

Life at 22: Mark Hakes, assistant director of Campus Ministry

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Considering Mark Hakes’ educational background in music, it might initially come as a surprise that they work as the assistant director of Campus Ministry at the College of St. Scholastica. “At 22, I was in grad school at UMD getting a master’s in music,” Hakes explained during an in-person interview. After discovering their passion for music in middle school when the choir teacher overheard their talent for singing and insisted on including a choir class in their schedule, they decided to pursue a bachelor’s degree in music and vocal performance at Stetson University. “I thought, what am I going to do with my life?” Hakes reflected. “Well, maybe I’ll go do music in college.” After receiving their bachelor’s degree, however, Hakes started to question if pursuing a career in music was the best choice. “I wasn’t overly keen on continuing to do music, but what do you do?” they explained. Feeling as if music was their only career choice, Hakes decided to attend UMD to continue their education in music. “I hated every minute of it,” Hakes admitted. “It was a program that was full of drama and frustration. It was one of those moments where, here’s this thing that I love to do, and in this situation I don’t want to do it.” Despite recognizing their disinterest in pursuing a career in music, Hakes was in need of a job after graduation. “There was an open position in faith formation at a church, so I just kind of stumbled into it, mostly because I didn’t want to do music anymore. I was so burnt out and frustrated,” they said. From there, Hakes’ career continued to advance in the field of religion. “I ended up being the youth and children’s minister at a church here in town, at Peace Church.” Not only was Hakes’ career transforming at the time, but their faith was growing as well. “Right before I was hired at Peace Church, I became a Catholic. I really felt like I wanted to become more involved in ministry, and I felt a call to priesthood.” “I went to go be a Jesuit,” Hakes reflected. However, after giving up their belongings and practicing four years of discernment, they were only involved with the novitiate for three months. “I realized that was not what I was feeling drawn to in my life.” Even though Hakes felt a calling to pursue a career in faith, their identity made it more challenging to find

acceptance. “As an openly queer person within the Catholic church, it’s not always easy to find a place,” they admitted. Hakes was able to find this place at the College of St. Scholastica. Their journey at the College began when they enrolled in the graduate teaching licensure (GTL) program with the aspiration to become a social studies teacher. However, they were called back to an occupation centered around religion. “I was just at the end of the GTL program when a job in Campus Ministry opened up,” they explained. As a qualified candidate with a strong faith-based background, Hakes was hired as the assistant director of Campus Ministry in July of 2019. Working for Campus Ministry has allowed Hakes to share their experiences with our college community. “My favorite part of my job is conversations with students and colleagues around vocation,” they said. Hakes elaborated that vocation is not just about finding your career. “As a college, we define vocation in that broad sense of any way that you engage with community. It’s not just your job—it’s your faith commitments, it’s your civic engagement, it’s your family relationships, it’s your friendships, it’s all the ways that you engage with the world around you.” When guiding students about vocation, Hakes uses their journey toward discovering a fitting job as proof that the path toward finding a perfect career does not have to be effortless. “Don’t feel like you’re stuck in whatever major you have,” Hakes advised. “I have a job at the College of St. Scholastica in Campus Ministry. Just because I got a bachelor’s degree in music, just because I got a master’s degree in music, didn’t keep me from finding my own path and my own way in the world.”



Submitted photo/Mark Hakes

As fall graduation approaches, Hakes reminds students not to stress about their future. “If you’re not sure what you’re going to do after graduation, that’s okay,” they said. “As long as you’re an active player in your own life, you’re going to find a way.” Hakes continued to highlight the importance of discovering who you are as a person. “St. Francis de Sales said, ‘Be who you are and be that well.’” A crucial part of this discovery process is being a life-long learner. “Keep learning about yourself,” they said. “Do that work to figure out who you are and then to be who you are and be that well.” As a queer person of faith who overcame the challenge of finding acceptance within a religious community, Hakes has had first-hand experience fulfilling the values of this quote. “I think it’s important for people of faith to consider how queer folks can be included in faith communities,” they said. “I’m an example that queer folks do have a place within religious communities. One of the beautiful things about our Catholic Benedictine identity is that St. Benedict calls us to welcome everyone as if they’re Christ.” Hakes’ story is an inspiration to not give up on the challenge of discovering your place in the world. “Whatever your faith tradition is, whatever your spirituality is, find those things and know that from our Catholic Benedictine perspective, everyone is welcome here at this college and in this community,” they said. At our college, Hakes serves as an accessible and welcoming resource to guide students on the path toward self-discovery. “If you’re questioning how you find your place in the world, I love having those conversations, so come and talk to me,” they said. They can be reached at mhakes@css.edu.

The Sacred Heart Shrine: A symbol of God’s love



The Sacred Heart Shrine. Script photo/Elena Bissonette

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The College of St. Scholastica is surrounded by reminders of our Benedictine values as seen in our lived history, buildings, community members and shrines across campus. A particular shrine on campus, often referred to as “Scary Mary,” stands beautifully erected on our grounds shared with the Sisters of the St. Scholastica Monastery and the Benedictine Living Community of Duluth (BLCD). But “Scary Mary” isn’t scary at all, and isn’t even a shrine honoring Mary; in fact it is reverently called the “Sacred Heart Shrine.” The historical shrine of Jesus can be found along the Maryglade trail in the back of campus. Sometimes you may see students, Sisters or visitors praying, writing or studying at this sacred place, or working there to beautify its surroundings. What makes this shrine a reverent part of our campus? Perhaps it is one of God’s many ways of reminding us of God’s boundless love for us. The Script sat down with Sister Lois Eckes for an in-person interview to share the history, significance and joy that the Sacred Heart Shrine brings to our campus. “It is a beautiful sacred place set apart on our campus, and the story of its creation is fascinating,” she said. “The shrine itself was carved out of the geological formation upon which a large portion of our campus and region rests. It is locally known as Duluth gabbro, a glacial rock from the pre-Cambrian age. It was from this place on campus that the granite was quarried for Tower Hall and the St. Scholastica Theatre.” “As the stone was being quarried for these buildings, it was gouged out concavely from the cliff except at the center. There it was carved into a high pedestal intended to hold a statue someday. The entire setting formed a spacious and welcoming setting for the 12-foot

white limestone figure of the Sacred Heart which was given to the Sisters in 1912 when their hospital in Grand Rapids, Minn. closed. Upon completion of the shrine site in 1946, the statue of the Sacred Heart was brought to its present location.” The Script asked Sr. Lois about the Sacred Heart statue and its meaning. “It is a reminder to us all of God’s abiding presence and love for us and all the world,” she said. “It conveys most vividly the invitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to ‘Come to Me, all of you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you’ (Matthew 11:28). With His arms outstretched Jesus is inviting us to come and be comforted by His love, be filled with hope and know we are not alone. The face of Jesus conveys a tender gaze and it is as though He is saying ‘Come let me wrap you in my arms of love.’ Let me give you rest!” she said. Sister Lois also shared how the Sacred Heart Shrine ties in well with our College of St. Scholastica’s mission, preparing us to go out into the world to share God’s love through our life witness and professional work. Sadly, for at least the last seven years the statue of the Sacred Heart has not always been respected. In fact, at least once a year for these years and more, the hands of the statue have been broken off and required replacements. “The Sacred Heart Shrine is a sacred place on our campus and meant to remind us of God’s tender, boundless love for all people and all creation. It speaks of all our values and we trust that all who are a part of our St. Scholastica Campus community uphold those values and pledge to live by them,” she said.