

Tuesday's TV: God's Cadets



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God's Cadets: Joining The Salvation Army BBC Four, 9pm

Nick Poyntz's film about the Salvation Army is fascinating on so many different levels. First and foremost, he was given unique access. Not only was he allowed to film inside their Officer Training College in South London, but the cadets were exceptionally honest and frequently very funny. And that's the wonder of this film — the people. These are people who have chosen to leave their jobs, uproot their families, eschew drinking and smoking and gambling and just about everything else so that they can work full-time for the Salvation Army on £7,500 a year and devote their lives to loving the unloveable and befriending the friendless. This wonderful film would be worth watching just for the opportunity to meet Major Janet Martin, who is quite simply one of the loveliest people you will ever see on television. Unfortunately the Salvation Army does have a darker side that reflects its Victorian origins. "Those who believe in Jesus go to heaven," explains one of the officers, "and those who don't believe go to hell. And they're eternally damned forever. There's no second chance." They can be equally damning towards one another — a vicar's daughter, for example, was criticised for being middle class and shopping in Waitrose. However, the Salvation Army isn't a cult of evangelical extremists. It is more like a loving and dysfunctional family where doubt is the accepted partner of belief and compassion triumphs over dogma. **David Chater**

Two Salvation Army lieutenants in God's Cadets (BBC Four, 9pm)
BBC

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