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## MAPW Alumni Profile: Chris Martin

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# Chris Martin



Christopher Martin  
photo-Kelly Ozmer Worms

Chris Martin ('13) also directs an organization affiliated with an existing fine arts center. [SHORE: Acworth's Creative Reading Series](#) is a monthly event he started this past year under the auspices of the [Acworth Cultural Arts Center \(ACAC\)](#), a fairly new nonprofit. Chris serves on the ACAC's board, where he is primarily responsible for literary initiatives and outreach, and SHORE is its banner literary event. The reading series is held in the Main Street Gallery in Acworth.

"It's a great space for a reading series," said Chris. "There are a couple restaurants and bars within a very short walking distance, so you can bring food and drinks in if you want, and we also provide a modest selection of drinks and light food at each event. It's an intimate and lovely setting, given the rotating gallery art, but also very casual. I like to think of it as a literary refuge and gathering place of sorts, and it's largely been that." The reading series is also unique in that it combines an open mic reading with readings by three featured authors each event. "And we're not focused on poetry alone. We've featured plenty of poets, of course, but we've also featured novelists of multiple genres, spoken word artists, playwrights, screenwriters, essayists, memoirists, satirists, and so on."

The name of the organization, Chris admits, is "a little tongue in cheek." It refers to the fact that Acworth is called "Lake City," and is a short walk from the shores Lakes Acworth and Allatoona. Also, the name refers to Chris's mission. "Acworth isn't exactly known as an arts haven, and I'm trying to change that, as are so many others. "Shore" can also mean "a prop to prevent

sinking," and the verb form of "shore" means "to support," which is exactly what we're trying to do with this series—to support literary artists and a sense of literary community."

## Q&A

### **Do you have any special stories to share about your MAPW experience?**

As far as challenges go—maybe unusual, maybe not—I was a full-time stay-at-home parent while in the program, which is to say that what made the program challenging for me is also what enabled me to be part of it. My son was born in December 2009, I started the program in August 2010, and my daughter was born in September 2011. I had to take a semester off in 2012 to focus completely on my kids and not deplete the reserves I'd need for a strong finish, but I made it.

As far as successes go, my first poetry chapbook was published while I was in the program, as were several individual essays and poems here and there. Two chapbooks closely followed my completion of the program, one of which was a collaboration with David King resulting from our independent study. Perhaps the biggest MAPW successes were being named the Outstanding Graduate Student of the Year for the program and winner of the Robert W. Hill Award, both of which meant a great deal to me.

### **Tell us about your writing projects, either those you pursue independently or those you pursue as a part of your job**

I've kept one foot in that stay-at-home dad role—my son is in elementary school now, but my daughter is still in half-day pre-k—and one foot in the role of part-time English instructor. I've been teaching English as an adjunct at Georgia Highlands College since 2014 and I'm thrilled to say that I'll be returning to KSU to teach having just accepted a part-time English instructor position here.

I just won the Will D. Campbell Award in Creative Nonfiction for my book *This Gladdening Light: An Ecology of Fatherhood and Faith*, which will be out next year with [Mercer University Press](#). This will be my creative nonfiction book debut and my full-length book debut of any genre. There are pieces from all my MAPW classes in the book. My most recent poem publication is "At Paradise Garden," featured in the current issue of *Thrush Poetry Journal*, and two pieces of satire, one in [McSweeney's](#) (a white whale for me), and another in [Atlanta Banana](#).

### **What advice would you offer to current or prospective MAPW students?**

Trail your obsessions. Slow down if you need to. Think of the program as a community. Use your time in the program to start putting your CV together so you won't have to build it from scratch later. If you're a creative writer, don't write just to satisfy a given assignment—well, you might have to do that every once in a while, but don't make it your general approach. Try not to look at the concentrations—creative, comp/rhet, applied—as mutually exclusive. Seek publication. Actively participate in various literary communities—local, regional, national, even global. If you're planning to teach afterward, at any level, go heavy on the comp/rhet, develop your teaching philosophy, and get some teaching experience if you can.

### **More about me**

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Information on my three poetry chapbooks](#)

[Interview in the current issue of Poecology](#)

# Resources for Writers

Below you will find the links to different sites where you can obtain more information about the MAPW, obtain help with your writing on campus, and also learn about writers' organizations outside of campus.

[MAPW Website](#)

[MAPW Facebook](#)

[MAPW YouTube](#)

[KSU Writing Center](#)

[Georgia Writers Association](#)

[Atlanta Writers Club](#)

[KSU English Department-Resources](#)

(The Spring 2017 issue of the *English Broadside* will be featured under this link)