Love Others: Racial Inclusion

Interview with Racial Inclusion Working Group (RIWG) member Linda McTurk

1. In a couple of sentences can you explain what the RIWG is doing and why you want to be part of it?

It’s very clear in the Bible that every person on Earth is precious and equal in the eyes of God, and it states in Galatians 3:28 that ‘there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’. But sadly, even within The Salvation Army, discrimination exists and it hurts people. This needs to change.

1. **What are the obstacles you find in ‘being together’?**

I used to find people with different life experiences challenging to relate to – I would ask myself, what have they got in common with me?

But from having lived abroad in China and America and now living permanently in the UK, I’ve realised from the people I’ve met from many different walks of life that there is more we have in common than we think.

I’ve learnt that ‘being together’ is only difficult if we are not willing to ‘listen together’.

1. **How can we pray into the obstacles, the lack of inclusion etc?**

Please pray for wisdom, discernment and openheartedness for the leadership of The Salvation Army. Real, systemic change is needed but it is difficult and costly. It would be much easier to stick with the status quo than to take the riskier route of trying something new.

Please pray for our RIWG group as we work towards helping The Salvation Army become a more inclusive environment and advocate for every person who is part of or serviced by our organisation to feel safe, heard and loved within it.

1. **What do we really want God to do through the group?**

Please pray that there would be more permanent funding allocated to the cause of our group and all diversity work. The group at the moment is predominantly run by people who are doing tasks in addition to their full-time jobs. There is not enough time or resources for our group at the moment to do all of the things we need to do to create lasting systemic change within the organisation.

Things we want to be able to achieve include:

* safeguarding THQ, DHQs, corps and every part of The Salvation Army from acts of discrimination and prejudice, including holding people who commit acts of discrimination to account
* creating more theological resources for churches to advocate for and ensure inclusivity in their congregations
* diversifying the people within The Salvation Army church to reflect the multiculturalism of British society
* helping to educate and spread awareness in the organisation about the need to be inclusive of everyone regardless of their background
* training more leaders so that the leadership of the church and charity becomes more multicultural and diverse

1. **What is your dream and vision as an outcome of the RIWG and how can we work towards this?**

In the Bible it’s clear that we need not just to have faith about something we should do, but we need to get on and do it. James 2:14-17 states: ‘What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.’

I would love for the RIWG group to eventually merge into a paid department within The Salvation Army which falls under the umbrella of an Equality and Diversity Unit. The department will then work to eradicate and prevent discrimination in all its forms within the church and charity on a permanent basis. Sadly, like the work of safeguarding, protecting an organisation against discrimination does not have a specific ‘end point’ because we are all human and thus prone to error. It needs to be ongoing, fully resourced work to make sure that The Salvation Army is a safe and inclusive place for everyone to enjoy.