



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,

Cart before horse

At the summer camp we help to run ([frontier camps.com](http://frontiercamps.com)), there is a wholehearted commitment to seeing young people as assets and creating leadership opportunities. Their gifts and abilities and their own journeying with God should find a shaping role in taking camp way beyond where God has tasked us older ones to go with it. Amen to that. But giving our young people, many of whom have no church or faith background, leadership responsibilities at a camp whose first stated aim is telling Jesus' story is a big ask. Do we only allow those who can commit to an institutional church and profess a statement of faith, when their only relatable experience of Jesus and of Christ-centred community is actually camp and breakfast club and such-like?



Three of Hull's best, leading with style!

It's that old chicken-and-egg situation: which comes first, believing, behaving or belonging? We have found that unconditional belonging to our faith communities, in what we do in Hull and in a field at camp, is the starting point for non-churched people in their journey into their own relationship with Jesus. So we are quick to say yes, come help out at camp, work as crew or as a tent partner. But we feel the burden of responsibility and no easy answers or quick fixes to the question of how we disciple them. Where might they learn how to trust and follow Jesus themselves?

Some years ago we started a young leaders' weekend away: an opportunity for fun, reunion, getting our heads around camp, as well as unpressured but honest time to mull over/wrestle with/find words for some of the faith stuff. Most of the young leaders have come up through camp, so this is one more step on an adventure with God they are learning to lean into. But this year we felt it right to bring a young person who wants to come and help on crew, who is socially very anxious as a result of bullying and who has never been to camp before.

Here's what they said:

Before I went my anxiety was at a 10. I thought I'd be happier just staying in my room at home. But everyone just makes you feel welcome, they don't judge. In school, I used to look at people and copy off them because I was scared of sticking out. There it was really different, I didn't have to change myself to fit in. Everyone just accepted me for who I was, how I acted.

Support Anna and Chris Hembury:
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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



The worst bit – sharing a room with eight people.

The best bit – in the end I'd have to say all of it!

The God stuff – I don't believe in it but I just respected it, just listened.

Discipling young people before they have come to faith does sound like putting the cart before the horse, but we are trusting the upside down and wrong way round of our own experience. Three people came back from the weekend asking for help with reading and understanding the Bible. And we are encouraged by the life stories of young people who have already come to faith this way,

one of whom is now running the young leaders' weekends and is a crew leader at camp.

Please pray for this new generation of young leaders, that they might find their feet on God's good road and find their voice in sharing Jesus' story. Pray too for wisdom for us as we work out how to do our part in their discipleship.

How's it all going?

Well, in brief:

The Breakfast Club continues to thrive, creating community and providing a key connecting point into many of our other activities. And as always, it is fulfilling the need for a warm space, alleviating isolation and providing hard-pressed families with food.

Matt's House now has four community residents, and has been a space of welcome and respite for a young woman from out of Hull, whose mum has been in the ICU at Hull Royal Infirmary. Our weekly community meals have found a renewed rhythm and we are planning a road trip for some focused reflection with the Earlsfield Friary, of which Johnny Sertin (CMS's Britain hub movement leader) is a part.

Orts is proving to be a place of healing in a gentle yet profound way, and the prayer time an unmissable start for some. "I'm on my way, hold the prayers!" messaged one of our regulars just the other week. The massive renovation of the space has also meant that more and more use is being made of it outside of the Orts day, with youth club, Circuit Breaker breakfasts, An Untold Story – Voices meetings and other ad hoc gatherings now also regularly held there.

Fridays at Selby St Mission is finding its flow and slowly seeing people come back, after Covid threw a very large spanner in the works.

In family news, Elijah is doing a bit of photography (and getting paid for it!) and going to the gym in the middle of the night! Kavita is in the throes of dissertation writing, with the end of her final year at uni in sight.

Give thanks with us for the fullness of life we get to share in all the various spaces we inhabit.

Shalom,

Anna & Chris



Photos from top to bottom: Young Leaders weekend in Derbyshire; The joy of making quirky birds at Orts!; A visual meditation on Colossians 1:15–23 at Selby St.



Going further with Church Mission Society

Jesus never gives up. Neither should we. We live in a fractured, hurting world. It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges. Find out more at churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup

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

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