

# **JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY**

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**Fullness – Prayer Issue**

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## Editorial Introduction

By Major Stephen Court, editor

### JAC150 FROM HERE...

Welcome to the milestone JAC150 - the 150th edition of Journal of Aggressive Christianity.

The rules for JAC150, as outlined in the invitation sent out into the salvosphere, were to complete the thought that begins 'From here...' in 400 words. As normal, the parameters are provocative, orthodox, edifying.

Respondents took very different, creative approaches to this challenge, and we are all the better for it. All of the entries are called 'From here...'

Captain Christine Tursi, Corps Officer, Hanover, Germany, reads 'From Here...' as the start of an answer to a question and goes on to riff on incarnation and mission.

Captain Nana Fatouma Togo is Secretary for Women's Ministries in Mali and Burkina Faso Region, and she uses the phrase to lead off a declaration of faith commitment.

Major Terry Shaffer, Territorial Pastoral Care Officer-New Jersey Division, uses 'From Here...' as a refrain of appreciation for the movement's past and advocacy for its potential future.

Colonel Ian Barr, theologian, in 'Love And Home', plainly gives his take from the perspective of his corps in the United Kingdom.

Commissioner Joe Noland, entrepreneur and author, spins off the eponymous 1953 classic film ('... To Eternity').

Commissioner Jim Knaggs, apostle, leverages 'From Here...' into an exhortation toward the possibilities that change could create for us as a movement to accomplish mission.

Major Don Grad, advancing the great commission in the Prairies, offers 'From Here...To Spiritual Warfare' as a potential corrective to organisational trends.

Your JAC editor does a little phrase study, digging around for gems.

And, wrapping it JAC150 up, Colonel Richard Munn, current SA Connects contributor, answers the challenge with, 'From Here... We Can See The End Of The World', dipping into his bag for a Greek phrase, a New Yorker Magazine cover, and three Bible texts to craft a great commission salutation.

JAC started in the last century, and JAC150 is a celebration of a quarter century in free online publication. Hallelujah. JAC is published every two months (hat tip Major Don Grad, who arranges the publishing and manages the archives). We're grateful to the contributors over the past 150 editions - this issue from Germany, Mali, USA

East, USA West, UKI, and Canada. And we're grateful for the readers through this century, who come from cities and countries dotting the globe. Hallelujah.

May God bless each of you, and may JAC150 spur us all on to love and good deeds, accelerating the advance of the great commission so that God's dream that none perish but all come to repentance is realised.

## From Here... Just Like You

By Captain Christine Tursi

“From here...just like you” has never been my answer to the question “where are you from”. I’m a little bit from everywhere but also from nowhere at all. Always the new kid, the girl with the accent, the one from somewhere in Europe. Different enough to never really fit in, but not different enough for it to really cause me any problems. Still, I’ve spent much of my time attempting to make those slight irregularities in my identity as minimally visible as possible. The trick is easy: mirror, assimilate, dissimulate, integrate, adopt. Like what they like, do what they do. Make what is theirs, yours. Fit in at all costs.

The problem with this strategy is that you end up forgetting who you are and end up slowly disappearing. And that is seriously not the point of it all or the goal our Creator had in mind. I have (mostly) stopped since and discovered that God wants to use me with all my quirks, irregularities and not-fitting-ness. Allow me to make a jump from my personal biography and experience to our shared one as salvationists (this should not be that much of a jump since salvationism is indeed a big part of my identity and I would guess yours too if you’re reading this blog). The Salvation Army used to be the new kid on the block, with the weird accent (or to be more precise weird terminology), the foreign theology, the alien practices. We used to be the trouble-makers, the status-quo shakers, the radicals who wanted to conquer the world for Jesus. We didn’t fit in, we were definitely not meant to and we really didn’t care to (maybe back then we were enough people, so it didn’t matter and didn’t scare us off). In the world but really, really, really not from this world with our uniforms, our bands, our saved souls, transformed lives and incredible growth thanks to the One calling us to be different.

What happened? At some point we discovered the appeal of the world and made it our goal to belong: mirror, assimilate, dissimulate, integrate, adopt. Like what they like, do what they do. Make what is theirs, yours. Fit in at all costs. We’re “from here just like you, we swear”. Uniforms? No, you must be mistaken, we don’t wear them anymore; sanctification? sacramental life? The. mercy. seat? Surely not. We belong, nothing different about us. Somewhere along the way we started rejecting our roots, questioning our origins, putting aside our identity. What an incredibly high price we paid, to be liked, to be accepted, to start growing again. But did we get what we hoped for? The truth is brutally visible in my context; it might not be in yours or only slowly and silently creeping in on the margins; sure, some areas show no trace of it at all (yet). But sometimes I really fear we are disappearing and how will we win the world for Jesus if we actually do disappear? (because that is still our goal, right?)

In recent years I have developed a strong belief in strong roots and wings to fly. Neither extreme is healthy, a balance is hard to find but necessary. A realistic lens on the past and a hopeful glance towards the future. Non-negotiables we are convinced in and steps into the unknown future we are ready to take (confident that the former were inspired by God and the latter are known by God)... It all sounds good but I think, really, the question that needs answering first is do we even want to be The Salvation Army any more? If we don’t, that is not a problem, there are enough other churches we can start calling our homes. If on the contrary our answer is yes then we can forget ever feeling at home among the churches again (their

friend, their ally, their brothers and sisters but never their twins), “from here...just like you” can never be our answer again or the assumption from those observing us. I don’t know about you, but normal has never really been my cup of tea and fitting in is not all it’s cracked up to be.

We’re not “from here” and it shouldn’t bother us anymore. We should fall in love with what makes us “us” again. God created us exactly like that, and that is what will help us win over the world for Him. I cannot wait to see it happening.

## **From Here (Earth)...** By Captain Nana Fatouma

To death, I have decided to follow Jesus.

To live for him alone. Because he paid the highest price for me by giving out His life. As Paul, I have discovered that everything is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Jesus came to the world to seek for the lost. Therefore, whoever believes in him shall be saved.

Let us see together from **Mark 1:40-45** the history of a leper man who encountered Jesus and how did he meet him?

A leper is a person suffering from leprosy. Leprosy is a serious disease, because the person afflicted was placed far from society. It was prohibited by Mosaic law to associate with a leper. This man needed to be saved from this disease. That's why he came to Jesus Christ and said, "If you want, you can make me clean".

Spiritually, we are lepers. This disease, leprosy, is sin in our lives. As the leper is separated from society, so the sinner is separated from God. Sin alienates us from God. We need to be saved from sin, and only Jesus Christ saves from sin **John 1:29 says**. As the leper came to Jesus Christ, believing that he was able to save him, so we too must believe in Jesus Christ to save us.

We said he came to save. He's full of compassion and doesn't turn anyone away. He sees everyone again and responds to everyone's desire. He saw the leper coming to him. He received him, touched him (a gesture no one could dare to do, but Jesus Christ does it because he loves everyone) and answered the leper's prayer: "I do, be clean," he said. And instantly, the leper was cleansed.

Jesus Christ loves us as he loved the leper. He wants to save us as he saved the leper. He expects us to believe that he is able to do this in our lives; he expects us to trust him as the leper did. Jesus Christ wants to touch our hearts and cleanse us from sin. We also want to be saved from the sin that separates us from God. We have said that only Jesus Christ is able to do this; but we must come to him, by faith, and tell him our problem. He will save us.

In our lives, sin disturbs us, separating us from God. We need to be saved. The Savior is Jesus Christ. To be saved, we must believe in him.

Not only to the leper, but also to me and many others. You too, if you want to be freed from sin, come to Jesus, come with faith, you'll be restored and saved.

## From Here... A Refrain of Appreciation

By Major Terry Shaffer

**From Here...** I see from my apartment a view of the ocean. Some days its just a smooth shimmering of sparkles. Other times, the ocean is storm tossed, and the waves come crashing down to the shore. Being on the ocean shore, it brings to mind the Founder's song, "O boundless salvation! Deep ocean of love...Now flowing for all men, come, roll over me!".

**From Here...** I never had the thought that my future would include retiring from The Salvation Army as an officer. Growing up in another Christian denomination, my paths never crossed with the Army, until much later in my life. Praise God for opportunities to serve him!

**From Here...** I am grateful for an officer's ministry to my family and a Corps Sargeant Major's testimony in a salvation meeting and how both of them pointed me to a saving relationship with Christ.

**From Here...** I was challenged on my soldier's enrollment to take seriously the soldier's Articles of War (A Soldier's Covenant) and challenged "do not leave the dear old flag".

**From Here...** I wonder how seriously we take and reflect on our soldier's covenant. What does it mean to be a covenant-based faith community vs. being a membership organization? And how does being bound together through our soldier's covenant help us move forward as an Army in the salvation war? How does our covenant make us a countercultural force movement vs. just another church option on Sunday morning?

**From Here...** I wonder how seriously we take our call to follow Jesus as salvationists? How much time is devoted to bible reading and study? How much time is spent in prayer to grow closer to the Lord? Are we able (and want to) to share what we believe and the reasons we do what we do? Where and how can we provide an opportunity for people to hear the gospel message outside of our chapels? Do our meetings allow an opportunity for a decision to be made?

**From Here...** I wonder how seriously we understand the need for trained and engaged soldiers. Have we taken a clerical vs. laity mindset in regard to roles and functions? How does not utilizing all soldiers and their skills hamper our efforts to share the gospel to the whosoever? Does not every soldier have a role in the salvation war?

**From Here...** I forever praise and give thanks that God has raised up this part of the Church called The Salvation Army for his purposes and glory. May God bless us as we seek to know and do His will in all the places our Salvation Army is called to serve.



## From Here... Love and Home

By Colonel Ian Barr

It is sometimes the simplest vision of what the Church and Christianity are about that speaks to the hearts of those of us who love Jesus. The words of the Anglican priest and poet Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy to the eleven people who turned up to his induction at London's famous St Martin's in the Fields church on Trafalgar Square on a cold November night in 1914 resonated with me when I first read them, and more so in recent years.

"I stood on the west steps and saw what this church would be to the life of the people. They passed me, into its warm inside, hundreds and hundreds of all sorts of people, going up to the temple of their Lord, with all their difficulties, trials and sorrows. I saw it full of people, dropping in at all hours of the day and night. It was never dark, it was lighted all night and all day, and often tired bits of humanity swept in. And I said to them as they passed: 'Where are you going?' And they said only one thing, 'This is our home. This is where we are going to learn of the love of Jesus Christ. This is the altar of our Lord where all our peace lies. This is St Martin's.'"

"They spoke to me two words only, one was the word 'home' and the other was 'love'."

We cannot simply assume that everyone knows what 'home' and 'love' means, even among our own people. My wife came home one night from a prison visit where she encountered a young woman who was 'inside' for some offence, but whose Salvationist parents had disowned her. The tragedy was compounded by the fact that her sister was well known to many of us in the Army as someone who was so starved of love at home that she hung about the reception area of Army buildings in the hope that someone might give her some attention and perhaps a cup of coffee.

The Church is not short of examples of people who have been made to feel unwelcome or unloved. Nevertheless, the Officers Covenant makes such people a specific priority: 'To love the unloveable' (an unfortunate choice of word, nobody is 'unloveable'. Perhaps it should be 'those who are not loved.') The gates of Hell may never prevail against the power and people of God, but the gates of much of evangelical Christianity seem to be impenetrable to a wide range of people, not least people from the various the LGBTQI+ communities. And there are others, many of them born into this movement, who might feel that all the church has to offer is judgement and condemnation, rather than the Good News about Jesus for all people.

Studdert-Kennedy once spoke of having the words 'Love' and 'Home' inscribed above every entrance to the church. In my final appointment I wondered why the word 'love' was so seldom seen on business plans, strategy documents, reports, and corps opening and closure proposals. I found it a very strange omission. The word 'home' tended to relate mainly to social services institutions.

Yet in the past decades I have witnessed again and again the loving presence of officers and others in communities across my home territory, building churches that are loving, welcoming, respectful, and accepting communities of faith, each one a

spiritual home where God's presence and purposes can be discerned in the lives of good, Godly and sometimes flawed humanity.

These two words 'home' and 'love' are so powerful. I am a member of just such a corps, where love, respect and mutual acceptance are central to who we are - as is discretion.

## From Here... To Eternity

By Commissioner Joe Noland

I know, I know, not very original. Wait! Hear me out. The title of the film is taken from Rudyard Kipling's 1892 poem, "Gentlemen-Rankers," about soldiers of the British Empire who had "lost their way" and were "damned from here to eternity."

The story is one of lust, deceit, betrayal, and murder. Its protagonist is a lowly private who loves the Army. He ends up being destroyed by the thing he loves. The antagonist is his commanding officer, holding the rank of Captain, and a true company man obsessed with power, and the advancement of his career. He makes life miserable for the private.

Throughout the story, rank, position, and protocol become all-consuming. The institution and its hierarchy take precedence over the mission. When the institution and its trappings became more important than the mission, then we are "damned from here to eternity."

Do parts of this story sound familiar? Every well-intended mission movement approaches a crisis moment, or perhaps a series of crisis moments—the "here" moment in "from here to eternity."

These "here" moments represent the potential dividing line between a movement and an institution.

It's no longer "from 1865 to eternity." It's "from *HERE* to eternity." To change the future, we must change the present. Change is the difference between life and death (damnation). Be it within an organization, or an individual.

At this crisis moment, '*HERE*,' we hold the future in our hands. The life of this Army is in our hands. The life of this movement is in our hands. Every person we touch (in our hands) becomes a matter of life and death.

Knowing this, let us move forward unselfishly, unhesitatingly, fearlessly, and creatively. Let us move forward, "from here to eternity," with vision and holy boldness. Amid a changing world, let us proclaim a changeless Christ who is, paradoxically, the Creator of all change.

*He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us [changing us], his Spirit deeply and gently within us. -Ephesians 3:20-21 MSG*

Change challenges (disrupts) the status quo...

Stagnation is the window to never.  
Change is the doorway to forever.

*But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. -Philippians 3:13-14*

NOWHERE OR EVERYWHERE!

## From Here... Forward

By Commissioner Jim Knaggs

From here... we go forward to serve Christ as an Army of Salvation, not looking back, only ahead as we cannot change what we have been, but we can, by the grace of God influence what we will become.

Our mission is first to present convincingly and appropriately, the Gospel of Jesus whenever and wherever we can. Already locked into firm systems and the institutionalization of the present, we need to reimagine our place, our perspective, and our profession of the Word as we engage in our purpose to the glory of God. Perpetuity cannot be our motive nor intention as that focuses primarily upon ourselves and will distract from the mission.

- Can we imagine methods of evangelism that will absolutely reach the lost?
- Can we imagine our inclusion in the powerful leading of God among the nations and generations to extend His Kingdom?
- Do we see ourselves committed to the deep prayer lives that reach the Holy of Holies to be in concert with the Holy Spirit in all we do?
- Might we live by the faith that pleases God?
- Can we use every function and facility of our movement to honor God?
- Are we prepared to shed the unnecessary and the public pleasing attitudes contrary to Biblical standards?

God provides for His Kingdom. We will realize the resources needed to advance these holy objectives in terms of personnel, placements, and possibilities. He is able. Are we? Isn't it amazing that God would entrust His message through us for the world?

- Our first step is to be holy, for "without holiness, no one will see the Lord."
- We must be faithful, "for without faith it is impossible to please God."
- Then we simply follow God's leading as He asks of His disciples. "Follow me."
  - The plan must be His.
  - The people must be His.
  - The glory must be His.
- Discipleship of the born-again is essential.
- Everyone has a place in God's movement.
- Allow the Spirit of God to inspire, instruct, and inculcate a responsibility and joy for us to lead others in faith.

There's more to be done. God is not finished with The Salvation Army. Do you believe?

Let's go!

## From Here... to Spiritual Warfare

By Major Don Grad

From its' earliest beginnings, The Salvation Army has done as William Booth said, "Go straight for souls, and go for the worst". They did not endlessly strategize, but went and did something.

Let me start by affirming that there is much good happening in our Army world, and people operating with a definite 'war' mindset.

As a retired Officer, I enjoy doing pulpit supply to other churches in town. Last August, during my message (at a local evangelical church), the Spirit prompted me to ask the congregation, "How badly do you want to see people saved?". That question keeps coming back to me, both as an individual, and in a corporate capacity.

Has The Salvation Army, declined in our warfare mentality and readiness? This statement is meant to provoke a reaction. Most Salvationists would give mental acknowledgement that we are in a spiritual war. Perhaps the better question is "Do you, the reader really believe the Christian is in a spiritual war, with eternal souls at risk?" "Wait a minute", some might say, "We are The Salvation Army!".

The typical reader of JAC is hopefully already on a spiritual war footing, But... what about your Corps, your Centre?

The Salvation Army in Canada used to have a publication called the 'War Cry', but a number of years ago it was re-packaged into a shiny monthly publication called the 'Salvationist'. The Salvationist is good, (and I am not just a cranky old Officer) but hopefully it does not reflect that we have gone from a 'war' mindset to anything less.

The Christian band 'Petra' wrote a song called 'This Means War' with the chorus:

*This means war and the battle's still ragin'  
War and though both sides are wagin'  
The Victor is sure and the victory secure  
But till judgment we all must endure  
This means war, this means war*

A few words to close:

*"No, in all these things **we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:37-39 (NIV)*

May the Lord richly bless your efforts for His eternal Kingdom!

## From Here... As Found in the Bible

By Major Stephen Court

This might be pedantic. And / or it might be prophetic. Let's give a look at every single appearance of 'From Here' in the Bible (we only have 'around' 400 words so we're using NIV only, not every English translation).

Genesis 37:17. *"They have moved on from here."*

Joseph is on a mission from his father to check on his brothers, who were grazing sheep and stewing about how to 'get' him.

Exodus 11:1. *"I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here."*

Egypt was a place of bondage.

Exodus 33:15. *"If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."*

That's how dear His Presence is.

Deuteronomy 9:12. *"The Lord told me, 'Go down from here at once, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt.'"*

Woah - the tension between Exodus 33:15 and Deuteronomy 9:12! We have to listen to the Lord carefully.

Ruth 2:8. *"So Boaz said to Ruth, 'My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me.'"*

'Here' in this instance was a place of protection and provision, acceptance and belonging.

1 Samuel 6:20. *"And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, 'Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?'"*

This whole episode underlines the utter holiness of God.

Jeremiah 28:3. *"Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the Lord's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon."*

'From Here' refers to the Lord's House. The prophecy itself was from Hananiah, and it was refuted by Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 38:10. *"Then the king commanded Ebed-Melek the Cushite, 'Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.'"*

'From Here' – the Benjamin Gate - becomes the source of deliverance for Jeremiah.

Matthew 17:20. *"He replied, 'Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'"*

'Move from here to there.' This is not a static faith. It is a movement.

Luke 4:9. *“The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here.’”*  
This is one of the classic temptations of Jesus.

Luke 16:26. *“And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”*  
There are eternal consequences for the way we live our lives.



## From Here... We Can See The End of the World

By Colonel Richard Munn



A renowned *New Yorker* magazine artistic cover depicts detailed Manhattan streets prominently at the forefront and fading overseas continents vaguely way off into the distance. Yup, we know our own neighborhoods very well, and can be only dimly aware of great cultures afar off.

Not so the gospel story. Not so our Salvation Army story.

From solitary Abraham who catches a global vision that ‘*all nations* of the world’ will be blessed through him, to Jesus who challenges his followers to ‘make disciples of *all nations*,’ to John who on the speck of an island catches a consummate vision where ‘*every nation*, tribe, people and language’ are before the throne of God, the gospel story from Genesis to

Revelation is decidedly expansive and global.

(NT Greek) *Panta ta ethne* – ‘all people groups.’ Genesis 12, Matthew 28 and Revelation 7 – what a trio.

Fast forward almost a couple of millennia and William Booth pens ‘the whole world redeeming’ and his precocious daughter, Evangeline, then adds a second reverberation, ‘the world for God.’

*Panta ta ethne* redeeming; *Panta ta ethne* for God.

You and I are part of a Christianity that is relentlessly multi-cultural and global; and, we are soldiers in an army that is inspiringly inter-joined around the world. The former gives us a great vision; the latter disabuses us from paltry self-centeredness. My friend who left a medium-sized corps to join a burgeoning 800-member congregation later confided in me, ‘I miss the internationalism, 800, that’s it.’

So, JAC colleagues, let’s go global. You can see the end of the world from where you are, and it is beautiful. From my mother who faithfully gave £20 a month to a Tanzanian grandma charity, to the Costa Rican men’s group that came and painted our local corps gym, to the international retired officers fund, to Others Trade for Hope, the list can go on, and the opportunities for interchange are boundless. It is no coincidence that every territory contributes to the World Services campaign.

More than that, however, missionally and theologically we must deliberately adopt a posture of humility and mutual respect. And then, we are liberated to expend every effort in our sphere of influence to make it pulsate with *panta ta ethne* – musical

groups, corps councils, congregations, cadet bodies, periodicals, special guests and leadership teams.

Happy 150<sup>th</sup> JAC – may your circulation go *panta ta ethne*.