

# London Cop Supports Charismatic Mission

He calls himself “the fan who joined the band.” Chief Superintendent John Sutherland is championing a charismatic mission to some of London’s toughest neighborhoods.

A longtime admirer of the Eden Network, a group of youth ministries operated by the Message Trust in Manchester, Sutherland has recently become chairman of this social action organization, which appoints youth and community workers to live and work in deprived housing projects.

“Hundreds of hard-to-reach young people are now being engaged with every week in all sorts of imaginative ways,” he wrote in the ministry’s first annual report, recently published.

The Eden Network was birthed out of the work of evangelist Andy Hawthorne, founder of the Message Trust, which impacted ’90s youth with the dance band World Wide Message Tribe. The network’s holistic blend of spiritual gifts and its service to the poor aligns them with such groups as the late John Wimber’s Vineyard movement, known for mixing charismatic ministry and social concern.

Eden London’s regional director, Daniel Haigh, summed up the group’s approach this way: “It’s the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other and the Holy Spirit behind us.”

Launched in 2010, Eden London is making what Sutherland describes as “rapid progress,” with teams in four communities in North, East and West London. Twenty-five team members operate by earning a living as teachers, designers or administrators. But they’re united in their commitment to work long-term in their neighborhoods.

The group faces its share of challenges amid London’s diverse

social landscape. Members of Eden Dalgarno in West London, for example, work in extreme poverty in comfortable Kensington. "There are many men here in their early to mid-20s who never had an education and who now see no options for work," says team leader Graham Stevenson. Another team plans to reach a poor housing project next to wealthy Notting Hill. Unlike its rich neighbor, the Brunel Estate has struggled to shake a reputation that includes anti-social behavior, prostitution and drug dealing.

Yet positive stories also emerge from the teams: truancy reduction in a high school, a "good neighbor" award scheme, weekly Sunday dinners that bring families together and a youth training program. "This is where people are moving into local communities and becoming part of the process of transformation from the inside out," Sutherland tells *Charisma*.

Sutherland, 42, attends the charismatic Anglican congregation of ChristChurch Fulham and has admired the Eden Network's work for 10 years. In his professional capacity as a senior police officer, he works with all faith communities in this multicultural capital. He also speaks at conferences by Holy Trinity Brompton, the charismatic Anglican church that birthed the world-renowned Alpha course, which offers spiritual enquirers a forum for questions of faith.

Recently appointed borough commander of Southwark, one of London's oldest districts, Sutherland is part of the Christian Police Association. But he's keen to work with anyone on community transformation—even TV stations.

In 2008, with the social concern charity XLP, he thought of turning an old police riot van into a community vehicle. They pitched the idea to MTV's popular show *Pimp My Ride*. "Astonishingly, they agreed!" Sutherland recalls.

Bull bars, a protective windscreen cage and blue flashing lights were replaced with carbon fiber and white leather

fittings. The van now houses a recording studio with a mixing desk, laptops, a video camera and a soundproof booth. "It's doing an amazing job in some very challenging neighborhoods," Sutherland explains. Instead of running away, as they'd normally react, young people run toward this riot van. "There's a lovely symbolism there," he adds.

Once nicknamed "John the Baptist" for of his faith, Sutherland promotes prayer as well as action for transforming towns and cities—"praying for the peace of Jerusalem," as he puts it.

"Policing is a stunning job for a Christian," Sutherland says with a smile. "It's things like finding the lost, helping the helpless and seeking justice on behalf of those who've been unable to find it for themselves. It's comforting those who are mourning. ... There's a DNA—an essence—that I would go so far as to say is biblical."