

JANUARY 2012

The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH



New Year, New Possibilities

As we enter the new year it is exciting to look ahead and see the many possibilities for growth and impact that lie before us. I want to take a minute to draw your attention to one of these. This summer VCC will be hosting a regional site for the annual Global Leadership Summit. For over a decade the Willow Creek Association (WCA) has brought together leaders from a number of areas to equip other leaders to better serve their churches and communities. Here is how they describe their purpose.

“WCA recognizes that the leadership core of any church includes leaders from the business, education, government and social sectors. The Global Leadership Summit welcomes leaders from all these sectors and fully believes that the maximum influence and impact of the Church is felt when all of its Christ-centered leaders are at the forefront of establishing and growing well led local churches, companies, schools, governments and social enterprises. This is the Church at its best! This is when God's love and care inevitably spills out into our neighborhoods, towns and cities through acts of love, justice, mercy, service and restoration.”

This event has become a regular tool for our staff. We have found this conference to provide a wealth of insight and thought-provoking perspectives that have promoted wonderful discussions and development. VCC has benefited greatly from this ministry.

For the last few years the regional site for this has been hosted by Cornerstone. They have asked for someone else to step in and do this for a season and after much thought and prayer we have committed to be this year's host. We see this as a great opportunity to serve the community of churches in the East Bay. It is also a great opportunity for outreach as we invite leaders in our community from a variety of sectors such as government, business, or education. Through this event we hope to expand our influence and ministry in the Tri-Valley, serving others as we seek to grow more effective in reaching out with Christ's love.

You may be wondering why I am telling you about this now if it doesn't happen until August. The answer is simple. It is going to take a great team effort to pull this off. We will need a large team of volunteers and we hope that many more of you will choose to attend as well.

As we move forward we will be giving you more details about the summit and how you can help. Let's pray that this will be a truly great event for God's glory and the good of others.

Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR

Greeting Giuseppe Gatto

On November 13, VCC members voted in favor of hiring new high school pastor, Giuseppe Gatto. Giuseppe started his new job the following day. Monday, November 14, marked the first time in six years that every staff position here at the church was permanently filled. We are glad to have Giuseppe join our family and we asked him to tell us a little bit about himself.

“I grew up in a broken home; that in its entirety included seven children (three boys and four girls). My house was and still is hostile to the Church. Although growing up was tough and some times were tougher than others, I did know that I was loved. My sister and I were abandoned by our biological father as infants, but my mother married the love of her life when we were still young. And that man, my Dad, raised us as if we were his own true blood, not distinguishing between his own children (my two brothers) and us. Our family is one of much character and great laughter. Also, no matter how hard we are on each other and no matter the difficulty of the situation we are in, we are always there for each other.



I became a Christian the summer before going into my sophomore year of high school. I heard my calling into youth ministry the next year, while I was a junior in high school. Even though I had heard my call I was unable to become part of a Church family until I was a senior in high school. During that year a family of the Church aided me in getting into college (Indiana Wesleyan University), where I obtained a Bachelors of Science degree in Youth Ministry. Since college I have moved around our country several times living in Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana, California, Washington, Tennessee, and finally back to the great state of California. Currently I am engaged to a gorgeous woman, Jodi Hopper and we will be getting married this upcoming March 31, 2012. We both are more than excited

to be a part of our new family here at Valley Community Church, and are we are eager to get to know all of you better.”

If you see Giuseppe around the church, stop and introduce yourself and say hello.

What's Wrong with Cash and Checks?



Nothing! Since its founding, Valley Community Church has been supported solely by the faithful giving of those who call VCC their church home. For many years the main vehicle for giving was cash or checks. More recently we've added online giving, accepting e-checks. Recent studies have shown a sharp and consistent decline in the use of paper checks and cash for all transactions since the year 2000 and this trend is expected to continue. Currently, 90% of people under age 35 carry a debit card but the vast majority of this same demographic does not consistently carry a check book. Our culture is moving away from traditional “paper” transactions and we want to be responsive to this change.

Starting this month (watch bulletin for exact date), you will be able make your contributions to Valley Community Church with your debit bankcard. This applies to regular giving to the General Fund, Benevolence, as well as commitments to the Setting Us Free campaign. Through a partnership with SecureGive, Valley Community Church will now offer mobile giving to go along with online giving and the traditional offering basket. The mobile giving app (available on iPhone, iPad, and Android phones) allows members to make a 1-time or

recurring gift to the church directly from their smartphone (search your appropriate app store for SecureGive). The giving portal on our website will also accept debit cards for your convenience.

As stated elsewhere in this *Bell Tower*, we are immensely grateful for the generous giving of the VCC family. We thank God for his provision.



Setting Us Free Update...

our continuing culture of generosity

It has been wonderful to see the grace of giving in action during the past few months at Valley Community Church. We began with the Setting Us Free campaign, in October, to eliminate our debt and propel us forward into new ministry possibilities. At the same time, on Sunday mornings, we focused on deepening our understanding of how, as followers of Jesus, we are to handle our money and possessions. The outcome of the campaign has been immensely gratifying. On November 6, Commitment Sunday, you pledged \$2.3 million over the next three years which will result in the payoff of the parking structure debt and a tithe of \$230,000 to missions. Since that day you've given almost \$670,000 towards the campaign, we've paid down the parking structure loan by over \$560,000, and purchased furniture for Valley Pregnancy Center's new location.

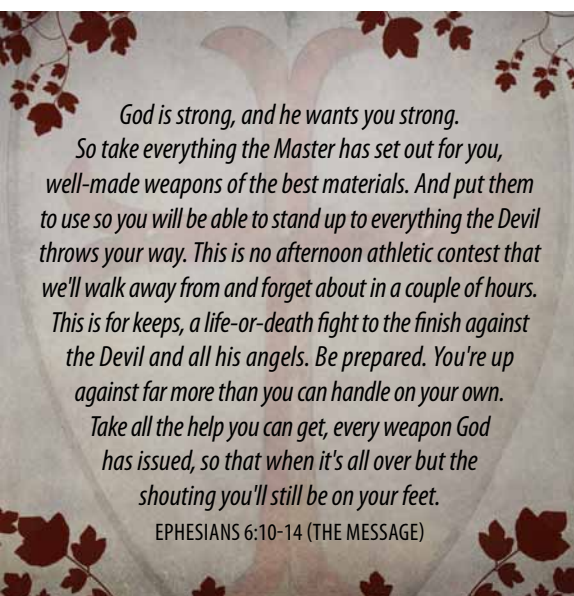
We've been amazed and grateful for the continued generosity of our church family. You have participated in many ways to bless those around us and around the world. Through your generosity we sent 135 shoeboxes to Operation Christmas Child, donated 23 Thanksgiving dinner bags plus 22 extra food bags to local families, and filled over

400 stockings for the School of Urban Missions. Our women's Bible studies and a few neighborhood groups distributed 140 baskets of Christmas cheer (food and small household items) to local families. The third annual Celebration of Hope Benefit Dinner raised nearly \$21,000 blessing over 400 girls through the Home of New Beginnings in Bangkok, Thailand. Our annual Angel Tree program provided much needed gifts and hope to about 50 struggling families.

Scripture mentions money and possessions over 2,000 times. Why? To quote Danny Hall from the October *Bell Tower*, "Because of two things. First, it is the most deeply personal reflection of what really matters to us. Second, it exposes the gap between our own self-reliance and our trust in God." We trust that what really matters to us will continue to be seen in our focus on living for the glory of God and the good of others.

Please note that ongoing gifts to Setting Us Free should be made in the small purple envelopes available in the church office or Sanctuary lobby. If you don't have an envelope handy you can just note Setting Us Free in the memo line of your check. A third way to set up your ongoing giving to the campaign is to use online giving with either your debit card or e-check (see article on page 2).

EQUIP *[ih-kwip]* to provide with abilities, understanding



We all want our children to be equipped to stand strong as Christians. This year's EQUIP series "Inner Armor" will help your middle school boys and girls to be prepared for what the world will throw at them.

Ryan Cochran and Cameron Torres will present



the lecture material and lead the youth through practical applications that will give them the tools to stand strong. It will be a fun and challenging weekend of training for students who want to love God and their friends (in that order).

EQUIP will be held at the Squaw Valley Lodge the weekend of January 27 through 29. The cost is \$155 per person. Fun activities include the opportunity to ski, snowboard, snow tube, and ice skate or just hang out (with adult supervision of course!). You can register your child for this great event at www.vcclive.org.

What is SOHL About and Why?

We hear about it every January. So what is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (SOHL) all about, and why do we need to concern ourselves with it?

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 on 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. They meet each client where they are and come alongside them during this difficult time of decision in their lives. While they offer free pregnancy tests, resources, ultrasounds and pre-natal care, their focus is always on the client, entering their situation with the compassion of Christ. VPC hears from clients that this is what makes them feel safe and not judged.

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

How can you help? Valley Pregnancy Center is always looking for volunteers from receptionists, volunteer counselors, help with the resources, Walk for Life (May 5th) and the banquet in November 2012. Contact VPC for more information on how you can be involved helping to bring hope and healing to so many in the Tri-Valley communities.

Exercise is Not Just Good for the Body

As Christians we hear a lot about being in God's Word and the importance of feeding our souls. We also know that proper diet and exercise are good for the body. However, most of us really do not see a correlation between our spiritual beings and our physical bodies. Many of us do not notice our bodies until something happens to them; they hurt, crave food, or don't fit into a desired size clothing any more. As we reach a certain age we begin having chronic aches and pain. We don't sleep through the night. Our bodies "just fall apart." When, because of this neglect, we become ill, we turn to God and pray desperately for a miraculous healing. All of a sudden there is "a connection" between body and soul—we ask God to repair what we could have prevented through exercise and proper care of our bodies.

This is not what God wants for us. He does not want us to wait until we are in desperate need of his attention. Rather, he wants us to partner with him in a long-term, balanced relationship where we give equal care to our bodies and our souls.

Exercise has been medically proven to "cure" a myriad of physical ailments. According to the Mayo Clinic, if you want to feel better, have more energy and perhaps even live longer, look no further than exercise. The health benefits of regular exercise and physical activity are hard to ignore. And the benefits of exercise are yours for the taking regardless of your age, sex or physical ability. New studies show that physical exercise has a protective effect on the brain and its mental processes as well. When we are physically and mentally healthy, we are less likely to focus on ourselves, and more likely to maintain a healthy balance between our spiritual and physical lives.

What better way to begin the New Year than joining the VCC Basketball League. It is the perfect way to get your exercise regime underway. The 2012 season will begin on Sunday, January 8 and conclude on Sunday, March 25. There will be basketball for both men and women. You can register online at vcclive.org.



New Stepping Stones on the Pathway—Topical Groups *by Tony Catudal*

If you were to consider the VCC Spiritual Growth Pathway (connect, engage, serve, multiply) where would you say you are on your Pathway journey? What would your next step be? It's always exciting to see someone take their next step of spiritual growth. In 2012, we are offering a series of Topical Groups to provide a place for you to take your next step. Each group connects to one of the four sectors of the pathway. If the Lord is directing you towards a next step in your spiritual growth, maybe one of these Topical Groups can help you along the way.

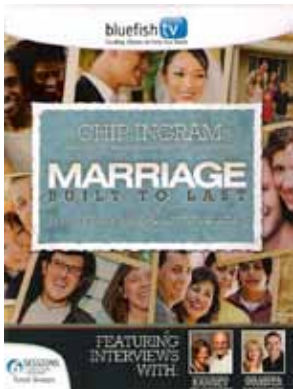


Starting Point

Starting Point is designed for anyone who is new to the Christian faith, curious about it, or reexamining what it means to have a relationship with

God. This 10-week study is an exploration of the Bible's grand story and where you fit into the narrative, held in a conversational small group environment. The group is led by John Marino, who previously led VCC's Discovery class. Those who have taken Starting Point have appreciated learning not only "what" we believe as Christians but also "why" we believe and what the evidences are.

Marriage: Built to Last



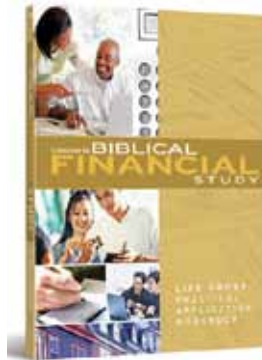
We all want a healthy, loving marriage, but there are so many real issues that can stand in the way. *Marriage: Built to Last*, is a 6-week video study by Chip Ingram, that isn't your typical marriage study. Throughout the 6-week series you'll watch 24 real-life couples from across the country share candidly about their struggles in communication, finances, sexual intimacy, expectations, and more, while interactive Biblical

and practical teaching will give you the necessary tools to live intentionally and love Biblically.

Discovering your S.H.A.P.E. to serve

This group study is designed to help you discover the importance of serving and how God has shaped you to serve, as well as how your unique shape can be used as you serve God here at VCC and beyond. This study will be led by Tony Catudal.

Biblical Financial Study



This 10-week study will make a great follow-up to last fall's Setting Us Free capital campaign. The material is from Crown Financial and will give Biblical and practical advice on how to maximize God's financial resources in your home, also allowing you to be in a better position to serve with your resources and time. This study will be led by Eric Martin.

XEE Evangelism Explosion

The Gospel is a story that is meant to be told, not by the scholars and professionals, but to be told simply by all of us to the people with whom we are building relationships. Interested? Join us in XEE for six weeks of training where you will learn how to engage in life-changing conversations with people who need to connect with God. This study will be led by Jay Ashcraft.

Is there something here that grabs your heart? If so, sign-ups will begin on Sunday, January 15, in the church lobby after each service. Watch the bulletin for details on class dates and times. Groups will begin in February. For more information or to sign-up, please Tony Catudal at tcatudal@vcclive.org, or 925-846-6622x17.

January Calendar

Sunday, January 1, 10:45am: New Year's Day Service

Sunday, January 8: VCC Basketball League begins

Tuesday & Wednesday, January 10 & 11: Women's Bible studies resume

Tuesday, January 10: Children's Homework Club resumes

Tuesday & Wednesday, January 10 & 11: Homework in the Hall resumes

January 27-28: Membership Class

January 27-19: Middle School Equip weekend

Saturday, January 28: Heart Connection celebration

Why Membership?

In April 2010 we held our last membership class. Among those who chose to become members of our body were Anthony Kim and Ron & Jan Mickelson. Curious, we asked what moved them to membership...

"The Bible, nor Jesus explicitly stress or teach the need for an official membership in a gathering of local body of Christ disciples. However, throughout the New Testament narrative you can implicitly gather the principle that each disciple was strongly bonded in fellowship with one another for commitment, accountability, learning, strengthening, etc. It is this principle that I see in the New Testament that drives me to give my whole self to a local congregation of believers for commitment, accountability and building up of God's kingdom through it. Therefore it was always my intention to become an official member of a local church. Valley Community is the church Christ hand-picked for me and where he wants me to belong!" *Anthony Kim*

"We felt the need to be more a part of a church community. VCC has met that desire with us through being in a great small group and part of the BLT adult Sunday School class. Ron enjoys the Early Risers group as well. We know many people and feel a part of a very alive church." *Ron and Jan Mickelson*

Calling After Hours? *Staff Extensions*

If you should call in when the office is not open, this little cheat sheet will help you reach the staff member you are calling without having to listen to the entire list of extensions. The church number is 925.846.6622.

Ext.	Staff Member	Ext.	Staff Member
44	Barb Kennedy	32	Kelly McIntosh
22	Brenda Black	11	Laura Monical
13	Cheryl Blea	20	Laura Rodrigues
37	Cindy Wolff	10	Mary Richardson
12	Danny Hall	35	Patrick Faulkner
46	Danny Min	18	Ryan Cochran
16	Don Elser	14	Scott Welsh
21	Giuseppe Gatto	38	Sheri Ellison
41	Heath Hardesty	36	Sid Niemeyer
39	James Whittle	15	Susan Hann
48	Jan Ash	33	Susan Harford
42	Jay Ashcraft	17	Tony Catudal

Perhaps God is working in your life as well and nudging you to make a full-blown commitment to Valley Community Church. With the advent of the New Year, a time when we traditionally make and keep New Year's resolutions, I can't think of a better time to consider becoming a member of our church body.

Our next membership class will be in January. Our membership class will meet twice, once on Friday, January 27 from 7:00 to 9:00PM in the Fireside Room and Saturday, January 28 from 8:30AM to 12:30PM in Room B212 (above the church office). Breakfast will be served on Saturday along with light refreshments during both classes. If you are interested in signing up, please watch the church bulletin for more information.

