

FEBRUARY 2011

The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH

a Journey with Jesus

Almost daily I receive invitations to attend conferences, read books, or listen to podcasts of the latest and most innovative approaches to church ministry. Some are helpful and thought provoking, others not so much. As a bit of a news and info junkie I enjoy looking at these ideas. While this can be very helpful, we need to remember that, in the end, what we are called to be and to do is really not all that complicated. We are called to know and follow Jesus our Lord.

In order to recapture that simple devotion to Jesus we have launched a study together of the gospel of Luke. Our goal is to encounter the story of Jesus in a fresh way, asking God to teach us more about who Jesus is and what it means to live in and for His kingdom. Our Spiritual Growth Pathway is our way of laying out a process whereby we can pursue this kingdom life. But let me warn you, because as simple as this may seem, it will require a lot of us.

When Jesus came on the scene, his ministry was about revealing the true nature of what the kingdom of God was all about. The people to whom he was speaking had a centuries old tradition about what the kingdom was about that had basically blinded them to the larger truth of their own history and the true purposes of God. In the language of today, they believed and lived by a false narrative. Jesus came along and challenged this false narrative with God's narrative. He challenged what I like to call our "notions of normal," a phrase you're going to hear me use a lot.

So, what does this have to do with us? Everything. We have to open our hearts up to the reality that we often live by false narratives as well. We have to be willing to let the story of Jesus confront our notions of normal in every area of our lives from how we do church, to how we live our lives in our families, our schools, our jobs, and our neighborhoods, to how we set priorities in investing our time and resources. We have to be willing to consider what it really means to call Jesus, "Lord".

If we are going to fulfill our vision of *Transforming Lives in a Christ-centered Community* then we must diligently pursue knowing and being changed by the person and work of Jesus. This journey with Jesus will provide a great opportunity to do this. Let me encourage you to:

CONNECT with God and His church each Sunday as we worship and study together.

ENGAGE in a deeper understanding and integration of these truths in a small group.

SERVE his kingdom by using the gifts and resources God has given you.

MULTIPLY your life by investing in helping others to know Christ and grow in their relationship to Him.

If we all join together in this, its going to be a great ride.

Danny
Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR

Running on Empty, Part Two *by Tony Catudal*

SERVICE AND WORK AND ACTIVITY—are all good and should be engaged in by every Christian. But at the bottom of all these things, giving meaning to them, will be the inward habit of beholding God. (*The Pursuit of God*, Tozer)

In January's *Bell Tower* we wrote about the need to prioritize soul care, asking the question, "do the priorities in our lives allow us to *fill up*; to care for our souls and give expression to their needs?" We also explored the idea that "growing and serving in community are key elements of spiritual life and flow out of a thriving relationship with Christ and, at some point, should be a part of the life of every Christ-follower."

Two of the steps on our Spiritual Growth Pathway are vital as we prioritize soul care.



Engage...A Place to Grow



While there are numerous ways to engage, we believe that the most effective way is for a person to become involved in a small group where "we are nurtured and cared for... where we are encouraged to grow in our relationship with Christ as we integrate God's Word into daily life." Being

a part of a healthy small group is the best way to engage in life transformation beyond our participation in the Sunday services.

Since we are each in different places in our spiritual growth, our goal in Adult Ministries is to simplify ways for people to connect with a small group, and to provide a broader range of small group opportunities for the varying levels of spiritual growth in our body. It is our hope that this allows people to participate more easily and to begin experiencing life as part of a small group.

What are your next steps to engage? If you are not involved in a group, two key next steps are:

- Making the time to participate in a group
- Finding the right group

This may be done by a friend inviting you to their group, a church-wide event, or by our small group staff helping you to get connected.

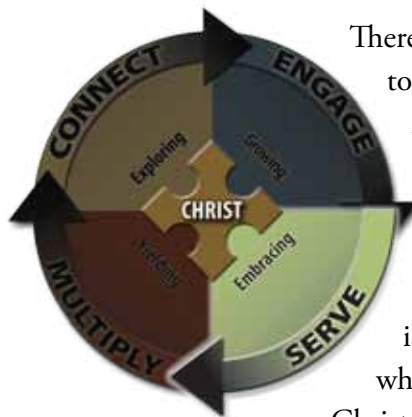
If you are already involved in a group, your next steps could be to:

- Prioritize attending more regularly
- Commit to genuinely hearing where the Holy Spirit is challenging you to grow deeper in Christ
- Take on a leadership role within your group
- Consider becoming a leader for a developing group

While our small group ministry resides in the "Engage" portion of the Spiritual Growth Pathway, it is our hope that our small groups lead people to growth in Christ that results in them living out every aspect of the VCC Spiritual Growth Pathway. Perhaps the next step for you is to begin to serve somewhere.

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SERVE... A Place to Give



There are countless opportunities to serve in ministries (both inside and outside of the church) for every level of growth and commitment. But serving is more than an activity or an event. It is a state of being; a part of who we are as we mature in Christ. Serving is an expression of Christ living in us and of the Spiritual Gifts the Lord has equipped us with to build up His body. Whether our manner of serving is behind the scenes or in a more up front capacity, the important thing to remember is that we always serve as an outgrowth of our internal growth and to the glory of God.

We will soon make it easier to become involved by listing available serving opportunities on our new website. These listings will also include the expected level of commitment, and personality type that may be best for a particular role (reserved, outgoing, etc.). A comprehensive list of serving opportunities is available in the office lobby. We will also offer classes in the Fall for people to learn more about serving and discovering their spiritual gifts.

What are your next steps to serve? If you are not yet involved in a ministry, two key first steps are:

- Make the time to participate in a ministry
- Find a ministry where you can serve

If you are already serving, a next step for you could be to ask a friend to join you in a serving opportunity that you have found meaningful.

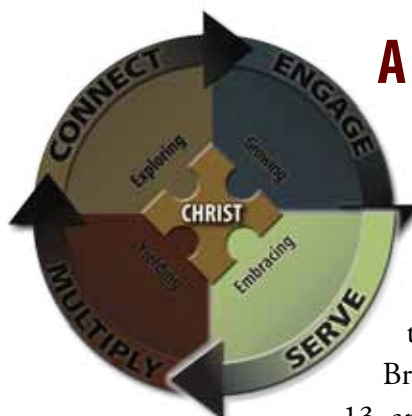
We are in process all of our lives and never fully “arrive.” Our lives are filled with responsibilities and activities that constantly vie for our time and energy. If we do not intentionally prioritize the eternal in our lives something else will prioritize itself for us. Again, the simple part is the hard part; turning toward Christ and reprioritizing our lives accordingly. The heart of the matter is not simply religious activities, but the condition of the heart itself. Here is a great reminder from Psalm 147:10-11 (ESV).

His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

If you would like to learn more or get involved with small groups or serving opportunities, please contact Tony Catudal at 925-846-6622x17 or tcatudal@vcclive.org.

THE CHALLENGE: What is the next step the Lord has for you that will take you beyond where you are now and onto the next phase of becoming more like Christ and engaging in His Kingdom purposes?

A Place to...Give | Brown Bag Sunday Is February 13

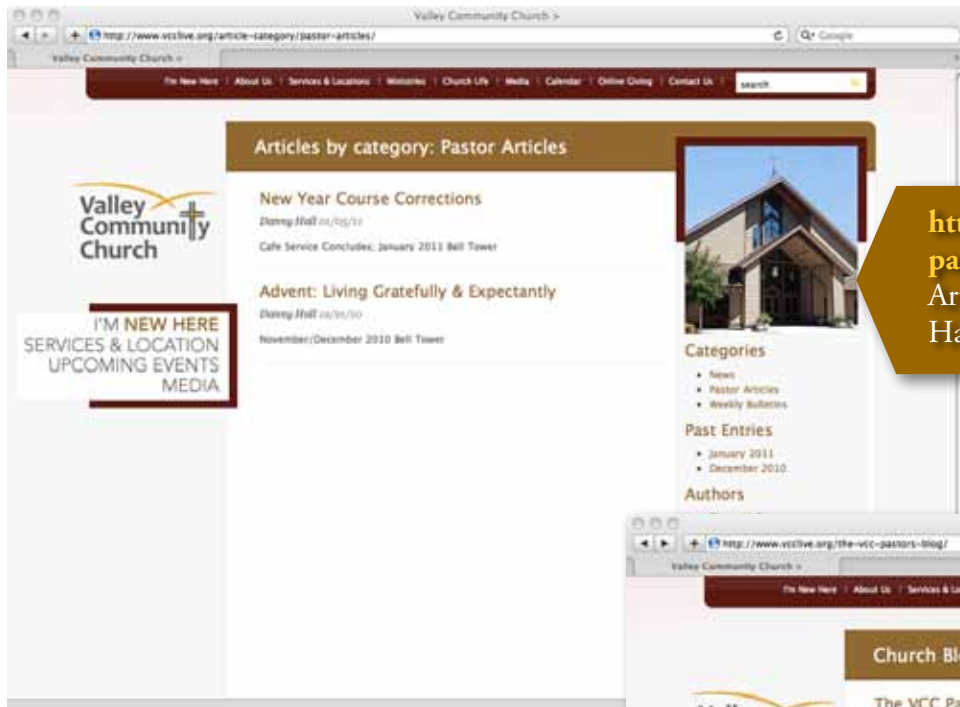


The hungry are with us here in Pleasanton. Please fill up your grocery bag(s) with non-perishable food items to be donated to the Food Pantry at Valley Bible Church. Bring them to church on Sunday, February 13, and leave them in the church lobby or the lobby of the church office.



Making the Most of Media

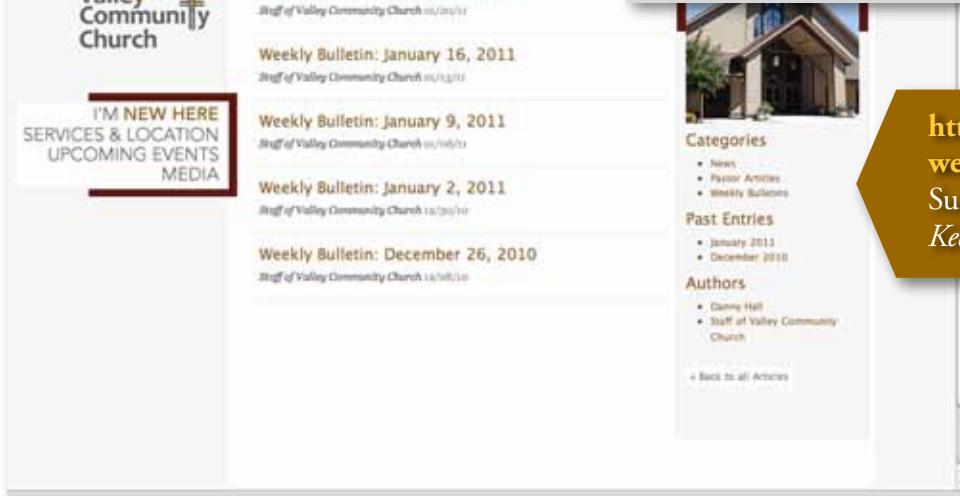
What comes to mind when you hear “Media”; newspapers, magazines, video? Under Media on our new website, www.vcclive.org, you will find elements of these and so much more. You will want to visit often as content is added all the time. Here’s a taste of what you will find.



<http://www.vcclive.org/article-category/pastor-articles/>
Articles by VCC pastors; in particular Danny Hall articles from monthly newsletters.

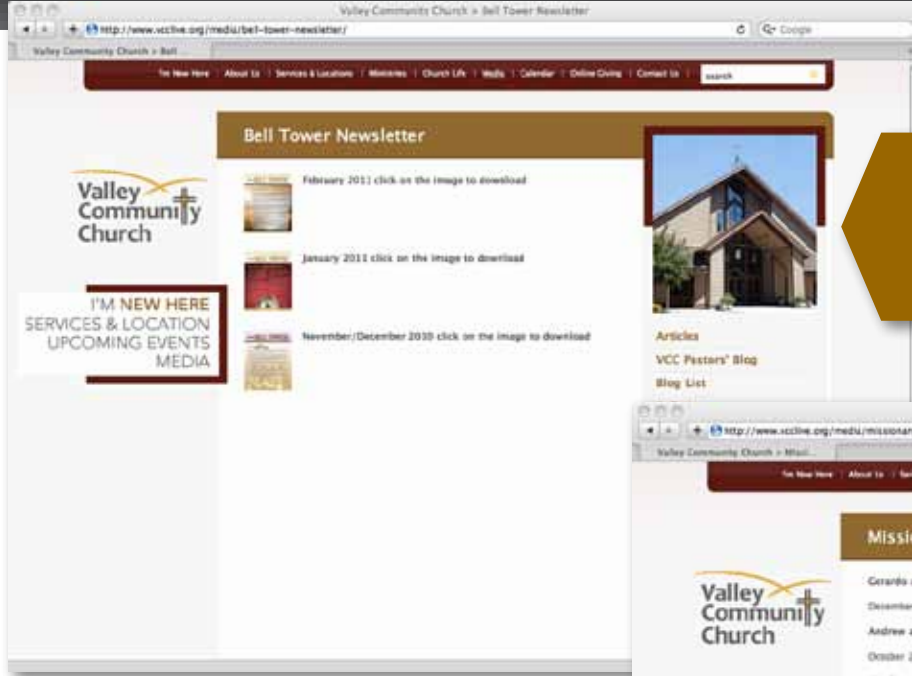


<http://www.vcclive.org/the-vcc-pastors-blog/>
Creative, entertaining, thought-provoking musings by our pastors.



<http://www.vcclive.org/article-category/weekly-bulletins/>
Sunday bulletins; highlights, church life, and *Keeping Connected*. Posted on Friday each week.

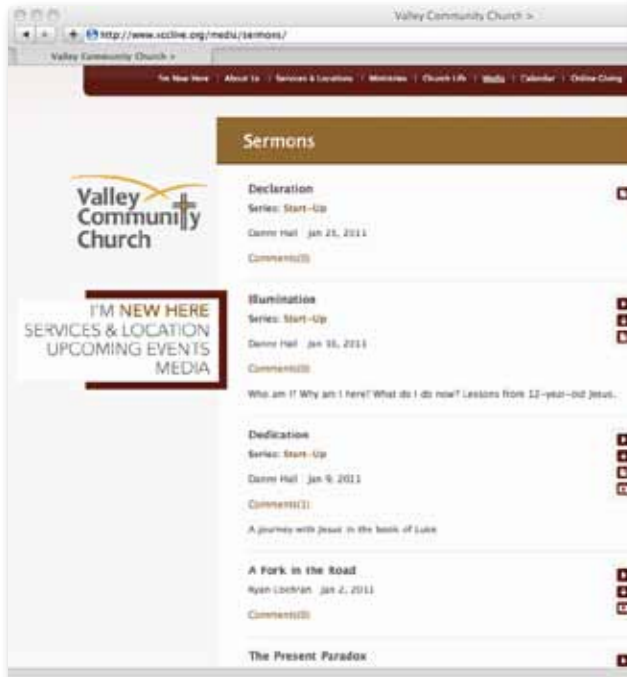
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<http://www.vcclive.org/media/bell-tower-newsletter/>
 The most recent *Bell Tower* and previous issues available for download.



<http://www.vcclive.org/media/missionary-updates/>
 The latest communications from our missionaries.



<http://www.vcclive.org/media/sermons/>
 Sunday messages in audio and video formats.



<http://www.vcclive.org/media/small-group-study-guides/>
 Small group study materials to go along with each Sunday message.

...Silence End...

Instigating & Participating in a Culture of Passionate Worship

Silence End. The hope is that for many it does just that—end. It sounds strange, for most of us need some silence in an age of constant noise, of TVs flickering, and of mobile devices pinging and buzzing to let us know that there is still some unfinished business that we must pay attention to. Yes, we do need that Sabbath of rest, of time to decompress and listen.

But there is another issue of the heart that calls for a breaking of silence rather than a falling into quiet. For many of us we are so dizzied with busyness, so pressured by our various roles of life (CEO, artist, mother, caretaker, pastor, engineer, barista and student) that we are bone-tired. When it comes to worship on a Sunday we tend to think what we need most is to sit and just absorb like a sponge. The problem is this: in our passivity we are only more drained, only more dehydrated. We slip more and more into spirals of depression, lethargy, and spiritual amnesia. In our active rejoicing we are rejuvenated.

There is another issue of the heart that calls for a breaking of silence rather than a falling into quiet.

What we need—what we are built for—is to engage in the active praises of The One who put the breath in our nostrils and the motion in our tongues. What we need is to break the silence that so many of us enter into when we go into a setting of community worship.

It is our mandate as followers of Christ to instigate and participate in a culture of passionate worship. One where our bodies (we are holistic beings) are engaged in worship—be it sitting standing, kneeling, lungs pumping, lips singing, feeling the low-end frequencies, or hands clapping. This is not to say we each have to express our affections in the same way (i.e. raising of the hands or falling to our knees), but we are to be people who break the silence of rebellion together. We are called together to sing together to the God who put our bodies together and who has brought us together as His body...that we may go out together to bring His love to

all others. We are to be moved in heart and mind, and to zero-in our attention and affections on our God. We are to put all pride and thoughts of “looking silly” aside to honor the one who looked far more than silly as he was crucified naked, bleeding, trying to breathe while on His splinter-riddled cross of passion.

It is our mandate as followers of Christ to instigate and participate in a culture of passionate worship. Why? Because it is God’s due and we are His people. Who has greater reason to sing with abandon than those who were brought from death to life? For those of us who have been silent, let’s move from being a spectator to participating, from being voyeurs to being one of those that voice the lyrical truth.

Please join us on Sunday, February 13 from 6:00-7:30PM for Silence End, a night of music and meditations on community worship sponsored by iNVERSION (www.inversiononline.org). It will be held in the sanctuary.

We hope this night of music will honor our Lord and be a blessing to our church family as well as the Tri-Valley area. All are invited. So let’s get the word out—invite family and friends. As a note, the music on this night will be louder than is usual on Sunday mornings due to the style. Please be expectant of this, but don’t let it stop you from coming!



Sanctity of Human Life *by Barbara Saba*

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you... JEREMIAH 1:5

Webster describes sanctity as “the fact of being sacred or inviolable; anything held sacred. God tells us that He consecrated (set apart as holy) each one of us. No one has the right to take that life from us—that is the sanctity of human life.

So what is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (SOHL) all about, and why? We hear about it every January. Let me see if I can help cast a light on the impact of this day, especially for the church.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is held in January on the Sunday that falls closest to the day on which the Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions were handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court which was January 22, 1973. Thirty-eight years ago these decisions ushered in the legislation to legalize abortion in our nation. As a result of these decisions, Americans have observed SOHL Sunday as a day to celebrate and bring attention to the intrinsic value of all human life.

It’s not just the history of this day we need to remember, but also the reason we recognize it. As Jeremiah 1:5 reminds us, every life is designed for a specific path and chosen by God. Giving dignity to life and placing value in how God formed each one of us before we were even in our mother’s womb mirrors the heart of our Almighty Father.

Being champions for life has also captured the heart of the staff, volunteers and supporters of the Valley Pregnancy Center. We meet each client where they are and come alongside them during this difficult time of decision in their lives. While we offer free pregnancy tests, resources, ultrasounds and pre-natal care, our focus is always on our client, entering their situation with the compassion of Christ. We are told by our clients this is what makes them feel safe and not judged.



Because they don’t feel judged, they open up to us and allow us to walk this path with them. By doing so, we have the opportunity to equip our clients, through education and the truth in love, to make confident and healthy life choices through their crisis and beyond.

We often hear women we know say they wish they would have known about a Pregnancy Center before they had an abortion. This is one of the reasons why we offer a Post-Abortion Counseling and Education Bible study (PACE). Through PACE, our clients find the healing and freedom that only our God can provide...“For all have fallen short of the glory of God.”

The Valley Pregnancy Center would not be here without our supporters and volunteers. Has God touched your heart to become a champion for life? Do you feel Him calling you to this ministry? Or maybe He’s called you to come and find healing over a past abortion. If so, please don’t hesitate to call us at the number below.

So, as we celebrate and recognize SOHL again this year, I pray you will have a renewed perspective of the value of life and the value He places on you! We thank all of our supporters because we would not have been here for the past 23 years without you. He has called us to care “for the least of these;” If you know someone that finds themselves with an unexpected pregnancy, we are here to walk through this time with them—be sure and have them call VPC at 925-828-4458.

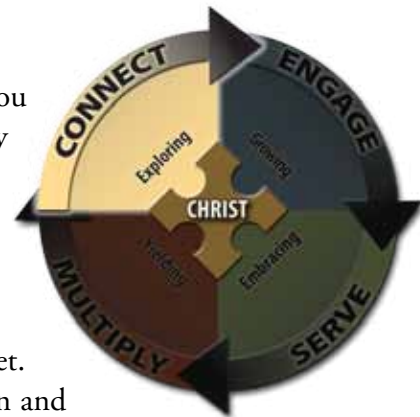
A Place to...Give | Valley Pregnancy Center (VPC) Baby Bottle Drive

Show your support of VPC by taking a bottle home and filling it with your loose change! Bottles can be picked up after services on Sunday, February 6, or in the office during office hours (Monday through Friday, 8:30AM to 4:30PM). Return your bottles to church by Sunday, February 27.



A Place to...Belong | Membership

A place to belong; there's just something about belonging. On February 25 and 26 you will have an opportunity to take that next step to connect with the body here at Valley Community Church. Our Membership Class will take place on Friday night from 7:00-9:00PM and Saturday morning from 8:30AM -12:30PM.



Church membership:

- Raises your commitment to this church body.
- Allows you to vote on important matters such as elders, deacons, pastors, and budget.
- Gives you an opportunity to get to know some of the elders and pastors, our vision and how the church operates.
- Is required for elders and deacons.

The content for the February class has been refreshed and reworked allowing for greater focus on what really matters to us. Don't miss this opportunity to join with us in accomplishing the vision of *Transforming Lives in a Christ-Centered Community*. Sign up by filling out the Communication Slip on Sunday or [email](#) the church office. Childcare available by reservation.

Upcoming Events

Men's Night Out

Thursday, February 3, 6:00PM

Friday Friends

Friday, February 4, 6:00PM

MS Equip Weekend

February 4-6

Parent's Date Night

Saturday, February 12, 6:00PM

Silence End

Sunday, February 13, 6:00PM

DivorceCare Begins

Thursday, February 24, 7:00PM

Making the Most of Facebook

Thursday, February 24, 7:00PM

MS & HS: Battle of the Bands

Friday, February 25, 7:00PM

Membership Class

February 25-26

HS Retreat

March 4-6

Men's Retreat

March 25-March 27

Unfailing
Psalm 13:5
LOVE
Happy Valentine's Day

