

A general returns to San Francisco

In a memorable and historic visit to the West's Del Oro and Golden State Divisions, General John Larsson and Commissioner Freda Larsson led hundreds to Christ, inspired and encouraged soldiers and officers, enrolled new junior and senior soldiers, met with civic leaders and advisory board members, and continued to make clear that people were the Army's main priority.

An entourage of national, territorial and divisional leaders accompanied the Larssons on their whirlwind tour through the West. It included the national commander and national president of Women's Ministries, Commissioners W. Todd and Carol Bassett; USA Western territorial commander Commissioner Linda Bond; the chief secretary and territorial secretary of Women's Ministries, Lt. Colonels Donald and Debora Bell; Lt. Colonels Richard and Bettie Love, Golden State divisional leaders; and Major Eda Hokum, Del Oro divisional commander.

In introducing Larsson to the 800-1,000 people in attendance at the Celebration of Faithfulness meeting held in the Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, Bassett described him as "a man of integrity who re-mains humble and Godly, who calls the Army to renewal."

Commissioner Freda Larsson commented on how she and her husband felt "very much at home since being in the West." She said: "We are privileged people to have the opportunity to lead this Army and visit its committed warriors throughout the entire world." She noted the increased variation on cultures growing in so many nations around the world and the importance of learning to live in harmony with one another. "Early in life," she said, "we learn spirituality from others, but as we mature, we must accept responsibility ourselves for 'growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ'."

In enrolling the junior soldiers, Larsson observed the Army flags each carried and commented on the fact the colors of the flag, yellow, red, and blue, were the only primary colors—that all other colors flowed from them. He then told them that if they keep God's love primary, all other parts of their lives will flow along with that love.

In his message for the evening, interrupted on many occasions with spontaneous applause from the audience, Larsson drew on a consistent line found in the letters to young churches in Revelations

<https://caringmagazine.org>



chapters two and three—“He that has ears to hear—let him hear.”

He observed that each of the letters began with statements of positive commendation, but each also had a clause within it beginning with the word “Nevertheless.” He then expressed his interest in wondering what kind of letter God would write The Salvation Army today. He even invited readers of New Frontier to express the same interest and write to the paper with their own guesses.

Larsson believed that God would express pleasure in our continuing desire to “ ‘save souls, make saints, and serve a suffering humanity’—the three S’s John Gowans used to summarize our mission statement.” He then went on to illustrate the remarkable work being done by Salvationists in difficult situations around the world. “Sometimes, as I see the Army in action like this, I believe I am standing on holy ground.”

“But then,” Larsson continued, God would say ‘Nevertheless’.

To identify what he believed God might say to us after this word, Larsson drew on the writing of William Booth in the very first Officer magazine when he identified his fears for the Army in the future if we ever diminished our commitment to our mission. “Booth also used three S’s,” he said. He was concerned with such issues as self esteem—where we might become so pleased with our selves we ignore those in need. He was concerned with secularism—that we would adopt non-Christian values and turn away from Christ. He was concerned with stagnation—where we would simply keep on keeping on until we wind down completely.

“But God is doing a new thing with the Army today. We are the world’s largest Army, and there are more of us today than at any other time in our history. We must stretch ourselves.

Larsson then noted that God might have a letter in mind for each of us as individuals. “He would start with commendation as a Spirit of love; but then he would say ‘Nevertheless’ as the Spirit of truth.” He noted that some stand just outside the borders of the Holy Spirit—possibly because they fear He might make demands on them. God wants us to attain the fullness of Christ—to be whole—to live triumphantly – to be more than conquerors.” He urged the congregation to avoid being spectators and become part of the game. He urged the congregation to “take the ear plugs out of your ears to hear when God is knocking at our heart’s door. If you hear him,” he said, “he will come in. You are part of God’s plan for this world.”

During the meeting, Commissioner Linda Bond presented Mrs. Evie Dawe with the Frontiersman of the Year award.

Featured groups for the service included the San Francisco Korean Cultural Dancers, the Oakland Garden Street Hispanic Corps, the San Francisco Asian American Yerba Buena Corps, the Concord Band and massed songsters from the Del Oro and Golden State Divisions.