

Army delegates attend aids conference

Delegates learn how The Salvation Army helps those with AIDS in various parts of the world.

This summer, approximately 25,000 people from around the world gathered in Toronto, Canada to attend the International Conference on HIV/AIDS. Dr. Ian Campbell, the Army's international health program consultant, led a group of Salvationist delegates. Members came from regional facilitation teams as well as from International Headquarters in London and SAWSO (Salvation Army World Services Organization) in the US. Among others, those present included Canada's Territorial Commander, Commissioner M. Christine MacMillan, Retired General and Mrs. Bramwell Tillsley, Ontario Central Divisional Commander, Lt. Colonel Don Copple.



MacMillan introduced Dr. Ian Campbell as someone who had not only challenged the Army to develop its worldwide mission but had also challenged her to develop herself.

Campbell described the ways in which Salvationists are helping those living with AIDS, as well as their families and communities, through community capacity development, although he stated that he now prefers to say "human capacity development." No soft option, community capacity development through integrated mission calls for those who engage in it to walk alongside the suffering, learn from them their hopes and dreams, and become channels of the grace that will empower them. Campbell spoke of the God of Grace, recognized by all adherents of the great faiths of the world—Hindu, Muslim and Christian alike—and said that such engagement leads to a journey of encounter with a God of grace—one that resonates with the person of Christ. He went on to say that the Holy Spirit is a guiding presence, leading people to make healthy choices in their lives.

Dr. Paul Thistle, currently studying at the training college in Canada before returning to his position as chief medical officer at The Salvation Army Howard Institute in Zimbabwe, reflected: "The International AIDS Conference brought people together from around the globe, including Salvationists. Unlike the strong expressions of opinion at many symposia and sessions, Salvation Army gatherings at the conference center were times of reflection and prayer. Unity of spirit and purpose was revealed amongst our diverse territories, as we encourage our communities to develop and sustain an effective Christlike response to the AIDS pandemic."

Others at the conference spoke of the growing influence that The Salvation Army has among the victims of AIDS and their communities in various parts of the world. Ricardo Walters (Capetown, South Africa) spoke about sub-Saharan and Southern Africa. Major Martha Morales (Chile) spoke of integrated mission in Latin America. Jerry Mua (Papua New Guinea) described the Asia Pacific region's facilitation team and its expanding sphere, as did Matthew Campbell (Melbourne, Australia), with a special emphasis on young people. Alison Rader Campbell spoke about Europe, especially advances made in Scandinavia and the Eastern Europe Territory, while Bram Bailey (SAWSO) added his observations of post-tsunami community capacity development in India. All spoke with optimism and hope, describing ways in which The Salvation Army is enabling people to discover and develop the capacity they have within themselves to heal and move beyond disaster and destruction to hope and life-affirming faith.

In thanking Dr. Campbell and his associates, Lt. Colonel Cople said that they had allowed the Holy Spirit to "reinvent their Salvationism" and prayed that the Holy Spirit would lead us all into lives that he had reinvented for us wherever we live.