

Spotlight at St. Mark

SHINN-KOBER

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Background: One never knows what will bring two people together who grew up 2,200 miles apart. Adam Kober and Jonathan Shinn, raised in Indiana and California, respectively, took separate, but similar, paths to find each other, find St. Mark and start a wonderful future together.

It was a December they will always remember. “We met randomly at A Restaurant in Newport Beach in 2011,” recalls Adam. “Jonathan walked up to me and I instantly thought, ‘I want to marry him!’” Seven years later, Adam and Jonathan are engaged (Adam popped the question last July) and looking forward to what lies ahead.

But, as the saying goes, getting there is half the fun.

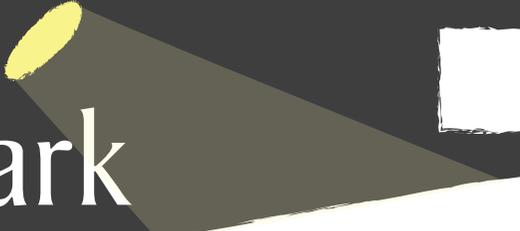
Adam grew up in the small farming community of Liberty Center, Indiana. His family, which owns and operates a large business that produces corn and soybeans, taught Adam and his siblings responsibility from an early age. Adam began raising horses when he was six years old and to this day, he breeds and shows quarter horses. With his degree in Landscape Architecture from Purdue University in hand, he moved to California in 2001 to start his career.

Today, Adam is Principal/Project Designer at Lifescapes International, Inc. in Newport Beach, specializing in the design of custom carved limestone fountains and intricate stone tile mosaic designs. If you are at Rockefeller Center in New York City this year, you can see some of Adam’s work as he is the lead designer of the Channel Gardens, a historic landmark that dates back to the 1930’s and completely changes themes every 4-6 weeks. His work can also be seen on the cover of the February 2018 issue of *Landscape Architect* magazine.

Jonathan, an 8th generation Californian, was raised in the heart of wine grape country, Lodi, California. Fittingly, his family owns a vineyard, growing wine grapes and cherries. Jonathan moved to Orange County in 1997, receiving his undergraduate degrees in International Business and Spanish (and minor in Cultural Anthropology) from Vanguard University. He



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A graphic of a spotlight beam shining from the top left towards the center of the page. The beam is a dark grey cone with a yellow light source at the top left. The text 'Spotlight at St. Mark' is written in white, with 'Spotlight' on the first line and 'at St. Mark' on the second line. The background is a dark grey gradient.

attended graduate school in England, where he completed his Master's Degree in International Business.

Jonathan is currently making his mark in the recycling industry. He buys non-ferrous metals and alloys from specific areas of the world and moves them to other parts of the world to put back in the manufacturing stream. These days, he is focused on the interior west of the United States. When not at work, Jonathan loves spending time with his family, hits the ski slopes any chance he gets and volunteers with Baja Bound, an organization that builds permanent homes for the working poor in Baja California.

Adam and Jonathan both faced challenges throughout their early lives accepting their identities as gay men. Both grew up in conservative faith communities that were less than accepting and, as many gay Christian youth do, they tried to "pray the gay away" and live lives they thought they should, but that were incongruent with their authentic selves. Jonathan married a woman he met in college and had two children, Greta (now 10) and Oliver (7).

Through their own journeys, both Adam and Jonathan came to realize that a life built on denial wasn't healthy or sustainable and that authenticity, truth and self-acceptance were the keys to live their best selves for themselves, their families and their communities. Today, Jonathan speaks in human sexuality classes and on diversity panels at his conservative Christian alma mater, helping to influence the school's views on LGBT issues.

Finding St. Mark: They started attending St. Mark regularly in 2014. "We were looking for a church home and tried several that weren't the right fit for us," said Jonathan. "The first week we came to St. Mark, we knew it was the right place." St. Mark has been an important part of their faith journeys. Both are active in the choir (tenor section) and Adam, who recently finished his term as an Elder, is directing the new landscape remodeling project at the church.

As they plan their future together, they relish in the joy Greta and Oliver bring to their lives and hope to add more to their family soon. "Could be kids or retired greyhounds," they said. "Or both. You'll have to wait and see!"