

SOUL IN THE CITY

Loving London

For two weeks in July/August 2004, thousands of young Christian volunteers will be descending on London to participate in an urban action mission called *Soul in the City*. The aim is to share the Gospel message by loving the community. The mission aims to build on the remarkable success of *The Message 2000*, when thousands of Christian teenagers and young adults flocked to Manchester to help to clean and refurbish run-down housing estates and run holiday clubs for children. In Manchester, police reported dramatic drops in youth crime over the fortnight of the mission.

Soul in the City will be covering seven vast areas of London. Churches in each area are already working together to plan projects for the teams of young missionaries to take part in. For example, in the West London area (which stretches from Hammersmith out as far as the M25) teenagers will be working to improve local park facilities. They will also be providing alternative entertainment for children whilst amenities are being upgraded.

Tent cities

Thousands of teenage volunteers will be housed in a number of 'tent cities' around London. Each morning they will be trained in various aspects of mission and Christian witness. In the afternoon they will be transported to and from their respective projects by coach.

The aim is to carry out dozens of projects across the capital over the mission fortnight. Each project will require about 25 volunteers,

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More information

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all of whom will be expected to radiate the love of God to the communities they serve.

In the evenings there will be outreach events. Volunteers will promote these events as they work in the parks and estates during the day.

Pupil power

Many volunteers will be school pupils. They are not well-trained evangelists. They are simply members of local church youth groups. Although many will be used to coming together for big summer camps such as *Greenbelt* and *Soul Survivor*, this year they will be serving God together through community work.

Many non-Christian youngsters living in London will come across *Soul in the City* projects in their communities and this may well give the Christian teacher an opportunity to talk about their faith with students.

For teachers working in schools outside London there will hopefully be opportunities to speak to pupils who have taken part in *Soul in the City*. Other pupils may have heard about what happened. Either way, this is sure to initiate conversations in Citizenship and RE lessons.

Socially concerned

I understand that other, similar, projects are in the pipeline elsewhere in the UK. I would like to think we are witnessing a brand new era of mission in this country which is practical, radical, socially concerned and led by young people. I would urge Christian teachers everywhere to encourage involvement and help prepare Christian youngsters for the kind of encounters they may have as they go onto the streets for Jesus.

■ Geoff Lumley