

CONTRIBUTING TO SOMETHING LARGER

AN INTERVIEW WITH NORA AVERY, OFFICE MANAGER

By Laura Lynch

NORA, WHO HAS SERVED THE CHRISTIAN STUDY CENTER FULL-TIME FOR OVER TEN YEARS NOW, IS A GREAT RESOURCE AND ASSET TO THE CSC. Although she prefers to be behind the scenes she shared a few thoughts about her work with us.

How did you come to be involved with the CSC ?

From the beginning of the Study Center in the late 1990s, I followed its development and found myself intrigued with the idea of possibly working there if a need arose. When Dr. Horner came to the Study Center as its Director in the summer of 2001, I saw an opportunity to volunteer. Initially I helped with their mailing list and donor database, which led to picking up assignments from Dr. Horner and working on them at home. This turned into a paid part time position which eventually allowed me to leave my other employment at Santa Fe College and accept full time employment with the Study Center in January 2005.

What attracted you to this work? What kinds of experiences prepared you for the work?

I have always enjoyed the administrative duties required in an office setting, especially the organizational skills required. I was president of a 150 family home school support group in Gainesville which included overseeing interaction and communication between small groups, developing and maintaining a resource and guidelines handbook, maintaining membership records, and meeting with our lobbyist from Tallahassee. I have also worked as an administrative assistant in IFAS at UF and in the Director's Office at Shands Hospital. While living in on a kibbutz in Israel I worked in Tel-Dor, their wire and cable factory, until they discovered I had been a secretary in the States. I'm not sure filing and typing in Hebrew prepared me for this job, but it did add to



the affirmation that my being a "secretary" was not just a job or something I enjoyed, but was a part of what God wanted me to do with my life. It also affirmed that having an organized person working behind the scenes can free up those in leadership positions to focus on what they are doing.

How have you seen things change over the years?

I have observed a gradual shift in the community and university from one of skepticism to one of acceptance and possibly even appreciation of the Study Center's existence. This is an answer to much prayer and also, I think, due to Dr. Horner's gentle and respectful interaction with those who do not agree with or understand what we do and with those of completely different faiths. The coffee bar seems to have gone from being a Christian Clubhouse to a place where everyone feels welcome, respected, and comfortable. On a pragmatic level, we no longer have to do a lot of the maintenance or upkeep ourselves, like plunging toilets, checking the attic for rodents, and spending Saturday mornings weeding or trimming trees.

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The Center is focusing on Faith and Vocation on the next few years. Has your view of work as a calling changed over the years? If so, how?
My view of work as a calling has not changed since I became a follower of Christ in 1979. I have always felt that as a believer I need to do what God is asking me, not do what I want to do and ask God to bless it. I have to admit it is pretty easy to be doing what I enjoy doing in this beautiful location with a group of fellow believers, to say nothing of the availability of delicious coffee downstairs.

What are some of your favorite parts of your job?

I enjoy most all aspects of being a secretary. I like being busy and of having a sense that I am contributing to something bigger. I also like hearing the hum of conversation drifting into my office from the main part of the building. I enjoy interacting with students and being a support to the organization.

Care to share any of your least favorite parts?

Probably my least favorite part of my work is the lack of time to start and finish a task in one sitting. Some days I feel as if I'm playing that carnival game called whack-a-mole. I also wish I could find time to learn new things or update my knowledge of the software used daily and to keep up with changing technical information about computers. I can still do simple things like switch out a hard drive, but keeping on top of the swiftly changing technology is getting more difficult.

You interact with an incredible variety of people in your work with the Center. Do you have any stories you'd like to share with our readers?

I do interact with a wide variety of people from our homeless man, Jim, who used to live on the back side of our building with his little TV and a bunch of other things plugged into our electrical outlet to the visiting well known guest lecturers

from other universities. I enjoy the opportunity to learn something from each person who comes in the door. I will unashamedly admit that some of the lectures given by our guest speakers might as well have been in Chinese, but there was always something I could take away.

What are some of the benefits you've seen for students who are involved in the CSC?

Over the years I've observed students come to programs at the Study Center first as keen but somewhat confused students and exit a few years later with a newly shaped confidence in their faith. I think this comes from being encouraged to ask hard questions about religion, scripture, and their faith without fear of being brushed off or belittled.

How has the Center impacted you and influenced your faith as it does the students?

When I started working here my faith was strong due to being in a doctrinally solid church for over twenty years which was pastored by two godly and gifted men. What the Study Center reaffirmed to me was that Christians can be thinking people, have intelligent conversations, discuss current issues and difficult topics, and interact with those of different faiths or lifestyles without having to have the last word.

You've been at the CSC for nearly 15 years. What might the CSC be like in 15 more years?

I would hope that what has been built and established over time will continue on: that the good relationships with the university and the community will grow and that students will continue to find their faith or have their faith affirmed as they pass through the Study Center's doors and go out to establish careers and areas of influence of their own.

UPDATE ON UNDERGRADUATE SEMINARS ON FAITH AND VOCATION

Applications will open soon for our 2015-2016 Student Seminars on Faith and Vocation. We will be expanding from five tracks to eight tracks. These programs entail once a semester group gatherings and then two to three gatherings at a mentor/leader's home for dinner, readings, discussion and leadership that is specific to the chosen track. For 2014-2015 Tom Nelson's book, *Work Matters*, laid the foundation for discussion and provided a solid redemptive/historical framework for thinking about work. Biblical texts such as Ecclesiastes and the Great Commandment did similar work.

Please watch for our 2015-2016 application on the CSC website. These are small group interactions and last year we did have to turn away qualified students. With the expansion to eight tracks this year we look forward to serving the needs of more students!

CONNECT WITH US

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NEWS & NOTES

2015 FLORIDA INSTITUTE ON FAITH AND VOCATION: THE WORK ITSELF

Speaker: Dr. James K.A. Smith, professor of philosophy at Calvin College

Thursday May 21- Sunday May 24. Registration is now OPEN for our institute on Faith and Vocation. Don't miss it. Dr. Smith is the author of the acclaimed book *Desiring the Kingdom*. He has written more than 20 books over a wide range of topics such as: *The Devil Reads Derrida: and Other Essays on the University, the Church, Politics and the Arts*; *Speech and Theology: Language and Logic of Incarnation*; *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences*; and *Who's Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood*. Our conference runs Thursday evening through Saturday evening then ends with a special lunch on Sunday for alumni. Go to christianstudycenter.org to register.

CELEBRATIONS

This year will mark our office administrator's tenth year full-time with the CSC.

We are also celebrating Terry Henry's fifteenth year as custodian. He was the very first member of the team, even predating our director.



We have been greatly blessed by the longevity and unity of our staff.

HELP WANTED

Are you local? Would you be willing to host individuals, couples, or families that might want to come to **The 2015 Summer Institute on Faith and Vocation?**

Please contact Laura Lynch at 352.317.8835 or laura@christianstudycenter.org if so. Thank you!

Have you noticed our plants?

We are still looking for a volunteer gardener. Someone stopped by but we don't know who you are...won't you come by again?

HELP FOUND

We are delighted to have Macey Valenti assist with student lunches this year.

Rebekah Clow has volunteered to care of our library. Thank you!

DOUBLE YOUR GIFT

Did you know the CSC has received more than \$10,000 from employer/company matching gifts last year? Your company may participate. Many large and mid-size secular companies will match employee gifts to non-profit organizations.

A BLOG? YES, FINALLY!

You waited and waited and waited. Now there is **"The CSC Interchange: compassionate conversation, candid exchange of ideas."** We hope you will participate.

PODCASTS

Our audio resources are available for you 24/7. On our website click on "Resources" then "Audio." You may download on your device or computer or subscribe via iTunes. Many of our friends enjoy listening in their cars when traveling or commuting.



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Coming Up at the Christian Study Center

Everyone is Welcome!

PUBLIC LECTURES

Money was Made for Man, Not Man for Money:

Viewing Wealth Through the Lens of the Sabbath

David Massias, CEO of Shadow Health

Thursday, March 19, 6:00 p.m.

Are We Called? Rehabilitating a Notion in Disrepair

Richard Gunderman, M.D., Ph.D., Professor and Vice Chair,

Department of Radiology, Indiana University

Tuesday, April 7, 7:30 p.m.

2015 Summer Institute On Faith And Vocation: The Work Itself

Dr. James K.A. Smith, Professor of Philosophy, Calvin College

May 21, 7:30 p.m. This opening lecture will be at Creekside Community Church.

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.



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