

# Anna and Chris Hembury

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*The call in action*

Dear friends,

## The Great Resignation

There has been a lot of talk recently about the Great Resignation, a phrase used to describe the current economic trend in which employees have been quitting their jobs en masse. The pandemic has allowed people to rethink their careers, work conditions, work-life balance and long-term goals. Apparently, higher quit rates indicate worker confidence in the ability to get higher paying jobs and tend to go hand in hand with periods of high economic stability and low unemployment rates.

When I first heard the term it seemed to resonate perfectly with our context, but in the very opposite sense to all this. For all of our nearly 25 years here, there has been an overwhelming spirit of individual and en masse resignation. Giving in to the inevitability of *this being it*, the futility of bothering with aspirations, the acceptance of a limited horizon and the depreciating sense of self. Here, quitting has nothing to do with confidence. The overriding sense has been of feeling like not having much of a story to tell.

Jesus says the truth is there is a different way of being, of holding ourselves and each other and our world, a way which leads not to a dead end but to life. In a place which has largely been written off and there seems little movement up or opportunities out, people can be forgiven for resigning themselves to a small story. But it is not only forgiveness that Jesus offers. An invitation to follow him is a call to defiance – to resist resigning ourselves to the way things are, to find our agency as God’s children, to remove the full stops to our stories, and adventure into the future God is writing with us. In visible ways, at Orts and at Breakfast Club, at Matt’s House and at Selby St Mission, the Great Resistance of the Kin-dom of God is disrupting the Great Resignation. In these spaces, people are tasting and seeing and beginning to trust that they can rethink what they want for their lives. The confidence to resign from the old story they used to believe about themselves. Maybe we are beginning to see the other kind of Great Resignation here after all.

Pray with us that people feel the confidence to embrace God’s bigger story for their lives.

## Outside perspective

At the end of last year, Idina Dunmore, a pioneer curate based in Southall, came to do part of her alternative placement here. She



**Name:** Anna and Chris Hembury

**Location:** Hull, Britain

**Our call:** To share life with those on the margins, who struggle to know their worth but have much to teach us; to help usher in God’s kingdom.

**Our role:** To listen, learn, imagine, provoke and create; supporting individuals, people groups and the local church to connect with each other and with God.



*Continued over the page*

*Orts: space to imagine a new story*

was a gift to us: encouraging, reflecting back and easily going with the flow of whatever happened to be going on at the time. Her time with us included joining in at Orts, Breakfast Club, youth club, Selby St Mission and the Matt's House community, among other things. Idina stayed at the community house and was thrown in at the deep end, leading our opening time of reflection for one of our intermittent "communing together" weekends, using St Brendan's prayer as a focus. It is so helpful to get a different, objective perspective on what mission stuff here looks like. We have vision and intention, but what do others see? Here's a snippet from Idina's reflections after her stay:

*Here I found more than "projects". These initiatives have been built from many faithful years of relationship-building, and enabled spaces for honest sharing of lives and mutual support. Just sitting in these groups, I was surprised how much trust people had to share their life stories, which were so often painful and messy. But they were willing to be honest and open, and I could see in that sharing and acceptance, they are finding healing. (...) These safe, creative spaces provide a taste of how things could be different, in lives and in families, and open a bigger horizon to the possibility of change. It also seemed to me that as a collective, [...] these initiatives are shaping the local neighbourhood in Hull to become a more hopeful and joyful community. And perhaps a community more open to the work of an infinitely loving and passionately involved Creator.*

Give thanks with us for this community growing in openness to God, and pray for Idina as she discerns the next step in her own ministry.

### Rock and roots

I (Chris) like the idea of keeping physically and spiritually fit. I would love to combine both one day by maybe undertaking one of the pilgrimages, like the El Camino or similar, but for now I must settle for our local park across the road! But the park is one of the places I like to pray in the midst of our urban expanse.

So anyway, I have a routine: as soon as I enter the park I begin running (physical fitness) and my first words are "Thank you Jesus for today" (spiritual fitness). I have good intentions of seamlessly slipping into beautiful, eloquent prayers and running for 30 minutes but the reality is I jog for 20 minutes and my prayers tumble into some kind of frustrated verbal table tennis between me and God. My saving grace is that as I make my way around the park I pass a very mature tree which has grown up around and over some large stones (see picture). Every time I pass it, without fail I am encouraged; I think, Yes, there's Jesus the rock and I am the tree with my roots still wrapped firmly around him. As I bounce by hope is restored. The back and forth of my prayers settles somehow and looking at it I think: Oh yeah, God's been good to me.

Shalom,

Anna & Chris



**Photos from top to bottom:** Setting off to sea with St Brendan's prayer as a community at Matt's House; superhero at Breakfast Club; rock and roots

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