



VOICE

A HOME AT THE HEART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON SINCE 1907 | FALL 2012



PRES HOUSE: A WELCOMING HOME TO NEW STUDENTS

by Erin Stumbras

As a sophomore in college, my roommates and I decided to live in the Pres House Apartments for no other reason than the location was unbeatable. Well that was honest, wasn't it? On a similar note of flat out honesty, I was about 6 for 48 on my Sunday church attendance record for the entire year before making the move to the apartment complex. You see, I grew up with a sense religion was more of an imposition than a choice. Church just did not resonate with me, and it was not until quite recently that I realized God might want me to do something about that.

This past March, I stumbled across a flyer in the Pres House Apartment elevator that was promoting a spring break trip, called "Break With a Purpose," to Joplin, Missouri. The trip was geared towards relief efforts in response to the devastating tornado that ripped through the city just one year prior. Eager to avoid the all-too-traditional Florida-bound spring break trips that I could only presume my roommates would eagerly suggest, I naively signed up to go. Two trenches, twenty coats of drywall, myriad small group discussions, and memories later, (one of which did include a pretty intense game of Scattegories), and you could say I was a little more than interested in what Pres House was all about.

Reflecting on the week in Joplin, I can now pinpoint the moment when I realized that I wanted my involvement with Pres House to be more than a week-long stint. This moment, albeit four days into the trip, came when I was dumbfounded to find out that every single person on the trip had

known each other before departing from Madison. It took four whole days to realize that I was one of two newcomers in a group of what I thought to be a semi-random mesh of students looking to do something meaningful for a week. This realization, in itself, attests to how accepting the community here at Pre House—from those who work here to those who worship here—truly is. Not once did I feel like an outsider, and not once were my beliefs belittled because I was new to the community. As a

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testament to how remarkably receptive this campus-based ministry is, I can easily say that this community-centered approach that Pres House promotes both instigated my interest in Pres House and keeps me coming back for more.

Pres House not only offers an opportunity to discover one's faith, but to challenge it. In a welcoming environment where opinions are valued, the uncertainties I feel in regards to my own faith have become less intimidating. My faith journey has transformed from being a superimposed religious code I felt compelled to adopt, into a sense of comfort and security when realizing that faith is neither a task nor an excuse, but a process that becomes all the easier with a community of support to help you along the way. ✝

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Seeking Committed Board Members

Are you committed to campus ministry at UW-Madison and interested in sharing your time, energy, and talents by serving on the Pres House board? Do you know someone in your church or network who might make a good member of the Pres House board? Contact Executive Director, Mark Elsdon at 608-257-1030 or mark@preshouse.org.

GOING THE DISTANCE

by Alex Kuehn

This fall a group of students and I, ran the Chicago Marathon. Our team was running with an organization called Team World Vision. And we weren't just running the marathon for ourselves. We were dedicating our race to helping raise money for World Vision's clean water projects in Africa.

One in six people in the world don't have access to clean water. Without clean water, people can't farm or raise cattle to provide for themselves, and women and children must spend time looking for water instead of caring for their families or going to school.

What's more disturbing is that more than 6,000 children die each day from preventable diseases caused by unsafe water and the lack of basic sanitation facilities.

But it's a problem we can fix. Our team raised \$10,655 . . . enough money to provide clean water for about 213 people for their entire life. All together, all the runners who ran for Team World Vision, about 1,600 of us, raised \$1.6 million to help provide clean water in countries like Kenya and South Sudan. And runners are running other marathons and still raising money for this important cause.

As a team, we want to thank you for your support over the last six months. I want to thank especially Mark and Erica for being open to new ideas. And I want to thank the team for being crazy enough and passionate enough to join me in this feat. And we want to thank those who gave money, who gave encouragement, and who gave support. We couldn't have done it without you.

I have been asked by a lot of people to describe what the actual race was like. And it's so hard to describe. But I think the Team World Vision National Director, Michael Chitwood, really summed it up well in a blog post he wrote. He describes a feeling that many of us got near the end of the race when we were tired and worn out, but still going. He calls the feeling "runmotional."

The first few miles go so fast. You feel so good. You can't believe how good you feel. How easy this feels. You couldn't be happier. Fans scream your name because it's written on your shirt. Some know exactly what it took for you to get here. Some have no idea.

By the midway point you are starting to feel the miles take their toll. But you've been here before. You've gone this far in training. This part doesn't scare you much.

As you pass mile eighteen you realize that mile twenty is coming. Past that is no man's land, the unknown. You begin wondering if the training plan was good enough. The farthest it took you was twenty miles. Everyone kept saying that was enough, that twenty miles was all you needed to train to. It didn't make sense. But what did you know? So you trusted them.

You pass the sign with two—zero on it. You're in deep now. The only way to the finish is to keep moving until you get there.

Somewhere in this space is where it happens. For some it's sooner. For some, later. But for most, this is the place where you feel it fully for the first time.

It starts in your soul and reaches deep into your gut. You might need to walk for a minute. You can't figure out what is going on. A rush of emotions comes over you, but you can't separate all of the feelings from one another. The first tear falls from your face to the street beneath you, the street that has just beat your body for the past few hours, and you ask yourself, "Why am I crying?"

The answer is complicated. It's tough to explain. You're crying for so many reasons. You're crying because of all the fear you walked through, just to take that first step, and all the fear that followed. You're crying because this was so much harder than you thought it would be, and so much better. You're crying because if you can do this, maybe there are a lot of other things you can do too. Things you're afraid of. You're crying, because everything has changed, even if you aren't exactly sure how or why. You're crying because you didn't just do this for yourself; you did it for a child on the other side of the world. A child who walks for hours everyday in search of water; water that is likely to make them sick, and because of you, they won't have to walk for water anymore. You're crying because you'll never be the same again. ❀



AMERICAN SONG BOOK

YOUR NOT-SO-TYPICAL ORGAN RECITAL

This past summer I embarked on a wonderful journey. I wanted to present a program that allowed some of the more non-organ “voices” of the wonderful Pres House organ to be on display. What a fun way to celebrate our independence as a nation. This recital featured works generally not heard on the organ, but with all the sounds and “voices” available it made for an entertaining evening. There were three criteria I used in selecting music: #1 the work had to be composed by an American composer, #2 it had to lend itself to unique sounds of the Pres House organ, #3 it had to be fun!

The evening kicked off with a rousing rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner” which used the original pipe work. From there we branched off into “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” complete with Wurlitzer wobble! (That’s what I call the immense tremulant of a Wurlitzer theater organ). From there we moved into “The Washington Post” march by J. Phillip Sousa. Who knew we

had a whole marching band! The evening progressed with appearances by many other non-organ sounds and great fun was had by all. Of course, what good is music at Pres House without great food, HAA HAA! For me the evening climaxed with an amazing spread of treats and refreshments organized by Mynda coupled with tons of chatting and hanging out. It was great to see Pridham Lounge filled with people smiling and chatting. It was such a blessing to see Pres House provide an evening of wholesome fun for not just students who worship here but the greater community as well.

I’ve been asked several times when the next recital will be, but I haven’t set a date yet. I guess I better get going on the next one. You’ll probably not want to miss out. I’ll be sure to give plenty of warning.

Thank you all so much for your ongoing support of Pres House. ❀

by Michael W. Hillestad



An early Christmas Gift Arrives at Pres House!

A deep heartfelt thank you to the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Prairie Du Sac for the gracious and generous gift of a Yamaha studio piano. This beautiful piano has replaced the aged piano in Pridham lounge and will get used very often. Thank you for helping Pres House continue to be a place where UW students want to grow in faith.

LILLY ENDOWMENT FUNDS VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT PROGRAM

We are thrilled to announce the creation of a major new program at Pres House called: “Soul-Work: Nurturing Christian Vocation in College Students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison” This program will be funded by a five-year, \$98,000 grant awarded by the Lilly Endowment.

This program offers opportunities for students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison to explore and appreciate how religious tradition, faith commitment and values can inform life choices, especially as related to career aspirations and plans. We seek to make public university students aware of faith-related career opportunities they might not have considered otherwise, and to facilitate intentional exploration and reflection upon such opportunities in an open and supportive environment. The core of this initiative will be a new Vocational Internship Program (VIP) that provides a year-long opportunity for up to 27 students over a period of five years to conduct an in-depth exploration of vocation in ministry through internships at local churches and faith-based organizations while living together in the Pres

House Apartments. Pres House will work with local churches and faith-based non-profits to establish internship sites, program expectations and an on-site mentor/supervisor. Pres House will provide opportunities for reflection and conversation about how internship experiences have provided participants insight into their gifts, created new experiences in hearing and responding to God’s call, presented challenges and obstacles, and ultimately enriched their faith and the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Funding for the program is made possible in large part by a grant that the Lilly Endowment has awarded to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies specifically for this project at Pres House. We look forward to providing updates on the impact this program is having on the lives of young people and in the larger church during the years to come. ❀



SPREADING THE NEWS ABOUT PRES HOUSE

One of the Pres House student leaders was out on campus wearing a shirt with the Pres House logo printed on it. He was approached by a new student he had never met who asked, "Are you a part of Pres House? I've seen stuff about Pres House all over the place. What happens there?"

In late September, a Board member was walking by Pres House and overheard two students talking to each other. As they passed in front of the Pres House Apartments, one of the students said to the other, "Dude, seriously, this is the best place on campus to live!"

Both of these incidents happened in the past two months. And rather than being unusual, they are becoming the norm around campus. Students know about Pres House.

After a pause in active ministry in the early 2000s, awareness about Pres House

had declined on campus; but in recent years this has changed. More and more students know that they will find a unique and amazing place to live in the Pres House Apartments and a warm, vibrant, and welcoming worshipping community in the Pres House Chapel.

A lot of work goes into increasing this awareness on campus. Each fall students plan and organize a series of welcome events to kick off the new school year. One such event this year was our second annual "Frunch" (Freshmen Lunch) event. Pres House student leaders went out late at night to "chalk" invitations on the sidewalks around campus and in front of dorms. Postcards were mailed to the homes of all incoming freshmen and an email was sent out to invite them to the event as well. It worked! More than 250 freshmen attended "Frunch" where they were welcomed by Pres House members, learned about opportunities to get involved, and enjoyed getting to know others over lunch.

Word of mouth is the best marketing for the Pres House Apartments which are 100% full for the third year in a row and already more than two-thirds full for the 2013-14 academic year. Almost half of the spaces in the building filled up on one day in early October! We aim to provide the best living experience on campus by offering clean, comfortable, well-maintained facilities combined with excellent service and unique programs that encourage intellectual, spiritual, and emotional growth. As our board member observed and our occupancy confirms, students agree that Pres House Apartments are a great place to live. And they are telling their friends.

You can help us spread the word further. Do you know a UW-Madison student? Is anyone from your church coming to the campus next year? Do you have a friend in the dorm looking for a good place to live or a welcoming place to worship? Tell them about Pres House! Let's keep sharing the story until everyone on campus knows that we are here. ✝

"Dude, seriously, this is the best place on campus to live!"



PRES HOUSE APARTMENTS

LIVING AT THE HEART OF CAMPUS

by Ginger Morgan

Two hundred and sixty five UW–Madison students call Pres House Apartments home. In some cases, they come to PH Apartments with friends and share an apartment. In other cases students sign individual leases and agree to live with students they may never have met before. No matter their circumstance or background, Pres House is committed to providing a home at the heart of campus that supports students' physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual well-being. As part of that mission, we promote four values within the residential community: academic success, personal responsibility, community, and spiritual exploration. Those values are translated into different programs and activities for residents designed to enhance living.

The 2012–2013 year began in mid-August. Our property management team used that window of time to ready the building: cleaning, repairing, painting, and replacing worn or stained carpet. Move-in day was busy, replete with laundry carts loaded with boxes and elevators running steadily from 11:00 a.m. well into the evening! I welcomed new residents and their friends and family members to PH Apartments. The coffee, lemonade and snack table saw lots of traffic, as did the pizza table at dinner time! One new resident commented, "This is so different from where I lived last year. We never did things together. I never even met the people who lived on my floor. Everyone here is so friendly, and they talk to each other in the elevator!"

The community came together the week before the start of classes when about 40 residents attended a Dinner and a Movie, munching on lasagna and watching "Hunger Games". The start of classes on September 4 also corresponded with the (now annual) Welcome Raffle and Ice Cream Sundae Party for residents. In addition to meeting many of their neighbors, 140 students vied for various "housewarming" prizes, including the coveted UW Yard Gnome! Since that initial gathering, 70–75 residents gather for a community Drop-In Dinner on the third Thursday of each month in our first floor community room.



In addition to the community-wide events, more than 20 students in the apartments participate in one of our intentional living groups: the Apartment Fellowship Group, the Veterans Community, or the Food for Thought Micro-Community. Each group has committed to meeting or doing activities together at least a monthly basis, organized and designed around interests specific to each group. Whether it is the Food for Thought Community inviting residents to walk down to the Capitol Square Farmer's Market; the Fellowship group joining with residents of the retirement community at Capitol Lakes to do activities; or the vets serving up ice cream sundaes to their neighbors—there is palpable excitement about the things that can happen when students live together at the heart of campus! ✚



Ginger Morgan joined the Pres House staff in July of 2012 as the first Director of Residential Community at Pres House Apartments. During her career she has served both as a chaplain and as a college administrator, developing expertise in mental health, spiritual care, and college student development. Ginger holds a PhD in Religious Studies from Denver University & Iliff School of Theology. She is often invited to speak with students and their parents about navigating the transition from high school to college. She enjoys good books, gardening, playing board games with her children, and more recently learning to cook for 70! She is an active member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker), and attends the Madison Friends Meeting.

THE VALUE OF CHURCH MEALS

by: Alicia Powers

I am a graduate student who has been attending Pres House for the past five years. During this time, many things have changed at Pres House, including a growing congregation and increasing student leadership. One thing that has stayed the same during that time, however, are the weekly meals that churches bring for us following worship. I would like to thank all the churches that brought meals, and I want to share with you some of the reasons that I, as a student, am thankful for their involvement with Pres House.



First of all, the meals provide a chance for fellowship and to get to know other people at Pres House. As I think about Sunday meals, my first Sunday at Pres House comes to mind. I was sitting at a table with Tracy, who was the chaplain intern, as well as several other Pres House members who I soon got to know well. While the food



initiated our conversation, we lingered long past when we had finished eating. At this meal, I began to learn what Pres House was about and felt that maybe I could belong here. As the community at Pres House has grown, Sunday worship and dinner are one of the few times when the whole community comes together. The meals have been essential in helping me meet new people and keep up with people who may be involved in different activities than me a particular semester.

Second, the meals provide a chance for me to know that I am cared about. Each week, friendly faces greet us as church members so willingly make sure the cheese does not run out or that the tortillas are still warm. College can be a lot of pressure. It is refreshing to know that, at least for an hour or so while we eat dinner, we don't have to be successful in our classes. We are welcomed just as we are to come and be fed. It's a great reminder that Jesus also welcomes us just as we are to be spiritually fed by Him. Even if I am having a bad day, it's reassuring to know that I am always welcome at the meal and it helps assure me that things will be okay.

Third, the meals help me retain awareness of churches outside of campus ministry. As a graduate student, I am in Madison year round, so I rarely make it back to the church I grew up in. Because of the meals, I regularly hear the names of churches in the area and have visited several of these churches. As I think about the completion of my degree and finding a church home outside of campus ministry, it is helpful to know that my church experiences over the past five years have not been isolated only to campus ministry.

Fourth, the meals remind me of the need to serve others. Receiving a meal from somebody is a very visible way of being served, and it has been a huge blessing to me. Likewise, it has encouraged me to look for ways to serve so that I also can be a blessing to people.

Finally, I want to conclude by saying thank you again, from me and from all the students at Pres House. Without the meals churches provide, we would lose a vital part of what makes Pres House special. ✝

RESTING IN OUR ROOTS

by Mark and Erica

After almost eight years of service at Pres House, during which we have experienced an extraordinary amount of change both in our ministry and in our personal lives, we were grateful for the opportunity to step back and rest. Campus ministry is a constantly moving organism, as students matriculate and graduate. Add to that the transformation that Pres House has undergone, and we were ready to slow things down and get back to our roots.

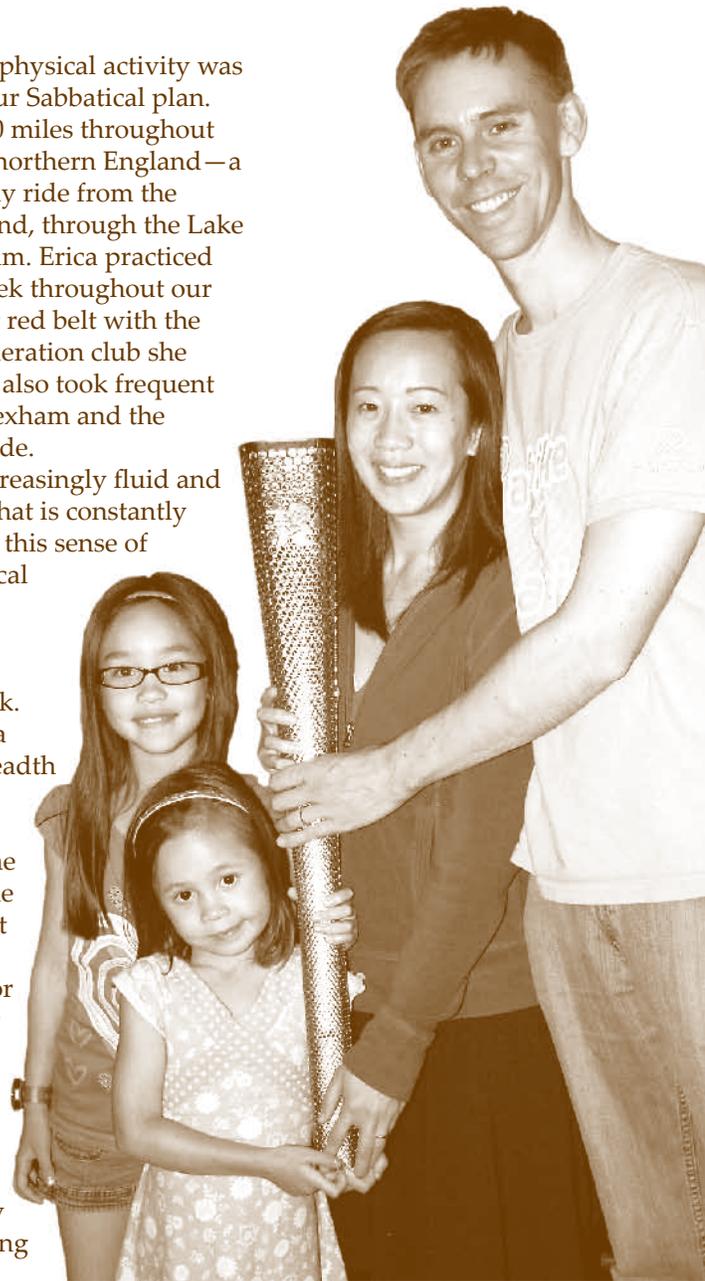
We spent three months living in Hexham, England where we exchanged homes with a retired couple who lived in our home in Madison. Our Sabbatical theme was “Resting in our Roots,” and we set out to do that in three particular ways: first, by reconnecting with Mark’s side of the family that still lives in the United Kingdom; second, by learning about St. Cuthbert, the patron saint of northern England; and third, by re-engaging in physical practices that have provided us with restoration in the past.

Over the course of our stay, we were able to visit regularly with Mark’s grandmothers who live in Newcastle, the largest city in northeastern England. Our daughters were able to ask them questions about their own childhood, and we were able to record their memories from the past (one is 101 years old, the other 94!). We also had the chance to visit Mark’s relatives in Scotland and the village of Elsdon which is nestled in the Northumbrian Hills.

In Hexham, the town we lived in for three months, we participated in the life of the local Anglican Church, Hexham Abbey which dates back to 674 A.D. We learned the art of “bell ringing” which is much more difficult than it seems and has a long history (the tower bells in the Abbey are older than the U.S. Constitution)! Through visits to historic and holy sites like Lindisfarne and Durham, and reading about St. Cuthbert and other early medieval saints, we learned a great deal about the rich history of Christianity in Great Britain. We also took a trip to St. Giles Cathedral, the mother church of Presbyterianism, in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Engaging in regular physical activity was an important part of our Sabbatical plan. Mark cycled over 1,000 miles throughout Northumberland and northern England—a highlight was a two day ride from the western coast of England, through the Lake District, back to Hexham. Erica practiced taekwondo twice a week throughout our time and tested for her red belt with the World Taekwondo Federation club she was training with. She also took frequent long walks through Hexham and the surrounding countryside.

In a world that is increasingly fluid and in a place of ministry that is constantly moving and changing, this sense of rootedness and historical connection provided a grounding that fed our souls and gave us perspective in our work. We were reminded in a tangible way of the breadth and depth of God’s presence and work in the world that has come before us and will come after us no matter what daily challenges we face. We are grateful for the wonderful support from the Pres House community, as well as for the generous grant from the Louisville Institute that made our Sabbatical not only possible, but a refreshing experience. ✚



The Elsdon family holding an Olympic Torch.

Pres House seeks to be a spiritual home at the heart of the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus. In keeping with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition of hospitality, Pres House is dedicated to providing a religious center and high quality student housing to promote the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth of residents and members of the campus community. Pres House is a ministry of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., and welcomes individuals of every perspective and background.



**Support
Pres House**

Throughout this newsletter you have read about the exciting activities happening at Pres House. Ministry at Pres House is only possible through generous donations from alumni, friends, and churches.

Please give today by using the enclosed envelope or send your contributions to Pres House at 731 State Street, Madison, WI 53703. You can also give online at www.preshouse.org/donate.



This October, the Pres House worship community joined with Pres House Apartments to throw a Halloween Bash replete with pumpkin carving at Pres House Apartments and caramel apples and other treats at Pres House Lounge. Students travelled between the two venues through the (appropriately decorated) basement passageway connecting the two buildings, arriving chapel side to the swell of spooky, haunting organ music.

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