



VOICE

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

SPRING 2018

GREAT REASONS TO STAY

BY MITCH DORN

Scholars Participant
2016-17/CEO Participant 2017-18



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“ Living in Pres House has been a great experience for a number of reasons. The community is full of life and welcomes new residents wholeheartedly. Motivation to better yourself and work hard to achieve your goals is found easily, but living here has been even more than that. What sets Pres House apart from your standard landlord is they make an effort to give back to their residents. From community dinners, Scholars programs, and apartment events, they put forth an effort unheard of anywhere else. Being a student can be stressful, but living at Pres House makes everything a little bit easier.

I personally have been a part of two different scholarship programs in my two years living at PH. They have been the highlight of my experience. The programs have offered me a way to give back to the community, PH and Madison residents both, and have greatly helped to reduce my rent. Credited to these programs, I have saved more than \$1,800, and I've thoroughly enjoyed the programs. I recommend living at PH to anyone. For fair rent, residents are rewarded with a very nice apartment to live in, an even better living community, and an opportunity to be a part of some great programs.

Twelve students and young professionals from Pres House went to Denham Springs, Louisiana over winter break to provide relief to flood victims. The damage happened a year and a half ago, and the community has all but been forgotten. However, going with the theme of the week, "Hope is Born," I saw a lot of hope being kindled during our short week on the work site. We broke into two groups while we were there, and while the other group did amazing work moving a several-ton ramp for a couple who had mobility issues after their relief trailer was taken away, my story about our trip comes from the work site I was on, with an eighty-year-old lady called Mawmaw.

When the flood happened, the water was just under the floorboards of Mawmaw's raised house, so she had thought she'd escaped damage and didn't get any repairs. But while the water never made it into her rooms, both it and termites ruined the support beams (which Claire taught me are called joists), so the floors bounced when you walked on them. In one room, there was a giant hole in the floor with nothing between a four-foot drop and Mawmaw except a dingy old carpet. So, our group ripped up the floors, redid the foundation, insulated and put in subfloor, and put in new laminate. The floors no longer bounced.

I don't think most of my crew was able to see this, but once we'd finished two of the rooms (minus trim), we gave Mawmaw a tour. Each room was kind of at a different stage of the process, so we were able to show her what we were all doing and how it looked before. But the coolest moment was when our crew leader walked into the finished room, showed Mawmaw her new floors, and told her there wouldn't be a bounce anymore. She did the cutest little jump, she's 80 like I said, so it was more like she stood up straight for a second and slouched back over, but she had the biggest smile. Even though her house still had a long way to go, I saw hope in her face, and that gave me hope for the future of the surrounding community.

I also saw hope in her giving attitude. Even though Mawmaw had an unstable house and lived in a dangerous neighborhood, she brought us snacks and offered to make coffee and hot chocolate almost every day. And at the end of the week, she told us she had a whole new set of grandchildren.

So even though we were only able to stay and help Mawmaw for a short week, I have a whole lot of hope for the future of her house and the community at large. When everyone gives what they can, hope is born, and it can change everything. ♣

HOPE IS BORN

A Story from the Pres House Winter Break with a Purpose

BY TAYA BRIGGS

Freshman



MORE THAN A PROTEST

Nonviolence Training

BY KATIE MOE

Pres House hosted nonviolence training workshops in March led by facilitators from Eastpoint Peace Academy out of Oakland, CA. Rooted in Kingian nonviolence philosophy, these workshops helped community leaders and students think about how to effectively, and peacefully, work for change. Student Katie Moe shares some reflections from the day here.

I decided to sign up for the “More Than a Protest” workshop thinking I would learn nonviolent methods of communication meant exclusively for day-to-day life -- for example, how I could talk about social justice with my family at Thanksgiving. Instead, the workshop took a more macro focus as we discussed how to achieve social justice through effective organizing. All of the methods to gain others’ support focused on the ability to find a shared goal or something to agree on.

I believe it’s really easy to focus on what makes us different from each other and work only with our “active allies.” The workshop challenged us to do the much harder work of recognizing what makes us similar and of building allies instead of isolating opponents. I think in this strategy we are really challenged to love all of our neighbors, including the ones we disagree with.

At the nonviolence training, we discussed how churches and religious organizations often remain “unorganized sectors” in social movements. I’ve personally found that I’m often met with surprise when people learn that I both go to church and have a passion for social justice. A lot of my social justice-oriented friends have articulated the need to reject religion on the belief that it correlates with exclusion and conservative values. A lot of folks I’ve met in the Christian community in Madison have likewise maintained an extremely passive view on social justice, trying to exemplify the separation of church and state. But I have always felt like Jesus’ call for us to love our neighbor directly translates to fighting for the rights of our marginalized neighbors, and I’ve been really thankful to find that that view is shared here at Pres House. ♣



RACE AND FAITH 2018

For the third year, Pres House collaborated with other campus organizations to engage the community on the topic of “Race and Faith.” People were invited to interact with UW freshman artist Claire Embil and her provocative images through their own words and drawings. Local digital artist Kara Gacovino created the [Race and Faith 2018 film](#) which synthesizes the interviews, artwork, poetry, reflections, and reactions to Claire’s artwork that address the intersection of race and faith in the UW-Madison community. This multi-evening event gathered community members from multiple faith and race backgrounds together in a hopeful witness of loving our neighbors. ♣



GATHERX

Young Professional Ministry in Madison Update

Work is well under way for GatherX, the new young professional ministry that is being launched by Pres House and local Presbyterian congregations. A search has commenced for new staff to lead this exciting effort. Check out the website, www.gatherx.org, for all the latest developments! ♣



REFLECTIONS FROM A GRADUATING STUDENT

SASKIA VAN RIESSEN

Every year we say goodbye to students as they graduate and move from UW-Madison and Pres House. It is bittersweet as we will miss the people who have been such an integral part of the community here, but we send them off with God's blessings and high hopes for their future. In this piece, Saskia Van Riessen reflects on what Pres House has meant to her during her four years at UW-Madison.

I was baptized as a baby by my grandpa, a former Presbyterian minister, and growing up, I can't remember a time when I wasn't involved in church. For me, this meant a large, very traditional, Presbyterian church in downtown Minneapolis, where I attended Sunday school and worship almost every week.

Looking back, I didn't question any of it: I just did it. However, I didn't feel much of a connection to God and I struggled to find my place in the church, even in positions of leadership. I recited the Christian beliefs when prompted to in church, but I didn't really understand them or how they related to my life. So why did I go for so many years? For one, my mom expected me to. As a Presbyterian minister's daughter, being involved in the church had always been the norm for her, and she wanted me to have a relationship with God. But I also loved the people. I looked forward to engaging with teenagers my age and other church members who knew me well. It's safe to say that I enjoyed the time before and after worship more than the service itself, and I knew that what I would miss most when I left for college was the sense of community that faith brought me.



However, before leaving for my first year at the University of Wisconsin, a Badger alum and youth leader at my home church told me that if I was looking for a faith home in Madison, Pastors Mark and Erica at Pres House would take good care of me. So when I walked by on the first Sunday of freshman year, I smiled when I saw the sign on the outside of the church that said "Part of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A." During a time of great transition, off on my own for the first time, I was looking for a little piece of home. So I went inside.

After my first worship service here, I was in shock. I didn't have to wake up early on a Sunday morning, I could wear jeans to church, and I actually understood the lyrics of the songs. Plus, the Communion bread was really good. And maybe most importantly, sermon themes were applicable to young adults. I always found people to sit next to during worship and chat with at dinner, including the girl that had been my campus tour guide when I visited UW-Madison the year before. It just felt like I had found the right place.

Even though for the first time ever I wasn't expected to go to church, I kept coming. It didn't feel like I was going through some sort of profound faith journey, but I was. I've learned the importance of allowing yourself to be in spaces of love, and that even when you don't feel yourself growing, you often are. I was starting to find meaning in it all for the first time and to just trust in God. Philippians chapter 4, verse 9, says, "Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you." My relationship with God has become a constant even when everything around me is always changing.

I'm so glad that I decided to come into church here on that first Sunday of freshman year. Pres House has had a huge impact on my faith journey, and this space is filled with warmth and kindness. I'm so thankful for those who initially welcomed my nervous freshman self, the countless people I've gotten to know since then, and those who continue to support Pres House and help others along their faith journeys. I mentioned earlier that I was looking for a little piece of home when I wandered in here four years ago, and it's safe to say that I found what I was looking for. ♣



A LOOK BACK:

UW-Madison Graduation in 1944

The year is 1944, and “in the whole history of American Colleges and Universities, there has never been a year in which the senior class has been so unmistakably cemented by influences and conditions beyond the campus scene” (at least, according to the seniors of UW-Madison at the time). The United States has officially entered WWII, and the soon-to-be graduates are uncertain of what lies ahead but full of excitement. Memorial Union is still fairly new, and students gather there to relax following final exams in its dining rooms and ballrooms. The Union had been built as a memorial to the 11,000 university men and women who served in the last World War. With the second war well in progress, the graduating class is teeming with “engineers who will design vehicles and machines for peace and weapons and defenses for war, doctors who will fight bacilli in tropical jungles and gangrene on the bodies of wounded fighters, dietitians and nurses and chemists and mathematicians who will help us through this conflict and into the tireless reconstruction.” Many students were drafted during their time at school and were unable to finish their journey at UW-Madison.

Although war is on the graduates’ minds, the students are also thinking about their time at the university as they prepare to enter the world. Students like Bob Mather and Ruth Cannon, who were active members of Pres House, gather in the church as students for one last time and reflect on the past four years. As the 794 students of the graduating class of 1944 march in to the tune of “Pioneers of Wisconsin,” the Wisconsin Loyalty Song at the time, they look to the future with hope and determination. ♣

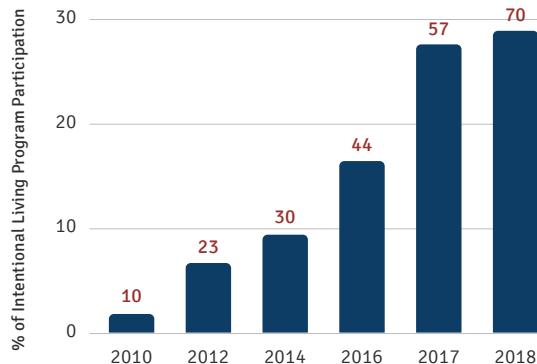


GROWTH AT PRES HOUSE APARTMENTS

Since its opening in 2007, Pres House Apartments has provided a home away from home for thousands of University of Wisconsin-Madison students. In 2009, Pres House established intentional living programs to promote opportunities for deeper engagement in a residential setting. In response to its strategic initiatives to build more robust programs at Pres House Apartments, the Board and leadership at Pres House created a full-time staff position to concentrate on residential community beginning in 2012. Now, ten years since opening and six years since Ginger Morgan's arrival as the inaugural Director of Residential Community, we have a wonderful set of accomplishments to celebrate!

Pres House Life Together was the first iteration of an intentional community at Pres House Apartments. The roots for that effort have blossomed into six different programs now available to residents of Pres House. The **Pres House Scholars** program provides residents who are coming to Pres House on individual leases to meet other residents and build a community cohort within the building. The **Micro-Community** program provides residents who share an apartment to design and pursue a shared interest or project through the leasing year. The Lilly Endowment-funded **Vocational Internship Program** gave rise to two linked programs: **Future Focus** and **Badger Faith & Service Corps**, which provide public university students opportunities to explore future aspirations and vocation in light of their faith, values and education. **Next Step Sober Living** is a safe haven for UW and Madison College students in recovery from substance addictions to live together and support one another's health and recovery while pursuing education, employment and life goals. **Community Engagement Opportunities (CEO)** program encourages residents to engage in wellness practices in four quadrants of activities: Community Building, Service, Spiritual Exploration/Wellness and Learning Outside the Classroom.

GROWTH: SCHOLARSHIP PARTICIPATION



These programs are some of the most innovative and effective ways in which Pres House carries out its long-standing mission to promote the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth of students. Intentional living at Pres House accomplishes the following aims: 1. Offer students an experience of gracious welcome and connection. 2. Improve students' capacity to interact with people who are different from them. 3. Invite students to identify and share their gifts in and out of Pres House. 4. Cultivate wellness in community. You will read stories of the impact these programs have on the lives of students elsewhere in this newsletter.

From an initial group of five (4 residents and an intern) participants, intentional living program participation has grown dramatically to involve 60 residents this year. Pres House has given away more than \$465,000 in scholarships since 2010 and we are on track for our biggest year yet with 70 participants receiving \$90,000 in scholarships during the 2018-19 academic year. In fact, we need to raise an additional \$25,000 before September to support this growing demand. Can you help? You can make a donation to support scholarships and intentional living at PH Apartments by visiting [here](#). Thank you! ♣

PRES HOUSE APARTMENTS

“Second to None!”

GARRETT GUNDERSON

Scholars Participant 2016-17, CEO Participant 2017-18

“Over the past two years, I have been fortunate to live at Pres House Apartments on East Campus Mall. In my time here, I have discovered that Pres House Apartments are truly second to none! The staff is absolutely wonderful and are complemented by excellent facilities. While at Pres House, I have been provided with numerous opportunities to meet different people, experience other cultures, and improve upon myself. In my time at Pres House Apartments, I participated in two of the scholarship programs. Through these programs, I was able to partake in a wide variety of events, ranging from an outing to a corn maze to participating in a team cooking contest to working with a group to plan and coordinate a comedy night for Pres House Apartment residents. These events provided me with the opportunity to meet new individuals, strengthen my interpersonal and teamwork skills, and have a sense of belonging in the Pres House community. Pres House truly has become my home away from home, and I am blessed to have been able to live there the past two years.”♣



LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS AT PRES HOUSE APARTMENTS

HONGDAN ZHU

Mathematics Major,
Future Focus Participant 2016-17,
CEO Participant 2017-18

"My name is Hongdan Zhu. I have lived in Pres House Apartments for almost three years and taken part in two scholarship programs while living here. I can say that Pres House is a great place to live in Madison.

The first program I took part in is called Future Focus. About 10 students who live at Pres House Apartments meet every two weeks and talk about different things.

Most of the topics are focused on helping you grow as a person. The discussions help give you a new understanding of your life. It made me pay attention to some aspects and emotions in life that I did not pay too much attention to before. I really enjoyed this process. I got to know more people in the building and I learned what they think about their lives and what they wanted for their future. I learned that it can be important to understand others before you try to make others understand you.

The second program is called CEO (Community Engagement Opportunities). It encourages you to take part in different activities and events that are happening at Pres House or at UW. You earn points by attending these events. This program is less serious than the first one, but it can also push you out of your comfort zone. I participated in a lot of different events like concerts, volunteering, and professional discussions. I found myself becoming more outgoing after I pushed myself to get involved. I also found that I have become someone who likes to attend different events."◆



Hongdan Zhu, right side holding a plate, attends "Healthy Eating On A Budget" in Pres House Lower Hall kitchen.

NEXT STEP SOBER LIVING AT PRES HOUSE APARTMENTS - IT WORKS!

NEXT STEP RESIDENT, 2015-16 – PEER MENTOR, 2016-19

I moved in to Next Step after getting sober and deciding to return to school at UW. Living with a group of individuals working toward the same goal has made staying sober and enjoying life without drugs and alcohol significantly easier. The supportive environment was exactly what I needed when returning to the stress of going to school. Next Step has helped me build new relationships and feel comfortable knowing I have a safe place to go home to.

Ginger, as well as the other residents, have been extremely helpful to me as I navigate sobriety. Ginger especially was extremely supportive during tough times I experienced early on.

During my time here I have performed well academically, turning around a previously lackluster record. I plan to live here for at least one more year (2018-19). After being here for four years, I will have stayed here longer than anywhere else since I moved out of my parents' house. ◆





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THE STORY OF PRES HOUSE ON A NATIONAL STAGE

Executive Director/Co-Pastor Mark Elsdon shared the story of the rebirth of Pres House at the national Presbyterian NEXT Church Conference in Baltimore, MD in February. He explained how a decades-long dream, the creative use of Pres House property, and an impact investment from the Synod of Lakes and Prairies became the Pres House Apartments and helped transform the organization. You can watch a video of his presentation on YouTube. Search “Mark Elsdon + Ignite” to find the eight-minute video. ♣



SUPPORT PRES HOUSE

Throughout this newsletter you have read about the exciting activities happening at Pres House. Ministry at Pres House is possible only 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.