

Emily and Kyle





Hello from Minnesota!

We're Kyle and Emily (and Mustard the Goldendoodle). Life together has led us through 4 states, 2 countries, and the deep desire to build community wherever we are—including in our own household. In each place we've called home, we have friends that have shared their lives with us, even when we don't share DNA. We have been welcomed into new cultures; we have received hospitality and care. Now, we can't wait to welcome a child into our family and offer them a home of love and belonging.

We love the quote "*Joy is the oxygen of doing hard things*" (Gary Haugen). As we've stepped into hard things over the years, we've also cultivated joy along the way. A few things that bring us joy are:

- **Cooking and Eating:** Great things happen around full tables.
- **Accents and Impersonations:** We crack ourselves up doing voices pretty regularly.
- **Our Faith:** We're committed Christians, and our faith gives us hope and motivates us to serve others.
- **Adventure and Travel:** Whether trying a new bike trail in our city or hiking a crater lake across the globe, we're energized by exploring new places.

We know you're in the middle of doing some hard things right now as you consider the possibilities of adoption. Our hope is that you also have pockets of joy to sustain you. Two of our family values are *courage* and *intentionality*, and while we may or may not get to know you more, we're grateful for *your* courage and intentionality to get to know us through these pages.

Our Story

The year was 2008. Taylor Swift was in her *Fearless* era, and "Love Story" had just hit the airwaves. Around the same time, our love story was just beginning on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay where we met right after college in a program for young adults studying Christianity. For both of us, our faith was and is foundational to our sense of purpose in the world, and we knew we wanted jobs that would make a difference in people's lives. At the same time, we both loved to laugh and enjoyed a good dance party as much as a deep conversation about our favorite books. Our first date was actually a cha cha lesson! We were the perfect match of silly and serious. During this time, Kyle really encouraged Emily to pursue becoming a pastor, even though she hadn't grown up seeing many women in that role before. Emily also encouraged Kyle in one of his dreams of living in another country.

We got married in 2010, finished graduate school in North Carolina, and in 2015, we moved to the Democratic Republic of Congo for nearly three years. Emily taught Christian theology to university students, and Kyle led a university research center. Our time in Congo will forever be one of the most transformational experiences we've ever had. We built amazing friendships that continue to this day, served with an incredible team, and learned that, most of the time, the best "help" we can offer others comes through our own willingness to be vulnerable. In 2018, we moved to Minnesota where Emily serves as a pastor focused on local service and global relationships. Kyle works from home for a solar energy company that he helped start with our friends in Congo.

2010

our wedding in North Carolina



2017

at a friend's house in Congo



2022

hiking in Minnesota





Why Adoption

We have always wanted to become parents. After years of struggling with infertility, our doctors suggested more advanced interventions. This didn't feel like the next right step for us, so we decided to take forty days in the winter of 2019 to prayerfully reflect on the future of our family. The only rule: we couldn't talk about it with each other! We took time to rest, reconnect, and pray (separately) about new possibilities. At the end of the forty days, we were both 100% ready to pursue adoption.

We thought about the incredible love and welcome we have received over the years in new cultures and homes. We thought about how much we *adore* our nieces, nephews, and our friends' kiddos. We thought about the deep and unwavering desire in our hearts to parent a child. We felt ready for this new adventure of adoption. In particular, we were excited about the possibilities of open adoption and helping our future child stay connected to their biological family, culture, and heritage. If you were to place your child with us, know that we are eager for you to be part of their ongoing story.

Our Home

We live in a cute mid-century house with bright yellow doors in an urban suburb. We love the natural light, and we for sure spend most of our time in the kitchen. We're walking distance to three parks, one of our favorite local coffee shops, and a great library. Our city is diverse, tight-knit, and inter-generational with frequent community events like farmer's markets and 4th of July fireworks. We love taking morning and evening walks around the neighborhood with Mustard, and he loves to greet all our neighbors young and old!



Brave Funny Loyal



Meet Emily

- **Job:** Pastor
- **Favorite Color:** Mustard Yellow
- **Favorite Sandwich Topping:** Any kind of mustard (you will see a theme here); also ALL THE PICKLES
- **Favorite Movie:** **Barbie**
- **Fun Fact:** I auditioned for American Idol in 2009.
- **Favorite Quote:** "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." - Julian of Norwich
- **Ideal Weekend Activity:** A big Saturday breakfast!
- **Best Accents:** French or British Bakeoff contestants
- **Favorite Cookbook:** *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* by Samin Nosrat

In Kyle's words: *No matter what she's doing or who she's with, Emily is caring, attentive, deep, and organized. She has a surprisingly funny side (including a number of accents and impersonations), and even though her Louisiana accent has faded, she has not lost her taste for a good crawfish boil, gumbo, or king cake. One of the things I love most about her is her commitment to taking care of herself well. Many mornings, I find her curled up on the couch with Mustard, drinking coffee and praying. I so admire the tremendous courage and compassion she's demonstrated since I've known her--whether it's leading a presentation in a foreign language, preaching a sermon, or staying hopeful through our journey to parenthood. It's this courage and compassion, combined with her strong sense of loyalty and responsibility, that will make her an excellent mother.*

leading a baptism at church



baking biscuits at home



teaching my Minnesota friends how to peel crawfish

Wise
Adventurous
Curious



Cherry Blanc 15.00
Mendocino, CA
Cherry Blanc, gamacha blanca, panvada macho, morate
temporillo, 2017, castilla, spain
Domingo Blanco de Tinto Road 12NA
Domingo Blanco, 2017, castilla, spain
BEER
Carmen Franc, 2019, love, france
Mondito Especial on draft \$8
Amoroso Brewing Co, Duain, and Beer, Black Lager on draft \$8
Amoroso Brewing Co, Duain, and Beer, IPA on draft \$8
Tropical Brew, Biggs, IPA on draft \$8
Tropical Brew, Tropical Banana Spil, tropical fruit on \$10
Aqua de Plata Spelling Vibe \$5
Jarron Mendocino \$5
Mason Coca Cola \$5
Square \$5

Meet Kyle

- **Job:** Partnership Manager for a Congolese solar energy company
- **Favorite Sport's Team:** Arsenal F.C. (English Premier League Soccer)
- **Favorite Roadtrip Music:** *Graceland* by Paul Simon
- **Favorite Dinner Party Music:** *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis
- **Fun Fact:** I've made my own chocolate from cocoa beans in Congo (see picture below!)
- **Ideal Weekend Activity:** Gravel biking
- **Best Impersonation:** Donald Duck or a Scottish soccer announcer
- **Favorite Cookbook:** *Six Seasons* by Josh McFadden
- **Favorite TV Show:** *The Bear*

In Emily's Words: *Kyle has an insatiable curiosity to learn about the world and other people. He is a master researcher, sharp thinker, and a great mentor. I love his entrepreneurial spirit and the way he always asks me what I'm learning about. Kyle is the best person to have a conversation with about pretty much anything because he's likely already read three books or listened to eight podcasts about it. Kyle channels his wide-ranging interests to serve and care for others, and he's someone that other people often seek out for advice. He also puts together great playlists for roadtrips and cooking. When I imagine him as a dad, I see him encouraging learning and adventure in our child--whatever their interests may be. He'll also make up fun little diddies to sing to them (he already has dozens for Mustard and me). Kyle's patience, servant-heart, and encouraging presence is a daily gift to me.*

with my friend and colleague, Subira, in Congo



drinking my favorite Congolese coffee



checking on my cocoa beans before making chocolate



Meet Mustard

Mustard is our sweet Goldendoodle pup who brings us so much joy! He was one of ten puppies in his litter, and the breeder named them all after spices. When we found out he had been called Mustard, we knew he was meant to be with us. (Kyle literally gave Emily a variety of fancy mustards for her birthday one year; she loves it that much.) Our favorite things about Mustard are his goofy smile, his morning snuggles, and his friendly demeanor. Mustard enjoys humans of all ages, and our niece and nephews specifically invite him over for playdates.

- **Job:** Chief Joy Officer
- **Favorite Snack:** Peanut butter
- **Favorite Activity:** Fetch, squirrel chasing, or eating
- **Favorite Human:** Kyle (but Emily makes sure I go to the vet)
- **Ideal Weekend Activity:** Dog parks or hikes with my humans
- **Best Impersonation:** Bucket of KFC or Chester the Cheeto Cheetah

A Few of Our Favorites

Hanging out with our nieces and nephews: Dance parties, baking activities, and magnatiles all included.

Planning our next trip together: For us, the planning is just as much fun as the going. Whether it's walking through San Francisco or Paris, we love exploring new places. One of our favorite trips was to Uganda where we hiked around crater lakes, went chimpanzee trekking, and saw animals on a safari.

Having a good show on rotation: A few of our current favorites include *The Bear*, *Ted Lasso*, and *Abbott Elementary*.

Picking a new recipe to try from our global cookbook collection: Recently, we went to our local Asian Market and bought ingredients for *khao soi*, an amazing coconut curry noodle soup from Thailand.

Dinner night with friends: Our ideal evening is sharing our newly discovered recipes with friends.

Being involved in our church: Church is a lot more to us than just a hobby or where Emily works. Sunday worship is the backbone of our week. We're active in a small group that supports us in the ups and downs of life, and Kyle volunteers as a teacher and small group leader.

Biking: Our favorite bike ride in our city is about 30 miles long with a halfway pitstop at one of our favorite bakeries for a chocolate almond croissant. (This is where Kyle is in the picture above!). We've also done some pretty awesome bike trips to South Dakota, Iowa, and Vermont!



Kyle's Hobbies

playing club soccer, teaching Sunday school at church, reading Christian theology, baking anything chocolate, good conversations with friends, listening to *The Economist*



Emily's Hobbies

collecting cookbooks, investigation podcasts, going on walks with friends, learning guitar, playdates with Mustard, weekly meal planning, making charcuterie boards with girlfriends

at a pizza farm in Decorah, Iowa



a cooking class for our birthdays

biking along the Mississippi River in Wisconsin





visiting with our friends from Congo in the US



hiking to see fall leaves



with Emily's niece and nephew at the beach



Our Traditions

Advent and Christmas: We love celebrating the Christmas season. During the four weeks leading up to Christmas, we observe Advent, lighting candles around our table each week to symbolize how we're waiting for Jesus to come. During Christmas, we always make Emily's chicken and sausage gumbo; both sides of our family request it! Then, we love hosting a party for all ages on January 6th to mark the end of the Christmas season where we celebrate the coming of the wisemen to meet Jesus. Most importantly, this is when King Cake season starts!

California Trips: One of our favorite places to visit is the coast of northern California, where Kyle's extended family owns a vacation home. The beauty of the rugged beaches and lovely hikes are rejuvenating. We love going there with friends and family each year.

Fall Leaves: Autumn in Minnesota is beautiful! Every fall, we make a point to drive to one of our favorite state parks and hike through the gorgeous forest as it changes colors.

Weekly Check-ins: Each week, we set aside an hour to "check-in" with each other about how we're doing, plans we need to make, and things we need from each other. In a check-in, we have to share a high and low from the week and one thing we've appreciated about each other. When our schedules are busy, this practice helps us be intentional with one another.

Supporting Friends: Because of our history working overseas, we have a huge network of friends near and far serving in Christian ministry all over the world. Whenever we have the chance, we love hosting them if they're visiting town, advocating for their work, financially supporting them, and helping tell their stories. We value being connected to this global community, and we think that introducing our child to these friends would help him or her become more compassionate, aware, and service-minded as they grow up.



Emily's Family

I grew up in Louisiana and most of my family is still there, including my mom, stepdad, dad, grandmother, brother and his family. My parents divorced when I was ten years old, and the first few years after that were really hard for me. Looking back, I can see how God worked through this event in my life to give me a deeper sense of compassion for kids who go through hard things that they haven't chosen, and ultimately, my faith grew a lot through this time.

Two great things that came after my parents' divorce were my two half-siblings who were born when I was in college. I remember holding them as babies and feeling like my heart would burst with love, and last year I just watched them graduate from high school! All my siblings are amazing people, and I'm so proud to be their big sister. I'm also grateful that my parents have maintained a positive relationship with each other, and we even all get together on holidays (see the silly picture below!).

We travel down south about twice a year, usually in the winter, and my family visits us several times a year as well, usually in the summer or fall. My parents are amazing grandparents. Even with the distance, we stay closely connected, and I videochat with them all the time. My whole family has been incredibly supportive of our adoption journey and cannot wait to welcome another child to shower with love.



Kyle's Family

I spent most of my growing up years in Wisconsin, the oldest of three boys. My brothers (see the picture below) are some of my best friends, and we live just ten minutes from my middle brother and his family. Growing up, our house was the one where all our friends wanted to hang out; my mom was constantly replenishing snacks for movie nights or high school Bible study. My parents were always looking to serve others, and their attitudes of hospitality and welcome made me also want to live that way as an adult.

My parents got divorced when I was in college, and this was a really sad event in my family life. Because of my experiences through that, I've always tried to be incredibly intentional in my relationship with Emily, being open with community and friends when we're going through hard things and making sure we take the time to talk through issues and listen well to each other. I know this is really important to her too.

Even through the ups and downs of that journey, I've always had a close relationship with both my parents. My dad is someone I call when I need help with a house project or life advice; my stepmom is encouraging and always praying for our adoption journey. My mom is the most energetic grandma you could imagine and comes to visit us often. They've supported us every step of the way through adoption and are so ready to welcome another kiddo into their lives.





baking cheesecake and singing Christmas carols with our niece and nephew



at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade in NYC with our nephews



making sandcastles with our nephew



making chocolate cake pops with our niece and nephew



Our Promise

When I (Emily) was first thinking about becoming a pastor, Kyle was the first person to tell me to go for it. He believed in me and was excited for how that journey might unfold for us. When I (Kyle) brought up the possibility of moving to Congo, Emily was always willing to take the next step of discovery, partnering with me in the risks and unknowns of an overseas move. Through ups and downs, dreams and disappointments, desires and adventures, our relationship has always been about giving each other wings. Now, as we dream about becoming parents, that is what we hope to do more than anything for a child. The greatest gift we could offer would be to instill in him or her that they are lovable, capable, and worthwhile—in short, to give them wings.

Kyle and Emily



Thank
you!

