

# ENGLAND

## UK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH REACHES OUT TO YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SUMMER CAMP

Youngsters from a former 'textile town' in the northern part of the UK have enjoyed a camping week in the countryside thanks to the local Congregational Church.

Morley Community Church, (EFCC) in the county of Yorkshire, places a high priority on reaching out to the younger generation with the Gospel. Youth workers from the church recruited 17 local young people in the 11-14 years age range to join the camp. They pitched their tents near the Delamere Forest in North Cheshire for a whole week in late July. They participated in an action-packed week which included water sports, games, swimming and quizzes. There was also a night walk, a trip to a Theme Park, a visit to a 'Maize Maze' plus hiking and den making in the Forest.

There was a session each evening where the Gospel was explained in an engaging way to the young people. More than 90% of the campers had no church background at all. Guest speaker, Marius Tudor, originally from Romania, presented the Gospel each evening. Each morning, there were short and simple Bible study groups and after supper each evening, team members gave their testimonies.

The youngsters and their friends stayed at a campsite which was formerly a country Chapel belonging to the Independent Methodists; this small UK denomination which originated in the early 1800s is best described as Congregational-Methodist. Significantly, it is the Chapel where Robert Moffat was converted as a young man; he later became the

pioneering Congregational missionary to Southern Africa with the London Missionary Society. An historical display panel on the cookhouse walls tells his story. When the Chapel closed in the 1990s, the Independent Methodists converted it into a Christian Camping and Retreat Centre. It proved to be the ideal location for the campsite.

Morley Community Church is only a small Congregational Church consisting of a couple of dozen worshippers. They were grateful for the support from two other Congregational Churches in Yorkshire who sent volunteers to cook and help in the games sessions. They also provided an experienced site manager who organised the practical side of running the camp. Other workers were recruited from the home congregation as drivers, games organisers, tent leaders and general assistants.

Fortunately for the campers the sun shone brightly all week with not a spot of rain. Campers were able to enjoy a wide variety of games and activities in full sunshine; they also had to play their part in helping to prepare food, do washing-up and undertake camp craft.

Church Secretary, Andy Dalton, said that all the young people had a fantastic opportunity to hear and understand the Gospel in the context of a unique camping experience. They were grateful too, for the help of other Congregational Churches who had rallied round to give support.

He concluded, "In the UK, the reality is that we are faced with reaching a new generation that

has no understanding of the Gospel or contact with organised Christianity. Nevertheless, we have found that Summer youth camps are highly popular with youngsters from non-Christian backgrounds. We are only a small church, but with vision, careful planning, enthusiasm, support from others and the Lord's blessing, running an evangelistic camp is possible for any congregation."



*Joshua Medlock (11) gets his hands dirty on camp*



*Campers are given a civic send off at the town hall by Morley Mayor, Counsellor Wyn Kidger, and Mayoress, Counsellor Wenda Whitehead*



*Trail deep in the Delamere Forest*



*Some of the campers resting in the Delamere forest on their hike*



*Campers taking a rest on camp*



*Campers building their den in woodland*



*View of the camping centre and cookhouse - formerly the High Legh Chapel. It was through a meeting here that Robert Moffat (pioneer Congregational missionary to Southern Africa) was converted.*



*Campers' morning Bible Study*



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