

UNDER CONSIDERATION

REFLECTIONS FROM THE HOSPITALITY TEAM

AN INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL BARRIOS, MACEY COOK, AND LAURA FONSECA

For people who may not be familiar with the Christian Study Center (CSC), what does the Hospitality Team do?

Rachel: There are several things that the Hospitality Team oversees, but the biggest contribution is preparing food and drink for over 120 people weekly. We try to be intentional about the food we make — to make it flavorful and creative. It helps to create curiosity around our programs.

Laura: I'd add that we create an environment of welcome and care. We get to facilitate the human experience of engaging in the wonderful sensations of food.

Why were you drawn to the Hospitality Team?

Laura: I was drawn to the team because of the experiences and relationships I had developed at the CSC. The programs were formative, and the hospitality demonstrated a love for people and food. For me, it was a tangible expression of the love and care shown by Christ. When I saw an open position on the team, I thought, "I would love to be a part of this mission that has personally impacted me."

Macey: I'm the Hospitality Intern at the CSC and I am getting my degree in Hospitality at UF. I was drawn to the team because it was tied to a Christian organization. I wanted to learn about cooking, events, time management, and serving big groups. But ultimately, I wanted to learn how to work in a way that honors the Lord, with purpose.

How does being a Christian shape how you think about hospitality?

Rachel: Sycora, our Coffeehouse Manager, has talked with me about the idea of God's first act being an act of hospitality. He made a home for us to inhabit, one that is functional but also beautiful and complex. Seeing how the Father and the Son are both intentional about hospitality makes me think about how I can approach things with excellence. I see hospitality all throughout the Scriptures and it makes me think about how what

we do isn't just a service to the physical body, but also creates opportunities to be spiritually nourished. We create space for people to be nourished and cared for.

Laura: I second everything she just said. I constantly think about God's provision for us and how He freely extends Himself to us. Similarly, I believe hospitality requires making myself available to people, not just through food or serving, but seeing people for who they are and creating a sense of belonging and relationship. It requires being joyful in how you extend generosity to people. And we can be generous because God gives us everything we need in life.

Rachel: To add to that, something the Lord has been teaching me is how I can glorify Him without needing validation in return. Instead, I focus on loving people well and serving people in a way that's informed by Christ's service toward others. Colossians 3:23 comes to mind when I think of our work glorifying the Lord.

Laura: Much of the work we do is behind the scenes. People don't see us preparing the meals, they don't see us cooking or washing dishes. But God delights in the work that happens with no audience to impress. The unseen moments have been some of the most formative for me because that's when the work is motivated purely out of a desire to love God and serve Him. I would hope that our work is not for seeking validation or approval, but instead for creating opportunities for people

to turn their attention to the things of Christ.

How does hospitality enhance the work of the CSC?

Laura: When I think of other academic spaces I've been a part of there has usually been a push toward intellectual pursuit where the end was acquiring more knowledge. Having hospitality be a core element of the CSC supports the community aspect of our work. Having a meal or enjoying a sip of coffee provided through Pascal's Coffeehouse enhances the participation in our



From left to right: Laura Fonseca, Rachel Barrios, and Macey Cook

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programs because they invite people to linger and connect.

Macey: I feel like it helps create a sense of home. When I think of home, I think of a good meal with my family. The CSC offers a place where you can come be a part of a community, enjoy good food, and talk about things that are important to our faith. To me, that resembles what life with Christ is like.

Rachel: When I think of how hospitality fits into the life of the CSC, one event that comes to mind is the Convivium Dinner that happened earlier this year. People from all walks of life came together to discuss questions about work and vocation. Though people came with different experiences and opinions, there was the shared experience of breaking bread together.

What experiences on the Hospitality Team have been the most fun?

Macey: The 25th Anniversary of the CSC! It was a weekend of fun, service, and learning. It's also when I really got to see our team work together in a major way. The charcuterie board on the counter was like no other! The attention to detail impressed me. I saw the impact hospitality had on people.

Laura: Yes, the 25th Anniversary. It was sweet to see so many moving parts work together. And I'm not speaking just to the hospitality side, but seeing the community come together, including local businesses who sponsored parts of the weekend and provided donations. Having people who have been connected to the CSC over the years come back to celebrate. I felt small in a way, but very much like I belonged. And yes, the spread of food we did for the welcoming reception was so fun. Hearing comments from people as they came in was really sweet. People would say "Wow!" or "This is amazing!" It was beautiful to hear how our hospitality was impacting people.

Rachel: I loved our times in the kitchen where it was just the three of us. We were able to be intentional about the work that we were doing while also having moments where we got to have fun and be silly. Those are memories that will stay with me.

Laura: We spend a lot of time together in the kitchen and because of that I'm grateful for a workplace where I feel safe to bring all of who I am. Our staff helps to make that a good experience.

What have you learned during your time on the Hospitality Team?

Macey: So much. Like I mentioned before, I learned how to serve while keeping God at the center of what I do. And I got to see that being around the CSC staff, including the Barista Fellows. Everyone is loving, patient, and kind with one another. That has had a huge impact on me. As it relates to practical skills, I learned about time management within the world of cooking and how unexpected or unlikely things could come together to make something special. I also learned about the importance of

attention to detail. Sometimes that meant things took a little bit longer. I saw that in both Rachel's and Laura's work, and those skills made the experience for everyone more delightful. I think about Rachel's recipes that she would make on the fly. There were moments when she would say, "Okay, we only have these things. What are we going to do with them?" and then turn around and make an extravagant meal. And I think about Laura's detailed desserts, and the way she was able to put things like a little leaf on the corner to transform the whole thing. Even the cupcakes she made for the Senior Lunch we hosted to commission graduating seniors who have been a part of community here at the CSC looked beautiful. The cupcakes would have been great without the strawberry and flower garnish, but she added it, and it showed great patience. She taught me that the smallest details can make all the difference. There's more I could say, but I've learned so much working with this team.

Laura: Rachel exhibits such great leadership and grace with our team. Her capacity to be a flexible leader and somebody that can take a less-than-ideal situation and shape it into something even better than originally planned or anticipated is a skill I've gleaned from working alongside her. One of my earliest memories of being on the Hospitality Team was very humbling. I made something that didn't come out the way I wanted, and Rachel helped me think of a way to turn it into something else people could enjoy. I've learned that being flexible and willing to adapt is critical when working in a kitchen where there are so many moving parts, especially while we're maneuvering around each other a lot. Being able to communicate and hold patience and grace for each other, even yourself, has been a point of learning for me.

Rachel: I'm going on year three of being a part of the Hospitality Team, and there's still a lot I'm learning too. I regularly remind myself of the reason behind the work we do. With that, I'm learning to let go of the desire to control every outcome. I have felt my heart being softened around expectations. I'm learning to be okay when things don't turn out the way I expected. The Lord can still use it. Ultimately, I want to strive to make meals to the best of my abilities, but it's okay if my expectations aren't met every time. Being on this team is a wonderful opportunity to serve this community together. I've seen the goodness of the Lord in it. We get to partake in making a hospitable place for people and that's really special.

NEWS & NOTES

CSC

- During the Spring semester, we introduced a new type of program that we are calling a Convivium, which gathered students, faculty, and friends in the community to share in a meal and discussion around a question that matters.
- We held a writing retreat for faculty and graduate students as a way of encouraging and supporting their labors.
- For Director's Class, Mike Sacasas explored the human vocation through a reading of Genesis 1-5.
- Our Assistant Director, Joshua Perlin, successfully defended his dissertation and graduated with a PhD in Psychology from the University of Florida.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

- Dory George in honor of Richard and April Horner
- Maxim and Sarah Dolinsky in honor of Sarah Hamersma
- Peter and Terri Partlow in honor of Anabel White
- Lori Demoor in honor of Logan Philips
- Mick and Ruthie Jo Popp in memory of Chandler Brown
- Judy Davis in honor of Dr. Jay and Laura Lynch

PASCAL'S

- Coffeehouse Manager Sycora Perlin hosted monthly dinners leading the Barista Fellows through G. K. Chesterson's *Orthodoxy*.
- During the last barista trip, we celebrated our graduating baristas: John Mark Vondruska, Aaron Luther, Andie Tice, Hannah Wohlever, Abigail Hartley, and John McKeehan.
- Pascal's just launched a food program, serving a small selection of made-to-order food items.
- Our summer hours will be Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM. We will be closed Saturdays and Sundays. We will resume our regular hours on August 18.

DIRECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

Below are some of our director Mike Sacasas's recent speaking engagements and publications:

- Participated in a panel on AI at the newly established Christian Study Center at USF
- Spoke at Gator100, an event honoring the top 100 Gator-led companies
- Gave a talk on AI at the conference of Florida District Court Judges
- Gave a talk on AI for the Ought Institute in Virginia
- Sat on a panel at the Understory Festival in Washington, D.C.
- Published "AI Is a Christian Heresy" in *Comment* magazine
- Published "Do You Still Look at the Stars" in *Inkwell*.





CHRISTIAN STUDY CENTER

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UNDER CONSIDERATION is a publication of the Christian Study Center of Gainesville, a community of whole-person formation integrating the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the human experience with the incarnate Christ as our model and convivial hospitality as our means.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Till We Have Faces by C. S. Lewis Reading Group
Facilitated by John Mark Vondruska and Dr. Ethan Williamson
Mondays, July 6 - August 3 | 11:45 AM - 12:35 PM

Symposium by Plato Reading Group
Facilitated by Dr. Nathan Rothschild
Thursdays, July 9 - August 6 | 11:45 AM - 12:35 PM

Guest Lecture - "The Most Peculiar Gift"
With Dr. Talbot Brewer (Professor of Philosophy, UVA)
Tuesday, July 21 | 7:00PM
At the Christian Study Center



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