



VOICE

FALL 2023

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



ALMOST 100 YEARS OF FALL WELCOME

We recently came across a Pres House fall welcome calendar from 1927. What is most striking about it is how similar it is to our welcome calendar from fall semester 2023, almost 100 years later! The specific events are a little different, but the general intent and flow of the semester is very similar. This makes sense since our core mission to “promote the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth of students” has remained consistent since the founding of Pres House in 1907.

New students arrive on campus each fall, they spend the first few weeks finding “their people” and checking out different opportunities, and then they start settling into their routines. This fall we have welcomed more than 700 students between our big events like Cookie Break, Trivia Night, PH Apartment welcome party, first worship services, first community dinner, and more. Just as in 1927, they are looking for friendship, social activities, spiritual experiences, volunteer opportunities, and holistic mind-body wellness. Throughout this newsletter you’ll read about some of the many ways we seek to be their home away from home in all those ways at Pres House.

Blatter sent to all Presbyterian students

| PRESBYTERIAN STUDENT PROGRAM | |
|--|--|
| First Semester 1927-28 | |
| Transfer Get-Acquainted Party Friday, Sept. 23, 8:00 | Hike Saturday, October 29, 4:00 |
| Freshman Get-Acquainted Party Saturday, Sept. 24, 8:00 | “Homecoming” Open House After the Game Saturday, November 12 |
| Hike Saturday, October 8, 4:00 | “W” Party Saturday, November 19, 8:00 |
| Student-Faculty Reception Friday, October 14, 8:00 | Kids’ Christmas Party Friday, December 16, 8:00 |
| Hallowe’en Party Friday, October 28, 8:00 | Hard-Time Party Friday, January 6, 8:00 |

Those of us here at Pres House today do have one important question:

**WHAT EXACTLY IS A “HARD TIME PARTY”?
AND HAVE ANY OF OUR ALUMNI HOSTED OR ATTENDED ONE!?**

PRES HOUSE AT A GLANCE: FALL 2023

Here's a snapshot of what's happening this semester at Pres House.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

4:30 pm in the Pres House chapel. We eat dinner together as part of worship every week!



SMALL GROUP GATHERINGS

The best way to find consistent, supportive community on campus. Flip this sheet over for a schedule!

FALL RETREAT

Mark your calendars: October 20-22. A weekend away is just what you'll need mid-semester.



BWAP: GUATEMALA

Learn firsthand about wealth & poverty, religion, and food in one of the coffee capitals of the world.



BRING ALL
of who you are





MOVEMENT-BASED SPIRITUAL PRACTICE IN THE NEW DOJO

Spiritual formation in churches often emphasizes words and thoughts with a focus on saying or believing the “right thing.” Our bodies are often ignored, forgotten, or even viewed with suspicion. In this way, faith can become a disembodied experience, especially when theologies treat certain people’s bodies (queer, female, BIPOC) as suspect and needing to be controlled.

A different way to approach spiritual formation starts with the conviction that we are created in God’s image as good, trusting that the Spirit is moving and at work in our very being. We are invited to listen to the wisdom of our bodies and practice moving in a way that shapes us into more loving, just, and faithful people.

It is through practice that we are transformed, because the things we do over and over become embedded in our very muscles and tissues. We cannot simply think our way into becoming more compassionate, peaceful, courageous people; we repeatedly move our way into embodying the fruits of the Spirit.

Thanks to a Pastoral Study Project grant awarded to Pastor and Director of Campus Ministry Erica Liu, a dojo (Japanese for “a place of the way”) has been set up in Allison Lounge for students to engage in movement-based spiritual practices. This fall, there are opportunities to participate in an Embodied Faith group, yoga, taekwondo, and meditation in the new Pres House Dojo.

**TO WATCH A VIDEO AND FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PRES HOUSE DOJO, VISIT:
[HTTPS://PRESHOUSE.ORG/ENGAGE/MOVEMENT-BASED-SPIRITUALITY/](https://preshouse.org/engage/movement-based-spirituality/)**



BY THE NUMBERS IN PH APARTMENTS

- 215 residents for the 2022-23 school year
- 100% occupancy rate
- A record high 60% of residents renewed their lease from 2022-23 to 2023-24
- 55% of residents receive a scholarship and participate in a purposeful living program
- We are approaching \$1 million in scholarship funds given away to PH Apartment residents in the last decade



RESIDENTS TALK ABOUT LIVING AT PH APARTMENTS.

“ I did not originally plan on moving into Pres House Apartments, but after meeting a group of wonderful girls who were planning to live there, I decided to join their lease. I have really enjoyed things like community dinners, morning coffee, and community engagement activities. Pres House is a very welcoming space, and it was a great apartment that helped me thrive at college! I renewed and returned this year for many reasons including location, support, and most importantly the community and positive atmosphere. The staff are super supportive and a great resource for residents. I decided to stay in Candid Corps because of the encouragement I found through fellow residents. Before joining Candid Corps, I didn't know anyone else in the building besides my roommates. Being able to connect with other residents and support their journeys was super fulfilling and led me to have a great sophomore year! I'm excited to be living in Pres House again and look forward to seeing what this year brings! ”

--Breanne B.

“ Prior to living in Pres House, we only lived in the dorms. While we were able to get our dream apartment on our first try, that was only because we applied in the second week of October! For many, this timeline is often challenging, because it's difficult to find people you're comfortable living with in a month or less of arriving at college. The community has been extremely welcoming! Through the scholarship programs and many events, the residents are able to truly grow together as people. In addition to the great facilities, the stellar location, and pricing I renewed due to my positive experience with Candid! Very few places would financially incentivize you to work on yourself and even fewer fulfill that goal and provide a community. ”

--Kylie H.

“ We chose to make Pres House our home during our second year of college due to its exceptional location, top-notch living spaces, and rent scholarship opportunities. Prior to this, my roommates and I stayed in dorms, and moving to Pres House was most definitely an upgrade. The leasing process proved to be straightforward, making it easy to split rent among a larger group. As newcomers last year, I was impressed by the strong sense of community that Pres House fosters. There are consistently engaging activities, whether it's community meals or workshops through Candid Corps.

It was an easy decision to renew our lease as the beautiful living spaces, reasonable rent prices, and convenient location continue to meet our expectations. One of the primary reasons we renewed our lease is the Candid Corps scholarship program. This program not only holds me accountable for my wellness goals but also connects me to other residents in Pres House. Through this program, I actively strive to improve myself, all while being reminded of the caring community that surrounds me. I think it is an absolutely wonderful and unique opportunity that I am able to receive a rent credit by setting positive goals for myself. Pres House has truly simplified the process of finding high-quality college housing. I'm happy to have called this place home for half of my college experience. ”

--Aurora H.





STUDENT-RUN MICRO-COMMUNITY LIVING AT PH APARTMENTS

Pres House offers seven purposeful living programs in the PH Apartments. Fifty-five percent of residents participate in one of the programs. Residents in each of these programs receive a rent scholarship and access to specialized programming to enhance their living experience and support their personal growth. Most of the programs are created and coordinated by Pres House staff, but one program is designed and run entirely by residents. Housemates propose a theme for the year with a topic, cause, or community goal in mind and meet monthly to work on their theme of choice. Throughout the year, Micro-Communities also host building-wide events to engage the apartment community in their projects. Residents Suyash, Thomas, Nikhil, and Damien share some program highlights from last year as they enter into their second year as a Micro-Community this year.

What is a favorite memory, topic, or experience from last year?

Suyash:

“One of our favorite memories is the Pres House-wide dinner we organized in Lower Hall. Each of us prepared dishes representing our respective countries that we shared with the entire Pres House community. We cooked in the basement kitchen together, which added to the fun of the event. To foster a sense of unity, we turned the event into a potluck, encouraging residents from other apartments to bring their favorite dishes and share it with the rest of the apartment. It was especially lively with the Mario Kart games residents were playing in the corner. This event holds a special place in our hearts because it brought us together, facilitating engaging conversations. We shared laughter and new friendships. Being able to host such an event and witness the joy it brought to everyone was truly gratifying, making it a cherished memory for us all. ”

What have you learned from your community and the PH community you have served? How has participating in the community helped you grow?

Thomas:

“This past year and a half, our Micro-Community has embarked on a transformative journey rooted in the exploration of our ethnic and cultural backgrounds through cuisine and traditions, uniting us as a second family within Pres House Apartments. Our theme let us delve deep into our personal stories, struggles, and memories, fostering individuality and expression among our members. More importantly, this project aimed to expand beyond our Micro-Community, inviting the broader Pres House Apartments community to join us in our family reunions, where we showcase

and share the traditions and meals we've embraced from one another and invite others to do the same.

By doing all this, we inspired a larger sense of community and connection, bridging the familial gap that develops as we students embark on our academic journeys that can sometimes leave us stressed and alienated. Through all of this, we have learned what it means to be "home" for our fellow students: a nurturing and supportive environment where we can find belonging and understanding. We have learned that formed families are built on love, trust, support, and shared experiences, resembling the dynamics and bonds found in traditional families. We recognize that this understanding will impact our future relationships and help us expand family traditions beyond what our nuclear families have passed down through generations, ultimately contributing to our personal growth and our ability to create inclusive, nurturing communities beyond the walls of the Pres House. ”

What are your hopes for this year?

Nikhil:

“ Our main hope for this year is to create a sense of comfort and belonging within our apartment and the rest of Pres House. As many of us are far away from our respective homes, we recognize the importance in fostering an inclusive environment. With a focus on embracing family and culture, we hope to celebrate traditions like Diwali, harvest season, movie night, karaoke, and more. We aim to not only celebrate, but also educate and enlighten others about the significance behind them. We also want to enable other residents of Pres House to participate.

For example, we are planning to have a joint celebration of Hanukkah with another group whose goal is to use food to bring people together. This will allow them to express their culture while allowing us to gain insight and appreciation for it. Throughout this year, we look forward to enriching our community with diverse traditions that unite us and that we could carry with us wherever we may be. ”

What has the Micro-Community program space done for you?

Damien:

“ The Micro-Community program has proven rewarding for me in many ways. Our theme this year centers around bringing our at-home experiences with our families to our Micro-Community at Pres House. My family likes to wind down by watching movies and TV at night. I've found myself to be particularly busy this year, so scheduling time with my Micro-Community to relax and wind down how I know best has provided me with a much-needed break. In a time where many of us are seeing less and less of our family and starting to live on our own, holding onto those traditions we hold dear is so important. We're able to create an environment for ourselves that is both nostalgic and comforting.

Last year, our theme centered around the cuisines of our cultures and families. This provided us an opportunity to share our

background and to an extent our cooking skills with our Micro-Community. Being that we all come from different environments, this was a wonderful opportunity to try new foods, learn more about ourselves, and gain more knowledge of different cultures. This has provided me with an invaluable understanding of the values and traditions of my friends, deepening our connection with one another. ”

What are your hopes for programs like this in the future at Pres House?

Damien:

“ I hope the future Micro-Communities enjoy their time as much as we did! It's a perfect opportunity to get closer with your friends and the rest of Pres House. I hope they take it as an opportunity to connect, both with the program members and the rest of Pres House. I hope that programs that are similar (or even dissimilar) do some collaboration - enrich the Pres House community, meet new people, and share with them. The Micro-Community program is for learning and growing, and I truly hope future groups, with the fantastic support of Pres House staff, learn and grow from their Micro-Community experiences the way we have. ”



YOUNG ADULTS INTERESTED IN PRESBYTERIANISM?

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT?!

By Nathan T. undergraduate student

For a generation of de-spiritualized Americans, Presbyterianism has widely been reduced to a footnote, an externally indistinguishable variation of Christianity. I believe there is much value in developing a deeper understanding of the past and present doctrines of specific denominations within Christianity, to come to peace with our differences and similarities. At Pres House, UW-Madison students come from diverse faith backgrounds, with varying degrees of familiarity with Presbyterianism. This semester we are holding a weekly small group gathering to discuss one primary question: “Why are Presbyterians Like That?” WaPLT is a series of Biblical lessons provided by the PCUSA campus ministry UKirk network that focus on the unique history and theology of the Presbyterian tradition through guided readings of related scripture passages. This program assists college students in delving deeper into scripture, locating verses that lay the foundational principles of Presbyterianism. Our small group has allowed for a tighter bond between members and the Bible.

Personally, this small group has been very enlightening, revealing to me the discrete quirks in the Presbyterian theology of which I was unaware due to my Presbyterian upbringing. One example of this came during our second session. We discussed



the concept of “grace” and how Presbyterians perceive grace as unconditional, unearned, and undeserved. This conception of grace is familiar to me, but I hadn’t previously viewed it as a uniquely Presbyterian tenet. We challenged our preconceptions of grace, comparing them to this UKirk-provided definition and how we saw the concept of grace being used in Christian circles today. The WaPLT lesson plan identified and facilitated discussion on passages highlighting the importance of grace within the Christian tradition, citing Ephesians 2:4-10 and Luke 10:25-37. We analyzed these excerpts from scripture while formulating an understanding of what shapes church doctrine. Conversations like these help us maintain a critical lens of organized religious institutions that promote hateful theological assessments of the Holy Scripture while further grounding our faith in scripture. WaPLT has provided us with a safe space to discuss the Bible in a Presbyterian context, allowing us to grow our bonds with each other and God.



Plus 10 more small groups at Pres House Church!

In addition to WaPLT, there are 10 other small groups gathering at Pres House throughout the week: a Bible study, an outdoor club, Queerly Beloved, and more. Gathering regularly in community is a key part of how students find a home at Pres House! We’re excited to see the relationships that develop this year as a result of Pres House small groups. You can learn more about each group on the Small Groups page on our website: preshouse.org.



INVESTING FOR IMPACT IN GUATEMALA

We are pleased to announce that a significant portion of the Pres House investment portfolio is now helping provide microfinance funding for the working poor in Latin America, and the income from that investment is sending students on a service-learning trip to Guatemala in January 2024.

For many years, Pres House has engaged in ESG (environmental, social, and governance) screening on our investment portfolio. Using guidance from the Presbyterian Church, USA Mission Responsibility Through Investment team we have screened out



investments in companies that are inconsistent with the values we promote at Pres House. In 2023 we have taken this a step further. After a year-long review of our investment policy and financial services partners, the Pres House board approved a new investment policy that balances the long-term sustainability of Pres House with funding for program growth while being even more intentional about the impact of our investment decisions in the world around us.

As part of this process we moved approximately 12% of our invested assets, or \$300,000, into an active impact investment with Working Capital for Community Needs (WCCN), a Madison-based microfinance fund that supports more than 22,000 families throughout Latin America. WCCN was started 35 years ago by church-affiliated individuals in the Madison area who were interested in supporting the people of Nicaragua. Since then WCCN has grown to work with individuals and families in 10 countries in Latin America. Investment funds from Pres House and more than 500 other investors and donors provide life-changing loans for people who have limited access to credit. These borrowers, two thirds of whom are women, use their financing to start and grow small businesses. As they pay back their loans, investors like Pres House receive our funds back with a small amount of interest income.

We will be using this income to help fund a Break with a Purpose trip to Guatemala for 10 college students in January 2024. During this immersive trip, students will learn first-hand how microfinance can empower people and families to transform their lives through small business generation and see Pres House investment funds directly at work; gain an appreciation of Mayan culture; learn about the educational system; and have conversations about wealth and poverty, impact investing, migration, and religion.

GONE FOR GOOD? BOOK RELEASE

As tens of thousands, and billions of dollars, of church-owned property is sold or repurposed throughout the United States in the next decade, will those properties be gone for good?



Edited by Pres House Executive Director Rev. Mark Elsdon, with a foreword by Willie James Jennings, *Gone for Good? Negotiating the Coming Wave*

of Church Property Transition, draws upon the experience and expertise of a diverse and interdisciplinary group of contributors from across the United States. These contributors highlight what we are losing as church property use changes at an unprecedented speed and scale and help us imagine the innovative possibilities that can emerge.

Gone for Good? calls for thoughtful intervention to prevent church property from contributing to injustice by ending up vacant and derelict, or as high-end housing, enriching developers and encouraging gentrification. As sociologist and Presbyterian minister Eileen Lindner, one of the contributors, points out, “the closing and sale of a church building may remove the last food pantry, soup kitchen, or after-school program from a neighborhood.”

The essays explore spiritual, sociological, and practical aspects of church property transition:

- assessing the impacts of churches on their neighborhoods, and the gaps they will leave behind when they close;
- developing church property into affordable housing;
- continuing a church’s mission and legacy;
- partnering with Indigenous peoples to return land;
- fostering cooperation between congregations, developers, and city planners;
- transforming ministry in rural churches;
- working with foundations and funders.

Gone for Good? is being published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. It will be out January 9, 2024, and is available for pre-order now. Visit melsdon.com for more.



Presbyterian
Student Center
Foundation

Nii Addo Abrahams

Associate Director of Campus Ministry
nii@preshouse.org

Mark Elsdon

Executive Director
mark@preshouse.org

Mark Gordon

Office Manager
mgordon@preshouse.org

Natalie Handley

Music Director
natalie@preshouse.org

Manato Jansen

Associate Director of Residential Community
manato@preshouse.org

Erica Liu

Pastor & Director of Campus Ministry
erica@preshouse.org

Ginger Morgan

Director of Candid & Community Initiatives
ginger@preshouse.org

Terry Bauer

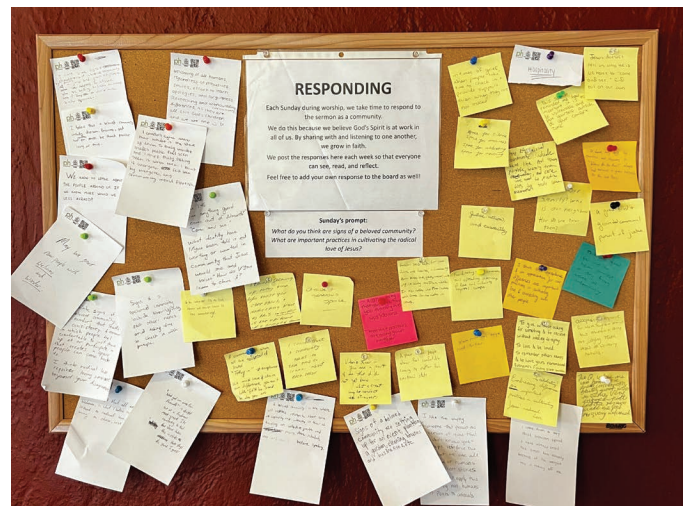
Property Manager, PH Apartments
terryb@rentfmi.com

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Responding in Worship

We've started a new practice during worship this year called RESPONDING. Each Sunday, everyone is invited to respond in real time to the sermon by writing down their thoughts and posting them in the chapel. We then move the responses to Pridham Lounge during the week so that everyone can see and reflect on what others have shared.

This new practice has been a wonderful way of recognizing how God's Spirit speaks through ALL of us!



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.