

THE IVY LEAGUE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER



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CAPTURING THE SOUL OF THE CITY

Photography Exhibit Intimately Portrays New Yorkers in Worship

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DARTMOUTH

The great American photographer and environmentalist Ansel Adams once said, “A photograph is usually looked at—seldom looked into.” Adams’ passion to photograph came from his longing to connect with nature and build a bridge for humanity to see its inherent beauty. Like Adams, freelance photographer Lanie McNulty attempts to reveal an often-overlooked beauty found in New York City: the worship of Christ.

In New York today, many visit the Guggenheim Smithsonian or the Museum of Modern Art to “look at” good art, but few might have the opportunity to “look into” photography that peers into the soul and the heart of the Christian faith. That might all change with Lanie McNulty’s *Lifted Up in New York City* exhibit which was displayed at the Neighborhood Church in Greenwich Village this past May.

McNulty, who lives in Manhattan, had an interesting journey to faith in Christ. McNulty holds an AB in government from Dartmouth (’86), an MBA from Harvard Business School (’91), and a master’s in education from Bank Street College. During her days in Ivy League halls, McNulty admittedly was not looking for God and felt Christianity was out-of-touch with real-world issues and “decidedly unhip.”

“I can say without exaggeration that I did not know one believing Christian—or at least one who shared his faith—while I was at either Dartmouth or Harvard” she said.

Later in life, it was her sister-in-law Shannon Hardington (Har-

vard ’86) who helped McNulty reconsider Christianity.

“What changed my mind was a subtle but undeniable transformation I observed in Shannon when she became a Christian,” said McNulty. “She had this certainty.”

With encouragement from her sister-in-law, McNulty took a small step of faith and asked Jesus to show her the truth. According to McNulty, “He did, and there is now no going back!”

With *Lifted Up in New York City*, McNulty tells a personal story of her search to better understand her own faith and “to reconcile two seemingly divergent identities—that of a Christian and that of a New Yorker.”

Compiled from photographs taken from 2004 to 2008, the collection follows McNulty’s personal account of God at work in the hearts and lives of New Yorkers. Through everyday settings—from a police precinct to an old rustic church—each photograph allows its viewers to peer into the heart of a

New York City worshipper. Included in the project are images from Harlem churches, a Queens dance ministry, a Bronx prayer walk, and the 2005 National Day of Prayer at

the College of Staten Island. The shots are set in photo-documentary style; but, as McNulty attests, they are really about her search to better understand her own faith.

The project began from a chance meeting at Trinity Baptist Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. McNulty was attending her first meeting at the church when she noticed someone worshipping in freedom: “It was



The inspirational and poignant photography of Lanie McNulty, Dartmouth ’86 and Harvard Business School ’91, was recently featured in Manhattan.



“Amen”



“Come Unto Me”



“The Stewardesses”



“Not My Might”



“Seraphim”



“Father and Son”

stunning—I saw a woman with one hand across her heart, one hand in the air, just singing with visceral joy to God.” The woman’s act of worship led to McNulty’s returning to photograph “joy” on various occasions at the church over the next several weeks. McNulty then took her camera and her love for people and began to photograph outside of Trinity at a range of churches representing diverse denominations and cultures throughout all five boroughs.

To McNulty, the key to her project was relationships.

“I tend to photograph people I know—some I know intimately, others I know only through shared experiences,” notes McNulty. “People let me and my camera into very personal and sacred places—their relationship with God—

because they trust me.” McNulty believes that trust allows her to photograph individuals not as an outsider, but as an insider who cares to share in the experience and “to celebrate the peace and joy and hope that comes from a relationship with Jesus.”

And with *Lifted Up in New York City*, viewers are invited to move from merely looking at Christianity to looking into the life-giving heart of Christian worship.

View pictures from “*Lifted Up in New York City*” as well as McNulty’s other projects at her website: www.laniemcnulty.com.

By Brandon Michael Duck, Columbia SEAS, '10