

# England

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2013

## on Sunday

Giving the children a right to dream, E6



## Releasing the passion of youth

By Catherine Butcher,  
HOPE's Communications Director

In many ways, Ben is a typical British 14-year-old. He loves football and is a big supporter of Liverpool FC. He plays the guitar and goes to his local school. He isn't particularly loud or extrovert but is known for being the one who welcomes people and connects with everybody in a group situation.

What makes Ben different from many of his peers is his mission heartbeat. He is part of a HOPE Mission Academy and understands that he can make a difference in his community, in his school and with his friends.

After attending a Christian teaching weekend last year Ben was encouraged to start some mission initiatives in his school. Dan Randall, who leads the East Lancashire Mission Academy, has been helping and mentoring Ben and already there is fruit from his labour.

Over the past few months Ben has set up a simple scheme called 'Text a Prayer' for fellow pupils. He put up posters around his school inviting prayer requests, and receives around 20 texts a week on a variety of subjects from 'exams' and 'headaches' to 'grandma's got cancer'. Ben prays and has been encouraged to receive texts of 'Thanks so much for praying'. Having been heartened by the response to this, he is now developing other outreach plans with his school friends.

### Mission Academy

Ben is one of two dozen young people who are part of the East Lancs Mission Academy, which is bringing together nine local churches. In March the Mission Academy teams ran a range of outreach events that the youth planned themselves as part of the Academy. A group of five young people held a senior citizens' day linked to the local church with a special lunch and activities from playing cards to Nintendo Wii Golf.

A second group of teenagers ran a Fun Day for people in their part of Burnley with a free barbecue, sports and music, which they performed themselves. That also gave them the opportunity to talk about their faith and why they were holding the event, pointing the 130 people who came along to the local church.

A cupcake give-away in Bolton was run by a third group



Phil Timson

whose simple message to passers-by was 'Because you're loved'. They gave away the cupcakes with a card pointing to a website for more information about faith in Jesus.

### HOPE's training offer

Phil Timson is the Youth Director of HOPE Revolution, which is running the Mission Academies together with Dr Rachel Jordan, National Mission & Evangelism Adviser for the Church of England, Soul Survivor, The Message, Urban Saints, YFC, Tearfund and SU. Their goal is to prepare young people to take a lead in 2014 as churches work together in mission.

Phil said: "Whether your youth group is a handful of teenagers or a hundred, HOPE has ideas, training and opportunities to help them to take a step forward in mission. We can support you to release

the passion and energy of teenagers to share faith in Jesus in their everyday conversations, backed up by faith in action."

To contact Phil Timson about HOPE's mission training email [phil.timson@hopetogether.org.uk](mailto:phil.timson@hopetogether.org.uk). Find out more about Mission Academies at [www.hope\\_revolution.com](http://www.hope_revolution.com)

### Reasons for hope

Youth workers in Salford are also working with HOPE Revolution to run a Mission Academy. Their first outreach events were held earlier this month, supporting a local Methodist church that doesn't have many young people in the regular congregation.

Four Mission Academy teams, each of four or five young people, were involved. They met in the morning to pray and for some training. Always being prepared to 'give the reason for the hope you have... with gentleness and respect' (1 Peter 3:5) is key to the HOPE word and action mission concept.

The Salford Mission Academy equipped the team to talk about their faith as well as putting faith into action litter-picking, playing rounders with local people in the park and taking a short survey of local people's opinions. Rosie Critchlow, who leads the Salford Mission Academy, said the church was encouraged by the response to the day and would adopt a new mission strategy as a result.