



Anna and Chris Hembury

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Location: Britain



What we do: Sharing life with people on the margins and supporting them to connect with themselves, each other, the planet and God.



Bringing hope where people have given up on God and the church

Dear friends,

The academic year has turned, so we find ourselves already immersed in the new cycle of activities. It is hard to pause long enough to reflect on the last bit, to be present to what we find ourselves in now and not simply rush into the things coming up ahead.

Camp

The most obviously noteworthy part of the summer (though we do love the less obviously significant, ordinary moments!) was camp (frontiercamps.com). Every year we take a couple of minibus-fuls of children and young people away for a week for a fun-filled holiday and the chance to explore their place in “Creator’s good story” (First Nations translation). Every year we underestimate the impact of being held in that loving community, on tender spirits that have a lot to bear and survive in the rest of their lives. Every year we are reminded that what we have grown accustomed to as normal/average for our neighbourhood is not healthy for children and other living things. Poverty, disconnect, shame, violence, multi-layered traumas – these are not the only words to describe the experience of those in our community, and it would be a huge disservice and distortion to overuse them. But we are often so keen to stress the positives in people and places that are easily negatively stereotyped and profiled, and so need to protect ourselves from overwhelm, that we skim over the hard stuff.

Many of the children we take away on camp are very obviously living daily in “survival mode”. We don’t always know what is going on, but we can safely assume that it is tough for them. Tyler (name changed) came to camp for the first time this summer. We have known him all his life and he is a regular breakfast clubber. He has a hard, protective shell that has always made engaging with him difficult and limited. From almost the first minute he arrived on the field at camp, Tyler softened; he spent the whole week in a state of easy delight, joining in everything with enthusiasm, coming up to chat about his day, mucking in with the rest of his tent, playing happily by himself in quieter moments, singing at the top of his lungs in the evening meetings. He could have been a poster child for what a carefree childhood looks like. Camp is just one week in his year, but is a week that offers an experience that can alter how he holds himself, and even the trajectory of his life.

Please pray for all the children and young people we took to camp, that they might remember back home what they allowed themselves to “open the eyes of their heart” to at camp, that “they might know the hope of their calling” (Ephesians 1:18).



High ropes – testing their limits at camp!

Support Anna and Chris Hembury:
churchmissionsociety.org/hembury

With Jesus
With each other
To the edges



Geese

One of the things that has helped ground us in the now, the present moment, has been seeing the skeins of geese heading off for their wintering elsewhere. It has been a daily reminder to live out of who we are. The geese just seem to know to be geese and do what they do in step with God's good timing. One of their remarkable abilities is that they can go the long distance because they can sleep while flying. While not aspiring to fall asleep on the job(!), we are reminded to find our flow, that "effortless action" in step with the Holy Spirit. This September marked 25 years of Breakfast Club – a good example of just that kind of "goose work".

I could do that

Five years ago, while chatting with the builder who was overseeing building the Orts space, he mentioned that he was looking for a driver. "I could do that," I (Chris) replied. It was the answer to a prayer, as I realised I needed some kind of work which would provide breathing space from being a team leader and all the head stuff that was a necessary part of that job. And so began my two-day-a-week foray into the bricks and

mortar industry. It's been a happy five years with a lot of builders' banter, often about Jesus and my faith and an ongoing joke about me pocketing all the collection money. It was hard work but I am extremely grateful to God for the opportunity to make some very good friends, share life's ups and downs and witness my faith as an ordinary person rather than a professional faith-sharer.

One of the reasons for moving on from this job is I just celebrated my 60th. Naturally, I had been wondering, "How long can my body keep going with this?" I also had a sense that God was calling me to something new and even though I had been praying for change I had no idea what it would look like. I was recently at a trustees' meeting of a charity I am on the board of and something came up about a new role that wasn't on the agenda. Again, I found myself saying, "I could do that" with a strange sense of peacefulness. Basically the *that* is to work with churches from across the city to help them think through what they are doing, perhaps link them up with others who are doing similar things or maybe thinking through new mission opportunities. Here was another answer to prayer. I started my new part-time role in October, with the rest of my time still doing youth and community work in our local neighbourhood. Thank God with us, for his faithful provision and impeccable timing!

Shalom,

Anna & Chris



Photos from top to bottom: Immy, former breakfast clubber, now leading activities at camp; Breakfast Club regulars enjoying family time; Fiona, Chris and Sam at their first team meeting!



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We've loved hearing recent mission stories from others in our area of work.

Jonathan in Ecuador has grown spiritually and got his first job as he's gained life skills, and our Breakfast Club here celebrated 25 years of food, community and steps of faith. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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