



‘INTO THE ZONE’

**Alternative Christian Faith Community for a
New Generation**

“21st Century Christian Spirituality”

**Progressive / Prophetic / Alternative
Counter Cultural / Cutting Edge / Inclusive
Global / New Faith Paradigms**

By Richard Wiltshire – WA Salvos Stores Chaplain



Into the Zone

21ST CENTURY
CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

PROGRESSIVE / PROPHETIC
ALTERNATIVE / COUNTER CULTURAL
CUTTING EDGE / INCLUSIVE
GLOBAL / NEW FAITH PARADIGMS



organized by the Salvation Army

NEW EVENTS - 1ST FRIDAY EVERY MONTH
6.30 PM - 8PM

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to promote a vision for 'Creating Faith Pathways' for today's world.

This will include proposing a new faith community called 'Into the Zone' that is culturally, theologically and spiritually congruent with a 21st century, progressive, global, multicultural and technological world. The beginnings of this community have already been trialed in the Salvation Army in Western Australia within Salvos Stores and it is hoped that this community can be developed further on a larger scale within the Australian Territory.

The key features of this community will involve:

- Exploring 21st century ideas in the fields of theology, church and Christian spirituality.
- Inviting keynote speakers to present and facilitate revolutionary, cutting edge and transformative conversations and discussions in a public event format.
- Mobilizing people who are passionate about transforming the world and their communities.
- Encouraging members to engage in new pioneering ministries.
- Utilizing technology to record and transmit such events globally via a podcast, website and YouTube account etc. (for people to access who cannot attend regional events).

These events are intended to:

- Expose people to new and cutting edge ideas in theology and spiritual formation.
- Provide a forum for people interested in discussing interesting spiritual topics and faith interests.
- Encourage people to ask profound, in depth and relevant questions for today's world.
- Be participatory and dialogical in nature.
- Provide emotional and spiritual support for community members (during Q&A, pastoral care at regional events and via online forums).
- Be held in popular / accessible external venues in the community with invitations extended to other churches, faith communities and the wider public.
- Be income generating via tickets for public events, online donations, patreon membership for the podcast and other income opportunities.

The following paper will detail how such a community can offer a fresh, alternative and cutting edge Christian faith paradigm for a new generation!

2 Christian Faith in a Rapidly Changing World

It has become increasingly apparent, that attendance within the institutional church has been in significant decline over the years (as evidenced in the 2017 McCrindle National Study on Religion, Spirituality and Worldview Trends) due to a number of important changes in our society. This includes:

- Aging congregations and an overall decline of interest in traditional models of church expression.
- Perceived lack of relevance for young people.
- Incongruence of predominantly Eurocentric and Americanized expressions of ecclesiology within today's increasingly global / international cultural context.
- Lack of support for spiritual seekers wishing to explore emerging themes and deeper questions in the disciplines of theology, philosophy and contemporary spirituality.
- Social and cultural changes since the 1960's (such as postmodernism characterized by an incredulity towards metanarratives / cultural assumptions)
- Mistrust towards traditional religious institutions with increasing numbers of people identifying with no religion (Nones) in Australian society (increase from 22% to 32% from 2011 to 2017).
- Secularization of the public sphere.
- Increased pace of life and busy work / family commitments that have made it increasingly difficult for individuals to participate in and attend traditional faith communities.
- Multiculturalism, globalization and international travel that have diversified and complexified people's faith needs, interests and requirements.
- Increased use of technology such as the internet that has transformed our understanding of community and have made it easier to access spiritual and religious teachings online via websites, YouTube or through podcasts and other electronic media etc.

'Into the Zone' is a pioneering ministry that seeks to address the above concerns as its central focus!

See section 3.

3 Features of a 21st Century Alternative Christian Faith Community

To establish a '21st Century Alternative Christian Faith Community' that can speak prophetically to a new generation in today's world, 'Into the Zone' is committed to the following principles when holding its events:

Growing Up

- Globally focussed and ecumenical in its culture, message and scope.
- Progressive and fully conversant with the latest ideas in theology and human spirituality.
- Committed to exploring new Christian faith paradigms that are prophetic and offer a truly counter cultural alternative to 'church as usual'.
- Psychologically mature and interactive with current ideas in philosophy, science and culture.
- Authentic and able to facilitate radically honest conversations and discussions.
- Incarnational and committed to transforming this world through engaging in social justice and environmental issues.
- Inclusive of all people regardless of race, colour, gender, sexuality, culture and religion etc.
- Conversant with a technologically driven society.

Waking Up

- Committed to exploring transformational and experiential aspects of faith.
- Supportive of Christian disciplines and spiritual formation.
- Supportive of contemplative approaches to prayer and meditation.
- Open to exploring Christian practices across the wider traditions of the global church.
- Committed to a mature understanding of human spirituality and awakening.
- Insightful into the phenomenological and non-dual dimension of human consciousness.
- Willing to explore new ideas, concepts and practices.

Cleaning Up

- Individually and collectively committed to psychologically, spiritually and theologically mature communities.
- Committed to challenging unhealthy views and ideas.
- Willing to critique and lament unhealthy and problematic practices and systems.
- Committed to the principles of psychological and spiritual healing.
- Supportive of all areas of personal growth.
- Respectful and compassionate towards all people.
- Committed to the full accountability and transparency of leadership.

Showing Up

- Visible and highly accessible to its members and the wider public.
- Dedicated to mobilizing local and global support within our communities.
- Committed to supporting pioneering ministries in terms of community engagement, mission, social justice and environmental stewardship etc.
- Committed to applying new insights to improve our relationships with family, friends, colleagues and the wider community.
- Interactive with other churches and faith organisations.
- Collaborative with wider community organisations, agencies and businesses.

4 Format for 'Into the Zone'

4.1 Monthly Regional Events

'Into the Zone' would consist of a series of monthly events that would be held at regional pioneer centres situated in offsite locations conducive to the culture and ethos of this new community. The evening format would consist of:

1. Keynote / guest speaker to deliver a short presentation on a topic relevant to Christian spirituality and theology for today's world. This may include a short testimony/bio of the speaker's faith journey.
2. Question and answers (Q&A) from the audience facilitated by the 'Into the Zone' facilitator / host.
3. Short notice on recommended books / materials to support further exploration of the topic at hand.
4. Coffee / refreshments.
5. Conversations, socialising and networking.

The events would be advertised within all internal TSA channels and also advertised externally to other churches, faith communities and the wider public.

The keynote / guest speaker may include:

- Ministers / pastors / officers that have a deep passion for a chosen subject area / ministry.
- University lecturers / professors that are subject matter experts on particular areas of theology and the philosophy of religion etc.
- Leaders of Christian retreat centres / Spiritual Directors who have in depth knowledge and experience on particular topics of spiritual formation.
- Chaplains and counsellors that have expertise in spiritual and pastoral care.
- Spiritual leaders within other traditions that may provide additional perspective and context for Christian spiritual growth e.g. Aboriginal leaders, local Rabbi's, meditation instructors etc.
- People with unique talents and skills supportive of human spirituality and growth e.g. musicians, artists, poets, depth psychologists etc.

Each event will include a core theme and the venue will include a speaking platform with chairs arranged to encourage conversation and participation. Examples of topics for events include:

- Spiritual Direction for Ministry Pioneers: *what is a Spiritual Director and how can people benefit?*
- Ancient Futures: *Christian spiritual disciplines and practices – old and new*
- New Monasticism: *how monastic practices and contemplative living can be applied to social action*
- What is Consciousness? *exploration into the relationship between God, ontology and phenomenology*
- Science and God: *exploring the relationship between God and emerging paradigms in neuroscience, quantum physics and consciousness studies*
- Spiral Dynamics: *evolution of psychological / sociological / anthropological and religious worldviews*
- Enneagram: *understanding personality types and how this relates to personal growth*
- God beyond Religion: *moving from early stage religion to mature spirituality*
- Christ in a Multi-Faith World: *loving Christ and loving our Buddhist/Hindu/Muslim neighbour*
- Contemplative Care: *exploring the relationship between contemplation and spiritual / pastoral care*
- Spiritual and Religious Art: *thematic Christian art throughout the ages*
- The Logos and the Universal Christ: *unpacking the Prologue to John's Gospel and other scriptures that relate to a Christology of the creation*
- On the Edge of the Inside: *mysticism and breaking taboos in church communities*

4.2 Podcast

To increase the accessibility of the 'Into the Zone' events, each event will be recoded and uploaded onto a Podcast that can be accessed globally. The free audio recordings (and video recordings where applicable) will also be uploaded onto YouTube.

This will be linked to an electronic donations page with the option of a 'patron-only feed membership' that will allow paid members to access additional materials, unedited interviews, copies of presentations, access to documents and articles etc.

4.3 Website

To support the 'Into the Zone' events, a website would be developed in order to educate, inspire, guide and connect people who wish to explore and develop deeper and more inspiring, lively and relevant expressions of Christian faith for the 21st century. This website would be linked to the main Salvation Army website as well as other external websites hosted by supporting partners e.g. other Christian organisations, churches and community organisations etc.

The website will include:

- Essential information on the 'Into the Zone' community
- Links to resources e.g. audio recordings / podcast, videos, articles, recommended reading etc.
- Information on local events
- Stories
- Opportunities to participate in pioneering ministries
- Details and address of regional event venues / pioneer centres
- Contact details for local discussion groups
- Donate details

5 Target Audience, Community and Membership

'Into the Zone' is intended to open up new and exciting conversations, prompt creativity and initiate a cultural shift that can reinvigorate the Salvation Army in today's world. The faith idea will also allow a much easier transition for new (especially young) people to become acquainted with the Salvation Army by providing an alternative format for connecting with a faith community outside a traditional corps / church venue and format. It is intended that this new faith community format will appeal to the following:

- Young people and adults who feel disillusioned with traditional church formats.
- People who are searching for a deeper spirituality as well as more progressive theological and philosophical conversations.
- People searching for fresh ideas and expressions of faith.
- People with a passion for 'Pioneering Ministries'.
- People looking for a more inclusive faith community on the basis of race, culture, nationality, gender, sexuality and religious / spiritual beliefs.
- Christians (and ex Christians) who are finding it difficult to connect with the wider institutional church due to negative experiences and past trauma.
- People who are looking for a faith community that is accessible online and via other flexible listening and viewing platforms.

6 Donations / Income

It is intended that the 'Into the Zone' community will raise funds for the Salvation Army in the following ways:

1. Ticket fees / suggested donation to attend regional events.
2. Online donations webpage to support 'Into the Zone' events and activities.
3. 'Patron-only feed membership' that will allow paid members to access additional materials, unedited interviews, copies of presentations, access to documents and articles etc.
4. Sale of coffee / tea and refreshments at regional events.

To support TSA clients and members of the public that might not be able to attend regional events due to financial hardship, people would be able to request free entry by contacting one of the 'Into the Zone' representatives or by selecting an option for financial support. Alternatively, Podcasts and Video casts would be free via a smart phone or by visiting the website.

7 Conclusion

'Into the Zone' is a pioneering alternative faith community with a huge potential to connect both locally and globally with people in today's world.

By acting as a prophetic voice within the Salvation Army, the community can speak to a new generation who are searching for a deeper spirituality and theological conversation beyond the traditional structures and systems of church. These events are intended to provoke new paradigms of Christian faith relevant to a 21st century, progressive, global, multicultural and technological world by facilitating cutting edge and thought provoking conversations.

By holding monthly regional events with keynote / guest speakers, the events will provide an opportunity to introduce the wider community to a range of interesting topics at local pioneer centers. These events can help to prompt creativity and initiate a cultural shift that can reinvigorate the Salvation Army in today's world by connecting with a global audience and membership via a Podcast and Website.

In addition to providing a highly accessible and relevant pathway to faith for today's world, the 'Into the Zone' community will raise funds for the Salvation Army through ticket sales, online donations, Patron membership fees and other income opportunities whilst providing support for those experiencing financial hardship.

It's been said that The Salvation Army was 'raised on a diet of faith-filled risk and outrageous innovation'! To continue this legacy, 'Into the Zone' provides the Salvation Army with a daring opportunity to explore a radically new vision for 'creating faith pathways' in a rapidly changing world! The only question that remains for anyone reading this submission is: do you want real change? Or do you only want 'church as usual'?

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