

## Kingdom Project Restoration Manager Speaks of Sacred Spaces

For many people in the general public, the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois tops the list of most unique sacred places to visit in the United States. Tens of thousands of people visit the Temple each month, and less than ten percent of them are Bahá'ís.

The Mother Temple's refreshing popularity is alive in Chicago, in particular. Articles in the Chicago Tribune highlighted the Temple as a favorite local destination, segments about its history are shown regularly on PBS, and, most recently, a lecture about the Temple educated the patrons of a local independent bookstore, Transitions Bookplace in Chicago.

Scott Conrad, project manager for the Temple restoration efforts of the Kingdom Project, spoke on August 31 about the architectural significance and sacred nature of the House of Worship. His presentation was the first in a series of monthly talks about the Bahá'í Faith and its teachings to be given at this nationally known bookshop. The speaker series was requested by Transitions to compliment events at the store with "Bahá'í Publishing" authors. The speaker series and author events are held on different dates.

Known for his unique brand of wit and spirited storytelling, Scott was the perfect teacher for a full audience of seekers, Bahá'ís, and passers-by. His engaging stories were illustrated by an eclectic and all-encompassing slideshow of historical figures, art, architecture, gardens, and interiors—not only of the Temple in Wilmette, but also Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition, Bahá'í holy places in Haifa, and plans for the new Temple in Chile.

With Scott steering the vehicle of architecture and history, audience members traveled the basic principles of the Faith and explored the meaning of "sacred space";

"The difference between Bahá'í sacred spaces and the sacred spaces of the past is that the Bahá'í sacred spaces are completely open to everyone," Scott said. "To create a sacred space, you have to create a boundary. You must go through a series of steps. The large series of terraces in the approach to the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa are one example of such a boundary between the everyday and the sacred."

The audience also received a lesson about the spirit of the early Bahá'ís and the uninhibited passion of the architect of the Mother Temple, Louis Bourgeois.

"Louis Bourgeois's mission in life was to do the temple of Peace, as he called it," Scott said. "He had a mystical calling for this building. He saw it in a dream." Scott went on to explain the uniqueness of the architecture as "a purely selfless act on his [Bourgeois's] part. It's interesting when an artist is able to eliminate himself from his work."

Upon encouraging the audience to visit the Mother Temple, Scott noted, "The ornamentation allows the Temple to speak for itself. You can learn so much just by visiting and reading the Temple."

With lectures like this in Chicago and across the country made possible by the Kingdom Project, the Bahá'í Temple and Faith are on a path of public teaching via architecture and beauty, bringing more visitors along for the ride. Popular destination: Peace!

For a report of Bahá'í lectures across the country, please visit [www.bahaibooksusa.com](http://www.bahaibooksusa.com) under "News".