

A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN THE WORLD OF CHESS

COMMUNITY CHESS CLUB

Kevin was taught to play chess at the age of 8; he taught his father to play chess during the power cuts of the late 1970's. In the following years he taught his wife & 3 children, the youngest learning to play the game by 4 years of age! As his son developed interest in the game, Kevin explored the idea of a community chess club. This idea further developed as he considered fresh ways of building relationships with folk outside the church on a regular basis. He approached a High School head teacher & parent to discuss an appropriate venue & practical support. The Thetford Youth & Community Chess Club began in January 2001 with a handful of interested players. Over the years the club has attracted players from 6-75 years of age! It embraces players from across the school spectrum & it is a community club. Kevin plays, coaches, affirms & develops potential. The club plays each Wednesday during term time. A handful of key volunteers support Kevin running the club in supervising, serving refreshments, some playing, coaching & transporting to tournaments. Without these volunteers the club would cease to run.

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A SPECIAL INTEREST CLUB?

Kevin is a Christian getting involved in something that serves & benefits the community. He feels the church could be more effective in communities if everyone in church considered how they might get involved in something outside Church, particularly with folk who are predominantly not from the church. Christians in school, village, or church buildings can facilitate special interest clubs. Some churches might be ideally placed to run such a community club. Christians can be involved in the refreshments, registration, supervisory capacity, teaching, befriending, supporting, administrating & facilitating. It will not require all the team to have the specialist interest skills but willing to play their part to offer support to those who do have. You will need to decide whether your aim is to run a specifically Christian club based at a Church or, if it is a community club aimed at building relationships with folk outside the Church, over the long term. The community club approach is an intentional activity to befriend & build bridges in the community with people outside the Church. There is evidence to suggest that many in the Church do not mix very well with folk outside their Christian circles. Mobilizing Christians to be more proactively involved in community life will lead to opportunities to befriend people in the longer term.

DIFFERENT FACETS OF THE CHESS MINISTRY

Kevin has developed many very good relationships with children, youth & adults over the chessboard, on trips, & during tournaments. He has co-organised one of the largest rapidplay tournaments over many years in Norfolk. The Thetford Rapidplay Chess Congress attracts over 100 players from novice to county standard players, including a team from Spijkenisse in Holland & in 2009, a team from Skawina in Poland. Kevin raises sponsorship to finance the tournament from local companies. There are a total of six sections & the tournament is a qualifying tournament for the London Junior Chess Championships. Prizes are given to the top three competitors in each section on the day; to the best girl player; best player from each international team competing; best placed veteran player & a prize for the best cumulative score from four players who have entered the team competition. Prizes do not therefore go to just the winners! This he believes has the affect of affirming children & young people & adults. Non-chess games are run on the day too & Christians are involved in the refreshments & practical parts of the weekend, including the hosting of young people from other countries.

TOURNAMENTS & TRIPS

In addition the club targets a few tournaments a year including a hand picked team to play in Spijkenisse in Holland. Spijkenisse is a twin town of Thetford & is very keen on chess, boasting a strong adult & junior club. Each year a team travel to Spijkenisse to compete & to be entertained

for the weekend by Dutch families. Kevin took the opportunity to share his testimony through a translator in the Spijkenisse Baptist Church on the 2003 trip. The trip is cultural & educational; it has helped develop relationships between many families.

Another tournament the club has been involved in is the British Land UK Chess Challenge. Last year the tournament involved over 70,000 children from 6-18 years of age. Our club best performance was Kevin's daughter coming 2nd in the Gigafinal u/10 girls, a tremendous result & great encouragement for the club. The Gigafinal in question had the top 2000 under 18 competitors competing in different age bands.

Kevin & his wife Val led the Scripture Union Overstrand Family Beach Mission for 16 years. The mission attracted over 100 children, young people & families to this action packed nine-day mission. Part way through the week a coach brought invited children, youth & families from Thetford to join with a beach mission day. Over the past years a handful of players & families came from the chess club as a result of good relationships built with them. In addition other special events are organized for children & families at the local church, like a Christmas Party or Easter Eggstravaganza. The giant chess set was often a feature during the popular beach mission family event.

USE IT OR LOSE IT!

There are many qualities developed through playing chess such as concentration skills. Evidence has shown for some children suffering from forms of autism that chess significantly helps their concentration levels. Chess concentration enhances decision-making processes, & the ability to use the mind in an organised & disciplined way. It can also aid teamwork skills, & self-confidence. Recent articles in newspapers & magazines have highlighted the importance of regularly using the brain to stay mentally sharp. Clearly one can become mentally lazy so the challenge is to 'use it or lose it!' Many older folk testify to the importance of regularly thinking & using the brain & I personally am convinced this discipline helps people keep mentally sharp.

CHECKMATE #

Kevin was inspired to write & beautifully illustrate 'Checkmate' a 24-page booklet that makes a clear link with a Bible verse & spiritual truth using chess terminology. The 'chess gospels' are now being used as a resource within the chess world to an audience of chess people; many who would be unconnected to the life of the Church. Please pray for the effective use of 'Checkmate' as a tool to share biblical truths in relevant ways to chess players. Kevin feels it is a unique resource & one that he prays will capture the imagination of many who are on the fringe of Church life. Copies are available from Kevin at £1 each plus p&p. Young people attending the Checkmate Residential holiday are given a free copy.

LEAGUE PLAY

The Thetford club entered the County League playing teams from all over Norfolk in 2003; in it's first season the side won the Division 3 league consisting of 18 games and was promoted, winning the trophy and the good hospitality trophy too. This league involves 18 games, 9 at home & 9 away. The Thetford home matches were held at King Street Baptist Community Church where Kevin has been actively involved. This does present opportunities for Kevin to share to visiting teams something of his role in the church & something of the life of the Church outside of Sunday. The team has achieved a second & third place in the first division & in 2009 went on to finally win the league, a tremendous achievement. Kevin prays for his league opponents [not for them to lose!] that their lives will be awakened to God's eternal purposes & plans. He prays also for deepening opportunities in the chess world & that he will be ready when those opportunities arise.

CHECKMATE RESIDENTIAL HOLIDAY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Kevin can testify to vision growing over the years, by seeking God's direction along the way. The Checkmate Residential was born in 2006 in his heart but became a reality in experience in August 2008. It attracted 12 young people, aged 10-14 years, 8 boys & 4 girls. In August 2009 a team of 10 Christians & 12 boys aged 11-15 attended a cracking holiday experience. The centre, once a converted Church, is now a lovely residential centre, ideal for a smallish group to spend five days together. In 2009 all the young people were presented a bible as well as a copy of Checkmate. The size of the holiday enables team to build relationships with the young people. The young people attending have come from a mixture of Church or non-church backgrounds. Some have also attended from France & Spain. I believe the holiday is unique & the vision for it would never have happened without journeying along the community chess club route first. Checkmate has run successfully in 2010 & 2011 with a full & varied programme. In 2010 there were 10 boys and 9 team members & in 2012 there were 11 boys and one girl plus a team of 9. The vision is to sustain & grow the holiday in future years.

The programme enables everyone to sharpen their chess skills, develop tactical awareness over the board, solve puzzles, play a simultaneous display, enjoy a game of giant chess, & have personal chess coaching. The bible teaching is unique as a clear link is made with the game of chess & a biblical character. Non-chess games such as football, cricket, baseball & indoor games such as Kwik Cricket & Schoelen are also enjoyed along with scrumptious food. If you might be interested in serving on team in the future let Kevin know.

WHAT NEXT?

Kevin is beginning to draw together a network of Christian chess players, nationally. In the future it would be great to run a tournament with a serving team of committed Christians. He continues to develop chess talks for midweek church based clubs & has run a chess club party at Christmas on the theme of 'chess' without playing a game the whole evening! Presently he is working on large visuals for use in a school, club or church presentation. He has incorporated a chess fun shop successfully into family fun events.

UNIQUE OUTREACH

Kevin has also developed some unique outreach using a giant chess set supported by a half a dozen sets in the Church forecourt facing the High Street. He takes on all-comers from the shopping precinct & invites along some club players too. This has resulted in some good conversations with men & families & drawn some new faces to the community chess club. It raises profile but also gives opportunities to share something about the Church & one's faith too.

ONE KEY CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH TODAY

The challenge for the church today is how to build effective bridges within the community in such a fast paced, changing world. Running specialist clubs is one way of doing this befriending, long-term, relationship building. What could your church do? It may be chess or it might be a computer club; rambling club; or something else.

Building solid relationships with people long term gives you a platform of trust & respect, enabling people to naturally share with you. Sincere, caring relationships underpinned by prayer will often take many years to build. Out of these relationships will come opportunities to share something of the life of Christ. Initially this will be by actions of kindness, sincerity, & good Christian character, leading onto to opportunities to witness. Kevin can help churches to set up a weekly, fortnightly or monthly club that sharpens chess skills but gives opportunities to share something of the Christian faith using chess terminology & visual aids. If you are interested then please do make contact.

RESOURCE TO CHURCHES & CONSULTANCY ADVICE

Kevin offers a chess event to churches that may be interested in exploring a chess club ministry. Within the event including chess play & puzzle solving, he would share a visual message linking chess & Bible truths. The event can be tailored to the age mix of the audience. Kevin also offers his considerable experience to advise Churches wanting to set up a chess club ministry. Use the contact details below for information.

If you are interested in the Checkmate Residential holiday for young people aged 10-16 years please see the ask for the relevant article, flyer & booking form. If interested in entering the Thetford Rapidplay Tournament in September or Norfolk Quickplay tournament in February do ask for the latest entry form by pdf.

Kevin has worked for Scripture Union as a regional evangelist for just under 20 years in East Anglia. He is an artist, a keen sportsperson, & enjoys action-packed films. In April 2011 he transferred into Face2Face Educational Trust covering East Anglia and beyond. He also goes into Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Kent & further afield as appropriate, for mission, training & speaking purposes.

Kevin Moore

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Resources available:

‘Checkmate’ chess gospel available to purchase, contact Kevin for details.

Report on the Thetford Rapidplay Chess Congress, pdf.

Report on Checkmate, the chess/bible holiday for 10-16 year olds, pdf

Checkmate flyer, pdf

Checkmate Booking Form, pdf

