

The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH

Keeping Commitment Over the Long Haul

One month into 2012 and the gym is unusually crowded again. If typical, that won't last for long. I wonder how many of you have been able to keep your New Year's resolutions. One of the hardest things to do is to keep a commitment over the long haul. Even when we really believe in something, it can be taxing to remain faithful.

This past year we have talked a lot around here at VCC about serving and investing in others. It has been quite remarkable to watch so many of you get involved in so many different initiatives. We are truly beginning to make an impact in our community and around the world.

However, we need always to be reminded that the quality and sustainability of our service will flow out of our growing relationship with Christ. Connecting with God and others in worship and engaging in meaningful interaction with others around the Scriptures in smaller groups are necessary foundational components upon which we can build lives of service and investment. To that end let me encourage you to consider two commitments for this year.

First, make being a part of our Sunday worship a priority for you this year. I say this because there is just something special and renewing to be among others as we seek to worship, hear God's Word, sing, share, and pray together.

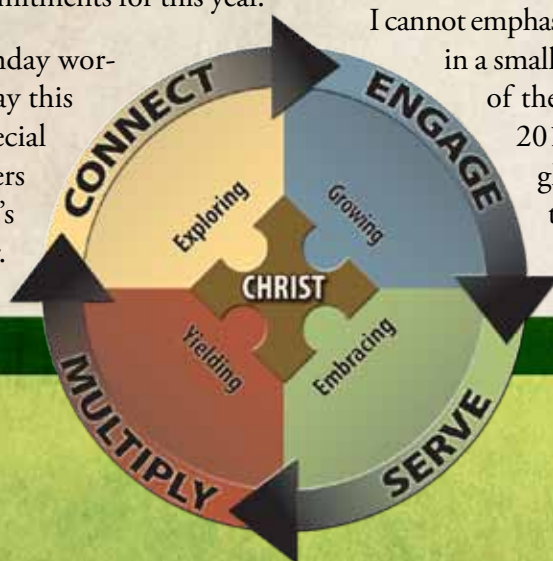
All throughout Scripture and the history of God's people, they have gathered for corporate worship. Come with an expectant heart and a desire to give to others and you will be surprised how much you will get from this.

Second, enter into some kind of small group experience where you can share life with others and go more deeply into the kind of relationships that encourage growth and authenticity in your faith. That rarely happens in larger groups like a Sunday service. We need that more intimate contact to know and be known in ways that strengthen and support.

If you are not already in a small group or you have a special area of interest/need, we are offering a number of short-term small groups beginning in early February and running anywhere from 6 to 10 weeks depending on the group. The group topics and their meeting times and location are below. For a full description of each you can check out the [January Bell Tower](#).

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of engaging in a small group. I hope you will take advantage of these opportunities as we seek to make 2012 a year where our impact for God's glory and the good of others continues to grow.

Danny Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR



TOPICAL GROUPS

CONNECT: Starting Point

Sundays, 9:00am, Fireside Room

10-weeks, free

Teacher: John & Monica Marino

ENGAGE: Marriage and Family

Thursdays, 6:45-8:30pm, Conference room

6-weeks*, \$10

Teacher: Bill & Gail Butler

MULTIPLY: XEE Evangelism Explosion

Sundays, 10:45am, Room B212

6-weeks, free

Teacher: Jay Ashcraft

BEGINNING FEBRUARY 5*

SERVE: Biblical Financial Study

Sundays, 9:00am, Fireside Room

10-weeks, \$45-55 (scholarships available)

Teacher: Eric Martin

SERVE: Discovering Your SHAPE to Serve

Sundays, 10:45am, Room B210

7-weeks, \$10

Teacher: Tony Catudal

* Marriage and Family group begins on Thursday, February 9

Setting Us Free Update...

our continuing culture of generosity

As part of the Setting Us Free capital campaign, our church set aside a tithe for each dollar contributed toward the campaign to assist in the building of God's kingdom. The campaign now has a pledged amount exceeding \$2.4 million, targeted to come in over the next three years. As these monies come in, a Missions Tithe Fund is being set aside. As directed guidance by the Elders, the fund's intent is to establish support for one-time missionary capital infrastructure projects and personnel investment projects. The objective was to use the funds in this way; two-thirds for international projects and one-third US domestic. It was a further desire that, where possible, the projects would involve members of our congregation, in order to heighten the awareness of the missions we support and strengthen the bonds between us.

The procedure is that the Missions Committee will gather projects from the missionaries and missional organizations the church supports to see if we can assist them in helping them accomplish their work. They make recommendations to a Joint Task Force of six, made up of the Chair, Vice Chair and one other member of the Missions Committee and three Elders. The Joint Task Force reviews the recommendations from the Missions Committee and makes a final recommendation to the Board of Elders for approval.

As a result of God's blessing and bounty that has been brought forth from the generous giving of our Church, two projects have been approved and funded. The first is an \$8,000 grant to Valley Pregnancy Center to upgrade their office furniture. Congregation member Frank Burger was asked to coordinate this activity between the church and Valley Pregnancy Center. The bulk of their existing furniture was donated many years ago and is not

functional and appropriate for their new location. With recent Federal HIPPA requirements, privacy for medical records is mandated and office furniture containing records is required to be locked and kept secure. Several of the older furniture items did not have or had lost this capacity. The funds will be used to replace the existing furniture with new and/or gently-used office furniture using funds from the grant.

The second project is a \$7,000 grant to the Hollenbecks' mission in Mexico. These funds will go toward the buying of concrete to be used as a foundation for a dormitory/garage housing five interns or guests and to create a slab that will double as a parking lot and materials staging area for their building projects. Congregation member Jan Ash will be the contact point for the Hollenbecks for this grant as she is a long-time friend of them and coordinator of our high school Ensenada missions trips.

The Joint Task Force continues to meet and consider the next projects that should be the focus of our church. We praise God for his goodness and thank him for the blessing he has placed upon our church.

Total given to-date towards Setting Us Free = \$725,510

Debt paid down thus far = \$671,486

For you ongoing giving to Setting Us Free, please use the purple envelopes available in the church office and sanctuary lobby.

Brown Bag Benevolence

The holidays are over and most of us have returned to a less hectic life of family, work and school. For many in our community, the end of the holiday season thrusts them back into a life of uncertainty, joblessness, homelessness, and worry about how to put the next meal onto the table for their families.

Benevolence isn't only about dropping a donation into the offering basket as it is passed on the first Sunday of each month and letting our deacons see to the needs of the poor. It isn't about seeing that needy families have a wonderful Christmas by providing food baskets and Angel Tree gifts. It is about doing each and every day what Jesus has called each one of us to do just as the Macedonians did in the time of Paul:

"And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people." 1 CORINTHIANS 8: 1-4

Brown Bag Sunday is another opportunity for us here at Valley Community Church to show our love and care for the needy. On Sunday, February 12, we will be collecting bags of groceries to drop off at the food pantry at Valley Bible Church. You can help by bringing in your bags of groceries to donate. In addition to non-perishable food, the pantry can use diapers, formula, and baby food.

If you are available to help deliver food to the pantry on Sunday, February 12 after the second service, please contact Laura Monical at info@vcclive.org.

Doctors Giving Back



Doctors Giving Back with John and Jana Turns is getting ready for their trip to Ethiopia on March 10-25. Opportunities include medical (trained and untrained), construction repair on the medical clinic, and general loving help. This year Doctors Giving Back feels excited and blessed to have some of Valley Community's own making the team trip this year to minister in Ethiopia.

Each one of us can help with this trip by donating items that are needed to help make the trip successful. Doctors Giving Back needs:

- Cash donations for water filters, vaccines, medical supplies, mosquito nets, food, medical equipment, hospital renovations
- OTC pain relievers: Tylenol or Motrin (adult tabs & Pediatric children's syrup), Advil, Aleve

- OTC stomach medications: Pepto Bismol (tablets, NOT liquid), Immodium (tablets AND liquid); Zantac 150 mg tablets; Prevacid
- OTC allergy medication: Zyrtec tablets; Claritin or Clarinex tablets (adult and children's); allergy eye drops
- First aid/antibiotic creams: hydrocortisone cream, antibiotic ointment (e.g. Polysporin, Neosporin)
- Eyeglasses and reading glasses
- Knitted or crocheted teddy bears, we would like the ladies to keep knitting. DGB would like to meet our goal of 600 teddy bears.



The Doctors Giving Back packing party is scheduled for Sunday, February 26. Any donated items should be dropped off by Sunday, February 19, so that they make it on this trip. Donated items can be dropped off in the boxes in the church office and the church office lobby.



REDEEMING JUSTICE

TO TANGIBLY DEMONSTRATE
GOD'S COMPASSION, MERCY,
JUSTICE & LOVE TO THE POOR,
AFFLICTED & OPPRESSED

Justice—it's a buzzword today that means different things to different people. The term "social justice" in particular can cause suspicion and skepticism because of our differing viewpoints and experiences in how the term is applied so broadly to various causes today. The Bible tells us, however, that God's justice is freeing mankind—especially the poor and oppressed—from the sin and wickedness that causes misery and affliction. This justice is a very part of who God is—and He is committed to it: "O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more." Psalm 10:17-18

Micah 6:8 tells us what the Lord requires of us in this cause: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

The Redeeming Justice team is a group recently formed to help Valley Community Church live out God's calling to love in this manner. Our mission statement is consistent with this calling: *"To tangibly demonstrate God's compassion, mercy, justice and love to the poor, afflicted, and oppressed."*


Who are the poor, the afflicted, and the oppressed? They are those who lack basic needs such as food and water, clothing, housing. They are the victims of disease and crisis, or simply have inadequate access to healthcare. They are the victims of human trafficking, bonded slavery, forced prostitution. They are not only in impoverished countries, but in our own communities.

Our goal is to serve Valley Community Church by enabling those who desire to live out their faith in tangible ways to discover opportunities to care for the poor, afflicted, and oppressed and by facilitating purposeful and effective methods of ministry. Many of us have a desire to serve God and others in some capacity, but simply don't know how or where to serve Him. We want to raise the exposure and increase our awareness of those in need, then focus our passions with a deliberate and strategic approach, and find effective ways to be a conduit for God's love.

In the month of February, we are scheduling awareness events that will be held each Saturday evening during the month in the Hall. The events will feature movies that focus on some of the different forms that injustice takes in our world, such as poverty and human trafficking, and on how God is redeeming these situations. There will be time for discussion and response, and even the opportunity to hear from some local organizations that are ministering in these areas. Childcare will be available. More details will be coming in the weekly bulletins and the weekly webminder.

Also, during the worship hours on February 12 and February 26, members of the Redeeming Justice team will be available to discuss opportunities for serving in justice ministries that we have identified as potential partners, and to discuss your passions and ideas.

We are looking forward to experiencing how God is redeeming justice, and being part of God's redeeming justice. Please pray that our hearts would be burdened by the plight of the oppressed, and that we would see clearly where God is working so that we can join Him.



Awareness
Events:
Saturdays
in February
4, 11, 18, 25
5:00PM

Does Praying in Numbers Work? *by Susan Harford*

My oldest daughter has been out of college since May 2010. She is living back home with her dad and me while she searches for a job. It hasn't been easy finding gainful employment that challenges a college graduate. Over the last fifteen months my prayers have included a request and more recently, a plea, to the Lord for something that would engage and delight her. Although there have been many people coming alongside of me and praying for us for many months, nothing significant was happening.

In the middle of December I added my prayer request to the prayer chain. There are over 175 people in our church body who are on the prayer chain and faithfully pray on behalf of those prayer requests. Within days of their praying, doors began opening. On January 15, exactly one month to the date that those 175 faithful people lifted their voices on our behalf, I am happy to report my daughter has a temporary job that engages and delights her!

I believe the power of prayer greatly increases when the number of faithful who are praying increases as well. I am currently asking for prayer for my husband—that he will find a new job within his corporation that will keep us in Pleasanton. I am confident that with our prayer warriors coming alongside of me, my pray will be answered according to God's will.

If you would like to add your prayer to the Prayer Chain, fill out the Communications Slip in your Sunday bulletin, leave a message at info@vcclive.org or contact the staff in the church office. If you would like to join the Prayer Chain as a prayer warrior, contact the staff in the church office or email sharford@vcclive.org.



Another Prayer Opportunity

On Sunday mornings after each service we have an area at the front of the church for those who are in need of prayer. We need volunteers (one man & one woman for each service) to pray with these people. If you would be willing to pray with individuals, please sign up [here](#).

NOTE: If this is your first time to volunteer for this activity, please contact Pastor Jay Ashcraft at jashcraft@vcclive.org or call him at 846-6622 before you sign up.



OASIS

coffee & tea
conversation
connection



Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30PM
Thursdays, 9:00-10:30AM
Choir/Music Room

OASIS: coffee & tea, conversation, connection

In January, VCC and Shining Light Preschool launched OASIS, a ministry to reach friends who are hesitant about "church" but would readily sit down and chat over a cup of coffee.

OASIS was conceived by Shining Light Preschool moms who thought this would be an easy way to put friendship evangelism into action. The concept is simple, no program, just a welcoming space for coffee, tea and conversation, and it is free. There is information on small groups, special events, and books with a bent toward those who are exploring or are new to Christianity. Babies and toddlers are welcome. The room will have an area where children can play while Mom socializes.

OASIS meets on Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30PM and Thursdays, 9:00-10:30AM in the Choir/Music Room through the end of May. Drop in anytime and come as often as you like!

Though the times are arranged around SLP schedules, everyone is welcome...dads, grandparents, neighbors, friends or parents you meet through your kids classes and shared activities. OASIS is also an opportunity for intergenerational friendships to develop—a casual way for older women to meet younger moms, for example.

If you would like more information or want to help (refreshments, set-up, clean-up), contact Naomi Prentice at Naomi.prentice@gmail.com or Esther Landhuis at elandhuis@gmail.com.

Gifts of the Garden—A Spring Tea *by Lilia Knight*

With Christmas behind us, our thoughts turn to spring which is quickly approaching! What could be more fun than to start planning for a tea party? Can you think of a better way to welcome spring than to sit with other women, take some time to relax, enjoy an inspiring speaker and have a good time over a cup of tea and lovely treats? Ladies, you are all invited to join us Saturday, March 24 from 2:00 to 4:00PM for *Gifts of the Garden—A Spring Tea*.

When you think of a garden and the gifts a garden has to offer, what does that mean to you? To me it means beautiful plants, flowers, fruit, veggies, lady bugs, butterflies and maybe even the birds, bees and warm sunlight. But then I think more deeply, I think of the Garden of Eden and what gifts came from it. I think of life, breath, naming animals, or walking with God in the cool of the day. That leads me to think about another garden, Gethsemane. It reminds me of olive trees and even better, Christ's obedience to God's plan of the cross. Whatever garden comes to your mind I'm sure you can think of how blessed we are by the gifts of the gardens we enjoy.

Speaking of gifts, this year we want to encourage you to bring a gift to give to the children at Shepherd's Gate. Please bring to the tea a new children's book, wrapped and tied with a pretty bow.

I hope you will bring a friend, neighbor or family member and join us for a relaxing time to partake of the Gifts of our Garden here at Valley Community Church. If you would like to host a table, join a team of servers, or help with food, please contact Lilia Knight at niteyknight@comcast.net. Mark your calendar for March 24 and watch for us out at the Gathering Place on Sundays for more information.

DivorceCare *Look forward to rebuilding your life; don't go through divorce alone!*

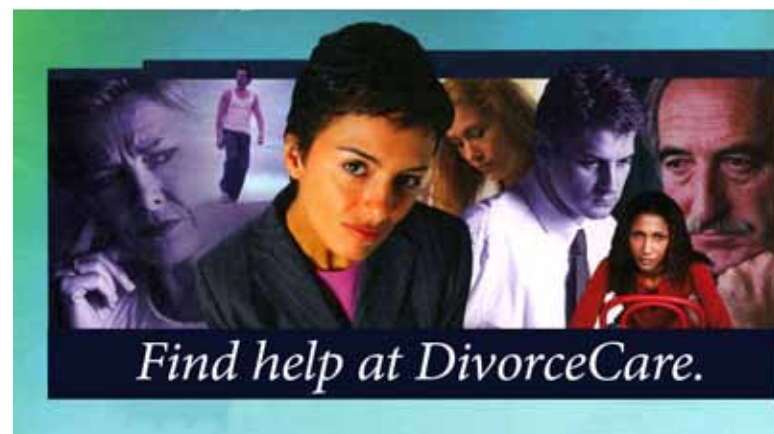
One of our goals as a church is to become more and more of a church family; a place where people in their times of greatest need and suffering turn for love and support.

All too often when people are experiencing difficulties in their lives, they distance themselves from their church. This is especially true during a divorce or separation. But during such a time a person most needs loving care!

We are going to be beginning another DivorceCare class on Thursday, February 16. DivorceCare is designed in a way to help so that you, or a friend of yours, doesn't need to go through a separation or divorce alone. It can be extremely helpful in helping families through the separation and/or divorce process and on into recovery. DivorceCare features thirteen video seminars that include more than thirty experts on divorce and recovering. You also become part of a small support group where, along with others in similar situations, you can discuss the seminar information and encourage one another through this difficult period in your lives.

If you are currently struggling with separation or divorce or someone you know is, please consider participating or encouraging your friend(s) to participate. Look forward to rebuilding your life; don't go through divorce alone!

We will be meeting on Thursday evenings, 7:00-9:00PM, in the Seminar Room. Child care is available for those who request it. To register, please call the church office at 846-6622.





MOCHA MOMENTS

Share a cup of coffee;
spend a moment learning
and growing together!

Mocha Moments

Women's Ministry at VCC desires to provide opportunities for women to grow (and help their families grow) in every aspect of their lives. We have been excited to see that growth and change happening. One opportunity that we hope to provide a couple of times a year to encourage that growth, is Mocha Moments. Mocha Moments are casual workshops, seminars or discussions around a specific topic.

Our first Mocha Moment was held in November where we heard TJ Roethe share her "Just In Case" seminar about being prepared for the unexpected. TJ provided class participants with a planner that went along with the class and helped households to organize for those unexpected moments in our lives. Those that attended felt it was invaluable and all felt a bit more prepared for the unexpected. We even heard rumblings that we should offer the class again—so stay tuned!

We are still working through what topics to offer at future Mocha Moments and the best forum(s) for offering them. Some of the topics we are thinking about include raising children, raising teens, children with special needs, how to share Christ with different religious groups, topical discussions on specific social issues, health and body issues etc. Some will meet at church and others may meet in somebody's home. Some will be for a smaller segment of our church and others will have a broader focus. While Mocha Moments are a part of Women's Ministry there will be many topics that will interest men and there may be times when we will have male speakers as well. We encourage all of you men to attend.

Our goal is to address the needs that women and their families face. We want the topics to help us grow in our walk with God, build disciples and offer a place for our neighbors who might not want to attend a service, to come and be a part of our campus. We welcome your input and ideas for topics. Topics should be broad in nature to meet the needs of a variety of individuals; married, single, single parent, etc. If you have any ideas, we would love to hear from you!

Watch the bulletin or our website for the next Mocha Moment and invite your friends, neighbors and family. We'll share a cup of coffee and spend a moment learning and growing together! To share ideas or for more information please contact womensministry@vcclive.org.

February Calendar

Wednesday, February 1, 7:00PM: High School MegaVISION

Saturdays, February 4, 11, 18, and 25: Redeeming Justice awareness nights

Sunday, February 5: Topical Groups start

Thursday, February 16, 7:00PM: DivorceCare begins

Sunday, February 21, 12:15PM: Small group leaders meeting