

## NSSDMC 2012: Final session with Dr. Ron Sider

The final session of the 2012 National Social Services and Disaster Management Conference featured Dr. Ron Sider, professor of theology, holistic ministry and public policy, and director of the Sider Center on Ministry and Public Policy at Palmer Theological Seminary. Sider also serves as president of Evangelicals for Social Action. He has published 31 books, and was once named one of the 12 “most influential persons in the field of religion in the U.S.”

“I believe in the last 125 years The Salvation Army has done better than any other organization in holding together evangelism and social action,” Sider said. “But I also know you continue to wrestle with this. We must ensure, unlike so many in the Christian church, that we do not tear apart word and deed.”

He spoke on six aspects we must consider in maintaining the relationship between evangelism and social action: sin, nature of persons, the gospel definition, salvation, Jesus, and eschatology.

“If sin is both personal and social, if persons are body and soul entities meant to live in interdependence, if the gospel message is the fantastic news that the kingdom has begun, if salvation transforms relationships with God and others in the church body, if Jesus is the redeemer who intends to restore creation, then Christians should not try to escape the world, but change it,” Sider said. “We change it by leading people to Christ and by changing unjust social structures. We must love the whole person the way Jesus did.”

In the final remarks of the conference, Lt. Col. Ray Peacock, who in retirement currently serves as Metro Denver Director of Social Services, reflected on the first national social services conference held in 1994 in Alexandria, Va. That event had 350 attendees; the 2012 conference was attended by over 700 people.

Kevin Thompson-Hooper, chairman of the National Social Services Commission and territorial social services secretary in the South, thanked Major Betty Israel, national social services secretary, for her service to the Army as she anticipates her retirement.



“I like to think that I have a good heart, because of the love of Christ that fills it to help the least,” Israel said. “And I know you all have the same heart as well.”