

# WORDS OF COMFORT AND HOPE

## A CCM Volunteer's Guide to Sharing Scripture and Prayer

### Purpose of This Guide

To equip Community Care Ministries (CCM) visitation volunteers with tools to share scripture and prayer in a way that is thoughtful, caring, inclusive, and reflective of The Salvation Army's Christ-centered mission. This includes not only those receiving care, but also their caregivers, who often need encouragement, reassurance, and support.

### Best Practices for Sharing Scripture and Prayer

#### **Listen first:**

- Begin each visit by listening.
- What the person shares can help guide which Scripture to read or whether prayer is appropriate.
- Build trust and allow spiritual conversations to emerge naturally.

#### **Seek permission:**

- Always ask gently: "Would you like me to read a short verse of Scripture?" or "May I say a prayer with you today?"
- Respect their response, whether they say yes or no.

#### **Be present, not preachy:**

- Focus on being a caring presence rather than delivering a sermon.
- Your ministry is to offer hope and encouragement, not to correct or instruct.

#### **Choose Scripture with care:**

- Select passages that bring comfort, strength, peace and hope.
- Avoid passages that could be misunderstood or sound judgmental when heard out of context.

#### **Use clear, accessible language:**

- Use translations like the *New International Version (NIV)*, *Good News Translation (GNT)*, or *New Living Translation (NLT)*.
- Bring a small Bible or Scripture resource you are comfortable using.



**Keep prayers short and heartfelt:**

- A sincere, simple prayer is often more meaningful than a long, formal one.
- Pray in everyday language and incorporate the person's needs when appropriate.

**Be inclusive and trauma-informed:**

- Being trauma-informed means approaching every person with sensitivity, recognizing that past trauma may affect how they respond to care. Volunteers should prioritize safety, respect boundaries, avoid making assumptions about a person's experiences and offer support without pressure. In every visit, the focus is on providing a calm, trustworthy presence, allowing the individual to guide the depth and direction of conversation.
- Respect all individuals, regardless of their faith background.
- Spiritual care is offered as a gift, never something to be forced.

## What to Avoid During Visits

**No promises:**

Avoid making promises (e.g., "God will heal you soon"). Instead, offer words of comfort, presence, and hope.

**No advice-giving:**

Avoid giving medical or personal advice. Volunteers are not acting in a professional health or counseling role.

**Non-judgmental language:**

Avoid language that suggests illness, suffering or hardship is due to a lack of faith.

**Keep it brief:**

Avoid overly long prayers or Scripture readings that may be tiring or difficult to follow.

**No debates:**

Avoid entering theological debates. Visits are intended to offer encouragement, not correction or argument.

**Respect boundaries:**

Avoid forcing religious conversations. Always honour the individual's comfort level and spiritual boundaries.

## Sample Scripture Selections

**Comfort in times of illness or suffering:**

**Psalms 23:1-4:** "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures ... Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."



- **Reflection:** Remind the person that God walks beside them through every dark and difficult moment, offering peace and protection.

**Isaiah 41:10:** “Do not fear, for I am with you ... I will strengthen you and help you.”

- **Reflection:** God’s promise is not just for the healthy or strong—he is with us in weakness and fear, too.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4:** “The God of all comfort ... comforts us in all our troubles.”

- **Reflection:** God understands our pain and offers real comfort through his presence.
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### **Peace and reassurance:**

**John 14:27:** “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

- **Reflection:** Jesus offers a peace that is deeper than our circumstances.

**Philippians 4:6-7:** “Do not be anxious about anything ... the peace of God ... will guard your hearts.”

- **Reflection:** When we bring our worries to God, he brings calm to our souls.

**Psalms 46:1-2:** “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

- **Reflection:** God is not far away—he is our immediate refuge and strength.
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### **Hope and encouragement:**

**Romans 15:13:** “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.”

- **Reflection:** Even in hardship, God can fill us with a deep and lasting hope.

**Jeremiah 29:11:** “ ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord ... ‘plans to give you hope and a future.’ ”

- **Reflection:** God's plans for us include a future filled with purpose and hope.

**Lamentations 3:22-23:** “Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed ... his compassions never fail.”

- **Reflection:** Every new day is proof of God’s faithful love.
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### **Loneliness and God’s presence:**

**Deuteronomy 31:6:** “He will never leave you nor forsake you.”



- **Reflection:** Even when others are gone, God remains.

**Psalms 139:7-10:** “Where can I go from your Spirit? ... even there your hand will guide me.”

- **Reflection:** There is no place so far or dark where God cannot reach us.

**Matthew 28:20:** “ ... surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- **Reflection:** Jesus promises to be with us every step of the way.

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### Gospel stories of compassion and healing:

#### **Luke 10:25–37: The Good Samaritan**

- **Theme:** Kindness and compassion reflect the heart of God. Share this story when someone needs to feel seen and valued.

#### **Mark 5:25–34: The Woman Who Touched Jesus’ Cloak**

- **Theme:** Jesus responds to faith, no matter how small. A reminder that God hears and heals.

#### **Luke 24:13–35: The Road to Emmaus**

- **Theme:** Jesus walks beside us, even when we do not recognize him. A story of hope and rediscovery.

#### **John 11:1–44: The Raising of Lazarus**

- **Theme:** Jesus shares in our sorrow and brings new life. A powerful story for those grieving or discouraged.

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## Sample Prayers to Use or Adapt

Prayer is a vital way to express care, comfort and shared faith. The following sample prayers can be offered as they are or adapted to suit each visit.

### **Prayer for comfort:**

"Loving God, thank you for your presence. Bring comfort and peace today. May your love surround us. Amen."

### **Prayer for strength:**

"Lord, give strength for today. Help [Name] feel your closeness. May they know they are not alone. Amen."



**Prayer of gratitude:**

"Thank you, God, for this visit. Thank you for [Name] and their life. Bless them with your peace. Amen."

**Prayer for healing:**

"Gracious God, we pray for your healing hand to be upon [Name]. Bring relief, renewal and restoration. Help them feel your peace and power today. Amen."

**Prayer in times of grief:**

"God of all comfort, we lift up [Name] in their sadness. Be near to them in their mourning. Remind them that your love never fails and that you are close to the brokenhearted. Amen."

**Prayer for hope:**

"Lord, even when life feels uncertain, we trust in your promises. Fill [Name] with hope and remind them that your love endures forever. Amen."

**Prayer of blessing:**

"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you and give you peace, both now and always. Amen."

## Guidance for Praying Aloud

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Keep eye contact if appropriate or gently hold their hand if welcomed.
- Use the person's name in the prayer, when possible, to make it personal.
- Close with a soft and reassuring tone, e.g., "Amen" or "God bless you."

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## Prayers and Encouragement for Caregivers

Caregivers are often under emotional, physical and spiritual strain. Offering a few moments of compassion, recognition and encouragement can make a significant impact.

**Prayer for the caregiver's strength:**

"Lord, thank you for [Name] and their faithful care. Strengthen them in body and spirit. Remind them that they are not alone and that their care is seen and valued. Amen."

**Prayer for rest and renewal:**

"God of peace, grant [Name] rest in the middle of their responsibilities. Help them to find moments of stillness and to know that your grace sustains them. Amen."

**Prayer for wisdom and patience:**



“Loving God, give [Name] wisdom in difficult moments and patience when days are long. Fill them with compassion and joy in the care they offer. Amen.”

## Encouraging Scripture for Caregivers

**Galatians 6:9:** “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”

- **Reflection:** God sees your faithful care, even when no one else does.

**Matthew 11:28:** “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

- **Reflection:** Caregivers are invited to find their rest and strength in Christ.

**Isaiah 40:29-31:** “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak ... those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

- **Reflection:** God offers renewing strength for those who pour themselves out in love.

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## When to Refer to Professional or Pastoral Support

During a visit, if you encounter any of the following situations, take the following actions:

### **Immediate actions while in a facility:**

- If the visit is taking place in a professional facility (hospital, care home, shelter, hospice, etc.), immediately report the concern to on-site professional care staff or the facility’s chaplain.
- If the concern involves suspected mistreatment or unsafe practices by facility staff, report the concern directly to the facility supervisor or administrator (not to the staff member involved).

### **Also report internally to your Salvation Army leadership:**

- Inform your CCM co-ordinator and corps officer as soon as possible after the visit.
- Document basic facts (date, time, nature of concern) without making judgments or accusations.

### **Situations requiring referral include:**

- Expressions of deep emotional distress, despair, or suicidal ideation.
- Observations of abuse, neglect, unsafe living conditions or mistreatment.
- Requests for sacraments (e.g., communion, baptism).
- Requests for ongoing pastoral care, spiritual counsel or anointing.
- Complex theological or spiritual struggles beyond the volunteer's role or training.



## How to Refer a Concern

If a concern arises during a visit, follow these steps to ensure the individual receives appropriate support:

### **1. Acknowledge the person's need:**

- Kindly and calmly acknowledge what has been shared: “That sounds very important and I want to make sure you’re supported.”
  - Offer reassurance without making promises or trying to solve the situation yourself.
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### **2. Respond based on where you are:**

- If you are visiting in a professional facility (such as a hospital, care home, shelter or hospice):
    - Immediately inform appropriate facility staff (such as a nurse, social worker, supervisor or chaplain) about the concern.
    - If the concern involves facility staff behavior (e.g., mistreatment, neglect), report the issue directly to a supervisor or administrator—not to the staff member involved.
  - Inform your CCM co-ordinator and corps officer as soon as possible after the visit.
  - Share the basic facts: what you observed, what was shared and who you notified at the facility (if applicable).
  - Avoid offering personal opinions or interpretations; simply report observations clearly and factually.
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## Important Reminders

- **You are not alone.** Your role is to offer compassionate presence, not to carry the whole burden or solve every problem.
- **Timely reporting ensures care.** By passing concerns on to corps leadership and professional care teams, you help ensure that individuals receive the right support safely and appropriately.
- **Confidentiality matters.** Share concerns only with appropriate leaders—not with other volunteers or congregants.
- **Trust God's presence.** You are part of a greater ministry of care and compassion; every act of listening, prayer and appropriate referral reflects Christ's love.



## **Quick Reference: CCM Volunteer Visit Tips**

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### **DO:**

- Listen actively and compassionately.
- Ask permission before sharing Scripture or prayer.
- Share short, encouraging passages of Scripture.
- Offer brief, heartfelt prayers in everyday language.
- Be attentive to emotional, spiritual and physical needs.
- Refer serious concerns promptly to corps leadership and, if in a facility, to professional care staff or chaplain.
- Respect personal boundaries and diverse faith expressions.

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### **DON'T:**

- Make promises about healing, outcomes or timelines.
- Offer medical, therapeutic or personal advice.
- Use judgmental or theological correction.
- Force religious conversations or debates.
- Share overly long or complex readings that may overwhelm or fatigue.

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### **WHEN TO REFER:**

- Expressions of emotional distress, despair or **suicidal ideation**.
- Requests for sacraments (e.g., communion, baptism), anointing or formal spiritual counseling.
- Observations of suspected abuse, neglect or unsafe living conditions.
- Complex theological questions beyond your role or training.
- Concerns involving mistreatment or unsafe practices within a professional facility.

### **In a care facility:**

- Inform professional staff or the site chaplain immediately, then notify your CCM co-ordinator and corps officer.

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**You are a bearer of Christ's presence—listen with compassion, love with humility, act with care and trust God's Spirit to lead.**

