

Exploring Asylum Hill Riverfront Family Church

For any who were at the January AHNA meeting you may recall a young couple there for the first time, Liza & Arunan Arulampalam. Liza is a co-pastor at Asylum Hill's newest church, Riverfront Family Church, which moved into the 224 EcoSpace just a few months ago from Glastonbury. I stopped by her office at Hartford Seminary where she works part time to find out more about them, and then stopped in Sunday morning for the photos and the live experience.

Riverfront Family Church began in 2008 with Liza's mother, Nancy Butler as the founding pastor. If that name sounds familiar and especially if you follow Colin McEnroe, then you should know, yes it's that Riverfront Family Church. Nancy struggled and eventually succumbed to ALS all the while giving her family, friends and church members a living example of how to live and die as a

Christian. Liza took over the responsibilities of pastor along with Ben Dubow and Jen Moyer about a year ago when they were still in Glastonbury. They started out in Hartford in the G Fox building, but didn't feel connected to the City as they wanted, mostly because there isn't a lot happening in downtown Hartford on Sunday mornings.

There move to The 224 is intended to be a spiritual partnership rather than a rental agreement as was the Glastonbury location.

I stopped by on a recent Sunday to get a feel for the community and I was heartened by the experience. Lots of diversity, young people, older people, very young people who like to run around, if they all had one thing in common it was that they were all relaxed, happy and friendly. The first part of the morning is a children's service where the messages from the bible seem mostly absorbed from the atmosphere, which is not to take anything away from the energetic storyteller or the clever graphics on the screen behind her. Everyone seemed perfectly content to go with the flow.

After a brief intermission they set up for the adult service, which began with a medley of spiritual songs lead by singers and accompanied by guitar, piano and djembe.

The sermon was given by Venida Rodman Jenkins, a long time member of the church and ordained pastor who is now in New York. The topic was "How to Neighbor LGBTQ neighbors". It's part of a multi-part series on Neighboring and at least for this Sunday, the Gospel was the story of the Good Samaritan.

One visit is certainly not enough to draw any conclusions, but it felt comfortable, casual and still earnest. I could imagine Jesus being heartened.

For more photos go to <https://goo.gl/photos/qv9hPRFuPLStN9ir5> or for more information go to <http://www.riverfrontfamilychurch.com> or Facebook Riverfront Family Church



By Bernie Michel