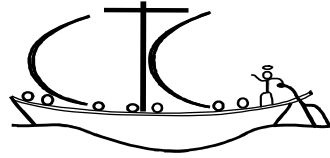




in our villages, towns & cities



CROWTHORNE HOPE ZONE – A VISION

Through the work undertaken in 2008 as part of the HOPE 08 National Initiative, it became clear to those involved that there was a lack of provision for young people aged 10 – 18 in the Village of Crowthorne. Through activities such as HOPE Football, Friday Night Youth Outreach and a Summer Scheme run in partnership with Thames Valley Police, relationships were established with many young people, some of whom spend a considerable time on the Morgan recreation ground in the evenings at weekends, no matter what the weather.

These youngsters were simply looking for somewhere to meet. Out of this simple statement came the vision for the Hope Zone Project – that we, as a concrete demonstration of God’s love for the young people of our community, provide a suitable space for them to meet – in warmth, safety and security. All too often they had received “bad press” and felt ignored, or even rejected by the wider community, and our plan was to try, in some measure, to address that and show them that they are loved and valued members of our community.

This vision is undergirded by two principles - Matthew 10 verse 42, of “giving a cup of water in Jesus’ name” and John chapter 4 where Jesus breaks down social, cultural, gender and religious boundaries in his encounter with a woman who was on the edge of society in her community.

It’s about Christian love in action; compassion for those on the edges of society; care for those whose voices are not often heard, or more often ignored. It’s about building up self-esteem, self-worth and confidence in the youngsters, breaking the sense of alienation they feel and integrating them back into the community. This project is open to all young people in our community, regardless of faith, creed or race.

Perhaps the vision could best be summed up thus: ***“To promote the well-being, development and improvement of young people, providing them with a place of safety where they feel secure, valued, accepted and welcomed.”***

The Hopezone project has been in operation since September 2009. It is a “Drop-In” centre for youngsters after school, on Wednesdays from 3.30pm, in the foyer of the Baptist Church on the High Street, Crowthorne.

We started with some 10-15 youngsters and now we have had to expand the premises into the main church premises because anything up to 50 youngsters are attending. A range of facilities are being offered – space for groups to mingle and talk together, computer games, active games such as table football and table tennis.

We are now considering the need to expand outside a church environment into a more “neutral” environment, and have been planning, alongside Crowthorne Parish Council and the Police, for nearly a year now to install a larger temporary structure on the Morgan Recreation Ground to provide more suitable premises. Our longer term vision is to build a permanent structure near the Morgan Centre premises.