

# Salvation Army Ceremonies

## Module 1 Introduction to and Principles of Ceremonies



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OFFICER FORMATION STREAM



# *Overview of module*

- principles of ceremonies
- what, who, where, why and how of ceremonies

# *Acknowledgement of Country*

Through our commitment to reconciliation, The Salvation Army acknowledges the First Nations peoples of Australia as the traditional custodians of this land. We further acknowledge and pay our respects to past and present Elders, giving thanks for their wisdom that has sustained their people since the beginning of time, and we pledge to support emerging and future generations.

Those undertaking this module of learning are located on country all around Australia. We encourage you to take a moment to consider the land on which you live, work and play.

# *Learning Outcomes*

At the end of this module, participants will:

- Be able to discuss various frameworks for understanding the importance of ceremonies in The Salvation Army;
- Have prepared a (draft) personal philosophy regarding the importance of conducting ceremonies.

# *Officer Readiness Profile*

This module addresses the following elements of the Officer Readiness Profile:

- 13. Responds to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people.
- 14. Appropriately cares for people across a broad range of life's circumstances and seasons.
- 17. Plans and leads creative expressions of worship appropriate to the context.

# *Principles of ceremonies*

## **Importance of Ceremonies**

"Salvation Army ceremonies mark significant events in people's lives. Officers have the sacred responsibility of leading ceremonies that are appropriate to the purpose, meaningful to the participants and enriching to the faith community."

Salvation Army Ceremonies Handbook p.1

## **Freedom of expression**

"Salvationist practice allows for freedom of expression as led by the Spirit. So long as Army principles and legal requirements are met, the officiating officer is not compelled to follow the suggested wording."

Salvation Army Ceremonies Handbook p.1

# *Principles of ceremonies*

## **Discussion questions**

What makes ceremonies important?

What makes ceremonies meaningful for you or for others?

What factors are most important to you when it comes to ceremonies?

(e.g., significance, reverence, tradition, dignity, flexibility, cultural considerations, fitting for the occasion etc.)

# *What ceremonies?*

## **Dedications**

covered covered in Salvation Army Ceremonies Module 2

## **Enrolments (Junior & Senior Soldiers, Adherents)**

covered in Salvation Army Ceremonies Module 2

## **Marriages**

covered in detail on Salvation Army Ceremonies Module 3

## **Funerals**

covered in detail on Salvation Army Ceremonies Module 4

## **Other ceremonies**

- blessings/dedications/openings of places and things
- why not baptism and communion covered in Introduction to Christian Theology as well as Worship and Preaching Essentials EBC Higher Ed units



# *Who can perform ceremonies?*

## **Dedications**

anyone

## **Enrolments (Junior & Senior Soldiers, Adherents)**

anyone

## **Marriages**

only legally registered Marriage Celebrants

## **Funerals**

anyone

# *Where can ceremonies take place?*

## **Location, location, location**

- In what locations have you attended or officiated at various ceremonies?
- Are there considerations needed to be taken into account for ceremonies not held at the corps?

# *Why ceremonies?*

## **Reflection**

Which of the following words do you most associate with ceremonies and why?

- symbolic
- sacramental
- covenant
- mission
- rite of passage/milestone
- all of the above

# *Ceremonies as symbolic*

Ceremonies include symbolic elements such as the flag, uniform or a badge, exchange of rings, signing of promises or legal paperwork, but the ceremony itself is also symbolic.

Ceremonies may be symbolic of shared values and traditions.

Ceremonies may be symbolic of marking the occasion of a change in membership status (note that we would also aim for inclusiveness and belonging apart from "official membership.")

Ceremonies may be symbolic in their witness or public declaration.

# *Ceremonies as sacrament*

A sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace.

Theologian Tina Beattie describes sacramentality as:

"The Christian belief that the material world is suffused by grace, so that it can become the medium of God's presence among us."

As Salvationists we do not stop there. We would say that all of life is opportunity for this type of grace-filled experience; all of life could be opportunity for knowing and experiencing the presence of God.

# *Ceremonies as covenant*

Covenant is a key element in the Old and New Testaments as well as modern day culture.

In simple terms, a covenant is a promise. Covenants may be unconditional (e.g., God's covenant of blessing with Abram) or conditional. Conditional covenants may be between equal parties (a mutual agreement of people on equal footing, may be formal or informal) or between unequal parties (e.g., God's covenant with Moses where the people were required to keep the 10 commandments).

Biblical covenants are usually accompanied by rituals and symbols and sealed with oaths and sacrifices.

# *Ceremonies as mission*

Mission is understood as the partnership between people and God to enact the Kingdom of God on earth.

If our why is mission, ceremonies are opportunities for us to partner with God, live out the Kingdom, and our attitudes about ceremonies would be welcome, inclusion and hospitality.

# *Ceremonies as rite of passage*

Anticipating, honouring and celebrating rites of passage, milestones or transitions for all ages is important.

When associated with a public event or ceremony, we create both memories and understanding. The experience can become a marker or an anchor point in a person's (and faith community's) life, holding them in tough times.

Rites of passage are important to faith formation. They connect us with Scripture, our faith traditions and the generations that precede us. They also connect us with our culture - who we are and where we belong.





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