Spreading the Word

Words of Life devotional book unites Salvationists worldwide

BY KRISTIN OSTENSEN, STAFF WRITER

When Major Beverly Ivany became an officer almost 35 years ago, she never expected that she would also become a writer. But today, as the author of Words of Life, The Salvation Army’s international daily devotional book, Major Ivany spends her days praying, reading and writing messages that she hopes will inspire Salvationists around the world—and she keeps a globe on her desk to remind her of how far those messages can reach.

Major Ivany is in her fourth year of writing Words of Life, and it may be the most exciting year yet. For the first time in its history, Words of Life is being officially translated into Spanish by the U.S.A. Western Territory, and this new version will hopefully be released by the end of 2014. “A fair percentage of The Salvation Army is Spanish-speaking so it will be a real blessing,” says Major Ivany.

Words of Life is also expanding into the digital sphere: an official app for phones and tablets is in development and is expected to launch by the end of the year.

These initiatives underscore the devotional’s significance in a growing, international Army.

“The great thing about Words of Life is that, on any specific day, Salvationists from around the world are reading the same thing,” says Major Ivany. “It unites us and helps us feel connected to the larger Salvation Army as a whole.”

A new issue of Words of Life is published every four months. Each entry offers a Scripture reading, an encouraging message and a call to action. On Sundays, Major Ivany includes excerpts from The Song Book of The Salvation Army.

“My hope is that readers will be able to apply what they read to their lives in a practical way, and live out what the Word is saying to them,” says Major Ivany. “It’s not just informative; it helps them feel fired up for another day.”

Over the past three years, Words of Life has covered every book in the Bible, following the overarching themes of faith, hope and love. Next year, Words of Life will focus on the Trinity.

“For example, with the Son, I am looking at the names of Jesus that are found in the New Testament and Old Testament, and focusing on who Jesus is and what he means to us,” explains Major Ivany.

Even when handling seemingly abstract topics such as the Trinity, Major Ivany aims to make Words of Life down-to-earth and accessible for everyone. In addition to the Bible, she draws on a variety of sources, from newspapers to novels, as well as her own life and experiences as a wife, mother and officer. In her early years as a writer, Major Ivany wrote mostly about family life and produced two devotional books for young people, Kid Talk and Teen Talk, which started off as devotionals for her own children.

Her four children and seven grandchildren continue to inspire her, as does her work as a corps officer at Toronto’s Corps 614, where she and her husband, Major David Ivany, have been appointed since 2012.
The corps is located in Regent Park, a neighbourhood where nearly 70 percent of residents are considered low-income.

“A lot of the people at our corps are very vulnerable, marginalized people,” she shares. “It’s really frontline ministry; it’s what the Army is all about.” As well as giving Major Ivany an opportunity to engage in practical ministry, the appointment often provides illustrations for *Words of Life*.

“I really feel that writing this is a partnership with God,” she says. “Sometimes thoughts come to me that I would never have thought of on my own, and I feel God saying that this is what people need to hear.

“The feedback I’ve received has been a real blessing,” adds Major Ivany, who regularly receives letters from readers. “People have told me how they were blessed on a certain day—that the message was just for them—and yet, it was written over a year ago. That encourages me to write more, if only for that one person who is going through a crisis.”