

JUNE/JULY 2011

The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH



Only the Start

What is **YOUR**
& understanding of
& commitment to
bringing
Hope to this
BROKEN WORLD?



Our annual Missions Weekend was a great time of celebration and challenge as we focused on our role of bringing Christ's love to our world. I am moved and proud to be part of a faith community that is having such an impact. Thanks to all who had a part in making that weekend such an amazing time.

But where do we go from here? The danger of such an event is that it becomes something of an end in itself. We gather to hear great stories and be challenged and that's all. It would be sad, however, if we left that weekend behind without each of us growing in our understanding of and commitment to our own role in bringing hope to this broken world. Let me challenge you to consider two ways you can follow through:

PRAY This summer we are sending teams to places like Mexico, Spain, Thailand, and Hawaii. Besides these trips there will be our own sports camp, VBS, High School and Middle School 'Xtreme Camps among the many things happening. All of these provide opportunities for growth and impact and need prayerful support. Your commitment to pray for these will make a difference.

Having served as a missionary for a number of years I can assure you that the need for prayer support is great. I don't know how we would have survived all those years without the active support of those who prayed for us regularly. I encourage you to adopt some team(s), team member(s), or project to pray for this summer. It really matters.

INVEST Our effectiveness as a church is directly proportional to how many of us choose to intentionally invest our lives in others. This summer, I encourage you to be creative, finding ways to reach out. Invite a neighbor over for dinner, organize a block party in your neighborhood, meet someone for coffee and talk about things that matter, help out at a ministry event, volunteer with one of our local ministry partners. Just do something to get out and get involved.

Events like our Missions Weekend have their greatest value when they inspire us to action. This summer let's not lose this opportunity to build on this foundation.

These are exciting days at VCC. We are welcoming Don and Brenda Elser to our team and we are continuing to explore how we can love and support each other as we go forward. Let's commit to pray and invest and trust God for a great summer.

Danny
Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR

PRAY & INVEST

Reaching Kids for Christ Through Sports



Uncharted Waters (UW) Sports Ministry has developed a high energy Bible-based summer sports camp that churches can't resist. Their Christian sports ministry camps provide the opportunity to partner with churches to reach out into the community using one of the most valuable communication tools in the world today—sports!

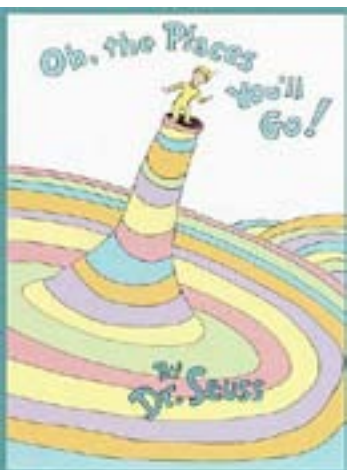
The ministry was founded in 1996 by Tim & Carol Conrad who were later joined by Alan & Barni Feuerhaken. They kicked off with USA camps in the summer of 1997 with approximately 900 kids attending. Today the curriculum has a six-year cycle and has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Thai, and Estonian with more languages planned in the future. In 2005 they partnered with Gospel Publishing House, which markets past curriculums, and Evangecube International to produce a sports-themed evangecube which is used by UW and Christian athletes around the world.

Since 2005, UW has seen its largest growth both in the area of staff and influence. Today UW has fifteen full-time employees who work in three areas of ministry, all with the same purpose of serving through sports. In 2009 they ran 110 camps and 50 resource camps around the world.

In 2008, God gave UW the vision of seeing one million kids come to Christ over the next five years. One key aspects of this is training leaders all around the world on how to use sports as an effective outreach in their communities. UW Sports Ministry is dedicated to making sports outreach camps as simple and successful as possible.

Here is just a small piece of how the week looks from the team's perspective. UW's team of trained coaches arrives on the Saturday before camp begins. On Sunday they meet with church volunteers for an hour to train them on their role during week. Monday through Friday this combined group of high-energy leaders, leads the camp from beginning to end. On Thursday, coaches present the gospel to the children at the camp. For children who make a decision for Christ, there is spiritual mentoring and follow-up to keep them involved in a church.

This year Valley Community Church will be partnering with UW to put on five camps in: Pleasanton, Richmond, Hawaii and two in Spain.



Oh! The Places You'll Go... by Cheryl Blea

You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So... get on your way! Dr. Seuss

I love the book by Dr. Seuss, *Oh! The Places You'll Go*. These lines remind me of this exciting journey we are taking in Children's Ministries. We have had the privilege of going many places, great places, far and away. And, no one in our ministry drives yet!

Eight years ago, a very beloved man from our congregation (John Haynes) came into my office and boldly said, "Cheryl, I think you should try this sports camp this summer with our church. My friend, Tim Conrad, is the founder of this ministry for elementary age children and he would love to meet you." I have never known anyone to actually say "NO" to John, so I made an appointment with Tim and the rest is, well, not over yet!

An additional summer ministry—isn't VBS enough? Run a sports camp? I am athletically challenged! A risk—I have been on the job for only three short years! Would kids come? Would they pay for a camp like this? There were all of these reasons to run the other way. In the end, God moved me to go for it. I agreed to bring on this ministry called Uncharted Waters and boy, let me tell you, the waters were Uncharted!

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Uncharted Waters sent me five college interns to do sports at a higher level. In addition they were supposed to sing, to present awesome Bible stories and to live their lives out loud (with lots of fun involved). They were to be role models to kids looking for great Christian role models. They were to show these kids how to love Jesus Christ with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind. What had I gotten myself into? As it turned out, the interns accomplished these goals and more. This was only part of the journey!

Although, more than once, it has been the hottest week of the summer, we have never been short of help. Each year we have increased our involvement. Our elementary students who attended camp that first year, have come back as middle school and high school students lined up to volunteer for our younger VCC students who are now attending. In spite of the high energy required and sometimes total exhaustion, they return in full force to help us put on our annual camps.

For the last four years our elementary students have raised money for three new church plants. Our middle school students have joined forces with UW Ministries and have traveled to help start new churches in Stockton, Hayward, Denver, and Tacoma. Last year we partnered with the Ira Jenkins Recreation center in Oakland to put on a camp for inner-city kids. AND, last year our elementary camp at Valley Community Church broke a record when it hit 100 kids. (The hundredth child got a prize, of course!)

Our relationship with Uncharted Waters ministries has developed into an extended family to the staff in our Children's Ministries office. When the UW staff passes through town, they stop in at VCC to visit. The founder wrote his newest children's sports book in our Fireside Room. More than once I have had UW staff crashed on my living room floor.

God truly had a plan when he brought us into partnership in reaching kids for Christ. We see students who were campers just a few years ago, grown up and in leadership roles because of this experience. They have gone to different places and shared the gospel with younger children—being stretched to the max! Some of our high school students met up with UW for Urban camps and last year our own Corie Sousa traveled to Oklahoma to train with UW for their Team 45 camp for four and five year olds so that Valley Community Church could reach out to our preschool families.

This year I had the privilege of sending my 23-year-old daughter, Janae to join the UW staff full time. She will head up the college recruiting department for summer interns. Janae has served with UW as a volunteer since she was in the sixth grade. (And for those of you who are wondering, yes, she is moving to Colorado Springs where the ministry is headquartered.)

This year we are putting on a total of five UW sports camps. Besides the VCC camp, they include two in Spain that will be put on by Jay Ashcraft and his team. Ryan Cochran is taking students this summer to meet up with UW and be trained to lead a sports camp with children who are in shelters, homeless, or in very low income environments on Oahu. We are also putting on a camp with the Bay Area Rescue Mission in Richmond. This camp will also target those in shelters, homeless or in low income environments. These camps are life changing for both our students involved in putting on the camps and for the children attending.

Do you see Jesus in all of this movement? The kids in the portable sure do! The kids on the mission trips sure do! Thank you John for being bold and approaching me. Thank you to all in our congregation who have supported these efforts in many ways: housing teams, bringing meals, buying cookies, and praying, praying, praying. Most of all, thank you for signing your children up for these opportunities.

In the past eight years we have had a little "church experience" of our own in the back portable. Through the seed John planted, the ministry has grown, much like a mustard tree. There are many children that have come to Jesus as a result of your efforts. We rejoice at what God has shown our young students about trust, faith, and connecting all over the world. God is working in the young hearts of our children here at VCC. PLAY BALL!

Changing Lives for a Brighter Tomorrow *by Susan Harford*



Cheryl Blea and I had the opportunity to sit down with Marshelle Wilburn recently and talk about the work that she does. Marshelle is the Director, Youth Outreach at the Bay Area Rescue Mission in Richmond, California. Her job is to run the after-school and summer programs for the mission. Currently she has approximately 55 children from kindergarten through high school enrolled. The goal of the mission is "changing lives for a brighter tomorrow" and it is quite a goal.

The children start arriving at about two o'clock in the afternoon and most remain until the mission doors close at seven. The children are given a substantial after school snack and dinner before they return home. This frees parents up to spend quality time with their children in the evening. During the summer they receive both lunch and dinner.

Afternoon activities include homework and Bible study which is mandatory before participating in any of the activities the mission offers. Summertime is more challenging as the mission staff looks for opportunities to get the children away from the center and outside to play. On the surface this sounds like the many programs that are offered here at the church and around Pleasant-town.

The more Marshelle talked the clearer it became just how different the two worlds really are. Over the last few summers, a local college has sponsored a one-week sports camp for them. Twin boys, from Oakland, had the opportunity to attend. Marshelle tells us they were bright and athletically talented. During their week of attendance they came to know and accept the Lord. Weeks after they returned home, one of them was gunned down; murdered. The assailants had intended to kill both youngsters but were able to lure only one of them away from home. In April (last month) the mourning began again when a 15-year-old student who participated in the after-school program was also gunned down. Because of the work of the mission, she too, knew the Lord.



Although she once told her husband she would never work in the inner city, Marshelle has come to love her work. These children need her and the mission. They have very little in their lives that they can depend on and the mission programs provide them with a safe place where they can come daily. When volunteers reach out and show love to them, these children find hope. They learn about Jesus and a God who loves them. For many, the concept of a loving father is foreign.



Just a year ago, the program was in jeopardy of being shut down but God had other plans. I wish I could tell you that there was a huge donation and that the program is thriving, but the truth is, they trust in God from day to day to provide so that they can remain open and give their love and their help to hurting kids. Won't you come alongside us this summer and help. Valley Community Church will be partnering with the Bay Area Rescue Mission and offering the children of Richmond a sports camp.



This is a population where families can ill afford the cost of sending their children to camp. You can make that possible for one or more children by sponsoring them for sports camp. Help us to show them that the love of Jesus reaches across cities and cultures. If you are unable to provide financial support, then please pray for the success of our program and a better world for these children to live in.

If you would like to help send a child in need to camp, you can make a tax deductible donation. Make checks payable to VCC with "sports camp" on the memo line. The cost to send one child to camp is \$65.



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Big Band Magic

Big bands were born during the years of the Depression and World War II. When the music began to play, a generation hit the dance floor. They set aside their troubles and woes; for a few hours they were able to forget about the fighting and financial crisis. From Artie Shaw to Ziggy Elman there was a band for every taste. If you wanted to hear more than one band, you could move from ballroom to ballroom and swing to the tune of *"That Old Black Magic"* or *"Chattanooga Choo Choo."*

Every city had a dance hall or two and no invitation was needed to enjoy the fun and challenge of new dance steps. With names like the "Rose Room" or "Ali Baba" and highly polished wood dance floors, the ballrooms ranged from converted theaters to elegant rooms in high end hotels. For as little as 40 to 80 cents, the dance halls were a venue for socializing, making new friends, budding romances and action at the end of the week.

You too have the chance to set aside your troubles and woes, socialize, make new friends and listen to the robust sound of VCC's own big band. Mark your calendars and join us at the Gathering Place on Sunday, July 24 at 7:00PM. This evening will include a welcome to Worship & Music Director, Don Elser. In addition to taking you back to the sounds of yesterday, you will be treated to big scoops of yummy ice cream! Can you think of a better way to spend a warm, lazy summer evening?

PASSIONATE & Reasonable

#P+R for Jesus

by Heath Hardesty

Last year VCC Student Ministries introduced us to A.B.L.E., a special event featuring apologist and author Sean McDowell. This year we are continuing in that tradition, but we are changing it up a bit. This year we are widening the doors, opening up the vision and introducing what is called the Passionate & Reasonable Conference. P+R (as I like to call it) is a two evening mini-conference to train and prepare high school and college students to use reason in speaking about the Christian faith and to answer critics in a loving and intellectually sound way. On Tuesday, July 5 and Wednesday, July 6, author, apologist, and captivating speaker, Sean McDowell will be at VCC. Each night will have two sessions by Sean, worship, dessert, and dialogue. The four sessions will be:

1. **Q&A with an Atheist**
(Sean takes on the view of an atheist and pushes against the Christian worldview. This will shake things up a bit!)
2. **Truth & Tragedy**
(What is truth? What about relativity?)
3. **Faith is Not Blind**
(Examining why faith is reasonable)
4. **Why the New Testament?**
(Examining the truth of the New Testament)

You won't want to miss this. High school students need to hear this. College students need to hear this. I can't wait to be a part of this. We are to be people with a head and a heart. So let's make sure we are learning how to defend the faith with grace. Stay connected for more information. Details will be coming soon. Hope to see you all at P+R.



In Times of Trouble

Corrie Ten Boom once said "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength." For our friends and neighbors who are struggling with job loss, foreclosures, and financial struggles, worry is a constant companion.

Here at Valley Community Church we have the opportunity to reduce some of that worry by contributing bags of food for the food pantry at Valley Bible Church. Our next Brown Bag event, will be on Sunday, June 26. Won't you please bring in a bag of non-perishable food items to help us fill up the food pantry?

A wish list of items for the pantry:

- Small jars of peanut butter
- Small jars of jelly
- Granola bars
- Energy bars
- Pasta sauce
- Soup

"If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother."
DEUTERONOMY 15:7



And the Winner Is...

While a record breaking crowd looked on, Animal Kingdom blew away the field in the final furlong of the Kentucky Derby on Saturday, May 7.

This same weekend we had our own win here at VCC. On Sunday, May 8, there was an overwhelming affirmative vote to call Don Elser our new Worship and Music Director and he has accepted! The process of moving him here is in the works. Don and Brenda are already looking for a place to live; in fact Don has found one in Livermore that looks promising. If all goes well, Don is planning to be in the office on Wednesday, June 8.

Financial Update

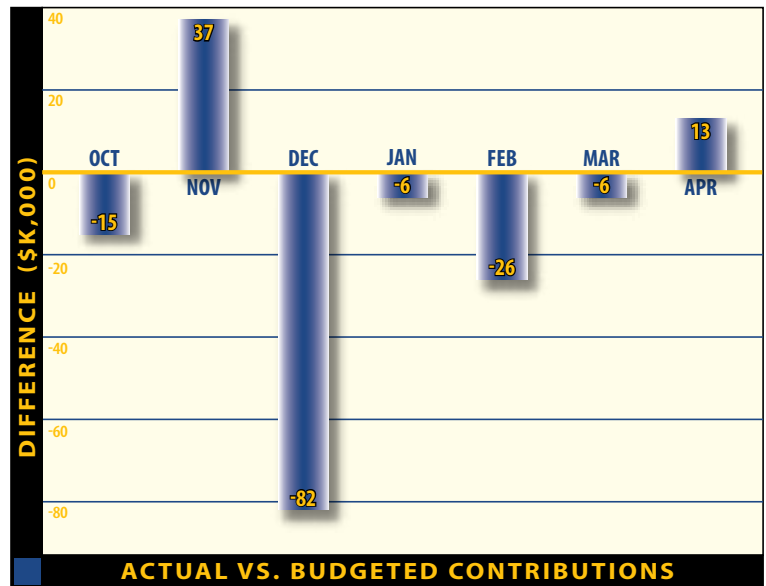
In our financial update three months ago, we were deeply concerned about a potentially large deficit in contributions relative to budget. Now the picture seems, maybe, a little clearer.

Perhaps showing some of the data will help to explain (with apologies to those who would rather not grapple with numbers). The chart shows the level of contributions relative to budget, on a monthly basis for the first seven months of this fiscal year.

The “scatter” evident on this plot gives caution in predicting future trends. You may recall that we previously interpreted the deficits in the past two Decembers to the recession, in which year-end bonuses and commissions have been lower than usual. So our somewhat optimistic forecast three months ago was that, apart from December, contributions would on average be equal to budget for this fiscal year.

The plot shows why we were concerned in February, but it also shows encouraging data from March and April. If one adds up the surpluses and deficits for all the months, excluding December, the net is a deficit of only \$3,000. So, somewhat surprisingly, we are glad to say that it is reasonable to continue to predict that in the remaining months our contributions will be close to budget. That means that the predicted total deficit for the year will be the same as the deficit in December, i.e. \$82,000.

Please pray for staff and elders as we are beginning the budget planning process for next fiscal year (which begins on October 1). Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor closely our financial situation in the months to come. And once again the Elders would like to express their appreciation to the congregation for faithful and generous giving during difficult times. We truly seek to use your precious gifts to accomplish God’s purposes through the ministries and outreach of VCC.



Three ways to give: traditional Sunday offering, set up an automated withdrawal from your bank account, and online through the [VCC website](#). Online giving is a safe and easy way to support the ministries of VCC. This system enables you to support the church by making a one-time contribution or establishing a recurring contribution.

Women Making a Summer Connection

For many of us summer is a time to focus on our children. Vacation Bible School, art classes, drama, sports camps, swimming lessons, are just a few of the many choices we pursue to keep our children busy and God focused. Our time is well spent building bonds and teaching life lessons to our kids. Our connection to God is often through our connection with our children.

For others of us the nest is empty; or maybe we don't have children. The summer seems like a long, hot, dry spell where our focus on God amounts to little or none and any effort we put forth is hard to maintain without the enthusiasm and insight provided by our sisters in Christ in normal Bible study classes.

For the past few summers, our Women's Ministry here at Valley Community Church has offered a time for those who wish to maintain their connection to God through a casual "come when you can" format. This year there will be a more structured format as we are offering two different Bible studies for women to choose from. Starting on Tuesday, May 31 and finishing on Tuesday, August 9, we will be offering a Beth Moore study on Revelation. There will be a morning session from 9:00-11:00AM and an evening session from 7:15-9:15PM. Both will be held in the Seminar Room. While very intense, this study has very little homework but does require committed attendance in order to stay connected to the material that is presented. There will be a weekly video followed by discussion and prayer.

On Wednesday evening, starting June 22 and ending July 27, there will also be a study called Priorities which will help you to set priorities in your life with a biblical perspective. This group will meet from 7:00-8:30PM in the Fireside Room. There will be weekly homework but it is application focused rather than a lot of written response. The weekly studies will be discussion based with time for prayer in groups.

Please contact brendablack@yahoo.com to sign up for either class and to pre-order your book for Revelations before Sunday, May 29. The cost for Revelation will be \$12. The cost for Priorities will be \$5.

Facebook – Keeping up with what is happening in Women's Ministries...

Stay connected with us on [Facebook](#). Hit "LIKE" to have access to our events calendar, be able to share your experiences and always be in the loop as new ministries and events are offered!

Women's Summer Bible Studies

Two studies offered to keep you in the Word this summer.

Here and Now... There and Then (Revelation) by Beth Moore

- Tuesdays, May 31-August 9
- Morning (9:00AM) and evening (7:15PM)
- Seminar Room
- \$12

Priorities... Setting Your Priorities with a Biblical Focus

- Wednesdays, June 22-July 27
- 7:00-8:30PM
- Room A205
- \$5

Summer Calendar

Sunday, June 5 Kidz Kick Off the Summer

Sunday, June 5 Fundraisers: Lasagna for España & Change for Spain

June 10-27 Bangkok Mission Trip

June 12-17 High School 'Xtreme Camp

June 18-23 Middle School 'Xtreme Camp

June 19-July 4 Spain Mission Trip (departure dates vary)

June 20-24 Elementary Sports Camp

June 28-29 Blank Canvas

July 2-9 Middle School Oahu Mission Trip

July 5-6 High School/College Passionate & Reasonable Conference (formerly A.B.L.E.)

July 11-15 Vacation Bible School

July 11-22 Guatemala Mission Trip

July 20 & 27 Wild and Wacky Wednesdays

Sunday, July 24 Big Band Welcome for Don Elser

July 23-31 High School Ensenada Trip

August 7-13 Adult Ensenada Trip

B A B Y
Dedications



Grady Harris Isselhardt



Andrew John Mikus



Christopher Kieun Moon



Eliot Thomas Mort



Jameson Wright-LaForce



Remy Nicholas Wright-LaForce