



# 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.

Dear friends,

## Stabilisers

Walking back from Breakfast Club one day, we were watching our friend's toddler gleefully propel himself along the pavement ahead of us on his balance bike – essentially a starter bike with no pedals, just using feet on the ground for momentum and steadying. Our friend, a keen cyclist, explained that it was a far better way for children to learn to ride a bike than using stabilisers, as it helps them to trust their own body and find their balance rather than relying on exterior support. When the stabilisers are removed, alongside a good deal of fear and trepidation, they may learn to ride the bike but usually find it harder to have an innate sense of balance.

This seems like a metaphor for community development and for mission: are we helping people to grow their capabilities, tap into their God-given potential and find fullness and flourishing? Or are we positioning ourselves as stabilisers, encouraging so much leaning into our support that they never see trusting in their own capabilities as a reliable option? Jesus can sometimes seem more direct and less nice than we would like him to be in his encounters with those who need support. But when he says “Go, your faith has healed you”, this sounds a lot more to do with liberating people to trust what is within than maintaining a sense of their own lack or inadequacy. Please pray that our coming alongside people, in support and in discipling, would be liberative and not foster an unhealthy over-reliance.

## Park life

Although we don't think we imagined we would remain here in Hull as long as we have, the longer we've been here the more sense it has made to stay. Long term relationships are good places in which to build the kingdom of God – trust, mutual support, rough and smooth times, living the joy and pain in the journey together. Small but significant things confirm the calling to stay put: parents who attended the Breakfast Club as youngsters, now bringing their own children to the club; a young man who came to the weekly Godly Play session while at primary school, now 17 and a regular at Saturday morning Circuit Breaker; young people we first got to know at our after-school club now helping in leadership roles at summer camp. We are encouraged by the difference being here for the duration makes. The sense-making our faith somehow offers has been called upon for births, baptisms, marriages, funerals and the ordinary in between stuff.

While walking in the park the other night, a little worn down and just trying to survive a tough season,



*Finding balance.*

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



three shadowy figures approached; the distinctive aroma of weed had already hit us before they called out, "Chris! Anna!" Now all in their twenties, we had known them individually in separate contexts for many years – one from Breakfast Club, one from youth club and the other from our time in schools doing mentoring. Collectively, they represented a lot of years of ministry. We had no idea they knew each other. We walked together

for a while and they quizzed us on how we were, how's our children, how's the clubs going? It felt like we were being ministered to, with each one trying to outdo the others with stories of our good times together. We had walked into the park with heavy shoulders, and a certain weariness. We walked out laughing and reminiscing and somehow reassured in our calling. Give thanks for these three lads, and pray for our continued ministering to each other.

### Summer lovin'

Each summer we take a bunch of children and young people away on camp for a week's holiday. It's an opportunity for them to experience a real soaking in the fullness of life: the challenge of new activities and experiences, the opportunity to develop new friendships with people from other places, a clear telling of the gospel in words and a chance to mull it over and make sense of it all in the context of a loving community that "spells it out" in the way we are with each other. After a three-year hiatus (two camps off during lockdowns), we were apprehensive about our own energy and enthusiasm for what is always an intense week. But the week was as magical as ever. Handing over the responsibility of Crew Leaders to young adults who had come as campers and watching them flourish, seeing children from some painfully difficult circumstances enjoying unbridled laughter and carefree fun, watching young people from our youth club fast forward in growth and maturity before our eyes, even singing terribly cheesy action worship songs with "cool" teenagers who decided to let their guard down – the whole week was a blessing and a reminder of another possible world (maybe with some different songs!). Give thanks for the team who make camp happen and please pray for the children and young people who came with us from Hull, that their first steps on their faith journeys might be nurtured and nourished through the year.

*"I have never been very religious but I do believe there is a God. The first few nights I didn't really find it very interesting, but it got to Monday and I got really interested in what they were saying. When we left I had more of an understanding about faith and Jesus which was quite interesting."* D., young person from Hull

Shalom,

Anna & Chris



**Photos from top to bottom:** Breakfast Club family bonfire night; Toasting marshmallows; Trying new things at camp; The Hull posse: campers, crew, young and old leaders!



## Going further with Church Mission Society

**Stories from the edges:** Find out how God is meeting people on the edges around the world through CMS people in mission. Go to [churchmissionsociety.org/stories](https://churchmissionsociety.org/stories)

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