

I was flooded with positive emails from staff members telling me of the impact Illuminate had had on some very troubled students

School feedback on Illuminate (see pages 10-11)



Letton has been an amazing experience as a young leader, it's a great environment to grow with other Christians

Alex, on his time at Letton

“It was her message from God and she wasn't going to leave it with Shaun!”

Read more on our Primary Schools Work, pages 6-7



It's been a great start to this new academic year of The Point.

If you are not familiar with The Point – it is CROPS' monthly youth worship event for young people with a unique mix of social space, time to worship, the chance to hear an inspiring Bible-based message and have prayer opportunities to help people respond to what God might be saying. The Point is held at Park Road Baptist Church, Peterborough (big shout out of thanks to the congregation of PRBC for letting us take over your building each month!).

In September we had Point team member and Werrington Parish Church Youth worker, **Newton Gatambia Kibiringi**, speak to us about 'staying switched on'. This was a great talk to have after a long summer holiday where many had been at Christian festivals like Soul Survivor - times that see young people making a commitment or a recommitment. Newton's talk laid out a challenge including some great practical pointers to help all of us keep Faith alive.... helping us to keep "switched on" to God.

In October we welcomed **Daniel Beckett**, another close friend of CROPS and regular contributor at The Point. Daniel is Children's and Youth Pastor at Godmanchester Baptist Church. He spoke on the 'Nazirite Vow' and how we are called to live our lives 'set apart' for God, challenging us on how we can live lives that are different to those around us, but lives that also cause others to question and explore.

At the November Point, we went with a different way of bringing a message to the young people with a

THE POINT

CITY-WIDE YOUTH EVENT

video sermon from **Louie Giglio** called "Fruit Cake and Ice Cream". In this talk he challenges us to think of how we can share our Faith with those around us as he shares the journal of a girl called Ashley. This was a very moving testimony with a powerful message about God's grace.

After the November Point, we chose to introduce a new series called "I Am"..

In December we had **Ethan Smith**, our very own Gap Year Student, kick-start this new teaching series "I Am" with his talk "I Am Who You Say I Am". The series aims to help young people engage with truth from God's word about what God says about us. The vision is to help the young people discover more about their identity in Him and what that truth means for them in their everyday lives as followers of Jesus, including what that means for His mission!

If you are interested in bringing young people to The Point, we have printed Point flyers available with all the dates for this academic year. This is either downloadable through our website or you can get in contact with us if you would like us to send you some.

■ **Words by Ethan Smith**



Matt Wild's update

CROPS Director

Welcome to an even bigger edition of the CROPS Newsletter!

We have added a few more pages and we hope you like it! Thank you for tracking with us over the last few months – the autumn term is proving to be a full one! We look back at some very exciting opportunities in and outside school with thankful hearts for all that God has opened up for us to do in His name. Huge apologies that this edition of CROPS News is out later than we wanted – flu and other things have caused a few challenges for us!

I am ever thankful to our team that includes Rachel Jessup, Richard Kean, Sheila Bucknell, and Ethan Smith who all give their time to CROPS as volunteers. Plus our growing team of volunteer mentors in schools!

I look back on all that we did in the autumn term. Did we actually do all our regular schools work - The Point, Letton Hall during the October half-term, as well as the Illuminate week in schools shortly after in November? Yes we did, and in the strength which God supplied!

Read on to hear more about all of those things. There is so much to be encouraged about when we think of the connections we have in schools through the many aspects of this ministry. Here's to another impacting year!

The heart of the vision of CROPS' work in schools is 'helping young people explore the Christian option and supporting them in the issues they face', and that's something we want to do more of! So please be praying for all that we are up to, for God's Kingdom to grow and for God's continued provision of energy, people, finance and openness to our work in schools.

Every blessing *Matt*



Ethan Smith

CROPS Gap Year Student

HELLO! And thank you to the brilliant team at CROPS who have made me feel so welcome and have already helped me to grow through the opportunities and guidance they have given me. Whilst it came with welcome challenges, my first term at CROPS has been amazing. It's been great to take my first steps in Youth Ministry, helping Matt with the weekly lunch clubs at The King's School, PRC

and OBA. I've also enjoyed helping Rachel in primary schools, notably Prayer Space at William Law and assemblies at many schools (including dressing up as a shepherd trying to find lost sheep!)

Letton was a fun challenge helping organise many of the activities that took place in the programme. It was great to help lead something that I had attended over 5 years as a young person. It has played a major role in shaping my Faith and has always helped me meet with God for guidance in my life.

Being part of the Illuminate tour, including my old school Ken Stimpson Community School, was also special.

Finally, I had a brilliant opportunity in December through The Point as I was able to share my first ever talk on the theme "I Am Who You Say I Am" – unpacking our identity in God and how we are truly free in Him. God has really been at work in my life over the past 4 months and I'm eager to see what work He does in the rest of my Gap Year. Bring on the Spring Term!



Sheila Bucknell

CROPS Administrator and mentor

It has been a busy term for me in the office and with my mentoring at OBA. Being able to meet with several young people and be there

for them to encourage and nurture them is something I look forward to each week. (Editor's note: Sheila is a highly valued asset at the school!).

If there is anything I can ever help you with, in terms of providing information for your Church or home-

group about the work of CROPS, do get in touch. We'll gladly provide you with what you need to let others know about the work or things to pray for us! Thanks again for all your support of CROPS – we couldn't do what we do without you!

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.

Letton Hall HOUSEPARTY

During October half term we returned to Letton Hall with 62 young people for another Letton Hall Houseparty.

We were joined by Tim Sandford and his family, Tim is part of the team at Souster Youth, a youth organisation in Northamptonshire. Tim shared his hobbies and passions with us. This included basketball, and numerous board games. Many of the Lettoners enjoyed playing 'Settlers of Catan', 'Munchkin' with Tim and this gave the free time a lovely community feel.

Through his talks in the main sessions, Tim focused on the theme of "No Longer I..." starting off with 'No Longer I but... God' with a real challenge for those of us who feel we are living with feet in both camps, the pull of friends verses the inward desire to live for God wholeheartedly. We then had 'No Longer I but... Jesus and His mission' – with a call to evangelism and reaching others and then Tim's last talk was 'No Longer I but... the Holy Spirit' – looking at being empowered by God's Holy Spirit but also the person of the Holy Spirit and his role in guiding us and equipping us as disciples. There was a real challenge as to how we should live sacrificially for God and the others around us, and especially our place in today's society looking at how we live in the age of "selfies" where we can be more concerned with ourselves over others around us. In contrast he challenged us to think of ways we could no longer live for ourselves but for God.

During the week young people were given a chance to attend seminars that leaders had prepared. These

focused on relevant issues such as: 'Frenemies' (friendships), Evangelism, Self-Worth, the Bible: Where to Start? And a big questions Q&A. The Leaders guided the young people as they explored in groups, pairs or in their own way. This allowed the young people to see what God had to say to them about these issues and it was great to see many of them thinking about how to apply God's wisdom to their lives.

We offered a series of workshops for the Lettoners to partake in. This was great for the young people to spend time together in a range of activities that showed many of the Lettoner's wonderful talents, whether it was creativity in our Craft and Drama workshops or showing off teamwork skills in Danish Longball and Scalextrics. We also offered a Bonfire Building workshop to create the bonfire for our second night at the Houseparty. The bonfire this year was great as always ... there is something so special about taking part in fellowship around the fire, sharing hot chocolate and cake and even dancing with the worship songs!

In addition to seminars, workshops and the main sessions, we also held a time of Bible study and reflection in the morning during 'Soul Stretch', demonstrating practical ways to engage with Scripture. We focused on Philippians 4 and looked into themes such as our spiritual gifts, putting our anxieties in God's hands and rooting ourselves in Holy things. We had various

methods of approaching the passage through prayer and reflection, discussion, journaling and drawing.

During the evenings we also held 'Letton Lounge'. This time was dedicated to our Letton Groups - for the young people to spend time with their Letton leader and catch up on how everything was going during the house party. Spending this time together enabled the Lettoners to invest in and develop a closer relationship with the other young people in their group. Through group discussions, games of Uno or spending time over a devotional, this time together has become a staple at our house parties.

And of course, there was Go Karting! Letton wouldn't be Letton without it! This has always been a favourite activity both for those who were doing it for the first time as well as others who come back each Let-



ton to perfect lap times around the track. It was great to see the young people speeding around the track (safely!)

We also had some unstructured "Letton Time" in the afternoons where we could relax and spend some recreational time together. This involved intense games of football, Mario kart on the Wii and visits to the tuck shop. Many of the other young people just spent time chatting to each other!

Our 'Talent Show' was as great spectacle, seeing new acts as well as old favourites. We even had two amazing young people as our new hosts. Entries included: dramatic storytelling, a cover of a 'Greatest Showman' song (which made a few leaders cry!). Young people performed beautiful and brilliant musical spectacles, including a traditional performance by 'The Mafia Cows'. Finally, our themed dinner this year was bril-

liant on a global scale! Our theme was "All around the World" - a celebration of different nations and cultures seeing some brilliant costumes including: Chefs, Vikings, Tourists, Celebrities and many "British Citizens" (those who had 'forgotten' costumes!). The decorations by our amazing group of Junior Leaders were some of the best we've seen at Letton.

Finally we'd like to thank everyone who made this Letton possible. We pray that the young people will have great memories and will continue to be challenged by the teachings and treasure the time away from their routines spent with each other, the leaders and God. We would also love to thank our leaders, the Letton Hall team, Trina, Hayley and Daniel (who were our amazing cooks for the week), and finally Tim and family for all dedicating their time to make Letton the unforgettable experience it was! ■ Words by Ethan Smith



Primary Schools Work

With Rachel Jessup



We've had a really busy term in Primary Schools! Ethan and I have delivered lots of assemblies at Farcet, St John's Stanground, St Michael's Cardea, William Law Werrington, St Botolph's Orton Primary Schools plus Heltwate and St George's Special Schools. Here are some highlights from these and 'Walk Through The Bible' lessons.



Pass the Teacher...

'Have you got any spare ones of those certificates?' a Yr 6 girl from Stilton asked as I prepared to give some out for the completion of the New Testament hand-signs (NT Mini) 'Probably' I replied, wondering why she was asking. 'Can I have a spare one please, so I can write it for you for teaching us? And can I present it to you at the end of the lesson in front of the class?' and that is exactly what she did!

Great news from 'Walk Through The Bible: the OT MINI and NT MINI' programmes that Richard Kean and I present have been accredited as **official resources** for

the Church of England Education Office's '**Understanding Christianity**' resource. This means that our lessons fit in perfectly with this new RE resource offered to schools by The Church of England Education Office.

Join the 'Walk Through' Team!

Many Church schools seem to be using this new syllabus resource for RE and it is being offered to other Primary Schools too. Consequently there is a much greater need for new people to be able to offer these programmes, giving children an overview of the storyline of the Old and New

Testament of the Bible. More presenters are needed as schools discover this wonderful addition to their RE content – would you like to train to present OT Mini? For more information please contact Rachel Jessup or Richard Kean at CROPS. Thank you.

William Law C of E Primary School was 'tweeting' about their lessons on Twitter. Here are a couple of examples of what they had to say about their OT Mini experience:

'Today we learnt about Pharaoh's evil plan and the important job Miriam did in looking after baby Moses. 19C then debated which commandments could be hardest



to keep today. Which commandment do you think would be the hardest to keep?'

'Another engaging lesson where children learnt the final hand signs for the remaining books in the Old Testament.'

Two of the girls even bounced up to me after school and said, 'RE is our favourite subject at the moment'. Their enthusiasm is infectious.

Shaun has a Secret

To introduce the word 'parable' to Farcet C of E Primary School during an assembly, I took in a Shaun the sheep toy/pyjama case. We discovered that there was more to Shaun than met the eye! On closer inspection we found a secret compartment in his back. A Reception child came to find it and discovered a message from God hidden inside "I have loved you with an everlasting love' from God. Jeremiah 31:3"

We read the message on the paper together and then the little girl took it out of my hand and went to sit down again – it was her message from God and she wasn't going to leave it with Shaun! When I referred to it later in the Collective Worship and held the message up to read it again, she held her hand out the whole time to make sure that I gave it back to her – that's the way to treat a message from God!

Words by Rachel Jessup

Richard Kean

'Walk through the Bible' presenter



During the autumn term I enjoyed teaching OT mini to Year 5 in Stilton school. OT mini gives children an overview of the Old Testament and how God used many reluctant historical heroes such as Gideon and Saul.

In each session we present eight stories, each with a hand sign and a phrase to help us remember the story. 'Walk through the Bible' ministries recently improved the reflective questions and activities that we use in each lesson. The class were full of great ideas for questions and they presented Biblestory freeze-frames imaginatively.

Some of the children wrote thank you letters. Their comments included:

"I like that every lesson you put in different hand signs and then we recite them at the end"

"Although we might find it hard we still learn things that we didn't know before"

"When we get home we get to tell all the funny and exciting things you have taught us during the day"

We're delighted that two more Peterborough schools have already booked in OT mini during the Spring term and we're also talking to the Peterborough Keys Academy Trust schools about signing up. This would include Longthorpe, Middleton, Ravensthorpe, and Thorpe Primary schools. Please pray for us as we seek to offer 'Walk Through' lessons to these schools.





Secondary Schools Work

Lunchtime Clubs

Each week we meet young people at **The King's School, Ormiston Bushfield Academy** and **Peterborough Regional College**. We've had an influx of new students at 'Park Up' and have been getting to know them and seeing a new core group emerge. One student who pops in regularly asked who had started the lunch club, as he wanted to say 'thank you'. He began to describe how he would at home, shut himself away in his bedroom all the time and not talk to his parents with whom he didn't have good relationship. He described home in these words: 'I've found it hard to feel love' then went on to say, 'but this club has really helped me to be able to talk to people, converse, relate. Through you, the card games (which I'd never played before), its helped me learn to talk and express things.' He said 'I now go down to the kitchen and sit and talk with my parents and things are getting better.' We were blown away by what the student told Matt that day – and hugely encouraged that 'just being there' makes a difference, it actually changes lives.

Collapsed Timetable Days – Breathe

In September Ethan helped Matt deliver Breathe with the sixth form at **Brooke Weston Academy**. It was a great introduction for Ethan to be running this unique resource containing MP3 technology, unusual objects on the prayer stations and most of all, young people exploring and reflecting on some of life's biggest philosophical questions. It was great to see these students question, agree, disagree, and have eyes opened to a new perspective.

In November we returned to **Nene Park Academy** for Breathe with Year 9 students. It was inspiring to note student comments about their experience about Breathe, such as: "I really enjoyed this, it was the best thing I've ever done at school" and 'I appreciate that there are people who are willing to spread God's name at schools'. We also had students say: "What challenged me today was realising that God is real" plus one student reflecting on station 12 (about con-

necting with God through prayer/the Holy Spirit) "The plasma ball station made me realise that there is more to God than I thought there was." Whilst Breathe is often a long day with lots of setting up (and resetting between each group), it is so worth it, knowing that students have had space to think about questions that they don't or haven't considered before.

Alternative Worship

Ethan has done an excellent job with our voluntary worship slots at King's School. October's theme was Love your neighbour. We watched a clip from the film 'Captain America' showing the character's willingness to put himself in danger for the other soldiers despite being bullied by those same people. We linked this to the Good Samaritan displaying sacrificial love. We explored further the idea of being sacrificial and thought of ways in which we could display love to others. Finally cards were written for people who have shown sacrificial love to us (teachers, parents etc.)

In December the theme 'Let Your Light Shine Before Others' used Matthew 5:14-16. We explored how we can let our light shine to those around us through our gifts just like Jesus did. We watched a clip from 'The Lord of the Rings' where Lady Galadriel gave the fellowship gifts. We particularly focussed on Frodo who was given a special crystal that shines even in the darkest of places. We talked about how they could use their gifts (musical, artistic, being a good listener, friend, etc) to display the light of Christ when with friends and others. When they left we gave each of them a tiny light bulb to remind them and encourage them to be the light in their world!

Assemblies

In November Matt spoke to all year groups at The King's School on the theme 'Pray for those who persecute you' – looking at Jesus' teaching and how that helps us. He mentioned how 'turning the other cheek' is emotionally healthy, and loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us is liberating.

One of my favourite experiences working at CROPS is when two different aspects of our work unexpectedly come together.



With Chris Wild

At one of our recent 'mentors meet-ups' a mentor shared a story of one of these occasions in their mentoring sessions. They were mentoring a young student who was having difficulty with anxiety and sleeping. A difficult family break up had led to a chaotic time at home and she was finding it difficult to have time and space or be being able to settle at night. The mentor worked with her over several weeks, talking through different aspects of relaxation and sleep. A few weeks later the student brought in a book to the mentoring session and said 'Sometimes I read this and it helps me sleep'. The student then brought out of their bag the 'It's Your Move' booklet given out as part of the our primary to secondary school transitions lessons that we run in the final term of primary school. She opened it at the page that quotes Psalm 139 and told the mentor that she had been reading this to help her feel peace at night and sleep.

Some mentees also made the connection between CROPS mentoring and CROPS being part of the recent Illuminate tour. It was great to hear their enthusiasm as they talked about the lessons and events and how it had shaped them individually.

This term we have had meetings with two new schools and both have been delighted to join in with our project. These are **Arthur Mellows Village College** and **St John Fisher Catholic High School**. We also had some more new mentors coming on board at the same time so this meant we could put at least one new mentor in each school straight away. This now means we have mentors in 12 of our 14 Peterborough secondary schools - which is fantastic news! Even though a few of the schools only have one mentor, we are well on our way to seeing our vision of two mentors in each of our secondary schools come into place.

When we meet with schools for the first time, we often say that the project works well because the mentor is a 'neutral person' to the student. Talking to someone who is a complete stranger can be easier for a young person who finds it harder to open up at school or home. It's a really common experience for students really open up about big things in their lives on the very first session, sometimes within a few minutes of meeting their mentor. However, sometimes it can go the other way and it takes a student a long time to build up the confidence to talk about how they really feel. A mentor told me recently about a student they had been mentoring for four months. They had been working together each week through issues in school and in general making positive progress. Then in a session before Christmas the student arrived and unexpectedly burst into tears. They opened up about what was 'really upsetting them', the anger, sadness and pain that they had been carrying for a long time and could no longer keep in. Mentoring takes time, it's about being on a journey and giving young people that safe space in which they can share what has been bottled up.

She opened it at the page that quotes Psalm 139 and told the mentor that she had been reading this to help her feel peace at night and sleep.

We now have 20 mentors working in local schools and it has been so encouraging to hear the many stories like these, showing the tangible difference they are making in young people's lives. Please remember our mentors and the students they meet in your prayers. This project is having a significant impact on 40-50 young people each week. ■ Words by Chris Wild

He talked about people trapped in cycles of vengefulness wearing people down and de-humanising everyone involved, but that there is hope in Jesus offering us a way out of all of that!

December saw a week of assemblies at **Nene Park Academy (NPA)** and (a first!) a week of assemblies at **City of Peterborough Academy (COPA)**. At NPA our assembly was based on the film 'Ready Player One' – talking about fairness and happiness in our world. In the film the main character discovered that to win the game you had to go backwards in the race. We mentioned how in the Bible, we discover that God loves all people, but is especially mindful of those who are weak and poor. From God's perspective, the important thing in life is to put other people first and look after those who are weaker.

At COPA the school had asked us to speak into the theme of responsibility so our 'Star Wars Force Awakens' assembly was a great fit - challenging the young people to do the right thing even when it isn't popular. We related this to two Bible heroes, Daniel and Paul who stood up for what they believed even when it wasn't popular. The challenge was to be courageous even in small everyday situations. ■

“Illuminate was hugely popular and the energy and passion was evident from the start. Even more impressive was the way the team reached out to students and made very strong messages about key issues and engaged with young people in a powerful and affecting manner.”

Jonny Watts, Head of RE, Casterton College Rutland

Illuminate Your City!



“Everyone was impacted by the session with Guvna B, not only were the students engaged with his stories and inspired by his message but he even had a number of teachers extremely moved by his positivity and perseverance.”

Jonny Watts, Head of RE, Casterton College Rutland

Thank you for your prayers during what was an extremely full-on but energising week! I am thrilled that CROPS could partner with Hope Revolution Peterborough to plan and deliver Illuminate in Peterborough, seeing 13 secondary schools sign up to host this special tour!

As a reminder, Christian artists LZ7, Guvna B and Faith-child were spending whole working in the following schools:

Nene Park Academy, Ormiston Bushfield Academy, Hampton College, Stanground Academy, The King's (the Cathedral) School, Thomas Deacon Academy, St John Fisher Catholic High School, City of Peterborough Academy, Ken Stimpson Community School, Arthur Mellows Village College, The Deepings School, Bourne Academy, Casterton College Rutland.

Whilst planning for Illuminate started a year in advance and getting 13 schools on board saw few hurdles, we would be foolish not to recognize that the openness from schools towards Illuminate has been years in the making. It has been through a combination of regular and committed work of individuals in Churches plus the CROPS team going into schools as well as those who have faithfully supported CROPS work that has enabled this to happen.

I personally got to work with each of the artists (some several times) in different schools in and around the city through the week. I was personally impressed by the passion, professionalism and quality of each of the

three artist's work in school, their heart for young people and how they engaged with the young people.

I have heard countless stories of young people who were profoundly affected by the visits at the time, but who are also continuing to listen to the music of the artists and engaging with the social media connection.

Christian schools work, now as ever before, is vital to see a generation of young people gain an understanding of the claims of the Christian gospel, but also in meeting the many emotional, mental and social needs of these young people. This work comes in many guises: offering Christian assemblies and lessons, providing lunchtime clubs that promote young people's well-being, as well as targeted pastoral support for young people through mentoring and chaplaincy. In providing these resources two important things happen.

Firstly Christian school's workers are in many contexts 'filling a void' where, without their presence and input, the relevance and validity of the Christian faith would not be communicated. Seeing and hearing this perspective from those who are followers of Jesus helps young people to gain an understanding of the Christian faith and how it relates to life today.

Secondly, for young people who are struggling in life, be it bullying, mental health issues, facing problems at home or in school, by pastorally journeying with them through these issues they experience a tangible expression of God's love for them individually and find hope for a better future, starting now.

These things are at the heart of the vision of CROPS' work in schools: 'helping young people explore the Christian option and supporting them in the issues they face', and Illuminate was a perfect fit with this. Whilst our work in schools week by week is the bedrock of what we do, the Illuminate Tour gave us an opportunity to see city-wide saturation and in a fresh way, raise the profile of what we offer especially in terms of follow up to the tour and meeting the on-going needs of young people.

In many of the schools, the lessons brought to the surface issues that young people are facing. CROPS Mentoring with its team of 20 volunteers from local churches, are working across 13 Peterborough secondary schools and will be picking up many of these young people. Partnering over Illuminate has strengthened our relationships with schools and again shown that the Church in the city cares about the community: that we believe in the flourishing of young people emotionally and spiritually! The partnership has helped to open doors to new schools and extend the range of resources that we currently offer in a school. We have

three new lunchtime clubs in the offing that CROPS and church youth workers are looking to run together in schools! Great things are happening!

The end of the Illuminate week saw two evening gigs (concerts!) on the Friday and Saturday nights where (over both nights) 1600 young people attended. It was so exciting to see so many young people from the schools we had visited there, having a great night and importantly hearing and responding to Lindz West's message at the end where he shared his story and the good news of the gospel.

The feedback from schools has been that this week was very well received and valued by both students and staff. Schools have already been asking when the next visit will be!

As we go forward from Illuminate, I am encouraged by the thought that it is the week by week contact with young people in schools and Churches that will help them to continue the next steps in their journey of discovery. ■ Words by Matt Wild



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