

A WORD FROM THE OFFICE!



Ethan Smith

CROPS Gap Year Student

It was great to come back after the Christmas break ready to prepare for another Letton Hall Houseparty; it's always a privilege to lead others for God in ways that could change their lives forever.

I've really enjoyed the continuing of our ministry through lunch clubs in secondary schools. In particular, developing relationships we already have with students that regularly attend our lunch clubs. It has been heartening to see how we can provide a safe place for many students to come into, spending time with us, and their friends.

I also had the opportunity to write my own assembly for the primary schools we regularly visit on the theme of Perseverance. In the assembly we explored how we can help others persevere and looked at how Paul had friends and the support of different churches to help him persevere in his ministry throughout the New Testament.

Fire Church was another highlight this term and it was great to be a part of such a broad event, seeing how many people from all over Peterborough came together to use their own talents to create a special event for the young people of the city. It was a very special evening. Young people I work with said they were keen to attend something similar again! It's also been a creative term - we had fun decorating areas of the CROPS offices, giving the hall and stairs a fresh look. We also created a publicity wall in the CROPS lounge to commemorate 30 years of CROPS. This was a lot of fun and incorporated the varied people and work of CROPS over the past 30 Years through old pictures, newsletters and cuttings, contrasting them with new publicity items and flyers. It's been a great two terms so far and it's crazy to think that it's almost been a whole year already! It's great to see what God has been doing through CROPS and I am excited about the remainder of this academic year!



Sheila Bucknell

CROPS Administrator and mentor

It is so good to be able to write a small piece to update what has been happening with my time at CROPS. Due to family bereavements and a period of ill health, I have not been around as much as usual for the early part of this year.

However, it has been a great privilege to be able to continue mentoring and it has been so good that with God's support and love young people have been helped to cope with the many pressures placed on

their young lives. I am so privileged to help with this work and it is a joy to hear from young people that you have helped them to change some part of their lives.

Matt directs and guides us all, whilst Chedz leads the mentoring project and together with the essential help of our gapper, Ethan Smith and Primary Schools volunteer Rachel Jessup, CROPS continues to grow and flourish.

I look forward to the year ahead and pray that I can continue in my role here at CROPS for as long as I am needed.

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.

Matt Wild's update

CROPS Director



I am so excited to introduce another edition of the CROPS Newsletter. I know the summer is only just kicking in but can I encourage you to **SAVE THE DATE** for our September **'Summer Bash'** – our annual event celebrating the work of CROPS. Sunday 8 Sep 2019 at Bretton Baptist Church. More details will be released soon!

Thank you volunteers!

I want to say a huge thank you to our volunteers – who are an increasing army of volunteers! You might be one of our volunteers in schools, delivering lessons in primary schools or mentoring young people in secondary schools each week. You might be one of our small numbers of (but mighty!) office-based volunteers helping to develop our admin and push projects forward. You might be one of the team who turns up each month at The Point to help serve the vision of unity and discipleship for young people from across churches and schools in the area. Whoever you are and whatever you do thank you for what you give to CROPS in time, commitment, heart and passion!



Never Alone

Looking forward to next term we are excited to let you know that we have booked the Lily-Jo Project and their *Never Alone* Tour to visit three schools (18-20th September). The *Never Alone* Tour aims to reach young people with a message of hope, for them to know that they are never alone, that they don't need to suffer in silence with any mental health concerns. In the UK it is estimated that 1 in 10 young people struggle with their mental health. Lily-Jo's "Let's talk about mental health" lesson is aimed to educate and equip young people ages 11-18 with the tools they need to take control of their mental health, not only today but beyond into their adult lives. Please pray as we seek to support young people in this way, and connected to our ongoing mentoring work.

Thank you again for supporting and being interested in CROPS.

Letton Hall HOUSEPARTY

February half term saw us returning to Letton with 61 young people to enjoy another Houseparty at Letton Hall.

This February's theme was "The Greatest" and who better to deliver this message than our own Point team member, Newton Gatambia Kibiringi. Newton is also Youth Worker at Werrington Parish Church, and brought his family to enjoy the week with us.

Newton looked at the greatest commandment through his talks and explored how our greatest adventure with God is to Go and Love. Each night focussed on a different part of Matthew 22:36-40 exploring the different ways in which we need to Love and how to live God's greatest commandment through; loving God back, self-love and loving others. The main challenge was looking at what we prioritise before God and how we can change this by putting God first in different aspects of our lives such as our relationships, interests and finances.

This Letton was also a time of fresh approaches to some of our staple parts of the programme, which included Soul Stretch, Workshops and our Seminars. Soul Stretch is our morning session where we encourage the Lettoners to connect with Bible. We used some new media to help the young people engage with the passages before gathering into Letton groups and discussing each passage with their Letton Group leader. This was delivered through some Vlog style videos from a Christian You Tuber, Jon Jorgenson. This was very well received as it gave the young people a basis of discussion before reading the passage themselves, leading to some very deep questions... even at 9:30 in the morning!

We also approached our Seminars from a new angle focussing on issues that young people may



not think are an issue in their everyday lives. One example was our "Filtered to Authentic" seminar where Lettoners looked at their social media habits and what would happen if we were to put a filter on the Bible. We also delivered Seminars tackling hard topics like "Problem of Evil" "Every day with God" or "Alcohol, Drugs and Parties", offering some guidance on what the young people should know involving these topics. Some old favourites also made a return such as our Q/A where the Lettoners were able to write down and anonymously ask any burning questions that wish to receive advice on.

We also wanted to change the way we did our Workshops. Whilst it can be great sitting down with a Scalextrics or doing your nails, we wanted to offer the Lettoners an opportunity to do something they've never done before or learn a new skill with some of our Workshops. This included "Landscape Painting", "Smoothie Making", "Crochet" (Not Croquet!), "Golf" and "Woodworking". Many of the young people really enjoyed learning a new skill particularly in the woodworking Workshop where they all worked together to make a Lectern for CROPS! As always we couldn't resist throwing in some old favourites such as our "LEGO" workshop and "Disney Karaoke".



The evening entertainment was great as always with our annual Acoustic Café and Talent Show. We had a great range of songs performed by the Leaders at the Acoustic Café! We had George Ezra, Coldplay and even a Donald Trump inspired version of “My Lighthouse” by Rend Collective, “My White House” (which was written by Chedz and Ethan). Our fantastic junior leaders were also serving musical inspired ‘mocktails’ such as “Cokelahoma” “Phantom of the Popera” and “Blood Orange Brothers”. It was great time!

The Talent show probably one of the “Greatest” we’ve ever had. We had a great range of acts including some musical performances, Matt’s Blanket “trick”, Intentionally bad jokes (that were actually good!) and a history lesson displaying some very good Photoshop skills and sadly the last Letton performance of The Mafia Cows. It was great night led by Ethan and Sarah.



It wouldn’t be Letton without our Letton Time and the Go-Karting! We always enjoy returning to Letton to see whose Karting King and Queen at Letton. This is a favourite amongst the Leaders and the Young People who often like to compete to see who spins off the track the least or to see who can go the fastest around the track. Whether the Lettoners were doing it for the first time or for the 10th time it’s something we can all do together and enjoy!

Letton Time also gave the Lettoners an opportunity to build on the friendships they had formed with each other throughout the week. Whether it was through playing football, card games, going for walks around the grounds or just sitting, relaxing and having a chat with each other. This free time within in the programme is something we all treasure at Letton because of the way it draws us together doing things we enjoy!

Finally, following the theme of “The Greatest” we had a “Greatest Musicals” them to our Themed Dinner this time at Letton. Inspired by the popular musical “The Greatest Showman” we saw many great costumes including Cowardly Lions, Thieves trained by Fagan, Pink Ladies, A Wicked Witch, PA Crew and even Willy Wonka himself! The hall was decorated to look like a theatre with Red and Gold balloons, napkins and much more, giving it the feel that we really we’re sitting down to watch a musical together.

As always we’d love to give a massive thank you to everyone who made this Letton possible. Our Prayer is that the Lettoners will look back on their time at this Letton and treasure what God spoke to them about through Newton’s talk and the rest of the programme, as well as continuing friendships formed with each other during the week to help remind them of the time they spent together with



God. Thank you all for coming, as we wouldn’t be able to do Letton without the young people there with us. We’d also love to say a massive thank you to the Letton Hall Staff for their support, plus Quentin and Hattie, (who cooked our amazing food for the week), our brilliant team of Letton Leaders and finally Newton and family! All worked hard preparing everything to make this Letton truly unique and memorable!

■ Words by Ethan Smith



Primary Schools Work

With Rachel Jessup

The Best Reason to go to School...

“There were only two reasons I wanted to come to school today: to wear my new coat (I like my coat) and your lesson!” – a Yr6 at St Augustine’s. I love it when RE becomes the favourite part of a child’s day and OT Mini lessons continued in the Spring term at St Augustine’s (with Rachel Jessup and Richard Kean), Barnack and St Michael’s CE Primary Schools with children discovering how the big picture of the Old Testament fits together.



Ethan and Rachel enjoyed taking a variety of Acts of Collective Worship at St. John’s Stanground, St Michael’s Cardea, William Law Werrington, St. Botolph’s, Farcet CE Primary, Heltwate and St. George’s Special Schools on themes such as Epiphany, Second chances, Perseverance and Easter.

Rachel also had a lovely three Lent and Easter lessons with Yr. 2 at Hampton Hargate Primary School at the end of term in which the children were able to ask questions about the Easter story after sharing in the amazement of the first women at the empty tomb as we heard the message of the angels again, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!’ Luke 24:5&6a.

Keep Going!

We like to encourage our Gap year students to stretch themselves during their year at CROPS, to do things they may not have done before and grow in confidence. It is also helpful to share the load and remind ourselves of the focus and vision for our lessons and assemblies while we train others. So, naturally I gave Ethan a couple of months to put together an assembly for us to present at two Primary Schools. After much thought, hard work, research into past assemblies and perseverance, Ethan put together his first Primary School assembly about... ‘Perseverance’!



Drawing on his knowledge of the footballers the children were likely to be familiar with e.g. Raheem Stirling and Ronaldo, Ethan described how even world class footballers need encouragement from the crowd and the rest of the team in order to keep doing their best in training as well as on the pitch for a game. He explained the need to look out for ways to encourage one another in order to help us persevere. This linked in well with the ‘Resilience’ Learning Power that a lot of schools are keen to promote. Many of the



younger children had never heard of a 'Mexican wave' so we had a lot of fun working together to get a Mexican wave across the assembly hall and back.

The 'Time Portal' Ethan had included in the assembly came in very useful when we needed to travel back in time to interview the apostle Paul and ask him about his life. We found out that he kept going despite three shipwrecks, lack of sleep and all kinds of dangers and hardships.

The children helped us as we put up various cardboard hurdles, which described obstacles that often get in our way and stop us from wanting to persevere. We talked with them about the hurdles of 'I'm too tired', 'I can't be bothered', 'I'm not as good as...' and 'Being afraid to fail'. A lot of the children said they could relate to each one of these and Ethan had chosen Bible verses to go on the screen to help deal with each one. The children enjoyed knocking their hurdle down each time we dealt with it. Well done Ethan – you can start writing a few more now!

Walk Thru The Bible with Richard Kean

We presented OT mini to two Year Six classes at St Augustine's

school during the spring term. OT mini gives children an overview of the Old Testament and helps to show when heroes like David and Nehemiah showed up in the biblical timeline.

In each session we look at eight stories – some that stand alone and some with many parts – and look at a picture, a hand sign and a phrase that makes the story memorable. Walk Through the Bible ministries provide the workbooks and the pictures, but it's the students that take part in the stories and try to remember the order of the hand signs!

St Augustine's included some of the new questions from Walk Through the Bible in their written work - to be answered before any teaching input and answered again at the end of the lesson. Several children hadn't heard of the biblical characters before the lesson and found it hard to answer, but had learned enough in the stories to reflect thoughtfully as if the questions were asked during the lesson.

I had an opportunity to teach the story of Esther in a new way: children came to the front of the classroom to take the roles of Esther, Mordecai, Xerxes and Haman. Resembling a slow-motion

dance the characters moved to different pairs and each part of the story showed the fateful decisions made by Haman. Asking the children to be characters that move changed what is normally a descriptive account into a drama that is interactive for the rest of the class; the children boo Haman and cheer for Esther – as if they were celebrating the festival of Purim.

A real surprise in the final session was a card signed by the whole class with so many supportive comments about all they had learned over the course!

"Thank you for teaching RE! I know more now than I did before!"

"Thank you for letting us hear your amazing stories!"

"Thank you for the best RE lessons I've ever done"

Peterborough schools have already made bookings in the summer and autumn terms – but there are still more schools we could be presenting in! Please pray that the schools with gaps in their RE curriculum might turn to CROPS and book in a perfect half-term of ready-prepared lessons! Pray also for wisdom and confidence as we continue to look for the future presenters of OT mini and NT mini.

■ Words by Rachel Jessup



Secondary Schools Work

Lunchtime Clubs

Each week we continue to be available for young people in our lunch groups at The King's School, Ormiston Bushfield Academy and Peterborough Regional College. Park Up at The Kings School and

Hot Chocolate club at Ormiston Bushfield both draw significant numbers (often more than we think should be in the room!) but they are great times to talk with the young people about their lives, help them build friendships and invite them to other opportunities

that we run in their school, or out of school activities like The Point and Letton Hall. We often see quite a few students attend the voluntary worship (alternative worship) at King's who know us from the lunch club and not necessarily with a church background. Its great to see that openness, and desire to explore further and give them a worship experience – something where they see the Father's heart for them.

Assemblies

Once again Matt has been in front of hundreds of students in assemblies in a number of schools across the Peterborough area. In January, Matt was invited to speak in the chapel services at The Peterborough School with both lower and upper senior school. Matt's message was centred around valuing people different to us, how we treat others and Jesus' call not just to do no harm to others – but to do people good!

In March, Matt and Ethan led who in the film searches through her social media profiles to discover more about her life in order to locate her. This built to the students thinking about the question of being known, and whether God is the person who knows us the best. We referenced David and Psalm



CROPS MENTORING

With Chris Wild



This term we have welcomed The Deepings School in joining our mentoring project, we already had one mentor ready to get started so it was good to get going, in this our 13th school, straight away. Our team of mentors has now grown to 22 which means we are able to make a huge impact across our local schools caring for students

139 and highlighted that David was saying that there was nothing about his life that God didn't already know. As though God had a search engine to find out every thought we have, word we speak and action we take. There was a strong message that God knows everything about us, and is there for anyone who feels lost and frightened. Each day as the room emptied students and staff came and spoke to us commenting on how they were impacted by the message in the assembly.

Finally just before the Easter Weekend Matt travelled over to Casterton College Rutland to speak in their Easter service. This was a special time that included numerous items by the choir and Easter Bible readings from the gospels. Matt spoke about Jesus' sacrifice in dying on the cross and how that one act changed the world forever – using the film 'First Man'. The film is about Neil Armstrong's life and mission to walk on the moon and the sacrifices he made over many years to achieve something that has made a huge difference in our world. This served as a great comparison to introduce Jesus' work of sacrifice for us all, something much greater. ■

at vulnerable times in their lives. In the last 2 terms we have already surpassed the 1000 mentoring sessions that we held in the whole of the last academic term, so the project continues to grow.

At this time of year many of our mentors will be supporting students who are dealing with anxiety and pressure around the subject of exams. There have been many quotes and articles recently that have wanted to communicate to students the same message at this time; 'Your value as a person can never be solely judged on a set of exam grades' and it's great to hear from mentors that they have had the opportunity to share these thoughts with students in many different ways.

One of our mentors has been mentoring a student since September and helping them work through the anxiety issues they have been facing. With GCSE'S looming this was always going to be a big issue for them at this time of year. One of the biggest issues the student faced when dealing with their anxiety at exam time was staying in the exam hall, it was just something they couldn't cope with and always walked out of exams. When his anxiety got too much he would walk out of his lessons too. As with most mentoring situations it was a combination of being there each week, lots of listening whilst offering some practical ideas to help them through this time. They encouraged the student to sleep and eat well, to think about their breathing, to think through what to do if things start to go wrong in an exam, gave them some articles to read and helped them understand how their body works in times of anxiety. The mentor said 'It

was just a matter of giving some pointers, you can see the weight lifted of his shoulders by the end of the session – they sometimes just need to come and talk it all through'. The mentoring has really helped the student with their anxiety and confidence; they now no longer need to use their time out card in lessons and haven't walked out of any exams since the mentoring began. They still have days when they find their anxiety difficult but they recover a lot quicker and are able to carry on.

It has been great to get some nice feedback from schools that we have been working with this term. Whilst meeting with one school recently, they asked if they could give CROPS Mentoring the money they take from their next non-uniform day as a way of saying thank you for all our mentors have been doing and the difference they have made. They also asked one of the most common questions I get asked when I meet up with the schools we work with...'Have you got any men?' The need for male role models in our schools is so important and the large majority of our mentors are female. So, as I promised the school I would ask... If you are a male, or know one who would be a great mentor, and can give an hour a week to supports students struggling in our local schools, then please do get in touch! (There's plenty of room for more females too!) ■ **Words by Chris Wild**

THE POINT

CITY-WIDE YOUTH EVENT

It's been another fantastic term for us at The Point.

But if you're not aware of The Point you may be asking "What's The Point...?" Well The Point is a monthly youth worship event for young people. It mixes social space, time to worship and an opportunity to hear an inspiring Bible-based talk to make for a truly unique evening. We also offer time for prayer and opportunities for the young people to respond to what God might be saying to them. We hold The Point at Park Road Baptist Church, Peterborough and we would love to thank the PRBC congregation for letting us use their building every month!

Over the past few months we've seen a rise in numbers at The Point, which has been really encouraging to everyone on The Point team. Whilst it's great having new people it can always be a bit intimidating for the new ones to integrate into the crowd of regular attendees. The time when people arrive is a great opportunity to form new friendships, to help the newcomers feel welcome. To help this we've invested in some games like 'Dobble' and 'Pass the Pigs' so people can play games together during this arrival time before the main programme starts. The aim being to break down some of the barriers and make everyone feel welcome.



In January, Bob Goody from Scripture Union continued our "I AM" series we kick-started in December. In his talk "I AM: New" Bob looked at how we can be made new through Christ and shared his testimony. This talk was a great encouragement for many of us, showing that despite the things we have done we are forgiven by God, and become new.

February saw Ed Walker, head of 'Hope into Action' delivered the next talk in the "I AM" series, "I AM: a Game Changer". In his talk he looked at the feeding of the 5000 and the idea of how we can be game changers through giving as giving is one of the practices that is central to us as disciples. This was a challenging talk as Ed led us to think about the ways in which we can give to others through his own experiences running Hope into Action. He also gave us some idea of easy ways we could start to give.

Mat Morton delivered the talk at The Point in March. His talk was called "I AM: Inseparable" and focussed on the amazing truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Throughout the talk Mat challenged us to think of the barriers that stop us from loving God and how these barriers can affect our faith. Mat spoke particularly from his own experiences and shared the ways in which he overcame these barriers. In our response time many of the youth prayed for each other. This was an emotional time together as you could see God was breaking down many of the barriers within the lives of our young people.

If you are interested in bringing any young people to The Point, we have printed flyers available with all the remaining dates for this academic year. You can also download it through our website or you can get in touch with us if you would like us to send you some.

■ Words by Ethan Smith



FIRE CHURCH



At the end of March CROPS, Peterborough Cathedral and the Diocese Youth Team 'Gen2' together put on an outdoor evening youth worship event called 'Firechurch'. Firechurch brought young people together from schools and churches across the wider area of Peterborough Diocese. On the evening we had around 200 young people and youth leaders attend this special event, situated in the grounds of Peterborough Cathedral (The Cloisters). This was the first event of this type in Peterborough and we had an amazing evening with dry weather too!

The immersive worship experience started from the get-go. At the start the young people gathered in groups at the main doors of the Cathedral and then were led down a candlelit walk through and around the Cathedral – with the choir singing in the stalls as they went through. They processed round to the far end and then out through a side door into the Cloisters where there senses were greeted with fire sights sounds and smells! In the Cloisters we had

5 fire-bowls burning plus a fire performer to entertain people as they arrived. Four of the fire bowls were set as 'stations' with different activities for the young people to gather round and do.

These ranged from a story telling activity where those sat around sharing their own stories as well as moments that had changed or impacted their lives. We had a prayer themed station as well as a worship station and the final one was on the theme of 'action', with volunteers from the local 'Garden House' project for the homeless, talking about their motivation in their mission to these people. There was also a food tent with hot drinks, sausage (and vegetarian!) rolls.

Towards the end of the evening we gathered every one around the main large gazebo for worship 'Rend Collective' style led by the band and then a wonderful moment when Sarah Brown, Canon Missioner from the Cathedral, led communion with bread and wine being shared remembering all that Jesus has done for us.

The young people were so positive about the whole evening. We had a real mix of many different types of church denominations bringing groups of young people, traditional and non-traditional churches all mixing in together. What a wonderful picture of unity it was. One young person commented that they saw a teacher and other students

from their own secondary school that they didn't know were also Christians and how that was a real encouragement to them in thinking about living out of their faith at school in the future. The whole evening had a wonderful sense of community, and the aim wasn't to just 'put on a big event' but grow the sense of community amongst young people by gathering young people from the Peterborough area (and beyond) for worship and an opportunity to connect as well as

introduce new young people to the Cathedral community and experimenting with diverse worship styles that unite and enrich.

At the end of the evening just before we sang our final song we were able to share about the opportunity of The Point, CROPS monthly event for young people as a great next step for those who had come to meet together with others again. We pray that all these events would continue to encourage and help grow this age group in the local church in the city. ■



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If you would like to discuss this further or would like us to email or post the forms to you please contact us via the office.
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