

Army represented at Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization

Representatives from The Salvation Army traveled to Thailand this fall for the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization. In preparation for the event, Army focus groups had submitted statements on most of the 31 issues identified as roadblocks to evangelism, including a statement on evangelizing children.

Approximately 1,800 Christian leaders from around the world attended the weeklong gathering, which had the theme “A New Vision—A New Heart—A Renewed Call!”

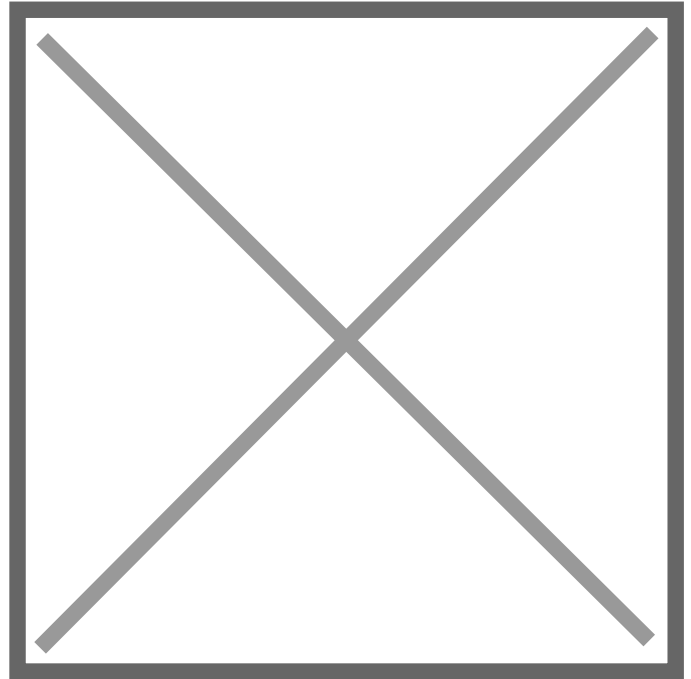
Convened to examine trends and issues facing worldwide evangelization, the forum addressed those issues through the development of specific action plans that can be implemented across the globe. Colonel Earl Robinson, secretary for spiritual life development and international external relations, led the Army delegation.

Delegates agreed that evangelism extends to social care, particularly in community, advocacy, and working to establish justice (focus group on Holistic Mission) with an emphasis, seen throughout the various groups, on the power of relationships.

In considering the evangelization of children, the importance of social service ministries is critical, especially in light of recent statistics on what brings children to the Church.

The Evangelization of Children focus group statement included a comment from an American point of view:

In the history of the Church, and The Salvation Army in the United States, the entry point into the Church for children has been primarily the Sunday school. However, in the past 30 years the decline in Sunday school statistics has been steady and nothing has been developed to take its place. Sunday school has become a by-product of, rather than an entry point, into the Church. Today it is fulfilling only a part of its original purpose. Consequently, we now find ourselves in a statistical decline in all major areas of church ministry. We have basically lost a generation who will not be reached by the Church because we were not there for them in their early childhood years.



George Barna, in his book *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, says, “We discovered that the probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her Savior was 32% for those between the ages of 5 and 12, 4% for those in the 13-18 age range and 6% for people 19 or older.”

What means can be used to sow this field, “ripe for the harvest”?

Many children come to The Salvation Army through our social service ministries, and how the Army provides its services can make a lasting difference in their lives, spiritually as well as physically. By developing caring relationships with these children, The Salvation Army shows the love of Christ and can lead these young people to the kingdom of God.

In his contribution to the focus group statement, Commissioner Joe Noland writes: “We can have the greatest program and teaching materials that have ever existed, but a curriculum without care is like a bed without its covers. It gives support but the warmth is not there. Without the warmth that bed will soon lose its attractiveness. Without the care, the curriculum will soon lose its attractiveness.”

Reports from the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization are posted online at www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/2004/

Salvation Army focus group statements can be found through a link at the IHQ website:
<https://www1.salvationarmy.org>