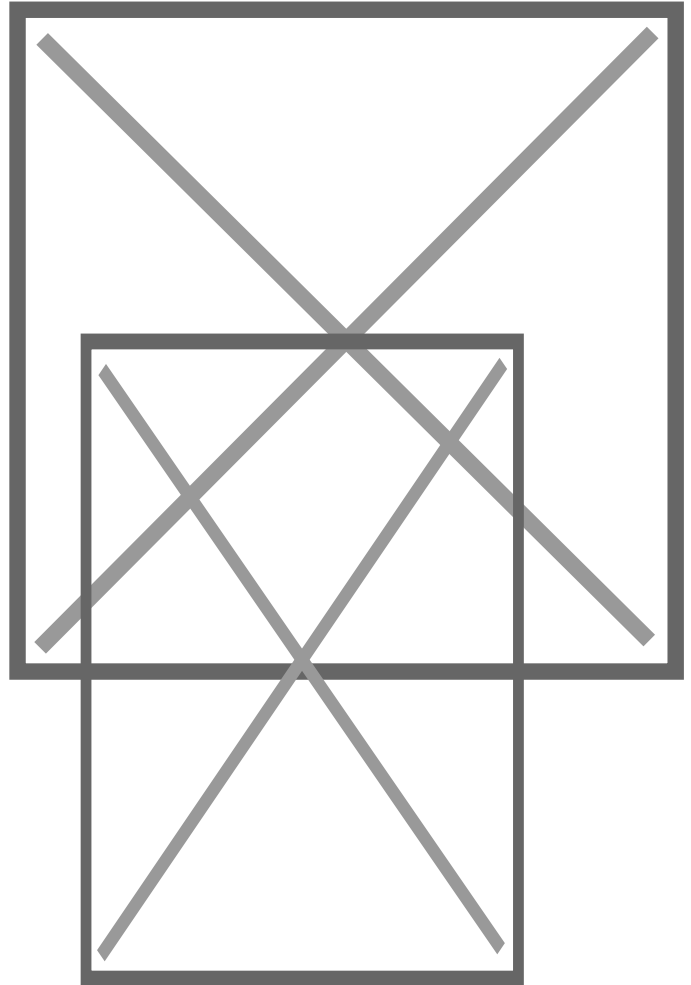


ALOVE: The Salvation Army for a new generation

United Kingdom

In the UK, ALOVE is giving a generation back to Jesus.

by Christine Clement –



ALOVE calls youth to dynamic faith, radical lifestyle, adventurous mission, and a fight for justice.

I want, dear Lord, a love that cares for all,
A deep, strong love that answers every call;
A love like thine, a love divine,
A love to come or go;
On me, dear Lord, a love like this bestow.
(SASB 426)

In 2004 the UK Territory's youth ministry team was renamed ALOVE. The name encapsulated what The Salvation Army is all about: a love that is from God, that is lived out in faith, humility and service

<https://caringmagazine.org>

to others. Renaming the youth ministries unit, ALOVE, was the result of months of research gathering opinions, perceptions and thoughts from young people throughout the territory.

Research shows that young people identified with the purpose and passion of The Salvation Army but not the military culture of the movement. Youth memberships had dropped significantly suggesting that The Salvation Army was failing to meet the needs of youth in 21st century society. For this reason ALOVE's vision is to give a generation back to Jesus. Their mission is to call a generation to dynamic faith, radical lifestyle, adventurous mission and a fight for justice.

Two years on from the launch of ALOVE what is happening?

ALOVE's mission has been embraced enthusiastically and in October 2005 leaders were able to report a 29 percent increase in youth fellowship attendance, a 21 percent increase in youth outreach, a 26 percent increase in youth work and a 39 percent increase in attendance at youth events.

ALOVE director, Russell Rook, attributes this to corps that have made great efforts to engage with young people outside the church family and the investment by the territory in the recruitment and development of quality youth workers. A third reason, and the one Russell considers the most important, is that The Salvation Army has handed its youth agenda over to the young people. More than 200 youth congregations and cells are being run by young people for young people.

ALOVE has provided a year-long discipleship and training program, called the Timothy Program. Based on the mentoring relationship of the apostle Paul and Timothy, this program is about developing disciples and equipping leaders. The program pre-dates the launch of ALOVE, having run for 15 years in which time it has trained 125 Timothies. Some of the young people have been "candidate Timothies" and used the year-long program as a foundation for officer training; others have completed the course in a gap year prior to university or other vocation.

Timothy is soon to be replaced by a new course, Essential1, but the emphasis will still be on the four ALOVE essentials of worship, discipleship, mission and social action. Essential1 will build on the Timothy program—the one difference being the intention to send the trainees out to placements in mission teams. It is hoped eventually to have a team training placement in one of each of the territory's 18 divisions. Essential2 will focus on the vocational development of young people.

Another program from ALOVE is NEO—"New Expressions Of." These church plants are youth focused and community based, seeking to transform communities through incarnational living. They imitate God's incarnation by moving teams into a neighborhood to live, work and build community among the people of the area. Such neighborhoods are among some of the poorest that can be found in British cities. It's hard work, but by living and working in the area relationships develop and eventually the gospel is shared.

Expressions of worship are not confined to the NEO initiatives. The old expressions of worship continue to interest and attract many young people. During the summer months many will participate, learn and grow spiritually through summer schools, making music and experiencing worship through creative arts. Although many of the programs mentioned in this article are administered by ALOVE,

the activities are not confined to young people only.

Similarly the fight for justice isn't confined to young people but they do embrace many such causes passionately. Whether it is spending the summer overseas refurbishing a school, joining in a Make Poverty History march or campaigning against human trafficking, the territory's young people will be there.

ALOVE's vision of giving a generation back to Jesus has well and truly begun.