

Cahill Family Newsletter 2023

Dear friends and family,

Can you guys believe it's already been another year? This year flew by particularly fast for me. Every day is so full of the necessary tasks of life that I am exhausted at the end of the day. But if you asked me what I did all day, I might not be able to tell you. It's like I'm balancing a bunch of plates, but if I drop one and pause to pick it up, all of them will come crashing down on me.

Anyway, January started out with me rediscovering my sourdough starter that had found a cozy spot in the back of my fridge. I was dismayed to find it had turned an interesting pinkish color on its vacation.

Rather than trying to revive that one, I decided to start fresh. The new one has been going strong all year, and I have finally found a routine and recipes that I have been able to consistently use. My goal is to try and change most of our bread consumption into whole wheat sourdough. I enjoy experimenting with new recipes to meet that goal.



February was when I got interested in gut health and decided to start making water kefir. It is basically a healthy version of soda. The fermentation process makes a lovely, bubbly water and then you flavor it with juice or fruit. I have really been enjoying that and the girls have taken a liking to it as well. Now I'm trying to work up the courage to ferment some vegetables. I haven't tried it yet, but I definitely think I'll attempt it soon.

March had me walking once again as I started my now annual goal of walking 100 miles during the spring season. I was especially motivated this year as it helped me stay active in the last few months of pregnancy. I was able to meet my goal thanks to a fun family/friends group chat that helped me stay encouraged by seeing others' progress.



We also decided to take our annual anniversary getaway in March. We usually try to go a little closer to our actual anniversary but because I was due to have a baby in

early to mid June and our anniversary is in mid May, we decided to go a little earlier. While we were away, Benjamin took some time to finish reading a book. He has had wrist issues for a number of years, and while researching ways he could fix it, he came across a book, "The Mindbody Prescription." Since reading that book, he has had no more pain in that wrist, and we have enjoyed many benefits from that!

April had us enjoying the big conference that happens around here every spring. It is so fun to see the campus come to life with all the people.



Usually Haven's birthday falls around that time as well. Our little dynamo turned 2 this year. It has been so neat to see her linguistic skills improve so rapidly lately. She is determined to keep up with her older sisters! She has the most energy and determination of them all so far. That comes with great loyalty and joy, but also some pretty intense training sessions. The training seems to be paying off though, as we recently started noticing improvement!



In May, we got a new piano. Benjamin has always wanted a Yamaha, and we finally found one at a good price. With the new piano and Benjamin's fixed wrists, we hear piano music much more often now.



May was also baby prep time. I focused on getting food in the freezer and keeping the house tidy. As we got closer to June, the baby was getting ready to make her appearance. I would get contractions through the night that would go away as soon as I got up—not fun when you still have to keep up with the other kiddos during the day. This kept up for a week or so before she was born—thankfully not every single night.

Finally, after a particularly long night, I got up to see if the contractions would stop again. I really didn't want to tell Benjamin. The only problem was that it was Sunday morning, and he is our church pianist. I decided that even if they weren't real, I would not be in any mood to greet people at church. So he called a backup pianist and my mom came to get our girls. It's a long, neat story, but to keep it short, our Felicity Nicole was born that afternoon—June 4—at 1:00pm at home!



She was 5 days earlier than her due date, but I wasn't complaining, as she was already 9 lbs!

I am so grateful to have family nearby as my mom kept the girls for a week while I recovered and we got to know this new little person. Recovery with this one took a little longer, but we took every day as it came, and I eventually got back to normal. A couple weeks after the baby came, Cherish turned 5. She is becoming quite the young lady. She is a huge help with the baby and seems to be quite a natural at knowing how to help.

Cherish has also started showing a lot of initiative this year. She will see something that needs to be done and do it without me asking. She is doing great in school and has started learning to read this year. She is very logical and capable. If I take the time to teach her something and explain the why behind it, she will joyfully come alongside and heartily join in.

Cherish also just lost her first tooth on December 12. For the longest time she was telling me that she "didn't like" that tooth and that it was "crunchy." She wouldn't complain about it all the time but would randomly bring it up.



It took me a long time to realize that she was actually old enough to be losing teeth! By the time I realized that, she was only about a week away from letting her Aunt pull it out!



Once July rolled around, preparation was in full swing for celebrating the 50th anniversary of Benjamin's parents. All of the Cahill siblings and spouses contributed their talent to make this a very special event. The day was enjoyed by all and is still talked about fondly by the guests of honor so I'd say it was a success!

That was a busy month as we headed up to Kansas for a sweet friend's wedding the next weekend.

August was a full month as well. Our sweet Serenity turned 4! She has learned a lot more self-control this year. She is a very sensitive person, so she can easily be hurt and melt into a puddle of tears without you even knowing what happened. She has gotten much better at telling us what's wrong. With that sensitivity also comes great compassion. She is often the first to notice someone hurting and offer a helping hand or word of comfort.



Serenity also started preschool this year and enjoys having school to do like her big sister. Speaking of school, we started that back up in August and I had to figure out a new routine to be able to help two kids with school instead of just one.

Around that time, Haven also got potty trained. Thankfully, she picked it up pretty quickly, though there is always a time when I wonder if it was even a good idea to start this in the first place. Usually that is just before the child makes a big breakthrough.

I also started getting back into some postpartum exercise. It was also around this time that Benjamin and I started watching a series of messages titled the Anger Series by S.M. Davis.

The one titled Freedom from the Spirit of Anger was particularly impactful for Benjamin by showing him that there is an underlying spirit beneath outbursts of anger or frustration that can be worked on daily. We are both seeing positive changes in this area slowly. As Mrs. March in Little Women puts it: "Watch and pray, dear, never get tired of trying, and never think it is impossible to conquer your fault."

September had us running, literally. We started training (albeit pretty late) for the



Family Camp 5k in October. This year I finally told Benj I was going to do it. He decided to join me because he had just gotten an old injury fixed that had prevented him from running in the past. Airrosti in Longview is the place that got him up and running again. (pun intended)

October brought Family Camp! Benj and I were able to finish the 5k. Benjamin was very gracious to stay back and run at my pace even though he could have gone much faster. If I ever do that again, I definitely need to train a little longer!



We took a break from school to enjoy the festivities of the week. Shortly after Family Camp came Benjamin's birthday. But this was no ordinary birthday. It was his golden birthday and I planned something special. As many of you know, Benj loves people. So I planned a surprise party for him that basically just had people come and go from our house all evening. The desired effect was achieved. He was totally surprised and very happy all evening!

As soon as that was over and November rolled around, I was very busy preparing for a two-week road trip we were planning. We bring all our own food, so it was a challenge to come up with things that would last for two weeks in a cooler or things we could make in the Instant Pot without having to bring too much extra. In that time on the road, we would be visiting Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the annual FEW Conference in Virginia, Washington D.C., the Creation Museum, and the Ark Encounter. My family was able to join us this year as well. Sadly, Dad had to stay back to work and be there if my grandparents needed anything.

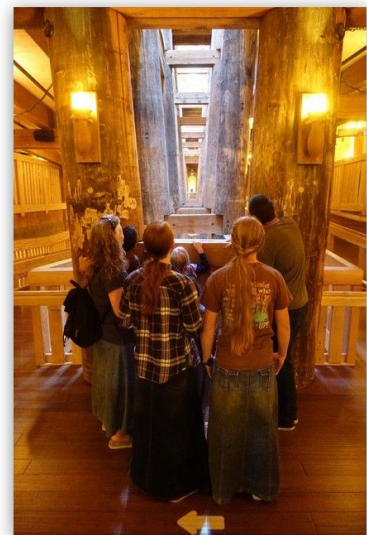


The Smoky Mountains were beautiful and the hikes offered stunning views of God's handiwork. The FEW Conference was just as encouraging as usual. We heard neat messages and had some great conversations. D.C. was a whirlwind day trip in which we visited the Smithsonian Museum of American History, the Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam, Korean, and World War II memorials, and Arlington National Cemetery. To witness the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a pretty neat experience.



Our last stop was Kentucky. We visited the Ark Encounter the first day we were in town. It is so incredible to see how large it was. I enjoyed the bits of information everywhere you looked and imagining what it may have been like. The next day we went to the Creation Museum. We have been a few times since we've been married and I'm amazed that there always seems to be something new.

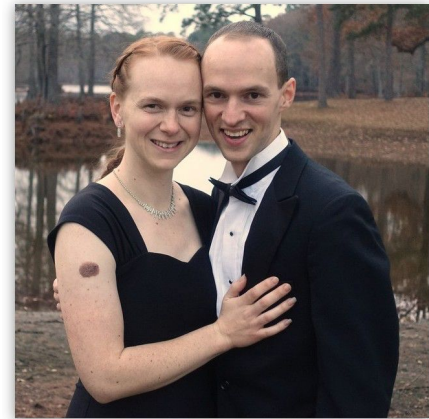
When we got back home, I had just enough time to unpack and do laundry before we headed to Benjamin's parents' house for Thanksgiving / family reunion. When Benj's family gets together you can count on lots of noise, games, late nights, and fun memories. With all the commotion going on, I may occasionally be found hiding in the rare quiet corner to read a book momentarily before being found and recruited for another game. I love it and am blessed to have such an amazing extended family!



Once we got home from that, we let out a sigh of relief to finally get settled back in after 3+ weeks of being gone. We then started school back up from being on break since late October. The beauty of homeschooling is that I can make the breaks fit into the times when we are busy. If we have to do some school in the summer, so be it; that is a time when we're not very busy.

In early December the ministry that Benjamin works for invited all the couples on an all-expenses paid marriage retreat. It was a neat two days of sessions mixed with some fun with other couples. Huge thanks to my mom and a couple of sisters for watching our girls for our getaway! We always enjoy learning new strategies for relating to each other and solving conflict.

Speaking of marriage, Benjamin and I have grown closer this year than ever before, and we are so happy together. We are very grateful for the resources and wise counsel God has brought into our lives.



The rest of December was pretty quiet. During our calm time back home, our baby Felicity has not slowed down. She started to crawl and eat solid food. She is desperately trying to keep up with her older sisters!



I am now thinking of what I'd like to learn in 2024. This past year, my confidence in baking sourdough bread came a long way. Although I wouldn't call myself a master, I would say it has become more second nature, and my brain is ready for a new challenge.

I believe this coming year I will embark on learning more about herbs. I was talking to a friend about this

and she sent me a great book to kick-start that journey.

Benjamin has also been working on things. One of the biggest changes I have noticed is his commitment to staying off digital devices after dinner. He is really focusing on making his family a priority, and we notice.

He was also inspired by another father to take his children on "daddy dates." Sunday afternoon, you will find him walking, biking, or driving around with one of the girls, snack in hand.

Well, for those of you still reading this, I salute you. God has been faithful and is truly there whenever we call. I hope y'all have another year of seeking and finding Him!



Benjamin & Marina Cahill

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2023 Memorable Quotes

(Haven said something incorrect.)

Cherish and Serenity: Haven, you're wrong.

Haven: I'm not wrong. I'm Haven!

(Marina told Cherish that she doesn't have to be afraid of bad dreams because Mommy and Daddy are always there.)

Cherish: And God is always here too right next to us. He has the whole world in His hand. We can even drive on Him!

(Felicity starts crying)

Cherish: She's starting to crank.

Marina: Haven, it's time to get up!

(Haven sits up in bed)

Haven: I hatched!



Gender reveal



Road trip snoozes



Felicity—Mommy's lookalike!



Squeezing in!



Doll baby



Matching dresses



Saturday lakefront cookouts



Zoo trip



Daddy's girls



Ark Encounter
carousel



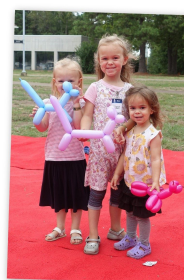
Cherish's new bike



Fun in the rain



Kansas wedding



Fun at Family Camp



Trailer ride