



# billy graham center centerline

Summer 2005

News from the **Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College**, Wheaton, Ill.

## Post-Prison Ministry Ways Christians Are Helping

Laurie Fortunak

**B**y the time Stephanie Miller was 10 she was an alcoholic. After becoming involved with a variety of drugs, Miller found herself spiraling downward into a world of theft, prostitution and abortion. She was arrested fifty-two times and served four prison sentences. It was in prison where Miller, now 45, gave her life to Christ. However, like thousands of others, it took several releases before she finally found success in the outside world.

Upon being released the third time, Miller recalls, "I was terrified. I had no healthy friends. I didn't want to go back to my old life, but I did. I was in the old environment and the old thinking kicked in."

She was arrested again. This time, however, she was determined to prepare herself for release. Miller contacted a transitional center in Florida. Today she is the women's director at the facility. The key to suc-

cess, Miller believes, was the support she received from fellow Christians.

Recent statistics reveal that of the more than 600,000 prisoners released back into society each year, 67 percent will return to prison within three years. However, vocation-based and faith-based programs are shown to result in significantly lower recidivism rates (36 and 16 percent, respectively). These numbers, however, are still too high, according to the Reverend Dallas Anderson, coordinator for Operation Starting Line (OSL), a ministry of the Billy Graham Center.

"The single biggest need, as seen in the prison today by the warden, is post-prison ministry and stopping the flow of recidivism," he says. "For 95 percent of those coming out of prison, just knowing what to do isn't enough. They've got to have someone who will walk with them. This is where the church needs to step in."

Indeed, numerous prison ministries are serving ex-offenders today, including OSL and the Interchange Freedom Initiative. However, success can only be achieved by

addressing the needs of the prisoners after release. One of the problems, according to Anderson, is how the church views ex-offenders.

"The underlying lie in the churches

Jim Whitmer



David Kern-Lyons (upper right), serves as Discipleship and Resident Director of the Koinonia® House in Wheaton, Ill., a biblical discipleship program to help those coming out of prison. Each weekday morning he leads the men in the home through a time of biblical application.

is that (the inmates) got themselves into trouble and that they should get themselves out. This is a lie from Satan. It is our issue and we are called to help."

Individuals and organizations around the country are indeed helping in a variety of ways. Below are three models.

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## A Brush with the Eternal: Selected Paintings of Ron DiCianni

July 1, 2005 - March 31, 2006

One of America's best known and well-loved Christian artists, Ron DiCianni, is returning to the Billy Graham Center Museum with a new collection of thirty-three original pieces. Five years after his initial exhibit at the Museum, DiCianni is once again placing biblical events in contemporary settings in a way which makes Scripture come alive. DiCianni, who considers himself "a Christian cleverly disguised as an artist," has created dozens of biblically centered paintings since 1992. As both an artist and an author, DiCianni has reached not only Christian audiences, but is also making an impact in the secular market as well.



at the museum...

**Museum Hours:** Monday-Saturday, 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. • Sunday, 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
For more information, call the Museum at 630.752.5909



## director's devotional

### Signs of Everlasting Splendor

“**T**here are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” —C.S. Lewis in *Weight of Glory*

If true, this language referring to souls as either immortal horrors or everlasting splendors is inflammatory. But it is not so far from the language of John when he wrote, “God has given us eternal life...He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12).

In our work at the Billy Graham Center we focus on the task of evangelism. We exist to “stimulate global evangelism.” Therefore, our goal is threefold: to “think” evangelism, to “train leaders” in evangelism and to “do” evangelism. Using Lewis’ words, we are out to make everlasting splendors. This can only occur as a person (1) turns from self to God, (2) receives the Holy Spirit in spirit and in truth and (3) embarks on a life of cooperation with this Spirit. In this response, God takes the broken old person and makes him or her new.

Because we believe this, we are careful to not declare a person saved or converted simply because of a public decision. We celebrate public decisions for Christ. We tabulate them. We report them. Decisions are an important and hopeful sign. But I

learned long ago that a decision does not make a disciple. If that is the case, what exactly does secure salvation? I don’t want to be glib, but quite honestly, only God can save a soul. We know that individual choice is part of salvation, but more important is God’s work in a life. Regeneration is the invisible work of God in a surrendering soul. The older I get and the more I watch the mysterious work of God, the more I am sure only God knows the “when” of salvation.

There do, however, seem to be five signs of salvation (a.k.a. signs of everlasting splendors in progress). I hold to these far more than I do a decision card, a hand raised or a baptism—as important as those are. (Incidentally, I’m very grateful to my colleague, Rick Richardson, who is joining the Wheaton College family as Professor of Evangelism this summer, for aiding me in these thoughts.)

First, there is an awareness of God’s presence, where before there was none. We sometimes call this “union with Christ.” God becomes real instead of distant. The new follower uses words like “near,” “inti-

mate” or “personal.”

The second sign is both a sense of gratitude and ongoing conviction. The new person recognizes intrinsically that he or she doesn’t deserve to be forgiven and saved, but is increasingly grateful for this gift. The third sign of splendor is a humility that grows as the new follower senses his or her need to let God be God in every area of life. He or she discovers the difference between wanting God’s help for personal hopes and aspirations and surrendering to God’s leadership in all things.

The fourth sign is a desire to be with a new family. In his saving work, God brings us to himself and to one another. I am no longer alone, and I don’t want to be. The last sign is the need to share with others what he or she has found. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 5:18, that we are “reconciled, to reconcile.” I believe this means that the God who saves me places this saving part of himself in me in order that I may go and participate in the saving work of others. We can’t help but share what we’ve discovered.

Five signs of emerging splendor—presence, gratitude and conviction, humility, family, and sharing. What do you think? I’d love to hear from Centerline readers on this topic.

Immortal horrors or everlasting splendors—a tale of all souls.

Have a great summer.

*James J. Allison*



### “I am delighted to invest in the ministries of the Billy Graham

**Center.** I consider it a very strategic organization for the Church and the Kingdom of God. I am committed to its purpose of ‘Stimulating Global Evangelization’ as their most noble goal. Therefore, I support the BGC with time, energy and dollars to assist in this most worthy calling. I would urge you to consider how you might join in this partnership that focuses on the local church and its mandate to fulfill the Great Commission.”

—Emery Lindsay

Bishop Lindsay is a Chicago Pastor and Bishop of the Church of Christ (Hol.) USA Denomination. He serves as a Wheaton College Trustee and member of the BGC Board of Directors.

## on BGC Evangelism Partners

BGC advisory committee members **Dr. Paul Larsen** (pictured left) and **Dr. Robert Cunville** (pictured right)



are active in the movement of God in India. Christian workers there are seeing countless individuals of different Hindu castes and other faiths come to Christ daily. Having received his undergraduate degree from Stanford University, his Masters from Fuller Theological Seminary and further Doctorates from San Francisco Theological Seminary and North Park University, Larsen serves as chairman for the William Carey Foundation, which advances the vision of that great father of the mission movement in India. Cunville received his undergraduate degree from St. Edmunds College in India, his Masters from Serampore College in India and his Doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary. He serves as associate evangelist and regional director in India with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, speaking at crusades in various parts of India. Both are ordained ministers. Larsen recently traveled to India, where he met with key leaders in both religious and secular organizations. Cunville resides in India. Both recently took a few moments to share what God is doing on the Indian subcontinent with editorial assistant Laurie Fortunak.

### Q: What are some unique ways God is working throughout the Indian subcontinent?

**Cunville:** The Lord is moving among many poorer sections which are looking for hope and answers to life's questions. In many of our meetings [crusades], we are seeing people from other faiths coming to accept Christ. We sense a movement of the Holy Spirit in the midst of persecution in some parts of India for those who believe in the Lord.

**Larsen:** (1) Mass conversions in many castes, such as the Shepherd, Scavenger, Butcher and Cobbler castes, (2) the reform movements on behalf of Dalit and abused women, (3) the Jeshu Darbaar (The Royal Banquet of Jesus), where over fifty thousand lower-caste individuals gather on the banks of the Ganges to wash away their sins. It now also meets several times a week in additional locations and (4) the movement among the Butcher Caste, which has seen thousands come to Christ. Groups of believers are now in eighty of the five hundred Dalit villages surrounding the city of Aligar.

### Q: What is the atmosphere and/or attitude of those in Christian ministry in India?

**Cunville:** There is a growing sense of joy. We see a lot of anti-Christian activities, but God is answering our prayers. There is a very strong prayer movement in India. Right now we have a greater freedom to preach since

our government is a secular one.

**Larsen:** I am impressed that there is a major social, religious earthquake occurring in India. It is going on in many places and takes many forms. Traditional and evangelical churches are experiencing good growth in many areas.

### Q: What are the largest obstacles Christians in India are facing in their ministries?

**Cunville:** We have seen a great cooperation among churches. However, as our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in the heavens, we

### Pray for Christian unity—

Our Lord told us that it is directly related to Gospel credibility (John 17:23). Pray that this might be a great time of awakening.

do have to deal with this aspect.

**Larsen:** There are issues of caste. Caste itself could well remain a part of the new Christian community. There are many new believers in these castes, yet few mature believers to help catechize and disciple them. Some churches also totally reject any attempt at contextualization. I pray that all this will not degenerate into caste and turf conflicts. I dread this more than overt and violent Hindu oppression.

### Q: What are some of the major problems those in India are facing today?

**Larsen:** (1) Many displaced Dalits must travel from the city—a two to four-hour commute—to menial jobs, (2) many homes are simply a crawl space with a ragged mattress and (3) the worst abuses of all are those against low-caste women. There are issues of abuse and equality there.

### Q: How can Christians in other countries help advance the Kingdom of God in India?

**Cunville:** By praying for us—for wisdom and sensitivity to the different cultures of people in India. Also, pray for wisdom to be able to present the Gospel with simplicity and clarity and to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Larsen:** Pray for Christian unity—Our Lord told us that it is directly related to Gospel credibility (John 17:23). Pray that this might be a great time of awakening. Thousands are being baptized each month and thousands of house churches are being created. A mass movement is growing in the Punjab among Sikhs, and leaders of entire castes are wanting to lead their people to Christ. I am increasingly wary of numbers, except to say that there appears to be many large caste movements coming into Christ's Kingdom.

### Q: What role has the BGC played in your personal or ministerial life?

**Cunville:** I have been blessed by the support of the BGC and by Lon's personal encouragement to me. I have always felt the prayer support of the team at the BGC.

**Larsen:** I have worked with Lon for more than twenty years—first as teacher, then as colleague in evangelism and now in the Roundtable on Theology and Evangelism. He has always been an amazing model in his personal witness and his public advocacy. He has taught me much in both respects.

**The Billy Graham Center (BGC) strives to stimulate global evangelism through key partnerships.** Forty leaders on the Center's advisory committee work alongside the BGC to develop strategies and skills for communicating the gospel.

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## Transitional Housing Model

Close to Chicago, Manny Mill oversees Koinonia House National Ministries (KH-NM), a 15-month home-based program, which helps former inmates transition into society.

"(Nearly) 85% of those in prison come from broken homes," Mill says. "If you are going to help, you need to create a home environment. We love and disciple them when they get out. It's not about telling someone you love them, it's about showing how you love them."

KHNM recently broadened its "Meet me at the Gate" program, designed to get churches and individuals paired up with inmates being released. The program can take two forms: physical homes or spiritual and financial mentorships. Former inmates going to stay in a home work through three phases before moving out. During this time, spiritual, social and physical needs are addressed.

According to Mill, this model links the church and the individual Christian in a special, sacrificial way.

"We cannot function outside of the church," Mill stresses. "If we want to be the church and love our neighbor, we need to suffer, and that may mean changing how we live our lives."

## Mentorship Correspondence Model

In the heart of Michigan, Dr. David Shuringa and his staff at Crossroad Bible Institute (CBI) oversee more than 4,000 instructors around the world who are working in mentorships with inmates. More than 52,000 inmates are currently going through the five-year program.

"We impress upon the students that re-entry begins upon incarceration," Shuringa says. "In prison, there is a lot of evangelism, but we need to do the follow-up as well. The beauty of this program is that it is a way anyone in the church can help."

Instructors correspond with inmates via mail. The program is three-tiered. In the first tier, inmates correspond with different instructors through Bible study worksheets. In the second tier, each inmate is given a personal mentor who will be their guide until reentry. The third tier involves college and seminary-level train-

ing offered to selected inmates.

"Each inmate receives personal letters of instruction and discipleship from their mentor," Schuringa says. "The inmates are encouraged by this. They get intensive, personalized correspondence."

Prior to release, CBI will connect the inmate with local reentry agencies and provide letters of recommendation.

## Community-Based Model

In California, a mighty move of God is sweeping through the mid-sized city of San Bernardino. "Cops and Clergy" is a program which includes both police and parole officers as well as clergy. A central component is the mandatory two-hour Parole Orientation. Each week more than 40 recent parolees meet with local business owners and church leaders. However, according to Pastor Ray Miller, city chaplain and director of Cops and Clergy, the central message is to give them hope in Jesus Christ.

"We need to connect with each person," he says. "We are here to help them be successful. Our goal is also to lead them to the Lord and to plug them into the local church."

Local Christian community members come out to provide support for drug and alcohol addiction, job training, counseling, housing and other social networking opportunities. Testimonies, prayer and Scripture reading are included as well.

"The Word of God has been quoted for two years in this (government) complex," Miller says. "The walls are permeated with Scripture and that has made all the difference."

Indeed, Miller and the others have seen the Lord work mightily in these weekly meetings, with 12-15 former inmates responding to prayer and nearly a dozen coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. They are then plugged into a local church.

Across the country, thousands of individuals are representing the body of Christ through post-prison ministries. Indeed, we are all called to help our fellow brothers and sisters. Stephanie Miller's own story is a reminder of how important this task is.

"I had people willing to walk with me through the old stuff and willing to stay with me through the struggles," she says. "That has made the difference." ■

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*CenterLine* is issued three times a year. Subscription is free. Send change of address to Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL 60187-5593.

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