



“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”  
(which means “God with us”). Matthew 1:23

The name Immanuel emphasizes the nearness of God. Jennifer Kennedy Dean writes that, “This doesn’t just mean God somewhere in the vicinity. Or God down the street. Or God within shouting distance. God is with us.” (Pursuing The Christ)

In Matthew 14, the gospel writer gives us a wonderful picture of His nearness in action. Matthew tells how Jesus sent His disciples across the Sea of Galilee after a busy day of ministry while He stayed behind to pray. As daylight faded, a storm came up, churning the sea into a choppy nightmare.

Mark adds the detail that when the boat was in the middle of the Lake, Jesus “saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them” (Mark 6:48).

The word Mark used for “straining” speaks of hard toil. There was great pain and torment of the body and soul that night as those men rowed for their lives against the wind. The wind was aggressive to their purpose, fighting them for every inch.

And from the mountainside, Jesus saw them! Then He went to them. He walked right into the fury of the storm.

Does this move you as it moves me? This is no sleepy, unconcerned God who idly observes the suffering of His children. This is God-With-Us. Immanuel comes down the mountain and steps into the dark, foaming sea. He moves near.

He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. (Mark 6:48-51)

The wind had been against them. Contrary to them. Aggressive to their efforts and goals and desires. Isn’t that a picture of life? Maybe circumstances have been “contrary” to you in recent days. Maybe you feel as though you’ve been walking against the wind or rowing until your heart breaks but making no progress at all. What can keep you, and what keeps me, is the knowledge that God watches it all. Jesus sees everything. He sees our struggles. He knows when the wind is against us. But He doesn’t just watch. He comes to us—at the right time. He steps into our circumstances to help us.

At this Christmas season, you and I can be assured that Immanuel is with us. We are not without God’s love or His all-sufficient strength. We are not without His safety. We are not without His care or provision. And we are not without His presence. This is the best news of all. Immanuel, God is with us!

Have a blessed Christmas!

Carson Decker  
Major  
Territorial Candidates Secretary

In this newsletter you can expect:
EYC Wrap up
Christmas & New Years News !
Call and Commitment
Harvest Hands Prayer Focus
Dates for your diary
Resource Highlight
Meet the team!

## Explore Your Call Wrap up 2024

More than 60 delegates from across the Canada and Bermuda Territory came together for the 2024 Explore Your Call weekend in Richmond Hill, Ont., in October, motivated to learn about the call to ministry in The Salvation Army. From their initial welcome on Friday evening to the closing Sunday morning worship service, attendees were given the opportunity to intentionally experience God's presence.

Under the leadership of Major Carson Decker, Territorial Candidates Secretary, and the Candidates team, Explore Your Call was designed to offer space for people to discern what the Lord's purpose is for their lives, and to explore if God is inviting them into full-time ministry or officership within The Salvation Army.

From early morning guided prayers to evening vespers, and everything in between, delegates actively participated and encountered God in a variety of ways, facilitated through worship, prayer, break-out sessions, teaching, and sharing together in meals and conversation. (Article written by Major Joyce Downer for The Salvationist)

Interested in this event? Mark your calendars for October 3-5, 2025 and watch this space for details as to how to apply.





## 2024 Christmas Challenge

Christmas time can be super busy, especially in The Salvation Army and we want you to take a moment to stop and savor the season. To help with that we are issuing a Christmas challenge!

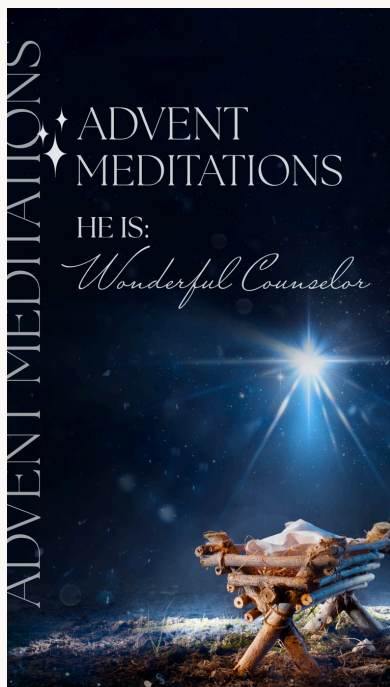
The challenge is simple, take a photo every single day, documenting the season leading up to the final day of the year. There are 31 photo prompts - one for each day of December.

We ask that you share these on social media, tagging the Territorial Candidates Department on Facebook and Instagram (@sacandidates) so we can see the season through your eyes.

If you are a Candidates Connect member, create a collage of your images and send it to us by January 10th, 2025 to be entered into a draw to win a special prize.

Head to [www.sacandidates.ca/resources](http://www.sacandidates.ca/resources) to download the challenge today.

We hope you enjoy these prompts, and most importantly, have fun with the photography project!



Our 2024 Advent devotions  
are based on Isaiah 9:6

“And his name shall be called,  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”

Each Sunday of Advent, a video  
reflection will be posted on our social  
media platforms for you to listen to  
and reflect on each of these titles.

Make sure you follow us on Instagram  
and Facebook!



It is always good to look back and  
reflect on the year that has past,  
while making plans for the year  
ahead. If you head to our resource  
page, you will find two year end  
retreats for you to choose from.  
[www.sacandidates.ca/resources](http://www.sacandidates.ca/resources)

As we prepare for the new year ahead, SA Candidates is designating 2025 as a Call to Prayer, inviting our Salvation Army family to join us in asking the Lord of the harvest for harvest hands (Matthew 9:38) - people who see the harvest through His eyes ... but who aren't content to merely see it, but to enter it, take up the plow and share the truth about the abundant and eternal life we have in Christ.

This is a prayer for individuals to respond to God's calling to full-time ministry as Salvation Army officers, as well as lay ministry opportunities and ministry in the local corps setting. All doing their part to love and help others. As part of this prayer initiative, there will be a different focus/activity for each month for us to engage with, including both corporate and individual prayer activities. These resources will be available at [www.sacandidates.ca](http://www.sacandidates.ca). (Note: Prayer resources will be uploaded to the website on a quarterly basis.)

Thank you for your commitment to partner with us in praying for harvest hands.

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 CALL to PRAYER

on your knees  
and pray for  
*harvest hands*

MATTHEW  
9:38




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 CALL and COMMITMENT 2025

on your knees  
and pray for  
*harvest hands*

MATTHEW  
9:38



Each year, the month of February is designated in our territory as Call and Commitment Month, where we create space for individuals to discern and explore God's call on their lives. It is a time to reflect, pray, encourage others and journey together as we listen with open hearts to His voice.

As Jesus spoke about the harvest and the needs associated with it, He gave a divine command ... pray for harvest hands. The verb means to ask or request. But it is more forceful here. It is to pray earnestly, fervently, and zealously. This is a harvest that needs laborers. We must go before the Lord and ask Him to raise up workers in His field.

Call and Commitment resources can be found at <https://salvationist.ca/candidates/call-commitment/>

## Resource Highlight

Our November Territorial Candidates Connect event was led by Kevin Slous, who introduced the Personal Discipleship Grid for Candidates.

As a developing spiritual leader, you will want to ensure your continued growth in learning, spiritual formation, and hands-on expression of faith development. The Personal Discipleship Grid will help you to become (and stay) even more intentional in these areas, helping you model holistic discipleship in your life, ministry and leadership. But discipleship is not meant to be a solo journey. As such, the Personal Discipleship Grid will help you establish an intentional rhythm of life, within the context of purposeful relationships (mentoring, small group, etc.). Whether you're a mentor, a mentee, or part of a peer accountability or small group, you'll find yourself taking steps towards a deeper life of faith in action.



life-long apprenticeship | conformity to Jesus | a shared journey

To get a copy of the tool, you can head to <https://salvationist.ca/candidates/resources/> or contact your Divisional Candidates Secretary.



### December

- 1 Advent begins
- Christmas Challenge begins

### 2025 - A Call to Prayer begins

### February - Call and Commitment month

- 2 Call and Commitment Sunday
- 9 Territorial Candidates Connect 6pm via Teams.

### March

- 5 Ash Wednesday - Lent begins

### April

- 18 Good Friday
- 20 Easter Sunday

### May

- 4 Territorial Candidates Connect 6pm via Teams



For more resources, information and inspiration, please visit us at



[www.sacandidates.ca](http://www.sacandidates.ca)



[instagram/sacandidates.](https://www.instagram.com/sacandidates)



[facebook/sacandidates.](https://www.facebook.com/sacandidates)



[thq.candidates@salvationarmy.ca](mailto:thq.candidates@salvationarmy.ca)

*"The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;  
 your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.  
 Do not forsake the work of your hands."  
 Psalm 138:8*



## Meet the team!!

Major Carson Decker, Territorial Candidates Secretary.

### **Top row, left to right.**

Captain Joyce Downer, Divisional Candidates Secretary, BC Division.

Major Louise Pond, Divisional Candidates Secretary Atlantic Division.

Major Indira Albert, Area Candidates Secretary, Quebec (Atlantic Division)

Shona Burditt, Candidates Project Coordinator, Territorial Candidates Department

### **Bottom row, left to right.**

Major Ashley Bungay, Divisional Candidates Secretary, PNT Division

Lts. Miya Bradburn and Jeff Robertson, Divisional Candidates Secretaries, Ontario Division

Lt. Amy Patrick, Area Candidates Secretary, Bermuda (Atlantic Division)

Janah Vitalicio, Administrative Coordinator, Territorial Candidates Department