

PRES HOUSE

SHARING CHRIST'S LOVE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON SINCE 1907

Fall 2004

LETTER FROM THE CAMPUS PASTOR

Mark Elsdon

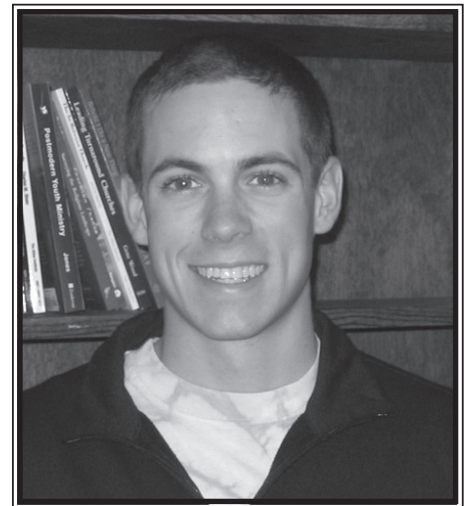
Winter is just around the corner. As this will be my first snowy season living in Madison, I watch the falling of leaves and mercury with trepidation mixed with a bit of excitement. Winter storms make work, shopping and leisure more difficult. Life is disrupted. Disruptions are not, however, always negative. A quiet afternoon by a fire with a cup of hot chocolate takes the place of work and hurry.

College can be like a winter storm for many students. University of Wisconsin-Madison students, like a young woman I recently had coffee with, find themselves asking, "Who am I?" They meet hundreds of new people and struggle to find a place where they are known. In class and in resident halls they are confronted by an endless number of ideas that

challenge the beliefs that they held when they first arrived at UW. Many students who come to college as Christians find their faith tried to the breaking point. Others take the opportunity to explore faith anew or for the first time. Like a winter storm this is always a disruption.

The gospel of Matthew tells the story of Jesus' disciples being disrupted by a storm. The disciples are out on a boat on the sea when the wind picks up and the waves begin to roll. Suddenly they see Jesus walking toward them on the water! He tells them not to be afraid. But instead of immediately calming the storm, Jesus empowers Peter to get out of the boat and join him on the water. Peter leaves behind what has always held him up on the sea and does something miraculous, something incredible – he walks on water! The disciples' lives are disrupted by the storm. It is scary and uncomfortable, like the university

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A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Stephen Nelson

My name is Stephen Nelson, and I am a freshman intending to major in mechanical engineering. I came to the UW-Madison looking for a Presbyterian ministry, so I went to the only place on campus with "Pres" in the name.

What I have found at Pres House is a very welcoming and exciting faith community, with two enthusiastic young pastors and a growing student membership. I feel very lucky to be a part of the revitalization of the ministry at Pres House, and am overwhelmingly excited about the growth that is being planned for the near future. With your continued support we can make Pres House the spiritual home of many more students. Thank you for getting the ministry restarted. The challenge now is to continue to realize the vision God has for Pres House. ☚



Elsdon continued from page 1

experience can be. But it is also exciting and empowering. Disruptions are often good for us; they are an opportunity for growth. Peter is empowered to leave behind the old and step out in faith to join Jesus in doing something new. Pres House exists as a space, both literally and figuratively, for this to happen in the lives of university students.

Pres House is a place for students to encounter Jesus in new ways and experience miraculous healing, wholeness, and spiritual growth during the storms of their lives. It is a place where Jesus empowers students to do incredible things in spite of and in the midst of the waves and wind pushing against them. Pres House is a refuge from anxiety, depression, uncertainty, and fear. Our mission is not to help people avoid those things or even just survive them, but to make it possible for them to encounter Christ walking on water to meet them.

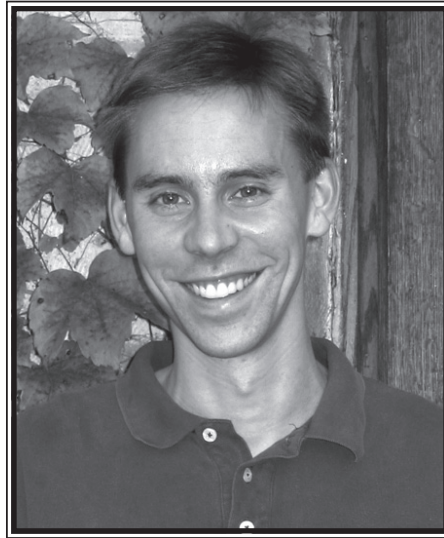
As Pres House engages in this ministry we, too, will look around and falter as we see the winds of history and the waves of new beginnings rise up to challenge us, but I believe that Jesus will reach out his hand and take hold of us. And by the grace of God may we all, like the disciples, see Jesus anew and exclaim in joy, "Truly you are the Son of God!"

Grace and peace,



MEET THE NEW PRES HOUSE STAFF

MARK ELSDON
CAMPUS PASTOR



I grew up outside of Chicago, lived in Atlanta for a few years and moved to California just before finishing high school. My parents are emigrants from England. Because of my exposure to various people around the country, the influence of immigrant parents, and being in an inter-racial marriage, I appreciate diversity in people and perspectives. After obtaining a B.A. in psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, I worked as the Ministry Associate in the World Missions Department at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church. God confirmed my call to ministry and led me to Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey to pursue a

Masters of Divinity degree. This past year Erica and I served as the English Ministry coordinators at Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church. I recently graduated from Princeton Seminary, was ordained this past September, and I am excited to have been called to Pres House as the campus pastor.

My passion is to be a part of God's work in the lives of people of all ages. I believe that God loves each and every person and desires him or her to experience that love and share it with others through words and actions. I am excited to minister on a university campus where students have the opportunity to explore new ideas, reflect on their faith and consider how God can use them to bring light and love into our world.

I enjoy many hobbies, some of which include bicycling, jogging, hiking, and editing home videos. I love to spend time playing with my baby daughter, Emma, and going out with my wife. I am pleased to make Madison my new home and look forward to exploring Wisconsin.

ERICA LIU ELSDON
PROGRAM DIRECTOR



For most of my life I have lived in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. My parents are emigrants from Taiwan, and after my father finished his education, they settled

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Pres House is a ministry of the Presbyterian Church, USA, and is operated by the Presbyterian Student Center Foundation.

down in Silicon Valley. It was during my college years at Berkeley that I became a Christian and felt the call to ministry. Upon graduating, I also began working at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church as an intern in the Student Ministries Department.

I am currently finishing up my last semester in the Master of Divinity degree program at Princeton Theological Seminary, and hope to be ordained in the fall of 2005.

I am thrilled about the call to Pres House, in particular because of my own experiences during college. My passion is to see lives transformed by the Gospel, bringing healing, redemption, and reconciliation between people and God. Some of my interests are multi-cultural ministry and justice issues.

Recently I have become a mother to Emma Tai-Ying, born this past January. In my spare time I enjoy reading, swimming, and being with family and friends. I am excited to plant new roots in Madison and look forward to seeing how God will be at work at Pres House!

**ELISABETH PLATT
OPERATIONS MANAGER**



I came to Madison four years ago from Michigan when my husband began his graduate studies in history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I grew up in Grand Rapids,

Michigan, and moved to the east side of the state for college and graduate school.

I studied psychology and religion at Spring Arbor University and then went on to the University of Michigan for my Master's in Social Work. At grad school my focus was non-profit management. For my first four years in Madison I worked at Saint Benedict Center as their volunteer coordinator and event planner.

In my freetime I enjoy reading classic novels (especially Jane Austen and William Faulkner), traveling and spending time with friends and family.

I am very happy to serve as Operations Manager at Pres House. I enjoy working with all of the groups that use this place to do important work on the University campus. I look forward to seeing where God is taking Pres House and am thrilled to be a part of it all.

**DAVE OLSON
RESIDENT MANAGER**



Hailing from Minneapolis, MN, I moved to Madison this summer to be a part of an outreach ministry to the alternative subcultures on the UW-Madison Campus. My background is in inner city ministries and working in churches. I come to Pres House with a ministry mindset and a desire to be a part of a community of believers surrounding the campus area. With my background in church development and my award-winning personality, I feel as though I belong at Pres House. ☚

A Note from the Board

As the articles in this newsletter indicate, the past year at Pres House has been a busy one. Mark and Erica Elsdon arrived at the beginning of the fall semester and are building relationships with students on the UW-Madison campus as they help these young adults explore issues of Christian faith.

We have met people who speak glowingly of their time at Pres House where they were students at the university—of exploring issues of faith when they sought answers, of wrestling with contemporary issues of the day, and of learning what it meant to follow Jesus Christ. We're eager to see a new generation of students involved in a vibrant ministry at Pres House.

Pres House continues to house a number of faith-based religious organizations and to rent space for a variety of functions, including weddings. With the help of our new staff, we are especially looking forward to reaching out to students interested in all the activities being planned.

Besides anticipating renewed student programs at Pres House, we are in the planning stages of an exciting brick and mortar project—constructing student housing on the land behind our current building and adding space for activities there that are consistent with our mission.

Partner with Pres House

We need God's help and yours—both your prayers and your financial support. We are grateful for your past prayers and monetary gifts; please consider contributing to this important student ministry. Send your contributions to Pres House at 731 State Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703. All gifts are tax deductible.



PRES HOUSE

PRES HOUSE WITNESSES TO JESUS CHRIST AT THE HEART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON CAMPUS, SERVING THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY AS A MISSION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA AND IN COOPERATION WITH OTHER MINISTRIES.

WATCH FOR INFORMATION ABOUT AN UPCOMING PRES HOUSE EVENT IN SPRING 2005.

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