



VOICE

SPRING 2022

A Home at the Heart of the University of Wisconsin–Madison since 1907



PRES HOUSE PROM 2022

A TRADITION CONTINUES

This year, our Practice of Play small group has taken on planning several social events for the Pres House community. They've organized scavenger hunts, a murder mystery party, a Yule Ball, and many game nights. Their latest effort — Pres House Prom — was a huge success!

Students decorated Lower Hall “disco style,” complete with disco balls, balloons, and plenty of glowsticks to go around. Two current students at Pres House — Matt Blaustein and Evan Digman — were DJs for the evening and kept the dance floor active all night. It was a wonderful time for dancing, pizza, and friends!

Our 2022 version of Pres House Prom keeps a long-running tradition alive of formal events and dances held at Pres House through the decades.



FORMAL
PHOTOS
FROM YEARS
PAST



WINTER BREAK WITH A PURPOSE AT FT. MCCOY

In January, a team of eight people from the Pres House community spent a week at Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin, where thousands of Afghan refugees were being temporarily housed as they waited to be resettled around the country. We served as volunteers offering hospitality. Participants from the Pres House team shared very thoughtful reflections of the experience during a worship service on January 30, 2022. To listen to all the student reflections, go to our "Listening to Sunday Sermons" page at www.preshouse.org and click on "Stories from BWAP 2022" (01.30.22).

Madelyn Peppard offered this poetic reflection on her experience:



UNTITLED POEM ~ MADELYN PEPPARD

I could call it a dystopia, but it was not fiction
So I'll try to describe it with my best words and diction
But how is one to explain the inexplicable?
Perhaps with my senses, though I'm not sure they're applicable

Because I cannot use my eyes, which I gave
To the rearview mirror, when I gave a shy wave
To the siblings enjoying Wisconsin in a snowbank
Innocently playing next to two men in an army tank

I cannot use my hands;
I gave them to young craftsmen with ruined plans
Who covered them with beads and yarn
Made into bracelets, adorning their arms

And I cannot give my nose
Because I gave it to the bags placed in rows
Of many cases of donated Lipton Tea
Drank through masks sleeplessly, quietly

I also cannot find my tongue
Because I believe that I left vicariously
With the boiled chicken and cauliflower
Eaten daily by each Afghan family

I have two things, though, that I can still use
My left ear is here for listening to you
Hear what you have to say about your new home and your old one
To hear your joyous laugh as we match Blue's Clues cards for fun
Hear a woman's story about her favorite cousin's wedding
Hear nothing but your voice in this bizarre oasis of a setting

And my right ear listens
To Erica, Nii, Olivia, Lauren, Andrea, Emma, and Evan
Each of them with their own talents and thoughts glisten
Sharing their stories, perspectives, and lessons

And both ears, I'll use to hear God's voice
At 11pm, while having a staring contest with the ceiling
It's still, and it's small, and it leaves me with no choice
To keep going, to reconnect with my mind and the people,
despite what we're feeling





HOLY RITUALS AT WINTER RETREAT

by Kevin Lee

Kevin Lee is a freshman studying computer science and is one of 22 students who attended this year's Winter Retreat, themed "Soil & Sabbath: Creating Whole & Holy Rituals in Communal Space."

On the day Fall Retreat ended, I promised Erica that I would come to Winter Retreat. I had not gone to the Fall Retreat due to the pressure of having two major exams following it, and I decided that it wouldn't be a suitable time for rest. Regrettably, Winter Retreat came at an even worse time than Fall Retreat. This time, five major assignments were due the following week, and all my mind could think of was disaster. I eventually signed up at the last minute, but I was doubtful of the trip even until the moment I stepped into the car heading to Lake Waubesa.

As you might be able to tell, academics occupy a pretty big chunk of my list of priorities. The regrets from my high school performance conditioned me to become a restless learner in college (almost to a fault), and since coming to Madison, I have increasingly found work and rest difficult to balance.

Winter Retreat came at the moment when I noticed the imbalance starting to permeate into my spirituality. My biggest struggle was what I would call the Sunday Christian Syndrome, where I fully committed myself to faith in the four hours of worship and went back to living my normal life for the remaining 164 hours of the week. I didn't know how the theme of "Soil & Sabbath" or the concept of "finding my soil" would help with my struggle, but I hoped that the retreat would give me a clue.

The retreat thankfully delivered, and more.

Pearl, our retreat mentor, guided us into the discovery of our "soil"—where we come from and find our home. We also did embodied activities to reflect on moments we have felt happy, safe, and scared; this was another way we explored the idea of our soil and how it is connected to rest. The provocative and intimate activities we did as a community made me feel closer not only to the people of Pres House, but also to myself. I gave myself ample time to learn how I like to rest, and how I like to let others into my rest. It allowed me to be fully

immersed in a concentrated moment of rest, something that is rarely endorsed by our hustle culture.

There were many great moments during Winter Retreat, but my favorite was writing a poem about our soil. It helped me pinpoint the root of my struggle with faith—my soil, the birthplace of my faith deep within me, was begging for nourishment that I had neglected for so long. It also helped me to discover the ever-forgiving nature of my soil and its call for me to give it my attention without a deadline. Without a deadline! The realization was liberating.

Yes, I did end up having enough time for work, and survived through the strenuous week. But I honestly think that I couldn't have done it without the help of the retreat. Through the busiest week of my entire academic life, I gave myself time for rest that I wouldn't even give on a normal week. I made sure to dedicate time throughout the week for journaling how I felt and I took care of my soil through prayer. Remembering all that I learned throughout the retreat ended up giving me a certain kind of productivity that I have never felt before.

I'm so grateful to donors at Pres House whose contributions make our retreats possible. Not only did I make lasting relationships with friends in Pres House, but it was a profound experience of self-discovery and deepening of faith.



MICRO-COMMUNITIES WITH BIG IMPACTS

A FEAST FOR LUNAR NEW YEAR

by Faith Isaac, Holly Qian, Sarah Tang, and Megan Wu



For our February event as the Culinary Connections Micro-Community, we decided to serve food to celebrate Lunar New Year. Our Chinese Lunar New Year traditions are rooted in a legend that the monster Nian (“year”) was attacking a Chinese village, stealing food and scaring children. However, Nian was afraid of bright lights, loud noises, and the color red. Thus, villagers host large gatherings each year to scare the monster away and restore peace for all families. Traditional seasonal foods include “Nian Gao” (rice cakes), “Lo Bo Gao” (turnip cakes), and steamed fish!

Since food is one of the most important aspects of the holiday, we wanted to share some of the cuisine and traditions with the Pres House community. We prepared stir fried longevity noodles with mushrooms, carrots, cabbage, and choice of chicken or tofu. Mandarin oranges and Chinese candies packaged in red envelopes completed the Lunar New Year menu.

This event required a lot of budgeting and planning ahead, so we started with a form to gauge interest within Pres House. To our surprise, more than 120 residents signed up for this Community

Dinner! We created a spreadsheet to plan ingredients, estimated amounts, and prices, then set a timeline for shopping and preparing the day before cooking.

We were informed multiple times that this may be the largest PH Apartments Community Dinner ever, so it was definitely a shock to us that our event had such a positive response! It’s great to know that people were interested in Lunar New Year and our traditional cuisine, especially since it is such a major holiday in our culture! Another thing that surprised us is exactly how much work goes into feeding this number of people. We all thought that making a large amount of stir fried noodles wouldn’t be too difficult (we are all rather familiar with the process). We usually cook noodles at home, but it is shockingly different the amount of work required when cooking for an entire residential building. We are definitely much more appreciative of our Pres House chef as well as the chefs working in dining halls across campus. Fun fact: we also learned that apple cider vinegar is a very effective meat tenderizer! Through planning and hosting this feast, we got a lot better at communicating and delegating tasks among our group.



TRANSITIONS: BECCA BEDELL MOVING TO CORVALLIS, OR

by Ginger Morgan, Director of Candid and Community Initiatives

After three years as the Coordinator of Residential Programs at Pres House Apartments, Becca Bedell is moving with her partner to Corvallis, OR to begin the next chapter of their life. Becca started her position with Pres House after completing a Masters of Fine Arts in poetry at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Becca had been part of the Pres House worship community during her time as a student, serving both on the Student Leadership Council and as part of the music team, most often playing drums and adding vocals. Becca undertook leadership of burgeoning Queerly Beloved small group, and has nurtured that safe space for queer identified students exploring, questioning, and addressing issues of faith and life throughout her tenure.

Becca settled into the rhythms of life at Pres House Apartments with ease, making connections with residents through hosting weekly Afternoon Tea, facilitating the Scholars program, the CEO (Community Engagement Opportunities) program, lending support and advice to the Micro-Community programs, and co-facilitating

FACETS (inclusive program geared towards residents in the LGBTQ+ community) with Ginger Morgan. In her first year (pre-COVID) Becca spearheaded a resident World Fair, inviting residents to share food and information about their cultures of origin or heritage.

She demonstrated an uncanny ability to learn and remember residents’ names, which contributed to the sense by residents that she paid attention and cared about them as individuals. When talking with Becca about her time working at Pres House Apartments, she reflected that connecting with residents and watching them as they learned about themselves, growing as students and people, was the most satisfying and enjoyable part of the work.

With this wide variety of experiences under her belt in only a few years, Becca is currently enrolled in a “Called To Pastoral Ministry” online seminar and is still considering paths forward in ministry, especially non-traditional and interfaith settings.

Pres House is indebted to Becca for leveraging her prodigious set of skills and gifts for the benefit of students and residents in service to the Pres House mission. We are so fortunate to have benefited from her time on our staff and as our colleague. The Pres House community bids her safe travels and blessings on the next chapter of her life.



Megan (back center) and the Scholars cohort visited the Schuster's Farm corn maze in October 2021

NOT PRES HOUSE BUT PRES HOME!

by Megan Berg

Megan Berg is a UW-Madison sophomore studying biochemistry, a prolific baker, and a Pres House Apartments Scholars participant.

When I signed a lease with Pres House Apartments around Thanksgiving of my freshman year in college, I thought I was just acquiring a place to live. But upon moving in last August, I learned my apartment came with much more than a kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom; it came with a community, a home.

When I initially joined the Scholars Program, I thought it was too good to be true. I would receive a rent scholarship just for hanging out with other residents once a month? Now, almost done with the school year, I still think the program is too good to be true! However, I understand the true reason for the program. I have made many new friends in Pres House Apartments, which has expanded my circle beyond just my roommates. It is an amazing feeling to be able to walk through my building, or attend Afternoon Tea, and know the people around me.

Additionally, being in Scholars has expanded my experiences. I learned how to fold dumplings and do Chinese calligraphy for the Lunar New Year. I tried self-reflection exercises to discern my emotions and values. I walked through the Chazen Museum for the first time in my life, despite living fewer than 100 feet from it. I would not have done these things without the support of the Pres House community.

While Pres House has offered me new friends and experiences, it has also built on the passions I have cherished since I was young. When I was a child, I first learned to bake with my parents. It was an activity they learned from their parents, and passed the skills on to me. We would all be in the kitchen together and even though it probably took them twice as long to bake with me as it did alone, my parents still included me. As I grew up, so did my love for baking, and now that I am away at college, I bake regularly by myself.

Pres House has supported my love of baking by giving me the opportunity to use my talents for service. About twice a month, I bake desserts for the Apartments' Afternoon Tea like brownie bites, lemon drop cakes, and snickerdoodle cookies. I also led the Scholars in making holiday treats for our December meeting. This service lets me develop my skills and share my creations with people who enjoy them. It is a fantastic feeling to be able to use the expertise my parents taught me for the enrichment of the community.

If I had chosen to live in a different building, I would never have been afforded the opportunities I have now. The community I have encountered has been able to support me in new and old endeavors. In the words of Cecelia Ahern, "Home isn't a place, it's a feeling." Pres House takes an apartment building and makes it so much more by filling it with amazing people and amazing support. In doing that, it becomes a home.



GOING GREEN FOR TOTES

by Lucy Bailey, with the Sustainability Micro-Community.
Photos by Julie Jones

In November, our Micro-Community hosted a reusable tote bag decorating event to engage the community in our sustainability theme. We provided cotton bags, fabric markers, and vinyl Cricut designs to print onto the bags. The lounge filled up as residents mingled, picked out designs, and shared tables to decorate.

We were surprised by what an incredible turnout we received! It was rewarding to see the beautiful designs people came up with and to meet more Pres House neighbors. We loved giving everyone a break to show some creativity!



GROWING TOWARD OUR BEST SELVES - CANDID HIGHLIGHTS

Candid programming and health coaching brings students together on a wellness journey that fosters connections and encourages relevant, relatable, and real conversations. Here are some reflections from recent Candid participants:



AVERY KRAHENBUHL

Freshman student studying Marketing and International Business.

When I first started college, I was a little overwhelmed with all of the new changes quickly happening in my life, but then I got an email about a holistic wellness group called Candid Circles and decided that I would go to a meeting to try it out. After the first one, I knew this was something that would not only assist me in reaching my goals for college but help me become a better person as well. I really enjoy attending the weekly meetings where we reflect on what is going well in our lives and then also talk about what we can improve on. Ginger has been a great mentor and her activities and suggestions have made me view myself in a new light. I would highly recommend Candid to any student here at UW-Madison and hope to continue working toward being my best self.



LUCY KUO

Junior student studying Computer Science and Economics.

I first joined Candid Circles during fall 2020 to work on my goal of making connections as I adjusted to the remote COVID life. By meeting with a group every week and sharing our goals, I learned that we all had more in common than I had originally thought, and hearing the successes of the members in my circle and meeting our small goals became a weekly highlight.

I continued with Candid Circles last spring to work on a new goal of motivating myself through the semester. With online school, this also provided a sense of connection to others. Through the program, I learned that I was not alone in my struggles, that others often could relate to my situation, and Ginger was able to share countless techniques related to my goal to help me along. I felt as though Candid provided a safe space for me to share my experiences, work toward my goals, and engage in a supportive network.

I continued with Candid Circles last fall to remain connected to this support network, meet new people, and have a support system to take account of my goals. Since this program has provided a positive avenue for me to work toward my goals alongside others, I look forward to continuing to improve my health and wellbeing through Candid.

I have especially appreciated when Ginger leads us in different visualization techniques or offers self-reflection prompts. I also appreciate meeting other members through drop-ins, and celebrating small wins with weekly goals, which I have found to be a refreshing start to my day each week.

Candid's ability to provide coaching, one on one time, and support groups through its Circles make it unique. This mix provides variety and flexibility while encouraging me to work toward my best self.



STAYING WARM - A NEW BOILER

Pres House is undertaking one of the most “exciting” capital improvement projects common to historic buildings - we are replacing our steam boiler! After lasting longer than expected, our 1994 boiler needs an upgrade before another Wisconsin winter gets the better of us and we end up left in the cold. In truth, replacing a boiler is not as exciting as constructing an apartment community, updating our organ, renovating Lower Hall, or restoring the Tower. But staying warm is an important aspect of our welcoming environment for students. So we are doing what must be done, installing an energy-efficient new boiler in early summer 2022.

Before the new boiler arrives, we will also undertake a project that has been decades in the making — removing the original, old coal boiler. Yes, believe it or not, the boiler that beloved ROOJAHs (Royal Order Of Janitors and Hosts) shoveled coal into is still in the basement at Pres House. According to City of Madison records, the heating system at Pres House reflects a history of heating fuel in this country: it was converted from coal to fuel oil in 1960, then converted from oil to natural gas in 1979.

Although the original boiler hasn't been used in many years, it stands sentry in the boiler room reminding all who enter of the history Pres House has witnessed through the eras. As remarkable as this relic is, the time has come to remove it. The old boiler contains asbestos and takes up an enormous amount of space. Clearing out the boiler room and updating the heating system with a new steam boiler will ensure future generations of students have stories to tell about the many hours they spent in Pres House protected from the cold, just as alumni recall similar stories from the past. But there is one big difference — the students of the future won't have to shovel any coal to stay warm!

While not as visibly exciting as other projects, this one is quite expensive. Not many steam boiler systems for a building like Pres House are available, so we are working with an expert installer from Milwaukee on this project. Total cost of removing the old boilers, updating the venting system, and installing a new boiler, will be about \$200,000. We have funds in reserve that will be applied to this cost but we invite our faithful donors to make an extra contribution this spring to keep the next generation of Pres House students warm and welcome. You can give via the enclosed envelope or online at preshouse.org/donate.

Thank you!





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Ringin'g Worship

Handbells made their first appearance in recent history at Pres House last fall and have continued throughout the year. Students with extensive bell ringing history in their home Presbyterian congregations led the effort. Jacob Larget reached out to his former director, Melissa Hinz, at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Madison who was willing to lend their handbells, tables and foam and coordinate their first musical appearance. Since including bells in worship, more students have expressed interest in learning to ring! Thank you!



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.