

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

A CONVERSATION WITH MICHELLE ATKINSON

September 2013

Though Michelle doesn't remember how she first came to know about the Center she thought, "This place is hip and cool." She came for the conversations and the coffee but eventually realized there were classes to take. It was a friend who convinced her that the director's class was "right up her alley" as she loved thinking about ideas, discussing books and relating what she was studying to her faith.



Despite an environment that was somewhat hostile to her Christian faith, Michelle found great joy in studying English literature at University of Florida. "You learn about your classmates and what they think, as literature is reflection of life." One class on religious conversions in literature was particularly

challenging. Hearing so many others' critical analysis, much of it against Christianity, was part of what brought her to a crossroads in her faith. "It is very difficult to know how to honor Christ in an environment like that," Michelle states.

In contrast to her academic experience, in some of her church and ministry experiences she found that her critical thoughts, questions and doubts were unwelcome. She usually received pat answers like "Well, his ways are higher than ours" or "You just have to have faith." Michelle had just about decided she would have to "pretend" that her faith was simple, and that her intellectual struggles didn't matter.

She was relieved when the director's class on Pascal enabled her to see that the Christian faith is intellectually compelling. The class encouraged Michelle to understand that her mind was not a hindrance to faith, but rather an asset to it.

*“The Center values wrestling with ideas and being willing to have honest conversations with people with whom they disagree.” Michelle adds, “Thinking and studying can be a form of worship.”*

She also gained an appreciation for framing her thoughts through the lens of scripture. Dr. Horner's *What Frames What?*\* perspective helped her immensely. Michelle learned to ask, "Is the gospel framing this when I look at this or that author or philosopher?"

However, the Center does not only care about the students' intellectual growth. She has formed great memories, had meetings with friends where she has made deep  
*Continued on page 2*

\* The concept of "What Frames What?" with an article by Dr. Richard Horner may be found in *Reconsiderations* volume 5, number 1, October 2005, "What Frames What?" on our website at [christianstudycenter.org](http://christianstudycenter.org)

*Conversation with Michelle Atkinson, continued from page 1*

connections, made wonderful discoveries in the Scriptures and been able to be honest and vulnerable with others. “I’ve also had the most loving work environment I’ve ever been in as a barista at Pascal’s coffeehouse” declares Michelle. “Believe it or not, being a barista is not so simple at first. All my co-workers were so understanding and encouraging.



When the process finally clicks you wonder why it ever seemed hard. However my tenure was rather short as this summer God called me to serve the young women in the youth group at Creekside Church.”

Michelle doesn’t know what her future will hold when she graduates next year. She’s thought about teaching high school or perhaps counseling. One thing is sure,

“You’ve accomplished the Center’s mission in me. People who give to this place are doing something big.”

## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The Christian Study Center has been facilitating the thoughtful consideration of a Christian understanding of life and culture to the university community for over twelve years now and we are pleased to serve you, as we serve the university.

We hope you will enjoy the speakers at our continuing *Seeing Justice, Seeking Justice* series. The Honorable Kevin Blazs joins us Thursday, November 7 on the topic of retribution, restoration and reconciliation in doing justice.

Professor Richard Hays, Duke Divinity School, will join us on January 30 to speak on New Testament justice. His books include *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* and *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture*.

Professor Miroslav Volf, Yale Divinity School, will be at the Center on February 20 to speak on public faith and global justice and reconciliation. His books include *Exclusion and Embrace*, *Allah: A Christian Response*, and *A Public Faith: On How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. The Center has utilized his books in its reading groups.

Though we recently refreshed our logo and developed a new brochure, our core commitments remain the same:

*While the Center’s guests represent a broad range of viewpoints, the Study Center roots its work in the Christian faith as articulated in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as summarized in the early creeds of the Christian Church.*

*In keeping with its Christian commitment, the Study Center takes a conversational approach to its educational program and promotes academic freedom. We seek to enlarge and extend conversations rather than narrow or end them, and we gladly share our lectern with those who share our questions- whether or not they share our Christian commitments.*

*The Study Center supports higher education, affirms critical thinking, works collaboratively with the University of Florida, and seeks to contribute to the intellectual life of the university community. In all it does the Study Center promotes human flourishing and serves the common good.*

We have also posted *new* videos about the Center so that you may be in touch with what you are supporting and what we are accomplishing together! Thank you to Two-Head Video (DJ and Mary Beth Head) and to John Sommerville whose generosity made this important project a reality.

See CSCGainesville on Youtube to access the videos, or check our website. Do be aware that our website is being renovated and may not be fully available at various times.

### CONNECT WITH US

352-379-7375

info@christianstudycenter.org

christianstudycenter.org

facebook.com/christianstudycenter

youtube.com/cscgainesville

twitter.com/cscgainesville

# NEWS & NOTES

## *Hellos and goodbyes*

Two new baristas, Todd and Jenna, join the team of Caryn, Savannah, and Kathleen under the faithful management of Juan Alcala. Pascal's continues to be a thriving example of hospitality and great coffee.

We are delighted that Laurie Goddard is our graduate assistant this year. She is even found behind the bar once in awhile.

Hello to Breck Strawbridge, our buildings and grounds supervisor. No one is happier than Nora!

Welcome to new board members, Vicki Sarajedini, Associate Professor Astronomy at UF, and Nick Dunn, Donations Manager and Volunteer Coordinator at Christians Concerned for the Community.

Hello also to Laura Hogan, a PR major who will be assisting us with our social media and other activities.

Congratulations to Allison Dunn who received her PhD in engineering and has an appointment at UF. Her husband Nick, a new board member, and she attended our first class in the fall of 2001.

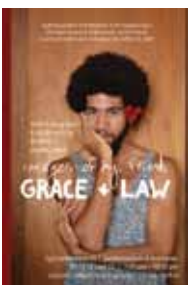
We sorrowfully said goodbye to "old-timers" Trevor and Melissa Richards and baby Abigail. Trevor received his PhD in Mathematics and Trevor began a position at Virginia Tech. Melissa completed an MA in Religion and Nature.

We will also miss Lauren Glenn, who moved to Texas to teach with husband Chris, daughter Madison and new son, Zeke.

## *Cool Breezes*

Florida without air conditioning is not a happy place! We are delighted with our 4 new air conditioning units. We are almost one third of the way to our goal of \$30,000. Will you help us? Checks, donations via PayPal, or stock donations will be gladly received.

Contact us at [info@christianstudycenter.org](mailto:info@christianstudycenter.org) or 352-379-7375 for more information. For those who have helped already: THANK YOU.



## *Featured Artist*

Larry Rosalez is our featured artist this fall with a photo exhibit, *Images of My Friends: Grace and Law*, in the Nathan Johnston Memorial Gallery.



112 NW 16th Street  
Gainesville, FL 32603

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
GAINESVILLE, FL  
PERMIT NO. 1

## Seeing Justice, Seeking Justice, Part III

### UPCOMING LECTURES AT THE CSC:

- 10/3 "What Do Christians Say About Eating Animals?" 5:15pm  
*Ana Peterson, Professor of Religion, UF*
- 10/24 "Confused Consumers: What Is the True Cost of Our Food?" 5:15pm  
*Tim Schubert, Plant Pathologist, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*
- 11/7 "Doing Justice: Retribution and Restoration in Criminal Sentencing" 4:15pm  
Room 80, Levin College of Law  
"Crime, Punishment and the Ministry of Reconciliation" 7:15pm  
*The Honorable Kevin Blazs, Florida Fourth Circuit Court*

Please check our website for information on reading groups and the director's class, as well as links to our podcasts.

This newsletter is a publication of the Christian Study Center of Gainesville which facilitates the thoughtful consideration of a Christian understanding of life and culture in the university community.



112 NW 16th Street  
Gainesville, FL 32603

352 - 379 - 7375  
[christianstudycenter.org](http://christianstudycenter.org)

Dr. Richard V. Horner  
*Executive Director*

Laura Lynch  
*Newsletter Editor*