



CHRISTIAN OPTIONS IN PETERBOROUGH SCHOOLS

Autumn Newsletter 2017



“For me spending time with other Christians my own age was perfect.”
Young Adult on ‘Awake My Soul’



“The Jesus station challenged me the most.”
Year 8 pupil, Stamford Welland Academy, on ‘Breathe’



WEB www.crops.org.uk
EMAIL hello@crops.org.uk
PHONE 01733 352701
POSTAL 68A Westgate, Peterborough, PE1 1RG

@cropsuk
/CROPSUK
crops.uk

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Matt Wild's Update CROPS Director

This newsletter looks back on a packed summer term and exciting end of summer holidays including CROPS' presence at Soul Survivor and the CROPS Summer Celebration. We hope you enjoy it! We apologise that this edition of newsletter has taken longer to get into your hands than normal. All we can say is there has been so much to get set up and sorted for this term!

Donning The Swim Shorts Again

CROPS Trustee Jon Ratcliffe has again braved cold seas and jellyfish for another fundraising swim towards our mentoring project. In July Jon swam the Irish Channel (Ireland to Scotland) raising money towards Year 2 of Chris Wild's salary as our Mentoring Project Lead. With members of Jon's family cheering him in the support boat Jon swam the 35 Km in 14 hours and 41 minutes in hugely challenging weather conditions. We so appreciate Jon's efforts and this swim has raised another £10,000 for the project. Thank you Jon and team Ratcliffe!

We'd love you to join Jon, not necessarily a channel swim (!), but partnering with us -perhaps by running your own fundraising event, coffee morning, etc, or consider setting up a monthly standing order to our work. Such regular support makes a massive difference to us. See our website for details.



CROPS Summer Celebration

The CROPS Summer Celebration was held at Bretton Baptist Church on Sunday 10th September. For those who can't remember that far back or who were unable to make it, it was decidedly autumnal! The hog roast was excellent and it was great to see so many friends young and older there. It was a great time to remember all that God has done this year in all the many activities and aspects of the work of CROPS. We were able to showcase some of our newer projects as well as highlighting plans for the coming year. **Sammy Miller** and the worship band did a great job, as did all those contributing behind the scenes, thank you. A big thanks you to Bretton Baptist Church for having us and making us so welcome.

We thanked **Nathanael Grenfell** for his contributions during his gap year and announced he is returning for a further year to specialize on the Mentoring Project. We also welcomed on to the CROPS Gap Year Team, **Honour Smith**



who is a member at **Werrington Parish Church** (WPC). Honour has just spent a year doing an apprenticeship in youth work through the YMCA, based at WPC.

More recently we had wonderful news that one of our previous gap year students, **Emily Tucker** after completing her degree in education has taken up a Christian schools worker post, and is now based in Harlow. Congratulations Emily! It is so encouraging when young people who go through the gap year are able to use their experience directly for their future ministry.

As we hit the autumn term we are busy preparing for **Letton Hall Houseparty**, which is fully booked, and **GSUS Live** a special multimedia lesson which we are hosting for seven weeks starting 30th October. Further details are later on in this newsletter. Whilst the GSUS logo is cryptic enough to get young people curious about its content (Jesus) – it is also a way of communicating the message that Jesus came to take away the sin (S) that has got in the way of God (G) and us (US)! Please don't think the name of Jesus has been changed or anything like that!

Please pray for all the team, for energy, ideas and inspiration as we go about our various roles in CROPS! This term is a challenging one as we are still fitting in assemblies and clubs whilst carrying projects like GSUS Live. We so appreciate your prayers, financial support and encouragement.

On behalf of the trustees, staff and team
Matt

Team Updates



Sheila Bucknell

Administrator and Schools Mentor

Wow! What a lot has happened within the CROPS year: gappers flourishing and growing in confidence and experience, the team reaching out to an even wider audience of schools and young people. Then mentoring growing and expanding under our Mentoring Coordinator with more young lives touched and encouraged, and more schools reached.

It never ceases to amaze me how much can be done with Jesus in our hearts and Matt leading the team. It is such a privilege to be part of the team and to work with and alongside such a group of diverse and gifted young people.

I can't wait to see what The Lord has in store for us for the year ahead and how many more young lives can be touched, with His help and provision.

Many blessings to you all.

Nathanael Grenfell

CROPS Gap Year Student

It's been another jam-packed term starting with *Awake My Soul* in the Easter Holidays. It was great to be part of a residential that I wasn't organizing, and personally have time to grow and be refreshed in my faith. It was a time spent with other young adults, building each other up. It was really encouraging and can't wait for next year! Other highlights include the many 'It's Your Move' Primary School sessions we did with loads of year 6 classes across greater Peterborough. Plus leading a Psalms based creative workshop at Ely Cathedral for the Kings students in Year 8. The hardest thing when leading that workshop was remembering not to call Chris, Chedz! This year has flown past and I've enjoyed it so much that I'm staying for a second year but with an extra focus – being part of the mentoring team in secondary schools!



Richard Kean

Walk Thru The Bible Primary Schools Presenter

Rachel approached me in the summer of 2016 with a clear direction: come and learn how to teach OT Mini. Meeting once a week for a term, she taught me the 40 hand signs and stories that make up this fun, dynamic course for primary school children. Since then I have created resources, rehearsed the hand signs, attended a course on story-telling, refined my lesson plans and delivered OT Mini to ten classes. The challenge this year will be to deliver more lessons without the joy that is team teaching with Rachel.

It is a year on from the start of my training and I am excited for the next steps in being a presenter: At the end of the summer I was at a weekend with other OT Mini presenters, each trying to tell a small part of the big picture in a way that will inspire and refresh each other. I am looking for new ways to tell the stories of Ruth and Esther. Then we are going to be delivering OT Mini in new schools this year, seeing the story of God's rescue plan reaching more children in and around Peterborough.



PRAY FOR CROPS TEAM!

Please remember in your prayers the different members of the CROPS team which not only includes the seven members you hear about in this newsletter but also 11 school mentors who have already started or who are about to start their work in schools. Most are volunteers and we hugely appreciate them!

Awake My Soul

For the second year running we took a group of 18 to 23 year olds to Letton Hall Stables for a retreat-residential. It was four days away in the delightful Letton Hall surroundings. We had twelve delegates – 6 guys and 6 girls, as well as Matt running things in the background. It was a very chilled and relaxed time, allowing the group lots of time to reflect and encourage one another. We were delighted that Daniel Pritchard, Manager of Letton Hall and (also an accredited Baptist Minister) was able to join us for one of the evening sessions and after a time of worship opened up some key verses from the book of Romans and Galatians on Grace. All we can say is that whilst we have all heard many a sermon on the subject – we got a fresh



revelation of grace in such a freeing way, which led to some great discussions and a wonderful time of prayer as a group. This for many was a special evening with one member of the group saying it was one of their highlights of the retreat, describing it as giving them “a new perspective on life”. Other quotes on the highlights of the week are:

“I appreciated the openness from each of us from the first night onwards.”

“I loved spending the week in community with others, not having a time-frame on things and just relaxing.”



The Point

We continue to have a great response from the young people across the city coming to The Point. We had an excellent summer lineup of local speakers. **Decca Riondino** encouraged us in May to read our Bibles together as he shared wisdom from his own life. In June our speaker was **Bernie Comissiong**, who spoke on evangelism and sharing your faith with your friends, as well as how not too! He challenged us to pray for the people we want to share our faith with. In July the one and only **Sam Higgins** spoke on sharing your story. He encouraged us to know that we all have a story to share and how God wants to use these to extend his story into the lives of others and change history!



CROPS Mentoring With Chris Wild

It has been fantastic to see so many people rising to the challenge and getting involved in our mentoring project since the last newsletter. We have had a steady supply of applications to be mentors that has resulted in us running several training courses throughout the last two terms. This means we now have a team of 12 mentors ready to go out into schools this term.

During the summer term five of our current mentor team continued mentoring in Nene Park Academy, Orton Bushfield Academy and Jack Hunt School. To date we have had the privilege of mentoring 40 different students and completing over 200 different mentoring sessions in this calendar year.

Our mentors have supported some amazing young people who are going through immensely difficult times, but we've also supported some really difficult young people who are facing big challenges. The young people we meet



who are struggling in schools are very different. We meet many who are on their last chance before exclusion, whose behaviour at school isn't good. And yet the background to their situations is very similar. There is usually always a heart-breaking backdrop to the current story of these young lives.

Building on this great start we are also starting mentoring, this autumn term, in The King's School, Thomas Deacon Academy and Stanground College. These are very new relationships with schools so we are very much praying for a smooth start to be made and logistics to be sorted out quickly.

It is great to encourage people by sharing personal stories of how our mentoring scheme is making a difference in students' lives, but the sensitive nature of the work means this can be hard to do whilst maintaining the confidentiality needed to make the project effective. We do however want to share some of the situations our mentors have been involved with recently.

In this last two terms many of the issues our young people are facing have 'home' as a common theme. Home should be our safe space, a base from which we go out and explore the world, especially for young people who are finding their identities. Our mentors have spent time supporting students who have been running away from home and the police who are searching for them, students who 'sofa surf' as the location of home changes



far too regularly. Students who have come home to find out their only parent have been put in prison and temporary accommodation has needed to be found. Our mentors have sat with students and helped give them the confidence to make the decision they want to make as they choose which parents' home to live in from now onwards. Another student regularly witnesses domestic abuse at home and one of our mentors has been there to support them. One student's whole family was evicted from their house for safety when his dad was sent to prison recently. When home is complicated, many students find school complicated too and it is a privilege to be able to support students in these areas of their lives.

As you hear these stories do you find yourself thinking that you'd like to be a listening ear to students like these? Do you know someone who would be a great mentor? It may be that you'd like people at your church to hear more about our mentoring project? Please do get in touch with us at CROPS if you do.

Soul Survivor

With Soul Survivor weeks B and C being held at Peterborough for the first time, we believed it was too good an opportunity to miss to raise the profile of CROPS. We had a stand in the Toolshed for both weeks. We had a number of enthusiastic team of CROPS exhibitors able to share about the work including Kat Wade, Sammy Millar, Nigel Taylor, Nathanael, Chris and Matt. We were able to distribute 1,600 CROPS wristbands to passing visitors including young people as well as youth leaders from local churches and further afield. We were able to connect with people from a wider local area who did not already know about CROPS and spread knowledge of schools work, of our gap years and events that we run. It was a beneficial time and we are looking at doing it again next summer, watch this space!



Primary Schools Work By Rachel Jessup



A little goes a long way...

It was first thing on Monday morning, I was due to do an assembly. My oldest daughter was feeling ill and not wanting to go to school. I had agreed to swap in to do this particular assembly only two days earlier. I was not feeling very ready. I went to do the assembly. I was weak that morning and left the school feeling frustrated with myself, unsure if I had done a good job. I thought I had not explained the Bible story very well or thought it all out as well as I should.

Later that day, as I returned to run the lunch club, an adult stopped me in the corridor. She had been in my assembly that morning and said, 'that was just what I needed to hear today'. I was blown away with God's grace; that He can speak through and use our weaknesses and best attempts on a bad day. I learnt that obedience is better than a polished performance and authenticity is more important than having all the loose ends neatly tied up. That bit of encouragement made all the difference to me that day. **Thank you to all those at William Law CE Primary who support and encourage me!**

A Wonderful Welcome

'You must have made an impact on one of the pupils because after last lesson she went to the library to get a Bible out,' Richard Kean and I were told as we arrived for our second OT Mini lesson at **Sawtry Junior Academy**. We had a lovely few weeks teaching 45 children the outline of the Old Testament in Sawtry, which was a new school for us to visit this year.

'**Bible Superheroes**' was **Eye CE Primary School's** assembly theme for the summer and I was asked to present

two of them. They had already heard about some Old Testament characters like Samson with his super strength so I decided to focus on the New Testament. We discovered that Jesus was a 'Transformer' (NOT a robot in disguise) but able to forgive the sins of the paralysed man, enable him to walk and transform his life inside and out. Banana-man also made an appearance in the second assembly as we discovered that not all superheroes could save the world on their own- they need strength and help from elsewhere. We re-enacted the storm and shipwreck of the apostle Paul and discovered that his super plan to get to Rome (given by God), super knowledge about the storm coming (he was warned by God) and super wisdom in listening to God led to the lives of everyone on the ship being saved and lots of people on Malta being healed by God too. In fact I enjoyed this assembly so much that Nathanael and I also took it to **Farset CE Primary** a week later.

I have been taking **New Testament Bible Explorer** lessons into Eye Primary this half term as well as joining Richard Kean for his OT Mini lessons at Farset CE Primary School. NT Mini will replace the Bible Explorer lessons from September so it is the last time that I teach this particular series of lessons (although



I'm sure the best bits will find their way into the new ones ready for September!) I'm really looking forward to the next academic year when Richard will also be offering OT Mini lessons as I develop the new NT Mini series.



It's Your Move

We had another hectic term fitting in many 'It's Your Move' (IYM) lessons! Written by Scripture Union for Year 6 children in primary schools it is a wonderful resource that explores how they are feeling about moving to secondary school. This year we took *IYM* into 15 schools across the city, speaking to approximately 700 children! A special part of the lesson is at the end where we look at Psalm 139 '*You know when I sit or stand, you see me when I travel and rest at home.*' It's a wonderful opportunity to share how in starting secondary school, and all the ups and downs that children will face, that God knows them and created them and wants to be their friend guiding them through school. A big thanks to all who helped deliver the lessons. Beyond the CROPS team, there were a number of students and past gappers: Andrew Henry, Kat Wade, Rachel Cawston, Sam Higgins, Sammy Miller, Honour Smith, and Lizzy Steele.



Secondary Schools Work

As well as our mentoring work in a wide range of secondary schools we also continue to lead assemblies, lunch clubs, RE days and other opportunities.

Lunchtime clubs and Chaplaincy work

Three lunchtimes a week we are in secondary schools providing spaces for young people to explore faith, have fun with friends playing games, find emotional support and develop social skills, or just catching up with the CROPS team. For the many young people that come to these opportunities that we run at **Ormiston Bushfield Academy, The King's School** and at **Peterborough Regional College** – they are the highlight of their week and so often a safe space in a hectic and frenetic school environment with the pressures of friendships, studies and tests, and just growing up! We realize this is as much the work of the kingdom as anything we do – and it's so great to each week pick up the relationships and continue chats and discussions, and find out what has been happening (and occasionally drop in to conversations words of wisdom and encouragement!).

Nene Park Academy

Back in April we ran a week of assemblies using the film *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, challenging the young people to do the right thing even when it isn't popular. We related this to two heroes in the Bible, Daniel and Paul who stood up for what they believed even when it wasn't popular. The challenge was to be courageous in even small situations.

Stamford Welland Academy

In July we ran a day of Breathe at Stamford Welland Academy for Year 8

" I enjoyed the fact I felt free and that I could let go of all my worries"

pupils. They had a great time reflecting on God and the bigger picture and how Christians grapple with ultimate questions. Some of the written feedback after the session about Breathe included:

"The Jesus station challenged me the most."

"The shredder station really helped my past grief that I couldn't let go of".

It's amazing how this resource continues to help young people to consider questions that may previously have been unasked, as well as impacting their well being.

The King's School

Towards the end of term Matt, Chris and Nathanael led 2x different Christianity workshops over two days for The King's School at **Ely Cathedral** as part of their activities week. Matt led Breathe, with Chris and Nathanael leading our Psalms based art workshop. King's

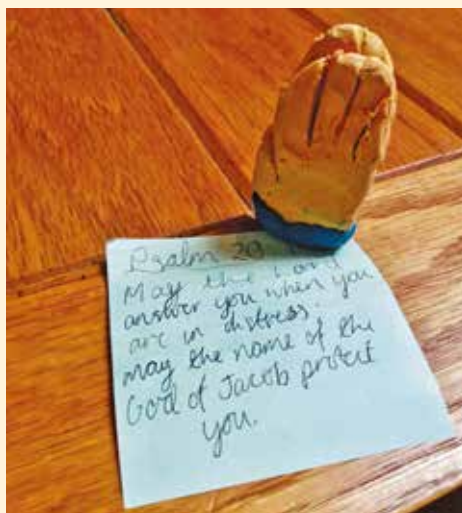


School have invited us to run these for the last 6 years and this year it was the last time we will have worked with Rev. Ian Forsyth, head of Religious Studies at King's. At the end of July Ian left teaching to go back into Baptist ministry taking on the leadership of a church near Guildford. We want to say a special thank you to Ian for all his support of CROPS over the years in school, but also out of school with the years he served as a trustee of CROPS.

We felt that these two days were a great success. Feedback was that the Year 8 students found the activities thought provoking and creative, and a unique part of their activities week.

Matt was also invited to speak in a whole-school assembly in July on the theme of **David and Goliath**. He opened up the story and also shared an anecdote about a man dressed in a gorilla's suit, pretending to be something he wasn't (with a humorous ending!). Matt challenged the students and staff to think about who the real hero in the Goliath story was. So often we think we should be David in the story, wanting to be the hero – trying to get rid of the Goliaths of sin, etc in our lives, when Jesus already has done this and won the victory.

We also found time this term to lead **two voluntary worship** sessions in the school prayer room and the highlight being a session on the theme of forgiveness. We created our own prayer station with an audio reflection we had recorded loaded onto mp3 players for students to be guided by in their response to Jesus.



Please pray for

GSUS
LIVE

in Peterborough



Bourne Academy

30rd October to 3rd November

Nene Park Academy

6th to 10th November

Casterton Rutland College

13th to 17th November

Stanground Academy

20th to 24th November

Thomas Deacon Academy

27th November to 8th December

City of Peterborough Academy

11th to 15th December