

JANUARY 2013

The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH

Moving Forward in Our Calling

The start of any new year is the season for making resolutions, fresh starts, and recommitting to the things that are important to us. As we head into 2013 there are some areas that we want to concentrate on to continue to move forward in our calling to see God transform lives in a Christ-centered community.

This past fall we did two things to help us in our commitment to get better at fulfilling our vision. First, we took a fresh look at what the Gospel is. We saw first and foremost the Gospel is the story of Jesus and his righteous reign as our King and Lord. That this King died for us to open the way into his kingdom is a staggering and incomparable display of sacrificial love. Having opened the way into his Kingdom, he invites us to receive forgiveness and become his disciples, forming us into his image and calling us to radically trust him as we participate in his Kingdom work.

Second, we asked you to participate in a Spiritual Life Survey to help us gauge and evaluate how we are doing in our journey to grow in our relationship with Jesus. We had a remarkably high participation rate and we have now received the results of the survey. While we are still sifting through the mountain of data and determining the best ways to use what we have learned, there are a couple of findings from the survey that I want to share with you.

The data is processed in a way that identifies the congregation's top priorities. The top two are that you want help from our church in "understanding the Bible in depth" and help in "developing a personal relationship with Christ."

Happy
NEW YEAR
VISION, COMMITMENT, FAITH

Both of these match up with what we already are committed to and where we are focusing our attention as we plan for this next season of ministry.

The designers of the survey have also developed some descriptive categories based on the data they have gathered from the 1000+ churches that have completed this survey. Our results place us in the category labeled "introverted." This means that our results indicate that we are a relatively mature church, where we are regularly engaging with Scripture and have a strong acceptance of core Christian beliefs. In their description, for churches like ours "this strong inner commitment to faith does not typically carry over into outward-focused activities like serving those in need or sharing Christianity with non-believers."

These results are challenging, but also encouraging as they align well with the way God has been leading us. In our Sunday morning services on January 13 I will be sharing more details from the survey and explaining some of the challenges this brings to us as individual followers of Jesus and for us as a church as well.

Let's be praying that God will use all of this to draw us closer to himself and direct us to the kind of Kingdom impact he is calling us into.

Danny Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR

God's Calling on Your Life

What is God's calling on your life? Perhaps he has called you to be a light in the workplace; to lead your peers in a godly way, a way that is different from what the world demands. Perhaps he has called you to get involved in local organizations to help feed the hungry, clothe the poor or build homes for the needy. Or maybe God is calling you to participate in a short-term mission trip during 2013.

A short-term mission trip will offer an opportunity to take a step forward in your own personal spiritual journey and often will precipitate a powerful change in your spiritual life. As you experience what it means to live, work and communicate in a culture unlike your own, you will see the world through God's eyes and experience firsthand "where the rubber meets the road."

Valley Community Church has a variety of short-term missions planned for 2013 for participants of all ages. Now is the time to start planning to answer God's call.

Team 45 Sports Camp, June.

This local short-term mission event is for middle school students only. Contact Cheryl Blea at 846-6622x406 or cblea@vcclive.org.

Camp South Africa, mid-July, estimated cost is \$2400/person (includes transportation). This trip is for congregants middle school age through adult. Contact Ryan Cochran at 846-6622x411 or rcochran@vcclive.org for information.

Haiti, July 6-13; estimated cost is \$595 (not including airfare). This trip is for high school attendees ONLY. Contact Giuseppe Gatto at 846-6622x430 or ggatto@vcclive.org for information.

Guatemala, August, cost TBD. Contact Dave Peterson at 426-7432 or davidpetersons@gmail.com for information.

Colonet, Mexico; September or October, cost TBD. Contact Terri Rees at terrireesestrada@gmail.com for information.

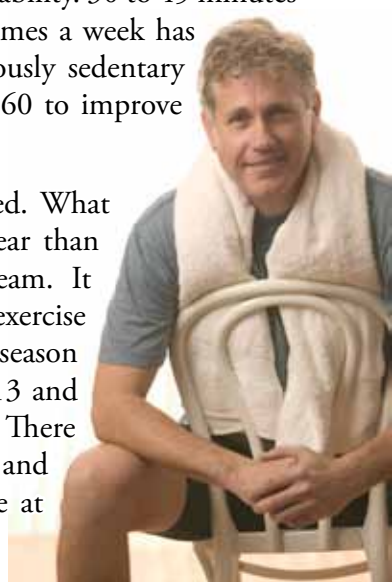
Fit or Couch Potato Brain?

Your brain consists of two types of matter. One is a thin layer of cells that are important to learning and memory known as 'gray matter.' The other is an insulating sheath containing nerve fibers and is called 'white matter.' Science has shown that as we age, these tissues shrink. They have also discovered something else, when the body is fit, there is less shrinkage in the areas that control memory and thinking.

As Christians, it is important for us to feed our souls and one way is through the study and memorization of God's word. Memory and thinking play an important part in being a healthy Christian. If you are a couch potato, statistics prove that you run a higher risk

of loss of memory and cognitive ability. 30 to 45 minutes of rigorous exercise just three times a week has been found to help even previously sedentary couch potatoes over the age of 60 to improve their mental processing abilities.

It is never too late to get started. What better way to begin the new year than joining the VCC basketball team. It is the perfect way to get your exercise regime underway. The 2013 season will begin on Sunday, January 13 and conclude on Sunday, March 31. There will be basketball for both men and women. You can register online at vcclive.org.





The STRETCH Retreat? *by Kelly McIntosh*

At the end of this month, our VCC Campus will be home to a weekend retreat for over 140 girls and boys ages 9-14 led by twelve amazing, high school, Christian youth (STRETCH team leads) blending two great passions: baseball/softball & God! Retreat you may say? Well, Webster defines retreat this way: *the process of withdrawing, especially from something formidable or unpleasant.*

And that is just what happens, as these team leads mentor and encourage the campers (as they are called at the 8th Annual STRETCH Winter Boot Camp) to “withdraw” from the everyday “unpleasant pressures of school/sports” that many children live with these days, and instead turn their hearts towards something (Someone!) better. Throughout the weekend retreat we learn that this Someone loves them and made them just as they are, even without a 4.0 GPA or a home run swing.

Webster’s also defines retreat as: *a place affording peace & quiet*, but there is NOTHING “quiet” on the VCC Campus as we kickoff Friday night with an Amazing Race–STRETCH Style, designed by VCC Children’s Ministry Director, Cheryl Blea. Last year one veteran camper, who had been here since the inaugural camp in 2006, and now attends a local college, but returns each year as a youth mentor, said, “Why didn’t we have anything like this when I was a camper? This is the best camp ever!”, as he belted out *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* AND line-danced in the Portable with his team.



It was on a Wild at Heart Retreat (there’s that word again) in 2005 that God sparked a fire to get STRETCH off the ground. Each year since, STRETCH (Striving to Reach Excellence through Christ’s Hand) has been sharing the love of God with young athletes, many who do not have a church home.

Over the years STRETCH has been blessed with many church leaders blending their love of sports and God. VCC Pastor Danny Hall has shared his love of sports and God at the coach and instructor luncheon on Saturday before we send them back out into the field for an afternoon of intense skills training and development. Once again this year we are super blessed to have VCC Youth Pastors Ryan and Giuseppe training and mentoring our team leads as they prepare them to share God’s love and acceptance with the campers throughout the weekend.

Our theme verse is Proverbs 16:9: *We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.* And we are so excited and can’t wait to see how God uses Josh Burger as he shares on Saturday night what God has “planned” for his life and how that faith and trust in God’s “determining steps” has led Josh on an amazing journey!

Oh, and what retreat would be complete without a final destination, a place of security, as Pastor Ryan shares a chance to learn about the **ultimate security** we have when we give our lives and our plans to God and trust Him to determine our steps! This special time with Pastor Ryan happens behind the scenes on Sunday morning (during church) after STRETCH Silly Olympics & Home Run Derby off the top of the parking structure.

If you want to sign-up your camper or if you have a passion for youth and would like to help out over the weekend then visit us at www.gostretch.org. We can’t wait to see the steps God has determined for the Winter Boot Camp *Retreat* this year!



Our Next Membership Class Is in February...Save the Date!

Our next membership class will be in February. Our membership class will meet over two days, once on Friday, February 8 from 7:00 to 9:00PM and again on Saturday, February 9, from 8:30AM to 12:30PM. Breakfast will be served on Saturday along with light refreshments during both classes. Childcare is available by reservation. If you are interested in signing up, please watch the church bulletin for more information.



Setting Us Free Brings Blessings Near and Far

Our 2011 Setting Us Free capital campaign is continuing to bear fruit. Some of our congregation may not have been around then, so a little history is in order. Our main financial goal was to eliminate the debt that the church was carrying for the parking structure. One of the most common initial responses we heard was “Why do we have a parking structure?” Serious concerns about parking emerged during and after the last major construction project at VCC, the building of the sanctuary. Ultimately a unique partnership with PUSD solved our parking problems by building a parking structure adjacent to VCC that could be utilized by the church and Amador Valley High School. In effect, the joint venture with PUSD was equivalent to doubling the size of the church campus. In addition to solving our long-term parking needs, it would also enable us to more fully develop our existing 3-acre site.

On November 6, 2011 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. To date the parking structure loan has been paid down \$1,067,996 and \$118,375 has gone towards special missions projects. Since our last update the projects below have been funded:

Harvest Mission – five bicycles for missionaries to use to travel to distant villages and funding of a one-year program providing free education for children not currently attending school.

Rafiki – 20 small network computers and e-library set up for one Rafiki village in Nigeria; benefiting orphaned and under-privileged children.

Hope for the Nations – the newly created Empowerment Center is used for free after-school English and computer classes to provide job skills in this predominately Muslim area.

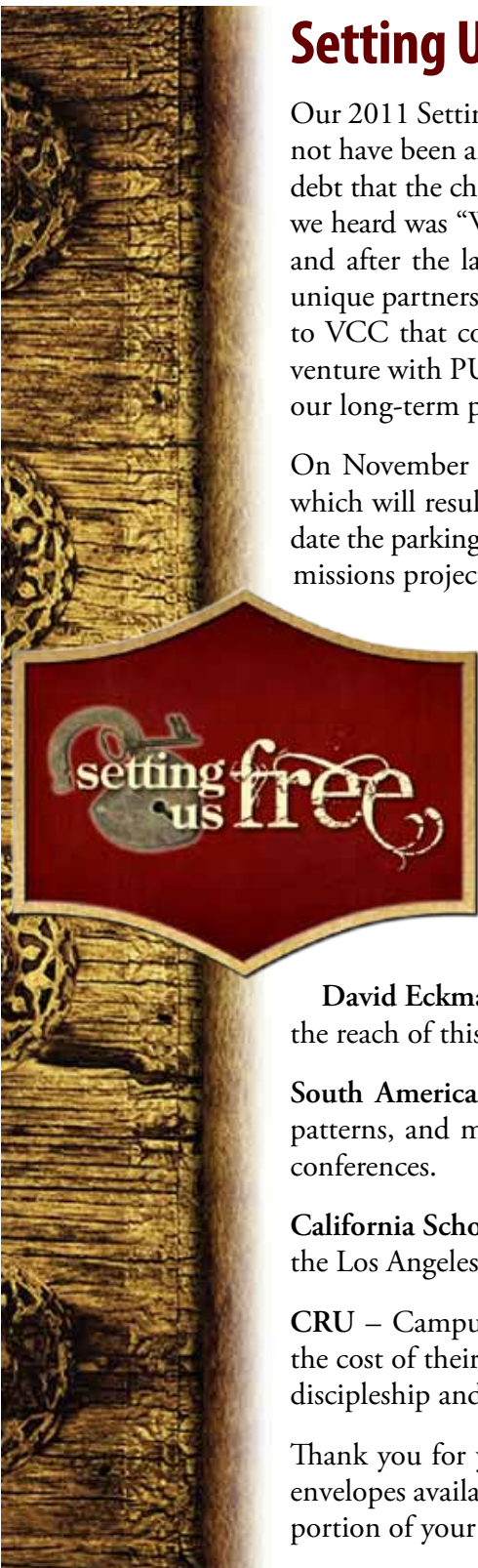
David Eckman/Aphesis – this translation of the Aphesis material into Chinese will greatly extend the reach of this ministry that has been life-changing for many in our congregation.

South American Mission/Bolivia – provided resources (flannel graph, lesson books, games, craft patterns, and more) for a children’s library and enabled the children’s ministry team to attend two conferences.

California School Project – 45 high school mentors were trained to reach their individual schools in the Los Angeles area.

CRU – Campus Crusade missionaries, Adam Nixon and Andrew Burger, received assistance with the cost of their seminary classes allowing them to increase their ability to lead Bible studies, provide discipleship and evangelism.

Thank you for your continued giving to the Setting Us Free campaign. Please use the small purple envelopes available in the church office or sanctuary lobby or indicate “Setting Us Free” in the memo portion of your check.



Charlotte Rose

The Baby that Almost Wasn't Born

Hello my name is Nina, and I am one of the many women who came to Valley Pregnancy Center in a desperate time of need. This time last year I was laid off, discovered I was pregnant, and my companion Jesse and I received a thirty-day eviction notice all in one week. Instead of the joy every newly-expecting mother should experience, I was overcome with fear and uncertainty. I fled to an abortion clinic as I'm sure many young women who are unexpectedly expecting do.

There I knew with absolute certainty I had a new life inside my body. I was given abundant information on abortion procedures, no personal attention, and not once asked how I felt, or even if I was OK. My visit was short, cold, and it seemed I only had one option, so my immediate and first choice was to have an abortion.

A few days later I began experiencing horrible pain and my sister's friend, who went to Valley Pregnancy Center, spoke highly of her experience there, so I went in. For the first time since I discovered I was pregnant I felt someone other than my immediate family genuinely cared about us. The nurse manager had answers to my questions, remedies for my pain, and concern that made me feel important. Days later when my pain had subsided I received a phone call from Jill. She called to check on my health and over-all well-being. I remember hanging up the phone that day and feeling a big smile on my face, someone truly cared.

I made an appointment at Valley Pregnancy Center where Jesse and I were greeted with warm smiles and friendship from the moment we walked in the door. We were congratulated for the first time and given the opportunity to see the life we had made growing inside me through an ultra sound. When we returned again we met Pauline,



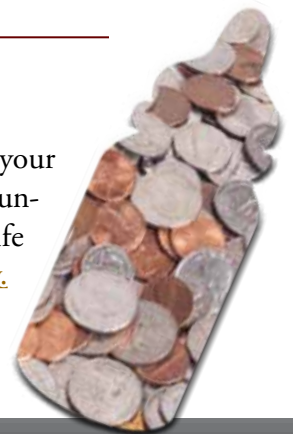
our counselor, who greeted us with comfort and support. I found it amazing how much guidance and love she extended to us, complete strangers. She gave us the attention and open ear we needed.

Something far greater and more powerful than me was trying to tell us it was a mistake to have an abortion. Instead Jesse and I continued to visit Valley Pregnancy Center on a regular basis. We attended the prenatal classes they offer, and the medical pre-natal care. We learned so much about our growing baby, and how to be successful parents. We came to find comfort in meeting with Pauline every two weeks through the majority of my pregnancy. She quickly became more than a counselor and more than a mentor, she became a dear friend.

All of the remarkable women and men at Valley Pregnancy Center are extraordinary and giving people. The love and support they offer through their volunteer time, is just as important as the information they give with an open and un-biased view. When I look at my beautiful baby girl I know without Valley Pregnancy Center we would have made a terrible mistake that we would regret for the rest of our lives. I appreciate and will always cherish my experience at Valley Pregnancy Center, because they gave me the opportunity to find the purpose and joy of my life... my beautiful baby girl, Charlotte Rose.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, January 20

How can you help? Fill up the baby bottles available in the church lobby, on January 20, with your spare change and return them by February 24. Valley Pregnancy Center is always looking for volunteers. They need volunteer receptionists, volunteer counselors, help with resources, Walk for Life (May) and their annual banquet in November 2013. Contact VPC at 925-425-0414 or www.valleypregnancycenter.org for more information on how you can be involved and help bring hope and healing to so many in our Tri-Valley communities.



Taking Your Next Step *Stepping Stones on the Pathway* by Tony Catudal

It's always exciting to see someone take a next step in their spiritual growth! As you think about the stepping stones on the VCC Spiritual Growth Pathway (Connect, Engage, Serve, Multiply), what would you say your next step is? In 2013, we will offer a series of Pathway Topical Groups as one possible place for your next step.

Starting Point (Connect)



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 group environment. 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.

More Topics (Engage)

Other topics being finalized for Engage, are, *Understanding the New Testament*, or *Deepening My Personal Spiritual Practices*; as well as a Parenting DVD Series.

Sign-ups will begin on Sunday, January 13, in the church lobby after each service. Groups will begin on February 3, and continue for 5 to 10 weeks, depending on the topic. For more information or to sign-up, please contact Tony Catudal at tcatudal@vcclive.org, or at 925-474-9410.

Biblical Financial Study (Serve)

This 6-week study will give Biblical and practical advice on how to maximize God's financial resources in your home, while allowing you to be in a better position to serve with your resources and time.

Spark Groups (Multiply)

These groups are neighborhood-based and focus on the question, "What is one risk I can take this week to make myself a better person and the world a better place?" 5-weeks in duration, these groups can be a great way to serve where you are by connecting with the people around you. "Transform your world one small risk at a time." There will be an equipping session on Thursday, January 31, with the 5-week groups to follow. For more info, contact Jay Ashcraft at jashcraft@vcclive.org or 925-474-9414. Check out the Spark website at, www.sparkgood.com.

The Dignity of Work by Susan Harford

Human potential is more fulfilled when people have the means to express their creativity, and an important way they do that is through work. Rev. Dr. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite

We could all take a lesson from the men and women at Keystone Adult Center. Every week, they relieve the front office of the monotonous chore of folding and stuffing our bulletins. The thing that really amazes me is the joy and pride they take in doing this task for us without benefit of compensation. Each Thursday we drop the printed bulletins off and, while traditionally the job of assembling all of the pieces was done on Friday morning, the young adults at Keystone are so eager to get to their task that they often beg to do the job on Thursday before they go home.

On Friday morning I swing by on my way to the church to pick up the fruit of their labor. There is always a tussle over who is going to get the enviable job of carrying and depositing the completed bulletins into my car. John and Melissa frequently trade off on the job while I stick my head in the door to thank the rest of the group for their devotion to the job. There is always at least one person, often many, that keep me informed, "not enough inserts, missing 2 inserts, need one more bulletin," etc. The office ladies here at VCC are so thankful for this group of devoted workers. We give them the dignity of an important job and they give us a little relief. It is a win win, for us all!





Creating a marriage that changes lives

Significant Marriage Weekend led by Dave & Mary Gothi

Discover how God wants to use your and your spouse's gifts together. In the Significant Marriage Weekend you will learn to protect your marriage and be intentional in creating a plan together to become all God has created you to be as an individual and as a couple.

March 1-3, R.S.V.P. by February 15

Tentative Schedule

Friday, March 1: 6:30 – 9:30PM

Saturday, March 2: 9:00AM – 5:00PM

Sunday, March 3: 9:00AM – 3:00PM

Cost is \$169 per couple (includes books & foods)

Cost per couple includes all sessions, lunch and snacks, and a follow-up course.

The sessions will be held in the Seminar Room on Friday and Saturday. The Sunday location is still to be determined. Register online at vclive.org beginning mid-January.

Kent and Valerie Laws attended our last Significant Marriage Weekend and this is what they have to say:

"Every couple at VCC should attend! We have been married for over 25 years and while the information we received was not necessarily new, the approach was fresh and well organized. The information that Dave and Mary shared and put together, helped us to be more intentional in some areas of our marriage that we had not previously considered as being really that important. Three months have passed since that weekend and in following what we learned, Kent and I have seen positive changes that not only affect our daily lives as a married couple but have also helped us in our walk with the Lord."

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

*God is strong, and he wants you strong.
So take everything the Master has set out for you,
well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them
to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil
throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that
we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours.
This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against
the Devil and all his angels. Be prepared. You're up
against far more than you can handle on your own.
Take all the help you can get, every weapon God
has issued, so that when it's all over but the
shouting you'll still be on your feet.*
EPHESIANS 6:10-14 (THE MESSAGE)

We all want our children to be equipped to stand strong as Christians. This year's EQUIP series 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 the weekend of February 8 to 10. It will be a weekend full of giving to others, teaching, bonding and playing...just beyond the Golden Gate. The weekend will consist of Friday night in town doing a service project and then we will head off to Nature Bridge Golden Gate at the Marin Headlands. You can register your child for this great event at www.vclive.org under [Upcoming Events](#). The cost is \$125 per person.

Save the Date for the Summit!

You've been given the gift of influence—in your home, school, profession, community or church—in which people are depending on you to move them to a better place. Learning how to maximize the positive impact of your influence is what leadership development is all about.

Through the Global Leadership Summit, August 8-9, you will have access to a faculty lineup that brings incredible depth and breadth of leadership talent, perspective, and insight. Gain practical, hands-on wisdom as some of the world's brightest leaders download their experiences and expertise so that you can develop as a leader.

Those who attended and volunteered at last year's Summit here at VCC marked it as a highlight of their year. Many lives are continuing to be impacted. Commit now to set aside two days so that God can do powerful things in your life during the 2013 Summit experience right here in our own church.

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
502	Barb Kennedy	401	Laura Monical
415	Brenda Black	413	Laura Rodrigues
406	Cheryl Blea	400	Mary Richardson
419	Cindy Wolff	411	Ryan Cochran
405	Danny Hall	407	Scott Welsh
403	Danny Min	420	Sheri Ellison AM
409	Don Elser	440	Sheri Ellison PM
430	Giuseppe Gatto	418	Sid Niemeyer
422	Heath Hardesty	408	Susan Hann
421	James Whittle	402	Susan Harford
414	Jay Ashcraft	410	Tony Catudal
588	Kelly McIntosh	424	Youth Interns

Mark Your Calendars Now

We all know that the pace of life in the Tri-Valley can cause us to succumb to the tyranny of the urgent. To guard against that, we want to let you know now the dates of some significant opportunities coming for adults in 2013. Consider which activities God may be calling you to participate in and mark your calendars now.

Membership Class: February 8-9

Pathway Topical Groups: February 3-March 17

Significant Marriage Weekend: March 1-3

Shadow Cliffs Baptism: May 19

Global Leadership Summit: August 8-9

Women's Fall Retreat: October 18-20

Men's Fall Retreat: November 1-2