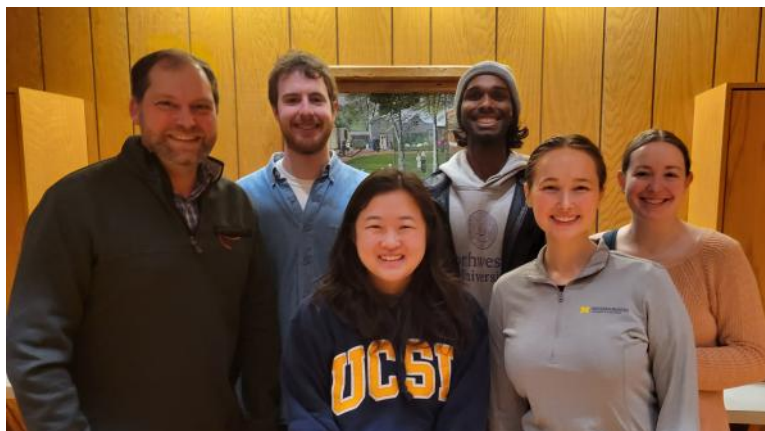




CONTEMPLATIVE LEADERSHIP

For spring break this year, five graduate students and I made the two-hour trek to St. Gregory's Abbey, an Episcopal Benedictine monastery in Three Rivers, MI. Not that the Abbey is in the town of Three Rivers, though. It's nestled among rolling hills and farmland, far from much of anything. While the main building contains the chapel, refectory, library, and the monks' quarters, the six of us stayed across the courtyard in the old farmhouse on the property, giving our time there the feel of a country retreat.



We have taken students to the Abbey before, but this was the first visit in nearly a decade and the first time our visit was funded by a grant from the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association. Our goal was to explore the intersection of the contemplative Christian life, exemplified by the brothers of St Gregory's, and a Christian view of leadership. That may seem like an odd pairing. What do monastic rhythms of work and prayer have to do with leadership?

The University of Michigan attracts and generates people who are goal and performance oriented, which is especially true of those who take on leadership roles. This can be an asset and strength that allows leaders to, frankly, get things done. UM students are good at taking on a program or event, coordinating details, and making it happen. However, sometimes the heart of Christian leadership is lost in that focus on meeting the goal.

This trip allowed our students to unplug from a goal-oriented spirituality and experience a contemplative, relational, unproductive way of being with Christ. The monks will tell you that their mission is to pray –



to pray without ceasing, to pray when nobody else is, to pray for the whole world. It is a very different approach to the Christian life than most of us have experienced.

I was delighted that the students who came entered into this life deeply while we were there. They joined the monks for most of the seven prayer services a day (and some made it to all of them, even 4:00 AM Matins!). They enjoyed conversation with Father William, the guestmaster, and other monks at daily teatime. They even limited their use of their phones, especially as we cooked and shared meals together, played board games, and talked late into the night.

All of us left feeling refreshed and inspired, knowing that we still have much to learn about living lives with a deep sense of the presence of Christ. After all, the brothers of St. Gregory's have been doing it for 87 years, and Benedictines around the world since the 6th century. But we also left with a commitment to slowing down just a little bit and leaning into contemplative leadership.

- Pastor Matt

NEWS AND NOTES

It was a joy to celebrate the **Baptism of Frances "Frankie" Hope Derbesy** at the Campus Chapel this spring. With her parents she has been a faithful attender of both Wednesday Night Dinner and Chapel Worship since just a few weeks after she was born, always providing her own vocalizations. It was a special treat to have Frankie's grandmother, who serves as a minister at Immanuel Presbyterian Church of Warrenville, IL, participate in the baptism. Julia, Philip, and Frankie are pictured here with Frankie's godparents, Robert and Becca.



Our annual end-of-the-semester **Ice-Cream Outing** to Blank Slate Creamery was a family affair this year, with lots of kids joining in the fun. And for once, the weather was actually warm enough for us to eat outside!

CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!

Congratulations to **Shayla Olson**, who completed her Ph. D. in political science and scientific computing this spring. Her research was of particular relevance to the church, as her focus was on race and religion in the United States. Her dissertation, entitled Sacred Commitments, Racial Convictions: Religion, Identity, and Racial Attitudes in American Politics, uses survey data to show that white Christians in the US downplay systemic racism and focus on individual racism more than other demographic groups. She suggests this is, in part, due to an emphasis on Christian identity over other identities, and a striving for “racial colorblindness.” While Shayla’s academic work is interesting, she has also been a generous and kind member of our community, al-



ways willing to help others out and offer a word of encouragement. She even cooked us a very memorable turkey for our Christmas feast at

a Wednesday Night Dinner last December. She and her husband and young son will be heading to South Bend, Indiana where she has a postdoc fellowship at Notre Dame.

Congratulations also to **Vanessa Elliott**, who completed Medical School this spring. She took a some-

what unconventional approach to her degree, doing some rotations in other locations and taking time off to be a kayak guide in the San Juan Islands of Puget Sound. Vanessa first came to the



Chapel as a Calvin University student doing a summer research program at UM. We were delighted when she decided to come back for med school, and she’s brought a great deal of joy and laughter to our community during her time here. Vanessa is heading back to the Pacific Northwest for her residency, where she’ll be splitting time between an urban hospital in Seattle and one in the remote lakeside town of Chelan, Washington.

SUPPORT THE CAMPUS CHAPEL

As always, it is only with your support that the ministry of the Campus Chapel can continue and thrive. Many of the congregations and agencies that support us are not able to continue the same level of support, as they face financial challenges of their own. Gifts from individuals and families are more important than ever. Please continue to support us in prayer and with your financial gifts. You can scan the QR code to donate!



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