

LETTERS TO THE ARMY

June 2008

PASTORAL LETTERS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL TO SALVATIONISTS ACROSS THE WORLD

This is the eighth in a series of Pastoral Letters from the General to every Salvationist across the world.

The Pastoral Letters are intended to be distributed unchanged and entire to all Salvationists and may be shared also with others interested in the sacred purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army.

INTRODUCTION

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ.

This comes to all Salvationists with my strong, ongoing affection in Christ for you, and with my prayers for your effectiveness in the sacred calling that God, in his supreme wisdom, has placed upon the peoples known as Salvationists.

It has been laid upon my heart that I am to take a step of obedience under God by reaching out to you all through Pastoral Letters written from time to time. I write therefore in order to obey the One who has created us all, and with a longing that what is written will affirm, encourage and inspire you.

The themes for these occasional Pastoral Letters continue to be the themes God reveals. His holy will is made known in many ways. I pledge myself to be mindful that his will is often revealed through interaction with members of the Body and not only or always in the seclusion of the place of prayer.

It is my deep hope that each Pastoral Letter will be read wherever Salvationists are to be found, whether in private or in public settings. The chosen themes may prompt discussion, prayer and – as appropriate – action.

All Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise stated.

Shaw Clifton
General

PASTORAL LETTER EIGHT

CADETS

Dear Fellow Salvationists,

I offer warmest Christian greetings to you all from London.

In this eighth Pastoral Letter it has been laid upon my heart to speak to you about cadets.

There are about 1,130 Salvation Army cadets today across the world undergoing training to become officers of the Army. Their ages range from 19 up to the mid-50s. Their backgrounds are as varied as you can imagine. Some become cadets with a modest educational experience, while others have university degrees including post-graduate degrees. Most of the cadets are in residence in a training college, with others being trained in off-campus settings. However, the one thing all cadets have in common is that all have been called by God to leave their secular walk in life to devote themselves full time to the ministry of an officer of The Salvation Army. It is a privileged calling.

Unless that divine calling has been experienced no person should offer to be trained as an officer. The life of an officer, whilst immensely rewarding, is also demanding and often stressful. At certain times of challenge and difficulty your abiding, settled sense of a sacred calling is all that will hold you secure and keep you pressing forward in your officer service.

That is why much emphasis is placed upon the testing of callings. Each candidate applying to become a cadet in training is invited to submit, in appropriate humility, to the process of having his or her claim to a divine calling gently but clearly tested through the screening process for candidates. It is a wonderful privilege to encounter candidates in this way and to learn from their accounts of God whispering into their hearts and minds. He speaks so graciously, so gently, but also so clearly until that first fleeting thought of officership grows and grows to become an abiding, settled conviction that you simply must obey if you are to have peace of spirit deep within.

I want to share with you lots of good news from around the Army world about candidates and cadets. In July 2007 we were in Hershey in the USA Eastern Territory and when we called for those offering for future service as officers to come to the platform 140 people came forward. It was breathtaking. The THQ is now processing 95 formal application cases. Praise God! In Sri Lanka, where the Army is far from great in number, 33 came forward in a similar manner. It was thrilling. In the USA Central Territory recently 40 stepped forward for officership. Wonderful! In the Australia Southern Territory it began to seem as though the next intake of cadets would be numerically tiny, but suddenly there were 20 to make up the next training session. God still calls, still speaks into the lives of those he has chosen in this way.

In the India Northern Territory there are 40 ready to enter training, but the capacity of the college cannot hold them all. In the USA Western Territory the territorial commander tells me that there are 300 candidates ready for application and possible acceptance in the next few years. The United Kingdom Territory has received 44 cadets into the latest session, a huge rise on recent years. The USA Southern Territory has received no fewer than 59 cadets in late 2007. Spain has five cadets, the first for some years. Marvellous! Japan anticipated having no first-year cadets at all this year, but suddenly three fine young people have stepped forward for acceptance. God is good!

I have a dream that the total number of cadets in the world will increase from 1,130 to 1,500 in the next few years. Leaders are needed. Is God calling you?

Please make time to offer up a sincere prayer for the cadets of future training college sessions, whose members are as yet unknown except to God. In 2008 the sessional name is 'Prayer Warriors'; in 2009 it will be 'Ambassadors of Holiness'; in 2010 'Friends of Christ'; in 2011 'Proclaimers of the Resurrection'; and in 2012 'Disciples of the Cross'. I have faith to believe some reading this Pastoral Letter will be part of these sessions in obedience to Christ's call.

God bless the cadets! God bless the candidates! God bless those involved in screening and training them!

God bless you all!

I commend you once again to the perfect love of Christ.

Shaw Clifton
General