and fire of the Holy Spirit.

The cross in the center represents the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The letter 'S' stands for Salvation.

The sword represents the warfare for salvation.

The shots represent the truths of the gospel.

The crown represents the crown of glory, which God will give to all his soldiers who are faithful to the end.