



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,

Beauty/brokenness

Our local park is a gift and a lifeline, a little patch of green space in an area full of concrete backyards, where an actual garden is a privilege. Spring has made the park sing praise again, bringing out all the glory of trees, grasses, blossom and wildflowers, and the avenue of horse chestnuts with their flowering candles make a spectacular cathedral nave. Families picnic, dogs frolic, runners run, skaters turn flips and tricks, immigrant menfolk self-organise basketball and football matches and children's laughter carries across the whole park from the playground. It's not hard to give thanks in the midst of all this beauty.



Our local park

Our local park is dirty and unsafe, a little hive of criminal activity in an area full of more of the same. A walk there means running the gauntlet of dog (and sometimes human) mess, broken glass, condoms and syringes. The skate park is fertile territory for recruiting young people to run county lines (trafficking drugs from one area to another). The underpass provides shelter for cooking up heroin as well as for rough sleepers with nowhere else to lay their head. All manner of base activity happens in dark corners as well as in broad daylight, and there's so much drug dealing we often refer to it as the late-night pharmacy. It's hard not to curse in the midst of all this brokenness.

Both descriptions are true, both our daily experience, both very often at the same time. In fact, beauty and brokenness seem to go starkly hand in hand everywhere here, not only in the park. Neither cancels the other out. Maybe that is God's view of all of us, not seeing only glory or guilt in monochromatic light, but all of everything in full spectrum colour and with no less love. Every night we walk with the dog around the park, recounting the blessings from our day in the midst of the beauty and the brokenness. Of course we curse and grumble too, especially about dog mess and broken glass – but with no less love for the people and the place. We hold onto the words from Jeremiah 29:7: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare". Thank God for our neighbourhood in all its beauty and brokenness, and pray for its transformation.

Co-creating community

Holding and curating a community is hard. We are enlivened by the possibility and potential for all that God can do at and with the Matt's House community, and constantly feeling like we're within touching distance of

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



all that but not there yet. And people and life circumstances and personal capacity and time constraints constantly shift and scupper hard-won momentum. In April a bunch of us folk from Hull undertook an off-site reflective retreat to do some focused thinking about our community with folk from the Earlsfield Friary community in London. Johnny Sertin (CMS's Britain hub movement leader) shaped and facilitated the discussions and we came away feeling like we'd done a lot of important thinking and articulating and imagining together. An Easter break and the usual out of-the-usual stuff meant that people's fired-up energy for continuing from where we'd got to plateaued somewhat. But if we have learned one thing in our time in Hull, it's

patience over panic. Build slow and you build deep. The kin-dom of God grows organically, it's not simply assembled together with the right pieces in the right order. So, we are nourishing the soil: with time spent together enjoying each other's company, including a wonderful trip out to Yorkshire Sculpture Park last week; putting in more love and being present with each other at our weekly meal; and exploring a daily rhythm of prayer that is often undertaken separately but following the same resource. This month, for example, we are each using the Northumbria Morning Prayer. We are responsible for holding the community, but we all grow the thing together. Perhaps that makes it harder, the not being able to control the pieces, but it is also what makes it truer and richer; more likely a space in which to encounter God at work rather than our own engineered outcomes. Give thanks with us for each person in the Matt's House community and those at its blurred edges, and pray for us to sense and move with the momentum of the Spirit.

A few things coming up

In July we have our annual Breakfast Club beach trip, a really happy way to give a coach load+ of families an affordable day out with their kids. Please pray for the water to be safe to swim in, as there has been an ongoing issue with pollution. We also have an end-of-term youth club trip and our usual big cooked breakfast for families and teachers from the local primary school. Please pray for all those moving up into senior school, that we would be able to continue to travel alongside them and find new ways to connect them in to God's good story.

The first week in August we are taking around twenty young people to the annual summer camp. Please pray that they would have a great week and hear Jesus' story. We will be doing one of the evening talks, so we really need all available prayer back-up!

Shalom,

Anna & Chris



Photos from top to bottom: Pausing to reflect at Earlsfield Friary's Paradise Farm; finding love at Yorkshire Sculpture Park; helping young people to reach new heights on a youth club trip



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