



Anna and Chris Hembury

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Contact details:
hemburys@gmail.com



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.

Dear friends,

Caravan of love

One of the triumphs of good community development for us is when it is impossible to mark out where the edges are – lots of different people come together to make something happen and it's hard to define who to give the credit to. In May, the Friday bunch at Selby St mission, the Matt's House residents and the wonderful women from Orts all helped make our third Caravan of Love happen: a mini neighbourhood festival which aims to bring people together, shine a light on some of the hidden treasure in our community, have a laugh and a dance and share good food. It was the first big gathering since the long COVID-19 hiatus, and the togetherness felt like a collective remembering of who we are, deep in our bones. From thin air a running order emerged for the open mic, with singing, storytelling and poetry; there were sets from local musicians and a truly incredible magic show from someone we only previously "knew" because they came to Selby St for food and the clothes bank. Turns out we didn't know them at all, and had once again fallen into the trap of projecting a small and pathetic caricature on those who come through the doors of the mission, rather than getting to know their personhood and glimpse their glory. *(I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Romans 8:18)* A lesson we keep needing to re-learn.



Seeing God's treasure, a magic moment.

Please pray for us and the folk at Selby St mission, that we would more readily see people as people, God's glory-bearers, and not just labels of "poor", "vulnerable", "marginalised", etc.

Not a fashion show

One of the elements that made up the Caravan of Love this year was a "Not a Fashion Show" by Orts. What started as a fun idea soon became a profound and ongoing conversation about body image, identity, hurtful words, what we fear and what we want to celebrate about ourselves, creativity and courage. The outfits that emerged were playful and brave, often speaking out something previously held hidden in the wearer, each representing an individual journey. "Strutting our stuff" didn't come easily to most of us, but going public was somehow an essential part our continuing inner transformative experience. In a way it felt like witnessing a baptism – letting old prescribed identities die, accepting our true identity in Christ (though not all would

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



name or frame it that way), and a public declaration of inner change before the community.

Here are just some of the things the women said of their experience: *“terrifying... but wonderful!”* *“freedom”* *“joy”* *“release of creativity”* *“solidarity in our struggles”* *“mutual building of our self-esteems”* *“loving our bodies and ourselves, doing it together, couldn’t have done it on our own”* *“coming into and out of ourselves”*.

Thank God for the journey all those at Orts are on, and pray we will recognise Christ at the centre of our liberation.

Circuit break

For many years, Chris has held thoughts of running a fitness session for men. He gained a black belt in karate when he was in his mid twenties, encouraging and training others as part of his own discipline, and so has been used to running classes and encouraging people to live a healthy lifestyle.

Last year somebody gave us a good sum of money (while we were visiting one of our supporting churches) and told us we would know what to do with it. At the time we didn’t but knew that God would show us. Around that time, Chris’s circumstances changed in that CMS were able to give him some more hours, enabling him to dream a bit. A seed of an idea came to mind, and was planted and watered with prayer: a time for men to get together, look after their physical fitness with a short, undaunting circuit training session and a safe space in which to get honest about their lives, relationships and mental health.

So we bought some equipment and got started. And there began a journey of physical and mental discovery for a group of men of wide-ranging ability. This talented bunch consists of present and past youth club members, asylum seekers, refugees, as well as some guys in ministry and other jobs. Together we train, eat, share our week and reflect on a Bible passage, which is really like a thought for the day that anyone can bring. Our time together is many things: it’s fitness, it’s encouragement, it’s about our relational, spiritual and mental health.

“Great workouts, fun, easy and laid back – then to top it off great people with breakfast after to recharge. Brilliant.”
Jacob

In real terms it’s a circuit breaker in the same way the wiring works in our house – if it gets overloaded the breaker kicks in, averting a possible disaster. We are encouraged that the group is growing a deepening friendship and look forward to having some trips out and social times over the coming months.

Thank God for continually supplying our needs; pray for those in the group and ask God to lead us to others who would benefit from being a part of it.

Shalom, Anna and Chris



Photos from top to bottom: In *“Not a fashion show”* – freedom and joy... ; ... and courage to be seen; In Circuit break – fit for purpose. (Photos 1–3: Mark Kensett)



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