

OCTOBER 2011

The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH

setting us free...going deeper

The next few weeks are so important in the life of our church. As most of you know we are launching our **setting us free** campaign on October 9, through which we are trusting God for the funds to eliminate our debt and propel us forward into new ministry possibilities. In order to prepare you for this I want to tell you a bit about what you can expect.

Our Sunday morning services are designed to compliment and reinforce the campaign by focusing on going deeper in our understanding of how, as followers of Jesus, we are to handle our money and possessions. There is perhaps no greater barometer of our spiritual health than our attitude toward money and possessions.

The Bible certainly takes it seriously. Over 2,000 times it is mentioned in Scripture, more often than love, faith, or prayer. Why? 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.

Over the four Sundays from October 9-30, we are going to look at what the Bible teaches and together explore the implications of this teaching for our lives. To facilitate this reflection we have written a three-part small group study based on these Sunday messages. We are asking each person to be a part of a small group for these studies so that we can all examine these

important truths more deeply. Existing groups are encouraged to use this curriculum during this season and for those not already in a small group, new groups are being formed just for this study.

Along with the Sunday morning services and the small groups we are also asking each of you to attend one

Group Fellowship meeting. These meetings are designed so that every person that is a part of the VCC family can get a more detailed and personal explanation of the **setting us free** campaign. These are extremely important opportunities for you to hear directly from me and Stu Bailey, our campaign director, about our vision and plans.

You will also see a video that tells the story of VCC, tracing God's provision over the years. Finally, this will be the best place for you to get all your questions answered. We are offering these groups at nine different times so you should be able to find one date that will work for you. Details about the schedule appear on page 6 in this *Bell Tower* and look for a postcard in your mail with this information as well. You will be provided with the information you need to RSVP by email or online. For those who do not respond through one of these ways, expect a follow-up phone call to ensure you have all the information you need to participate.

 Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR



Reaching Children of War

The last memory Nana has of her village is of flames shooting through rooftops and screams echoing through the streets as she joined her neighbors in a desperate flight for safety. Nana was seven months pregnant at the time. She and her husband, Bograte, were caught by surprise when Russian forces assaulted their quiet community, dropping bombs and setting fire to many buildings. With no time to gather their belongings, the couple sped away in their car, veering around burning vehicles. They kept driving until they ran out of gas, then continued their escape on foot—an arduous undertaking for Nana. The conflict left hundreds of civilians dead or injured, and displaced tens of thousands.



In December, heartache gave way to hope for thousands of Georgia's suffering families as Operation Christmas Child teams began blanketing the war-torn region, bearing gift-filled shoe boxes and the Good News of God's love. They came across Nana and Bograte living among the refugees crowded into old military barracks in the town of Koda. Among the 350 boys and girls who received shoe box gifts was the couple's daughter, Lizzie, born two months after their harrowing escape. "Thank you for the gift," said Bograte. "We are trying to make our lives as normal as possible, but it is difficult. We have only the hope of God to get us through this."

Samaritan's Purse distributes food and clothing to the refugees; but they want to give something deeper than physical help. These war torn people are hurting. When they distribute the shoe boxes it gives them an opportunity to get into peoples' lives and into their homes. They talk to them about Jesus Christ. If they connect with one family, it can have a spin-off effect in the neighborhood and it's a great blessing to see the powerful changes in their hearts.

Boxes need to be dropped off to the church office by Sunday, November 14.



Where is it going?

You can discover the destination of your shoe box gift(s) by using EZ Give.

By making your donation [online](#) using a credit or debit card you will receive an EZ give label included in your e-mail receipt. Print or copy the label as many times as you need to attach to each of your boxes.

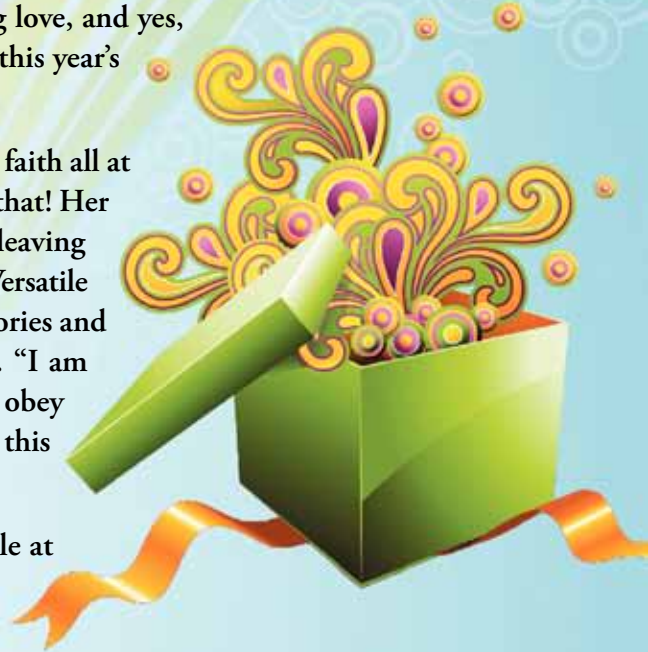
Your specific EZ Give barcode is connected to your e-mail address, so it's important to use the same label on each of your boxes. The barcode on the label enables us to track each shoe box gift. You will receive an e-mail telling you the destination of your gift, along with information about Operation Christmas Child in that country. If your boxes go to more than one country, you will receive more than one e-mail.

God's Gifts to Women

God has a very special gift waiting for you in the majestic Santa Cruz Mountains. What woman doesn't love gifts? And yet most women live without ever fully experiencing the gifts God has in store for them. The gift of friendship, the gift of God's presence, the gift of family, the gift of God's unfailing love, and yes, even gifts in disguise; all are yours for the taking when you join us for this year's women's retreat at the Koinonia Conference Grounds.

Seldom can a speaker relate to young and old, seeker and veteran of the faith all at the same time – but somehow our guest speaker Donna Jones does just that! Her personal warmth and genuine love for Christ captivates her audiences, leaving her listeners feeling as though her message was meant just for them. Versatile and dynamic, Donna combines strong Biblical teaching with personal stories and application to inspire her audience to move one step closer to Christ. “I am passionate about encouraging and equipping women to know, love and obey Christ in their real, everyday lives. I want to know, love and obey God this way myself,” says Donna.

Sign up online at vclive.org or visit the Women's Ministry table at the Gathering Place on Sunday mornings.



Men & women: do you need some time away this fall to refresh or recharge yourself? Here is your chance!

Living to Win!

Winning! As men it is often important to us to “win.” We want to win in the areas of possessions, power, influence, respect, sports; but what does it mean to truly win? What is God's view of winning? How does the world's view of winning influence us? How can you be *Living to Win* in a godly way?

Come join us at Redwood Christian Park on Friday, November 4 for our men's retreat to learn more. Our speaker this year is Dean Hampton. Dean brings a pastor's heart and a wealth of ministry experience to share from, as he speaks about God's values for men and winning in a biblical way. “I believe that the heart of ministry is to point people to Christ and bring them to a spiritual maturity” says Dean.

Whether you're young or old; have been at VCC for many years, or are just joining our church body, this retreat is for you. There will be a chance for you to be challenged and encouraged in your life. You will learn how to pass these ideas along to the next generation of Christian men.

The retreat will include opportunities for golf, cycling, and hiking on Saturday afternoon (you know, “manly” ways to connect with other men!) before you return home.

You will be able to sign-up and pay [online](#). Please watch the bulletin for more information.



Answering Your Questions *by Sid Niemeyer*

The start of our **setting us free** capital campaign is just around the corner. Our main financial goal is to eliminate the debt that the church is carrying. When people learn that the debt is for the parking structure, one of the most common initial responses we hear is *“Why do we have a parking structure?”* The answer to that question requires delving back into our history.

Serious concerns about parking emerged during and after the last major construction project at VCC, the building of the sanctuary. Because parking on VCC’s property was so limited, we relied heavily upon parking on the Amador Valley High School (AVHS) lot. In early 2000 we began preparing plans for a next phase of building, Phase 4, and by that time, on some Sundays we were exceeding the combined capacity of our parking and the adjoining AVHS lot. In 2002 the City approved Phase 4, but City staff expressed serious concerns about our parking and imposed upon VCC requirements on when and how we could use our facilities, for example on a Sunday morning we could not use all of our facilities at the same time.

VCC held a congregational meeting to discuss the concerns about our lack of permanent parking. The congregation agreed that the use of year-to-year “good neighbor” parking on the adjacent AVHS parking put VCC in a very vulnerable position. Even without a future Phase 4, our use of the existing facility (Phases 1-3) was at risk. For example, if a future school board prohibited VCC from using the AVHS parking lot, our current campus would become untenable. We began looking into various options, including selling the church and relocating.



Many options for nearby parking were explored over the course of the following year. Every option seemed impractical or too expensive. Then an idea emerged. It was suggested that we approach the Pleasanton United School District (PUSD) to explore the

possibility of a joint project—build a parking structure on the school’s property. There was no precedent (in the country) for such a project but the lack of other tenable

options pushed us into exploring this possibility. 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.

The projected cost of \$2.8M to build the parking structure was equivalent in cost to buying “bare dirt” (i.e. undeveloped land) in our area of town, and for that same cost we would have a fully developed parking facility. And of course, there was no such undeveloped land available that was anywhere near to the church. The leadership of the church saw this solution as a special answer to many prayers, and confirmation that VCC should stay in its current location. The plan, as well as the loan to fund it, was approved in 2005, and the parking structure was dedicated in 2006. The parking structure provides multiple benefits to VCC and our community, including a long-term solution to our parking problem, a strong partnership with Amador Valley High School, and significantly improved neighbor relations.

Probably the second most frequently asked question about **setting us free**, at least so far, is *“Why was the parking structure financed instead of paid for up front?”* In 2005 we envisioned that not long after construction of the parking structure, we would build Phase 4. We decided that rather than conducting a capital campaign to pay the costs of the parking structure, this cost would be rolled into a later capital campaign for Phase 4. But Phase 4 was postponed, and then postponed again, until several years ago VCC decided that Phase 4 would be postponed at least another five years. After making this decision, we developed plans for a capital campaign to pay off the parking structure, but a change of senior pastor caused this plan to be put on hold.

We expect that people will have many more questions about **setting us free**, and that is why we are encouraging everyone to attend a meeting where you can ask your questions personally. Danny Hall briefly described these Group Fellowships on the first page of this *Bell Tower*. Let’s keep talking to one another, listening to God and one another, and see what God will do through us.

Butterfly Paper Clips & Benevolence *by Jill Lorentz*



A few weeks ago, I was flipping through a magazine and read an article about “must have” items for the back-to-school season. One of the items on the top ten list was a set of butterfly paper clips—8 clips for \$4.99. I thought to myself, “wow... really?” Will my kids be able to start school successfully this year without these special paper clips? Who determines what we *must have* and how do we feel if we don’t have these things?

The culture we are a part of here in the Tri-Valley subtly influences, or even outright pressures, each of us to generate our own *must have* list. Do we have the right job, drive the right car, use the most amazing cell phone, or even carry the proper designer purse? Our possessions and our outward appearances say something about us in our worldly realm.

But what does God have for us on His list? We are called as Christians to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and love our neighbors as ourselves. Maybe if God wrote an article with a top ten *must have* list for His followers it might include:

1. *Selflessness*
2. *A heart for serving others*
3. *Acting kindly*
4. *Showing humility & compassion*
5. *Speaking the truth in love*
6. *Extending grace to others*
7. *Forgiving those who hurt us*
8. *Joyful, generous giving*
9. *Gratitude for our blessings*
10. *Living out our daily lives as a reflection of Christ’s love for us*

Something to think about....

If we commit to pursue God’s list for ourselves, He will reveal countless opportunities to serve others in meaningful ways. For me, this has taken the form of working on VCC’s Benevolence Ministry for the past year. The Benevolence

team meets face to face, each week with local residents who find themselves experiencing financial stress and emotional crisis. The needs are many, the circumstances and the stories are varied. Our willingness to serve, pray and listen to those who seek help from Valley Community Church comes from God’s *must have* list. The money in the Benevolence fund comes from people responding from their hearts to God’s list.

Each first Sunday of the month, a special collection is taken to support and replenish this fund. Your generous giving helps your child’s classmate, the person who busses your lunch table, the senior citizen shopping at Safeway, the single mom & her kids sitting at the bus stop on Main Street...the person sitting next to you at church on Sunday. You may not know who benefits from your generosity by name, but they are all around us. Our Heavenly Father is creator and provider of all of life’s amazing blessings. At times, some experience more blessings than others. If you are experiencing a season of blessing, pray for God to show you how to put your *must have* list into practical action. How can we best share our time, talents and treasures to help our neighbors in need and glorify our God?



Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-5



This campaign is not simply about raising money, rather it is a time to focus on the critical role that giving and money plays in discipleship. Our deepest hope is that for each person who participates fully, their walk of discipleship will deepen.

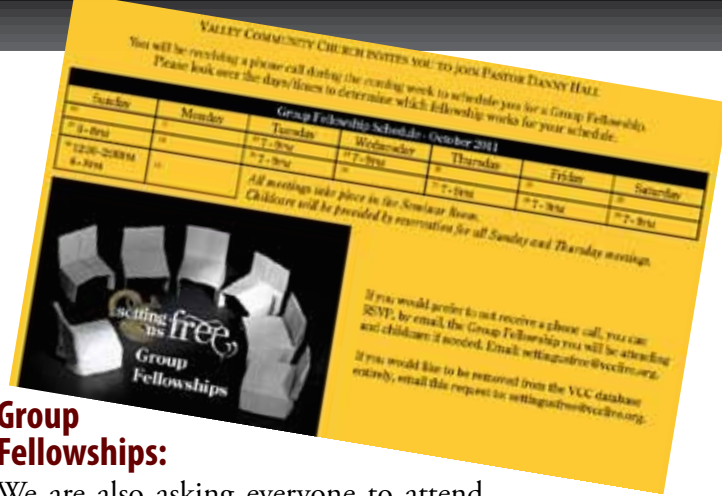
Sunday morning messages:

- The Grace of Giving—October 9
- The Treasure Principle—October 16
- The Pleasure Principle—October 23
- The Measure Principle—October 30

Setting Us Free Small Groups:

We are asking each person to be a part of a small group so that we can examine these important truths more deeply. Existing groups are encouraged to use the specially created curriculum during this season and, for those not already in a small group, new Setting Us Free groups are being formed.

If you are not currently in a small group, follow the link on the church [website](#) to sign up for a short-term Setting Us Free group. Be sure to tell us what nights of the week will work for you.



Group Fellowships:

We are also asking everyone to attend one Group Fellowship meeting. These meetings are designed so that every person that is a part of the VCC family can get a more detailed and personal explanation of the Setting Us Free campaign. You will be receiving a phone call to schedule you for a Group Fellowship or you may R.S.V.P. by email to settingusfree@vccflive.org, the date and time you will be attending. The schedule is available below:

- Tuesday, 10/18, 7:00-9:00PM
- Wednesday, 10/19, 7:00-9:00PM
- Sunday, 10/23, 6:00-8:00PM
- Tuesday, 10/25, 7:00-9:00PM
- Thursday, 10/27, 7:00-9:00PM
- Friday, 10/28, 7:00-9:00PM
- Saturday, 10/29, 7:00-9:00PM
- Sunday, 10/30, 12:30-2:30PM & 6:00-8:00PM

Fall Calendar

- Sunday, October 9**
Setting Us Free—Kickoff Sunday
- Thursday, October 13**
The Sharing Closet
- Thursday, October 13**
Christmas choir rehearsals begin
- October 18-30**
Setting Us Free—Group Fellowships
- October 21-23**
Womens' Retreat
- November 4-5**
Men's Retreat
- Sunday, November 6**
Setting Us Free—Commitment Sunday
- Sunday, November 13**
Setting Us Free—Celebration Sunday
- Monday, November 14**
Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes due

