

BEST PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVITY AND CULTURAL APPRECIATION

A Salvation Army Lens for Community Care Ministries

Introduction

Community Care Ministries (CCM) exists to serve with compassion, dignity and inclusivity. In our diverse cultural landscapes, our ministry must reflect The Salvation Army's mission to share the love of Jesus Christ and meet human needs without discrimination.

This guide offers practical approaches to help CCM volunteers and leaders honour diversity in their outreach and relationships, while remaining grounded in the gospel. These are not rigid rules or formal training requirements—they are ways to grow in awareness, deepen connection and embody the inclusive love of Christ.

Biblical and Theological Foundations for Inclusivity

The call to inclusivity is deeply rooted in Scripture:

- **Imago Dei (Genesis 1:27):** Every person is created in the image of God and deserves respect and dignity.
- **The Great Commandment (Mark 12:30–31):** Loving our neighbour means valuing people in all their diversity.
- **The early church model (Acts 2:42–47; Acts 10:34–35):** The gospel embraces people from all nations, cultures and walks of life.
- **James 2:1–9:** Challenges us to reject favouritism and honour all equally.

Inclusivity isn't a trend—it's a response to God's character and the heart of Jesus. It's how we live out our faith with integrity and love.

Understanding Diversity in a Salvation Army Context

Canada and Bermuda are beautifully diverse. CCM must honour the distinct histories, traditions and cultural expressions of the people we serve, recognizing how faith, community and culture are interwoven.

Key considerations include:

- **Indigenous Peoples (Canada):** Honour Truth and Reconciliation principles. Acknowledge the living legacy of colonialism and ongoing barriers to equity.
- **Newcomers and refugees:** Consider migration journeys, trauma and social exclusion.



- **Religious diversity:** Offer hospitality to those of different faiths while modelling the love of Christ.
- **Linguistic diversity:** Use inclusive communication and offer translation when possible.
- **Generational differences:** Respect how different age groups experience and express faith.
- **LGBTQ+ individuals:** Uphold The Salvation Army's commitment to treat all individuals with compassion, dignity and respect.
- **Bermuda's cultural landscape:** Celebrate Bermuda's African, Portuguese, British and Caribbean influences, including holidays like Cup Match and Emancipation Day.

Best Practices for Inclusivity in CCM

Relationship building and active listening:

- Enter each encounter with humility and a desire to learn.
- Ask open-ended questions. Listen to understand, not just to respond.
- Show consistent care—trust grows over time.

Culturally and socially respectful service:

- Be mindful of dietary needs and culturally significant foods during meals or care visits.
- Understand cultural differences in communication or physical boundaries.
- Acknowledge holidays and traditions that may affect participation in CCM.
- Ensure no one is excluded based on gender identity, orientation or background.

Representation matters:

- Invite participation from diverse voices in leadership, planning and volunteer teams.
- Use imagery and resources that reflect the cultural makeup of your community.
- Uphold the principle of “nothing about us without us.”

Creating a welcoming environment:

- While formal cultural training may not be available, encourage peer learning and shared reflection.
- Use signage, materials and communication tools that are accessible and inclusive.
- Ensure physical spaces are welcoming to all, including those with disabilities.
- Speak in ways that affirm people's identities and experiences.

Avoid tokenism and stereotypes:

- Appreciate cultures as whole ways of life, not costumes or occasional events.
- Don't ask people to represent a group—invite them to contribute meaningfully.
- Regularly evaluate whether your ministry practices foster real belonging.

Cultural and Social Appreciation vs. Appropriation

Cultural appreciation involves humility, learning and honour. Appropriation, by contrast, reduces culture to novelty or uses sacred elements out of context.

Guidelines for respectful engagement:

- **Seek permission:** Involve cultural communities when planning inclusive activities.
- **Give credit:** Honour origins and creators.
- **Understand significance:** Don't adopt symbols, music or customs without learning their meaning.
- **Avoid stereotypes:** Represent cultures authentically, not as caricatures.

Practical Applications in CCM Activities

Visitation ministries:

- Respect personal, cultural and spiritual boundaries.
- Offer care and prayer that reflects the individual's background and comfort level.
- Be mindful of how to affirm dignity for marginalized individuals.

Community meals and gatherings:

- Offer inclusive menu options which reflect the tastes and dietary needs of the community.
- In Bermuda, honour traditional foods and their social importance.
- Invite shared storytelling around meals to build connection.

Music and worship integration;

- Incorporate diverse musical expressions while remaining Christ-centred.
- Collaborate with culturally diverse Christian communities.
- Honour local worship traditions, such as Caribbean gospel rhythms in Bermuda.



A Posture of Learning and Growth

Inclusivity is not something we perfect, it's something we pursue. Even without structured training, CCM teams can grow by:

- Seeking feedback from those served.
- Staying curious about social issues affecting your community.
- Hosting conversations about how to serve more inclusively.
- Asking: Are our practices aligned with Christ's love and The Salvation Army's mission?

Conclusion

The Salvation Army's call of "heart to God, hand to Man" invites us to embrace all people with love and grace. Practicing inclusivity in CCM is not a checkbox—it's a reflection of our faith. When we honour one another's stories, cultures and dignity, we reveal the love of Jesus to the world.

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God"

(Romans 15:7).