

Thought Matters Conference

Thought Matters is the annual conference organised and facilitated by The Salvation Army South Pacific Theological Forum (SPTF). The SPTF exists to facilitate theological discussion which informs ministry practice. It is currently composed of representatives from the Australia and New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa Territories.

Conference Theme

Jesus prays in John 17 that all his followers will be one. Paul pleads in Philippians 2 for the church in Philippi to make his joy complete by 'having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind'.

Yet we live in a time characterised by division, in which disagreement often leads not to dialogue but to angry dissension. In the face of complex issues about which Christians sincerely disagree – sexuality, leadership models, social justice, the very nature of salvation and more – how do we 'be one'? What does unity mean? How do we love one another when we disagree?

The Māori concept of kotahitanga – unity, togetherness, collective action, being with and for one another – will frame a discussion about how to debate and discuss important issues while learning to love more deeply rather than retreating to dogmatics.

The SPTF is calling for papers that will address a range of issues relevant to this conference theme. Papers arising from a biblical studies, theological, historical, practical theology or inter-disciplinary perspective are all welcomed. Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Can we remain 'one' but have more space for diverse views?
- Do we need a leadership culture that values people over principle?
- How do we navigate the intersection between indigenous faith/s and 'mainstream' faith; or between indigenous worldviews and practices, and a dominant culture?
- How do we remain in unity when some feel they are operating on the 'edge'?
- How do we experience unity with diverse faith expressions?
- How do we explore sincere, diverse views on sexuality and 'what the Bible says' while honouring one another?
- What does it mean for our neighbourhood to understand the gospel in their own language or norms?
- One option for your abstract might be co-presenting as people who disagree on a significant issue, in dialogue about how you can nonetheless engage with mutual love.
- Another might be a theological exploration of your experience working with people who saw things differently to you, and what you learned in the process.

Abstracts of no more than 200 words should be submitted by **21 July 2023**.
Please email abstracts to thoughtmatters@salvationarmy.org.nz

Successful applicants will be notified by 4 August 2023 and will need to submit their final paper (2500 words) by 15 September 2023.

Conference Proceedings will be published following the conference.

Criteria for selection

The “Thought Matters” conference is a safe and respectful space for theological conversation. It is expected that there will be a wide range of views expressed through papers and in responses from delegates. The aim of the conference is to explore ideas rather than convince others of the rightness or otherwise of any particular position. Therefore, we are looking for presenters who are able to clearly articulate their ideas in a respectful manner, allowing space for disagreement and discussion with others. We will also be selecting papers which represent a range of views.

We welcome abstracts from all people groups, including those with or without formal qualifications, female and male, indigenous persons, persons from a non-English speaking background, and persons with a disability. Practitioners, theologians as well as those with lived experience are invited to apply.

Writing your abstract

A useful abstract will include the following components:

- A clear statement of the question or issue to be addressed.
- A summary of the position(s) to be presented in relation to the question or issue and/or an indication of key conclusions.
- An indication of key sources of information to be drawn from – key writers, research, personal experience, biblical exposition, etc.

Supplementary to the 200-word abstract we ask that you also provide a short biographical statement, including:

- Your name.
- Church, academic, professional and/or community affiliations relevant to your submission.
- Any experience and/or qualifications which support your submission.
- Any other information you consider relevant for selection panel deliberations.

All abstracts will remain confidential to the SPTF selection panel.

For further information or to submit your abstract, please contact:

thoughtmatters@salvationarmy.org.nz

Or on Facebook / Thought Matters

