



Anna and Chris Hembury

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What we do: Sharing life with people on the margins and supporting them to connect with themselves, each other, the planet and God.



Bringing hope where people have given up on God and the church

Dear friends,

Leadership

Nationally and globally, the past few years have given us much to be terrified about in terms of those in leadership and what they do with their power. It feels like an impossible task to bring about a more just and kind world. But when we can pause long enough to get past our bewilderment, we remember that we are not simply subjugated and powerless. We recognise and follow a different kind of ruler, one whose “kin-dom” turns the ways and values of this world upside down. And we have been tasked to be, and to go and make, disciples (Matthew 28:19) – apprentices who learn by working alongside Jesus, to see what he does and imitate that.

We have just come back from our annual young leaders’ weekend. It’s an opportunity for those aged 15–25 who are stepping into or still finding their feet in leadership roles at the summer camp, to reconnect with friends made at camp and make new friends. This aspect of the weekend might sound like the cherry on top of the leadership training cake, but it’s actually a key ingredient of the cake itself! Relationships are the context for our faith journeying, and the young people learn most about themselves through being held in this loving community and learning how to rub along with each other and experiencing that kin-dom in practice.

D: “I loved how easy it was to connect with everyone, even though I didn’t know anyone. If I was going into a new group in Hull I would have felt so awkward, but I didn’t feel awkward at all and there were people from all over.”

J: “It was nice to have a drama-free weekend away where there was no arguing or bickering, everyone just got along.”

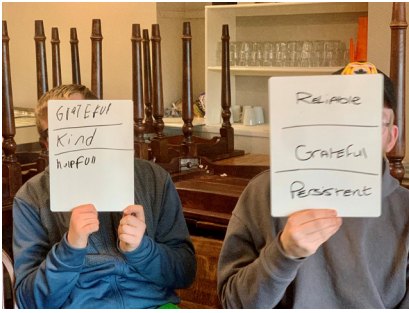
The weekend is also an opportunity for them to explore their own faith journey. Some of the young people from other places are part of worshipping church communities and have some language and practice in articulating their relationship with God. The young people we brought from Hull are on unfamiliar terrain, just taking their first steps (or thinking about whether they even want to!) in exploring a relationship with God. We peppered the weekend with small moments of prayer, opportunities to give it a go in different ways, and a time of reflection and worship. It would have been a lot for them to get their head around, but the apprentice way of learning by having a go offered a gentle “in” on their own terms and at their own pace. Remarkably,



Young leaders’ training, reflecting on character

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With Jesus
With each other
To the edges



one of the young people from Hull who isn't from a church background secretly wrote a worship song that weekend! Part of it goes like this:

*God only knows what you've been through
 God only knows what they say about you
 God only knows the real you
 Is there a kinda love that God only knows?*

The young leaders' weekend is also, of course, an opportunity to equip the young people with some specific leadership training. Thankfully, we had an expert in the field (Richard Williams) to help us design the weekend, distilling some key tools and insights from his vast encyclopaedia of leadership knowledge and wealth of experience. We put the young people through their paces, with a mixture of self-understanding stuff to get their heads around and physical team-building activities. Our aim was to help them to better understand themselves and begin to see how the kind of person they are can best find expression in the different kinds of leadership roles at camp and in their wider life.

A: "When I'm at the young leaders' weekend or at camp I feel more included, more heard than anywhere else in my life. And people accept me without judging me. So I don't feel like I have to be so loud."

K: "I came back way more confident than before I went, but I don't really know why."

Please pray for these young people, that they would choose to apprentice themselves to Jesus; that they would find themselves in their imitating him; that they would flourish in leadership in God's upside-down kingdom.

Holy upheaval

It's one of my (Chris's) favourite things – to be waiting excitedly and anticipating the start of Advent, which of course is all about waiting to take part in the crazy story of God taking his first human steps. Just as I was beginning to settle into waiting I was hit with a "holy upheaval": an offer to take part in a Murmuration production called Holy Upheaval. (Murmuration is a beautiful but bonkers production company, which our friend Liz and Anna started together a few years ago.) They just needed a male voice and a strong pair of hands – nothing to worry about, I could easily do it, apparently! As it turned out I had a key role in moving stuff around, holding bits up, operating a 10ft-tall puppet of the angel Gabriel and being the sage voice narrating the wisdom of Solomon.

In the past I had been a roadie for Murmuration, shining a torch or helping lug equipment, but now I actually had a proper leading role – I was a narrator of this amazing retelling of a beautiful story. One of the most moving and abiding memories of (being a part of) this production was working with the people Anna and Liz had gathered, people with different faiths (Christian, Sufi Muslim, Buddhist, pagan, agnostic) and journeys in life, all here, together acting out this gospel of Jesus and his journey. And seeing it shape and change our own stories in the acting of it. Waiting and acting seem to go together very well.

Shalom,

Anna & Chris



Photos from top to bottom: Naming their qualities; Holy Upheaval – the pointless circular rhythms of Ecclesiastes; Holy Upheaval – Solomon amassing wealth, just "chasing after the wind"



Bringing hope where people have given up on God and church

We've been encouraged to hear stories from others who are part of our wider area of work. In Honduras, Carlos had a change of heart working with a Christian ministry, and in the UK Garry Ion reports on how Carlisle's Community Shed is sharing skills, community and Jesus. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

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