

PRESS ON

“...but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”
Philippians 1:12

The BELL TOWER

FEBRUARY 2013

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH

This year it is our goal to take steps to deepen our relationship with Christ; to be more intentional about how we live out the gospel of the Kingdom. In the Sunday morning message on January 13 I laid out three commitments I want all of us to make in 2013. Here they are.

First, let's commit to increasing our time reading and reflecting on Scripture. The second part of this challenge is very important. Many people read the Bible on a regular basis or at least hear it preached or taught. While this is a good start, real life change will only happen as we take time to reflect on it as well. Thoughtful, prayerful reflection on God's truth allows the Holy Spirit to enlarge our understanding both of the meaning and the implications for life of what we are reading. If you do not already have a regular reading plan, there are many available. If you have a computer or mobile device like a smart phone or tablet, I suggest you try out youversion.com. This is a great resource full of different types of Bible reading plans and helps.

Second, let's commit to cultivate and engage in spiritually enriching relational environments. This might sound a bit daunting, but it really only means that we can't grow deeper in our faith alone. We need each other. Whether it is in a regularly meeting group, a micro group (3 to 5 people), a one on one mentoring relationship, or a spiritual friendship, we all need to be in the kinds of relationships where we can have conversations that matter. We have mastered the art of superficial conversation, but that will not get it done. We have to open up and challenge, encourage and support each other as we grow in God's grace.

Third, let's commit to serving somewhere. We need to give our lives away; helping meet the needs of those in our church, our community, and our world. Our spiritual growth is both enhanced and fueled by our investment in others. Serving pushes us out of our comfort zones, makes us evaluate our priorities and lets us discover new gifts and skills. It also lets us know the joy of seeing God use us for His glory.

Because we are all busy people we will be tempted to say, "This all sounds good, but I don't know how I'll ever find the time." This is a reflection of the fact that we all calculate how much it will cost us to commit. Let me challenge you to ask a different question. Ask yourself "what will be the cost if I DON'T commit?"

2013 can be a great year for us all. Let's press on together.

Danny Danny Hall
SENIOR PASTOR

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Activities & Events Coming Soon

Community Worship Night: Friday, February 1
Respite Care Training: Saturday, February 2
Membership Class: February 8-9
Pathway Topical Groups: February 3-March 17

Parents' Night Out: Saturday, February 16
Brown Bag Sunday: February 17
Girls' Night Dinner & a Movie: Friday, February 22
Significant Marriage Weekend: March 1-3



What's It All About? *by Sam Walker*

I think two seconds had passed between the time Pastor Danny talked to the Missions Committee about CityServe and mentioned VCC would need a liaison, and when I threw my hand up. After going to my first CityServe meeting I have no doubt my impulse was right on. It was inspiring. There were nearly 30 people there from around the Valley. They included pastors, church staff, a lot of lay people, several organizations (Agape Village, Shepherd's Gate, etc.) and even a representative from the City of Dublin (their mayor is a big supporter!).

So just what is "CityServe" anyway? As Danny has mentioned a couple of times, it's a Tri-Valley effort by evangelical churches to link the many needs that exist with those who want to serve. It's been around for several years. Today, it largely consists of a website, managed by a small group of people, which lists local organizations that have opportunities for service. One example might be helping out at a senior center. CityServe is not a clearinghouse to determine who can do what, but essentially a conduit to connect those who serve with those who need. You might not think that in an affluent area such as ours there would be much need but I'm learning more and more how great the need is right here in our midst.

But wait! There's more! CityServe is upping the ante. It's about to become a 501(c)3 entity. CityServe has an office in Dublin and a fulltime staff person. It is now supported and managed by a coalition of churches and a board on which Danny is a member. One of its aims is to be much more proactive in finding ways to serve and taking advantage of all of the churches working together (kind of like the whole is more than the sum of its parts). For example, when there's a need, there are often times when putting the word out in just one church doesn't draw enough volunteers. If it's a newly found need and has a short time span, CityServe can call up the Minute Men/Women so to speak, to help. Another role that CityServe can provide is to present a variety of options for people to serve depending on their gifts and availability. For example, a paid pastor at the County Jail might need help. Some of the CityServe volunteers are more than willing to jump in and work directly with prisoners and their families. For others (like me), that could be a big step. But what the pastor may really need is some administrative help so he can be freed up to work more with the inmates. The work might be something that you could do from your home. CityServe's role would be to contact and work with the pastor to identify the need ahead of time and then find a volunteer.

So where do we at VCC go from here? At a minimum, check out the website, cityservetrialvalley.org. In the future, get ready for a more proactive approach where CityServe will find more ways to help, whether it is merely driving something or someone somewhere, or coming alongside of a person in need. So as you may be able to tell, I'm pumped up about what's ahead of us. So as they say in the Navy—stand by! There is more to come!

Minstering to the Least of These! *Disability Ministry at VCC*

Approximately one in three families is directly affected by a disabled family member. One in five children in the U.S. is disabled and the divorce rate in marriages with a disabled child exceeds four out of five. People with disabilities (and their families) are by far the largest unreached population in the United States. Disabilities come in an array of limitations, abilities, ages and sizes. Whether big or small, they all can be extremely challenging to the disabled person and their families. If you are fortunate enough to have never had to struggle with a physical or mental limitation or watch a loved one do so then you may not have any idea of the daily challenges.

We believe that God wants us all to know Him regardless of our abilities. There are many ways in which we can reach out to the disabled and their families and help them to come to know the love and acceptance of Jesus Christ. One way is just by reaching out to them and including them in church life; letting them know there is a place for them here.

Valley Community Church has a number of programs in place at this time to serve the disabled community such as Friday Friends, Special Needs Sunday School, and other programs are in the works. We are excited about God's plans for this ministry. You can find out more about how you can help minister to this community by making sure you attend our Disability Awareness Weekend events on Friday, February 1, through Sunday, February 3.

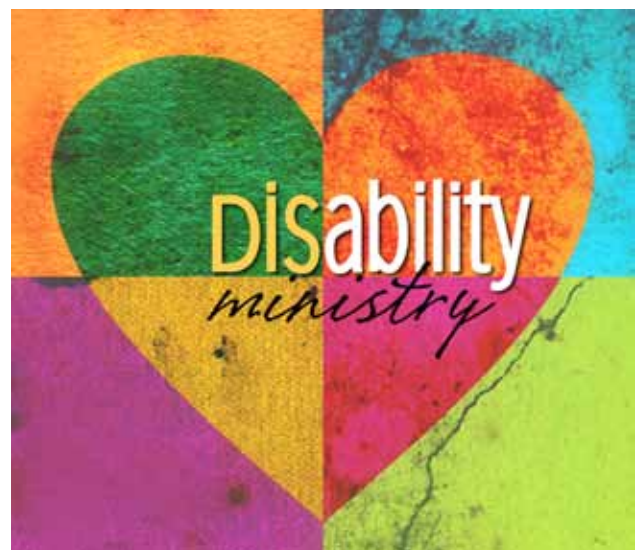
We will kick off the weekend with our Friday Friends worship concert in the Sanctuary from 7:30-8:30PM. This is a time for all of the community to come and worship together and celebrate His love. You will love seeing and joining with our disabled community as they rock in praise to our Lord!

Saturday morning from 9:30AM to noon there will be respite training in the seminar room. This training will be taught by Mr. David Glover, founder and president of PURE ministries. David will begin equipping us to host regularly scheduled respite care events that benefit the disabled and their caregivers. This outreach will allow parents or caregivers to bring their disabled child and siblings to a fun event for three or four hours while they get a much needed break from their daily caretaking duties. Finally on Sunday morning Mr. Glover will be our guest speaker at both services. He will talk about the reasons this ministry is so important in the Kingdom of God.

If you have neighbors, family, or friends that are caring for a disabled person or if you know someone who would benefit from any of our programs, please take a moment to encourage and invite them to one or more of our events. So often the disabled feel isolated and alone. Let them know how they and their loved ones can benefit from our programs and most importantly let them know that they are welcome here at VCC.

The most current offerings of our programs can be found online at vcclive.org/ministries. For more information or to R.S.V.P. for the respite training event contact Shelly Welsh, VCC Disabilities Ministry Coordinator at 925-580-4392 or at Welshx4@att.net.

And the king will say,
"I tell you the truth,
when you did it to one
of the least of these
my brothers & sisters,
you were doing it to
me!" Matthew 25:40





Reaching Beyond Ourselves *Livermore Homeless Refuge*

Have you ever wondered what you can really do to help the homeless? For several years, the Livermore Homeless Refuge has provided a safe, warm place for 20-25 homeless men and women to sleep every night during the winter months and enjoy breakfast the following morning.

The shelter is open when the temperature is below 40 degrees or there is more than a 20% chance of rain.

Shelter for the homeless on these nights rotates between four local Livermore churches and is run and staffed by volunteers. There is an immediate need for volunteers to work one of the three night shifts once a week, every two weeks, or on an 'as available' basis.

The refuge has a need for supplies such as:

- clean used shoes and socks
- cup of soup
- oatmeal
- tea bags
- sugar and creamer
- paper coffee cups, large and small heavy duty paper plates
- toilet paper, paper towels, paper napkins

If you or your small group would like to get involved with the Livermore Homeless Refuge, you can contact Bob and Donna McKenzie directly at 925-895-4167 or through livermorehomelessrefuge.org. Your VCC contact is Dave Peterson at davidpetersons@gmail.com or Tim and Maureen Shearer at ShearerFam@comcast.net.

Cultivating Rich Relationships *by Tony Catudal*

Last month Danny Hall shared what we have been learning about ourselves as a church from the Spiritual Life survey which was completed by nearly 200 congregants. He encouraged us to press on in three ways: 1) increase commitment to reading and reflecting on Scripture, 2) cultivate spiritually enriching relational environments and 3) find a place to serve.

The responses from the survey also affirmed conversations that the Lord has led the leadership team to over the course of the last year. Out of those conversations came a decision to revitalize our Small Groups Ministry. Relational environments (including small groups) are critical to our mission of making disciples. We believe that a Christ-follower needs to be in a relational environment in order to grow spiritually.

Also crucial to our mission are the group leaders whom we support and equip in a variety of ways. One way we do this is through two group leader gatherings during the year

where we share our vision, a training topic, and a meal, while giving them a chance to be in community with other group leaders.

Our first group leader gathering for 2013 will be held on Sunday, March 17, from 12:15-2:00PM, in the Seminar Room. This will be a great time for you to come and hear about what is taking shape as we look ahead within our Groups Ministry. Please save the date and make every effort to attend.

I would also like to extend an open invitation to any of you who would like to consider leading or hosting a group, to come and hear more about this ministry.

As ever, the Lord is at work in our midst. Each of us is a part of this community life and we are better together. It wouldn't be the same here without you! For more information or to connect with a group, contact

Tony Catudal at tcatudal@vcclive.org, or at 925-474-9410.





Who Knows What Miracles God Has in Store? *by Susan Harford*

'Xtreme Camp is coming and miracles can happen! When my unchurched niece, Erin, was in the ninth grade, my daughter Stephanie invited her to come to camp and she did. That summer she trusted Christ as her Savior. Stephanie has moved on to college and Erin is in her senior year of high school. She is attending a church in her local community and takes her younger sister to services with her. This year she has the opportunity to go to "camp" with her new church—on a houseboat! However, 'Xtreme Camp is the same weekend and she feels drawn back to the friends she has made and the place where she first gave her heart to Jesus.

I am so proud of Erin. I am proud that she has been able to live out her faith on her own. I am proud that she was baptized this past October. I am proud that she has drawn her sister closer to God and that there may be another baptism in our future. I also praise God for the way he has drawn Stephanie and Erin to live out their faith in a way that makes my brother, Erin's father, interested in knowing more about Jesus. Who knows what other miracles God has in store for our family all because Erin attended a week of 'Xtreme Camp? I encourage you to send your children, invite their cousins and their friends. God may have miracles in store for you too!

Our theme for both camps this year is CONSUMED...Matthew 6:33. The speaker is Duffy Robbins. Number One Gun will be our band. For more information check out this [video](#) or contact the youth office.



High School 'Xtreme Camp 2013

Sunday, June 16 through Friday, June 21

Open to all current HS students

Middle School 'Xtreme Camp 2013

Saturday, June 22 through Thursday, June 27

Open to all current MS students

Register Early & Save!

Online registration will begin in March. Catch the EARLY registration cost of \$295. Cost will increase to \$330 beginning April 29. LATE Registration cost will be \$360 as of May 20. We can't wait to be CONSUMED by God at 'Xtreme 2013.

The Hungry Are Always with Us

The holidays have come and gone. Baskets of food and gifts have been distributed. We continue to receive letters and notes of thanks; needy people telling us how grateful they are. What we don't hear is the stark fact that they are still in need and still going hungry. They have their pride.

Our country's jobless rate stands at around 9%. Many people in the Tri-Valley have felt the impact of the economy in one way or another. Doubtless you know someone who is unemployed or underemployed. Statistics show that those who have been unemployed for six months or more have a 50% chance of finding a job. How does a family of two, or four, or more subsist when there is little or no income?

One of the Tri-Valley *treasures* for these people is the Valley Bible Food Pantry. Well beyond the holidays, Valley Bible continues to meet the needs of hundreds of families who wouldn't make it without their help. We can help too!

Your food donations help keep the pantry stocked beyond the holidays. Our next Brown Bag Sunday is February 17. Help to restock the pantry by bringing a bag full of non-perishable food to the church on or before that Sunday. If you are able to help deliver the bags to Valley Bible after second service, please contact Laura Monical at lmonical@vcclive.org or by calling 846-6622x401.





Becoming a Member

We held our last Membership Class in October 2012. Among those who chose to become members of our body were a young couple, Shawn and Lisa English, who started attending Valley Community Church in mid-2011 soon after relocating from Florida. Curious, we asked what moved them to membership.

“We wanted to become members because we knew as Christians we were called to invest ourselves in the church body. God put on our hearts that Valley Community Church was the church for us to attend and we saw no other delay in becoming members of the body. We are thankful for all that Valley provides for us and wanted to make sure we were also part of that for others.” ~Lisa English

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, there’s no better time to consider becoming a member of our church body.

Our next Membership Class is February 8-9. The class will meet twice, once on Friday, February 8, from 7:00 to 9:00PM and Saturday, February 9, from 8:30AM to 12:30PM in the Fireside Room. 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 use the Communication Slip in the church bulletin or call the church office at 846-6622.

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

Divorce is a messy business. Experts agree that the process of divorce is one of the most challenging experiences a person can have and that the emotional toll on a family is very similar to grieving the death of a loved one. It can take years to get over the effect of a divorce. Whatever the reason for the divorce and whether you wanted it or not, divorce turns your whole world upside down. When the going gets tough, many of us just want to crawl under the covers or bury our heads in the sand until things get better. Unfortunately the pain follows you under the covers and if the tears don’t make your eyes red, the sand surely will.

If you are currently struggling with separation or divorce or someone you know is struggling, please consider participation in our DivorceCare classes. DivorceCare is designed so that you or a friend of yours doesn’t have to go through a separation or divorce alone. It can be extremely helpful in assisting families through the separation and/or divorce process and on into recovery even years after a divorce.

DivorceCare has recently updated their material. It features brand-new 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 event in your life.

We will be starting our next session of DivorceCare on Thursday, February 21, here at Valley Community Church. Classes will be held in the Conference Room and start at 6:00 p.m. Child care is available for those who request it. To register, please call the church office at 846-6622 or email info@vclive.org.

If you are struggling in your relationship or you are already divorced and need help to recover, we encourage you to participate. For those of you who know someone who might benefit from DivorceCare, we hope you will encourage them to come. Look forward to rebuilding your life; don’t go through divorce alone!



Who Doesn't Value a Good Investment? *by Sandy Carter*

As I listened to Pastor Danny's recent sermon, "Investment Strategies" I thought, "we are so blessed." An investment in general terms requires an output of time or money in the present with expectations of a profit in the future. Valley Community Church is indeed blessed with a staff and members who invest their lives in others.

There are many ways to invest in other believers as we rub shoulders using our God-given gifts. But one of the ways I think we can help others grow is to intentionally help them learn to feel comfortable talking 'God-speak.' That is, helping another man or woman learn to recognize God's hand in their lives and to be able to express what they see.

To those of us who have walked with God for many years, the ability to share what we are hearing from the Lord may seem second nature. But for many younger believers talking about Jesus and recognizing where He is showing up in their lives, requires exercising a spiritual muscle that has not fully developed.

How do we mentor others in this way? First, we share our own stories. We ask God to develop in us the sensitivity to His Spirit to see His handiwork in our own lives. We practice thankfulness until we naturally recognize Jesus' partnership and overflow with the kind of gratitude that eagerly shares what we learn.

Second, we help others hear from God by encouraging them to regularly fellowship with Him through the Word and prayer. God speaks to us when we encounter the Scriptures with a heart to obey and when we pour out our hearts in prayer with an ear to hear.

Finally, we ask good questions: "What are you hearing from God this week? How are you applying what you learned from your recent Bible study? How do you think Jesus would react if He were in your current situation? What aspect of God's character is most precious to you at this time?" Asking questions that encourage "God-speak" enables others to see the reality of the Lord's hand in their everyday lives.

As you follow the lead of so many at VCC and invest your lives in others, be intentional about sharing your own God stories, encourage others to hear from God consistently and ask questions that allow them to share their encounters with God, too. When we invest in the lives of others for the Kingdom, we see a profit in fruitfulness in their walks with the Lord and an increase in their service to the Body of Christ.

Let's be wise investors for the Kingdom, intentionally sharing our lives and vision with the next generation. For who doesn't value a good investment?

Learn more about investing your lives in others by attending the Heart Connection Orientation for women, March 2, 2013. For more information, contact [VCC Women's Ministries](http://www.vccwomensministries.org) at www.vcclive.org.





THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Your Dollars Helping to Make a Difference

Those who attended the Global Leadership Summit last August will recall that there was an offering taken that was to be used to help others, in need, attend future summits. In Guatemala in 2012, leaders were struggling with the ravages of a 7.5 earthquake where many of them suffered from the loss of their homes, possessions, and even lives. Earlier in the year they also mourned the loss of senior pastor and GLS Steering Committee Chairperson, Jorge, who was murdered for selling a car to a lady whose stolen car had been recovered by the mafia.

We are happy to tell you that your dollars made a difference in the lives of these men and women. Your offering went to help many Guatemalan church and marketplace leaders attend the Summit which was held at 5 of the prior 6 sites.

They praise God for the scholarships that were offered to pastors and leaders. The offering helped send those from more impoverished backgrounds who might otherwise have been unable to attend. Up to 50% of the leaders who attended at the Guatemala City site were marketplace leaders. Marketplace leaders are making a big difference in their workplaces and communities.

The Global Leadership Summit is growing in Guatemala as people seek hope and encouragement. By God's grace GLS leaders are currently making plans to expand into 2-4 additional sites in 2013. It is by their vision, energy and commitment that the GLS continues to grow in Guatemala and offers training and inspiration to its leaders.

Good to Great in God's Eyes by *Kent Laws*

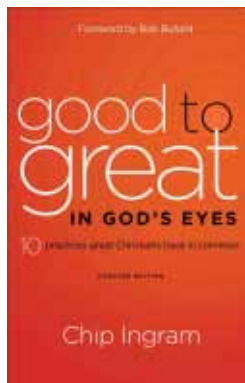
Guys: Are you tired of the 'status quo' spiritual life? Do you ever feel like you were destined for greatness, but stuck in mediocrity? But wait! Is it wrong to desire to be great?

Several times in the Gospels, the disciples argued over who was the greatest. Finally, on the night of the Passover, prior to Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus explained (Luke 22) to them a new paradigm where greatness is equated with service to others. Jesus didn't condemn their desire for greatness, but He explained it in Kingdom terms.

So guys, are you tired of just floating along in life, desiring to be more, but just not knowing how to get going? There's a reason for that desire and there's a solution to it. Chip Ingram explains that "God invites you to be a world-changing, kingdom-shaping follower of Christ. The desire to be great was planted in your heart by the one who made you. But the desires remain only desires if there's no follow-through, no plan to accomplish them." So what's the plan?

A few months ago I went through Chip's book *Good to Great in God's Eyes* with the guys at Early Risers. I learned biblically sound and very practical ways to get from just being good to being great from the only perspective that counts—God's. Through Chip's lessons in the book and on DVD, I learned ten specific principles which are reliable starting points to cultivate greatness in our Christian walk with the Lord.

This series includes the following messages:



- Think Great Thoughts
- Read Great Books
- Pursue Great People
- Dream Great Dreams
- Pray Great Prayers
- Take Great Risks
- Make Great Sacrifices
- Enjoy Great Moments
- Empower Great People
- Develop Great Habits

On February 23 we will begin the "Good to Great" study series at VCC. The classes will be on Saturday morning, lasting about an hour and a half each. We will go through the ten chapters of the book in ten weeks. Each week includes a short video from Chip. We have not set a start time yet, but we are considering starting at 7:00AM. If you are interested and want to chime in on a start time that works best for you, I would love to hear from you by Sunday, February 10. For more information you can contact, Kent Laws (kvalaws@sbcglobal.net), or Bill Steuben (bsteuben@gmail.com), or Ted Saito (ted_only_saito@comcast.net).