



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.



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus with people unconnected to church

Dear friends,

Unexpected journeys

Three years ago I (Chris) set out on a journey with no real long-term strategy, no plan to change the world – just the desire to stay fit and help others to do the same, both physically, mentally and spiritually. Over time unexpected things began to happen: a flyer through the door about a government-funded diploma in gym instruction; a retreat in the Stretton Hills; a surprise baptism; a bond; a support; an interweaving of faith journeys.

Circuit Breaker is a Saturday morning circuit training session followed by an egg sandwich. I gained my First Dan black belt in my twenties and can cook an egg, so I had enough of a foundation to give it a go (that's a mission term). The flyer through the door was timely if not slightly anxiety inducing (given my history with education). In truth, and unexpectedly, I enjoyed it... and I have a diploma!

We have some friends who run a retreat house in the Stretton Hills. I floated the idea of a weekend away with the guys and in September seven of us headed off for a break, and toward a deeper relationship with God and each other.

A couple of days before we left, I had a call from one of the lads: God had been talking to him about getting baptised and it was urgent! He hadn't been planning to come on the retreat but now couldn't wait to get there. The day after our arrival, in the pouring rain we trudged up to the reservoir at the top of the hill and baptised Kev in the ice cold water.

Please pray for all the lads, that they would know the God who walks beside them as they journey, wrestling with life and faith.

Beginner's mind

We seem to have found ourselves in a season of endings. First, there was the decision to close Matt's House, our courageously experimental intentional community, after some 10+ years, as we wrote about in our last link letter. So we are exploring how to do missional community in a local but dispersed form. Then, our local church found itself undergoing a serious overhaul of all its activities; firstly, an indefinite pause on everything bar the Sunday service while a rigorous safeguarding process was deliberated over. Next, decisions were



Circuit Breaker getaway

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With Jesus
With each other
To the edges



made to shut down all its social outreach activities. Our little group who held Fridays@ Selby St for 11 years found ourselves in a bind. We had been hosting a space where anyone could come in off the street, enjoy the garden and warm space, a cuppa and toast, join in or not on their own terms with a bit of creative reflection around a theme/ passage from the Bible, prayer and lunch. Given where we live, and the other social provisions the church had going during the week (food bank, clothing bank, addiction recovery groups, etc), many of the folk

who dropped in and joined us were battling addictions, homelessness and unprocessed trauma.

Since spring, our Friday activities at Selby St have been on hold. We have wrestled with ourselves and with the powers that be around all things mission and safeguarding – how to responsibly manage risk and hold space in healthy ways that look after everyone's wellbeing, while also being a genuinely welcoming and inclusive community that allows people to find belonging in their own time. The new parameters offered only allowed for named "members" and no open door. In the end, without animosity, we felt it might be better to start afresh around the corner at the Parish Hall (run by Hull YFC, where Orts, Circuit Breaker and many of the other activities we're involved in happen). We restart this week (November)!

Now, after 21 years of taking children and young people to Frontier Camp, constraints and changes in the way camp is run as well as the particular needs of those we bring from our community, mean we find ourselves starting afresh there too. We and loads of kids/teenagers/adults from Hull are grieving the end of what has been a hugely important part of our lives and giving thanks for all the fun, relationships, joy and faith formation. With the team here we are taking the bold step to reimagine what a homespun summer camp for our lot might look like next year.

Shoshin is a Japanese Zen term that translates as "beginner's mind". It refers to a paradox: the more you know about a subject, the more likely you are to close your mind to further learning. We have been here a long time and were getting comfortable with the idea of living this next season as some sort of wise elders, experts in the field who had seen it all before and could contribute best by sharing from the wealth of our experience. It seems God has a better idea! We find ourselves called to start again – with fresh eyes and intellectual humility, free of preconceptions, filled with curiosity and open to a world of possibilities. "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

Could you increase your giving?

At this time last year, we shared with you that there was a significant shortfall in our funding. Thank you so much to those who gave in response – we are so grateful! We are pleased to say our funding gap is smaller than it was, but our funding is still not sustainable. However, we know we serve a God who provides. Please pray with us for our funding to increase so that we can continue to serve God at the edges. If you are able to increase your regular giving or give an additional gift this year, we would really appreciate you prayerfully considering it. You can give online at churchmissionsociety.org/Hembury, by calling 01865 787489, or if you received this letter by post, by completing the enclosed form. Thank you so much for walking on this mission journey with us.

Peace,

Anna and Chris



Photos from top to bottom: Surprised by God – unexpected baptism; Frontier Camp: thank you, good night, God bless; Fridays@ – where are you on the "good road" today?



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

It's so encouraging to hear news from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to churches. In the UK, CMS's Pioneer Mission Training programme is equipping people to respond creatively to the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of traditional church. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope