

## Providing a 'Pit Stop' at Clarence Park



On Sunday Evening (19th July) we did not hold the normal Sunday Evening Service, but instead opened the church for an evening of service to those in need.

The occasion was the Annual T4 Pop concert on the Sea front when about 25,000 young people congregated to listen to a programme of Pop Music. Since our church is located between the concert venue and the railway station, at the end of the event many of the concert goers come streaming past the church on their way home.

This year like past years they had all been standing for many hours, but due to the heavy storms on the Sunday this year many were cold, wet, and very thirsty along with their usual need of toilet facilities. So this year the church had arranged to meet these needs, with a banner outside offering a 'Pit Stop' and a team of 44 the church set about inviting those who were passing on their way home into the main church. Cold drinks were dispensed at a stall outside, hot drinks in the church vestibule, and people were directed to the toilets as necessary.



All the helpers who were aged 6 to 80 wore distinctive 'T' shirts and some circulated among the visitors, chatting, asking where they came from, and occasionally having a significant conversation in terms of the Christian faith. We had visitors from far and wide, North Wales, Margate, Nottingham, and Durham to mention a few.

During the afternoon we estimate that over 500 drinks were served (hot chocolate was particularly popular) and that nearly as many used our toilets (we had never thought of toilets as being an important resource for Christian mission!) Directions were given to those who had lost the way to their campsites etc. and many came and sat in the church just for a rest and to get warm (a few were suffering from the cold and were given aluminised sheets).

The only need we had difficulty meeting was when a few wanted to wash their feet; the suggestion has since been made that we might open the baptistery with a few inches of water and let them walk down into it! (that would shoot our yearly baptism records through the roof!)

The young people coming in were thrilled at what was on offer. They asked many questions, like 'Why are you doing this, and for free?' - giving us the opportunity to draw attention to the love of God. There were also many comments like 'I didn't know church could be like this!', along with expressions of gratitude like 'I think what you are doing here is wonderful!'

During the afternoon, the CD playing christian music was turned off and those sitting in the church were invited to continue the T4 atmosphere as some of our young people took up their instruments and sang songs of worship in a sort of impromptu concert. We did stop short of an organ recital despite the request from many of the youngsters.

At the end of the day we felt that we had served our Lord as he would have wished and ploughed a deep furrow in the hard clay of indifference and resentment toward the church, praying that the Holy Spirit would be able to use our efforts to plant the seeds of the Gospel in the days to come.

