

Commissioners James and Carolyn Knaggs share vision for the territory

The Knaggs discuss goals, culture, soldiery and the future.

by Bob Docter –

Commissioners James and Carolyn Knaggs explored aspects of the Army's present reality and future growth in an hour-long interview with *New Frontier*.

Scanning a list of questions by *New Frontier* staff, Knaggs, after a brief pause, seemingly took a slightly different track while actually exploring many of the questions together. Recognizing the wide cultural, racial, economic and age diversity of this territory, he began by examining matters of communication, its means, its difficulties and its use

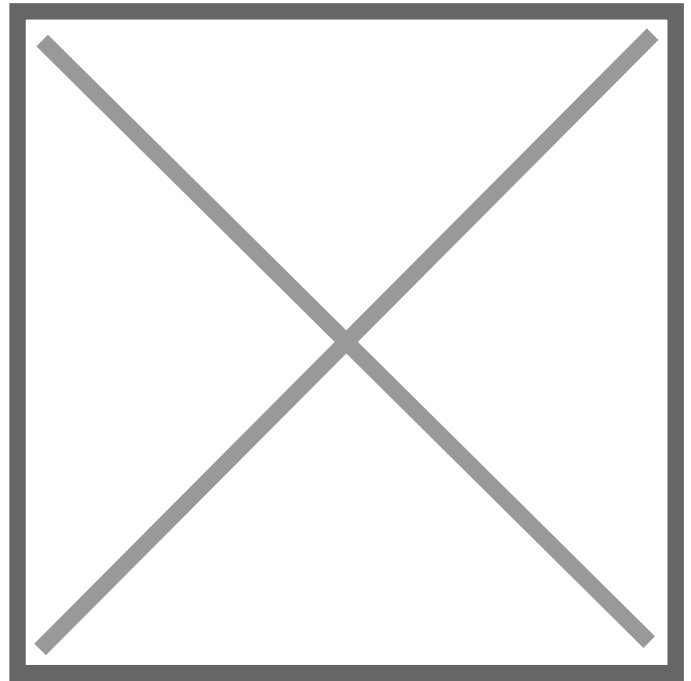
in our programs today. He made it clear at the outset that this conversation "is not a reflection of my experience with the Western Territory in that we have only just arrived. I am speaking," he said, "of my experience in general."

Our primary goal

"The primary goal of The Salvation Army universally and the Western Territory in particular is to win the world for Jesus," Knaggs said. "In moving toward that goal, one of our great roles from our distant history and continuing right up to the present pertains to our ministry to the marginalized, to the disenfranchised of society.

"This segment of the population provides the challenges for only one of our roles. As we work toward winning the world for Jesus it cannot be singular. We need to get into the mainstream of America as well. Nevertheless, our focus on the marginalized should always be our specialty. We approach this population recognizing that often this is about culture," he said.

"Language is a fundamental contributor to culture, and we find within this population segment wide diversity of language," Knaggs said. "Therefore, we can't win this world for Christ if we limit our language use to English."



Culture and language

“Many of us, myself included, have been raised with almost an arrogance in relation to our willingness to stray from English usage and learn another language,” he said. “It is a serious and short-sighted mistake to believe that only one language will suffice. We need to communicate in the languages to which people will respond in order to show them our acute interest and our acute love.”

“It’s in my soul that while we’re here, we will facilitate the possibility for officers and soldiers to learn other languages sufficient to lead people to Jesus. That is something that God has put on my heart in these early days here. It’s not the only thing, but its one of them.”

Continuing, Knaggs said: “I am not against mono-cultural worship, but it’s temporary. It’s also a quicker way to reach people for Jesus. If it’s a Korean corps, they are reaching Korean people for Jesus. However, another expression of Christian faith would be a beautiful mosaic of cultures in a single hall. This is something we need to consider. Nevertheless, I’m not afraid of those traditional ministries that take place in a single language. We can take advantage of them now and reach people of that culture quickly.

“Some cultures might be more age related—with our youth or with seniors,” he said. “It won’t stay that way, because the Gospel works to get all people involved and included.”

Commissioner Carolyn Knaggs then said: “Even in our English vocabulary, we have to speak the language of the day. We have to communicate in a manner and in places where people are looking for information.

“Jim,” she said, referring to husband, “is a real ‘techy’ and has done the blogs and tweets people are looking for and in a manner they will understand. The craft of our communication must cover the generations. We have always had a burning in our hearts to reach children, teens and young adults. We need to emphasize Christian education for youth to a greater degree in our corps programs.

“The sky is the limit on how we tell people that Jesus loves them,” she said.

Fan into flame the gift of God in you

Knaggs picked up on that remark and said: “I believe very firmly in the line Paul said to Timothy, that we need to *fan into flame the gift of God that is in you...* (2 Timothy 1:6).”

“That’s our responsibility as a movement of God—our soldiers, and that includes officers, employees, advisory board members—all of us. Together, the influence of our Army is much greater than the number of soldiers on our rolls. We need to leverage all of that in the best way possible, and *fan into flame the gift of God within us*. We all have God given gifts within us. Those with literary gifts, gifts in the arts, in dance, in public speaking, in relationship building within diverse age groups, in leadership, in music and drama—all God-given talents need to be developed and used. Most importantly, we need to nurture the gifts of the spirit God places within us to be used in our interpersonal relationships.

“Personally, I’d like to see a generous application to our literary work. I would like to see us publish more books—not because we need to fill our shelves, but to fan into flame the gifts that publication demand.

“We will strive to build on what is currently in place in the territory,” Knaggs said. “We think the territory is in great shape, and want to build on the ministry of our predecessors. Commissioner Phil and Pat Swyers left everything in perfect order. We will build on what exists.”

Soldiership

“As an Army—a movement—the time has come to accentuate and strengthen the role of *soldier*,” Knaggs said. “We’ll continue to campaign hard for more officers, but it’s not just about the officers. It’s never simply soldiers as opposed to officers. They are soldiers, too. It’s time to bolster the role of ‘soldier’ and leverage that strength into a soul saving movement that will really honor God. That’s going to come from the soldiers we already have. We just have to engage them in the process. We have to say ‘yes, this is your Army.’ This doesn’t just belong to red epaulets, it belongs to soldiers—including officers—and all others who engage in the salvation war.”

Carolyn Knaggs added: “We talked about the very successful ‘Come Join Our Army’ campaign at a recent Commissioner’s conference that we were pleased to observe. The general position was to now move into a ‘discipleship’ mode. We’ve invited thousands of people to join our ranks, but now we need to help really build a deep foundation of biblical truth in their hearts. We need to build a doctrinal base and help people engage in the process of bringing their friends and building our church.”

Professional training

Jim Knaggs then said, “Because of my very limited experience here, I’m not completely aware of the make-up of the possible ‘surrogate service’ going on in our social work. It has been my experience in the past that social work has the name of The Salvation Army, but we have had to look outside the Army to get the necessary competence in place to serve people in this program. Very few Salvationists, let alone Christians, have been involved in the delivery of service. I’d be surprised if I didn’t find the same situation here.

“One of the solutions to this is to strategically attract Salvationists into these professional and other roles in Army social programs, in addition to the wonderful people presently serving there,” he said. “The message to young Salvationists growing up is that you need to serve Christ and there is a place for you to do that in The Salvation Army. This approach would signal needs and encourage youth to plan their professional training in harmony with Army programs that need professional workers. If it’s as an officer, fine; but if not, we have plenty of other ways people can serve.

“I believe we have the soldiers right now for this Army to take a quantum leap forward in terms of ‘mission effectiveness,’” he said. “I really mean that. It’s a matter of empowering and setting people free. We need the best kind of help from the best people to present both a professional and a spiritual message. Remember our primary objective—to win the world for Jesus. Nobody gets left out. I’m talking about everybody—from Fairbanks to Phoenix, from Micronesia to Bozeman, from Tim-buc-too to Tucumcari, we’re all in this together—not just to increase in numbers, but to win people for Christ.”

Go from strength to strength

Going forward, the strength of the Army is in our soldiery. We need to maximize that potential to the very best. We could get soldiers more involved in decision-making. Why couldn't we have a finance council meeting at 8 p.m. so people can be involved in some of our critical decision-making? We need to look at ideas to engage the soldiery more. We need to encourage and allow people to be the witnesses for the Lord that God calls them to be. Nobody needs permission from his or her corps officer to tell a neighbor about Jesus. Our strength is available. It's from the Lord. All we need to do is use it.

"May God bless, inspire, and motivate us to do his will."