



billy graham center centerline

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

Reaching a Post-Christian Culture Evangelism Roundtable Equips Leaders for Ministry

Dawn Herzog Jewell, editor

Strings of lights dangle over exposed brick walls and artwork, adding to the trendy, night-spot feel of the Spoken Word Cafe. Artists and their friends gather around candle-lit tables at this downtown Chicago storefront on North Milwaukee Street. The mostly African American audience takes turns at the microphone in front—rhyming, rapping and sharing experiences set to music.

The Spoken Word Cafe caters to the black community's appreciation for soul poetry and the spoken word. No preachers crack open their Bibles here, but "it's not uncommon to hear a whole poem about Jesus," says Daniel Hill, pastor of River City Community Church (www.rivercity.cc).

The storefront that houses the "Cafe" also serves as River City's church offices.

This monthly venue is one of the church's innovative means to reach a multi-ethnic community for Christ. Begun last September, the church already averages 125 diverse Sunday worshippers—25 percent African Americans, 10 percent Hispanics, 10 percent Indians, 5 percent Asians

and the rest Caucasians.

"Many people are not ready for church yet, so you have to carefully consider, with God's leading, how to awaken their spiritual side to the realities of Christ," Hill says. Christians from River City invite their non-Christian friends to the Cafe, and eventually to church.

This April 22-24 Hill was one of more than 70 church leaders, evangelists and concerned believers who gathered for the Billy Graham Center's annual Evangelism Roundtable in Chicago's suburbs. This year's topic, "Issues of Truth and Power: the Gospel in a post-Christian culture," brought together Christian leaders eager to swap ideas on reaching North American culture for Christ.

Lorna Dueck, Canadian TV producer and newspaper columnist, was struck by the diverse gifts and viewpoints that participants wielded for kingdom purposes. "We understood that the body of Christ, knit



Jon Trott (right), longtime member of Jesus People USA, is a leader in post-modern evangelism whose ministry was post-modern before the term was coined.

together, needs the breadth of the workers gathered," Dueck says. "Poverty activists, theologians, church planters, media, addictions experts, disciplers, campus workers, itinerant evangelists, academia—we all had something but no one [evangelism] method could stand alone."

Continued on page 4

at the museum...



That Old Time Religion

Before television and photography, there was the postcard

September 2004 - January 2005

In the early twentieth century, the postcard was a mainstay of popular American culture. A common find in many kitchen drawers and cupboards across the country, the subject matter of postcards was wide and varied. This American icon even left its mark on twentieth century religion. Over the last 25 years, the Billy Graham Center Museum has amassed one of the finest religious postcard collections found anywhere. This exhibit features a select sampling from that collection.

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

The Nobility of Our Calling: Lessons from Asia

My assignment was to spend a week in April with 25 evangelism leaders from six nations. They met in Manila, traveling from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Korea, Philippines and Indonesia. My invitation came from gifted leader and thinker Kumar Abraham, who leads the Southeast Asia Evangelistic Association. Abraham, a disciple of Sri Lankan theologian Ajith Fernando, is devoted to mentoring more than educating—like me.

Here are a few lessons I gleaned from this trip:

Similarities

Evangelism leaders worldwide are often pastors as well as evangelists. I believe this is good, for evangelism not grounded in the local congregation is irrelevant at the end of the day. Churches are God's front-line operations.

Like their Western brothers and sisters, the Asians are deeply devoted to their task. Their hearts beat for lost people. One Saturday, the "25" went into Manila's neighborhoods to share Christ. I saw them on street corners, sitting on benches and speaking with anyone willing to listen.

Finally, like their Western counterparts, they are poor. However, I didn't hear any complaining. They exemplified the reality that "God provides."

Differences

Many of the 25 Asian evangelists are companions of danger. Working in unfriendly regions (Muslim, Buddhist and Communist), they know persecution that we Westerners only read about in Christian history. During our conference, one young Filipino's wife was placed on a death list by Islamic extremists on the Philippine island of Mindanau. Instead of returning

home to her, he knelt as we laid hands on him on his wife's behalf. We wept and prayed for her protection and faith. As far as I know, she is safe.

These evangelists long for books and study materials. Christian literature is precious and rare to them. Training materials were treated like gold. We are awash in resources, bemoaning our ability to keep up with the latest "must reads." They dream of books.

How could a Western educated and practiced professor of evangelism like me enhance the work of Asian evangelism leaders? I had my doubts beforehand. At the week's end, I believe I did add value to their lives and calling. I am sure, however, I received more. Those brothers and sisters taught me about the nobility of our calling.

The Billy Graham Center depends on faithful supporters like you to accomplish our mission. This fiscal year, July 1 through June 30, our funding need is an additional \$420,000, which is 50 percent above last year.

I'm praying for many to join our new **"Life Circle."** Life Circle members commit to giving \$1,000 or more to the Billy Graham Center per year. We chose the words carefully. **"Life"** refers to eternal life. Our work helps many cross from death to eternal life with Jesus Christ. **"Circle"** refers to the community of friends who join us in this good and vital venture. To join our Life Circle, indicate on the enclosed card.

Many of our *Centerline* readers are already regular supporters. Thank you very much. I hope you can continue at whatever level possible. Every dollar helps.

Thank you again, and please, remember us in your prayers.

Laine J. Allison



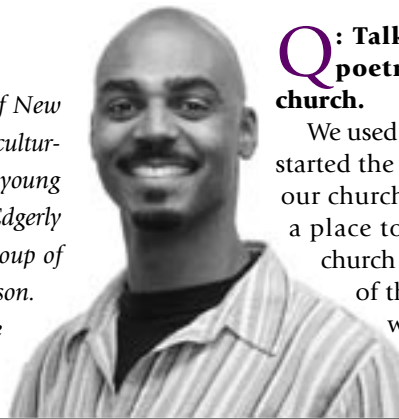
Salvation Army display at the Billy Graham Center Museum

Did You Know...

- More than **800,000** people have learned about the spread of Christianity in the US at the Billy Graham Center's Museum, and more than **7,000** have made faith commitments there?
- More than **10,000** missions and evangelism books are loaned annually from the Library's collection of 200,000 books?
- More than **500** scholars research Christian history at the Archives each year?

on BGC Evangelism Partners

Adam Edgerly, 40, is founding pastor of the Los Angeles site of New Song Church. An Evangelical Covenant congregation of 480 multicultural members, it focuses on hip-hop and ministering to unchurched young adults, a blend of young professionals and those of lower incomes. Edgerly is a member of the Billy Graham Center's Star Fellowship, a group of select godly and gifted leaders being mentored by Director Lon Allison. He shared with CenterLine guest writer Deann Alford about the joys and challenges in multicultural ministry.



Q: Talk about the Tuesday night poetry open mic reading at the church.

We used to attend those before we even started the church. A couple members of our church host them. We want to have a place to host poetry readings at the church on our own turf in the middle of the community. It's one reason we need a community building. Also there will be a tutoring center and a computer lab. We actually have a separate 501(c)(3) for that outreach.

It's called The Shaw. It's the nickname for the district but also an acronym we came up with that stands for Sports, Health, Art and Well-being.

Q: How do you keep your life balanced with the demands of a fast-growing new church?

[Edgerly laughs] The easiest answer is that I don't. I'm really working on that. I'm part of a multi-site church with a very large staff. That staff becomes a very close-knit community. We help each other keep our lives balanced.

Q: How is the Billy Graham Center assisting you in your development as a member of the Star Fellowship?

Q: Does the focus on a multicultural church ever override reaching a lost world?

No. In fact, it's among the best strategies. I find many pastors are prepared only to reach one segment of the population. As we develop a multicultural church we're able to reach entire populations surrounding the church. Children who grow up in a multicultural environment have sort of innate skills in relating cross-culturally. I believe we're preparing a generation of cross-cultural missionaries.

Q: Is it difficult to reach pre-Christian people in a church that's committed to multiculturalism?

No, in fact that's also just the opposite. One of the worst evils in the world is racism. When pre-Christians see people relating to one another cross-culturally and enjoying that, it's very attractive to them. And they want to know why. For example, church members go out to eat after a service. Our demographic is primarily second-generation Asian—about 14 different Asian groups—but also Caucasians, African Americans and Latinos. People have very frequently walked up and said "This is a very beautiful group of people. Where are you from?" People have come to church because of that. Jesus says he wants all to know him: "I pray that they will be one as we are one so that the world will know that you have sent me." I think the most powerful example of this is when people are in relationships that cross barriers that wider society finds difficult to cross.

Q: Is this a trend?

I'm excited to see God raise up more multicultural churches and how rapidly those churches are growing. The world has seen how segregated the church is and how historically, racial hatred has been part of the church. That affects our

ability to share the gospel. Ephesians 2: 14-18 describes what Christ came to do, creating one body out of people who were historically hostile. When people see that happening tangibly, it demonstrates the power of God. When they don't see that happening, it belies that message. I see it as one of the greatest evangelistic barriers we have to the church in America.

Q: How do you serve the artistic tastes of black/Asian/white cultures in worshipful music, dance and drama, or do they blend?

Our goal is not really to blend them. We look at our target area and try to determine who are the people who have not been reached, and we figure whether there is

something we have in common culturally. As far as music style, we try and think of what kind of music would be attractive to people who don't go to church in that area.

Q: Do you incorporate hip-hop, such as rap music, into services?

Yes. Rap itself is only one kind of hip-hop. Rap is not the dominant style we would use in a worship service. We'd incorporate rap in a song but we wouldn't expect the congregation to sing the entire rap. They would probably sing by responding to the hook back and forth. The hook is similar to a chorus, but shorter. Hip-hop also has music that is singable, so a whole congregation sings.

"I'm excited to see God raise up more multicultural churches and how rapidly those churches are growing."

Lon Allison has been a friend and mentor for many years. Lon was the person through whom God called me into full-time professional ministry. I was thrilled when he asked me to be part of the Star Fellowship. Its other members have been a real gift of God to me. We help one another in our personal lives to be effective leaders.

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.

Continued from page 1

As Dueck exchanged ideas with other evangelism leaders, her mind was also back in Canada. "The Dalai Lama was visiting our nation and sweeping our country with some kind of spiritual euphoria," she says. "I was grieved that my evangelical community was silenced by his sparkle in the face of a nation's spiritual hunger.

"Through listening at the Roundtable, I realized the need to reconcile who I am with who my neighbor is—not to bash and rant, but to walk alongside asking, "Who are you and what do you hunger for?" and then to offer who I am and what I hunger for."

Dueck returned to Canada and wrote a compelling commentary on the Dalai



Lorna Dueck, Canadian TV producer

Lama's visit. She urged evangelicals to "go inward with our eyes shut—and pray deep for personal and church revival." More than a million readers saw her article online (www.listenuptv.com/lorna/dalailama.htm), which she hopes helps ignite and convict fellow believers.

Jon Trott is a leader in post-modern evangelism whose ministry was post-modern before the term was coined. Trott is co-editor of Cornerstonemag.com and a 27-year member of Jesus People USA Covenant Church, an inner-city communal ministry involved in the arts. JPUSA calls Christians to experience Christ by living in community, a draw for a post-modern generation that longs for relationships.

"Community itself is probably the greatest positive force we have going for our ministries today," Trott says.

When Trott's 60-plus-year-old cousin recently recounted her conversion to Islam, the challenge of witnessing with Christ-like love hit home for Trott. "Evangelism is about loving someone enough to tell them what we know," he says. But "post-modernism reminds us that evangelism is also about asking what they know—and really caring to hear them!" After listening, he says it's critical to learn each other's commonalities and differences in order to begin a dialogue.

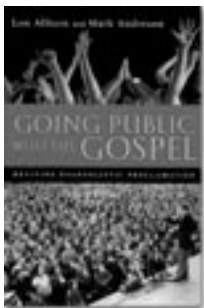
This summer Trott is leading a series of seminars on love, community and relationships at JPUSA's Cornerstone Festival (www.cornerstonefestival.com) near the small town of Bushnell, Illinois. Each year, more than 25,000 people from across the country flock to this eclectic music, arts and teaching festival. This year's seminar topics include "Dating and Sexuality," "Songsmithing" (songwriting), "Christian Earthkeeping" and "Outreach to Subcultures."

"Doubtless what I got from the Roundtable will salt what I offer to others at our festival," Trott says.

Today's Christian leaders must grapple with how the Bible intersects with post-modern culture, but Dueck believes there is a bottom line for evangelism. "The most successful practice I can have is to listen for how the Holy Spirit is calling me to evangelism and show up and work with him," she says.

From a festival in rural Illinois, a storefront in downtown Chicago, a Canadian TV program and many other beacons of light, Jesus' followers are reaching a hurting culture with his truth and love.

The Billy Graham Center, in conjunction with Roundtable sponsor InterVarsity Press, is considering publishing the knowledge gleaned at the Roundtable in a book edited by Lon Allison and Rick Richardson. ■



Going Public with the Gospel, by **Lon Allison and Mark Anderson**, addresses the critical need to revive public evangelical proclamation in today's answer-starved world. This book offers compelling arguments for returning to publicly proclaiming the gospel, citing God's historic use of evangelistic preaching to bring people to himself.

Published by InterVarsity Press and available through the EMIS office at the BGC for only \$13. Order online at www.emisdirect.com or call 630-752-7158.

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The Billy Graham Center stimulates global evangelism, partnering with Christian leaders to develop strategies and skills for communicating the gospel. The Center serves the church in evangelism and missions through leadership training, research, networking and strategic planning.

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