

Red Kettles & Christmas

Those red kettles have become a part of the celebration of Christmas. You've been seeing them for a while now at shopping malls, businesses and other public places.

The Salvation Army – an international charitable organization – is most recognized during the Christmas season with its volunteers and employees who stand outside of businesses and play and sing Christmas carols or ring bells to inspire passersby to place donations of cash and checks inside the red kettles.

The Army was founded in 1865 in London by one-time Methodist circuit-preacher William Booth. Originally known as the *East London Christian Mission*, Booth reorganized the mission in 1878, becoming its first general and introducing the military structure that has been retained to the present day. The organization today reports a worldwide membership of more than 1.5 million employees and is present in 127 countries.



An incident while Booth was on his deathbed sums up his life of purpose and achievement.

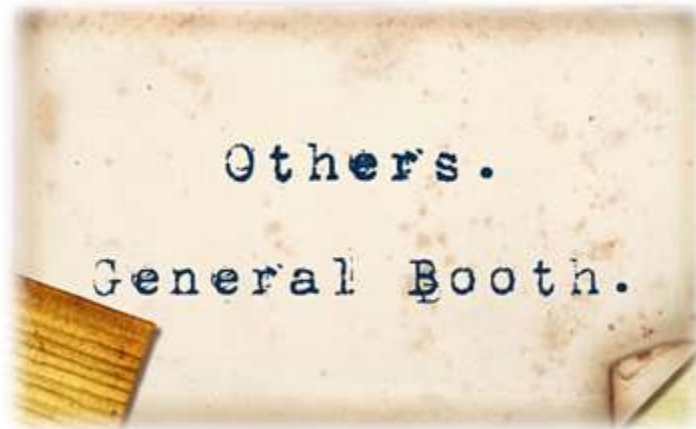
It was Christmas Eve 1910, and Gen. Booth was nearing the end of his life. His health was poor, and he was going to be unable to attend the Army's annual convention. Booth had become an invalid, and his eyesight was failing him. No one knew that he would not live to see another Christmas.

Somebody suggested that Gen. Booth send a telegram or a message to be read at the opening of the convention. It would be an encouragement to the many soldiers of the Salvation Army who would be in attendance following Christmas and their long hours of labor ministering to so many others through the holidays and the cold winter months. Booth agreed to do so.

Knowing that funds were limited and desiring not to use any more money than necessary – so that as much money as possible could be used to help the many people in need – Gen. Booth decided to send a one-word message. He searched his mind and reviewed his years of ministry, looking for the one word that would summarize his life, the mission of the Army and encourage others to continue on.

(more)

When the thousands of delegates met, the moderator announced that Booth would not be able to be present because of failing health and eyesight. Gloom and disappointment swept across the floor of the convention hall. Then the moderator announced that Booth had sent a message to be read with the beginning of the first session. He opened the telegram and read the one-word message:



At Christmas, more than any other time of the year, in the minds of most people, the focus shifts to *others* – those who need meals, clothing, places to sleep, encouragement and demonstrations of love in various ways.

The Salvation Army is committed to fulfilling such needs year around.

And so, I'm proud to say, are the associates of Life Care and Century Park, whose mission can be summed up in *others!*

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself (Philippians 2:3 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter

