

Salvation Army Celebrates 150th Birthday With 'Boundless'

Next July in London, the birthplace of The Salvation Army, where founder William Booth preached his first sermon in July 1865, the organization will celebrate its 150th anniversary with a global conference: "Boundless: The Whole Word Redeeming." The 20,000-person capacity O2 arena will host representatives from each of the 126 countries where the Army is working today.

"It's going to be an event that will inspire the entire Salvation Army world, and for the first time we truly have the capacity to reach all our members everywhere," said Lt. Col. Eddie Hobgood, congress coordinator.

This is only the seventh Salvation Army international congress—the last was in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2000—and this anniversary congress is named after Booth's timeless song, "O Boundless Salvation."

"When William wandered into the East End and saw the poverty and neglect of the church, he was moved to do something," Hobgood said. "We believe very strongly the call to save the world is as strong today and The Salvation Army needs to sometimes be reminded of what we're all about. 'Boundless' is a call to continue into the next 150 years."

From July 1-5, 2015, seven sessions will feature various aspects of General André Cox's dream for the Army. Forty performance groups from throughout the world will participate—from hula, to Chinese lion dancing, and the Angola National Band.

"We know this is more than just celebration for celebration

sake,” said Stephen Dahlem, a creative consultant to the event. “We want people to leave moved and inspired.”

As soon as delegates exit the Tube’s North Greenwich Station, they should plan to be submerged in The Salvation Army story. The arena will also feature an interactive heritage display with rarely seen early Salvation Army artifacts and insight into features of today’s Army and where it’s headed.

Today the Salvation Army has become the largest evangelistic ministry and social service agency in the world. Every day, the Army touches millions of people through relief work, soup kitchens, food pantries, clothing distribution, medical assistance, drug and alcohol programs, shelters and more. And just as important, those incredible outreaches are driven by a passion to reach the world for Christ.

“We are what all the years have made us, but God has much more for us to do,” said Commissioner William Cochrane, international secretary to the chief of staff and chairman of the congress planning and advisory council. “All the experience of the years and the Holy Spirit have enabled the building of a movement that is stronger than it’s ever been in its history.”