



Chesterton House
ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

A Center for Christian Study at Cornell

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is hard to describe Chesterton House to someone who has never seen it. Reciting lists of programs, courses, speakers, social gatherings, and communal life, it simply isn't the same as seeing it in action.

It is to enter into an inviting and curious community so unlike distorted high-pressure elite academic life, toxic social media, and cancel culture. It is to be surrounded by Christians who explore their faith and integrate it with their vocation and academic work, reconceiving careerist projects in terms of kingdom renewal. At its best (though certainly not always) it can feel magical, like what a college experience is supposed to be.

That magic continued even through a pandemic year filled with restrictions. Our residential campus gave us a platform for vital in-person ministry and deep Christian formation. New students have joined this transformative experience and once again we filled over capacity in our women's houses, and had to turn away deserving students. Our events and short courses moved to Zoom, and we had a record number of people engaging with our content.

Students were exposed to a wider diversity of ideas and speakers than we historically have been able to provide, not just in the usual metrics of race and gender, but also by denomination and ideological perspectives. Online programming allowed our alumni to engage in events, and based on positive feedback we hope to continue these intergenerational conversations.

We are excited with the explosion of energy as students returned this fall. Thanks to our supporters, we look forward to serving this new generation of Cornell students coming to Ithaca. If you are in town, come by and visit to see the magic for yourself!



Vivek Mathew Ph.D. '19
Executive Director





THE CHESTERTON HOUSE

The power of a Christian center for culture, community, and intellectual exchange is immense. An outward-focused community marked by grace, hospitality, and a vibrant intellectual ethos is a positive alternative for social media-stressed students. It unites and amplifies existing campus ministries, drawing non-Christians into a welcoming *koinonia*, retaining its religious identity while seeking the common good of the campus.

A more powerful experience.



“Before Chesterton House, I was missing spaces where I could talk about hard questions of faith with people who actually knew me and those around them, living in daily rhythms of making dinner with each other in the evenings and running into one another early in the mornings. It really offers more resources for intellectual engagement with big questions of faith than ministries are usually able to provide.”

Hannah Master '23



YEAR AT A GLANCE

While the world turned topsy-turvy, we continued to serve our resilient community and provide a large array of cultural programming for Cornell's campus.

A HYBRID YEAR

We continued a fully in-person residential community life, mixed with virtual online events that included the wider Cornell community beyond the Knoll.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Alumni & student joint events via Zoom featured intergenerational learning and community

CHESTERTON HOUSE LECTURES

3,886

Recorded event viewings

1,254

Meals served

COURSE SPEAKERS

For our *God, Politics, and the Healing of the Nations* course, we featured a variety of different perspectives from orthodox scholars from very different traditions, including **Oliver O'Donovan (Edinburgh)**

DANTE AND THE MORAL LIFE

Eleonore Stump, PhD '75 led out short course.

THIS YEAR'S SPEAKERS

Our distinguished speakers for this year included:



Eleonore Stump, PhD '75



Oliver O'Donovan (Theology, Edinburgh)



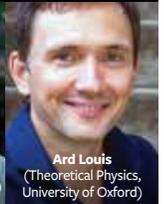
Ken Blanchard '61, PhD '67



Matthew Milliner (Art History, Wheaton)



William Newsome (Stanford, Neuroscience)



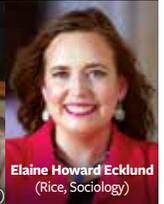
Ard Louis (Theoretical Physics, University of Oxford)



John Inazu (Wash. University, Law)



Jennifer Powell McNutt (Wheaton, Church History)



Elaine Howard Ecklund (Rice, Sociology)

REDISCOVERING G.K. CHESTERTON

We held a special conference on G.K. Chesterton which included speakers Matthew Milliner (Wheaton) and our own Dr. Hannah Eagleson.



2,983

Live event attendance

DEVELOPING DISCIPLINES FOR LIFE

Our community now features daily rhythms of prayer, communal scripture reading (thanks to the Grace and Mercy foundation) and shared meals.

UNIFYING CAMPUS MINISTRIES

With our tradition of hosting a prayer meeting for all campus ministers and local church pastors in one weekly gathering, we continue working to make campus fellowship groups and area churches more effective in their own work reaching students.

SERVING THE ENTIRE CAMPUS

We are unique in operating at every level of Cornell campus culture. From undergraduate and graduate, to staff and faculty, across all schools, undergraduate, graduate, and professional, we are the only Christian ministry with a presence in academic areas of the University. To take one instance, we had a very special event co-sponsoring Ken Blanchard '61 PhD '67 speaking on Servant Leadership at the Johnson Business School, with a special introduction by the Dean of the business school.

MERELY CHRISTIAN

We work with all orthodox Christians across denominational and cultural lines, from Pentecostal to high church, from Catholic and Orthodox to Protestant. This year we brought in Eleonore Stump PhD '75, a world leader in academic philosophy of religion and also a faithful and orthodox Catholic, as Prof. Stump led us in a mini-course on Dante's *Inferno*.

INTELLECTUALLY ENGAGED

Chesterton House has a long history of connecting our lived and embodied faith with our whole selves, including our minds. We sponsored a number of faith and science events, including William Newsome, director of the Stanford Neuroscience Center, and continuing with our Templeton Roundtable series of faculty-specific talks that invite non-Christian and Christian faculty to think together about big questions.

“Because of the demands of architecture students, I don’t have time to commit to Christian organizations. But being a part of the residential community opened a new possibility. Before living here I was pretty stagnant in the faith. But now it feels like coming home, sitting down at the table with brothers and sisters.”

Jeremy Huelin '21



Looking To The Future: GRACE IN AN AGE OF CANCEL CULTURE

With our tradition of intellectually focused ministry, we worked to model a charitable space to hear opposing views sympathetically. Our course on theology and politics this year brought in a wide variety of perspectives and traditions on some contentious issues. In an often intolerant American campus culture, we are counter-culturally moving the opposite direction.

A key strategic goal is to increase viewpoint diversity by increasing the number of outside speakers and visitors we bring in, giving many perspectives a place at the table while retaining a firm commitment to the historic creeds.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Our next large strategic need is to increase our women's residence capacity. Every year since its offering we have sadly had to turn away women who would otherwise experience an utterly transformative college year that could make the difference between a faith that grows and develops resilience and a faith that atrophies.

We have a fully drawn, permitted, and contractor-planned project ready to go. If we can get the remainder of the funding we need, we can construct this addition over the 2022 spring and summer and expand our women's residential capacity by **40%**, from **15** to **21** residents.

“One of the beautiful things about Chesterton House is how it brings people from all backgrounds, both really liberal and also really conservative together. It is truly diverse in terms of ways of seeing the world.”

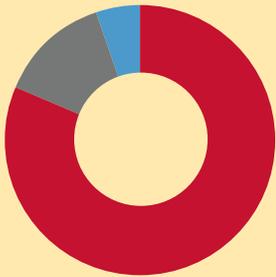


STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Chesterton House relies on the donations of hundreds of supporters at every level. Our institutional durability comes from mission-focused donors who are partners for the long haul. In an increasingly contentious environment, we no longer print our donors names in publicly available forums in order to protect them from targeted social media campaigns that might seek to cause reputational harm. We are so grateful for all our supporters and the financial gifts that keep us running.

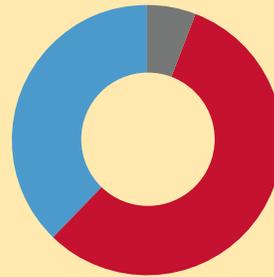
2021 FINANCIALS

EXPENSES



Program	\$ 490,571
Administration	\$ 81,697
Fundraising	\$ 30,268
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	\$ 602,536

INCOME



Annual Fund	\$ 373,693
Restricted Gifts	\$ 38,950
Service Revenue	\$ 249,139
Sales / Other	
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	\$ 661,781

Note: These figures represent the annual operations. Revenue and expenses associated with the Building for the Future Capital Campaign are not included. Some of the operating surplus was spent on capital improvements, not reflected in the expenses above.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2020-21

Dr. Fred Barber '87
Prof. Jonathan Butcher
Esther Lee Esq. '16
Andrea Lodge
Dr. Vivek Mathew PhD '19
Nelson Mead '81

“At the Johnson Christian Fellowship (JCF) we wondered how to inspire our MBA cohort to know Jesus. Chesterton House gave us the opportunity, partnering with Ken Blanchard speaking on servant leadership. It was one of the most broadly attended events we ever hosted. From start to finish, Chesterton House was fantastic to work with.”

Merle Mullet, MBA '21



Chesterton House

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www.chestertonhouse.org