

"Thank you Miss Jessup, your RE lessons were Epic!"
Year 6 pupil



3,087 students impacted by GSUS Live visit!



"Great place to meet new people and build long lasting relationships."
Megan on Letton Houseparty

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Matt Wild's Update CROPS Director

This newsletter looks back on special autumn term that not only included all our regular work in schools, but also our October half term young peoples retreat to Letton Hall which flowed straight on into 7 weeks of GSUS Live! 7 weeks in which 3087 students heard the message about Jesus!

We are hugely thankful to you for your continued support and prayers throughout this term that has been long and needed much endurance through dark nights and early starts. God has encouraged our hearts greatly as we have had the opportunity to meet with several thousand children and young people sharing good news, hope, answering many questions and being there to provide support during vital stages of young peoples journeys in life.

New Year's Eve Hope 4 Peterborough Service

On New Year's Eve CROPS were involved in the 'Hope 4 Peterborough' Service that brings together Christians from different denominations and backgrounds to celebrate what the church is doing together in Peterborough through word and deed. Several hundred Christians gathered for this service and young people from The Point band led the worship for this special New Year's Eve service with CROPS worker Chris



Wild sharing a update, a year in, about CROPS mentoring.

Please continue to pray for all the team, staff, volunteer mentors, primary school team for health, creativity in preparation, wisdom in moments of need, energy, and to be filled with God's love as we seek to go in His name in all we do for the gospel. We so appreciate your prayers, financial support and encouragement.

On behalf of the trustees, staff and team
Matt

The Point

It's been another fantastic term teaching at the Point, our monthly youth worship and teaching event. Back in September we had former CROPS gapper and current Regents Theological College student, **Andrew Henry** kicked off the Academic year. Andrew spoke about comparisons and how we often get caught up in comparing



ourselves to everyone else so much so that we miss the gifts that God has given us.

In October we were joined by Godmanchester Baptist Youth Pastor, **Daniel Beckett** who spoke on the theme of 'superheroes' and whether their fallibility, and Jesus being the ultimate super hero. He described how what we all long for is unconditional love and acceptance.

For the November Point, we had Bretton Baptist Youth Worker **Rachel McDermott** speak to us about how God equips each one of us and how it's not about what we can do, but God can do through us. He equips those he calls and he has called us!

Last, and certainly not the least, we were joined by **Newton Gatambia Kibirungi**, youth worker at Werrington Parish



Church. Newton helped us to explore what our true identity is and where it comes from through the story of the prodigal son and our relationship with the Father. It's been great to see so many new people this term as well as seeing those who have been for years, keep coming back to The Point and growing in faith as well as bringing friends along.

ABOUT CROPS

CROPS (Christian Options in Peterborough Schools) are a charity unique to Peterborough, and were set up by local churches in 1989 as a Christian education charity to work in schools. CROPS aims to help children and young people gain an understanding of the Christian faith, and its relevance to our lives today. In its work in schools CROPS also supports the needs of young people pastorally through a mentoring project and lunchtime clubs, developing the whole individual.

CROPS provide a wide range of resources to primary and secondary schools through assemblies, lunch-clubs, curriculum input for Religious education, chaplaincy work, special 'off-timetable' projects, and targeted pastoral support alongside school pastoral teams. In addition to this CROPS supports local youth workers and youth work in churches through events like 'The Point' and 'Letton Houseparty' as well as running a gap year programme for school leavers. CROPS continues to be funded by churches and Christian individuals and seeks to work in partnership with local churches and other organisations.

Team Updates



Sheila Bucknell

Administrator and Secondary Schools Mentor

Another great time of team work with the wonderful CROPS team!

Mentoring has seen a period of great growth enabling us to reach out to more young people in Peterborough schools.

It is such a privilege to be allowed to work with young people and to know that with God's help, we can make a difference.

Comments received such as "I no longer feel lonely," and, "I can tell you anything that is on my mind" are so good to hear and knowing that the time you spend with them is helping them to grow in confidence and to deal with some of the problems life throws at them.

Sometimes we laugh together and sometimes we cry but whatever we do, we do it together in a caring and loving environment. Long may it continue to grow!



Honour Smith

CROPS Gap Year Student

It's been an exciting start to my gap year as I have become more involved with the different aspects of CROPS. I have been getting stuck in with helping to run our regular activities such as Park Up at Kings, and Hot Chocolate Club at OBA, and The Point. I have also been helping Rachel at William Law with J-Zone, and some of the NT Mini lessons. A highlight for me this term was Letton in October. This is a time that I have noticed a significant growth in my youth ministry and leadership skills, with this having been the third Letton Hall Houseparty I have helped at. This was especially apparent in the confidence and knowledge God have given me so that I was able to lead a seminar about the Woman of Nobel Character from Proverbs 31. Co-leading worship at Letton and the December Point was also an experience that has helped me to develop as a worship leader. GSUS Live has been another highlight, for which I was involved in presenting lessons across 4 secondary schools. It has been amazing to hear how GSUS Live has helped so many young people, especially in learning how to deal with fear, rejection, and forgiveness!



Nathanael Grenfell

CROPS Gap Year Student

It's been an amazing start to another year with CROPS! This term has certainly been a busy one but also an exciting one. It's been great to start mentoring in Jack Hunt and Thomas Deacon Academy, meeting a few students each week to support them through the various things going on in their lives. Another fantastic experience for me this term has been being back at Letton Hall in October half-term with 70 young people. It's always so amazing to see so many young people step out in their faith. I'm really looking forward to all the amazing opportunities that this next will bring!



Richard Kean

Walk Thru The Bible Primary Schools Presenter

The Capenway training weekend in September 2017 was useful and fun: I saw superb ideas for different ways to present the OT Mini content and met some mesmerising and imaginative presenters. We even took some time out to be interviewed about how we learned to become presenters.

The autumn term was a time for consolidation and refinement of my OT Mini presentation. The Bretton Baptist Church Thursday morning study group invited me to give them the Old Testament Mini presentations – and with plenty of scenes to act out, reports from the Promised Land to present and the revised hand signs to learn, there was a lot of interaction, laughter and so many supportive comments from the members:

"Brilliant!"

"You reminded me of when I learned this at school!"

"An excellent refresher in the old testament"

"I learned something new but because I'm so old I can't remember what it was!"

We hope and pray that schools in the west of the city take the opportunity to book in OT mini during the spring term – an experience of seeing the big picture of the Bible timeline and finding out where all the wonderful stories fit – stories of God at work through some unlikely heroes.

Letton Hall Houseparty October 2017

By Honour Smith



October half-term saw another Letton Hall Houseparty to which we took a whopping 70 young people! This time round we had the wonderful **Jason Royce** as our guest speaker. Jason is the Director of Souster Youth a growing Christian youth project that is based in east Northamptonshire. As 'Sabbath' was the theme Jason in his sessions was talking all about how God calls us to rest – and he particularly looked at things within culture/youth culture, things in our lives that can steal God's rest from

our lives. First of all Jason got us to focus on thankfulness and appreciating what we have. Jason also taught us about good and bad technology, and how it affects us – especially our rest! He then left us with a challenge to have a 24-hour technology fast. Additionally, Jason recruited us all to join the 'Slow Club', looking at how to take life slow in a busy world, and to marvel at the indescribable beauty and intricacy in God's creation. Finally, Jason ended his time with us by encouraging us to write our own Psalms

around what we had learned from the week. Many young people rose to the challenge and shared some amazing Psalms with everyone, showing us how much God had been working through them in their time at Letton.

Besides the main sessions, we also had our morning devotional time: Soul Stretch. Across the three mornings we looked at the passages James 3:1-12, Matthew 14:22-36, and Philipians 2:12-18. This time, we had a different approach to how we explored the passages. Through

"Letton was great for building my confidence in my Letton group as I got to know and trust them" **Sophie**



offering different options: discussion, annotating, journaling, and reflection, everyone was able to respond to the passages in their own personal way. This meant Soul Stretch was a really valuable time spent exploring and responding to Scripture together in our Letton groups.

Throughout the week the young people also had a choice between an array of seminars to attend. These explored topics that our leaders felt addressed issues and question young people have today, such as identity, doubt, and living a Christian lifestyle. These seminars were entitled; Lads, Lads, Lads; Being a Christian Girl in School; Faith Gets Shaken...and Stirred; Christian 5-a-day; 3-D Jesus; Proverbs 31: A Woman of Nobel Character. Through the seminars the young people were guided through an exploration of these topics, which enabled them to consider these ideas in a deep and personal way. Workshops were another opportunity for the young people to choose what they would like to attend. This Letton we offered the young people a choice between craft, football, Scalextrics, keva blocks, and nail painting. We feel that these activities were a fantastic opportunity for the young people to take time to relax and have fun.

This Letton we had the addition of the Letton Lounge. This was a treasured time spent in Letton group having a chat and catching up over a Hot Chocolate. This really helped invest in building the groups' relationships, especially between the group leaders and the young people. As per usual, we went Go-Karting. This was fantastic, since at our last Letton Hall Houseparty we were disappointed that we were unable to do this because of the heavy rain. After an initial pour of rain we were worried this would happen again. Fortunately, we were blessed with glorious sunshine so we were able to go ahead much to the young people's delight.



We also had a fantastic time at our very own movie premier with our 'At the Movies...' themed dinner that saw array of awesome costumes from Storm troopers to snow queens. We even rolled out our own red carpet! This year's talent show acts were also all remarkable, from juggling, to piano playing, and a bizarre presentation on socks - not forgetting the annual performance by 'The Mafia Cows' and their special guests. We even had some brilliant stand-up comedy from guest speaker Jason!

One of our regular Letton leaders **Newton Kibirungi**, youth minister at Werrington Parish Church noted how Letton plays a major role in shaping

the faith of the young people. For him it gives them an opportunity to meet with the Lord in broader and deeper ways. And because of this he always encourages the young people he works with to attend.

We hope all this accounted for another unforgettable time at Letton, and we pray that the young people will treasure all of these memories and all that they have received from God during this time. We also wish to thank the team at Letton Hall, all the leaders, our cooks **Daniel** and **Hayley Beckett**, and the young people for making this yet another special time away at Letton.

"A brilliant 4 days, surrounded by truly gifted young people with some great godly input throughout"

Ben Wilson (Youth Leader)



Secondary Schools Work



GSUS Live

by Matt Wild

Its now the third time CROPS has hosted GSUS Live. In November and December 2017 GSUS Live came to Peterborough offering a very different RE experience. GSUS Live, a resource of Counties UK, is a mobile multimedia classroom providing an hour-long lesson that explores Jesus' teaching on forgiveness, fear and rejection.

Having been involved each year I feel this visit has seen by far the best engagement and conversations with students during the lessons. Over the 7 weeks 127 lessons were delivered on-board GSUS Live, with 3087 pupils experiencing the lesson.

Primary Schools Work By Rachel Jessup

Autumn 2017 saw the introduction of the NT Mini lessons to about 180 Year 5&6 pupils in Discovery School and William Law Primary Schools. Briefly covering the 400 years in between the Old and New Testaments (the introduction of a common Greek language to the Greek Empire, which included Israel; the renewed hopes for a Messiah in Israel and the creation of straight Roman roads by the new Roman Empire) we build the context and glimpse why God may have chosen that particular point in History to send his Son into the world. It was a time when long distance communication and travel were increasingly possible and the most important message the world has ever heard was about to make history... Jesus birth, baptism, temptation, conversation with Nicodemus and then the woman at the well lead us to the end of lesson one! It's a lot to cover but the emphasis is on getting the big picture, joining the dots and seeing how the stories all fit together.

Lesson 3 takes us through the highs and lows of Holy Week and lesson 5 ends with the last two verses of Revelation as John looks forward to Jesus returning as King. It's been an exciting journey leading these lessons with the children and engaging with staff.

One teacher commented that although they had understood about Jesus being called the 'Lamb of God' in the past they hadn't really made the connection with the



Jewish Temple sacrifices of a perfect lamb before. 'You've taught me something, whatever the kids may take away from it'. This shows the breadth of the impact of CROPS work in primary schools.

As to other work we have been doing, assemblies, St John's CE Primary School in Stanground kindly invited me to take their Collective Worship at the beginning of November. Honour Smith one of the CROPS gap year team, joined me and we talked about Big Questions. Questions we can answer with science, questions which are just for fun, questions we may never know the answer to, and important questions. We asked 'What makes a good question?' and looked at the question the Pharisee asked Jesus, 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' We thought about what makes a good answer... was Jesus' answer good?

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul

"Thank you Miss Jessup, your RE lessons were epic!"

and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself."⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.' Matthew 22: 27-40 (NIV)

I look forward to my next visits in the spring term.

J-Zone a weekly club that we have been running for some time has come to a natural end at William Law School for now as we prepare to rethink the lunch club style and work with the drop-in nature of children finishing their lunch and arriving at various times. We will let you know how God leads us in this area and are also looking for a third team member who could support this club in the summer during Monday lunchtimes (12.45-1.45pm).

Please pray into and about this opportunity, thank you. All volunteers will naturally go through a DBS process before joining us in school. Could this be any area for you to serve CROPS?

St. Augustine's Yr. 3 lessons are beginning in Spring 2018. I am using the new 'Understanding Christianity' material in order to become familiar with this fabulous new resource offered to schools by the Church of England Education Office and RE Today Services. I look forward to the new challenges that 2018 will bring and thank you for all your support.

"Thank you Mrs. Jessup, your lessons are great, the education is thrilling and calm."

CROPS coordinated the visit with the lessons being delivered by a team of local presenters made up of youth workers and members of churches from Bourne Baptist Church, KingsGate Community Church, Bretton Baptist Church, Werrington Parish Church, Eye Church, as well as members of the CROPS team. This in itself was one of the highlights of GSUS Live, working with and delivering this project with Christians from local churches who were passionate about the project and the schools.

The GSUS Live trailer visited the following schools: Week 1: Bourne Academy, Week 2: Nene Park Academy, Week 3: Casterton Rutland College, Week 4: Stanground Academy, Week 5-6 Thomas Deacon Academy and Week 7: City of Peterborough Academy.

A typical GSUS Live lesson sees the students come on-board, get seated behind the desks, then watch an engaging video that introduces the themes of forgiveness, fear, and rejection linking to historical figures including Jesus. The team explain the lesson; push some buttons to make the touch screen computers rise out of the desks (this always gets some excitement!). Students log on to the program, choose one of the three teenage characters 'Ben, Sophie or Jack', whose own stories link with one of the three themes of GSUS Live. Bible story animations, contemporary Christian songs plus short films on historical and famous public figures such as Martin Luther King and Malala Yousafzai are all used to help pupils look at real-life issues through a Christian perspective.



"I think this opened my eyes as to how important Jesus is." **Student**

GSUS Live received an overwhelmingly positive reception from both students and staff. One school wrote and said:

"Both staff and students benefitted immensely from GSUS Live. Many students described it as one of their best RE lessons." Stanground Academy

The lesson finishes with a 'wrap-up plenary time' with students writing down questions about the lesson, to do with Jesus or aspects of Christianity, the themes explored, or comments on how it has impacted them. The team then take time to answer these before concluding with an explanation of the 'GSUS' logo as a final reminder of the gospel: 'Christians believe that what connects **US** to **God** is Jesus the **Saviour** who came to deal with our **Sin** - that which gets in the way of a relationship between **God** and **US**, because He loves us.'

The team sought to answer student's questions, helping them understand answers about Christianity clearly, answering sensitively, with a desire for them to understand truth. Students expressed some of their biggest searching questions, and afterwards when going through the post it notes, many of their 'aches' and 'cries' - often tied to struggles in their lives brought us to tears. We know that time after time in those discussions - hope was offered, we pointed to Jesus!

Student comments and questions from the Q & A times during GSUS Live this year:

"This activity made me think about trusting in God and to never give up hope even in the darkest of times."

"Does God believe in second Chances?"

"How do know Jesus existed?"

"How do you find Hope?"

CROPS would like to thank the team of volunteers from local churches who helped present the lessons, as well as our rigging team preparing the GSUS Live trailer for its move from school to school each Friday evening in the dark and the cold!

Assemblies, Chapel and Alternative Worship Opportunities

The Lady In the Van – Who is my Neighbour?

In early October we ran two weeks of assemblies at **Nene Park Academy** and at **Sir Harry Smith Community College** on the theme of homelessness exploring the bigger question of: Who is My Neighbour? The assembly looked at what Jesus

had to say on the subject and used clips from the film 'The Lady in The Van'. It challenged whether we are willing to help people who are different to us today, and what that might cost us. In a similar vein we also visited **The Peterborough School Chapel** to speak in both upper and senior chapel on a similar theme around the question – Who Is My Neighbour?

In the second half of the term whilst GSUS Live was in full flow we squeezed in a few bookings at **The King's School** for Alternative Worship. Of note our November visit coincided with remembrance and we encouraged the 60 students who attended to take time to reflect on the sacrifices made by many to give us our freedom, including the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus gave for us and what that means for us today in our lives going forward.

Finally at the end of November Matt had the opportunity to speak in the whole school assembly at King's. This was part of their 'U2 song title' theme assembly series – on this occasion: 'I will follow'. Matt asked the question 'where are we heading in life?', and what keeps us on the path.

The assembly explored Paul and his vision of heaven and the call he had to run his race and how that helped him to know where he was going and decide what he was about. with the courage needed to get back on the path when we stray with God's help. This included many a reference to the Tolkien Hobbit story and Sat-Nav journeys going wrong along the way of course!

CROPS Mentoring With Chris Wild

What a year it has been. Having now been in post with CROPS for a year it has been amazing to look back and reflect on what God has been doing in young people's lives through the dedication of our team of mentors. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank them for their hard work and commitment this year. One of things that has encouraged me the most has been the breadth of churches represented by our team of mentors. So far this year 14 people have been trained to be mentors and they represent 10 different local churches. I think this is a great show of unity across Peterborough churches.

This term has seen an opportunity to start mentoring in 3 new schools, which has been fantastic. We have 2 mentors that have now started in each of The Kings School and City of Peterborough Academy. Also in January we will have two new mentors starting at Ken Stimpson. For a long time we have had mentors who have been keen to work in Ken Stimpson so it has been great to finally bring this into place. All this means that we are now mentoring in 8 of Peterborough's 14 secondary schools so we are over half way towards our target.

It has been great to meet up with new mentors over this term to find how their mentoring is going. Hearing

the stories of the difference they are making is always an encouragement.

Sometimes we meet students whose needs seem really complex, one of our mentors has been meeting a student who has many different struggles. Life at home wasn't supportive for them with an environment filled with much tension and pressure. He was diagnosed with mental health issues and suffered from panic attacks. The recent break up of a long-term relationship, mixed with no long or short-term focus in life had led the student to feeling very little hope. The student described his life as 'permanently waiting for the next bad thing to happen'. For the mentor it was mainly a matter of listening and helping them by reflecting back what they were saying to help them process their thoughts and feelings. Listening and reflecting back may sound simple but here it has made a huge difference to the student's life. Over the process of half a term where they met up each week it enabled the student to begin to open up at home and talk to their parents about how they were feeling. This has led to a huge improvement in family relationships. They sought further specialist help from other organisations that has led to an improvement in their mental health, and they now have formulated a plan for their next steps in life giving them a new outlook and perspective on the future. At the end of



their final mentoring session together the student commented 'thank you, you have really helped me, none of this would have happened without you'.

We probably all know from our own experience that sometimes you just need to sit with someone and talk it all through. This for me is the real heart behind CROPS mentoring - It all starts with a mentor caring enough to show up each week and start to listen.

This year we have offered over 350 such opportunities for students to talk to someone in a mentoring session and we have offered support to over 60 different students. I'm really excited about what can be achieved next year. Maybe you have an hour a week that you like to use in this way? Our current mentors are aged between 19 and in their 70's so age should be no barrier, please do get in touch if you think this may be for you.

"Thank you, you have really helped me, none of this would have happened without you."

Student being mentored