



INKLINGS

the newsletter of campus chapel ministries



MINISTRY OF (DIGITAL) PRESENCE

When people ask me what I love about campus ministry, one of the things I nearly always mention is that it's a ministry of presence. There is incredible value in us simply being where we are, at the intersection of the church and the university. We bear witness to our God, who is also present there, by being present, with all of who we are, in the conversations, the community spaces, even the classrooms of the university. But what does that look like when our presence becomes entirely digital? That's the new reality we are all living into this spring.

Set against the backdrop of uncertainty and anxiety the pandemic has created, we at the Chapel have been discovering new ways to be present to one another and to encounter God's presence. The cornerstone of our community life, Sunday worship, is still an opportunity for connection in real time – it just happens on a digital platform. We still sing, pray, hear the Word, and even share communion as best we can through Zoom. (And I can tell you, they didn't offer seminary classes in how to preach sermons to a computer screen full of small heads arrayed like the Brady Bunch opening credits.) The same goes for our Virtual Wednesday Night Dinner (as you can see) – we all grab our plates and gather for a “shared” meal and conversation.

It's different, and there's some grief at losing our normal communal rhythms for a time (especially for students graduating this year, featured on page 3). But journeying through a tough time together has pulled us closer. One of our students contracted COVID-19 in late March, along with a number of his extended family members. He recovered, but sadly his grandmother passed away after a short battle with the disease. Seeing our students and young adults, especially our Leadership Team, supporting him with love and care in that moment was a powerful image of what the church is called to be.

It was also amazing to see our community respond to a practical need in the Brightmoor neighborhood of Detroit. Already a food desert, increased demand related to the pandemic meant that residents had to rely even more heavily on corner stores for food, which are now price gouging heavily without legal ramifications. Our own Nathan Groenewold (pictured below) is doing ministry there with Cohort Detroit, and connected us with local leaders who are providing food-assistance. The Chapel community provided over \$500 worth of groceries and hygiene supplies.

We are all finding our way forward in this new reality, but rest assured that God is still faithfully present, and the ministry of the Campus Chapel and Center for Faith and Scholarship continues. A campus ministry colleague recently reminded me that the first step in developing organizational resilience is knowing how you define reality. When all else seems to be in upheaval, we persevere by clinging to God's promises that we know to be real and true. That's our reality. No matter how we gather, God is present when we do, gifting us with faithful love and resurrection life.



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KUDOS AND FAREWELLS



***Alex Cooke** is graduating with an honors degree in Biochemistry with a minor in the History of Art, focusing on architecture. This year he was one of the CFS ProVocation Fellows, which was a wonderful way for the pastors to get to know Alex better. We will miss him greatly, particularly his enthusiasm and passion for Camp Kesem, willingness to grill when seasonally appropriate, and his subtle and witty humor.*



***Annaka Koster** completed her Master of Information Science degree at the School of Information. Post graduation, she has secured a job as a librarian in a public library on the west side of Michigan. We will miss many things about having Annaka at the Chapel, particularly her clever sense of humor, quick quips, enthusiasm for Belly Deli, love of games, and willingness to help lead worship liturgy.*



Chad Westra (seen here with spouse, Mary Catherine) just completed his Master of Arts in Chinese Studies. After graduation he plans to explore opportunities in international business with tentative plans to complete a PhD in modern Chinese history or literature in the future. Chad has been a wonderful fixture at the Chapel, often stopping in during the day to study, chat, feed the fish, or destroy Pastor Matt at ping-pong.

Nathan Groenewold sustained his Classical Examination on Saturday, March 7. Ordination details are pending due to the Coronavirus outbreak, but we are looking forward to celebrating Nathan and God's call on his life. Throughout the past year and a half, Nathan has been working with Resonate Global Mission and local partners to build Cohort Detroit, a ministry that raises up Christian young adult leaders within marginalized Detroit neighborhoods. You can find out more about his work at partner.cohortdetroit.org.



Chapel Board member **Phil Christman** had his book *Midwest Futures* published by Belt Books. It is a series of interconnected essays exploring the idea of the Midwest past, present and future. It's an insightful (and funny!) read.



A VISIT FROM TAIZÉ

Taizé music and worship has long been a part of the life of the Campus Chapel community, so when an opportunity arose to help host events for two visiting brothers from the Taizé community, it seemed like a natural fit. Twenty years ago former Chapel pastor Don Postema organized a similar visit from Taizé brothers. This time the Chapel, along with St. Mary Student Parish and First Presbyterian Church, were invited by First Baptist Church to help coordinate events for Brother John and Brother Emile (pictured here with Pastor Bailey and ProVocation Fellow Rebeka Rooks).

The planning team felt strongly that worship should be a central component of the visit, so three coordinating worship events were planned for three nights in a row. The visiting brothers also met with the Interfaith Roundtable of Washtenaw County, our ProVocation Fellows, and several other groups.

The night of Taizé worship hosted at the Chapel came just hours after the University announced the cancellation of in-person classes due to the Coronavirus outbreak. In a time of anxiety, the peace that service provided was a welcome gift. We did not know that this Taizé worship would be our final large in-person event of the semester, but we are grateful we ended this way. A special thanks to all who participated in the worship service and made it a meaningful and rich evening.

