



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,

DNA

You are probably familiar with a quote attributed to St Francis of Assisi, which goes like this: “Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words”. There is some dispute as to whether or not he actually said those words, but they certainly seem in keeping with the way in which he lived out his faith. We are inspired by that deep commitment to authenticity, to “walk the talk”, and we are



Families gathering for our termly cooked breakfast fry up

challenged to let all that we do, both in terms of the way we live and our activities, be an embodiment of the gospel. We sit well with that Franciscan tradition of being a living expression of what following The Way of Jesus might look like. It challenges us to live with integrity (wholeness, our actions undivided from our faith and values), humility (staying grounded) and obedience to God (finding our liberation in submitting to an authority higher than ourselves). Of course, “sitting well with” and meeting the challenge are not the same thing! It’s just as well God’s loving kindness is new every morning!

The walk, however, is not the whole deal. What about the words? “When necessary, use words,” is how it goes, not “no need for words”. So we are challenged to speak the good news too, to tell the story we are living. Social action and evangelism are the two strands of the DNA of Jesus’ ministry. A double helix held together, the integrated whole. Lived expression making sense of propositional truths. Jesus, the Word of God, said “I [who] am the way [how], the truth [what] and the life [why]” (John 14:6). It seems God gave us the whole story to pass on.

Our work with children and young people, at Breakfast Club, youth club and in our everyday relationships seeks to do the preaching of the gospel by action and example. We demonstrate God’s love and care, God’s seeing of those who go unnoticed, God’s celebrating of those who go uncelebrated, God’s concern for people’s welfare, for hungry bellies and need for connection. We do practical things and we let others find their own agency by doing things for us and for each other. Of course, we use words as well in all that. But, each summer we go off to summer camp together with a bunch of children and young people.

Camp is the place where they get to hear the story they have been experiencing. It’s where they get to

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



put words to the good news. It is where we get to name the who and spell out how and the what and the why. Sometimes it's where the penny drops, but the "Aha!" is more often a slow drip of many years of clubs and camps and sense-making and finding answers to questions they didn't know they were asking.

And camp is where they get to find other words, other ways of expressing, which in our Christian traditions we refer to as praise and worship. This year we taught them a song called Say Yes (by Michelle Williams) and it just sort of took off! Knowing the backstory and context of the lives of the children and young people we had brought there, it was profoundly moving to see them belting out "When Jesus say yes, nobody can say no!" at the top of their lungs, with unapologetic joy! The songs we sing at camp, as often in church, give us words that help us tell ourselves our true story; that is to say, our part in "Creator's good story,"

as the First Nations translation of the New Testament so beautifully puts it. They help us reposition our lives within that narrative, rather than the ones often put on us or those we have imprisoned ourselves within.

The other day, back serving cereals at Breakfast Club when the new term started after the summer break, Chris was singing the Say Yes song to himself. One of the kids, who had been to camp with us for the first time, asked him: "Are you still singing that song?". "Yeah," Chris replied. "So am I!" he grinned happily.

Thank God for all the spaces where these children and young people can get to experience the good news of God's love, and for camp and the spaces where they get to put words to that experience – words they can carry home and live by.

Shalom,

Anna & Chris



Photos from top to bottom: Fun messing around with tie-dye at youth club; facing fears and meeting challenges at camp; play and adventure, another of camp's gifts; peeling spuds, essential camp crew activity!; telling Creator's Good Story at the evening gathering at camp



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