



Giving Hope Today

The Salvation Army

Ontario Division
Ottawa Citadel

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Greetings to our Ottawa Citadel Corps Family. We trust that you are keeping well, staying healthy and keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus.

It was back on March 14th that Captain Graciela and I made the decision to cancel Sunday worship due to the pending Covid 19 pandemic. At that time, I (and I think most of us) thought that after a couple weeks we would be back together in time for our anniversary weekend. Then, we had hoped for an Easter weekend gathering. Then we thought May, and then maybe by summer. Certainly, we would be back together in the corps for worship by September. Well, here we are today with many still wondering and questioning what our future together will look like and asking the looming question of "WHEN?". So, what are our next steps? Is it time that we regather?

We understand that there are some who are eager to get back to worship and get back to normal. We also realize that there are those who for health reasons, compromised immune systems, age, or other reasons are hesitant to come back to church gatherings. Let me say that whatever you are feeling at this time is indeed right for you and only you can make that decision. In no way should any of us feel guilty for our decision because we all face a different set of circumstances and realities. This means that none of us should feel any sense of spiritual superiority or inferiority and, by no means is your choice a reflection of your commitment to Christ or to our corps.

We want to thank those who took the time to complete a "Regathering Survey" and we want to point you to the latest edition of the corps newsletter 'The Contact'. I trust you will find the results interesting and will see the complexity of the decision that lies before us.

As we consider the results, we have been tasked with the responsibility to make a decision. Please trust us when we say that this decision has not been made lightly and that it has caused us anguish as we have waffled over knowing the right thing to do. This decision is made out of love for you.

We, along with the support of the Mission Board have made the very difficult decision that we will not be gathering inside for worship in the near future. Naturally the next question is, when will we? The answer is that we do not know. At this time there are just too many variables to be able to make that decision. As we consider the impact of children returning to school and the recent jumps in cases in Ottawa and across the

province, we feel we need to keep our finger on the pause button. We do not feel that it would be fair to give you a date at this time and have to rescind it before we open or to have to potentially close again. When the time is right, we will be together again.

Just as much as you, Captain Graciela and I long to regather for worship. We long to see you. We miss you. We miss shaking your hand and giving you a hug. We miss worship and being led by our worship team. We desire to hear the band play a great march for the prelude and enjoy the ministry of the Songsters. We miss being able to pray with you. We miss the joy of sharing in fellowship and sharing meals together. However, the reality is that should we gather at this time these things that we miss would still be missing from our worship experience.

This does not mean that things are not moving forward at the corps. In accordance with Salvation Army guidelines we are pleased to share that the corps will be available for small groups to gather. Bible studies, prayer meetings, YP meetings, junior and senior brass ensembles of 10 or less people will be permitted to gather in the corps building while following the prescribed guidelines. If you are a group leader please contact me for the information that you will need in order to proceed. Also, the purchase of new audio-visual equipment will help us to continue to produce quality online worship services with the possibility of live streaming our meetings.

Some will agree with our decision and others will disagree. What we are asking for is your continued support and prayers as we navigate these uncharted waters together. I am reminded of the line from song #588 that says,

*And where I cannot see I'll trust.
For then I know Thou surely must
Be still my all in all. (Salvation Army Songbook)*

That is what we must do. We must trust that God is in control and that He is working all things together for His good and for His purposes. In the meantime, we must remain diligent in pursuing Jesus Christ. We must remain attached to the Vine and to each other. We are praying for you! Captain Graciela and I covet your prayers as well.

Every blessing,

Captains Jeff Arkell

Graciela Arkell