



VOICE

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

FALL 2019

REFLECTIONS FROM PRES HOUSE STUDENTS

RADICAL LOVE

“ I grew up in a small town with about two thousand people, and I graduated in a class of 45. My parents told me that they believed in God, but we never went to church, and I never really knew what Christianity meant. It was up to me to decide what I believed in. When I was in 5th grade, I decided to start attending a small group at a local church that all my friends attended. It was the largest one in my area, even larger than the school.

I have always been a very inquisitive person, but I did my best to sit quietly and not ask any questions. The leaders of my group always told me that I had to be 100% sure in Jesus and who he was, without question. But when you're 12, are you really sure about anything? I didn't understand how to deal with my first real crush on a girl in my small group, how to respond to the onset of my mental illness, or even how to read the Bible. I decided not to express my confusion and uncertainty but someone else did. She was told that she would be going to hell.

Between that bad experience and the deep depression that I found myself in, I decided to leave the church and not come back. I decided that it wasn't worth it to be part of a community where there is no room for doubt, questioning, or hard things because in real life, things aren't so straightforward. Understandably, when I came to Madison, I was a little bit apprehensive about any faith community at all.

However, things were starting to become a bit better in my life, and I was desperately in need of friends, so I decided that looking for a student organization would probably be my best option. Several of the most important people in my life were Christian, and if they were amazing people, there had to be others who would accept me for who I was as well. I attended the Pres House welcome lunch, but that was only the beginning. What truly caused me to give a second chance at my faith were the signs in front of the church. The pride flag and inclusive

statements gave me a rush of excitement, and I knew that the people there wouldn't be offended by who I was.

When Jesus asks in the Gospel of John, "Does this offend you?" I believe he meant to challenge a lot of people's faiths. He radically loves even those who are considered to be at the bottom of society, including those who many believe are "crazy" or "dirty" or have very little to offer. He sacrifices himself for those who may not even give anything in return. How do we love the people who have hurt us and learn to truly forgive? How can we give all of who we are to helping people who may not do the same for us? Radical love is a hard lesson to learn, and it is very hard to come by, but Pres House is the closest that I've ever come.



Macayla C., Sophomore

INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE

Supporting Student Wellness • Corporate Sponsors Serve Students • A Warm Pres House Apartments Welcome • Gratitude from Scholarship Recipients • Music Team Explosion

UNEXPECTED SEEDS

Reflecting on the Inaugural Eco-Spirituality Retreat

“Imagine you’re a graduate student, like me. Or maybe you can imagine you’re an undergrad or a young professional. Either way, imagine your life is very busy, mostly spent on a campus of some kind, with a shameful amount of staring at a phone/computer/tablet/projector/whatever. Imagine you do not usually think about where your food comes from (I mean where it REALLY comes from) or what sorts of plants you pass on your commute. Imagine you usually try to recycle, or maybe you want to reduce your waste production, but you don’t really consider this in every small decision. You do not think twice before grabbing the to-go lid for your very, very, very necessary morning coffee.

I have a feeling that for most of us, the above “imagining” wasn’t too hard. We probably don’t spend much time thinking about how we relate to nature or what our environmental impact is on a day-to-day basis.

Before the Eco-Spirituality Retreat was advertised for the first time, I did not realize “Eco” and “Spirituality” could go together. I think my main impetus for registering for the retreat was pure curiosity—that, and Erica said the food was good. I consider myself a casual environmentalist, perhaps, but not an outdoorsy sort of person, and probably more “religious but not spiritual” (the lesser-known cousin of “spiritual but not religious”). So this retreat, whatever it was, didn’t seem squarely in my comfort zone. But I had that Saturday free, I liked Pres House so far in the month I’d been there, and since I consider myself a collector of unusual religious experiences, hanging out at Holy Wisdom Monastery with a group of environmentally focused Benedictine sisters sounded like a good use of time.

Holy Wisdom is a monastery open to women of all Christian traditions and following Benedictine rule. Somewhat unusually, they focus their particular tradition on caring for the earth. While I certainly have encountered Christians who care for the earth before, I’ve never met such a group so focused on integrating faith and care for the environment. Our retreat was led by Sisters Lynne and Denise, and it was really apparent how well they knew the land around them and how they cared about it. Holy Wisdom has turned the old pastureland on which it sits into reclaimed prairie, and also collects seeds and plants from their prairie for Dane County to redistribute to other places doing the same.

Being curious, I had done some research before I went, and listened to the podcast we were given to prep for the retreat, but I still didn’t really know what to expect. When we got there, we were greeted by the sisters and students from St. Norbert College and Lawrence University who were also attending



Andrea K., First Year Graduate Student (on right)

the retreat, and we began a long but fulfilling day of group discussions, a delicious lunch, and a LOT of seed harvesting. We discussed in small groups our relationships to important pieces of land in our lives, reflecting on our experiences with nature (or lack thereof, for some who grew up in urban environments). The highlight of the day, however, was the seed collecting. When we were told we would be working on the prairie, harvesting seeds to send to the county, I was initially skeptical. I had come under the guise of a retreat, and was I going to be put to work??

I didn’t feel like the victim of a bait-and-switch for very long. To call the seed harvesting “work” seems wrong—it was more meditative than that, a very simple task repeated on a beautiful day in a restful setting. We soon settled into a rhythm, and despite the morning being a little chilly, it felt warm as we got to know the people around us, our hands occupied but our hearts and minds very much available for conversation and fellowship. After a delicious lunch and a brief time to warm up, we headed out to a different site to collect different sorts of seeds. Now we had graduated from beginner seed collectors to intermediate and had to distinguish between a few more different types of plants. Despite taking more concentration, this afternoon seed harvesting was even more rewarding, as the sun had come out and we now got to know each other beyond the basics of small talk. We were on a hillside, from the top of which we had seen the Capitol building across Lake Mendota. We were both physically and emotionally distanced from our normal lives, and this kind of “work” was so different from what I normally do (biochemistry, if you’re wondering) that even though my body was exhausted at the end of the day, I felt refreshed and whole.



Our last discussion was focused on what we would take away from the day. Throughout our discussions, we had spoken about having a relationship with the earth, rather than just using it, and about the way we speak of the earth and nature (apparently, some languages use the same pronouns for nature that they would for other humans). I think I'm taking away a greater sense of respect for the nature around me, and a reminder that the earth too is God's creation, created to be in relationship with me and the other way around. We may be tempted to take God's command in Genesis 1 to be in charge of the earth as a challenge, a call to dominate and subdue. However, we are called to care, be responsible, and respect, and in this way our faith should factor as much into our environmental considerations as it does into anything else in our lives. ”



MUSIC TEAM EXPLOSION

There is no shortage of people who desire to worship God.

Natalie Handley

I remember saying this way back when I first interviewed to become Music Director at Pres House. Time and time again this proves to be true. Last spring, we lost so many strong music team members to that pesky thing called graduation. As I warily looked at the fall semester, I saw we had no guitarists, no male singers, and a sparse team all around.

But then music team exploded — in the most marvelous, unexpected ways! Nine new people have participated in the team in just a short month, doubling our numbers. Usually, one or two join at a time, but this year everyone came at once — and they came with a variety of instruments and voices. In one particularly surprising and joyful rehearsal, we had two violins, a viola, a trumpet, an organ, a piano, an electric guitar, drums, and six singers! It has been wonderful to see so many students find a place to belong on music team. There is definitely no shortage of people who desire to worship God. ♣



“

I'm taking away a greater sense of respect for the nature around me, and a reminder that the earth too is God's creation, created to be in relationship with me and the other way around.

ANDREA K.

”

CORPORATE SPONSORS SERVE STUDENTS

Pres House has long enjoyed the support of area churches who partner with Pres House to provide evening meals following worship. More recently we have been developing partnerships with businesses in order to expand our support of students. This past year, corporate sponsorships have provided students in our apartments more affordable living while also allowing them to give back to the community. Corporate sponsorships have also provided students with wholesome, nourishing food as well as sweet treats to pick them up during a long day. We are pleased to mention the following partners from this past year:

UW Credit Union – This is the second year of Pres House and UW Credit Union’s partnership. UW Credit Union has provided a wide array of support, including funding five scholarships in the Pres House apartments with a \$5,000 donation, providing logo items for our apartment residents to enjoy, and helping educate students on financial literacy.

Einstein Bagels – In advance of the UW Mock (Sober) Tailgate hosted on September 21, the State Street location of Einstein Bagels donated several hundred delicious, wholesome bagels to Pres House. More than 150 visitors joined Live Free Student Wellness & Recovery, Pres House, Wisconsin Voices for Recovery and Connections Counseling on Library Mall to enjoy music, free food and coffee, hula hooping, an obstacle course, and pre-game fun with none of the hangover!

Insomnia Cookies – Insomnia Cookies has provided delectable, warm cookies for welcome events here at Pres House including our Frunch welcome lunch, “What I Wish I Knew as a Freshman,” and “What I Wish I Knew as a Graduate Student” events. They also provided a free cookie coupon for each of the 234 residents living in Pres House Apartments this year. All in all, Insomnia Cookies donations added up to almost \$1,000 in support of Pres House welcome programs.

We are grateful for all our partner businesses and organizations. And, we are looking to grow our corporate sponsorship support! Please let us know if your workplace would be interested in supporting students at UW Madison while raising awareness of the business. ✿



A WARM PRES HOUSE APARTMENTS WELCOME

“ Returning to campus as a sophomore this fall, I was both excited and apprehensive to get back into the swing of college life after summer. Besides my coursework and campus involvement, one of my other worries was housing. Last November, I signed a lease with some friends at Pres House Apartments, but at the time, September of our sophomore year had seemed very far away. All of a sudden, I found myself driving back to campus on move-in day, my car full of boxes, to pick up my key. By being greeted by staff at the doors, I saw from day one that Pres House Apartments wanted to facilitate connections between other residents. My roommates and I quickly realized that we had made the right choice. Although what first drew us to Pres House Apartments was the unbeatable location, it has become clear that the community is unlike that of other apartments around campus.

At Pres House, residents are more than just one tenant among many. Within the first week of classes, Pres House hosted a Welcome Pizza & Ice Cream Party to help neighbors meet one another. We enjoyed dinner and dessert while playing a get-to-know-you game which allowed us to connect with our neighbors beyond simply their year and major. (And hey, my apartment won a mini muffin pan so we were pretty happy!). Ginger Morgan, Director of Community Initiatives, and Rebecca Bedell, Coordinator of Residential Programs, were there to share information about life at PH Apartments. Transitioning from a dorm to an apartment setting, it can be easy to forget that there are other students behind closed doors. This event allowed my roommates and me to meet people on our floor who we may not otherwise see during the day. As a member of the CEO scholarship group, I participate in activities on campus beyond my studies that facilitate community, learning, service, and wellness enrichment. By providing these scholarships, PH Apartments encourages residents to develop their interests outside of the classroom. By participating in activities like the Welcome Event, I have the chance not only to make connections with others but also to work toward completing scholarship requirements.

In addition to the Welcome Event, Pres House hosts Wednesday Afternoon Tea and a monthly Community Dinner. Afternoon tea is a time to connect with other residents, eat some snacks, and take a break from schoolwork. This is yet another example of how PH Apartment strives to promote camaraderie between its tenants. One of my favorite events has been the Community Dinner. Once a month, residents have the opportunity to attend a free dinner in the basement of Pres House cooked by Laura

Andrews, the Pres House chef. This event is also great because besides receiving a hot meal – which no college student can turn down – it provides an excellent opportunity to hear about things happening in the Pres House community; Ginger and Becca give a “spotlight of the month” on upcoming events. My roommates and I also earned CEO points by helping with the clean-up from one of the dinners. Aside from getting important information and working on CEO requirements, the dinners allow residents to mingle with one another and de-stress from a long day of classes.

If the strong Pres House community is not obvious from the events I have described, stop by Pres House Apartments and see for yourself! I have truly enjoyed my first few months as a resident here; I came into this school year with some apprehension after hearing stories from friends and family about their own college apartment experiences. To any future residents: you have nothing to worry about. By choosing Pres House Apartments, you are choosing a campus home where management recognizes you in passing, residents greet one another in the hallway, and residential program staff create incredible opportunities to grow in friendship and learning while on campus. As a resident of Pres House, I have experienced nothing but welcome from other residents and staff. If not for the central location or awesome amenities, come to Pres House for the community, which you cannot help but see the moment you walk through the doors.”



Claire J., Sophomore

GRATITUDE FROM SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

We asked the 82 residents of Pres House Apartments involved in purposeful living programs at Pres House what they would say to the donors whose gifts fund their scholarships. Here are some of their responses:

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR SUPPORTING ME AT PRES HOUSE APARTMENTS! THROUGH THE FUTURE FOCUS PROGRAM, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT MYSELF AND MY FUTURE GOALS AS WELL AS MEET NEW AMAZING PEOPLE THAT ALSO LIVE IN PH. THANK YOU AGAIN!

CLAIRE L.



Thank you so much for donating to Pres House and allowing us students to live in the best location on campus affordably. These scholarships also allow us to make meaningful connections and to learn more about ourselves which I am so thankful for.

Danielle L.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to focus on my growth as a person.

Olivia

THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND CONNECT WITH OTHERS IN MY COMMUNITY. ADDITIONALLY, THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO ENGAGE IN VALUABLE SELF-REFLECTION THAT WILL GROW ME AS A LEADER. FINALLY, THANK YOU FOR MAKING MY APARTMENT SO MUCH MORE AFFORDABLE.

PAIGE B.



Thank you for providing me the opportunity to live in intentional community at Pres House. It has been a meaningful experience that I am incredibly grateful for.
Theresa S.

THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING US WITH RESOURCES THAT HELP CREATE AND BRING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER.
KATHY N.

Thank you so much, this means the world to me!!
Jon D.

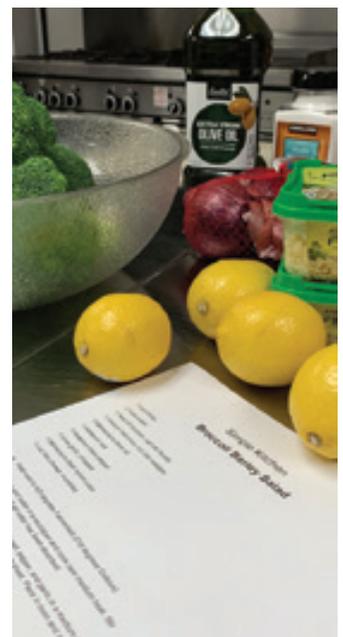


SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLNESS

Pres House continues to grow our programming and support for student wellness at UW-Madison. We understand that many things can interfere with a student's capacity to thrive on campus, from isolation and social anxiety to academic struggles and more. The wellness initiative at Pres House brings students together on a journey that fosters connections and conversations that are relevant, relatable, and sometimes raw.

Our work in this area is expanding: in the past six months we added a new, full-time Coordinator of Residential Programs, thus significantly expanding the staff working in the Pres House Apartments and on wellness support. Thanks to generous donors and expanded programs, we have been able to offer the highest number of purposeful living scholarships ever to residents in the Pres House Apartments. Eighty-two residents are participating and receiving scholarships this year. Already this semester we have offered more than 16 distinct and focused wellness programs, and engaged almost 400 students in wellness activities. Some examples include Simple Kitchen cooking classes, financial literacy training, a second annual Sober Tailgate, and more.

And this is just the beginning of our growth in this area. We are in the process of selecting a new name and branding for what is becoming a major program area at Pres House. We are developing new programs, a wellness club, and other exciting services. Stay tuned for more as we roll out details in early 2020. In the meantime, please note that you can now directly support student wellness by making financial contributions specifically designated to help students thrive at UW-Madison. ❀





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WELCOMING HUNDREDS OF NEW STUDENTS!

We have welcomed 700+ new students to campus and Pres House this fall.
An estimated 450 attended Frunch — our welcome lunch for freshmen.



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.