



VOICE

SPRING 2024

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



20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND REUNION WEEKEND

Over the weekend of April 20th and 21st 2024, more than 150 people attended a series of events to celebrate Pastors Erica and Mark's 20-Year Anniversary and to catch up with each other after many years. The weekend began on Saturday with a music team jam session that brought alumni and current students together in the chapel to make a joyful noise. Current and former board members began arriving at 5pm for a special reception, and Pridham lounge was full with leadership from many decades of Pres House history. The main event kicked off in the chapel at 6pm with a song and hymn sing that filled the chapel with soaring notes and continued in Lower Hall over a catered dinner by Chef Dave Heide. Alumni and board members shared reflections on the past 20 years to round out the night (read their reflections in this issue).

Sunday morning began with some Greenbush donuts and coffee in Pridham Lounge and then a walk along Lakeshore path. The chapel was again full of people and beautiful music for worship on Sunday afternoon. The celebration choir sang from four



corners of the chapel and a student oboist, Katie Twist, blessed all in attendance with her gift. Pastor Erica offered a sermon giving thanks for all the people who make Pres House what it is and five loaves of bread were shared around the Lord's Table! As happens each week, worship continued over dinner in Lower Hall where volunteers were honored and thanked for all their hard work.

The weekend was a joyous success. People from various eras at Pres House were able to meet each other. Those who gathered experienced the warmth that Pres House offers, and the spirit of those who couldn't attend was felt deeply. Throughout the weekend, the memories that alumni and friends had submitted were posted on display and 18 new photo books told a visual tale of the last 20 years. Pres House is so much more than any one person; each person who has been a part of the community makes it the special place that it is.





REFLECTING ON THE LAST 20 YEARS

The following pages contain edited adaptations of reflections that were shared on Saturday evening, April 20, 2024 at the 20-Year Anniversary Celebration banquet at Pres House.

Becky Schwei, 2nd student to join in 2004, and Tom Schwei, board president 2006-2009

BECKY

My name is Becky Schwei and I'm here with my dad Tom Schwei. I came to Pres House in 2004 which was the same year as Mark and Erica. I was a freshman living at Witte. One day that fall I was in my dorm room and I got a call on my dorm room phone from Erica and she invited me to be part of building a community at Pres House. Throughout that first year, I met with a group of students to plan out what a worship service would look like and more importantly, what values we wanted to embrace as a community. I spent my freshman and sophomore years dreaming about and then attending Pres House worship.

TOM

One day, a friend and Pres House board member, Ralph, tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You know, Tom, we could use someone like you on the board." I said, "Really, how so?" He said, "We need to borrow \$17 Million, build an apartment building and fill it up to support our renewed ministry." I said, "Ralph, I've never done any of those things!" After asking Becky's permission, I joined the board as treasurer, served two years in that role and then moved on to become president of the board. For me, Pres House was the first organization where I had this type of leadership role. I went on to have similar board experiences at several other local nonprofits.

One of the cool ideas Mark and Erica began in those early years was Break With A Purpose over spring break. For an early trip to rural Kentucky, they asked me if I would be interested in being a leader. This was the first mission trip I had ever been on in my life. I

followed it up with co-leading a trip the following year with a group of PH students to Joplin, MO. Again, while I hope I contributed something to the students during these trips, I know I got a lot out of them. I have since gone on 10 more domestic and international mission trips, which have been hugely transformative in my life. Apparently, Pres House is not just about developing students.

BECKY

Pres House did a great job of ministering to students and young adults too. After studying abroad my junior year, I came back to Pres House and was part of the community for the next 10 years or so while I was in my twenties. While a part of the Pres House community, I learned a lot about the value of hospitality and how it fostered community. One example is a series we called Post Grad Priorities. This event was designed as a space for graduate students and young professionals to explore important life topics such as aging parents and mental health. The most impactful part of this event was the time we spent shopping, cooking, cleaning and just being together.

As my dad and I reflected together on our story, we realized that both of our Pres House stories started by taking a chance and deciding to show up when we got the phone call or the tap on the shoulder. Neither of us would have dreamed that we would have been standing here 20 years later talking about the tremendous impact that Pres House has had on our lives. We both feel that any benefit we may have provided Pres House by participating, we have individually benefitted much more. Maybe that's part of the story of Pres House: the impact that a community like this has goes well beyond the walls of the building; the path is not linear, but when you show up and participate, and when God is present, the impact is life-changing.



Cody and Kira (Ault) Hanson, undergraduate students 2008-2011

CODY

Kira and I met on the first day of the first week of freshman year, in the lakeshore dorms, in 2007. To set the stage for that time, the iPhone didn't yet exist, Facebook was very cool, and we often stayed up way too late playing the video game, Guitar Hero. We found our way to Pres House together that winter, and it immediately was a place we felt at home. I don't think we could have guessed that we had just met our life partners, as well as the people who would marry us a few years later! Erica and Mark officiated our wedding in 2012.

KIRA

Many of our college memories are tied to Pres House. Cody lived in the Pres House Apartments for a year. We attended a few Fall Retreats to Green Lake along with Break with a Purpose trips to the Heifer Ranch in Arkansas and the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. On any given day, you could find us in the Pres House Lounge for dinners, small groups, or study sessions. We even had a Pres House Prom night. I believe a picture recently surfaced from that night that is hilarious and also mildly embarrassing.

For me personally, my time at Pres House is marked by community and relationships, and in turn conversations that really broadened my views and understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. I specifically remember a small group that focused on studying God's Justice. As part of that group we went to serve dinner at a local homeless shelter, where we were quickly corrected that we were not there to serve but more importantly to be in community. That night we ate alongside those we came to "serve" and shared in life together. It was a moment of God's kingdom on earth, and the experience was truly humbling and eye-opening for me.

Much has changed since we left Madison in 2011. For one, the Lower Hall used to be a Subway sandwich shop! Yet walking back into Pres House today feels like a homecoming. We experienced countless faith "Ah ha" moments in this building. It seemed like every Sunday, Mark or Erica's sermon spoke directly to our hearts and current situations. Pres House became a home away from home, a welcoming safe place to wrestle with faith and realize that God's love for us has no boundaries. The people and openness to share is what makes Pres House so unique.

Sami Haddad, graduate student 2015-2017

On a night much colder than this one in February 2016, what I cannot believe is already eight years ago, I found myself right here — at our Race and Faith event — sharing my story as a Latino-Arab-American.



Never had the sanctuary felt so large. Pres House was hosting 250 students, faculty, and community members — all here to learn from their community how faith both compels us to seek racial justice and gives us the courage and tools to seek it.

Towards the end of the previous semester (my first in Madison) I found myself sharing with Erica and Mark the pain of a fellow student congratulating me for — more or less — outperforming my skin color. When all I felt was anguish and a burgeoning resentment of my new UW community, Erica saw a sliver of hope - an opportunity for me to use that pain I was feeling for a purpose. She asked me to share my story.

In the runup to the Race and Faith event, Erica dedicated what felt like an unlimited amount of time helping me paint the vignettes that have defined my racial experience in America. My trauma finally had a narrative - one which I could wrap my arms around and embrace as my story. Stepping into the pulpit, I was alive with the richness of my struggles. In this sacred space I felt safe, I felt heard and, for what felt like the first time, I felt whole.

This is just one story — one of uncountably many examples of Erica and Mark putting whatever they are doing aside to provide comfort, insight, direction, and a listening ear for a student, a member, or really just anybody in need. When they are not actively counseling or preparing Sunday's worship, they are actively creating spaces for all students to experience community from seemingly small ways, like providing free coffee and doughnuts on bitterly cold days in Pres House.

Pres House, to some, will always be remembered as a welcoming place of worship — to others, a beautiful example of Gothic Revival Architecture — but to all of us here tonight celebrating 20 years of Mark and Erica's indelible work, we know Pres House will always be home.

Rona Neri, board president 2023-2024

I first joined Pres House in 2019. I was not exactly looking for a new commitment. But after speaking with other board members and Mark, and talking to God about how completely unqualified I was for the job, I still felt called to say yes. There was something undeniably special about Pres House and the people in it that spoke to me even while I was feeling unsure of myself.

To be perfectly honest, my first few months weren't great. I had a bad case of imposter syndrome and I felt like I was in over my head. But everyone on the board was unfailingly kind to me and patient and eventually I found my place here. What I observed from the beginning was that there was something special about Mark and Erica's leadership. They authentically embody the essential values of Pres House: to make this place a home that welcomes everyone – all faiths, all races, all ages, all identities; people who feel confident and people who doubt.

Some leaders who stay in the same job for a long time become entrenched in a way that makes them reluctant to do anything new. I've never seen that happen here. Creative ideas are encouraged – like the new native plant landscape plan that board member Carol Quintana initiated.



So often they go above and beyond, sacrificing extra time and energy for Pres House. That was never more evident than when we were struck by a global pandemic. The Pres House board meeting in March of 2020 was the last thing I did in public before lockdown. It was at that meeting where I finally understood that everything was about to change. But the virus that paralyzed most of us somehow made Mark and Erica and the whole Pres House staff nimbler and more creative. They found an interactive virtual platform called Gathertown where students could connect, they distributed frozen meals, started a podcast, held outdoor worship and ramped up the content and outreach for Candid – a new wellness program that was in its infancy when the pandemic hit, but proved to be a lifeline for students. In a time of universal anxiety and isolation, they created innovative avenues for fellowship and belonging.

The throughline, for the past five years of my tenure and the 15 before that, is the exemplary leadership of Erica and Mark -- exemplary because it is authentic, humble, open, and always informed by their profound faith and Christ-like hospitality. Pres House, this place where we've gathered, is sacred ground because of their loving stewardship and the ways in which they nurture, respect, and warmly welcome every student, staff person, volunteer and board member who walks inside. They've fostered a healthy, growing family where we can truly "be all of who we are" and know that our hard questions & doubts are safe here. Above all, it is holy because God resides where you can be vulnerable enough to laugh, to cry, and to truly connect with one another. I'm so thrilled to meet more of my extended family here today and to publicly thank Mark and Erica for making this such a singular and beautiful home for us all.



Mark Elsdon, pastor 2004-2020 & executive director 2004-present and Erica Liu, pastor 2004 to present

MARK

Many of you have joked that we don't look much different from this early photo today. But I assure you, we were younger then. 😊 Erica and I first came to Madison when we were 27 years old. We were fresh out of seminary, or actually still in seminary, when we first visited Pres House. We have literally grown up here. We've grown up as pastors, as leaders, as parents, as people. But Erica tells the story best of how we ended up at Pres House in 2004...

ERICA

We came home from the hospital after our first child was born to find a message on our answering machine from Rev. Randy Bare, asking us to consider an opportunity in Madison to do campus ministry. Given the circumstances—just had a baby, not done with seminary, questionable judgment amidst the sleep deprivation—I said “no” with zero hesitation. So it was a surprise to me when the following week, Mark handed the phone to me while I was nursing, saying, “They want to talk to you.” I have no recollection of what I said, and as the Board did not even have my resume, I was even more surprised when they invited us to Madison for an in-person interview. Again, I immediately said no, but Mark suggested it would be good practice and a mini-vacation in a time when we were struggling to figure out parenthood.

That is how we found ourselves with an 8-week-old infant flying to Wisconsin to learn about a place called Pres House. When one of the Board members said, “If you get one student you will have grown the ministry 100%” I was not sure whether to be encouraged or dismayed, and when they talked about the dream to turn the parking lot into student housing, I remember thinking, “I definitely missed that seminary class!” All along the way, as the Board invited us to take the next step in discernment, I kept saying no and Mark kept saying it would be good practice. You know where this story leads, and twenty years later, I guess you might say that we are still practicing.

MARK

There are so many stories we could tell about the years since then: Of the first students we met, like Becky. Or of looking at architectural plans of the Pres House apartment building around our kitchen table at our first Madison home while Emma napped in her crib nearby. Our first worship service in the chapel with a handful of students. Seventeen ‘Break with a Purpose’ trips all over the country starting just after hurricane Katrina in 2005 through our most recent trip to Nicaragua this



past January. Making literally 1 million decisions during the construction of the PH Apartment building and renovation of the church. Miraculous major donations that made the renovation here possible. Opening the apartment building with four students in the first intentional living community program and the steady growth that has happened since – this fall there will be more than 120 residents in purposeful living scholarship programs and we've given away more than \$1 million in scholarships. Reclaiming the basement here from the smell of Subway restaurant bread. Witnessing the ordination of former staff members for full-time ministry. Launching our Candid wellness program. Solving so many problems. Meeting so many students. Learning so much.

When Erica and I started our adult lives, our ministry, and our careers, we probably had some vague hope that we'd someday work on something that mattered in people's lives and in the world at large. We had some vague sense that we'd love to leave a lasting legacy of some kind. We had some vague sense that we'd love to be somewhere where we could use our gifts fully, grow in our knowledge and skills, and be supported along the way. We had some vague sense that someday, far off into the future, we might have a dream job. What is so incredible to reflect on tonight, is that we've had all of that from the first day we stepped into this building 20 years ago.

It hasn't all been easy, far from it, but it is impossible to fully articulate what a gift it is to have been a part of something so remarkable, for so long. Many dream of the chance to experience the sort of fulfillment, contribution, and support that we've experienced here at Pres House over the past 20 years.

We are immensely grateful.

And this is really all because of two incredible ingredients that make Pres House so special: The people of Pres House, and the spirit of God that has been at work here for 117 years. I tell people all the time that there is a special spirit about this place that has been around for many, many decades. The programs have changed, the people have changed, the challenges have been many, but throughout it all, I truly believe the Spirit of God has been present. While the evening has been a celebration of Erica and my 20-year anniversary here, it is really a celebration of what all of us together, alongside God's spirit, have built here at Pres House.

ERICA (adapted from her Sunday sermon)

The people of Pres House are the heart and backbone that make the community work. At the beginning of our time at Pres House, board members, volunteers, donors, and the first students did not hide from the challenges: from the zero students involved in the ministry to the roof that had not been replaced in 75 years. They held our infant daughter while we searched for a home and believed new life could grow because they trusted God was able to use two young, naive, and unlikely people to start something. They sat through countless meetings working on everything from carpet color to financing, policy to strategic vision. They rallied members from their home churches to pack up their cars with crockpots of food and deliver it to hungry college students; they opened their homes to provide hospitality and encouragement in times of need.

The thousands of dishes that have been washed and tables wiped down by our many volunteers are what have created the space for a lonely student to connect with others, for spiritual nourishment to come to the hungry and parched. The legacy of Phoebe, benefactor of Paul, lives strong in Pres House as people have generously donated for students to have rental scholarships in an amazing apartment community and have opportunities to go on retreats, service trips, and more. It is because of people in the past twenty years who have given of themselves to make Pres House a welcoming home for thousands that we are able to celebrate the goodness of God today. Things are built, after all, brick by brick.

So to each of you who has put a brick down – attending Board meetings, running the dishwasher, making grocery runs, practicing a song, creating a slide, moving chairs, putting out coffee, reviewing the finances, pulling weeds out front – you are the heart and backbone of Pres House and we are in awe of your faithfulness; it is because of you that the grace and love of God are a tangible presence in this community, that students are able to experience the transforming power of Christ in their lives. Mark and I have learned and gained so much from your wisdom and gifts; we are grateful beyond measure to share this chapter in the life of Pres House with you.

MARK & ERICA Please know that we are so grateful for each of you. On behalf of the many thousands of students who have been touched by Pres House in the past 20 years, we say thank you!



PRES HOUSE

THE SPIRIT THROUGH

Promoting the spirit of University of Wisconsin

Pres House wishes to acknowledge and honor the long heritage and



1907

Ministry is launched in 1907 by the Synod of Wisconsin and Christ Presbyterian Church. First pastor is Rev. Matthew Allison.



Participation in the Presbyterian Student Headquarters grows.

1929

Presbyterian Student Center Foundation was created in 1929 to promote the intellectual, moral, and religious growth of people in the University of Wisconsin community.



Sunday worship and church life thrives as University Presbyterian Church at Pres House.



University Presbyterian Church at Pres House is run entirely by student elders and deacons.



Pres House serves as a sanctuary and meeting space during campus unrest.

Rev. Matthew Allison
1907-1935

Rev. Cameron Hall
1935-1939

Rev. Cecil "Doc" Lower
1939-1951

Rev. Jack Collins
1951-1958

Rev. James Jondrow
1958-1969



1921

A home is bought at the corner of State and Murray from the Fitch family. It is soon renamed the "Pres House" by students.



Ministry outgrows the first "Pres House," so plans are drawn up for a chapel, student "club house," and housing.



1931

Pres House chapel and student center is built in 1931, but funding dries up with the Great Depression. Housing was not built as planned, and it takes longer than expected to complete the chapel.



1940

After very tight years financially, and new fundraising efforts, the original mortgage is paid off by Carroll College.



1946

Stained glass windows are added to the chapel.

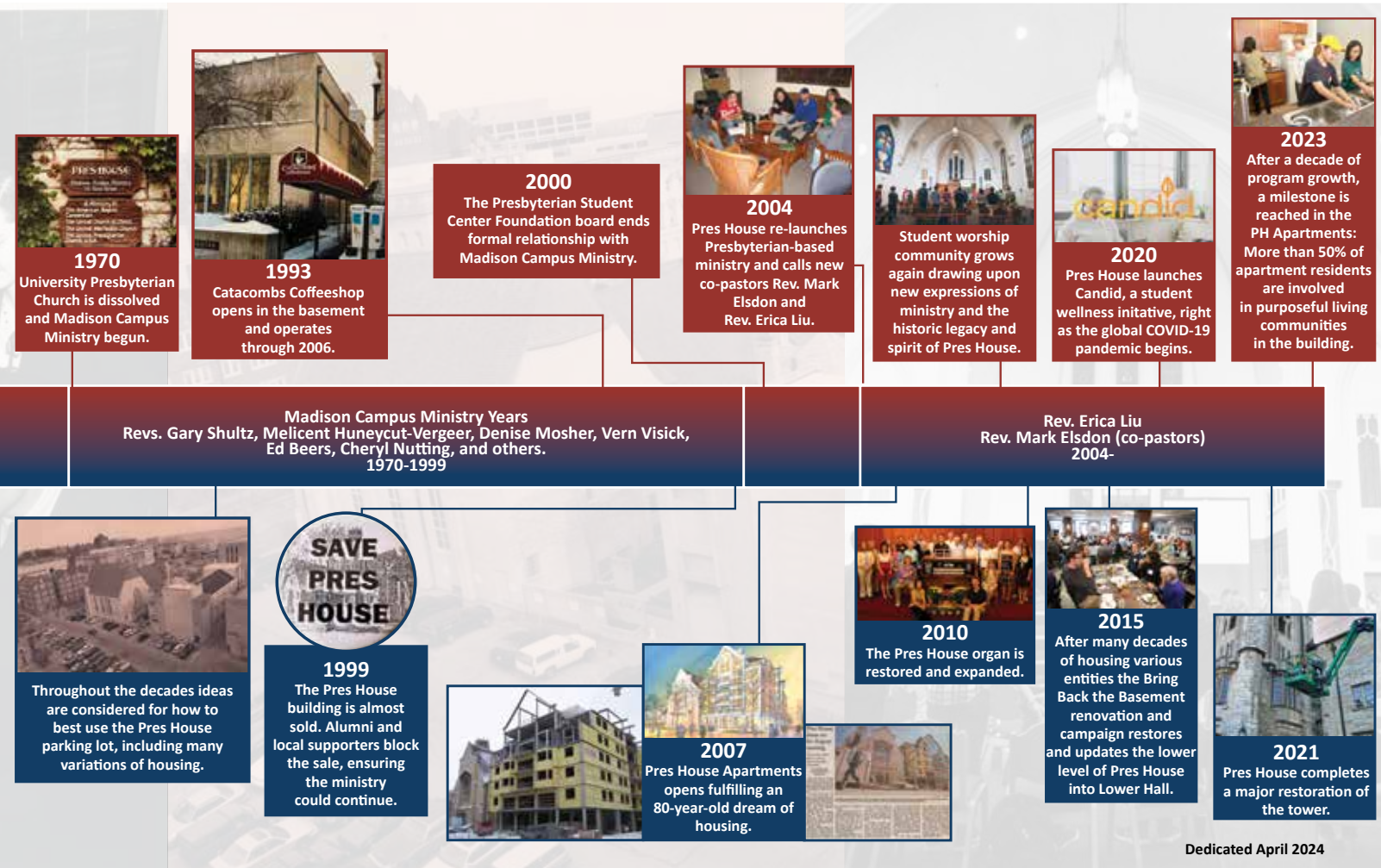


ROOJAHS
(Royal Order of Janitors and Hosts) live in Pres House chapel building and take care of it.

HISTORY OF PRES HOUSE THROUGH THE AGES

Spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth
 Wisconsin – Madison students since 1907

Despite its buildings sit on the traditional, ancestral homelands of the Ho-Chunk people and their living legacy of Native Americans here in the Madison (Four Lakes) area.



Dedicated April 2024

SO MANY MEMORIES!

During the RSVP process for the 20-Year Celebration and Reunion event, Pres House alumni and friends were invited to share memories of their time at Pres House (even if they couldn't attend the event). We received so many beautiful memories! Here are some of them:

“When I feel stressed or upset, I can always book a meeting with Ginger and Manato to share my struggles and feelings. They will always provide me with mental support. Terry is also super professional and helpful. She is every resident's dear mom. I love living in Pres house!”

- Yuwen Y.

“The first Pres House prom! We had it right as COVID was beginning to let up, and for the first time in what felt like forever, we were able to gather, dance, and pretend things were back to normal (even if we were still masking).”

- Ben T.

“Though I've only been here for a few months, I have found a home in the Pres House lounge.”

- Ella S.

“A favorite memory for me was shortly after being appointed to the Pres House Board, they assigned me to the building committee where they promptly made me chairperson. My involvement amounted to on-site checking, reviewing and interacting with the contractor and architects, averaging about three to four days a week. It took one year to complete the housing facility and remodel the church property.”

- Bob S.

“My favorite memories of Pres House are of feeling an actual connection to my peers for the first time in many years. I didn't feel alone anymore, and it helped me see that there were still people in my corner. Thank you, Ginger, for showing me that you cared about who I was, and who I wanted to become.”

- Adam S.

“Almost every time I am at Pres House I remember the many years of worship, student meetings, and the development of my faith when I was a student at UW Madison in the 80's. I also remember attending several special events at Pres House through the years which have continued to shape and inform my faith. I'm so grateful for the establishment of Pres House 'way back when,' for the apartments that serve students in so many ways, and for the faithful service of Mark and Erica through these 20 years!”

- Barry S.

“My first fall retreat, I remember us all in a circle playing a rousing game of 'sheep-pong' and laughing hysterically although the whole point was to try not to laugh.”

- Brad S.

“I met my wife in the choir at Pres House in 1962. Jim Jondrow married us - in Ohio - and we have now been married for 60 years.”

- Rolf H.

“Erica made the 'Brett Favre's Best Fans' newsletter on her birthday one year and received many congratulations from current students. I remember when Emma and Sophie (Mark and Erica's daughters) were 6 and 2. I was playing the organ after worship and Emma wanted to play it. I let her record something on the organ and she moved over to dance to it. Sophie followed and attached herself to my leg and after dinner playtime began.”

- Alicia P.

“I am currently sitting in Indie coffee where I came during Pres House Grad Student Coffee. This was the highlight of my week everytime I could make it, as a student. The question box allowed for both ice breaker questions as well as more thought-provoking ones. By the time COVID came, we had all graduated and most everyone left Madison (except for me). We spanned the United States and somehow managed to find a time that was reasonable across the time zones to do a monthly or bimonthly virtual coffee—reconnecting our ‘grad student coffee group’. This community is amazing.”

- Mary M.

“The yoga class with med student Asha!”

- Sophia M.

“During my last year at Pres House, I reaffirmed my baptismal vows. I was just rereading my testimony and believe that said it best: ‘I have been able to grow so much while I have been at Pres House. I feel protected here. It has been a safe place for me to mature in my faith and values and I feel as though it prepared me for the next transition in my life, where I take my faith out into the world to serve others.’”

- Anne L.

“I still remember the first day I ever stepped foot into Pres House for a music team jam session, and realized that it was a church. It was a surprise at the time, but turned out to be one of my greatest blessings in life.”

- Kevin L.

“Many memories—singing in the choir with director Miriam Belleville and doing solo work with her and Betsy Farlow. Also, the wonderful Sunday evening suppers that we had — with my roommate Anne D. busy in the kitchen preparing the food! Those days will never be repeated, unfortunately!”

- Fern L.

“I have always loved random conversations and debates at Pres House, especially in our Discord! A favorite of mine is boneless wings vs. chicken nuggets.”

- Emily J.

“I have many favorite memories, but one that stands out relates to whether the laundry facilities in PH Apartments should be inside apartments or down the hall. A small survey helped us decide!”
(They ended up down the hall!)

- Alice H.

“When I was hospitalized in December 2023, the Pres House team sent a lovely and thoughtful gift basket to me at the hospital. I was touched by their compassion and concern, and every time I use the personalized insulated tumbler that was included, I am reminded of how blessed I am by my relationship with Pres House and with Mark and Erica.”

- John H.

“The one thing that sticks out is not a great memory, but makes me more grateful for Mark and Erica. After worship and dinner at the Christmas service in 2019, our little boy had an unfortunate mishap. Natalie and I were sort of in shock, and Mark and Erica helped us to figure out the appropriate action. Mark drove us to the children’s hospital to find care for one child while Erica watched our nine-month old. Just one example of how the Elsdon’s have been part of our extended family.”

- Derek H.

“It was the Pres House between-semester weekend retreat at Devil’s Lake State Park in 1956. The building was supposed to be heated comfortably and water was supposed to come out of the faucets, but that didn’t happen. Everything and everyone was freezing. However, that didn’t prevent our attempts to cook meals, sleep and enjoy each other’s company. The hardy students, graduates and undergraduates, did Bible study, had long discussions, got acquainted, and agreed that this would be a retreat to remember. As I got on the bus to go back to Madison, one of the graduate students I did not know very well but noticed on the retreat, asked me to sit next to him. I am glad I did. In December of the same year, 1956, Jim and I were married. Through the years we have watched Pres House continue to have outstanding leadership and continue to be a remarkable presence on the UW campus.”

- Sally D.

“November 18, 2018 was a special worship service called “Queerly Beloved” (a name we later brought to the LGBTQ+ small group) - I remember the gratitude and abundance I felt. The service came together beautifully, and it was perhaps the biggest turnout for worship that I remember seeing as a student, including several friends from my grad school cohort who attended specially for that service. One of them remarked afterwards, ‘if church were like this all the time, I’d go to church.’”

- Becca B.

“Some of my favorite memories of Pres House are Bluegrass Sunday, Christmas Choir, Embodied Faith, going to Erica and Mark’s house for Freshman Connection, the sermons that speak to me in difficult weeks, baking cookies in the Pres House basement, going kayaking in a full winter coat and hat at retreat, our circle discussions and brown bags in the Chapel during COVID to maintain connection, and walking the labyrinth during Lent. My first time singing Taize and singing ‘Come as You Are’ have been some of the most religious experiences of my life.”

- Allyson M.

“I served as Board President during a difficult period for Pres House vs. the Synod but Pres House prevailed.”

- Ralph S.

“Dana and I met at a group through Pres House in 2013. One particular evening, after meeting 3 or 4 times already, something strange happened — I ‘saw’ Dana for the first time as she sat on the couch across from me. It was a surreal moment, as if time stood still. I will never forget it. 11 years later and with a daughter now, I still recall that moment I met my wife at Pres House.”

- Joe L.

“I enjoyed the choir under Betsy Farlow’s direction.”

- Tom S.

“My husband (Tom) and I were married at Pres House in 1956. We were married 62 years. Pres House gave me a great connection to carry on life. I was a deacon.”

- Barbara D.

“Playing Guitar Hero in the chapel!”

- Allison W.

“Jim was a faithful member of Pres House from 1954 to 1962. He sang in the choir, played cards on Wednesday afternoons, was a Deacon and quartet member. He was married there in Oct. 1958. Our first two children were baptized there. After Pres House, we joined Christ Presbyterian in Madison.”

- Patricia R.

“I’ll always cherish memories of Bunny Bunny at Council meetings, playing games that were probably inappropriate for a church camp at Fall Retreat, and of course, sharing delicious meals together after service. To me Pres House has always been far more than a beautiful building — it’s a family, transcending time and space to be with you wherever your journey takes you.”

- Silas S.

“Fred and I met at Pres House in the fall of 1960. Both of us sang in the choir and found the faith community at Pres House to be a very special place. We were married in June, 1962 and moved to Youngstown, OH in 1964. Pres House continues to be an inspiration to everyone! Thank you!”

- Judy B.

“As an ordained Presbyterian Minister, I was thrilled to preach at your 4:30 Sunday service in September 2008. Because my services were over at noon that morning, it would be a tight schedule to arrive on time. Thankfully, the weather, I-94, our car, and maybe even the highway patrol all cooperated! We made it with 5 minutes to spare!”

- Gary H.

“Warren and I met at Pres House. We were married there in November 1958. Our reception was warm and friendly to all. Once again I am proud of PH in my life.”

- Kaye E.

“It was a privilege and a pleasure to be a part of the ‘rebirth’ of Pres House and welcoming Mark and Erica to Madison.”

- Bruce K.

“My husband (Doug) and I remember how we collected ingredients other Christ Presbyterian Church members would bring on Sunday mornings so we could take and serve a taco/burrito bowl on Sunday evenings at Pres House, and be part of that student Christian fellowship.”

- Norma M.

NEXT STEP SOBER HOUSING TURNS 10!

The Next Step Sober Housing program in the Pres House Apartments is celebrating its own anniversary this year. 10 years ago, a board member sent us a Madison Magazine news article spotlighting Tom Meyer and Aaron's House, a sober living community serving young adults in Madison. Our Director of Residential Community, Ginger Morgan, met with Tom to learn how we could add to the number of sober housing beds available, with a particular focus on UW Madison students in recovery. A generous donor gave \$50,000 to get our Next Step program started. Since then, we have supported 24 residents in their recovery and saved Wisconsinites more than \$800k in relapse related costs. 75% of our Next Step alumni report continued engagement in their recovery journey. They now work in nursing, engineering, IT, service industries, and nonprofits. At least three have become parents! This program literally changes lives. Donations to the 20-Year Celebration Fund will support additional scholarships for this program.



SPECIAL GIVING OPPORTUNITY

In celebration of this 20-year anniversary, Pres House is raising money for a special 20-Year Celebration Fund. We invite you to join generous donors who have already given to the fund by making a special gift that will support three very dynamic projects around Pres House.

The first is already complete – we have created a new display of the history of Pres House from 1907 through today. It traces some of the highlights of our buildings and programs over the last 117 years. The display has been installed in a landing area so all can see the remarkable history of Pres House. You'll find the same timeline that is now on the wall at Pres House printed here in this newsletter.

The second initiative the fund will support is additional scholarships for residents to live and participate in the Next Step Sober Housing program in the Pres House Apartments which is celebrating its own 10-year anniversary. Please see the story in this newsletter about this program that literally changes lives. The Fund will support more scholarships for residents in this program.

The third project we are hoping to make possible with this fund is a major update to the landscaping at Pres House. We commissioned a study of our garden area since it has been 17 years since any significant work was done on our plantings. Saiki Design did a wonderful job understanding who we are and what we are about at Pres House. And they took into account our desire to honor the native people who lived on these lands long before Pres House existed. They have designed a plan that will return our landscape to a historic oak savannah-based environment that will reintroduce native plants to Library Mall, encourage insects and butterflies to return, and demonstrate via plant communities that Pres House is a place committed to cultivating life together in community. This ambitious project will require significant investment to carry out, and we hope the 20-Year Celebration Fund will provide much of the initial funding to make this update possible.

We welcome your support for these projects through the 20-Year Celebration Fund. You can give via the enclosed envelope, with this QR code, or online at preshouse.org/donate. Make a note on the envelope or select "20-Year Celebration Fund" online to designate your contribution for this purpose.



Why?

College students are 250% more likely to be diagnosed with substance abuse/dependence than the general population.

Half of those students also report binge drinking with thoughts of suicide.



24

24 Young adults served over past ten years

75% Of Next Step alums report continuing in recovery

42% Of participants completed educational program while living in Next Step

\$827,520

Net economic benefit over 10 years

Studies have shown an annual benefit of \$20,688 per sober housing resident per year



\$190,000

Investment by Pres House

\$70,000 resident scholarships

\$120,000 program expense



Presbyterian
Student Center
Foundation

731 State St., Madison, WI 53703
608-257-1030
info@preshouse.org
preshouse.org | phapts.com | candiduw.org

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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Celebrating 20 Years of Ministry!

The year 2024 marks the 20-year anniversary of when pastors Erica Liu and Mark Elsdon moved to Madison with their infant daughter and joined in the effort to revitalize Pres House. Over the past two decades, they have worked with board members, alumni, donors, volunteers, and thousands of students to shape Pres House into the place that it is today. This special newsletter issue marks this anniversary and all that God has been doing at Pres House over the decades.



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.