

FREE



SPRING 2022

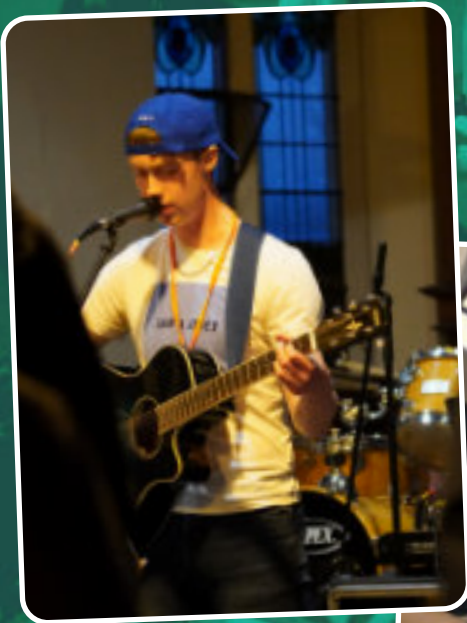
CHRISTIAN OPTIONS IN PETERBOROUGH SCHOOLS

“Letton has made me a better version
of myself through Jesus.”

Jacob, Letton Hall attendee

“I don’t skip lessons
anymore...”

student being mentored



“I didn’t know Jesus died for us.”

student comment from GSUS Live



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CROPS is a Charity Incorporated Organisation, Registered No. 1157651

MATT WILD'S UPDATE

CROPS DIRECTOR

It's my joy to be writing the introduction to another CROPS Newsletter! We are two school terms into another academic year, and I can't quite believe that time has flown so quickly!

In September, we as a charity felt that as schools were opening-up again post-Covid, that it was right to pause some of our out of school events for the first half-term to see what direction things would go with Covid itself, but also to



double-down our time in re-establishing our connections in schools. The impact of Covid on education meant we had lost a lot of opportunity to be in schools in the previous 18 months, with schools being closed at several times, or restrictions on external

visitors when they were open. That was a hard decision for us, but it was worth it and there is a definite feeling of momentum growing with what we can do in schools. You will read in this edition some of the things like **GSUS Live** that we have been able to do again in schools along with updates on the Primary Schools work and CROPS Mentoring, and we are currently booking lots of primary schools in for our year 6 lesson *It's Your Move* about the move up to secondary school!

Whilst we had a short pause on out of school events and activities, it was so exciting to restart two key areas of CROPS ministry to young people, especially those across churches – our monthly indoor youth event **TOGETHER** (formerly *The Point*), and Letton Hall Houseparty - both enabled by a great team of volunteers and youth workers from local churches. We recently gathered some local youth workers for encouragement and support, and I asked everyone to share their story of what got them into youth ministry. As we listened to each other it was so inspiring, and we learnt things we didn't know about it each other's journeys. Amazing where a question can lead eh!

I would like to say on behalf of the team and trustees at CROPS, a huge thank you to those who have continued to support and pray for CROPS over this very challenging period. We are so grateful for your commitment to CROPS through prayer, encouragement, and financial giving.

If you are wondering about getting involved in the work of CROPS please do get in touch, there are always ways we can involve people however small or large an amount of time you may have to give. Drop us an email!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt".



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** aim 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 support 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 in liaison with school pastoral teams. In addition to this, **CROPS**

support local youth workers and youth work in churches through events like 'The Point', 'TOGETHER', 'Letton Houseparty' as well as running a Gap Year programme for school leavers. **CROPS** continue to be funded by churches and Christian individuals, seeking to work in partnership with local Churches and other organisations.



TOGETHER

After 18 months of not running an indoor event (*The Point* as it was) due to Covid-19 we restarted back indoors at Park Road Baptist Church with **TOGETHER** in November 2021. When Covid first hit we initially took *The Point* online, then from September 2020, we took it outdoors. This then grew into something new with the arrival of **TOGETHER**!

We have now run six **TOGETHER** events! How time has flown! In looking to restart an indoor event that previously been the same for several years, we took the opportunity to take a fresh look at what we were doing and add some changes to the format to ensure we were engaging young people and keep things fresh.

We took things that were successful features of the things we did online and outdoors from the pandemic phase and integrated these into the new indoor event at Park Road. For example, discussions – these were a big part of what we did, and we noticed the young people really engaged in these times, so we now have two moments in the evening where young people are in groups to talk, one early on helping foster relationships, the other after the message shared by the speaker to dig down into the practical

outworking and challenge of the message in our lives. Another feature was about having lots of activities on offer as soon as young people arrive, which was vital when we were outdoors. This now means the lower hall with lots on offer as people arrive before moving everyone upstairs for the main programme.

Over the 6 events we have run we have built to having 50 young people attending – which is amazing, with a vision to keep growing! The new format in a familiar venue has worked well so far, gradually building momentum each month.

Doing the split spaces (activities downstairs then moving upstairs for programme/worship) is enabling us to create different environments and helps the young people to switch to a different focus.



The young people are clearly loving the discussions seeing high engagement in these times. Groups are forming, young people are gelling, with more conversations between different young people. Our guest speakers have been using the narrative of their story and applying scripture and leaving a challenge to go back into group to discuss and then pray about before final time of worship.

We are so encouraged by a representation of 15 different Churches from across Peterborough and surrounding towns, with new churches joining and trying the event out. There is a real buzz about the event!

At the heart of **TOGETHER** is a big focus on young people being involved in leading and serving through things like hosting upfront, worship, tech, and media team. It's so encouraging to see them growing as they serve and inviting friends from school to come along.

We still have a heart and vision for reintroducing a run of outdoor **TOGETHER** events as part of our annual rhythm in late summer, or summer 2023. We still need some fundraising for this project and to work out logistics and extra team needed.

If you know young people who haven't attended recently check out **TOGETHER** on our website: crops.org.uk/together



PRIMARY SCHOOLS



WITH RACHEL JESSUP

September 2021 started well with high hopes of a return to normality in the classrooms. I enjoyed visiting **Stilton CE Primary School** on Mondays where I taught an enthusiastic Yr. 6 class the storyline of the New Testament followed by a quick classroom swap and juggling of visual aids to teach Yr. 5 the Old Testament. One of the children asked if I remembered the name of a Teaching Assistant in their school because, apparently, I taught her OT Mini when she was in Junior School (it might

make me feel old but at least she remembered the lessons more than 10 years later!) I guess it's inevitable now that I have been in and out of Peterborough Primary Schools for over 24 years...

On Wednesdays I taught two Yr. 5 classes at **St Michaels CE Primary School** in South Stanground (after lateral flow testing to ensure I was Covid free). It was great to be back there, and I look forward to teaching NT Mini for the Yr. 6's in the Springtime.

As Covid began to spread more I decided to only visit one school in the second half-term and so I was able to teach 3 classes of Yr. 6 students at **William Law** on one morning a week. It was encouraging to have questions like, 'Are you coming back to teach us the New Testament too?' and other keen remarks which showed that they were enjoying the RE experience.

After a great time teaching the Old Testament storyline to **Barnack Primary** Yr. 5 children, I was asked to take two lessons about Holy Week at **Newborough CE Primary**. This Yr. 4 class knew a lot from the RE lessons already and were full of questions and great at making connections!

“We have loved the sessions delivered by Rachel and would definitely recommended them to other schools and year groups.”

Here are some comments from the teachers feeding back on the lessons:

“The interactive nature of the lessons really inspired and enthused the children. They were able to remember the stories told using the actions provided and this enabled them to think about the meanings behind these and so the learning took place on a deeper level.”

“All children were included in the sessions and Rachel made sure that all children had a chance to take part in role-play or learning games played.”

“Rachel's use of props also brought the stories to life and the children enjoyed trying to guess how some of the props worked. They were also able to ask further questions to progress their own understanding within the sessions.”

“I would rate the presentation as Excellent.”

A highlight of the first lesson occurred when I mentioned that the crowds on Palm Sunday shouted ‘Hosanna’ to Jesus. Hands shot up in the classroom as they realised that they knew that word from a song they sang in assembly. ‘Miss, we sing that...’ and starting with a few students, the whole class joined in. They burst into song and carried on singing right to the end of the chorus. It was a great moment.

One child asked why Holy Week was called ‘Holy’ so we explored what Holy meant and discussed how Jesus was pure and set apart to do God's special mission. We looked at the story

of Jesus clearing the Temple of all the things that didn't please God. We discovered why Friday is called ‘Good Friday’ because Jesus took the punishment for all the wrong choices and mess ups humans have made throughout History. We discovered that Holy week tells us how God made us

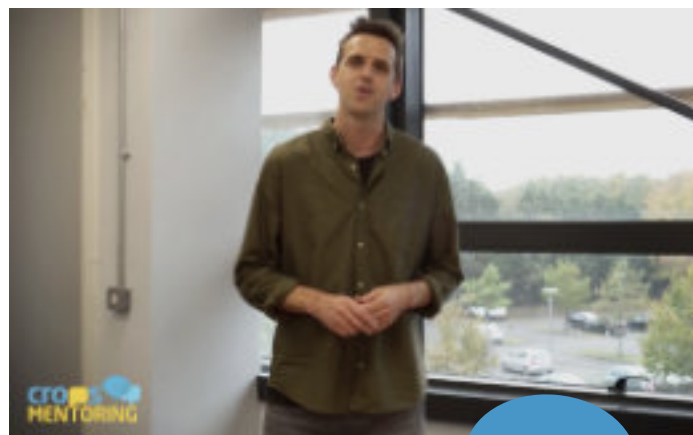
a way to be Holy - how He ripped the Temple curtain in two so we can all stand in the Most Holy place and talk to God in prayer. We explored a lot more than was on my original lesson plan because of their brilliant ideas and questions - I love it when that happens...

Heart for Children Network

The Heart for Children Network is for anyone leading children's work in a Church or school setting. We have continued to meet through Zoom once a term while also praying and sharing great resources and encouragements through e-mails.

Please let me know if you are interested in joining the network by emailing rachel.jessup@crops.org.uk, so I can let you know when the next meeting is. On that note our next meeting is Thursday 22 September, 7.15pm – email Rachel for Venue or Zoom info.

5 YEAR



CROPS MENTORING

BY CHRIS WILD

As CROPS Mentoring reaches its 5 - year anniversary (how has that gone so quickly!) it has been great to reflect on all that God has done through the project and the significant number of young lives that have been changed through people from our local churches giving their time to support and encourage students who are going through difficult times. They are an amazing group of volunteers who each bring their own unique experiences and giftings to the mentoring team. We are so thankful to them.

Being a mentor and listening to student's stories brings out a whole host of emotions. I speak to many mentors who come out of their mentoring sessions feeling different each time, it can be tired, energized, excited, sad, or teary, but the main thing they report is the privilege that it is to walk alongside people who are hurting and play a part in helping them on a journey of restoration. Its due to this amazing team,

from a huge variety of churches, that we have been able to support hundreds of young people in our city with well over 5000 mentoring sessions since we started in 2017. That's hundreds of individual stories of small and big changes.

Equipping others

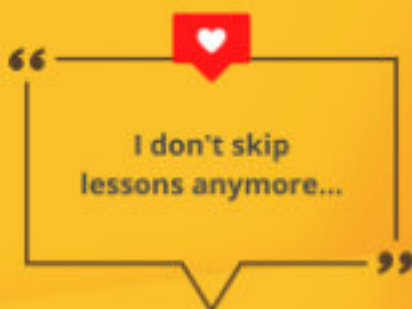
In more recent times we have been able to support many churches and organisations from all different parts of England to start or expand the mentoring they do in local schools, as well as speaking at the Youth for Christ staff conference about our work. It's great to know the lessons we have learnt are able to help others to support more young people too.

"I just wanted to drop you a quick email to let you know that we have 6 mentors going into our local high school supporting 12 students overall, from next week onwards - we are really looking forward to it! We wouldn't have got to where we are without your help and support. Your advice, insight and training has been invaluable. Thanks so much!"

Tim Cooling, Elim Christian Centre, Glossop

Doing what we do

At CROPS Mentoring we believe that 'everyone should have someone they can talk to', whether that's about how they feel, or the big issues they are going through. I'm sure that's something we can all identify with; we've all had times when we've needed a friend to sit with us and help us get it all out of our system. Sometimes just saying it all out loud helps us work things out, sometimes just 'feeling heard' does us the world of good, other times it's the wisdom that people bring that help us to move on. We feel it's the same with mentoring. Many students do have people they could talk to too, but just don't feel comfortable



CROPS MENTORING

RS ON...



talking to them; for others there just isn't an adult in their lives who wants to give them that time to talk and listen, and others find talking to a stranger, who can be trusted – to be a perfect solution. These are some of the reasons why we believe CROPS Mentoring works and why so many schools have chosen to partner with us.

This term our mentors have seen this working in lots of different ways. We've been helping students learn ways to deal with conflict; dealing with anger and exploring its root causes, understanding panic attacks, working through what 'being a worrier' means and what can be done. Students have told us some honest and vulnerable things; "I can't sleep because I don't know if my mum's boyfriend will come back in the night", "I don't know what the reason to carry on is, what makes people want to carry on?", "She says she's done with boyfriends but it never last more than a week".

"Yesterday was a good day, I woke up and wanted to go to school..." It may be the sort of statement most students would say at some point in their school life but for one of our students this was big progress.

In their first mentoring session they really opened-up about how they were feeling: "I get stressed easily, I can't cope with my feelings, I doubt myself, I get easily distracted, I cry 5 times a day, I compare myself to others, I beat myself up a lot, I find it hard to

be positive, my mind often goes to the negatives". For the mentor the verbal list seemed overwhelming and 'where do I start' seemed as much of a challenge as 'what shall I say'. With lots of weeks of listening, letting the student talk things through, offering gentle encouragements and with a few prompts encouraging action, the student is beginning to turn things around. They are no longer hiding away in the toilets at break times and lunch, they feel comfortable to walk along the school corridor if any older male student is going to pass them by, and they are starting to communicate with a friends and family about how they feel about things, things that they normally keep locked up inside. These changes which make day to day living in school more bearable, are making a huge difference to an individual's life and they are working towards a daily school life where they can thrive instead of just survive.

It's had 'its up and its downs' but we have loved the first 5 years and we are so excited about what the next 5 years will bring. Please consider joining us and being a part of it.





Letton Hall HOUSEPARTY

After 2 years of disruption due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we were finally able to be back at Letton Hall to run our residential-houseparty! It really was a special moment to, on the Monday of half term, 14 February, to be driving across in a convoy of minibuses to get back doing something we and the young people have missed so much. Being able to go away to Letton felt like we experienced something of 'normality' (whatever that is!).

We took a group of 40 young people plus team and ran our 4-day residential and were back to running a normal Letton programme! We had in the pausing of this venture been able to spend some time reflecting on what we did and how we did it and so made some tweaks to the

programme. There was such a joy among the group of young people to be away, to be back at Letton, to be able to experience being away with other Christians in such a beautiful and atmospheric place, growing together and living in community.

Theme and Teaching

Our theme for the week was **SHIFT** – Living a Life that Matters and we explored how we might in our lives, 'shift into a gear' that means we begin to live intentionally and discover all that God has for us. **Matt Forsyth** our guest speaker (Mission Enabler for Northampton Methodist District, and former CROPS Gap Year student) – opened a familiar Old Testament passage in 1 Kings 2:1-4, the beautiful but powerful moment between David and Solomon. Matt rooted the teaching in the following

challenges: the need to decide to live courageously, to decide to live obediently, to decide to live faithfully and the final session wrapping the teaching up with the handing-the-baton-on moment between David and Solomon, weaving in Jesus' last words of the great commission and calling all to ***Make the Shift!*** We saw the young people make a variety of responses during the week including three young people who for the first time choose to take that first step of obedience in committing their lives to Christ.

Programme Elements

The young people had lots of activities to get involved in during the week which included go-karting and archery on site provided by Letton Hall team. Monday and Tuesday were a little wet weather-wise, but we





still made it out for the evening wide game (yes in the dark!) plus games of football and other options on the Tuesday afternoon. The rest of week brightened up and before storm Dudley, Eustice and Franklin arrived Friday onwards (!), we did all we had planned, including our outdoor walk on the last morning (Thursday).

As we often do at Letton we had our activity workshops – things like ‘Painting with Bob Ross’, Cake decorating, Scrapbook creating, Footgolf/ Ultimate Frisbee, etc. We also had seminars that leaders ran for the young people on issues such as: *How to disagree well*, *Girl Talk*, *Gaming*, *Care for the earth – what should Christians*



do?, *It's so boring (church?)*, it was great to see the young people engaging in these and exploring the themes and growing in their understanding.

An Amazing Team

All in all, it was a fabulous week being back. We're glad to have started back with Letton Hall and are building now for the October residential. As always, we were

blessed by a really strong team of leaders and helpers who faithfully served the young people and each other through the week. A huge thank you to our cooks **Quentin and Sue Arnold** again for feeding us! We would also like to thank **The Peterborough School** for the loan of several minibuses for our transport, and **Speedy Couriers** for sponsoring a transit van for us for the week.



SECONDARY SCHOOLS



In November 2021 CROPS hosted 3 weeks of GSUS Live in schools, a resource from Counties UK. GSUS Live is a lesson that provides a stimulating environment in which the students investigate Jesus' teaching about fear, forgiveness and rejection

Readers of CROPS news will know that we have hosted GSUS Live several times in Peterborough in the past, and that this project was in the form of custom adapted 40 ft lorry trailer – operating as a mobile classroom, 'exhibition style unit'. This would be towed into a different school each week for the lessons to take place on. GSUS Live as a project has been around

“I didn't know

Jesus died for us.”

now for 20 years and the two lorry trailers that were originally commissioned for this project lasted a lot longer than anyone thought (double the time!), but sadly got to the point that they were beyond servicing and could no longer be used but scrapped.

You will understand my sense of panic and shock when I heard that our 2021 Autumn booking would be quite different with the two trailers being de-commissioned during summer 2021 towards the end of the Covid-19 Pandemic season.

However, what was to come was a new classroom-based version of GSUS Live that the Counties UK team had put together, still delivering a multimedia-based teaching experience for students to explore the life and message of Jesus for secondary schools. This utilises tablet computers and the same computer programme, and wait for it, CROPS were going to be the first group to use this in schools! So, what arrived was a transit van with lots of tech



kit, pull-up banners with the GSUS Live graphics to transform the classrooms where these lessons would take place – to visually give the feel as students walked in that it wasn't going to be a normal RE lesson!

It was exciting to be taking this new set up into schools and the experience of using this new resource far exceeded our expectations of what it would be like to deliver. Whilst we missed being on board the old trailer unit, we loved being more in the school, (not outside in the carpark!), plus - the classroom dynamics meant that there was a lot greater interaction and engagement with the students in each lesson. We had some amazing discussions, questions posed by students in the lesson plenary times.

We took GSUS Live to three schools: **Nene Park Academy**, **The King's School** and **Casterton College**, Stamford. Overall, we had 1269 secondary school students take part in the lesson in the following schools: Nene Park Academy (385), The King's School (347), Casterton College (537). That's a lot of post it notes used I can tell you!

The students asked some brilliant questions and wrote some interesting feedback on the post it notes that we hand out at the end of the lesson for our plenary time.



Students said things like:

‘I thought GSUS Live was really helpful because it could help me deal with my Anger’

‘Will Jesus forgive all our sins as long as we say sorry?’

‘This has made me think that I’m not an atheist, but an agnostic’

‘This lesson has made me feel more confident about school.’

With this new style of delivery, Counties UK (who manage the GSUS Live resource) have added a 2nd Van and kit so that it can be in more than one place at a time and have adapted the booking so that we can have it locally more often. Rather than wait another few years like we have done in the past to have GSUS Live with us (for a whole half term) we can have another 3 weeks quite quickly again – and so it is great to announce that CROPS will again be hosting GSUS live this coming autumn (November into December) for another 3 weeks in 2022.

Please be praying for us as we look to get 3 different secondary schools signed up to be involved in having the lessons across all their year 7, 8 and 9 groups.

ASSEMBLIES

Matt has been back to delivering assemblies in-person and recording video assemblies for schools to use in the classroom since September.

This has included termly assemblies at **Nene Park Academy** on various themes. The autumn term assemblies carried the theme of ‘Revenge’ looking at how revenge may make us feel good to begin with, but in the end, it will hurt us more than it hurts the other person, and how when Jesus talked about resentment and revenge, he said something completely astonishing – forgive, be kind, choose peace. In the



spring term ‘Blame’ was the focus, here we looked at when bad things happen to us, we want to find someone to blame, and how the Apostle Paul’s teaching shows us that the evil that happens cannot be blamed on just ‘bad’ individuals, that everyone does bad things, but the good news in the Bible is that God has provided an answer for the problem of human sin. More recently (May) we explored ‘Fear of Failure’ looking at how we respond to setbacks, not giving up when we encounter difficulties and using the example in Galatians about not growing weary, but keeping on going to reap a harvest.

Just before Easter Matt filmed an Easter talk for **Casterton College** to be used in their Easter assemblies. This was on the theme of rejection, and whether we accept or reject Jesus’ claims. It explored that this is a personal choice that no one can make for us, and a choice not to be made lightly, and one certainly worth investigating thoroughly.

For **The King’s School** Matt has led termly assemblies on the theme of ‘Forgiveness and confession’ (October) and how the promise in the Psalms gives us hope when we bring things to God: *‘As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us’*. **Psalm 103:12** and then in January - ‘Stories of Hope’ – and the

difference Hope makes to the human heart! Matt used a story about an experiment with some Norwegian rats that illustrated how when someone experiences a rescue it gives hope for the future – and how Jesus gives the example of coming alongside someone to help them find hope.

LUNCHTIME CLUBS

This academic year Ezra Upton and Matt Wild have restarted two lunchtime opportunities for young people. ‘Park Up’ at **The King’s (the Cathedral) School**, plus the drop in space at Peterborough College as part of the chaplaincy team. ‘Park Up’ – is an activities-based space for years 7 & 8 with games console, table tennis & tabletop board games. We have had around 100 students coming through the club, generally 25-30 each week – and this has been a great place to build connections, have conversations and let the students know about other things we offer in school, and out of school.

Chaplaincy at **Peterborough College** has seen us meeting a regular group of 5 students who meet to play card games over a hot drink and talk about what is happening in their lives, the fun things and well as difficult issues. We have been able to share our Christian perspective and offer to pray for them, with some students coming along to our monthly, restarted TOGETHER events at Park Road Baptist Church.

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