

Cahill Family Newsletter 2016 – 2021

Hello friends!

We have finally gotten around to trying our hand at a yearly newsletter.

But since we have been married for 5 years already and so much has happened between now and then we thought we would give you a brief overview to catch you up to the present.

2016

May 14th, 2016 is when this crazy, fun adventure began. We were 20 & 22, just two kids with stars in their eyes not knowing exactly what was in store, but that we could make it through anything, together. We had a wonderful two-week honeymoon that took us to Petit Jean State Park in Arkansas. Then we headed up to Indiana for Benjamin's college graduation.



While we were up there, we took a couple of quick day trips to the Creation Museum in Kentucky.

When we got home, we set up our apartment and real life began.

Shortly thereafter we realized that we were not perfect humans and there were some things we needed to work on. Everything was not roses and sunshine. But through patient conversations (into the night sometimes)

we were able to gather some understanding of one another and each person's needs.

Benjamin committed to no computer work outside his job and I didn't get together with friends in the evenings for the first year of our marriage, which helped us have more time to talk.

We had a unique opportunity during this time to work together on some of Benjamin's work projects. He taught me how to do some basic things like helping to run cables/fiber and terminate them. This gave us another chance to learn some valuable lessons about how each person thinks and needs to work. And we really had to WORK on sorting these things out in order to work together peacefully.

That allowed us some rapid growth in some areas that may have taken us longer to sort out in other circumstances and I am very grateful we had those early opportunities!

Within our first year of marriage, I was praying that the Lord would bless us with a baby in His perfect timing.

One day, I realized He had answered my prayers. And we told our families shortly thereafter. Unfortunately, God had other plans. We miscarried at around 6 weeks.

It was an emotional time for me, but God really used it to draw me close to Him.

2017

A couple months later we were expecting again, and I was cautiously optimistic.

We waited a little longer to tell everyone about this one, but we eventually did. I was shocked when I miscarried again at around 12 weeks.

I was devastated and cried out to God asking Him “why?” many times. I came so close to telling Him that He didn’t know what it felt like to lose a child...that is when He whispered to my heart that He not only knew what it felt like, He willingly sent His child to die for me.

In that moment I felt like He was right there with me, holding me close to His chest in silent understanding while I grieved.

It was a precious time of drawing closer to Him. I then realized that these children were never mine to begin with and learned to say with Job “the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

He taught me that any children He gave me were ultimately His and I was just to love them as long as I had them. Fast forward to October 2017 and we found out we were expecting again. I was excited and nervous. I was constantly praying for open hands and a peace for whatever outcome.

Travel Our family has enjoyed taking quite a few road trips in the five years since we have been married. Benjamin loves seeing people, and Marina loves enjoying nature, so we both enjoy traveling. Since Benjamin plans the trips, though, they are often more weighted towards seeing people. We are working on evening out the balance!

Our first major trip after our honeymoon (May 2016) was in April of 2017 to a friend’s wedding reception in California. We took the opportunity to visit Marina’s birthplace, Huntington Beach. We spent time walking the pier, and Marina enjoyed introducing Benjamin to the beach—a first for him! Next stop was a day in San Francisco. Benjamin introduced Marina to Lombard Street and

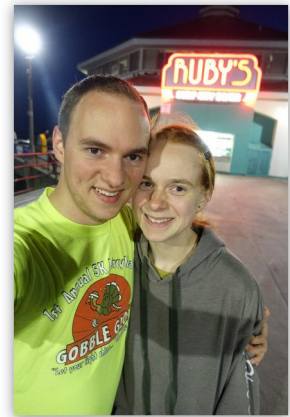


together we marveled at the geography. Then we spent several days with Benjamin’s friend in Northern California. Before returning, we headed to Boise, Idaho, to spend a couple of days with more friends. On the way home, our tire blew out on I-80 in Wyoming. Benjamin was very happy to utilize the full-size spare tire in the trunk of our Camry and continue on with the rest of the trip with minimal delay.

We really enjoyed this first trip and decided that we would like to continue taking road trips.

Our next trip was in August. We timed it so that we could stop at Benjamin’s sister’s house in Arkansas to take a portrait of their growing family, before continuing on to Missouri to see a total solar eclipse. Afterwards, we headed up to Illinois for Benjamin’s work.

In December, we took a tour of the Southeast spending several days in Daytona Beach and Panama City Beach, Florida, and Birmingham, Alabama, before visiting friends in Tennessee and Oklahoma.



2018

When we got to around 16 weeks, we finally went to a midwife. At 18-20 weeks we got our gender ultrasound. We were having a girl and she looked perfectly healthy!

We finally told our families as it was getting harder to hide my growing belly.

Our baby girl arrived healthy via C-section on June 18, 2018! Cherish Maureen Cahill, our Precious, Wished-for child!

We were planning to have a natural birth at a birth center with midwives, but around 36 weeks we found out that she was breech.



I tried all kinds of things to get her to turn but again, God's plan was different than mine and we had to quickly schedule a C-section.



(Praise the Lord my Father-in-law is a doctor and was able to quickly get us on the schedule for our C-section and deliver our precious baby girl for us!)

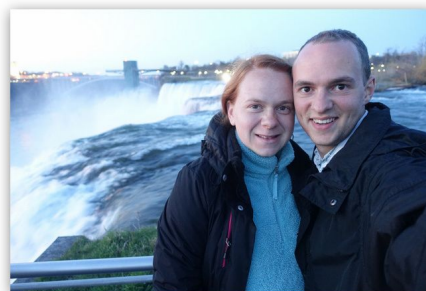
Recovery from the C-section was a bit harder than I thought it would be but we got through it and were completely enamored with our precious baby Cherish.

Travel In 2018, our neighbors told us about a conference their families put on in March.



We decided to go, so we took a trip to North Carolina for a weekend, and we really enjoyed it.

With a baby due in June, we wanted to take a trip to visit friends and see some sights before the birth. We planned a 14-day trip in May, during which we visited 8 families, and saw Niagara Falls and the Creation Museum! We spent nights in North Carolina, Virginia, New York, West Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, and Tennessee.



In September, we took our first trip with the baby to Florida for a vacation with Marina's family.



2019

It seemed like we had finally settled into a routine when God decided to do something else I hadn't planned for.



When Cherish was 6 months old I found out I was expecting again. I was in denial even 6 positive pregnancy tests later! The pain from the last birth was still fresh in my mind and I wasn't sure I could handle another one so soon.

Again, God was working on me. First he taught me to let go but was I now willing to truly believe that every child is a blessing and trust Him with the size and spacing of our family?

Again I wrestled with God and again He was faithful.

By the 20-week mark I was fully surrendered and looking forward to meeting my baby! On August

19th, 2019, we welcomed Serenity Josephine Cahill to our family. Her name means peace, Jehovah will increase.



Cherish took to being a big sister almost right away.

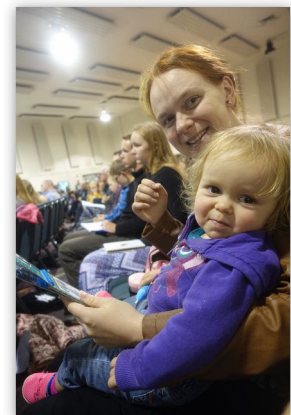


We had our challenges getting used to two kids (why does it always have to be right in the middle of making dinner when they all decide to have a meltdown?) but overall Cherish really did enjoy being a big sister and mommy's little helper.

Needless to say 2019 was a busy year. With the girls being only 14 months apart, my days were full of diapers, training, feeding, cleaning up, etc. I sometimes had to remind myself of how blessed I really was.



Travel We didn't do any traveling for most of 2019, but we did take a quick trip to Minnesota for the funeral of a friend in October. In November, we went to another weekend conference, this time in Virginia.



2020

In early 2020 I decided I was ready to try something new.

I was feeling stuck in my relationships with the people around me and my walk with God, so I started attending BSF with encouragement from my mother-in-law.

That was a neat and encouraging time and then COVID happened. We finished out the BSF year on Zoom which proved to be rather interesting with an infant and toddler by my side.

In June, we bought a minivan. Anticipating three children in the future, Benjamin began looking for just the right minivan in January. After six months of watching, just what we wanted showed up at a good price. We purchased a 2009 Sienna LE 8-passenger, and we love it!



While on a trip in August, I had started feeling yucky but decided it was because we were on the road and not eating quite like we usually did and didn't think much more about it. (At this point you may be catching onto something much quicker than I did.)

After feeling funny for roughly 2 weeks, Benj finally suggested that maybe I was pregnant. Apparently pregnancy brain had already taken full effect and other things started to make sense. (I had been extremely forgetful on top of not even being able to surmise that I might be pregnant. The struggle is real y'all!)

I was excited about the prospect of another baby as I had just weaned Serenity and was looking forward to the joys of another newborn in my arms.

The pregnancy went smoothly and we were planning another C-section for mid-April 2021.

Travel In March of 2020, we drove to North Carolina for a triple wedding. We had some car trouble, and our trip was quite interesting as a result. It was such a neat story that we wrote about it on our blog at benjamincahill.com.

In May, we took a trip to Colorado to visit Benjamin's sister for a week, with a day trip to some new friends in the area. On the way there and back, we stopped in with some other friends in Kansas. We both enjoyed the beauty of Kansas.



In August, we took a three week road trip, first to Florida for a beach vacation with Marina's family, then on to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for a conference with Benjamin's work, and then another



work stop in Illinois on the way back to Texas. By the time we returned, our minivan was stuffed after unpacking and repacking several times! While we were in Michigan, the water pump gave out on our minivan. Benjamin was able to repair it himself, thanks to YouTube and a shop full of helpful tools, while Marina kept the girls busy.

In November, we went to another weekend conference in Virginia.

2021

In February this year we had the unexpected surprise of snow! Benjamin and I have always lived in the south and have never experienced the beauty of a snow covered landscape where we live. It was breathtaking! The girls also enjoyed getting bundled up to go play in the crunchy white stuff (and eat it). We stayed home for about a week as we had about a foot of snow on the ground and Texas has no way of clearing the roads to make them safe to drive. I would like to say we made snowmen and went sledding but I was very pregnant and didn't have the gear/energy to do that, so the girls and Daddy went outside every now and then to clear the sidewalk.



Toward the end of this pregnancy, we had the opportunity to move from an apartment to a house.

It was an exciting and crazy time! I basically painted the house myself at 34 weeks pregnant. I am extremely grateful to everyone who helped me do a room or two here and there—especially my mom and Benjamin who painted all our kitchen cabinets. I wasn't allowed to do that part as we used oil-based paint.

Finally we moved in on March 20, 2021. I was pretty worn out after that at 37 weeks pregnant, so I spent the next few weeks enjoying my older girls and resting.



Shortly after moving in, we figured out that baby was in a good position to try a VBAC.

We consulted with some midwives who had experience with that and they said we should try it so we switched our care to them and waited.



I was due 4/22/'21, but we weren't sure when baby would come since I had never gone into labor before. We did hope that baby would come on a certain day because we had a theme going with the other two. Our first was born on 6/18/'18, second was 8/19/'19, so we were hoping this little one would come on the 21st.

I was hopeful when I started having contractions late afternoon on the 20th. I labored through the night and

our baby girl Haven Elise Cahill was born naturally on 4/21/'21!

That was an amazing experience and I so enjoyed being able to love on my baby without the pain of a surgery recovery.

Haven means 'safe place' and Elise means "God's promise". "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." – Psalm 91: 2

For a couple months after Haven, we had 3 kids under 3, so life was full. In June we celebrated Cherish's 3rd birthday with a small family party and a tradition from Benjamin's childhood: a scavenger hunt!

We placed pictures of places she would know around the house and they led her to a new bike!



Next thing we knew, it was Serenity's 2nd birthday and we had another small party for her. My parents had a small trampoline they were getting rid of, so that was Serenity's gift. Our little "Renny" is full of energy, so that was the perfect gift for her!

Family Camp was in October and this year was fun! We decorated our tandem bike to look like a horse and our bike trailer as a covered wagon! The girls had fun in the "wagon" and enjoyed the horse's tail in their faces—so much so that they pulled most of it off!



This year I have found that having 3 kids has really stretched me. I am really struggling with finding out how to juggle my time between all the chores and spending time with the kids during the day.

Most days my floors have dust bunnies in the corners (and under the couches), my shelves have dust, and don't look too closely around the ceilings because of the cobwebs. We have also worked out a deal with the resident daddy long legs; they don't come into my direct line of sight, and I pretend they don't exist.

Now to end our year, we plan on getting some projects done around the house and going to Benjamin's parents' house for the last week in December.

That is always such a special time as all of Benjamin's siblings and their families gather at Mom and Dad Cahill's house for a week of fun, loud, relaxing, tight (after all, we are fitting 33 people in a five-bedroom house), craziness.

Travel In August, we took another trip to Florida with Marina's family. However, this time, we tried out a "camper-van" setup Benjamin built last year, complete with full-size bed up front and bunk beds in the back. We slept comfortably, all the way up to the next to last night, when we woke up to ants in the van! Benjamin cleaned everything thoroughly, and by the time we got home, most of the ants were gone.



In October, we visited friends at their farm in Kansas, and thoroughly enjoyed riding semi trucks, a combine, and climbing a pile of corn!

November found us again trekking to Virginia for the weekend conference that we have come to love. We tried doing something a little different this year by leaving a day early so we

could have a special family day in the Smoky Mountains before finishing our trip to Virginia.

We loved it so much we are considering making something like that a tradition!

Well, thanks for bearing with us and here's to hoping that next year's letter will be a bit shorter! ;)

We wish everyone a blessed new year full of Christ's love and joy!



Benjamin & Marina Cahill

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Thursday nights with Daddy



Walking 100 miles in Spring



Caught sneaking food!



Center of the USA



Twin cousins (2 days apart)



Sister time



Daddy time (Cherish)



Stick Inspector (Haven)



Daddy's girl (Haven)



Triple toddler bunk beds



Mommy's big helper (Cherish)



Holding hands