



A Salvation Army Theology of Governance

Approved by the International Management Council: June 2018

1. Introduction

The Salvation Army believes that people, relationships and the created world, matter deeply to God.

As Father, Son and Spirit, *relationship* is foundational to the essence of who God is and how God seeks to mend brokenness, reconcile divisions and restore unity, peace and flourishing (shalom) throughout the creation.

People are created in God's image; are perfectly loved by God; and along with the *created world*, declared 'good' at creation. A level of authority was granted to people as 'trustees' of the *created world* – to govern, steward and care for God's creation and the living creatures that inhabit it. (Genesis 1:27-31).

However, the Genesis story of creation does not leave people or the world in this perfect state. It outlines the thinking, choices and behaviour of humans that resulted in broken relationships between God and people; people and people; and people and the created world. These broken relationships resulted in divisions and fractured shalom. God's perfect intent is no longer a reality, and a deficient pattern of thought and action is portrayed as being embedded in humanity. The wounds of this brokenness are felt by all creation, as it groans to be released from the slavery to decay. (Romans 8:18-23) It is into this world that God sends the Son and Spirit to mend, reconcile, and restore through God's perfect love.

Therefore, in response to the above and the twofold command to love God and love others; we, as God's people, seek firstly to live a life in loving relationship with God - declaring that '*there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.*' (Doctrine 2). Secondly, we determine to live in loving relationship and service to others, so that we will please God by '*acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.*' (Micah 6:8) This is lived out within the context of seeking to care for the environment we inhabit.

In light of this understanding, those who hold positions of leadership and trust within The Salvation Army will seek to live, minister and govern in ways that excel in their contribution to the love, dignity, well-being and respect due to all God's children, and the healing and flourishing of all creation. This will bring glory to God, be a worthy offering of worship and build God's reign on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus reveals the meaning of God's reign throughout the gospels, when he forgives, heals, frees, includes, reconciles, teaches and restores abundant life to the people of his time. As disciples of Jesus, we endeavour to continue this work by partnering with the Spirit in bringing God's transforming rule of love into the world.

We believe that 'the purposes of God are the final reference point for all human activity.'¹ Therefore, in our planning, actions, designs for the future, and our governance, we are accountable to God and others. This accountability is not mere compliance, but a drive towards best practice in every area.

Two key outcomes of governance renewal would be: firstly, to reaffirm God's purposes for our movement, and secondly, bring a fresh focus on our accountability to God and others in governance practices. We aspire to be a God-centred movement.

The basic meaning of the term 'governance' is the rule, control and management of an organisation. The way governance happens is embedded in the organisation's structure, processes, practices, values, culture and rules. The Salvation Army, in its pursuit of good and godly governance, seeks to ensure accountability, transparency, equity & inclusiveness, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness & efficiency and an adherence to the rule of law of the land, are all embedded in its governance.²

These characteristics can be grouped under over-arching principles of right relationships, good stewardship, mutual accountability, the use of gifts and spiritual fruit, humble discernment of the key issues, and wise decision making.

¹ *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, p 33, Salvation Books, 2010, 2013

² These characteristics (also used as italicized subtitles under the Principle headings) are taken from <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf> accessed 06/03/2018



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2. Principle of Right Relationships³

(Good governance is equitable and inclusive: all feel included and empowered to belong and maintain or improve their well-being).

The Salvation Army commits to the teachings and practices of Jesus, which affirm and demonstrate the importance of 'right' relationships.

In following Jesus, our relationships must be characterised by love, respect, dignity, equity, compassion and justice; where each person is valued, and diversity and difference are embraced.

Jesus made God's love for every person very clear – especially those considered by his contemporaries as 'less than', outcast or unworthy. He treated the poor, the sick, the vulnerable, the young, women and those regarded as sinners with dignity and respect. We are called to do likewise.

Central to the teachings of Jesus is the command to love one another, (Matthew 22:36-40), and this is given further emphasis with the new command to love others as he loves us. We are called to demonstrate this love to the world in our words and actions so that people may see and know that we are followers of the Christ. (John 13:34, 35).

'Right relationships' do not engage in flaunting authority by lording it over those in our care. (Matthew 20:25-27) In a 'right relationship', we consider others as better than ourselves and seek to humbly serve them. (Philippians 2: 1-4).

Compelled by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15), we desire and work towards the flourishing and deepest well-being of all people.

3. Principle of Good Stewardship

(Good governance is effective and efficient: it meets needs through the best use of the available people, resources and time to ensure the best possible results. There is a commitment to the sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment).

God is the owner of everything in this world (Psalm 24:1; Colossians 1:16,17), and this ownership has never been surrendered. God has, however, entrusted people to manage, administer, or 'steward' God's creation on his behalf. (Genesis 1:27-30).

A steward is one who is entrusted to manage or govern the property, possessions and affairs of another on their behalf. Stewardship is the manner or way a person undertakes that process.

Good stewardship is characterised as being effective, efficient, equitable, inclusive, innovative, careful and fair. Its management practices are marked by integrity, sustainability and selfless service.

We are charged to be good stewards of the people, abilities, opportunities, resources, and environment that God has placed into our care, and we will be called to give an account for how we have managed what has been entrusted to us.

Directly after Pentecost, the first Christians developed a way of life that expressed their love of God and each other. They met together continually, were united and shared everything they had. It was an attempt to exercise stewardship in a way that benefited the fledgling church and those in need. They followed their Jewish heritage in believing that the gifts of creation and the fruits of human effort were to be used in the service of God's plan and for the good of all people.

As we continue to exercise good stewardship on God's behalf, we are called to be both ruler and servant – existing to please our God, our Master, while lovingly taking care of God's creation as servant leaders.

³ The Principles used here are taken from 'A Theological Rationale for Good Governance', an MSR discussion paper 2011 report by the Assembly Task Group on Governance, Uniting Church of Australia



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4. Principle of Gifts and Spiritual Fruit

(Good governance is participatory: participation by both women and men is a key cornerstone; anyone affected by or interested in a decision should have an opportunity to participate in the process either directly or through legitimate representation; and participation needs to be informed and organised).

The Bible tells us that we are all created in God's image, and uniquely shaped with abilities, passions, personality, experiences and spiritual gifts. Each of us has a unique and valuable contribution to make as we participate in being part of the 'body' of Christ. Nobody can say to another, that they are not needed or that their part and participation is 'less than' another. (1 Corinthians 12:18-21) All are valued and essential.

We are all different: 'the body is not made up of one part but of many' (1 Corinthians 12:14) and we have all been given certain gifts by the Spirit. (Romans 12:6). These gifts are given to us, not because we deserve it, but because of the grace of God. These spiritual, 'grace gifts' are to be used to serve one another, as good stewards of God's multi-faceted grace (1 Peter 4:10), so that God's church can be strengthened, and the world impacted by God's rule of love. The Church is to continue the mission of Jesus and Spirit by healing wounds, mending divisions and restoring relationships. It is a mission that has the potential to transform the world, releasing men, women, children and the created world to flourish.

There is a strong emphasis in the letters of Paul that the Body of Christ functions effectively only when our various gifts are used appropriately. We are vitally joined to one another, with each contributing to the others. This does not mean that everyone has to be involved in every decision, but rather that everyone has something to contribute and should be encouraged to do so.

While the Bible indicates the vital importance of knowing and developing our spiritual gifts, it also urges believers to pursue love as 'the most excellent way'. (1 Corinthians 12: 31) Love, known as 'spiritual fruit' (Galatians 5:22, 23), is essential for the body to be unified and for believers to work together in harmony. Without the spiritual fruit of love, our gifts amount to nothing. (1 Corinthians 13).

Galatians 3:26-29 declares there are no longer divisions based on race, social standing and gender – we are all equal, united and known as children of God through faith in Jesus. Therefore, in our practices, procedures and governance, we must no longer discriminate, but be open to receiving peoples' participation through the contribution of their God-given grace gifts, marked by love.

5. Principle of Humble Discernment of the Key Issues

(Good governance is responsive: it is responsive to both present and future needs, serving the needs of the entire community, while balancing competing interests; and meets needs within a reasonable timeframe).

There is no doubt that there are massive needs and multiple ministry opportunities confronting us in this world. Nor is there any doubt that we, as God's people, are compelled by the love of God to respond, minister and act within this context. (Isaiah 1:17; James 2:14-17).

Responsiveness in and of itself, however, is not enough – discernment is required. Otherwise, when 'confronted by a sea of human need and the insatiable demands of people, we can in Stanley Hauerwas's phrase, become a quivering mass of availability' – leaving us paralysed and unable to move forward to meet needs and minister in an effective way. People's needs and demands can therefore drive us, rather than God's purposes and will.⁴ There is a profound difference between doing good things for God and discerning what are the key issues that God wants us to engage with.⁵ Indeed, we are to discern what God is doing in this world, and join in that work.

The example of Jesus, who discerned that it was time to leave his effective healing ministry in Capernaum and move on to other towns to preach God's Good News, is illuminating. (Mark 1:35-39) Jesus shows us that radical dependence on the Holy Spirit and prayer; an unwavering focus on God's purpose and will; and a determination to be obedient, permits choice and the possibility of 'no'.

⁴ Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*, Downers Grove Illinois: IVP, 2005 p26

⁵ Seamands, *Ministry*, p 26



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Also, in the Old Testament, we are told that the leaders of Issachar had an understanding of their times – that is, they understood the culture, needs, thinking and events that were shaping their world at that time. Therefore, they all knew what Israel needed to do – they knew the best course to take. (1 Chronicles 12:32) This also speaks of discernment and choice.

Discernment of the key issues is not static, but a dynamic, creative and flexible process. We are to be continually renewed in our thinking, so that we may be able to discern what is the good, acceptable and pleasing will of God. (Romans 12:2).

What occupied the focus of the leaders of the last century may not be the key issues now. God may require us to focus on a different issue tomorrow, to what we are grappling with today. In light of that, our prayer could be based on Philippians 1:9,10 – that out of our constantly overflowing love, we will grow in knowledge, wisdom and understanding, so that together, with a focussed eye on God, an awareness of the future and obedience in our hearts, we will be able to discern what is best and know what really matters.

6. Principle of Mutual Accountability

(Good governance is transparent, accountable and follows the rule of law of the land).

Accountability is a key foundation of good governance.

It means that we report, explain and are answerable for the decisions made, actions taken and subsequent consequences. It is essentially about accepting responsibility for what we decide and what we do – both individually and collectively.

Mutual accountability is a relational element that means we give ‘an account’ of ourselves and our work in a reciprocal way to one another. We hold each other accountable. When it works well, trust is built and people flourish.

Mutual accountability is at the heart of a culture of service for one another. It flows from a belief in the mutual interdependence and free self-sacrificial love of God as Father, Son and Spirit. It is demonstrated by the example of Jesus’ own service from which we derive our understanding of ministry (service) within The Salvation Army. We are to live in relational humility with each other, having the ‘same mind-set as Christ Jesus ... by taking the very nature of a servant.’ (Philippians 2:5,8) and we should speak the truth in love to each other. (Ephesians 4:15)⁶ The concept of ‘servant leader’ is forged with some challenges within a quasi-military movement with a hierarchical structure, but it can be facilitated through robust, intentional *mutual* accountability.

Each of us will give an account of ourselves to God (Romans 14:10-12) and we are also inextricably linked to other Christians, as we are all part of the one body. (1 Corinthians 12: 12-27) What happens to one part of the body, will affect the other parts. We are to hold one another to account (Matthew 18:15-17) and work for the good of all.

Our mutual accountability spans across many areas, such as family, leaders, followers, church/corps, community, government and our care of the environment. However, we should hold ourselves accountable, even when others do not require it of us.

⁶ The Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland’s ‘Territorial Mutual Accountability Charter.’



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7. Principle of Wise Decision Making

(Good governance is consensus oriented: there is mediation of different needs, interests, perspectives and expectations to reach broad consensus).

Wise decision making underpins all the above principles.

Wisdom is a gift from God and something to be desired and asked for. It is needed when mediating between different needs and perspectives, and often found when we meet together and seek the wisdom of the 'faithful'.

God was pleased when Solomon asked for wisdom and the ability to understand justice. In response, God planted the deepest wisdom into his heart. (1 Kings 3:7-13).

From that point, Solomon became known for his wisdom and the ability to make wise, insightful decisions. The Book of Proverbs contains some of Solomon's wisdom and advice in relation to wise decision making. It counsels us, in particular to seek advice and guidance from others (1:5), and listen, even when the advice is a reproof. (12:1).

The early church in Acts consistently sought the wisdom, advice and opinions of the whole group of believers, when deciding on issues and solving problems. In Acts 6, when dealing with perceived discrimination in the distribution of food, the disciples called a meeting of all believers to resolve the concerns. Again, in Acts 15, various groups of believers meet to resolve a disagreement about circumcision, until together, they determined that 'it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you.' (Acts 15:28).

The Spirit permeates the church, dwelling within us personally and communally – forming and transforming us, so that together we share the mind of Christ. The Spirit teaches us and guides us into all truth. (1 John 2:27).

If we need wisdom, we can ask our generous God who will give it to us. (James 1:5-6).

8. Conclusion

Good governance is an outworking of who we are as people of God as we seek to love God and love others. The Salvation Army, in its pursuit of good and godly governance, will continue to pursue accountability, transparency, equity & inclusiveness, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness & efficiency and an adherence to the rule of law of the land as an integral foundation of its governance.⁷

The above principles of right relationships, good stewardship, mutual accountability, the utilisation of gifts and spiritual fruit, humble discernment, and wise decision-making, are principles we must ascribe to.

Our prayer is, that as The Salvation Army, we will continue to live, minister and govern in ways marked by excellence, that contribute to the love, dignity, well-being and respect due to all God's children, and the healing and flourishing of all creation - bringing glory to God and building God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

⁷ <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf> accessed 06/03/2018