

# It's a holy mess

## Local ministers preach on televangelism saga

By **ALECIA HOLLAND**  
Staff Writer

The problems of Jim and Tammy Bakker and the battle over the PTL Club have had a negative impact on the image of televangelism. According to local ministers, the controversy has weakened the credibility of televangelists — but it may benefit local churches.

"I'm not just amazed, I'm abhorrent!" said Manuel Wortman, the United Methodist Campus Minister, when asked about the Bakker/Falwell televangelist controversy. "Those of us in the mainstream are amazed at the amount of money that televangelists bring in and expend on salaries and houses. Most of us have found that they are doing just what they have now been proved to have been doing. If we haven't said 'see, I told you so' already, we have felt that."

Robert Seymour, the minister of Olin T. Binkley, said, "I haven't had any confidence in this kind of ministry (televangelism) for a long time. It is already damaging to the televangelist movement, but people have short memories and in a few years it will be ancient history."

James O. Abrahamson, the pastor of the Chapel Hill Bible Church, said, "It is better that this controversy, as ugly and embarrassing as it has been, be exposed now than continue. Many people have suspected what is going on for a long time."

Pastor Evans of the United Christian Fellowship of Chapel Hill said he was surprised that people have been so alarmed that an evangelist could make a mistake. "It is a shame that this controversy has been dealt with publicly and not privately by the church."

Both Evans and Abrahamson's ministries are evangelical, but neither is directly related to the televangelist movement. Neither Seymour's nor Wortman's ministry is associated with the evangelist movement.

Abrahamson, Seymour and Wortman believe that televangelism's lack of credibility may benefit local and community churches. Wortman believes this will not affect most mainstream churches because most of their finances come from local church members. However, this could go in favor of local churches because there is public accountability of funds, or accountability to those who contribute, he said.

"Prosperity Christianity is not what I consider Christianity to be. In my way of thinking, televangelism is not the way the church should be. Televangelism is a form of religious entertainment — it's like Johnny Carson with a religious host. The church as I understand it is a community of faith, with a focus on people being

present as people," Wortman said.

"My fear is that so many of the contributors are the poor, the emotionally unstable and the elderly, who, for whatever reason, send money without adequately informed judgments," Wortman said. "There are some people who are ideologically bound by a belief pattern that you are supposed to send money to get into heaven."

Seymour agreed with Wortman that the poor and the elderly are being harmed by televangelism. "I think it is clear that the major damage done by the televangelists is that they are exploiting vulnerable people who give money in good faith who don't have the money to give," Seymour said. "This is a way of robbing the poor."

Evans said that he does not see local churches benefiting from the controversy. "A church that teaches tithing will not be threatened at all," he said.

Wortman said that people who have seen that corruption can exist in televangelism will give their money to local or community churches where there is more credibility. "The difficult thing for us now is to discern who has credibility," he said.

Abrahamson said, "A distinction needs to be made between legitimate televangelists, such as Billy Graham, and the 'empire builders.' Billy Graham's first intent is preaching, not fundraising like Oral Roberts, Falwell and the Bakkers. Graham's ministry will be affected, but not devastated, because some people do not see the distinction between legitimate televangelists and others."

Wortman said, "The issue at stake here is character. It is not just Jim Bakker, it is Gary Hart, it is Ted Kennedy, it is all of those people who have the public's trust."

## In need of a computer? Here is where to look

By **KAREN SMILEY**  
Staff Writer

A variety of computers and software are available across campus for student and faculty use this summer, according to Lisa Morrow, spokesperson for the Microcomputing Support Center.

There are seven locations, with a total of 40 PCs, 37 Macintoshes, three Apple II's, two NEC letter-quality printers and one Apple LaserWriter.

The computers are located in the Undergraduate Library microcomputer room; the basement of the Health Sciences Library; 232 Davis Library (PC lab); 7001 Davis Library (Mac lab); the basement of Phillips Hall, rooms 14 and 28; Gardner Hall, room 05; and Craig Residence Hall. The computer room in Venable Hall will be open during the second summer session.

Reservations are not required for any of the computers but they are required for the letter-quality printers, Morrow said. These printers are located in the Undergraduate library and Davis library. Reservations may be made by phone and must be claimed within 10 minutes of the reservation time.

There are assistants in each lab who are trained and available to give tutorials in several supported word processors: PC-Write, WordPerfect, MS Word and MacWrite. These programs, as well as other software such as Lotus and Systat, are available in the labs and may be checked out with a student ID or driver's license.

Several summer hands-on training workshops are being offered by the MSC, Morrow said. They are free of charge to all staff, faculty and students, she said.

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