

Boundless brings some back to Army roots

By Jennifer Byrd –

The first night of The Salvation Army's 150th anniversary congress, "Boundless," was emotional for many, but for Major Barbara Rich from the Dallas Fort-Worth Command in Texas, it was especially poignant.

"As we were singing the Founder's song, I realized that this one song has held significance for all the generations of Salvation Army officers and soldiers in our families," she said. "The sense of heritage was colliding with the emotions of seeing the display of The Salvation Army's international reach and I was an emotional mess. I'm so proud of my Salvation Army roots."



Rich's grandfather, Brigadier Cyril Payton, was a little boy when he watched the funeral procession of General William Booth in the streets of London.

But for Rich, Boundless wasn't just about recognizing her family roots. It was about getting out of her comfort zone and seeing just how vast, yet interconnected The Salvation Army really is. And to witness God's presence in various ways.

"There were many moments that I felt God's fingerprints were all over," she said.

Pushing herself even included where and with whom she sat during the congress events. One time she and her husband found themselves sitting with members of The Salvation Army from Africa and she wished for a moment they had instead connected with friends. But then she chastised herself because, as she remembered, it was an international conference.

"I was so much more blessed, embracing the international scope of The Salvation Army and getting out of my comfort zone," she said.

Rich said that she always understood the vastness of the international Army but soaking up the program content at the congress made it feel more personal.

"I was deeply moved when I heard about the impact made in a village as result of a water source," she said. "The Army helped change the economy and ability for children to become educated. Everything changed because of the water. It has a deep impact on the village."

She also was moved by how the Army helped one family.

"I was reminded of the changes the Army can make in one person's life," she explained. "I heard about one person who made a deep spiritual change in their life, which affected the whole family. The Army can be a catalyst for big changes, like with the village or more intimate ones, like having a ripple effect in one family."

It helped her as well. Rich said she was struggling with the fact that several friends are leaving the Southern Territory and moving to South Africa. Then in one session she sat down next to somebody from South Africa and talked about her friends and what great leaders they will make at their new appointment.

She also met many people who, when she shared who her father-in-law was, shared with her that they had been called to officership by him. "It's a little bit like being from a small town where you know everybody," she said. "Now take that small town feel but disperse it over a broader geographic area and this is what it feels like to be part of The Salvation Army."

Looking back on the event, Rich reflected: "As I pause to think about the international expression and vastness of The Salvation Army, and the deep connectedness, the Lord was working behind the scenes. There are no accidents."