



CHRISTIAN OPTIONS IN PETERBOROUGH SCHOOLS

# Summer Newsletter 2017



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Ethan Smith



“CROPS has communicated to 6400 pupils through assemblies and engaged with over 1000 pupils through lessons this term.”  
Matt Wild, CROPS Director



WEB [www.crops.org.uk](http://www.crops.org.uk)  
EMAIL [hello@crops.org.uk](mailto: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

The Spring term for CROPS has been such fun and a real time of growth. We've led another impacting Letton Hall Houseparty and the second **Awake My Soul** University-stage retreat over Easter. Looking back on this term it has been exciting to see doors opening for the mentoring project and assemblies and RE resources in schools. We've communicated to 6400 pupils through assemblies and engaged with 1000 pupils in lessons in local primary and secondary schools.

As schools across the area face even greater challenges in regard to funding and decide what services they can or cannot fund in school, (with the same numbers of pupils and the challenges/issues they face) there is an opportunity for the church to be good news! Will we rise to the challenge?

With this in mind I am hugely encouraged about how having another full time staff member on the team is helping to grow what we are able to offer local schools. Can I thank those of you who have been praying and sending extra finances our way to make this happen. As I said on New Year's Eve in the Cathedral, we totally believe this is right for us to be stepping out and growing the team at this time and the response from schools for mentoring is proving this- but with that comes the challenge of growing our income to see this work sustained over a number of years. This is something we also trust God in! If you would like to support in this way with a one off or regular gift, go straight to our website and via the 'Give



Now' button do this there. Otherwise call the office and speak to one of the team.

As we hit the summer term we are busy preparing for the summer and having a presence at **Soul Survivor** youth festival, to be held in Peterborough for the first time. We are also busy booking Primary Schools in for the **It's Your Move** year 6 presentation about the move up to secondary school and booking in schools for **GSUS Live** (for the Autumn term!).

Please pray for all the team and volunteers for energy, ideas and inspiration as we go about our various roles in CROPS!

Thanks  
Matt

## Team Updates



### Sheila Bucknell

Administrator and Schools Mentor

It has been another great term with the magnificent CROPS team, what a joy to share and support the team here. Mentoring is going from strength to strength under the leadership of Chedz Wild with extra Mentors coming on board soon, which will enable us to reach out to many more young people in Peterborough schools.

It has been another inspirational year for me, being able to mentor at OBA and as always this could not be achieved without the support of the staff there. I look forward to continuing my journey with CROPS and to working to achieve even greater outcomes in the year ahead.

### Nathanael Grenfell

CROPS Gap Year Student

Two down, one to go! I seriously have no idea where the time has gone but it's been a great term. I've enjoyed far too much this term to list everything but a few highlights were; going back to Letton in February for a fantastic four days away with a great team and young people; speaking for the first time at the April Point; and getting to know Chedz (Chris) better. I can't wait for what's next!



### Chris Wild

Schoolsworker and Mentoring Lead

The last few months have been an amazing start to my time at CROPS, getting the mentoring project off the ground (more of that in the mentoring update) and speaking at Letton Hall have been two big highlights. Being back in schools doing mentoring has been so rewarding, there is a huge need in our schools for this support and it's great to be able to make a start in doing something positive in this area. It was a privilege to be back at Letton Hall again, it never ceases to amaze me how much is crammed into four days and how powerfully God works through the day to day conversations as well as the main sessions. The team have been incredibly welcoming, not just in the office supplying cups of tea, but seeing how each person gives up their time to make their own different role in CROPS work has been a real inspiration.

## CROPS Mentoring with Chris Wild

The schools mentoring launch at the Cathedral on New Year's Eve was a fantastic start to the work, helping to spread the news of what the project is about across many churches. It was great to have so much supportive feedback confirming that this is a real area of need for young people, that local Christians can get involved in. The search for volunteer mentors began straight away and with a lot of initial interest, an open evening was held for people to explore in more detail whether this is something they could be part of. This was held in early March at Westgate New Church and 15 people came and heard the need for and vision of the project, with a chance to ask lots of fantastic questions

"You have taken a lot of weight off my shoulders."  
"I love coming to these sessions as I feel I can just be me."

### Student Quotes

about what being a mentor would look like practically.

Whilst the search for volunteer mentors continues Sheila and I have continued to go into local secondary schools and spend time with young people who are facing difficult times in their lives. We have been working with students that are going through a whole range of issues including; bullying, self-esteem problems, parents going into prison, family breakdown, anger management, exam pressure and generally getting into trouble at school through a

poor attitude towards teachers and learning. These conversations can go from exciting to frustrating and heart-breaking to lots of fun, but they are always so worthwhile.

One student we have seen was in lots of trouble for swearing at teachers, they said they had 'no control' over their swearing. They are a few months from doing exams and haven't ever revised at home. Their disruption of classes and other students was so bad they were referred for mentoring. The mentoring sessions explored controlling anger, dealing with grief, interpersonal relationships and what they want out of life in the future.

Since then they haven't been in trouble at school, or sworn at a teacher, they revise for 1 hour every day after school at home and are through to a final interview for an apprenticeship scheme. They have stopped spending time with students they got into trouble with and tell them that they want to work hard instead – because they want a better future. Their teachers are really noticing the changes.

From January through to March we have mentored 16 different students, which so far totals meeting students for over 70 sessions. We are really looking forward to seeing how much this will grow as our volunteer mentors sign up, go through training and get on-board.

Now, three months in, we are mentoring in 3 local secondary schools and starting conversations with more. We are in the middle of volunteer interviews, taking references and preparing training courses for those who are really keen to go ahead. It is exciting to see what God is doing as people rise to the challenge.

Would you like to get involved? Get in touch if you would like to join the volunteer mentor team!



### The Point

The Point continues to be a place sought out by many young people locally.

**Bethany MacDonald (Visible, Manchester)** visited in January sharing how often we try to change things we know are wrong in our lives, thinking that then God will love and accept us. Instead the challenge is for us to accept that 'it's not by our might, nor by our own power, but by God's Spirit' (Zechariah 4:6) - that change will come. In February **Ed Walker**, founder of **Hope Into Action** spoke on 'good news about justice'. We were moved as Ed led us in a Franciscan Blessing – a prayer inviting God to bless us with Discomfort, Anger, Tears.

**Samuel Taylor** in March spoke on Ephesians 5:14; waking up and living alive in the light of Christ. Lastly, in April we had our very own **Nathanael Grenfell** share about what it means to love yourself; recognising the truth of how much God loves us.

It was great to have guest worship leaders this term in addition to the usual mix, **Samuel Taylor** and the Kingsgate Youth band in February as well as **Simon Stubbings** in April. We value the worship times and talks at The Point but also recognize that it's the opportunity of being part of something bigger, young people meeting up with friends to be encouraged to stand firm in their faith.





## Letton Hall Houseparty February 2017 - Onside

By Nathanael Grenfell



This February's Letton was certainly an unforgettable one. Undoubtedly it was an incredible four days, including a few extra hours added at the end thanks to Storm Doris!

It was amazing to have **Chedz Wild** as our guest speaker for four fantastic main sessions exploring how God is ruthlessly and passionately on our side and fighting for us through the good and bad in our lives. It was a time to look at scripture and make sure we didn't have a 'wonky view of God.' Chedz led us to look at how we are free to live out amazing lives for Him when we realise just how much 'He has our back' in everything we face, and in God's strength.

We also answered that often-asked question: can teenagers survive without WI-FI for 4 days? To which the answer was: yes they can! We wanted to have a proper retreat away from the distractions of home and social media, and to get young people (and leaders) to focus more on the people around them; on the whole

this worked really well and it was great to see so much face to face interaction.

Our morning devotional time – Soul Stretch, provided us with a reflective start to each day. Starting with some acoustic worship, we then moved onto reading the Bible together. Using the idea of S.O.A.P (Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer) to engage with scripture both personally and in small groups.

Seminars always provide a great place for young people to have open discussions around important topics or issues.

This time we had seminars looking at; Resilience, Contentment, God's Call, Identity, and the difference between religion and a relationship with God.



"My child had a brilliant time at Letton thanks for all your hard work I know how much time you will have put into planning such a fantastic program"

Parent



“Letton has helped me gain a better understanding of Scripture and how to apply it to my life.”

**Ethan Smith**

On Wednesday we ran several creative and fun workshops including Den building (we will be back in the Spring to re-plant those trees!), The Great Letton Lego Challenge, Bracelet Craft, and looking at What's in a worship song.

Unfortunately the weather prevented us from going on the go-karts on Wednesday so instead we showed the film 'Zootropolis' and later we had the pedal go-karts out (eco-friendly and more tiring!).

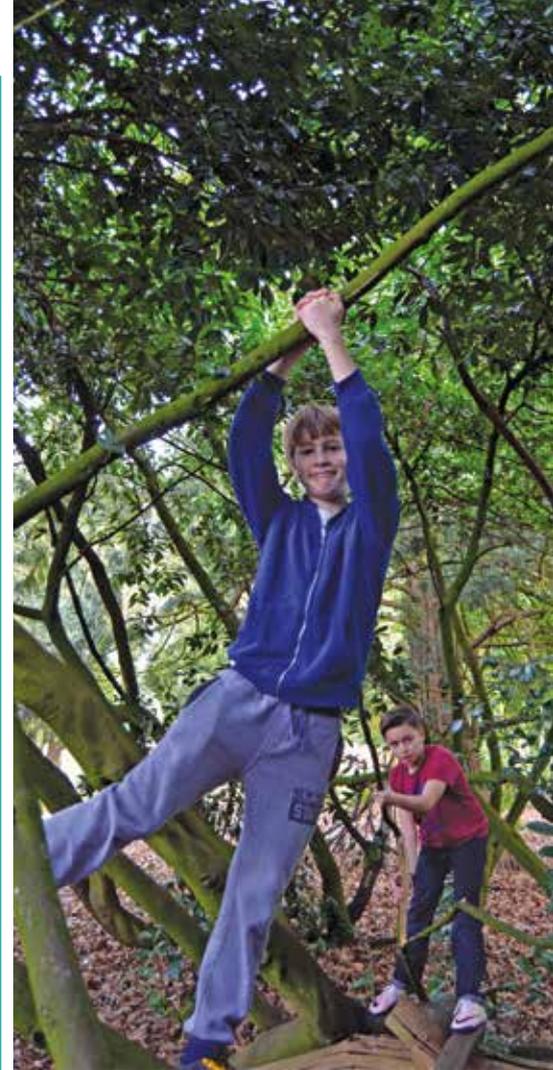
As always on the last night we had our themed dinner and talent show. This February we thought it would be great to take our minds off the cold and the rain with a summer theme and BBQ meal. This was so much fun! Inflatable palm trees, beach balls, windbreaks

“Letton is a great opportunity to have fun, and learn what God is telling you, whether you have never heard about him, or need to get back on top of life.”

**Zach Didcott**

– and flowery shirts! Once again we were blown away by the talent show – so many young people in our talent show with musical acts and comedy sketches alike.

Courtesy of Storm Doris we were granted extra time at Letton which we made full use of with games, films and even a picnic in the drawing room, departing when the winds had died



down. It was a late return but safety was paramount.

We want to thank our wonderful cooks, Quentin and Sue (and son Marcus) for providing such lovely meals for us all. We also want to give a massive thank you to all our Letton leaders for giving so generously of their time and talents, helping to make Letton such an incredible experience.





## Primary Schools Work By Rachel Jessup

**'Why can't J-Zone be on every day? We love it'** asked two enthusiastic girls at the end of a high energy lunch club at William Law Primary School! Great feedback and a tribute to the commitment of **Nicky Peake** (Kingsgate), **Jo Oldaker** (Emmanuel) and **Fiona Kutschera** (Life Church) who give up their time on a regular basis to help plan, prepare for and run the club with me (Bretton Baptist). I love the fact that CROPS brings people of different Churches together in unity to serve God. If God has given you a vision to run a

lunch club but you don't have a team or resources to do it, why not get in touch with the CROPS Office and see if we can make the links for you?

### Nathanael's putting his back into it

A highlight of this term has been taking a Palm Sunday assembly into Heltwate Special School. Our first visit was with the 5-11 year olds and we talked about how people welcome our Queen, with a red carpet, waving flags and cheering. We re-enacted this special entrance with several volunteers and then talked about how Jesus himself was welcomed into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday like a King. I hadn't taken a donkey prop in so Nathanael Grenfell kindly agreed to be the donkey for this assembly and the volunteers led him down the path as we pretended that Jesus was sitting on his back. The next day I assured Nathanael that I would think of another way to do the donkey with the 11-19 year olds version of the assembly. We called up two volunteers who were to be sent out by Jesus to find a donkey and to say the words 'the master needs it'. Before I had even finished explaining the actions, one of the volunteers went straight up to Nathanael who was standing at the front and took his hand and led him back to us. 'Have you found a donkey?' I asked 'Yes' they replied confidently – no doubt at all in their mind that this was the one

who should play the part... so Nathanael got to be a donkey for the second day running! Thank you Nathanael, you played the part of that peaceful, long suffering, beast of burden very well – a reflection of your year's work experience at CROPS???

### Genesis is all about beginnings

Every time we retell the big storyline of the Bible we remind ourselves how God puts the Big Picture together perfectly through a whole mixture of very imperfect people. He's even able to use people like us! This term we have taken a series of OT Mini lessons (The new condensed Old Testament Bible Explorer) into three Yr5 classes at William Law CE Primary School, 2 Yr 5 classes at Watergall Primary School and 2 Yr 6 classes at Eye Primary School. Richard Kean has been working with me to present many of these and will soon be offering this series of lessons to schools himself so we can grow the team of Walk Through The Bible Presenters in this area. This is a very exciting time as we continually review and improve on these new lessons to teach the original stories in an interactive and accessible way. We are looking forward to a training day in Luton during May to help inspire our story telling ability further.

I have also been teaching the New Testament Bible Explorer lessons at Watergall Primary School Yr 6 and look forward to the NT Mini version of these coming out in September to make them even more memorable for the children in the future.

**'Please put your swords down on the table'** said the teacher as the children entered the classroom dressed as Romans! It was great to be there on the Yr3 'dress up as a Roman' day because we could talk about the Romans being in charge of Israel at the time of Jesus as a great way into the topic. Hampton Primary School had invited me in to answer Yr2 questions about Lent and Easter and Yr3 questions to finish their topic 'What do you know about Jesus?' All 6 lessons were very different from each other as the children had fabulous questions of their own which led the discussion and the relevant stories or activities that worked with them. It's always exciting to hear what the children are thinking about!



## Secondary Schools Work



“This experience gave me a closer understanding of Jesus.”

### Nene Park Academy

With Chris Wild starting with us in his mentoring role, weekly support for students in this way has picked up again at NPA. As to assemblies, in early March we took a week of house assemblies focusing on the theme of revenge. This used the film 'Mandela' and how getting our own back may be tempting but ultimately keeps us trapped in cycles of hate. With the challenge to 'Not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with Good.' (Romans 12:21).

Towards the end of the term as part of Christian Rapper Guvna B's visit to the city with Kingsgate – we were able to help host him at NPA for an afternoon. This included a lesson with students particularly interested in hip-hop music where Guvna shared his story, including how Christianity had shaped and changed him and encouraged the students to think

“The thought process (of Breathe) really challenged me because they weren't things I would normally think about.”

about what their unique contribution to the world would be.

### Casterton College Rutland

In the last week of term we went across to Casterton Rutland College (near Stamford) to deliver a day of Breathe lessons and on the final day of the spring term to speak in their two Easter services. Breathe, as always, elicits a variety of responses from the students. We were working with year 9 and led five sessions through out the day. At the end of each session we invited the students to think about how the experience had affected them.

For the Easter services Matt's talk was themed 'In My Place' looking at how Jesus died in our place so that we could take his. As part of the talk we used a clip from **Batman: Dark Knight** – where because of Batman's actions the people of Gotham city would not lose hope because one man was willing to pay the price for another person's crimes. We then linked this to Isaiah 53 and how Jesus had taken on himself our punishment for our wrongs.

In the break between the two services Matt and Nathanael had some really great conversations with a few Year 11 students who had been helping with

aspects of the service, who had lots of questions about whether we were Christians, what our lives were like, what we believed etc. We were able to share a number of perspectives and leave questions to ponder!

### Peterborough Regional College

We continue to be part of the chaplaincy team at PRC. Every Tuesday lunch we meet in the prayer and contemplation room (by the wellbeing centre), serve drinks and chat with students. We have had a student who has been coming for a number of months and asking lots of theological questions (which we have faithfully tried to answer - not always possible!). Anyway, recently after one of the sessions this student went to see the college Chaplain and ask for prayer to become a Christian. The student wants us to lead Alpha with them so we are now working through the discussion/ video Alpha series to help them understand more about Jesus.

“Thinking about 'where God is' was a hard question, challenging.”

## Secondary Schools Work *continued...*

### **Sir Harry Smith Community College - Whittlesey**

We have recently started working in a new secondary school. Whilst SHSCC is a very long established school it has been many years since CROPS has been involved. Matt and Nathanael led daily assemblies with years 7, 8 and 9 in March on the theme of 'Listen and Learn' tying in with the fundamental British value of 'tolerance and respect', exploring what it really means to listen to other people – and whether we could miss a truly life changing message by having our 'ears closed'. The assemblies were met with much positive feedback from staff and went down very well with the students.

### **The Peterborough School**

Matt and Nathanael have visited Chapel a few times this term to lead services with the prep-school and seniors. In January the theme with the seniors focused on Change, and the conversion of Saul - using the film **Les Miserables**. Matt shared how a dramatic supernatural encounter with Jesus brought change in the lives of Jean

Valjean and Saul and that divine help is available for us today if we want to see change in our lives!

### **Thomas Deacon Academy**

We were invited to lead 2 days of Breathe with students in year 7, 8, and 9 again this year. Staff and students engaged well with the resource with the Principal coming down and having a go too! One students' reflection about the experience was that he was blown away with the idea that Jesus would hang out with people at a party after reading one of the quotes on the Jesus station!

### **The King's School**

We visited twice this term to lead Alternative worship with our themes following that of 'Standing up for what is right' (Holocaust Memorial) in January and 'Being Known by God' (verses just knowing about Him) in March.

**Park Up** our lunchtime club continues each week with a real mix of different students attending. There is always lively discussion and lots of fun but also those moments where students need

that extra support and attention due to issues in their lives. We have this term, started to support student leaders of the Christian Union 'Alive' that meets on a Tuesday (upper school) lunchtime and are helping to deliver the Youth Alpha material with ten year 10 -12 students.

### **Ormiston Bushfield Academy**

We continue to meet students on Wednesday lunchtimes at OBA for Hot Chocolate Club: games, conversation, support and hot chocolate! Sheila also continues to mentor students each week on Thursday mornings. This term we were invited by the RE teacher to lead some lessons on Fair-trade as part of the Fair-trade week the school was holding. We led a Christian Aid resource – 'the trading game' that helped students understand the imbalances in our world when it comes to countries competing to trade. There were lots of shouts of 'its not fair' and one young lady left the classroom at the end vowing to become Prime Minister one day in order to change things!

