



CHRISTIAN OPTIONS IN  
PETERBOROUGH SCHOOLS

Summer Newsletter 2024



**THRIVING THROUGH TRANSITION:**  
Reaching 40 Schools Across the Academic Year!

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CROPS is a Charity Incorporated Organisation, Registered No. 1157651



# Sam Higgins'

# update

## CROPS Team Leader



It's my joy to be writing my first introduction in a CROPS Newsletter. I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of Matt Wild, the previous director, as the new CROPS Team Leader. Since joining the team in November 2023, it's been a privilege to lead and serve on the CROPS team in schools across Peterborough and to witness the mentoring project reach a significant milestone – more on this later.

Also, even with CROPS having been in a time of transition and change, we've still managed to connect with **40 primary and secondary schools this academic year**, and I am so thankful for the opportunities we've had.

### Who is Sam?

I underwent theological training at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, where I obtained a degree in Theology,

Ministry, and Mission with a focus on Youth Ministry. Since then, I have worked for several churches across Peterborough in youth ministry. Previously, I worked for the Diocese of Peterborough as the Youth Mission Enabler for Peterborough Deanery, stirring things up in over 30 churches and helping them explore how they engage with teenagers.

It's been a privilege to have worked closely with CROPS for several years, serving on what once was the Point (now TOGETHER) team, assisting with the running of the Letton Hall Houseparty, and getting involved with various schools' work, such as GSUS Live, the Illuminate tour, and Park Up at The King's School. Now, I am honoured to lead the team in reaching young people in schools and sharing the love of Christ.

### Thank you for your support

On behalf of the team and trustees at CROPS, I would like to extend a huge thank you to those who have continued to support and pray for our work. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to CROPS through prayer, encouragement, time – whether through volunteering or financial giving.

Thank you again for standing with us!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Higgins".

## about CROPS

CROPS (Christian Options in Peterborough Schools) is a charity unique to Peterborough and was 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 provides 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 supports local youth workers and youth work in churches through events like 'TOGETHER', and 'Letton Houseparty' as well as running a Gap Year programme for school leavers. CROPS continues to be funded by churches and Christian individuals, seeking to work in partnership with local churches and other organisations.



# CROPS GAP YEAR

Since 1989, CROPS has given the opportunity to many young people to come on board and spend a year working with us. This year we were blessed with the presence of Jacob Kutschera and John Markham – giving them opportunities to engage with schools work in both the primary and secondary schools across Peterborough.

The CROPS gap year is not just a time to give, but also to receive. This year we partnered with Peterborough Diocese Gen 2 Team, Souster Youth, and Hope Church Corby (Elim) to provide a shared programme of input and development for interns / gap year students across the academic year. Starting with a induction residential retreat in September, monthly development days, access to YMT (monthly 'Youth Ministry Training' evening delivered by Souster Youth) and a mid term spring retreat.

## THE GAPPERS' THOUGHTS ON THE GAP YEAR



JACOB

*How has the gap year at CROPS been for you this academic year?*

"Its been a year of change – its gone from studying in school, to being able to explore more what I want to do. From that I was able to do what God wanted me to do as well through serving Him throughout Peterborough – at TOGETHER, Letton Hall and things like the CU in Kings."

*In what areas has the gap year helped you grow?*

"Its helped me find out what I'm called to do next."

*What's next for you after the gap year?*

"I've applied to Ridley Hall to study theology and youth work."

*Would you recommend the gap year to anyone?*

"Yes! I would say if you're thinking about it, just go for it! It's such a good experience."

*How has the gap year at CROPS been for you this academic year?*

"There has been a lot of opportunities to do stuff. There's never been a dull moment."

*In what areas has the gap year helped you grow?*

"I think being able to do a lot of the social media has been a good opportunity to help those skills further grow – its been very beneficial. And also having the experience with planning sessions and things of that sort."

*What's next for you after the gap year?*

"After the gap year I'm moving on to university to study media"

*Would you recommend the gap year to anyone?*

"Yes! I would definitely recommend it to anyone. The amount of opportunities you are given puts you in good stack for later life."



JOHN

For more information about the CROPS gap year and how to get involved do get in touch with us via email or visit the CROPS website.



# PRIMARY schools

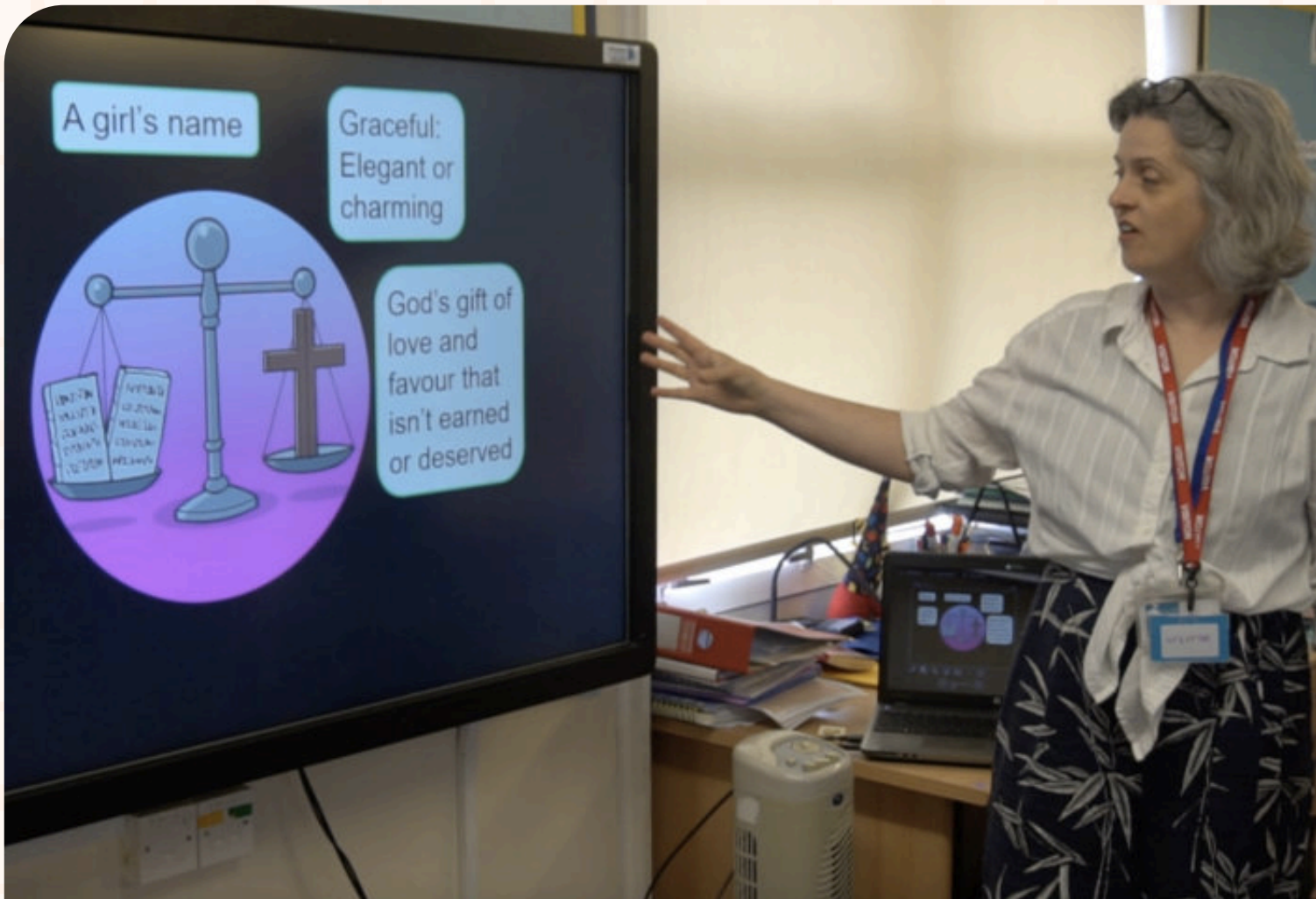
WITH *Rachel Jessup*

**Since September 2023, change and continuity have run side by side at CROPS. I've continued to offer Walk Through the Bible lessons in Stilton CE Primary and St Michael's Church School, along with Collective Worship at Newborough CE Primary, All Saints CE Academy, and St Michael's Church School, but I've also visited new schools for assemblies, including Gladstone Primary Academy and a Collective Worship at The Peterborough School KS1. I have also shared my time with working at Werrington Primary School for one day a week.**

Sam Higgins settled in quickly as the new CROPS Team Leader and came along to see what is involved in the primary schools work of CROPS. In one lesson, a girl asked, "Why would God send Jesus if he

knew that he would die on a cross?" This led to a great conversation about the big storyline of the Bible and God's amazing love and sacrifice as the basis of his plan to save us.





God always prepares the way and often seems to like to add His own real-life illustrations to what I am trying to teach about! On one occasion, I arrived at a school to do an act of Collective Worship based on peace in God. I wanted to explain that God can give us His inner peace no matter what is going on around us, even if it all seems to be going wrong. I arrived to discover that the projector wasn't working for the PowerPoint, and neither was the sound system! The frustration of the teacher trying to set it up for me just showed how much she wanted it all to come together well. Fortunately, I always have lots of non-technical visual aids, so we just used the lack of PowerPoint as an example of things that go wrong sometimes - until the school tech person arrived to fix it. We talked about how Mary must have felt when she heard the angel Gabriel's

message, probably thinking that everything she had expected about her future had fallen apart, but the peace of God meant she could say, "I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" *Luke 1:38 ICB*. What faith in our trustworthy God.

The second act of Collective Worship that morning was for the older, KS2 children. It had a similar theme, and we had all the power working this time. I was getting near the end and decided to pray before we sang the song. I prayed that we would know God's peace even when the unexpected happens. Just as I said 'Amen', the fire alarm went off, and we all had to traipse 'peacefully' out of the building. Yes, God's timing is perfect!

The Christmas assemblies and acts of worship included a giant cracker which we pulled to remind us of

the 'surprise' of the angel visits, the present of Jesus (much better than cracker toys!), the 'Good news of great joy' - which brought more happiness than the funniest joke, and the crown which reminded us of the wise visitors who came to bow down to the King of Kings.

We have been really encouraged by making new contacts in the region and around the city recently and continue to look forward to welcoming a few new people to the Heart for Children Network throughout 2024/25. If you know of someone who works with children in your church or local school and would like to connect with others with the same heart, then please get in touch! We love to share resources but also find that we get a bigger idea of what God is doing in our city. This big picture of God at work through so many ways and places and denominations is truly wonderful.

# CROPS mentoring

WITH *Chris Wild*



**“We have seen lots of progress with the pupils that have been supported by CROPS, so we value it as an intervention in the school very highly”**  
– *Secondary school teacher*

## Good news

It was fantastic to receive this feedback from a local school just before the end of term. We love the fact that local Christians are making such a huge impact in the lives of young people across Peterborough and that schools value it so highly. The end of term also brought more great news as CROPS Mentoring hit the milestone of delivering 10,000 mentoring sessions in our local secondary schools! That's 10,000 opportunities that our amazing team of CROPS Mentors have had to show up,



listen, support, and give the precious commodity of time to students who need someone to talk to. We are so grateful for the way God has guided and led our project since its beginning in 2017 and brought us to where we are today. This term we also welcomed some new schools to partner with us, starting with the recently built Manor Drive Secondary Academy, and we were able to place a mentor there straight away.

## “You’re a failure... not good enough”

These words had been repeatedly said, by a parent, to a student that one of our mentors had been working with. Words the student had carried around with them for years. The student sobbed as they told their story of having to call the police about one of their parents and the depression and addiction they witnessed regularly at home. The student said at the end, “I’ve never had anyone I can tell all this to before.”

## “It was my fault”

One of the common things mentors encounter is young people that are carrying emotional burdens around with them. Things they feel responsible for. Most are taken on unwittingly. These aren't

always big things—sometimes they are—but they always feel big to the student. As their stories unravel, it is so powerful to be able to help them change their frame of reference and see things from a different perspective: “Why do you think that was your fault?” “Why would that be your responsibility?” “How has taking that on changed who you feel you are?” One student felt they should have spotted the signs of changes in their sister’s behaviour, so it was their fault that things went wrong. Another thought it was them “not helping around the house enough” that made their dad leave the family home. Many feel responsible for their parents' drinking, behaviour, or relationship breakdowns. Helping students make connections between their thoughts, feelings, and actions is a great privilege for our mentors, but it isn't always easy. It is fantastic to have one of our mentors, Tanya, who also works as a psychotherapist, to provide training for our mentors twice a year, and her training session this term has been hugely beneficial for us as we seek to support students in the best way possible.





### Primary pilot

For every student that struggles in secondary school, we know there's probably one feeling the same in a primary school. And although the world of primary and secondary schools is very different, people's lives often aren't. We've known for a long time that the benefit of feeling heard, listened to, and equipped to deal with life's difficulties applies whether you're in secondary, primary, or even an adult. So, with that in mind,

CROPS has started to explore this. We've started a pilot of 'primary mentoring' in a local school and this term added two more schools to the pilot.

Our mentors love working in our local secondary schools, but we appreciate that might not be for everyone and working with teenagers may feel daunting for some. Perhaps primary school mentoring may be more your thing? Our pilot project is still ongoing, but

watch this space and take some time to consider if you would like to get involved in the future.

- Every day one of our incredible team of 25 CROPS Mentors meets students once week, in their schools, to listen and help them build resilience for life's challenges.
- Every week our volunteer mentors spend over 100 hours supporting students
- Every year our mentors hold over 2000 mentoring sessions, supporting hundreds of students.



# SECONDARY schools

## Park Up at The King's School

We are thrilled to share that 'Park Up' continues to flourish at The King's (the Cathedral) School. This lunchtime activity space offers students a variety of entertainment options, including games consoles, table tennis, and tabletop board games. Each week, we welcome 30-40 young people, creating a vibrant environment for building connections, having meaningful conversations, and informing them about other opportunities we offer both in and out of school.

## Alternative Worship

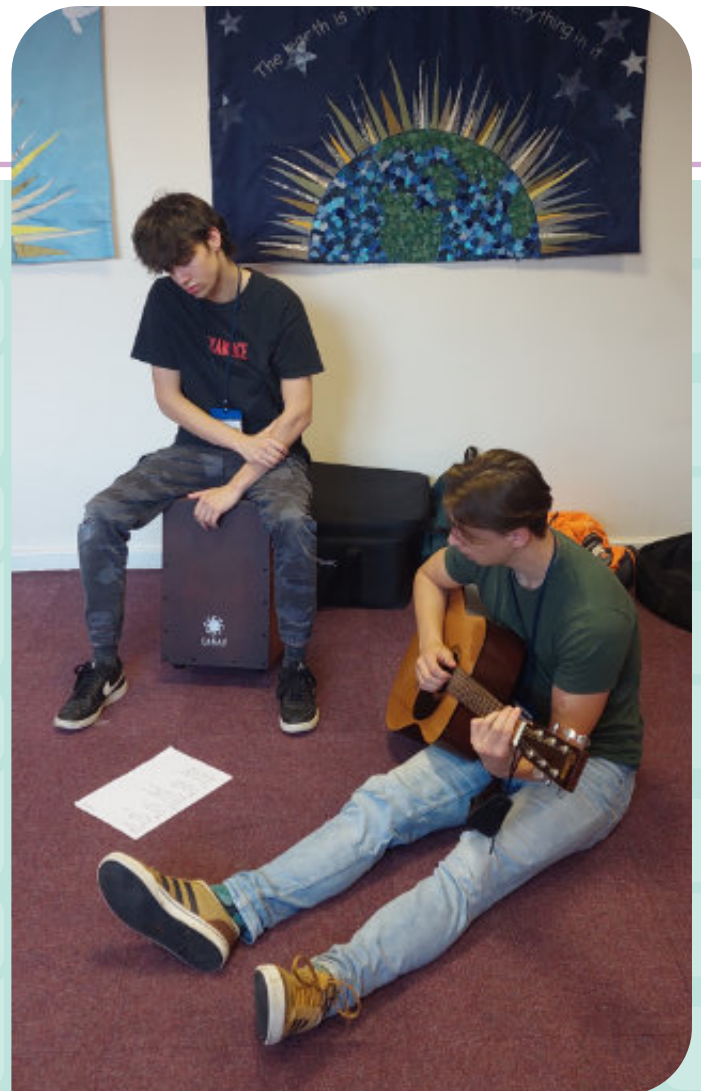
In addition to the traditional Friday morning assembly at The King's School, we offer an Alternative Worship session every few weeks. This 20-minute gathering provides a unique space for students to draw closer to God through worship and song. Since January, 15 young people have joined us, many of whom also participate in the Christian Union. It's inspiring to see their eagerness to grow deeper in their faith.

## King's School Christian Union

Our weekly Christian Union at The King's School continues to be a cornerstone of our work. Initially established by Sam in his former role, this group has thrived under CROPS' guidance. Since January, 19 students have participated, with an average of 10 attending weekly. These sessions offer a platform for spiritual growth and leadership development, particularly for our Gap Year Students who occasionally lead the sessions.

One notable session led by Jacob focused on spiritual disciplines, allowing students to explore their personal spiritual practices. One student's reflection on Psalm 24 resulted in a heartfelt prayer:

*"Dear God,  
I pray that I always know that you are here beside me. I pray that I know I'm the head, not the tail. I'm above and not beneath. Even in the darkest moments.  
Amen."*

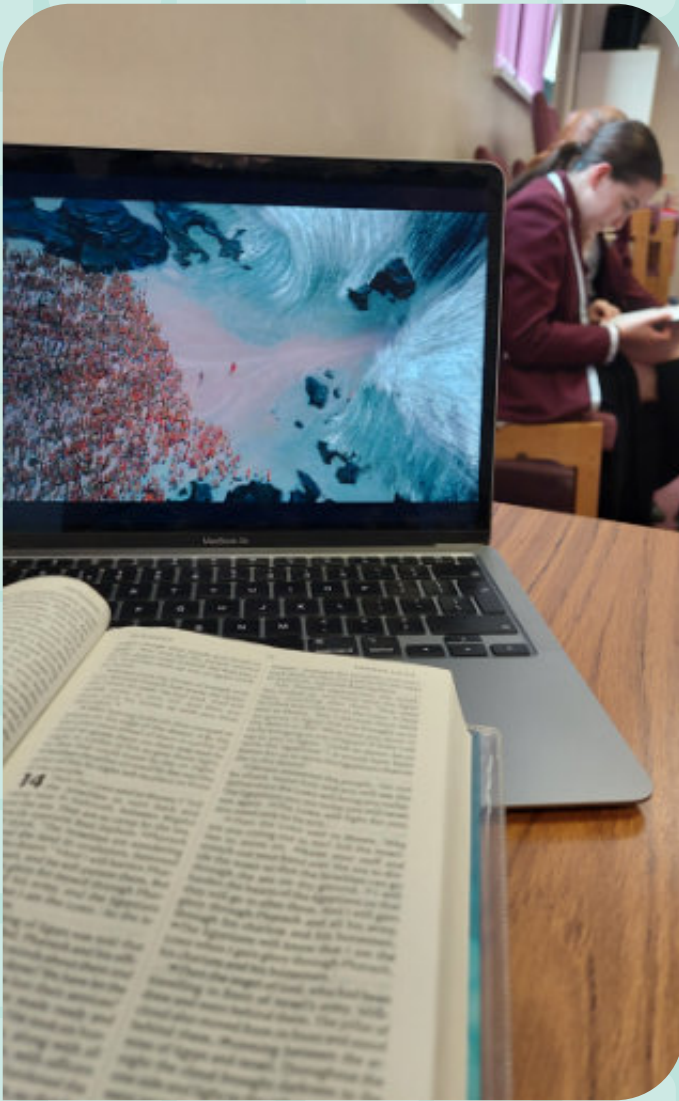


## Looking Forward

We are excited about the upcoming opportunities with secondary schools in the coming months. One of our key initiatives is the 'iMatter' wellbeing resource, developed by former director Matt Wild and dedicated volunteers. This resource focuses on self-worth and will be offered to schools across Peterborough. Additionally, our 'breathe' programme continues to support the spiritual development of secondary-aged students through interactive meditations and activities.

As we approach the end of 2024, we look forward to the Illuminate tour in partnership with KingsGate. Over several weeks in the autumn, LZ7 will deliver lessons centred on mental health, bullying, and suicide, using their music to connect with students. We are also excited to deliver GSUS Live, an interactive RE lesson that explores themes of fear, forgiveness, and rejection.





We also look forward to the new opportunities that have arisen, to head into The Peterborough School for their school chapel services and Manor Drive, for assemblies and future RE lessons from September.

### Prayer Points

- **Existing Groups:** Please pray for the young people we already engage with, that our activities will continue to thrive and provide spaces for deepening relationships with each other and with God.
- **New Opportunities:** Pray for new relationships with other schools and fresh opportunities for assemblies, RE lessons, Christian Unions, and more as we look to expand CROPS' impact in the coming months and years.
- **GSUS Live:** Pray for the provision of at least three schools to run the GSUS Live programme in and for the necessary financial resources to cover the costs associated with this initiative.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers as we work to make a difference in the lives of young people in Peterborough.





# Letton Hall HOUSEPARTY

**GRAND  
DESIGNS**  
UNVEILING THE PLAN

It was a blessing to be back at Letton Hall Houseparty in February (19-22nd) with 56 young people! The jam-packed four days were an amazing experience, deepening relationships and fostering spiritual growth. Letton feels like a big family, and it was wonderful to welcome many younger teenagers for the first time. It was just beautiful to see so many young people freely worshipping God throughout the week.

## Theme and Teaching

Our theme, "Grand Designs," mapped out the overall narrative of the Bible, led by Arthur Franklin, a youth worker from St. Andrew's in Oxford. Arthur guided us from creation to covenant, salvation, and finally, restoration, highlighting

Jesus' sacrifice and the promise of his return. Many young people engaged deeply with God's word throughout the week.

## Activities and Programme

Each morning began with "Soul Stretch," a reflective time with smaller Letton Groups, where we studied scripture, asked questions, and enjoyed acoustic worship. We also had seminars on topics like Christians in Sport, Worship, and God and social media, which allowed Lettoners to explore their faith in the context of their everyday lives and hobbies. Workshops offered a fun, hands-on break, with activities like Dance, Drama, Footgolf, and Lego.



The programme was packed with exciting activities like go-karting, wide games, and football matches during free time. The themed dinner and talent show on Wednesday evening were highlights, featuring various performances and mocktails served by junior leaders.

## An Amazing Team

Our time at Letton was made possible by our dedicated team of leaders and cooks, who provided fantastic food – thank you to them! Also a huge thank you to the Letton Hall Staff for maintaining such a wonderful place. Letton Hall Houseparty is crucial for CROPS, enabling us to serve the youth of Peterborough and surrounding areas, leaving a lasting impact on countless lives.







CROPS

# TOGETHER

As we reflect on this academic year (September 2023 - July 2024), we are thrilled to share the tremendous progress and impact of our TOGETHER nights. Over the past year, we have hosted 11 TOGETHER events, each one a testament to the vibrant and growing community of young people we serve.

In January, we introduced new core values for TOGETHER: Honour, Encourage, and God-Focused. These values were crafted to uplift and inspire our youth, fostering a



positive atmosphere without the need for strict rules. We have observed how these values naturally guide the young people's attitudes and behaviours, enhancing their engagement, especially during worship and talks. The importance of Honour was particularly highlighted during our March TOGETHER night, where the speaker's message resonated deeply with everyone present.

We are delighted to report a consistent attendance of 50-60 young people each month. This steady participation is a clear indicator of the event's success and the meaningful impact it has on the lives of many. TOGETHER has not only been a place of gathering but a catalyst for spiritual growth and transformation.

A particularly inspiring outcome of TOGETHER is the story of two young people from different churches who recently chose to be baptised. They openly shared how their experiences from CROPS events, especially TOGETHER, played a significant role in their journey towards Jesus and their decision to be baptised. Stories like these are powerful reminders of the profound impact our events have on young lives.

As we move forward, our vision for TOGETHER continues to grow. We aim to sustain this momentum and expand our reach, bringing more young people into this nurturing and faith-filled environment. We are grateful for the support of our community and the dedication of our team, which makes all of this possible.

If you know young people who haven't attended recently, check out TOGETHER on our website: [crops.org.uk/together](https://crops.org.uk/together). Your continued prayers and support are invaluable as we strive to inspire and nurture the faith of the next generation.



# Want to support the work of CROPS?

CROPS relies on the donations of churches and individuals. You can give financially to support the work of CROPS in different ways. You can donate direct from our website, send a gift using this form, and / or use the standing order form on this page for setting up a regular standing order.

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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