

CONNECTIONS

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A Word from the Director

Why was the World Religions and Global Cultures Center of Campbell University Divinity School founded in October 2007? The Center was founded from a vision and concern for Christians and churches to awaken to the rapidly changing culture surrounding them of religious pluralism of various non Christian religions coming to America as well as the indigenous growth of sectarian religious communities springing out of Christianity. The Center promotes the understanding of one's religious neighbors through study of their beliefs and practices. The Center then

fosters the engagement with one's religious neighbors through visits and conversations with these neighbors to their temples, mosques, and churches as well as inviting them to programs on campus and in the churches. Key emphases of the Center are Education, Understanding, Communication based on Biblical and Christian principles, and Movement toward religious neighbors in meetings on one's home turf of church and campus and into their communities of temples, mosques, and churches. You are always invited to join us on this journey in what we believe are the

footsteps of Jesus Christ into the twenty first century.

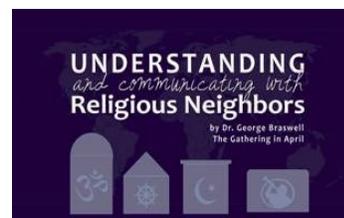
-Dr. George Braswell



Dr. George Braswell Founder and Director, of the World Religions and Global Cultures Center

Just Outside our Doors

In April, through presentations by the World Religions and Global Cultures Center, Hayes Barton Baptist Church had the opportunity to learn about some of the prominent world religions we might encounter in the Raleigh area. Each week, our members returned to discover more about each religion and how we as Christians might



respond to people of other faith traditions. We are now more able to connect and talk with our neighbors of other faiths. It was emphasized each week the im-

portance of understanding those who share beliefs different from our own so that we can engage in respectful dialogue. We are grateful for the WRGCC and its desire to help churches understand the neighbors just outside of our doors.

-Kristen Muse, Associate Pastor of Hayes Barton Baptist Church



Mike Dishman receives his teacher training certificate in Islam from Dr. Braswell. Also pictured is Dr. Jo Ann Stancil, Minister of Education at Wake Forest Baptist Church.

Learning How to Relate

Earlier this year, I had the occasion to listen to Dr. Braswell as he presented on Islam on four Wednesday nights at our church. Additionally, Dr. Braswell offered us the opportunity to participate as a lay person in the Teacher Training Certificate Program offered the World Religions and Global Cultures Center. Attending the lectures, reading the assigned materials and completing a paper on

the basic tenets of Islam has certainly given me a better understanding of a faith now embraced by 25% of the world's population. Through the Teacher Training Program, I feel I can now dialogue with my neighbors about their Islamic faith. As a parent of a child whose mother and father are of different faiths, I very much understand the importance of communication and understanding

between people of different faiths, and I appreciate what WRGCC is doing to promote understanding between various faith groups. Dr. Braswell's passion for understanding other faiths and learning how to relate to them is inspiring, and we are fortunate to have this program in our area.

-Mike Dishman, Member of Wake Forest Baptist Church

Better Prepared

In November of 2014, my husband was given a change of station, sending us to Okinawa, Japan. The Christian population of Japan is less than 1%. While the majority of the Japanese people are open to Christianity, they are reluctant to let go of their traditionally held religious beliefs. Fortunately, as a divinity student, I had just completed classes in World Religions at Campbell University Divini-

ty School (CUDS), which included the study of Shintoism. I had also served as a scholar of the divinity school's World Religions and Global Cultures Center (WRGCC). The WRGCC offered me great opportunities to personally see and participate with various religious centers and people from all over the world. The knowledge I gained through classes and my Center scholarship helped to better pre-

pare me in engaging the Japanese people and their faith traditions and culture. Having the ability to interact and connect with my new neighbors was essential in helping to create and foster community.

-Holly Willenbrock, Campbell University Divinity Student



Shinto Temple In Okinawa , Japan

Come Go With Us

Earlier this year Kim and I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Braswell. I asked Dr. Braswell, "What advice or direction might you suggest as we begin our work among internationals in the capital region?" He replied, "Be my guest for the World Religions practicum next month and **come go with us** as we travel around the Triangle and visit temples, churches and

mosques representing the religions of the world. Surely God will give you insights that will help you begin your mission." Dr. Braswell's invitation began a great adventure. The week took us back and forth across the great divide that has separated many around the world and across the ages. We highly recommend you and your church seek one of the many oppor-

tunities provided by the World Religions and Global Cultures Center. They are able to help you cross the bridge of knowledge toward missional practice as God leads you to share your life and faith with your new international friends across the street, across the hall at school, or across the counter where you shop.

-Marc and Kim Wyatt



Marc and Kim Wyatt, Co-operative Baptist Fellowship Field Personnel serving as advocates for Internationals in the Research Triangle Area

A Rich and Fruitful Friendship

As the imam of the Islamic Association of Raleigh, a culturally diverse and continually growing community, I have had the privilege of knowing and collaborating with Dr. George Braswell, an admirable individual, venerable Christian figure, and well-versed divinity professor with accumulative awareness of world religions and global cultures. During my mission years at the Islamic Center of Raleigh, I developed a meaningful friendship with Dr. Braswell that was reinforced upon

his frequent visits together with his graduate students. These visits were filled with intellectual discussions and thoughtful inquiries made by his students about Islam. Moreover, I was Dr. Braswell's guest on numerous occasions such as the annual interfaith luncheons hosted by the World Religions and Global Cultures Center (WRGCC). On one occasion, Dr. Braswell invited me to give a presentation on Islam Sharia Law, which was attended by not only students but also by several

spiritual leaders and other notable figures. My friendship with Dr. Braswell over the years has been a rich and fruitful relationship on both a personal and an interfaith level. Indeed, I believe that through our friendship many bridges of understanding have been built between followers of various religions/faiths.

-Dr. Imam Sameh Asal,
Islamic Association of West Virginia



In May, Dr. Iman Sameh Asal visited with Dr. Braswell at his home before leaving to assume his new position at the Islamic Association of West Virginia.

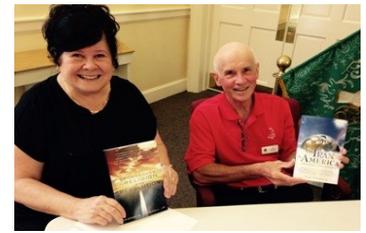


Dr. Ashley Smith, his wife, Vickie, and Dr. Braswell pose near The Village Chapel in Pinehurst, NC.

From Pinehurst to the World

In his book *Revolutionary Parenting*, George Barna found that teaching children about their own Christian faith and how their faith differs from others is believed to allow these children to be more confident in their Christian beliefs, while at the same time fostering more tolerance and acceptance of people—all people! Recently, I had the privilege of leading a small group from The Village Chapel and to join with Dr. Braswell’s World Religions practicum. Our group reported similar responses that Barna reports; there

was a deepened appreciation for people of faith representing various religions. Connecting with their humanness through fellowship, we made new friendships and lasting memories. The experience certainly caused us to consider, “Who is my neighbor?” The greatest witness I believe we can have as Christians is a strong understanding of our own Christian doctrine, while developing a respect and love for people of other faiths and cultures. Praise God for the life-work of Dr. Braswell and the WRGCC; remember, “For God so loved the



Dan and Sue Joslin, members of The Village Chapel in Pinehurst, NC display their recent purchases of Dr. Braswell's latest two books.

world!”

-Dr. Ashley Smith, Associate Pastor of The Village Chapel of Pinehurst

Over the past year, the WRGCC stepped into new venues with an invitation to the LDS Christmas Nativity Luncheon at the LDS Temple in Apex, NC, the OASIS conference in July, and the CBF General Assembly meeting in Charlotte, NC.

Having A Presence



Dr. Mike Cogdill, left, Steve Bodhaine, Stake President of Raleigh for the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (LDS) center, and Dr. Braswell, right.



The WRGCC during the OASIS conference in July at Campbell University Divinity School.



In March, WRGCC joined CUDS at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina General Assembly meeting.

Showing Appreciation



Judge Willis Whichard, left, and Dr. Braswell are joined by Venerable Chueh Shang and Mrs. Jill Chen of the Fo Guan Shan Buddhist Temple of Raleigh.



Irma Duke, WRGCC Advisory Council member, Fiaz Fareed of the Islamic Association of Raleigh engage in conversation with Sharon Pace of the Unification Church.



Rabbi Raachel Jurcovics and Imam Oliver Muhammad converse during the Appreciation Luncheon.



Guests enjoy a wonderful meal at the Appreciation Luncheon.



Dr. Bill Slater of WFBC, left joins Dr. Mark Hammond, Provost of Campbell University, right.



Cynthia Barnett of the First Church of Christ Science and CUDS student, Jason Knight enjoy a time of food and fellowship during the Appreciation Luncheon.

In March, the WRGCC held its annual Appreciation Luncheon for its friends and neighbors of various faith traditions. Westwood Baptist Church in Cary hosted the event and worked along side Wake Forest Baptist Church (WFBC), Hayes Barton Baptist Church, and First Baptist Church of Angier in providing a wonderful meal to the more than 60 guests. The luncheon allowed CUDS faculty and students and local church members an opportunity to engage members of other religious faiths in meaningful dialogue.

-Lisa Grissom, Editor and Visiting Scholar at the WRGCC with Campbell University Divinity School

Making an Impact

In looking back on “A Year in the Life” of the World Religions and Global Cultures Center (WRGCC), it is readily apparent the impact the center has had in the communities it has engaged. It has helped to equip church communities, both laypersons and ministers, with understanding and knowledge of other faith traditions and beliefs different from their own. It has helped to train Campbell University Divinity School students who have been placed in unfamiliar contexts half a world away how to see other faith traditions through the lens of awareness

and insight. It has helped to better prepare Christian missionaries when assisting refugees and asylum seekers coming to the United States longing to breathe the fresh air of freedom. It has helped to forge friendships with those who follow other faith traditions and are sustained even at a distance; friendships that have been reflected in true fellowship of the sharing of tears of sorrow at the unexpected loss of a son and tears of joy at the birth of new grandchild. The work of the Center is more than just an academic endeavor that is confined to the classroom; the work of the center is about true engagement with other religions, cultures,

and peoples...which in turn will help foster understanding and community.

-Lisa Grissom, Editor, Visiting Scholar at the WRGCC with Campbell University Divinity School



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