

CAMPUS CHAPEL

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INKLINGS

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BEADS AND ASHES

By Katie Van Zanen

(This essay was first published on the post calvin blog on March 16, 2022.)

This year, on Ash Wednesday, I was crossed and blessed at St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral in Jackson, Mississippi.

It was the tail end of a trip honoring my friend Sarah's thirtieth birthday; we'd spend the preceding three days enjoying Mississippi coast Mardi Gras, catching beads and beer koozies and foam footballs thrown by revelers of many kinds and boogieing to the uneven melodies of high school marching bands and also making risotto and going on long runs and playing Code Names and sipping frozen beverages from the Daiquiri Shak. It was glorious. But in the car on the way home from the parade, talking about our lives beyond that weekend, we fell into discussion about a shared sense of malaise: *I hate my job. Maybe it's time to leave this city. If we want to buy a house, what can we afford and where? I think I want to be a parent, and soon. Should I move home? I think I don't want to be a parent. If my friends leave town, what will I do? Is this relationship gonna go the distance? What will I do when my parents get older?* We drove past house after house set high on pillars to protect from future hurricane storm surges, along a beach covered with sand that was imported after an oil spill.

Is it the pandemic, we asked, or is it just—turning thirty? And the real question, the question behind it—*Where do we go from here? Because I'm trying to imagine a good life and a future, and I don't know how to.*

I'm the last of that crew to turn thirty; my birthday isn't till the end of May, so technically I'm behind the curve. I am unusual in that there is a very specific deadline to my malaise—I have to graduate in 2023 and then find something else

to do with myself. But in many ways, we're all in the same place: we know that in two years—in eighteen months—our lives will look radically different. But we don't know how, and we don't know where we'll be, or who will be there when we come out the other side.

After Mardi Gras, Sarah and I closed up the rental house, grabbed coffee, and dropped our beads off for recycling at the aquarium in Gulfport. And then we drove three hours back to Jackson, where she's lived for seven years now. I hadn't been to Jackson since I helped her move in 2014—we went to church with her parents in Kalamazoo in the morning and then drove South, stopping for lunch in Champaign and dinner in Memphis, and the next day I took the overnight



Ash Wednesday Cross © Jan Richardson

train back to Chicago. We were twenty-two. Sarah is a deacon now at the cathedral, so on Ash Wednesday she was up front in a robe. I sat on the wrong side of the aisle, so when we went up to receive ashes I didn't get them from her, but as the dean, Anne, marked a cross on my

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forehead I could hear Sarah telling someone to *remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return*.

In that car ride from Gulfport to Jackson, from Mardi Gras to Ash Wednesday, we talked about death. I've been thinking about it a lot, for probably the entirety of the pandemic, those two years that feel like a cubist painting of the life I'd imagined, and I asked Sarah what she thought about heaven. And she talked about the Prodigal Son story: maybe heaven is a party God throws with an open invitation, but we are only able to enjoy it if we're willing to accept that God invited all those other people, too—that God loves me, and God loves

every other asshole on this planet just as much. I kept thinking about the thrown beads that weren't caught, that were crushed under the wheels of subsequent parade floats, bits of which would wash into the Gulf and be consumed by the cousins of the crawfish we had ordered for dinner, and how bound we are to return to dust, how eager we are to forget or ignore it. And then, toward the end of the service, we asked God to grant us a true understanding of our waywardness, that we may at last come to your eternal joy.

Katie Van Zanen is a PhD candidate in English and Education and a member of the Campus Chapel board.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

It's the moment you've all been waiting for! In our last issue of the *Inklings* we introduced a new regular feature, sharing a photo from the Chapel's past, but without any details. Now we'll finally reveal the story behind the photo.



In February of 2009 the group pictured here spent a week in Lexington Kentucky on a spring break service trip. Working with World Renew and local partners, they did everything from painting a community center and working in their gardens to serving meals and hanging out with guests at an overnight shelter for homeless community members. The student participants were (from right to left) Annie Van Dyke, Joel Ondersma, John Prins, Josh Koetsier, and Jung-Ho Kim (all four guys were residents of Phi Alpha Kappa, as John's shirt gives away!). They were joined by staff members Matt Ackerman (then just a lowly ministry intern) and Rebecca Jordan Heys (now pastor at Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids).

In keeping with the theme of this issue, the photo was taken on Ash Wednesday after we had attended services at a local church.

And now here is a new photo for you to wonder about, this one from a bit deeper into the Campus Chapel archive. Be sure to check out our spring issue in a few months to learn more about this blast from the past.



HARD TO SAY GOODBYE

In February we bid a fond farewell to community members Lauren Bylsma and Nick Van Klompenberg



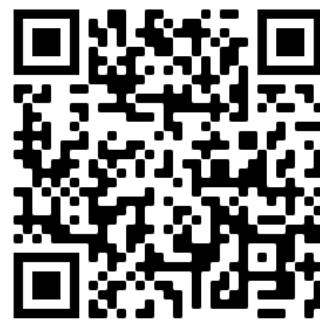
and their two young daughters, Amelia and Louisa. Lauren and Nick were active members in the Chapel community for more than ten years and left an indelible mark.

During their time in the Ann Arbor area they met at the Chapel and got married, celebrated a graduation and first jobs, got their first dog, bought their first home, and welcomed both their girls. And they did all of that with joy and kindness, generously putting others first. Lauren and Nick served the Chapel in many ways, including leading worship and being on the Chapel board, leadership team, and building and grounds committee. They were always willing to chip in and prepare a Wednesday Night Dinner, often with a theme. And they were cornerstones at our discipleship activities, social events, and clean-up days, even getting young Amelia involved with the maintenance work by bringing along her little wagon and bubble lawn mower to help.

Nick, Lauren, and the girls relocated to the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area where Nick started a new job at Milwaukee Tools and Lauren will continue working remotely as an epidemiologist. They will be greatly missed!

SUPPORT OUR WORK!

Thank you so much for your generous support of the ministry of the Campus Chapel and CFS. Your year-end giving was a testimony to the value you see in the work we do. But the need is still there; for example, a recent power outage ruined the electronics in the oven in the Chapel kitchen, and it will need to be replaced, and our water heater is nearing its end, too. We know God will continue to provide, but we also want to remind you that we need your support. Make a one-time donation, or set up a recurring monthly gift. And reach out to Pastor Matt (mattack@umich.edu) if you'd like to sponsor a specific Chapel or CFS event. You can fund a Wednesday Night Dinner, underwrite the next CFS lecture, or even provide for our new oven (and have it named after you)!



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