

## COFFEE, CRAFT & COMMUNITY

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUAN ALCALA, *manager of Pascal's Coffeehouse, an initiative of the Christian Study Center*

*What first attracted you to the CSC in your days as a student?*

I've met students over the years who were attracted to either Pascal's or the CSC. I feel that I was unique in that I was drawn to both from the beginning. I first learned about the CSC at the end of 2009, when my commitment to Christian faith was still new. I considered myself a thoughtful person, so the CSC's commitment to a serious and considered faith appealed to me. During those first years, I learned with powerful satisfaction that Christian faith, the faith I was coming to love, was a reasonable framework for understanding the world.

What drew me to Pascal's was the Cuban Latte, which we now call the 12 Ounce Cuban Espresso with Milk. Being Venezuelan, my family introduced me to coffee at age 8. No matter how deep into craft coffee I go, I'll always enjoy what we drank as a family. Before Pascal's Cuban Latte, I had never tasted anything so similar to what I drank growing up with mom and dad. Those daily morning rituals were so dear to me that when I found a drink that evoked those memories, I wasn't turning back.

*Having been a barista and manager of Pascal's previously, what drew you back to become manager again?*

I left Pascal's for the Trinity Fellows Academy in Maryland without any intention of returning. During my fellowship as a writer-in-residence, I sought to provide an answer to the question "What is the unique way we know through story as opposed to reason or logic?" For me this meant writing fiction, which turned into a novel, and a series of essays about Jesus' parables and his rationale for using them. Along the way, my interest for coffee increased, as did my energy for creating the kind of space we seek to create at Pascal's, one focused on craft, community, and conversation.

At the same time, my wife (my fiancée then) was finishing her undergraduate studies at UF. We wanted to get married that summer, find work, and begin our lives together. The position at Pascal's came my way and it became clear that spending the first couple of years of marriage in a town we both knew was the wise thing to do. So we settled in Gainesville, and I got to exercise these growing interests.

*Some people come into Pascal's and have no idea that the Christian Study Center exists and that Pascal's is part of it. Elaborate.*

I think various reasons exist for why people only notice Pascal's, despite the fact that the sign out front says Christian Study Center too. The most obvious reason is that almost everybody makes a habit of seeking out coffee shops. Folks walk in, purchase a coffee or pastry, and then they get on with their lives: meeting with friends, studying, and so forth.

The CSC demands more. It demands that you interrupt the flow of your day to pay attention to something you weren't expecting. Our culture is caught in a current — a current created by technological advances, social media overload, and a FOMO (fear of missing out) economy — that allows people to engage in a lot all at once. This can be great, but I think it comes with a cost; namely, an increasing unwillingness to think deeply. And that's what the CSC demands. Thought. Deep thought that involves questions about God and human meaning. So even if someone catches a glimpse of CSC



material while at Pascal's, if they're caught in this current, they may overlook it. We have a hard enough time getting customers to read our menu, let alone an article, a journal, or a book.

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As an institution, I'm sure we could do better to thicken the relationship between Pascal's and the CSC, and we'll continue to take initiatives toward this end.

### *Is there anything distinctive about the fact that Pascal's is part of a Christian study center?*

Pascal's seeks to be the embodiment of a Christian understanding of life. We ask questions like: How should we think of craft? How should people who work together treat each other? What is a coffee-house's role in a community? With regard to craft, we are convinced that this world belongs to God and not to us, and that he has laid out certain criteria for work. We make decisions by asking does this work honor God? Does it honor other people? Does it honor the land and the created order?

So when it comes to coffee, we care about our roasters and how they interact with coffee farmers.

When it comes to food, we care about what ingredients our bakers use. When it comes to flavor, we care about how something tastes and we like to combine ingredients to create new flavors. We keep these questions in front of us constantly because of our Christian faith.

In this way, the CSC provides Pascal's with the resources to engage the community with its craft. Pascal's, in turn, displays what a robust Christian understanding of craft, community, and work can look like.

### *How do you fit into the neighborhood as a whole?*

I think of our neighborliness in two directions. The first is our general way of relating to the Gainesville community more broadly and the University of Florida and our College Park/University Heights neighborhood more specifically. The second is the way we relate to other businesses. Both of these kinds of relationships are governed by our understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, Jesus took on our flesh, our limitations, our temptations, engaged in our world. In the same way, we want to be a part of our community. We want to participate in the Gainesville community, speak its language, know its culture, sympathize with its loves and frustrations in a way that says, "We are here to enter your world." We call this human incarnation. On the other hand, Jesus' incarnation was a doorway to the divine, to God. He opened himself up and allowed for others to enter his world. This invitation is meant to be enticing rather than coercive. It says, "This is our vision of the world. You can dwell here as long as you like. We hope you find it true and beautiful like we do." This we call Christian hospitality. In these two ways, human incarnation and Christian hospitality, both of which we



find in Christ, we want to relate to our neighborhood.

### *What are some examples of this way of thinking?*

One tangible expression of Christian hospitality is our menu. We serve what we would want to consume. We work with bakers, roasters, suppliers, and other vendors who are either already part of the Gainesville community or doing their work in a manner consistent with our views of craft. We ensure that these partners share our vision for food, drink, and flavor. We feature the Vine's (local bread bakery) sourdough bread, which they make from a starter dough that they've been cultivating for years. We love to share their craft with our community, and because of our commitment to the well-being of our customers, we also choose to use Turbinado sugar, which is the initial pressing of sugar cane, one

of the least processed sugars. This is the sort of decision we make based on the idea of Christian hospitality.

Most importantly, Christian hospitality and incarnation shape the tone we set. Tone within a space is often hard to measure, but we aim for, "Welcome. We're glad you're here. Take, eat, drink. Here's what we're thinking and talking about. This is important to us. Come join the conversation. We think that you, too, will find that this matters."

### *What kind of changes have you seen in the coffeehouse since you first came as a patron, then as a barista, and now as a manager?*

We've been honing this vision of incarnation the entire time. It's slowly seeping into the details of what we do. I don't think the vision has changed. It's simply become more evident, from the way we converse behind and across the bar to the way we choose what we serve. We've grown as an institution. I joined a team of 4 baristas in 2011. I now manage a team of 14. The growth has been remarkable, and we believe that it is due to our community picking up on our vision and wanting to be a part of it. When you think about it, it's easy to see why people get so excited about what we do- good food and drink, important face-to-face conversations about human meaning- this is the stuff most fundamental to what it means to be human. ☺

#### CONNECT WITH US

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# NEWS & NOTES

## PASCAL'S



**PASCAL'S COFFEEHOUSE HAS NEW HOURS.** For those who couldn't come during the week day, you now have the opportunity to enjoy the great coffee and atmosphere in the evenings and on Saturdays.

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Monday–Thursday	8 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Friday	8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saturday	8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

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Pascal's has been busy with patrons, and several new baristas have been hired over the last several months to join Caroline, Honesty, Cassidy, Lauren, Stephanie, Daniel, and Juan, the manager. They include Rachel Howard, Becca Maguire, Kate Gaines, Anna Molinaro, Andrew Fiore, Sarah Yoder and Tucker Scruggs. We've said good bye to Ethan Brown, Rachel Hart, Scott Trinkle and Amy Clear. We are blessed with a wonderful group of students who work hard, honor their craft and serve their customers with genuine care.



### Giving Assistant and AmazonSmile

**DO YOUR REGULAR ONLINE SHOPPING** through the 1,828 stores associated with **Giving Assistant** and you will be able to support the Christian Study Center with a portion (or all) of your cash back earnings. Donations are made automatically. Like **AmazonSmile**, but the percentages are higher! But we love AmazonSmile too!



## CSC

### Fall Travel

- ♦ **OCT. 3-5** Dr. Horner and Juan Alcala, Pascal's manager will be attending the CMTEV Gathering (Campus Ministry Theological Exploration of Vocation) in Indianapolis, IN
- ♦ **OCT. 29-30** Dr. Horner will present on a panel about the ways that para-university institutions like the CSC can influence higher learning at the Baylor Conference on Higher Learning in Waco, TX
- ♦ **NOV. 13-16** Dr. Horner will consult with MacLaurin CSF (Christian Student Fellowship) and present a talk at their Christian study center in St. Paul, MN

### Miscellany

**FAREWELL** to our faithful building superintendent, Breck Strawbridge who is moving on to his own career. We welcome David Lynch who will take on Breck's responsibilities.

## FALL ARTIST IN THE NATHAN JOHNSTON MEMORIAL GALLERY: VICTORIA WHEATON

"Before my junior year at UF while working at a children's arts camp, another local artist saw a piece of mine and encouraged me to be more intentional in my work... During this time, my creativity was both broadened and sharpened, and now I am constantly learning new techniques and mediums.... I truly feel closest to my Creator when I am creating. I create because God creates.



This past summer, while I was working on the pieces displayed here, I kept hearing about the traumatic and devastating events happening in our country and around the globe. There was so much negativity going around that I felt as though the goal for my pieces should be to foster an atmosphere of positivity and a sense of light, because I believe that even in dark times, there is an ever-present light."



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#### UPCOMING EVENTS:

*All meetings in CSC classroom*

#### **Works in Progress**

**Part Three, *Pascal and the (Post)Modern*, Richard Horner**

- Friday, October 21, 1-2 p.m. — “The Fate of God in the Modern Age, Part Two: The New Atheism,” Chapter 7
- Friday, November 18, 1-2 p.m. — “The Aesthetic Turn,” Chapter 8

#### **Readings in Faith and Culture**

- Wednesday, October 12, 1-2 p.m. *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* by Andy Crouch. Led by Chipper Flaniken, Pastor at City Church
- Wednesday, November 9, 1-2 p.m. *Confident Pluralism: Surviving and Thriving through Deep Difference* by John D. Inazu. Led by Chris Musgrove, Director of CRU at UF

#### **Director’s Class (for undergraduate and graduate students)**

“Creative in the Image of God” Theological Reflections on Imagination and Creativity

- Wednesdays, 11:45 am - 12:35 p.m. Lunch provided

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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