# Creative worship and prayer ideas

Sunday 2 July is Founder’s Day. In other words, our birthday! We want to focus on celebrating who we are – our vision, our people, our values. We want to celebrate how proud we are to be The Salvation Army, and the massive force of good it is in today’s world and should be in generations to come.

This resource offers creative worship and prayer suggestions to encourage and give thanks to the local leaders, volunteers and supporters who are putting their faith into action and living out our values in your corps and community. Farewell Sunday ideas are also included to give thanks to your leader(s) if they are leaving this summer.

For this Sunday to feel extra special you could decorate your hall using balloons and banners. There could also be a craft table set up with the Salvation Army birthday colouring sheets for anyone to come and colour during the meeting. After the meeting celebrate together by sharing birthday cake with your tea and coffee.

## Prayer

Written prayer

Father God,

Thank you for all that you have given to us. In this time together, we want to appreciate your blessings and generosity for all you have provided for us in this community. There are times when we take your blessings for granted and focus too little on the ways in which we are so fortunate. Teach us to be full of praise and to celebrate your wonders in all circumstances. We pray for those who don’t have access to the same privileges we have, such as the safety to gather together in your name, financial resources and community opportunities. May you surround them with your guidance and love to protect them through difficult days.

Lord, we come to you with open hearts, ready to be transformed to continue the work of The Salvation Army. You have a plan for each one of us – guide and teach us to become all you want us to be. Amen.

Responsive prayer

**Leader:** Lord, we come before you in this time of prayer to give thanks for you all you have done in and through this church. We thank you for the lives you have transformed and used to do the work of your Kingdom.

**Congregation:** We give thanks to God for all he has done.

**Leader:** Thank you, God, for you have provided everything we have ever needed to build this corps. Help us be ready to receive more blessings from you in future days.

**Congregation:** We give thanks to God for all he has given.

**Leader:** During times of difficulty and confusion, you have been our guide and taught us the right direction to follow. Help us to continue to listen and to be obedient to your word.

**Congregation:** We give thanks to God for all he has taught us.

**Leader:** Creator God, help us trust in your plans for each of us. Thank you for your promise that you will always be by our side to protect us all. Speak to each of us here so we can clearly hear the call of your voice.

**Congregation:** We give thanks to God for everything he has promised. Amen.

### Creative prayers

#### Paper chain prayers

Equipment: paper strips, stapler / sticky tape

Give each person two strips of paper. On one piece of paper, write a prayer of thanks to God for all he has done in your local church: for example, the mission opportunities, people who have connected with the corps, the space and safety to meet together. Write your words of appreciation to God.

On the second strip of paper, write a prayer of hope for the future of The Salvation Army. Pray that God will continue to make his presence known and grow us into the people he made us to be. After this time of reflection, collect all the pieces of paper and link them together using sticky tape or staples.

We are a community united in prayer with thanks and hope for our future. This paper chain of prayers can be added to over time as a reminder that our thankfulness should never stop growing. The chain may also be used to decorate the hall or at a community event during these times of celebration.

#### Church community tree

Equipment: Canvas, paint, pens, paper, scissors, stapler / sticky tape.

On a canvas, draw the bare outline of a tree. Whenever people enter the building leading up to the celebration, encourage them either to leave their fingerprint or to draw and cut around their hands and attach the outline to the canvas. This might be volunteers during the week, children and toddlers attending groups, musicians coming to rehearse, or external labourers coming to fix something. The canvas should be full of hand and fingerprints by the time it is the birthday Sunday.

Use the canvas as part of a prayer time in your celebration service as a physical representation of people who help to support and benefit from The Salvation Army in your area. Spend some time in prayer to acknowledge and appreciate the time and talents of each life represented on the canvas. Pray that your church community tree will continue to flourish.

#### Thank you notes

Equipment: sticky notes, or print out the Salvation Army birthday thank you card designs

Use the birthday thank you cards or have sticky notes readily available around the room. During a time of reflection, while some background music is playing, everyone can write words of encouragement or thanks to anyone they feel supported by in the corps. It might be people who play important roles who go largely unnoticed, or leaders of groups or musicians. Once the prayers and words of gratitude have been written on sticky notes, the notes can be given to the people who are in attendance. Give enough time for people to have the opportunity to write as many notes as they see fit.

#### Awards ceremony

Leading up to the birthday Sunday, ask your congregation to nominate others in the corps who deserve special recognition for their hard work. During the birthday Sunday service, use the Salvation Army birthday certificates to acknowledge individuals who may go unnoticed. After your awards ceremony, give time for your congregation to pray openly for these people, your leaders, volunteers and community.

## Creative worship

### Classic party games to get everyone involved:

Have fun with your fellowship to start your celebration. Playing a light-hearted game is a good way to relax into worship together.

* Musical statues

Play some music for everyone to dance and move along to.

Encourage your congregation to leave their row of seats.

When the music stops, if anyone carries on moving, they

are out of the game. Once they have sat down, they

 can help you find anyone else who moves.

* Pass the parcel

While music plays, pass a gift wrapped in many layers around the hall. On each layer, place a handful of chocolates. Pause the music at random

moments. Whoever the parcel lands on, they open the layer and share the chocolates with the people around them. For the final layer, you could manipulate the game so it lands on someone in the corps who goes largely unnoticed and deserves a bigger treat. The final prize might be a bigger box of chocolate to share with anyone who hasn’t received chocolate during the game.

* Musical chairs

Get a small group of volunteers to come up to the front to play a game of musical chairs. Have a small prize ready for the winner.

* Giant treasure hunt

Place sweets or chocolates around the building before your congregation start to arrive. During the opening song, challenge everyone to go and find all the sweets and chocolates you have hidden. Once they have all been found, everyone can share the sweets and chocolate.

* Congregation limbo

Have the whole congregation participate in a game of limbo. Have two people hold a pole at both ends. Move the bar to an appropriate height depending on the height and flexibility of the individual going underneath. This could be a little chaotic so you might only want to have one round of this game.

### Illustrations

#### Paper cup balance

Equipment: Paper cups and a sheet of cardboard

(Make sure to repurpose or recycle any equipment used)

Ask for a volunteer, preferably a child or young person. Get them to stand on one paper cup. The cup should crumble from beneath them as it can’t take the individual’s weight. Then get several cups, evenly space them apart, and put a piece of cardboard on top (like the picture below).



The cups should now hold the volunteer’s weight as it is evenly spread across all the cups. The running of a church is similar in many ways. If one person takes on the responsibility of everything in a church, they will quickly feel tired and run down. When people work together and share responsibilities, it makes a stronger foundation. No matter how big or small your actions are within the corps, your contributions help to support others around you. Once your volunteer has successfully stood on a first layer, they can try to make a second layer. This shows that the strong foundation means we can continue to build.

##### Bible verses:

* **1 Corinthians 12:12**

‘Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.’

* **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**

‘Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour; if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.’

Message:

We must all work together to build the future of our corps. Spend some time acknowledging the people currently giving themselves to the work of The Salvation Army.

Whether this is serving teas and coffees on a Sunday, leading a group or volunteering, each person deserves recognition. Encourage your congregation to support each other and continue to build upon the foundation set by previous generations.

#### Can’t see, can’t hear, can’t speak challenge

Equipment: blindfold and headphones

Ask for three volunteers. One person must be blindfolded, another must wear headphones with loud enough music that they can’t hear, and the final person must not speak.

As a group, they must complete a treasure hunt around the hall. First, put the blindfold on one volunteer and headphones on another. From this point on the other volunteer must not speak. Give the team of three 60 seconds to collect a set list of items from around the hall. Write out the list beforehand or have the list projected on the screen. These items might include: a Bible, an instrument, a songbook. They must not split apart and must remain together throughout the challenge. If the volunteers work together and use their strengths rather than be hampered by their weaknesses, they should complete the task successfully.

##### Bible verses:

* **1 Corinthians 1:10**

 ‘I appeal to you brother and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.’

* **1 Thessalonians 5:11**

‘Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.’

##### Message:

Look around the room. The people around us have a vast range of strengths and weaknesses. In the 158 years of The Salvation Army, people have used their gifts and talents to carry out God’s work. Their dedication and passion towards a shared goal inspires future generations to continue the work around the world. As we look to the future, we should continue to use our strengths and build each other up.

#### Birthday praise

Equipment: A piece of paper (Recycle your piece of paper once you have finished using it in your meeting)

Start with a big piece of paper. Ask your congregation how many corners your piece of paper has. They should respond with ‘four’. Take away one of the corners by ripping it off. Ask again how many corners has your piece of paper got? They should now respond with ‘five’. Rip away another corner. Ask once more how many corners has your piece of paper got? The final answer will be ‘six’. How can it be that by taking a corner away it increases the overall number of corners? In the story of feeding the 5,000 Jesus used what God had given him and found that the more food he gave away the more food he had. God provided everything Jesus needed.

##### Bible verses:

* **Matthew 14:13-21, Jesus feeds the five thousand**

Verse 19: ‘And he told the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.’

* **Psalm 96:1-4**

‘Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.’

* **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

‘Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.’

##### Message:

During this time of birthday celebration, we must remember to give thanks to God, for he is the one who has made all things happen. In Matthew 14:13-21, before the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 had begun, he gave thanks to God for what he had provided. Five loaves and two fish were not enough to feed 5,000 people but Jesus still gave thanks for all he had been given. It reminds us that as part of our birthday celebrations we should first give thanks to God for all he has given. God will continue to provide and bless us in abundance.

## Other Bible verses around the theme

* **Matthew 25:14-30, The Parable of the Talents**

Message: God has blessed us all with our own gifts and talents. He calls each one of us to use and put our God-given gifts into action for the good of him.

* **Luke 17:11-19, Jesus cleanses ten lepers**

Message: Only one person came back to give his thanks and his praises to God. Jesus wants us to be thankful and recognise all that we have been blessed with.

## Farewell Sunday:

If your local leader is leaving this summer, this Sunday will likely be their last with you at the corps. The celebration of The Salvation Army’s birthday offers an opportunity to thank your leader(s) for all they have done during their appointment at the corps. Below are a couple of ways to thank your leader(s) who are leaving.

### Footsteps of encouragement:

Start by finding out how long it would take to walk from their current appointment to their next. This can be worked out by using maps on the internet or an app. Luckily, they won’t have to walk that distance(!), but as they journey to their next chapter the support and encouragement from your corps will be valued.

Give everyone a pre-cut-out paper footstep. Ask the congregation to write a supportive message, prayer or Bible verse to share with their leader(s) as they go forward from your corps. Footsteps show a place where someone has been, as well as their movement from that place. The leaders can keep these footsteps as a reminder of where they have been before and use them as confidence to step forward to wherever God has appointed them.

### Thank you gifts:

Put together a selection of gifts into a little hamper. This doesn’t have to be extravagant, but might include some of your leader’s favourite treats or something else you know they like. It might also include objects with special meanings or fun stories from the time they have been with you. It might also include items they will need in their next appointment, or something they will need during the move, like a gift-card to go out for a meal. When presenting your leader(s) with the basket show your appreciation and encouragement to them for the next chapter in their ministry.