



Well Being
Department

rhythms of REST

Keeping Sabbath in the midst of spiritual ministry

Jesus said 'I came to give life with joy and abundance.' (John 10:10 - The Voice)

Letter from the Territorial Commander

Dear Friends,

The second of our missional priorities under the heading of T-I-D-E is Integration. The temptation remains to confine our thinking about integration to missional collaboration and co-operation between services - corps and social centres. To do so is to miss the opportunity to explore integration as a concept of our holiness theology - in the healthy wholeness of our being, both corporately and individually.

A study undertaken by our Well Being Department has revealed that many of us lack 'integrity' - in the broadest sense of the word - because our busy lives often result in a lack of 'wholeness, coherence, cohesion, undividedness and togetherness'. For many, the need for nurture is neglected as we seek to fulfil God's work and address

the many demands that we encounter every day. The pressure of ministry and leadership places us under great stress, and not all of us are as skilful or even as disciplined as we need to be to relieve that pressure.

This booklet goes some way to address the challenge we face in bringing better balance to our lives. I believe that wholeness within engenders unity without, and that this will enhance the integration of our mission.

I commend this initiative, and encourage you to seek the abundant life - life in all its fullness - which Jesus came to give.

Yours sincerely,

Commissioner Clive T. Adams
Territorial Commander



Introduction

It is such a privilege to be a Salvation Army officer among so great a group of people committed to serving God within The Salvation Army. We are committed to bringing the good news to people of the promise of life in all its fullness. (John 10:10)

However, I want to be honest and share that in my commitment to share this life with others I have sometimes been in a position where I have not been experiencing it in my own life. There have been times in the past when I have been stretched beyond a healthy capacity. I have given beyond my own resources, failed to be replenished in my own spirit, and I know that I am not alone in this. The officers' Vocational Development Pathway 360 Paro reports have revealed consistently over the past ten years that an officer's ability to maintain a healthy work/life balance is the lowest scoring competency. This is a shared experience with many employees and volunteers who are devoted to their work and sometimes struggle to share a similar commitment to rest.

In 2013 research was carried out and a report written on the subject of stress in officership. The report stated that:

'...around 40 per cent of UK officers are experiencing stress or extreme stress at any given time. Stress, along with anxiety and depression, accounts for around half of sickness absences amongst UK officers. If we believe that the future of the world rests on our shoulders, particularly in the context of increasing secularism and years of declining church attendance, this will affect our willingness to stop and rest, and leave needs unmet. Changing our susceptibility to stress may require a change in some of these patterns of thinking.'

*'O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!'*

John Whittier

The report made some helpful recommendations, some of which have been implemented and others are currently being worked through. It recommended the encouragement and support of officers to fully engage with Sabbath rest.

The Well Being Department have been asked to look for ways in which we can support these recommendations, and so this booklet is intended to encourage conversations among officers about how to build Sabbath into a busy spiritual ministry. I'm grateful to Major David Taylor who has written the main content and for other members of the Well Being Department who have contributed by collating stories from officers and provided further resources.

Sabbath is a gracious invitation from God to enjoy the riches of his love and to live within the boundaries of his provision and strength.

We all know this to be true, and yet often find it so hard to make choices that honour the very first requirement of God on our lives - that every week we remember to hold as holy the time in which he calls us to delight in him, to honour him as Lord of all and to simply rest in his presence. It is my prayer that these resources will be of some help in encouraging us all to take the Father at his word and discover anew the abundance of life that is to be gained in his presence and through receiving his rest.

Major Judith Payne
Director for Well Being and Leadership Development

Sabbath rest

Modern-day rhythms

Sabbath is integral to the rhythm of God's creation. Creation resplendently parades an array of wonderful rhythms that enrich our lives. Night follows day, summer follows spring, winter follows autumn. The majestic opening chapter of Genesis concludes with the acknowledgement that *'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning - the sixth day'*; and *'on the seventh day he rested from all his work'*, blessing it as holy (Genesis 1:31; 2:2 NIV).

Our industrialised, mechanised and now digitised world seems increasingly oblivious to these rhythms of nature. Everything is instantly accessible, possible, available. There is little time to stop. We are afraid that we might lose an opportunity, miss a connection, waste time, fall behind or depreciate our value. In this technological world it is easier than ever for work to squeeze out more healthy rhythms of living and to incessantly dominate our lives.

'God always and eternally intended the Sabbath to be a lifestyle—an attitude, a perspective, an orientation for the living that enables us to govern our lives and steer clear of bondage.'

Priscilla Shirer

'There is something deeply spiritual and challenging in having projects that need to be completed, yet choosing to put them aside and focus on who gave us the privilege of the projects in the first place.'

Captain Lee Raggett



The search for significance

Workaholics exist in most walks of life, but in Christian ministry there are particular concerns. The nature of a caring, pastoral profession which exists for others, is often met with the frailties and vulnerabilities of a human nature that craves appreciation, being valued and feeling significant. The reality is that none of these understandable needs can be met by simply working harder and longer. Ultimately the significance, value and appreciation that nourish our souls and allow us pause for rest, for refreshment and vitality are found in our relationship with God. Here we discover our true identity as God's sons, daughters, friends and partners - not through what we do and how hard we work, but simply through the undeserved free gift of God's grace.

'...If I find myself getting worked up by paperwork and forms and letters and questions and all the other things, it is easy to sit despairing that on yet another day these things needed sorting. As soon as I feel overwhelmed I spend time refocusing myself on the missio Dei until God stills my soul enough for me to continue with what I was doing.'

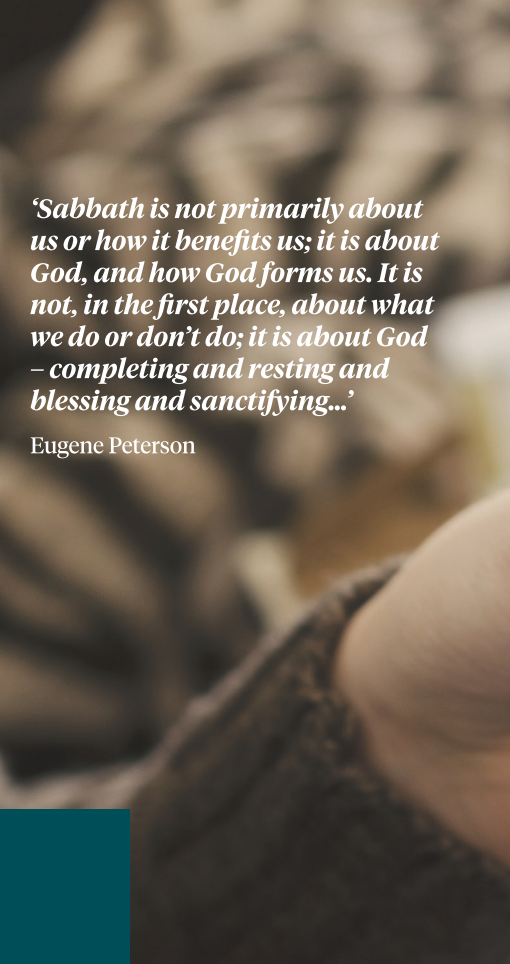
Lieutenant Megan Lowe

Sabbath is a gift. It is a gift that we must learn willingly, gratefully and joyfully to receive. God has shown its value in the act of creating the world, gifting it to us for the enrichment of our lives. In his book *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, Peter Scazzero helpfully notices four important dimensions in the full enjoyment and benefit of Sabbath. He puts it like this: *'Biblical Sabbath is a twenty-four-hour block of time in which we stop work, enjoy rest, practise delight, and contemplate God.'* Each of these four elements of Sabbath adds something distinct to our healthy living and wellbeing. They are worthy of our consideration and will be explored throughout the rest of the booklet.

Stop work

The first dimension of Sabbath to explore is to stop work. Work which is both paid and unpaid of course is positively good and to be fully and conscientiously embraced. But we are foolish to think that it all depends upon us! One of the most liberating realities is to discover that when we stop and take time out, everything does not come to a grinding halt. Life continues, other solutions to problems are found, or they may simply wait. Many deadlines are, after all, arbitrary or even unrealistic, and most importantly we are not indispensable. It is a sobering lesson to learn and one that requires both courage and discipline - the courage to let go of striving for significance, value and appreciation through our own human efforts, and the discipline to take positive action.

At the heart of healthy spiritual, emotional and physical lives are disciplines that position us in the right place before God's Spirit, who is able to refresh, renew and resource us in the maturing of our lives into our full humanity. There are many practical disciplines which serve this purpose, some of which we have become more familiarly accustomed to and which are therefore more habitual, such as prayer, worship and service. But Sabbath is an essential discipline that we must choose. It involves the decision to stop everything that relates to what we understand as work, whether paid or unpaid, for 24 hours, so that we are in the right place for the unfolding rhythm of God's purposes to take shape in our lives.



'Sabbath is not primarily about us or how it benefits us; it is about God, and how God forms us. It is not, in the first place, about what we do or don't do; it is about God – completing and resting and blessing and sanctifying...'

Eugene Peterson

Pause for thought...

What practically is the best, regular, 24-hour period that I can build into my weekly routine, in which I can stop all paid and unpaid work?



‘There are many people I know who possess a vision of evolution yet seem to lack the will for it. They want, and believe it is possible, to skip over the discipline, to find an easy shortcut to sainthood.’

M. Scott Peck

‘Sabbath rest means so much more than just a day off. It is a day for me to focus on who I am in Christ without the responsibilities of the role that I have been called to. By taking time to stop and metaphorically take off the uniform for a period of time, I know that when I step back into my role as a Salvation Army officer I do so with a deeper sense of calling rather than obligation. I know that busy times in the church calendar can make taking a full Sabbath day challenging, but I am also aware of the flexibility of the role that I have which means that I have choices about when I work and when I rest.’

Captain Jonathan Raggett

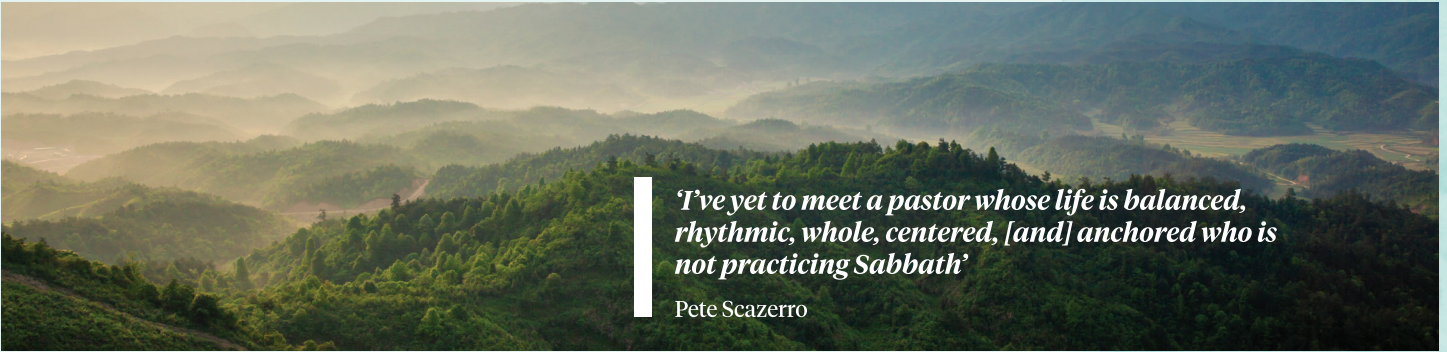
‘Sabbath rest or time off has to be planned and programmed for, just as much as those things which are a part of our work and ministry. We have to ensure that we do actually take Sabbath time and stop work for a while. Only very self-disciplined people can experience Sabbath as part of their working day. Whether it has been a half-day, a whole day or a holiday, the change of pace, scenery or even just sitting in the back garden reading has been beneficial. How Sabbath is worked into our lives is a matter of personal choice. The important thing is, though, that we actually do it.’

Lieut-Colonels Graham and Kirsten Owen



Enjoy rest

Once we have stopped we are ready to rest. Sabbath was good enough for God to recognise the importance and value of a day of rest, and Sabbath is a gift to us from God. To recognise that Sabbath is an aspect of the rhythm of God's creation is to receive the gift of Sabbath as an act of God's grace to be enjoyed, rather than a legalistic chore that gets in the way of our enjoyment. Sabbath is to be enjoyed for the gift of rest, a gift gracefully provided by God long before it was codified in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). 'Grace' and 'joy' spring from the same root word in the Greek language. When with open hands we fully receive and embrace the undeserved gift of God's generosity, we are filled with a joy that flows from a deep reservoir of God's provision for us and within us. If we refuse or dismiss the gift, we not only close our hearts and minds to the generosity of the giver, but we also needlessly impoverish the receiver.



'I've yet to meet a pastor whose life is balanced, rhythmic, whole, centered, [and] anchored who is not practicing Sabbath'

Pete Scazerro

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Sabbath rest is not merely to enjoy one day of the week, but to begin to taste the joy of an eternity with God (Hebrews 4:9-10). It is hard for us to begin to imagine the full beauty, glory and peace of God's presence awaiting us in God's new heaven and earth. Yet Jesus is clear that in him the Kingdom of God is inaugurated; it is here and now, a foretaste of the future. In the same vein, Sabbath rest from work is not only a fundamental part of the rhythm of God's creation for us to enjoy, but also a starter or appetiser to whet our appetite for the feast that is being prepared. A well planned week that intentionally uses the time available for work is one that makes possible a whole day's rest from work, at the point in the week that a 24-hour period best fits into our weekly routine.

Pause for thought...

What changes will I need to make in my weekly working practices, so that I can be fully liberated to devote a whole 24-hour period to Sabbath rest, without fear that this time will be encroached upon?

'It is hard to ensure I keep my Sabbath rest, and it has meant I turn off my work phone, don't answer emails and have intentionally informed people that I am doing this. I actively encourage all of my team to practise Sabbath rest and have taken steps to ensure they have the opportunity to do this. The introduction of Sabbath rest has allowed me to recharge my batteries after a busy week, and also allowed me to renew and strengthen my relationship with God. My family also benefit from this as I am more relaxed, and then able to spend better quality time with them.'

Lieutenant Daniel Holland



Practise delight

Sabbath rest does not need to mean doing nothing. Sadly in some people's minds Sabbath has become associated with legalistic attitudes about what you can or can't do. A significant part of Jesus' ministry involved his conflict with overly zealous, religious and legalistic attitudes on the subject. At a particular point of conflict, Jesus reminded his critics that *'the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'* (Mark 2:27). This fundamentally important principle reinforces the reality that God's gift of Sabbath is for our enriching and refreshing in relationship with God, and not just a principle that we must itself serve. Therefore, the resting that is at the heart of Sabbath can include any number of pursuits and delights that genuinely refresh and restore us. If we are to find the most benefit from Sabbath, we need to learn about which delights fulfil and refresh us, as they will differ from person to person. The important point is that they are a rest from any work that is both paid and unpaid.

If you were to speak about your own enjoyment of Sabbath, it could mean reading a good book, watching an enjoyable film, eating good food, exploring new places, walking in beautiful countryside or climbing a mountain and feasting upon the view of God's creation from the top! For each person it is different. Whilst there are delights that might be solitary, there are many that involve good company. It is important to discern the difference between those relationships that we might delight in on the Sabbath, because they refresh and restore us, and those relationships which are equally important but which, because they are more associated with work or with Christian service, are potentially draining of our energy. Sabbath is not a day to be drained of our resources, but for those resources to be replenished for the six days that lie ahead.



'In my desire to embrace the Sabbath I realised it was not about doing nothing. I became aware that for me it meant doing anything which brings restoration, relaxation - preferably both - physically, spiritually and emotionally and that the rest that I find I deeply need comes from renewed time with my Lord and finding my peace with him.'

Lieutenant Janine Skinner

'The important thing I have learnt is that whatever I do during my Sabbath is to ensure that it gives me joy and delight in God's presence.'

Captain Jo Walters



*'Thou madest us for thyself,
and our heart is restless
until it rests in thee.'*

Augustine of Hippo

Pause for thought...

What delightful things will I be able to prioritise in my Sabbath rest, and what advance planning will this involve so that I am ready to enjoy them?

Contemplate God



'To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and ready to receive, we are at last at the point where we may begin to grow.'

Rowan Williams

Sabbath is especially an opportunity to focus upon our life-fulfilling and transforming relationship with God. Placing this fourth dimension of Sabbath last is not an indication that it is the least in our list, but that it is the culmination of all the others. Our deepest restoration and refreshing is found in the presence of God who made us and wishes to enjoy our company, now and in eternity. The Psalmist reminds us to *'take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart'* (Psalm 37:4). Stopping work, finding rest and taking delight are most fully realised in God's presence. So it is that the Psalmist goes on to say, *'Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him'* (Psalm 37:7).

Pause for thought...

How will God have my full attention in the plans I am making for Sabbath rest, so that I can be truly open to God's transforming power, in which my word is fully found in God's word?

Christian ministers who are very active may easily fall prey to the danger of allowing little time for contemplation, for what we might call spiritual vision, for looking thoughtfully into the depths of our reality in which we are in God, and God is in us.

Sabbath is, therefore, God's gift of rest from the everyday routines of working life, in order to be able to take great delight in the life that God has gifted us and to grow in our deep understanding of our life in God and God's life in us. It is true that these things may and should be contemplated every day and not just on the Sabbath. Contemplation and action must be two realities that go hand in hand, constantly. This is at the heart of lifelong learning and development. But Sabbath represents the opportunity to make contemplation, through our rest and delight, a whole day's priority.

Two aspects of our contemplation of God are critical for our maturity, growth, resilience and wellbeing. The first is that we are in a place where God has our attention and is able to speak to us, to reveal the deep things that God has for us. Our transformation will not take place in our strength and efforts. It is a work of God, accomplished through the powerful word of God spoken deep into our hearts and minds. Secondly, this deep word of God will help us to be able to discern more readily those words which are not from God. We live within a fallen world, in which Paul describes our struggle *'against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'* (Ephesians 6:12). These must be resisted and opposed!



'A couple of years into our officership, God spoke to my husband and me through Exodus 23 and called us to take a year of Sabbath as a corps, by gathering together at the feet of Jesus as a community, listening to him, and resting. We noticed that we had become more missionally fruitful in the first six months than in the previous three years put together. I feel convinced that this calling to Sabbath was not just for a year, but is a foundational principle on which the health of our life and ministry rests. Weekly Sabbath reminds me that it's God that keeps the world turning around, not me.'

Captain Vanessa Coleman

Conclusion

Time spent resting from work, delighting in God's life and contemplating God's reality, whether on our own or in the good company of others, is time in this world for being restored and refreshed in the midst of increasingly busy, complex and changing lives. It is time to discern God's voice and to distinguish this voice from the many voices that call to us. It is time that God gives to mature and transform us into full humanity, in which we are resilient, graceful and imbued with the health and wellbeing that only God's healing salvation can accomplish.

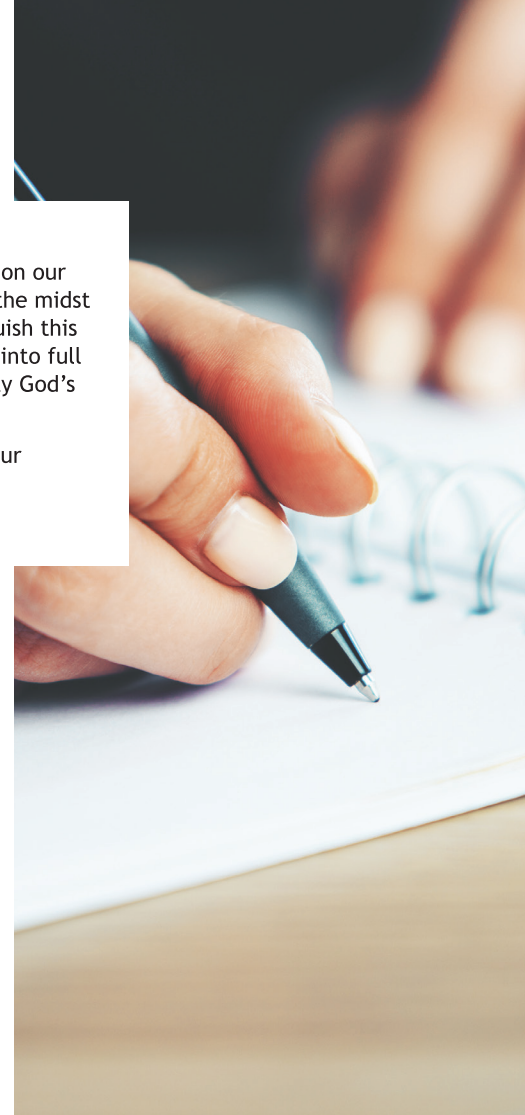
Ask God to help you to find the discipline and imagination to create the rhythm of Sabbath in your weekly life, in your family, in the communities to which you belong. It is God's gift for us all to willingly, gratefully and joyfully receive.

'We have had corps members say to us that they want more from us than just hard work; that they don't need officers who "burn themselves out", that they don't want officers to be tired, but "to inspire us", and that they want to see "an alternative, fruitful life". The Sabbath rest is our attempt to address these issues.'

Majors Gill and Paul Billard

'If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord.'

Isaiah 58:13-14





Resources

Books

- *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, Peter Scazzero
- *Rest Assured: A recovery plan for weary souls*, Vicki Courtney
- *Sabbath*, Dan Allender
- *The Rest of God - Restoring your soul by restoring Sabbath*, Mark Buchanan
- *Receiving the day - Christian practices for opening the gift of time*, Dorothy C. Bass
- *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, Ched Myers
- *Sabbath Keeping*, Lynne M. Baab
- *Rest: Living in Sabbath Simplicity*, Keri Wyatt Kent
- *The Sabbath*, Abraham Joshua Heschel
- *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the rhythms of rest and delight*, Norman Wirzba
- *Rhythms of Rest*, Shelley Miller
- *First Day - Discovering the freedom of Sabbathcentric living*, John Andrews
- *Working from a Place of Rest - Jesus and the key to sustaining ministry*, Tony Horsfall

Visit the Well Being Department page on OurHub for links to other articles and resources to help you explore this issue further
<https://ourhub.salvationarmy.org.uk/Well-Being>

‘There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.’

Hebrews 4:9, 10



Well Being
Department

Tel: 020 8536 5480

E-mail: wellbeing@salvationarmy.org.uk

Website: <https://ourhub.salvationarmy.org.uk/Well-Being>

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