

CHRISTIAN STUDY CENTER *of* GAINESVILLE

Facilitating the thoughtful consideration of a Christian understanding
of life and culture in the university community

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Collaborative Efforts



One of the questions I asked myself several years ago was whether I genuinely believe in scholarship and higher education or just in the scholarship and teaching that I do? I now answer that question by attending several events sponsored by other organizations each year: academic departments, centers of higher learning, museums, campus ministries, etc.

Last year these included a lecture on campus sponsored by the Undergraduate Student Philosophy Association, in which a UF professor of religion talked about the fictitious self of Hindu thought. This excellent presentation not only got me thinking about the self in our late-modern setting, it also made me struggle with how I would address the question of the self in the Christian tradition. It did just the sort of work that a good talk should do, whether on the south side of the Avenue or at our place.

At the end of the lecture as I was chatting with members of the audience, the speaker walked by and asked, "Aren't you the guy with the study center across the street?" "Yes," I responded, to which he said, "Good. We need to talk. I am bringing a speaker to town that I think you might find interesting."

We were interested, and the speaker, whose talk we co-sponsored with the Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions and who teaches comparative religion at Harvard, gave a fascinating talk on theological poetics in Hindu and Christian thought.

Prior to the talk I considered making some clarifying introductory comments on what's involved in comparative religion so as to guard against the all-too-common idea that religions are interchangeable parts whose differences are of no great consequence, but then I rightly backed off, welcomed everyone, and got out of the way. The speaker then stepped up and made some of the same comments that I had thought of making and did so far more eloquently than I ever could have done.

It was an excellent event. It deepened my own understanding of the Psalms and also created fertile ground for interaction across religious lines. Just the sort of thing we want to do as a Study Center.

The fact that this event came to us by the initiative of one of the faculty in the University's Department of Religion was especially satisfying. Part of our vision over the years has been that our friends on the south side of the Avenue would not only accept our initiatives to work with them but would actually reach out to us. I am deeply grateful for the initiative of this colleague and hope we can continue to explore these collaborative efforts that have always been central to the Study Center's contribution to the life of the University. We are always interested in creating a genuine, open conversation around enduring, shared questions, and there is no better way to do this than working collaboratively with our friends in the University.

I will admit, however, it is hard to find the audience for this sort of thing. We struggle on two fronts. One, the secular university is not inclined to attend events that take our Christian theological framework seriously. Two, most Christians are used to coming to events where they know they already agree with whatever the speaker is going to say, and they wonder why they should bother to come to a talk that takes some other viewpoint seriously. Since we are committed to genuine conversation, we invite guests with opposing views to speak from our lectern and not just sit in our audience. That places the onus on us to listen well and engage compassionately. Turns out, this is an unusual approach, but I remain convinced that it is part of the distinctive calling of the Christian Study Center.

- Richard V. Horner



READING GROUPS AND LECTURES



Readings in Faith & Culture and Spring Institute:
We continue to offer resource presentations and discussions to a community of ministers and leaders in local churches and campus organizations. The aim is for the people who attend to be enriched not only by the resources presented, but also by the practical conversations that emerge in discussion and by the relationships built through bringing this group together regularly.

The commitment and interests of this group inspired our 2017 Spring Institute, a day-long seminar on “Recovering the Human: Medieval Spirituality for

the Late-Modern Church.” This institute served to deepen relationships between churches, community leaders, and the Study Center. Our speaker, Chris Armstrong (Ph.D., Duke University), an author and the director of “Opus: The Art of Work” at Wheaton College, brought his expertise in medieval history to guide clergy and ministry leaders to work out their faith in late modern times by recovering the medieval mind on practical issues of spirituality and human life.

The Christian Study Center has provided a place to develop what it means to live a faithful life in an increasingly complex world. The CSC not only provides timely material and discussions to live a thoughtful and intentional Christian life, but also provides meaningful interactions with a community of people who are engaged in answering these challenging questions (or exploring these challenging topics). These are spaces that my regular ministry context just doesn't allow me to pursue to the extent I desire. I am always learning and growing in conversations that the CSC creates. I appreciate the fellowship and the ability to come in unsure and verbally process... I feel like it's a safe place to grow and figure things out in a world that is very unsafe for verbal processing and figuring things out. I'm grateful for the way the CSC has served me and, by extension, the ministry I serve these past six years.

- Chris



Works in Progress:

The Study Center always seeks to encourage scholars in their work and to give opportunities for others to benefit from and interact with that work. This past year we enjoyed hearing both Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor, Department of Religion at UF, present her work on “Ramanuja and His Successors: The Centrality of Devotion and Grace in One Hindu Tradition” and Karin Fields present her PhD work, “A Phenomenological Look at Adoptive Nesting to Prepare for Adoptive Motherhood.”



Reading Groups:

The Study Center offers reading groups that explore important works of historic or contemporary Christian thought or works of scholarship that explore contemporary social change. Todd Best and Tim Schubert led a discussion group around select readings called “Technology and the Self, Technology and Ourselves,” and Richard Horner led discussion on Alain de Botton’s *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer’s Guide to the Uses of Religion*.



THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

Director's Class: Every semester the Study Center's Executive Director offers a weekly 50 minute class or discussion group designed to help students think through the intellectual challenges created by the intersection of Christian faith and learning in a university setting. The class continues to engage both current students and alumni across the country and the world. One of those alumni recently sent the following encouraging note.

I just want to send a quick note expressing my thanks for what you've done and continue to do at the Study Center. I've listened to the podcasts ever since podcasting became a thing. I love to listen to the conversation and to the unconventional topics you all cover.

A friend and I have facilitated a Sunday adult education class for two years, and I tend to model what we do after the type of things you do at the Study Center. This past semester we facilitated a class on secular humanism, and we listened to portions of your "The Fate of God in the Modern Age" series. I used it as one of my central guides as I was planning. The class went very well. We had some great conversation about the "culture of possibilities," ending with thinking through what is most compelling when we get in conversations with people about the big questions. We challenged some of our thinking and helped people to challenge themselves and think outside the box a bit.

What you all do at the Study Center reaches further than the University of Florida. I want to thank you for your ministry there and beyond, even to Boulder County, Colorado! -Steve



MFA Thesis Presentations: Since it is important to us to affirm students in the work they do and encourage them in professional development, we enjoy giving students the opportunity to present their work at the Study Center. Last spring, two Fine Arts students from the director's class, Mallory and Paige, presented their masters theses in sculpture and ceramics.

In the Fall of 2016, Dr. Horner invited me and my friend, Mallory, to attend the director's class that he would be teaching, "Creative in the Image of God." This class really sparked my interest as an artist and graduate student in the School of Art and Art History at UF. I was excited to talk about art in the context of belief in God for a change especially going into my thesis year at UF. My art work was directly about my faith in Christ and how it affects my worldview. While I felt supported in my program at UF, God was not something that came up in conversation among classmates. So Mallory and I attended the class and began to get involved with CSC. Dr. Horner was such an encouragement and source of knowledge. It was so encouraging to come together with people of like minds to have serious conversations about God, art, and how we maneuver in the world in which we live. Some of the things that



I learned at the CSC even showed up in my thesis paper. The CSC was very supportive of me and my work. The CSC even gave me and Mallory the opportunity to present our thesis papers at the CSC to receive feedback from people in the community and show the work in Pascal's. I am thankful for the CSC because it revealed to me that there are Christians in academia and they can contribute to conversations. I wish I had gotten involved in it sooner! I learned that it is important to get involved with people in academia who share your beliefs in order to build one another up in the faith so that we can go out and let our light shine - so make time for it! It will have an impact on your college studies and experience in ways that you may not ever imagine! -Paige



FAITH AND VOCATION



Undergraduate Seminars on Faith and Vocation: The spring of 2017 was our last semester of this version of our seminars for undergraduate students. Thirty-eight students enjoyed reading, discussion, and meals in the homes of local professionals who mentored them. Students were divided into five vocational tracks:

- Church-Based and Non-Profit Christian Ministries
- Counseling, Psychology and Helping Professions
- Healthcare
- Open Exploration: Arts, Humanities, and Beyond
- Science, Engineering, and Technology

Faith and Vocation in the Academy, Graduate Roundtable: Each semester, graduate students considering careers connected to academic work are invited for dinner and discussion of readings concerning what it means to be a Christian within one's scholarly discipline. Dr. Brent Henderson, Associate Professor of Linguistics at UF and member of our Board of Directors, is leading this group for the fourth year in a row, and recently, he shared the following:

This year we have focused on the theme of 'imagination' in faith and scholarship. What that has meant practically is that we have talked about education and scholarship in the context of 'information vs. formation.' I think this has been the highlight to have students (some of whom are new to grad school) think about their education less in terms of learning content, passing tests, etc. and more in terms of how their experiences are forming them, in particular at the deeper unconscious levels (the level of 'imagination'), and seeing how this is really also the place from which great scholarship comes.

I won't soon forget my first day as a graduate student in Musicology here at UF. I was delighted to hear that there was a Christian Study Center with a wonderful coffeehouse inside, so I headed over right after my first class, and found a place that was filled with good books (of all kinds), delicious coffee, and a perfect atmosphere for me to work: one that combined my love of scholarship and my deeply-held faith. I didn't have much work yet to do on the first day of school, but I found a copy of Wendell Berry's A Timbered Choir and began reading through some of the poetry there. Now I study here every day, always with good poetry to stir my soul when I need a break. In addition to the wonderful environment for studying fostered here, I have also enjoyed the different classes and study offerings. I have participated in the Graduate Roundtable each semester, and have had a wonderful time talking about compelling readings and getting to know other graduate students who share the Christian faith while sharing a meal, alongside my husband, who studies Trumpet Performance. My husband and I have also enjoyed the Director's Class this semester which works through the gospels over a delicious (and free!) lunch. This is a great chance to relax and deepen my understanding of the Gospels. I have also attended two reading groups that I just started this semester, one on technology and the self, and the other on current Atheistic thought. Both of these groups meet less frequently, which makes them accessible in my busy schedule, but they have both already proved fascinating and worthwhile. I can't believe I found a place like this so quickly after moving to Gainesville from rural Illinois. It has been more of a blessing than I can express. Thanks be to God.

-Hannah



PASCAL'S COFFEEHOUSE



Barista Society: The Christian Study Center hosts Pascal's Coffeehouse as a hospitable service to the university community and an embodiment of our theological approach to faith and work. The eleven baristas currently employed by Pascal's are all Christian undergraduate students. They develop a bond as they work at hospitality, customer service, and craft coffee together.

This fall we invited them to deepen their bond by taking part in a reading and discussion group created exclusively for them called the Barista Society. The Barista Society's aim is to create conversations that explore issues raised at the intersection of shared human experience and Christian faith. The first semester's theme was "Frameworks of Inquiry: Making Sense of Sense-Making." The group asked two basic questions (1) Which forces in our culture shape how we approach inquiry and (2) Is there a reasonable framework for undertaking inquiry? To this end, they had two dinner meetings with local thinkers and read C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* together.

Aside from the intellectual stimulation that the Barista Society has provided, one of the best parts of attending has been the value and care expressed for me as an employee of Pascal's Coffeehouse. It is a unique experience to confidently know that my development and growth as a person, and a Christian, matters to the people I work for. Not only are they willing to provide free meals and resources, but they also sacrifice time out of their lives to invest in creating unity among the Baristas.

Listening to other Barista's perspectives on hard issues reminds me that we are all trying to figure out life together. We are all wrestling with our own things – a lot of which have to do with what we believe about who we are and who God is."

- Gabi



FINANCIAL REPORT 2017

	Study Center	Coffee Shop	Total
INCOME			
Contributions	243,626		
Building Conversations	80,720		
Lilly Endowment	23,136		
Program, Rentals, Other	15,771		
Transfer from Pascal's to CSC Program	12,000		
Sales		212,602	
Total Income	375,253	212,602	587,855
EXPENSES			
Personnel	180,149	105,949	
Building Expenses	62,484		
Program Services	37,269		
Cost of Goods, Supplies, Equipment and Fees		106,157	
Transfer from Pascal's to CSC Program		12,000	
Depreciation	27,827	4,411	
Total Expenses	307,729	228,517	536,246
Net Income (non-restricted)			7,235
Building Conversations Funds (yet to spend)			44,374

Our Support:

- 174 individuals and families
- 7 churches
- 3 foundations
- 2 grants

Thank you for your generous support. Whether you live near or far you are a vital part of serving this university community with the faithful presence of Christ and a thoughtful Christian understanding of life and culture.

Ways to Give

It's easy to give online via EFT or Paypal: christianstudycenter.org/about-us/donate or mail a check to 112 NW 16th Street, Gainesville, FL 32603, payable to the Christian Study Center of Gainesville.

Stock gifts are always welcome and easy to receive. If you intend to give stock, please notify us by email at info@christianstudycenter.org or call the office at 352-379-7375.

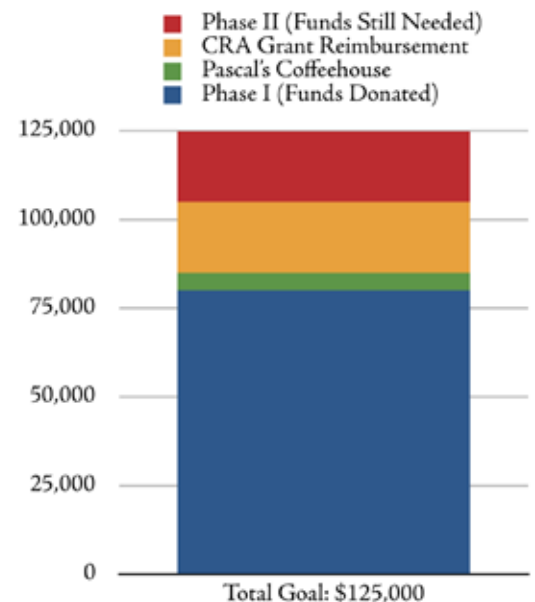
Don't forget those employer matching gifts. It's a great way to double your gift.

Building Conversations Update

The gifts you, our donors, contributed for Phase I of Building Conversations enabled us to replace gutters, powerwash and paint the outside of the building, landscape our property, enlarge and resurface the parking area, and create parking for student scooters and bikes. On the front porch we have created more space for patrons with a new bar area and planters, in addition to new table seating with ceiling fans and outlets.

We are thankful to offer the use of our building to so many Christian groups, students and university faculty, as well as see it filled every day with students studying, doing bible studies or meeting friends. To better serve the university community at our door, we will begin Phase II this summer. This phase includes a full restroom renovation which we hope will be finished by July of 2018, and \$20,000 in gifts will enable us to complete the project.

With the help of a partial match by the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and your contributions, we are over three-fourths of the way to our goal of \$125,000.





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