

# First 100 Days

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## A Practical and Pastoral Roadmap for a Corps Officer's First 100 Days

Adapted with permission from CFOT by the Corps Mission Department

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## Introduction

Transitioning into a new appointment brings both excitement and uncertainty. This *First 100 Days* guide is here to support Salvation Army officers in navigating those early days with clarity, compassion, and spiritual grounding. From building relationships and understanding your local mission context to establishing healthy rhythms, these steps are designed to help you lead with purpose — right from day one.



“ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.  
— Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

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# First 30 Days

## Take a Moment to Breathe and Pray

Before you dive into schedules and expectations, pause. You’ve just gone through a significant transition — emotionally, physically, spiritually. Take time to rest in God’s presence. Spend unhurried moments in prayer, seeking His peace and guidance. Dedicate your new appointment to Him.

**Why it matters:** Ministry flows out of being, not just doing. Grounding yourself in God before anything else centres your leadership in Christ.

## Prioritize Presence and Listening

Review previous AMIRs, financials, demographics, and community data. What’s the spiritual and social landscape? What ministries are thriving or struggling? Visit frontline services to see ministry in action. Ask: How is this corps living out The Salvation Army’s mission locally?

**Why it matters:** Every corps is different. Understanding the mission in context helps shape relevant and Spirit-led leadership.

## Understand the Local Mission Context

Spend intentional time with people — staff, soldiers, adherents, volunteers, and community partners. Host listening circles, attend programs, and be present in informal spaces (e.g., church lobby, food bank, thrift store). Ask open questions and listen before offering solutions.

**Why it matters:** Relationships are at the heart of ministry. People need to know you care before they care what you know.

## Meet One-on-One with Key Leaders

Schedule early meetings with your leadership team, board members, key staff, and ministry leaders. Ask about their roles, dreams, concerns, and how they’ve seen God at work.

**Why it matters:** It builds trust, honours existing leadership, and helps you identify strengths and possible pressure points.

## Connect with Your Community Ministries (CFS, Shelter, Thrift Store, etc.)

Some corps are more complex than others. If your appointment includes a Community and Family Services department, shelter, thrift store, daycare, or other ministry units, take time to visit those spaces and meet with the program managers. Learn how their work integrates with the mission of the corps and how you can support them.

**Why it matters:** These ministries are often the front door of your church to the community. Understanding their needs and rhythms will help you lead holistically and with unity of mission.

## Communicate Clearly and Humbly

Take time to write a brief message introducing yourself to the congregation and community. Share who you are, your heart for ministry, and your commitment to serve with humility. Emphasize that this is a season of mutual learning and listening.

You can post or share this message in a variety of ways: include it in the weekly bulletin, post it on social media, send it in a congregational email, or include it in your monthly newsletter. If possible, also take a moment to share it verbally during your first Sunday or welcome gathering.

**Why it matters:** Early, authentic communication sets a tone of approachability and stability. It helps people begin to build trust and see your leadership as relational and grounded in mutual respect.

## Establish Healthy Rhythms of Prayer and Sabbath

Set a tone for spiritual health by modelling rhythms of prayer, rest, and reflection. Begin or continue a prayer walk around your neighbourhood. Set boundaries for rest. Invite others to pray with you — for discernment, unity, and vision. God set the pattern: work for six days and rest for one. If you try to go seven days a week you will soon become inefficient and ineffective. Sabbath refers to a rest from your labour (how you make your living), not to inactivity. Sabbath helps you to create healthy boundaries in your life.

**Why it matters:** The spiritual pace of the leader influences the spiritual health of the body.

# Don't forget...



## Connect with anyone critically ill

One of your first and most important pastoral responsibilities is to connect with individuals in your congregation or community who are critically ill or receiving end-of-life care. Reach out as soon as possible to arrange a visit — whether in hospital, hospice, or at home. If possible, bring a brief Scripture, a prayer, or even just your quiet, compassionate presence. Don't feel pressured to have the perfect words; often, simply showing up speaks volumes.

**Why it matters:** Moments of crisis are deeply formative. When people are most vulnerable, your presence as a spiritual caregiver brings comfort, dignity, and peace. For families, your visit can be a powerful reminder of God's nearness and the Church's care. Being present in suffering opens doors for trust, prayer, and witness that cannot be replicated elsewhere.



## Take your furlough; don't use it to unpack

Furlough is an important part of your rhythm as a Salvation Army officer. It's not just a “break” — it's a vital time for physical rest, spiritual renewal, and family connection. Avoid using it just to unpack or catch up on tasks. You may choose to take it before arriving at your new appointment or shortly after settling in, once you've had time to meet your team and understand the scope of your responsibilities.

**Why it matters:** Healthy ministry begins with healthy rhythms.

Taking your furlough seriously helps establish patterns of rest and renewal that will sustain you over time. It sets an example for your congregation and staff that rest is not optional — it's part of faithful leadership. Without rest, your ability to lead with clarity, compassion, and spiritual depth will be compromised.



## Unpack and establish a sense of home

You need to be settled into your home to serve your corps effectively. Take time in your early days to unpack the essentials and set up your living space so that it is both pleasant and functional. If you have children, prioritize setting up their rooms first — this helps them feel grounded, safe, and cared for in the midst of change. Create familiar routines, decorate with favourite items, and involve them in setting up their new space.

**Why it matters:** A settled home environment contributes to emotional stability and overall well-being. When your family feels secure, you're better positioned to serve your corps with focus, peace, and presence.

# Next 30 Days

## Connect With Your Area Commander

If your AC hasn't yet reached out, take the initiative. Schedule a check-in to ask questions, share your observations, and seek advice.

**Why it matters:** Your AC is a partner and coach in ministry. A strong relationship helps you feel supported and connected to the broader mission.

## Plan Your Preaching Through Fall and Christmas

Lay out your preaching calendar through to the end of December. Include major events like Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day, and the four Sundays of Advent. Don't forget to include Rally Day (or Welcome Back Sunday) in early September — a key moment to re-engage the congregation after summer. Consider how this Sunday can help set the spiritual tone for the new season and invite people back into community, service, and discipleship.

**Why it matters:** Advanced planning allows for greater creativity, collaboration, and reduces pressure during the busiest season of the year.

## Discover Christmas Goals and Dates

Begin preparing for Christmas outreach early. Review timelines for kettles, hampers, counters, CFS processes, and volunteer recruitment.

**Why it matters:** Christmas is a high-capacity season that requires strong logistics. Early preparation helps the team avoid stress and focus on the heart of the season — sharing Christ with others.

## Begin to Visit People

Start making intentional pastoral visits. Connect with retired members during the day, and working people over coffee, lunch, or evening visits.

**Why it matters:** Your presence communicates care. Personal visits build relationships that lead to deeper trust, openness, and spiritual growth.

## Confirm Business Systems Are Functioning Well

Review administrative systems such as Workday, SAMIS, Shelby, Business World (Agresso), and Link2Feed. Ensure that statistical reports are being entered regularly — or if you're not the one entering them, make sure you know who is responsible and how the process works. Make sure stats are entered, bills are paid, and processes are followed. Ask DHQ for support if needed. Also,

confirm with your previous corps that all necessary transfer forms — both additions and removals — have been completed and submitted.

**Why it matters:** Operational health supports ministry effectiveness. Understanding who does what and how ensures that critical responsibilities aren't overlooked. When administrative systems run smoothly, you gain more time and energy for people-centred ministry, and you foster a culture of accountability and transparency.

### Hold Your First Team Meetings (Pastoral Care Council & Ministry Board)

Begin formal meetings with your leadership teams. Start with the Pastoral Care Council, then the Ministry Board. Use this first gathering not only to listen and learn but also to honour your predecessor. Take a moment to affirm the work that has gone before you. Let your team know you are committed to building on the foundation that's already been laid. Review the Corps Action Plan to understand what successes were achieved, what hurdles were encountered, and what next steps had been identified.

If a Pastoral Care Council isn't currently in place, consult with your Area Commander to help form one. Be mindful that some team members may still be adjusting to the leadership transition — lead with patience and grace.

**Why it matters:** These teams are essential for pastoral care, planning, and shared leadership. Beginning with honour sets a tone of respect, unity, and continuity. First meetings aren't just organizational — they are relational moments that shape the culture of trust and collaboration moving forward.

### Establish a Working Relationship with Your Staff

In larger corps, reconnect with managers and staff in areas like Community and Family Services (CFS), the thrift store, shelters, and other ministry units. Beyond informal introductions, take time to set up regular one-on-one or team check-in meetings. These don't need to be long — but they create space for shared updates, prayer, and relational connection. Use these early conversations to set clear expectations, clarify roles and responsibilities, and communicate boundaries — including your Sabbath and rest days.

**Why it matters:** Healthy staff relationships are essential for sustainable, mission-focused ministry. Regular check-ins build trust, improve communication, and help you stay ahead of challenges before they escalate. When staff feel seen, supported, and aligned with your leadership, they are more likely to flourish in their roles and serve the mission with clarity and joy.



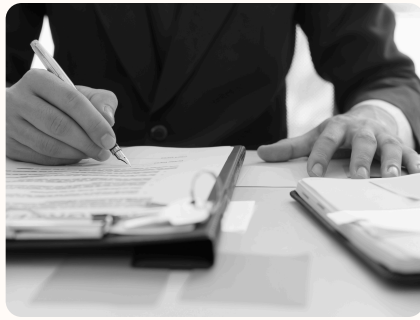
# Don't forget...



## Reflect, Pray, and Begin to Discern

Now that you've spent time listening and observing, carve out space for reflection. What are you noticing? Where is God already at work? What burdens or opportunities are surfacing? Spend time in prayer and, if possible, with a mentor or spiritual director.

**Why it matters:** Discernment creates space for God to lead. Moving too quickly into action can short-circuit what the Spirit is trying to reveal in this new season.



## Review Structures, Rhythms, and Policies

Take stock of the corps' internal systems — meeting rhythms, communication channels, finances, and policies. What's working? What's not? Are people clear on who's responsible for what?

**Why it matters:** Healthy systems create freedom for ministry to grow. Identifying small fixes now can prevent bigger issues later.



## Begin Building a Leadership Culture of Collaboration

Gather a small group of leaders to pray and dream with you. Don't rush into planning — start with listening and spiritual discernment together.

**Why it matters:** Shared leadership fosters creativity and ownership. Inviting others into discernment prepares the soil for collective decision-making.

# Next 40 Days



## Establish Your Children in School; Work Out Routines

Knowing your family's daily rhythms — school drop-offs, meals, work blocks, rest — will provide a stable foundation in the midst of change. Ministry life often brings unexpected events (e.g., hospital visits, crisis calls), so it's important to distinguish between interruptions and Spirit-led opportunities.

**Why it matters:** A stable home supports a sustainable ministry. When your family thrives, your capacity for pastoral care, leadership, and flexibility grows. Routine provides mental and emotional grounding for both you and your children.



## Connect with Community Leaders (e.g., Mayor, Police, Local Agencies)

Use your brief of appointment as a starting point for reaching out to key civic leaders in your area. In small towns, personal contact from the corps officer is often expected and welcomed. If the information hasn't been provided, do the research and take the initiative.

**Why it matters:** Community relationships expand your ministry reach and credibility. When leaders know you by name, you become a trusted partner in responding to local needs and opportunities.



## Join a Service Club (e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions Club)

Especially in larger cities where access to civic leaders may be more limited, joining a local service club can provide valuable connections. While some clubs require an invitation, most welcome new members. These groups often support charitable causes and can become allies to your corps and CFS ministry.

**Why it matters:** Service clubs are natural bridges into the wider community. They give you access to networks, visibility for your ministry, and often lead to both volunteer and financial support.

## Listen Carefully Before Announcing Any Visioning or Strategic Planning

You are not the first corps officer to serve this congregation, and you likely won't be the last. Honour the history and experiences of the people you now lead. Take time to understand their story before introducing change. Avoid making immediate leadership or staffing changes (unless there's a serious issue like moral failure or fraud). If difficult decisions do need to be considered, consult your Area Commander with your preliminary observations first.



**Why it matters:** Trust is built through respect and relationship, not rapid change. Listening first allows you to discern both the visible and invisible dynamics at play. When people feel seen and valued, they're more open to joining you in future visioning. Strategic change must be Spirit-led, not reactive.

## Schedule Pastoral Care Council and Board Meetings for the Year to Establish Their Priority

Set dates early for your Pastoral Care Council and Ministry Board meetings and communicate them clearly. These gatherings are not just administrative — they are opportunities to prioritize the spiritual and relational wellbeing of your congregation. Use them to ask, *“How are our people doing?”* and *“How can we better care for them?”*

**Why it matters:** Setting these meetings in advance signals that people — not just programs — are your top priority. Consistent pastoral care fosters a culture of compassion, accountability, and intentional discipleship.

## Calendar Your Appointments, Study Time, and Sabbath to Control Your Schedule

Proactively schedule your key commitments — visits, sermon prep, rest, and family time — into your calendar. When someone asks for a meeting, and you reply, “I’m booked then — can we find another time?” they understand that. Your calendar becomes a visible tool for setting healthy boundaries.

**Why it matters:** Ministry can quickly consume every hour if you let it. Protecting your time for rest, preparation, and presence with your family ensures long-term health and effectiveness. Your calendar is one of your strongest tools for sustainable ministry.

“ Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

— Ephesians 4:2–3 (NIV)

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