

# Chesterton House

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



A Center for Christian Studies at Cornell



## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Much ink is spilled about newfound cultural ills, and elite campuses seem to give grist for the mill: record levels of social isolation, mental illness, affronts to dignity, barriers to equal access, a social-media fueled toxic cancel culture, and echo chambers of intolerance are now standard parts of a campus life that is effectively the front lines in cultural fragmentation.

Chesterton House offers an alternative model: a real and thriving community showing how things could be different. Communities like ours show how faithful and orthodox believers can be a redemptive presence in a divided world, offering hope for a better path through conflict.

Campus culture spreads out to the broader culture. So it isn't too far off to say that Chesterton House is one of a number of institutions that effectively serve as the church's R&D lab. As we launch innovative new programs like Chesterton Perspectives, the Logos Seminar, and the Public Reading of Scripture,<sup>1</sup> we are increasingly attracting interest from beyond Cornell, from being the subject of a three year research project<sup>2</sup> by psychologists and sociologists studying moral formation in our community, to a recent designation as an Oasis of Excellence for viewpoint diversity by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, an organization advocating for donor intent in higher education.

Yet Chesterton House is not primarily "programs" and "content". Rather, we nurture vibrant and hospitable communities of scholarship, inquiry, and growth centered around Jesus of Nazareth. It is these communities which do the real work, so to speak, providing myriad spaces of entry for Cornellians to engage with people, programs, and content.

And because it is at-bottom a ministry of personal connection rather than bureaucratic programming, it can speak directly to the larger, often unspoken longing of the soul, inviting students into the high adventure that is discipleship.

I truly believe that in the long run this will be the gospel's way forward through our most intractable conflicts.

Thank you for being a faithful partner with us in this work,



Vivek Mathew Ph.D. '19

Executive Director

<sup>1</sup> With support from the Grace and Mercy Foundation

<sup>2</sup> Funded by the John Templeton Foundation, led by Anselm House at University of Minnesota and a team of researchers at Baylor University









## THE CHESTERTON HOUSE

Change begins through personal contact rather than mass-produced programming. Cultural transformation comes through ripple effects of these contacts. We create many different spaces of encounter on campus that are unlike anything else, building communities that are integrated across intellectual, communal, and pastoral dimensions. The impact goes far beyond the nearly 4,000 attendees across our events. We create entire new cohorts of Christian relational networks that go on to leadership in all sectors of business, science, tech, law, media, arts, nonprofit, church and parachurch, etc.

**Changing the Culture.**



“Chesterton House was the first time that I ever encountered a living community that charitably listens and honestly seeks the truth. The Logos Seminar course sparked my curiosity about Christianity’s deep intellectual tradition and helped me see who I am in relation to God.”

Lydia Huang '24





# YEAR AT A GLANCE

With the “new normal” emerging this year, Chesterton House transitioned to be in-person for all our events with the exception of outside speakers. Here is a sample of some of the events we ran.

## BOOK CLUBS

Just Show Up Book Clubs: We had the opportunity to host several virtual gatherings for both alumni, as well as a separate one for faculty.



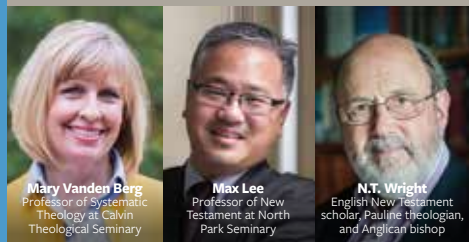

**244**  
Course enrollments since 2014

**2,518**  
Meals served

## THIS YEAR'S SPEAKERS

In the fall we built out our hybrid model of in-person attendance at the Knoll with a Zoom audience and speaker in our living room space. This allowed for one of the only intergenerational spaces of inquiry and discussion in Cornell, with in-person students and instructors joining with our supporters, alumni, and parents over Zoom.

Our distinguished speakers for this year included:



## PUBLIC READINGS

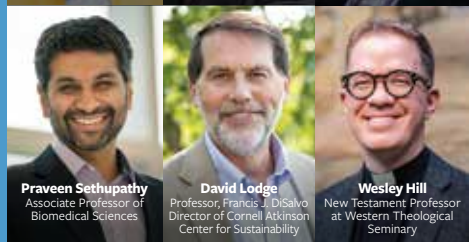
Weekly gatherings for Public Reading of Scripture at the Knoll.



**3,807**  
Total in-person event attendance

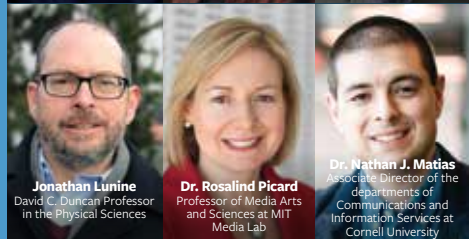
## CONNECTIONS

Connected graduate students with Christian faculty for mentorship and guidance.



## FACULTY GROUPS

Faculty reading groups were hosted for Augustine's *Confessions* and several Roundtables on Science and Religion.<sup>3</sup>



## ADVISING

Advised and supported the Christian student journal, *Claritas*.

# AN INTENSIVE RESIDENTIAL FORMATION

Chesterton House offers a residential program unlike any other in the nation, with Cornell students given the opportunity to experience the formational impact of a residential Christian college *within* a large, elite research University.

Our residential students are countercultural in their joyful commitment to a collective project in moral formation. Students voluntarily take on lifestyle covenants, engage in hospitality to neighbor, submit to mentorship and spiritual formation, connect in many communal meals, retreats, reading groups, noncredit courses, and collectively listen to the entire Bible in our Public Reading of Scripture programs.<sup>4</sup>

The Knoll, our two-acre residential campus off of Thurston Avenue, both serves as a home as well as a larger center and gathering point for all Christian ministries at Cornell. It also serves as a growing center for intellectual culture and community for many hundreds of Cornell students from across the larger Cornell campus. Our grace-based hospitality welcomes students from all backgrounds without compromising our religious identity.

The Knoll campus hosts a multitude of ministry groups who use our space. We offer support and advising to increase their impact for campus. We unify disparate ministry groups by hosting a regular prayer meeting bringing all campus ministries together with local church pastors in interceding for one another's ministries.

## AN EXCITING EXPANSION

Bursting at the seams with full houses, and after many years of turning down applicants for our residential program, we are approaching a major milestone as construction nears completion for our addition to our primary women's residence. This will accommodate six new women each year to join in the life-transforming residential campus experience. Special thanks to all our Capital Campaign supporters who made this possible.



“Chesterton House is an inspiration for what this world could be at its greatest. Without it, I could never know how good relationships could be, how deeply people love God, I could never know how important it was to a Christian to grow in holiness. It really filled my heart and helped to heal me in a very big way, even giving me a reason to

continue pressing on, a reason to live when I wasn't sure that there really is goodness in the world worth living for.”

<sup>3</sup> Supported by the John Templeton Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> With support from the Grace and Mercy Foundation.



## INTEGRATING FAITH AND THE MIND

This year we piloted the innovative Logos Seminar and Chesterton Perspectives series. These experimental programs respond to an increasingly tense campus climate riven by mutual suspicion and distrust by modeling a charitable engagement with viewpoint diversity. Such openness is increasingly rare in campuses where the vast majority of students report self-censoring.

The programs were very well received with some of the most positive feedback we've ever had from student participants. Strikingly, response was enthusiastic from both conservative and liberal participants alike.



“The Chesterton House is remarkable. At a time when American society seems to be polarizing and fragmenting, we are in urgent need of spaces where thoughtful and respectful engagement across party lines can take place. Sadly, many university and college campuses – the very places where such discussions should be commonplace – have become places where advocacy, and censorship, reign supreme. Thankfully, the Chesterton House is a place where ideological and intellectual opponents can talk to each other frankly about their views, can respectfully listen to each other, and – most important – can thoughtfully learn from each other.”

Carl R. Trueman  
Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies  
at Grove City College

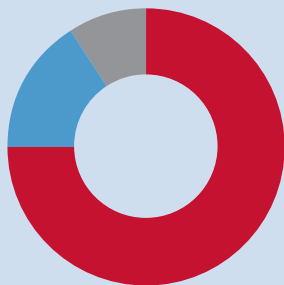


# STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Chesterton House relies on the donations of hundreds of supporters at every level. Our institutional durability comes from mission-focused donors who are long-term partners for the long haul.

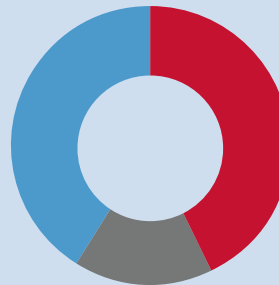
## 2021 FINANCIALS

### EXPENSES



Program	\$ 445,107
Administration	\$ 92,841
Fundraising	\$ 55,466
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	\$ 593,414

### INCOME



Annual Fund	\$ 275,032
Foundation Grants	\$ 101,500
Service Revenue	\$ 270,151
Sales / Other	
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	\$ 646,683

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

2021-22

Dr. Fred Barber '87  
Prof. Jonathan Butcher  
Esther T.J. Lee '16  
Andrea Lodge  
Dr. Vivek Mathew PhD '19  
Clifton Chang '96  
Ward Davis

“From the pre-orientation retreat to living on The Knoll for his junior and senior years, Chesterton House has been a part of our son’s Cornell journey from start to finish. We are so grateful for the light at Cornell that is Chesterton House, and for the opportunities it creates for dialogue and genuine community.”

Nick Papastavros  
A&S '90 and Vivian Lee



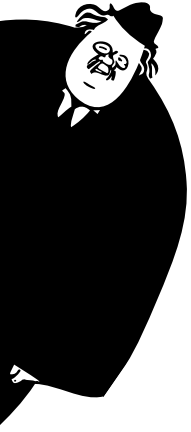


**Chesterton House**

PO Box 4405

Ithaca, New York 14852-4405

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