

REFLECTION

The following questions are intended to facilitate reflection on the issues raised by this statement and assist in identifying potential changes to practice which may be required as a result.

- Are there ways in which aspects of this theological reflection statement apply or relate to you personally?
- How do you respond to the word ‘racism’?
- Focussing on your work or corps setting, what might the following statements look like in practice?

The Church is called to demonstrate God’s grace and love for humankind by being hospitable and welcoming to and inclusive of people of all racial, ethnic and cultural identities (2 Chronicles 6:32-33; Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:17-19; 1 John 3:18). This is only possible when doors, arms, hearts and minds are open to welcome all into fellowship and full participation with warm hospitality.

...every person has a part to play for the Church and indeed the world to function as God intended (1 Corinthians 12). We therefore seek to promote and facilitate inclusion of people from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds at all levels and in all contexts.

- How might we lovingly address practices, behaviours or systems which are directly or indirectly incompatible with God’s call to inclusion, hospitality, welcome, equity and justice?
- How might we (as individuals, corps, teams, departments, an organisation etc.) seek to expose, challenge and correct stereotypes, prejudices and practices which result in exclusionary behaviours towards some people, or unfair positions of power or privilege for others?
- What are the implications of the issues raised above as we seek to ‘Love God, Love Others’?

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United Kingdom and Ireland Territory

Loving others

A theological reflection on racial, ethnic and cultural justice, equity, inclusion, hospitality and welcome

The Salvation Army in the UK and Ireland Territory believes the fundamental truth that humanity is made in the image of God, and the human race – in all its beautiful diversity – evidences aspects of God’s character and demonstrates the multifaceted nature of God’s creation (*Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 2:10*).

Every human being has intrinsic worth and is precious and valuable in God’s sight (*John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; Galatians 3:28 and 5:14; Ephesians 4:1-6; Colossians 3:11*). There is, therefore, no moral, social, biological or theological justification for any racial, ethnic or cultural group to be considered inferior or superior to any other (*Psalms 139:13-15*). God alone has power, authority and dominion over creation, and the whole creation is subject to his lordship (*1 Chronicles 29:11; Job 33:12; Psalm 95:3; John 3:31; Colossians 1:15-17*).



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This is only possible when doors, arms, hearts and minds are open to welcome all into fellowship and full participation with warm hospitality.

It is God's design and desire that people of all backgrounds worship and serve Him (*Revelation 7:9*) and every person has a part to play for the Church and, indeed, for the world to function as God intended (*1 Corinthians 12*). We therefore seek to promote and facilitate inclusion of people from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds at all levels and in all contexts.

Racism in all its forms is sinful and contrary to God's nature and will, evidencing a disregard for the image of God in which humanity was created, and a lack of love for those God created (*1 John 4:7ff*). Therefore, we celebrate diversity and are committed to inclusion because people of all racial, ethnic and cultural groups should be welcomed, valued, respected and treated with dignity (*Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 3:28; 1 John 3:23*).

God's vision for creation has no place for powers, systems and structures which marginalise and exclude people on grounds of race, ethnicity or culture. We therefore oppose and seek to expose, challenge and correct stereotypes, prejudices and practices, which result in exclusionary behaviours towards some people, or unfair positions of power or privilege for others (*Micah 6:8; Matthew 21:12; James 2*).

Prejudice, discrimination and flawed perspectives of others' worth can be both individual and/or institutional, intentional and/or unintentional. We confess and repent of times we have fallen short of God's standard (*Romans 3:23*), and we commit to seek out and proactively address practices, behaviours or systems which are directly or indirectly incompatible with God's call to inclusion, hospitality, welcome, equity and justice.

Inclusion, hospitality, welcome, equity and justice are central to God's nature, the ultimate expression of which is found in Christ (*Galatians 3:28; Romans 5:10-11*), in whom we are reconciled to God and to one another, so we are 'no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household' (*Ephesians 2:19*).

We believe God calls us to pursue justice, and challenging injustice is fundamental to this aim. However, where obstacles to justice persist, the achievement of equity may require measures which encourage and facilitate the inclusion and participation of those who might otherwise be excluded (*Deuteronomy 16:20; Psalm 9:7-9; Psalm 67:4; Psalm 99:4; Proverbs 29:14; Isaiah 11:4*).

Scripture states that the greatest commandment is to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (*Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8*). It is our privilege and responsibility under God, who extravagantly loves and welcomes us, to live out that same love, expressed through racial, ethnic and cultural justice, equity, inclusion, hospitality and welcome (*1 John 3:18, Deuteronomy 6:5*).

