




The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH

ASKING THE MORE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS



Questions. We all have them. Some questions are the normal ones of everyday life, some are trivial, but some carry enormous implications for how we lead our lives. The way we handle these important questions determines to a large degree what the path forward will look like. So, it is extremely important to be sure we are asking the right questions.

Like all churches we are facing challenges. Some of these challenges will require wisdom and courage to meet. The inherent tensions of ongoing ministry in a changing world are not easy to navigate. For instance, how do we balance tradition with innovation? As the religious, cultural, and church landscape evolves, how do we stay true to the gospel yet relevant to the world in which we live?

Because all this is true, we need to carefully look at the questions we are asking. For instance, we could be asking questions like these:

- How do we attract more people & increase attendance?
- How do we raise offerings to meet our budget challenges (see financial update on the next page)?
- How do we inspire people to be more committed?

All of these questions are legitimate and churches ask them all the time. But perhaps it is time to ask a more important question, a question that takes us deeper into the vision God has given us of seeing lives transformed in a Christ-centered community. What if we started by asking ourselves individually and corporately the simple, yet profound question, "What is God doing?"

This is the question that the elders at VCC have begun to ask. We know that the challenges we face are being allowed by God to refine us, to mold us into the people and the church God wants us to be. Rather than simply being problem solvers we are asking God to help us be discerners of His will. We want to learn to listen to how the Spirit is leading us. We want to be aware of anything and everything that He has on His agenda for us. What if God shows us sins to be confessed? Will we be humble enough to do that? What if He shows us he wants us to do some things the way we always have and others in radically different ways? Will we be wise enough to know the difference? What if He shows us we are too focused on ourselves and not enough on loving others? Will we be courageous enough to change?

The answers are not simple and all answers have implications, some that may be hard, but if we are truly being led by God, then all will lead us into deeper dependence on God. That is a good thing.

In light of this I want to challenge all of you to begin to ask that question for yourself, your family, our church. Instead of beginning with, "What's in it for me?" be open to how God wants to form you into the image of Christ by asking, "What do you want to do in and through me?" If we can all open our hearts toward this, we will see God do some amazing things.

Danny
 Danny Hall
 SENIOR PASTOR



Financial Update Part 2

Three months ago we gave a forecast of expected contributions for the current fiscal year in which we projected a “disconcertingly large deficit” of \$155K. That forecast was based on an expectation that the average shortfall for contributions (relative to budget) would be \$10K per month. The very next month (February) supported that projection as the deficit was \$7K. But in March and April the situation changed dramatically: the shortfall in March was \$35K and in April was \$34K.

If we take the past three months as the best predictor for contributions in the remaining five months of our fiscal year, then our total deficit for the year would be about \$275K. Such a deficit is simply not sustainable. The Elders are working hard to address this financial difficulty, and by “press time” for this *Bell Tower* expect to be close to announcing the steps that will be taken. The Elders have for some time been discussing and praying about our financial status and future for VCC ministries. They frequently ask, “How is God guiding and directing us?” The Elders ask the congregation to join them in praying for our current financial crisis and for God’s guidance so that we take the steps that will lead to the future He desires for our congregation.

Tell a Story, Touch a Soul! *by Jan Villot*

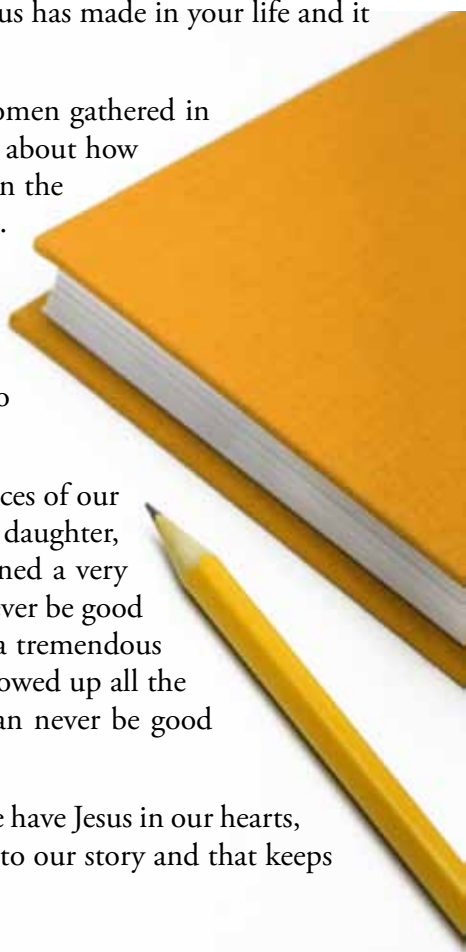
An old Hassidic proverb says, “Tell a fact, touch a mind. Tell a story, touch a soul.” What if your story could touch a soul? What if, in your own way, you were able to share with someone the difference Jesus has made in your life and it made a difference to them. Would you do it?

We just had a conference here at VCC, called Telling Your Story – 2013. Over 80 women gathered in hopes of finding ways to be more effective in telling their stories of coming to faith or about how God is working in their lives (see Kelly McIntosh’s story, Mom’s Bitter/Sweet Tattoo, on the next page). It was fun! It was challenging! It was powerful! For some, it was life-changing.

We know we are supposed to be prepared with our stories, because the Bible tells us so. God says we can overcome the world by the power of our testimonies. He tells us to be His witnesses and to relate what we have personally seen and experienced. The funny thing is that we seem to think we need to do this for God’s sake. The truth is we need to do this for our own sake.

When we put together our stories and focus on how God has met us in the circumstances of our lives, we see things we wouldn’t see otherwise. He connects the dots for us. When my daughter, Nikki Pritchett, did the My100Words workshop on finding your faith story, she learned a very valuable truth. Her whole life has been affected by a deep down belief that she could never be good enough. It motivated her to accomplish some lofty goals, but she lived her life under a tremendous amount of self-induced pressure. By writing her story, she saw this truth and how it showed up all the time – in her parenting, friendships, work and play. She finally saw that, yup, she can never be good enough, but God doesn’t ask her to be! He loves her anyway. It was so freeing for her.

God’s love is always showing up in our lives. That is why our stories are so dynamic! If we have Jesus in our hearts, then He is transforming us. There is always a new lesson or revelation that we can add to our story and that keeps it fresh and real and honest.



Mom's Bitter/Sweet Tattoo *by Kelly McIntosh*

This past fall, my college-age daughter called me in the afternoon. As I answered the phone I thought, "We haven't really connected in awhile, maybe she needs money?" As we moved past, "How's life?" I could tell she was not her usual happy self. She shared how, at times, she was still sad over the ending of a dear friendship/relationship earlier this year. She was "concerned" about why this "mourning" was taking so long. We had a great time of sharing how God understands our hurt and how He promises to walk with us, or just sit with us at the pit (Psalm 40:1-3), while we process all our feelings and hurts. He will never rush us and His plan for us is abundance (Psalm 66:12) even in the hurt/loss.

She said she felt like she had baggage; the baggage of trusting someone with her love and now not sure how to trust again; plus the added baggage of growing-up in a divorced home. And I heard (felt) God say, "You ALL have got baggage, but some of you never open it...take it out...talk about it with Me!" No wonder we need counseling when we grow up! I told her I was so proud of her for opening it up, taking it out and talking about it.

As this special time came to a close, she said, "Mom, I wanna get a tattoo with you! I want to get 'matching' elephants, because you love to collect elephants (a Texas A&M University thing – 'thang' in a Texas accent) and I will always remember YOU when I see it." Can't I just give her an 8x10 glossy of me? She continued, "I watched you these years (through a devastating divorce) and elephants are strong, just like you are strong." It seemed as if her "trust" in me said, "Mom I saw how you walked with God and cried with God and trusted God. And I don't think you are perfect, but I know Who is!"

I had given her my approval for a tattoo, so I knew this was not a "plea" for a tattoo. I still had my doubts. What would a tattoo, an elephant tattoo, look like on a 50-year-old body? She assured me that it would be much better for me, because my "skin had already done a lot of stretching". Was that supposed to make me feel better?

And as we said goodbye, I felt so overwhelmed with God's love for me, by providing me with this moment, this glimpse into Psalm 40:3 coming full circle. I thought, "I'm getting a tattoo, aren't I?"

I shared the next day with my mentor friend (who does NOT have a tattoo,

but had no trouble moving me along in that direction). We talked about the elephant figurine she had given me twelve years ago. It sits on my desk at work, a reminder of God's faithfulness through a very sad, dark season of my life, of a Bible story...not the one with elephants and an ark, but the one of God's faithfulness to His people (Exodus 15:22-27). God led them out of Egypt. Now they were in the wilderness where the water wasn't all that great, in fact it was bitter and they (we?) began to complain! "Hey Moses! We do NOT like this! We wanna go back! Egypt was better than this! We are mad/unhappy/frustrated about how our life has turned out! This is NOT what we planned!". Moses says to God, (maybe under his breath), "Lord, I can so do life with you, but these people are really getting on my nerves.") "God, Help!"

And God does! He shows him a piece of wood! AND Moses, because of his trust in God, his daily faith walk with the God Who brought them out of Egypt (Leviticus 26:13), looks at the piece of wood and says, "Seriously God! I said we need help with the water and You show me a piece of wood? Did I NOT make myself clear?" And Moses takes the wood and throws it into the water and it changes from bitter to sweet.

And God longs to do the same for us in all the complicated, frustrating, bitter things. When we cry out to Him for help, then trust in His answers, we can watch HIM turn bitter into better, stale into sweet, hurt into healing and a mess into a miracle.

Oh and one more thang, later that week, the Exodus story, about the bitter waters of Marah, was in the Bible study I was doing on the book of James and the following day, that story was in the book I was reading, *The Saving Life of Christ*. Over Thanksgiving I got a tattoo with my daughter...and with God.

P.S. Where is my tattoo? It is in a spot on my back where only God and I can see it, (oh, and also my daughter when she wants to be reminded of my love for her and God's love for us!). He lifted me up out of the pit...and put a new song in my heart. Psalm 40:2-3

P.P.S. And my daughter's tattoo? She chose a large elephant holding a piece of wood and a smaller elephant holding onto the larger elephant. Many will see and trust in the Lord. Psalm 40:3





Many people at VCC serve in a great variety of ways. In addition to outside our local area, many serve in our valley (where the need is greater than you might think). In this, and in future *Bell Tower* editions, we will let you know what they do and how you can join us.

Cleaning Kaleidoscope *by Sam Walker*

“They” arrived at 9AM sharp on a Saturday. All were dressed for the occasion—a floor-to-ceiling scrub-down of the Kaleidoscope Center in Dublin. “What’s that?” you might ask. Well, Kaleidoscope is an Easter Seals-run after-school program for about 30 developmentally disabled children. When their regular school is not in session, they are there all day. Many of the kids are autistic and there’s a great staff that teach and take good care of them. Although the staff vacuums and mops every day, there’s pretty much nothing else done to keep the center clean.

That’s where “they” come in. Volunteers from the surrounding churches show up once a month to step in and clean. While the volunteer effort is coordinated by City Serve (a coalition of churches of which Pastor Danny is on the board), the “they” in this case were folks from our own VCC. (VCC has signed up for the Saturday cleaning once a quarter.)

Kimberly, the school director, was there to greet them. “There’s no specific thing or list of what to clean” she announced as they stood around her, the guys with hands in their pockets. “But pretty much everything is in need of cleaning” (kitchen, classrooms, windows, playground and, of course, bathrooms). She showed the volunteers

around the place, showed them where the cleaning items were and then left them to their own devices (which were paper towels, rubber gloves, Lysol, window cleaner, etc.).

What to do and how to divide and conquer? “John” suggested that the women clean the bathrooms. One couple went off to clean the kitchen, others to wipe down the zillion toys. John was not quite sure how it all happened, but somehow he ended with close encounters with each of the bathrooms. Three hours flew by! In spite of the bathroom incident, all of them actually had a great time. They had “served” God’s children (sounds like a Bible verse).

Are you jealous? Would you like to help? Kaleidoscope would love to accommodate you. ALL you need to do is contact me and I’ll set you up with other folks from VCC. Some of “them” might even come with you to show you the ropes, bathrooms, etc. What to do next? Just contact me at walk_mac@yahoo.com or call me at 829-9296. Serving has never been so fun or so easy.

PS: Would you like to serve a little deeper? Kim can use help one day a week augmenting her staff. There’s training involved and she’d like a short (six month) commitment. Again, contact me and I’ll introduce you to Kim. She’s nice.

Nine Trips and Counting! *by Dave Peterson*

Doctors Giving Back, led by John and Jana Turns, just completed their ninth annual trip to Ethiopia for two weeks in March. They went to provide medical services at clinics in the rural town of Assosa.

Assosa is near the Sudan border and has many nearby refugee villages. The population is about 45% Muslim, 45% Coptic, and 10% or less Evangelical Christian and is overseen by a Muslim governor. While primarily a medical mission, the team coordinates with a church from Colorado doing pastor training in local evangelical churches.

Our team of 16 included eight doctors and nurses. There were five of us from VCC who made the trip. In addition to John and Jana, there was me and my wife Becki Peterson, and 18-year-old Nicole Woo (the youngest member) who were a part of the team. Arriving on a Sunday, we were guests at a large (several hundred members) evangelical church and treated to a children’s choir. The children were all dressed in their choir robes. Thanks to the Christian missionary work, the evangelical churches are





growing in this inhospitable environment. Our first night was a long one and was spent sorting the hundreds of pounds of medicine that we struggled to get through customs at the airport.

For the next two weeks, the team had long mornings at a clinic that we set up in a large government building in town. Even without any advertising, the crowds were large, forming a continuous line from 9:00AM until noon. Nicole worked our intake with a translator taking histories and vital signs. Dave directed traffic, keeping everything moving. Becki, John and Jana worked with translators to provide whatever medical care was appropriate. For serious cases, John referred patients to the hospital in the capital, which the patients likely cannot afford. Typical diseases seen continually include malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis, leprosy, and intestinal parasites. Clean water, mosquito nets, vaccinations, and adequate food would cure most of the conditions we saw. Untreated open wounds are common. It is especially sad to see people with a large goiter on their necks. It is easily prevented by iodized salt.

Each day we had an hour break for a quick lunch, and then it was out to local villages to set up an impromptu clinic under a large mango tree. Two hours were spent at each of two villages in the afternoon, but sadly we often only had time to see a fourth of the people seeking medical attention. These people are extremely poor and their only access to health care could well be the annual trip by Doctors

Giving Back. Even if they can afford the local hospital, which most can't, it has only minimal facilities. It was hard to close our clinic at the end of the day when we could see people were still standing in line hoping for care.

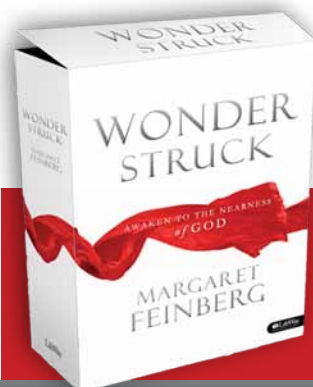
We handed out reading glasses and sunglasses to those whose eyes have been damaged by sun exposure. This includes even young people. We handed out shoes to those who had none and clothes to those dressed in rags. Because many of their diseases have water-borne causes, we provided water filters in the rural villages. One of the things that gave the team the most joy was passing out the bears that wonderful people in Pleasanton and around the area had made and donated. The smiles of joy on the faces of the children were priceless to us. Thank you for your donations and prayers.

Doctors Giving Back will make their tenth trip in the spring of 2014. You can be a part of this mission trip by going to Ethiopia yourself, making bears in the coming year to send with the mission team (our goal is 1,000 bears from VCC), donating needed medical supplies, shoes, or clothing (watch the bulletin for information) and/or praying for the success of the trip.

Desiring More of God *by Jacquie O'dell*

Do you desire more of God in your life? In our consumer-oriented society you can set aside this summer to become more consumed by the one true and holy God as the women of VCC study *Wonderstruck*, by Margaret Feinberg.

Through this seven-week video and Daily Interactive Workbook series we will explore topics such as *The Wonder of God's Presence*, *The Wonder of Rest*, and *Friendship*. In this study, Margaret invites us to, "Come learn how to recognize the presence of God in the midst of your routine, unearth extraordinary moments on ordinary days, identify what's holding you back in prayer, and discover peace in knowing you're wildly loved." This summer explore the WONDER of God and call on Him to astound you (Isaiah 29:13-14)!



This study will begin June 25 and run through August 7. We will meet each Tuesday from 9:30-11:00AM and Wednesday from 3:00-4:30PM and 7:00-8:30PM in the Seminar Room. You can register at the Gathering Place on Sundays, June 9, 16, and 23, between services. Books are \$15. Please contact Jacquie Odell with any other questions at 925-786-8946 or jelodell@comcast.net.

The Least of These...

Those who are hungry and hurting are always with us. Our God calls us to feed the hungry. One way we do this at Valley Community Church is by contributing to the Benevolence fund on a monthly basis.

Another way that we help is by stocking the pantry at Valley Bible Church on a quarterly basis. Valley Bible is currently feeding 200 plus people per month. Your donation of non-perishable items goes a long way in helping these families to stay afloat while they look for work.

Our next "Brown Bag Sunday" will be on Sunday, June 23. Please bring your grocery bags of food to the church lobby and they will be delivered to the pantry.

If you are available to help deliver food to the pantry on Sunday, June 23 after the second service, please contact Laura Monical, lmonical@vcclive.org or Susan Harford, sharford@vcclive.org or call the church office, 925-846-6622.

'I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me.'
Matthew 25:40

What am I going to do with my children all summer?

If you are asking yourself this question, don't worry, VCC to the rescue. Once again we have some exciting returning events planned for our students. Here is an opportunity, parents, to keep your children connected to God while giving them quality time with friends. Please plan ahead so your children can attend these events. Events are for children who are exiting kindergarten through fifth grade beginning this June.

Registration for all events is currently underway. You will be able to register and pay with a credit card at the [Valley Community Church website](#).

Crazy Sunday Kickoff: Sunday, June 2 is our kickoff to summer Sunday. Don't miss the CRAZY stuff that is going to happen during first and second service. Bring a friend(s) to this surprise event!

Team 45, June 17-21: Team 45 is a Sports Camp created for those children who are 4 and 5-years-old. They will have a great morning of singing, Bible stories and working on motor skills. It will be held from 9:00-11:30AM. The cost is \$65 per child.

Sports Camp, June 24-28: Sports Camp is from 4:00-7:00PM. Choose basketball, cheer, or soccer. Come hear great Bible stories, sing songs, play the sport of your choice and hear about noteworthy athletes who persevere. The cost is \$65 per child.

Wild and Wacky Wednesday, July 17: This is a "surprise and trust" field trip for students. We will depart from the church around 9:30AM and return your children to you at the church around 5:00PM. The cost is \$40 per child. Space is limited to 45 students.

Blank Canvas, July 23 & 24: Blank Canvas days are great days of drama, music, and art that your child will not want to miss. It will run from 9:00AM until 1:00PM. The cost is \$30 per child. Space is limited to 30 students.

Please keep us in your prayers as we move into this summer. It will be exciting to see what God has in store for our students.

 Kidz
Connection
Summer 2013



Whether you have an hour, a day, or three days available, we have the perfect spot for you. Come help us make the Summit the best experience possible for our church, our guests, and the Kingdom. Take a look at the job descriptions below to see how you might like to serve. Sign up now. Contact Volunteer Coordinator, Amy Statham, amylstatham@yahoo.com or 925-456-5636.

CONFERENCE INFO CENTER (Thursday & Friday)

This area serves as a central location for conference guests to receive information about the ministries of the host church plus local restaurant and attraction information. It is helpful if these volunteers are good with area directions and familiar with local restaurants.

FACILITIES (Wednesday, Thursday & Friday)

Janitorial support throughout the conference and physical setup of the conference guest service areas.

FLOATERS (Wednesday, Thursday & Friday)

Persons willing to jump in and help wherever possible and whenever needed. Typically these are volunteers who show up at the last minute but are willing and able to serve wherever needed.

GUEST BREAK SET-UP/SERVE TEAM (Wednesday, Thursday & Friday)

Prepare breaks for conference guests and lunches for the volunteer and staff team. These volunteers will be very busy during the conference assembling carts for breaks, delivering food, and cleaning up after breaks.

GUEST CHECK-IN (Thursday & Friday)

Handout guest name badges, distribute conference materials and welcome conference guests. Many times this will be a guest's first interaction with your church. Therefore you want to make sure these volunteers are friendly, familiar with the church, and can work well under pressure.

MEDICAL SUPPORT (Thursday & Friday)

Nurses, doctors and EMTs on-call for emergency medical service during the conference.

NAME BADGE ASSEMBLY (Wednesday)

Responsible for taking the conference name badges provided by the WCA and preparing them for distribution to the guests at check-in. They will separate, tear, paper clip, and assemble the name badges in alphabetical order.

PACKING ASSISTANTS (Friday evening)

Assist the Operations and Resource teams in inventory, packing, labeling, and moving the materials to be returned to designated destinations.

PRAYER TEAM (Thursday & Friday)

Intercede for conference guests, volunteers, and speakers, and be available to pray with the conference guests.

REGISTRATION SOLUTIONS (Thursday & Friday)

Help guests who encounter problems at Guest Check-in. These volunteers need to be organized, work well under pressure, and preferably computer literate.

RESOURCE CENTER ASSISTANTS (Thursday & Friday)

Assist the cashiers with bagging purchased items, processing credit card purchases, answering guest's questions, and line control.

RESOURCE CENTER CASHIER (Thursday & Friday)

Assist in running the cashier station at the resource center. They will need to be comfortable handling electronic payments and be able to work well under pressure.

RESOURCE CENTER SETUP & STRIKE (Wednesday & Friday)

Help to unpack & pack boxes of resources and display product for the Resource Center.

USHER (Thursday & Friday)

Help guests find seating, distribute hand-outs at the doors, and be available to direct guests in case of an emergency.

VOLUNTEER CENTRAL HOSTS (Wednesday, Thursday & Friday)

Register volunteers as they arrive onsite and take care of Volunteer Central, keeping it clean & setting up the snacks.

CROSS-TEAMING

These are volunteers who are trained, willing and able to serve in various capacities on multiple teams. For instance: Check-in, Conference Information Center, Food Service Team.

Rewarding experience, volunteer at the Summit

Volunteering for the GLS was a very rewarding experience. Willow Creek makes it easy and has it down to a science. They tell you what to do, and what to expect, and they were right about everything. Working with the team Kris Jarvis put together was delightful. My favorite part of the GLS was having Carley Fiorini as a surprise guest. She discussed the faith journey she has been on since she spoke at the GLS a couple of years ago. Sue Carlstrom, Registration Lead

All in all, I feel that things went very well. I had a wonderful group of volunteers and it was a blessing to serve with them. Amy Brabender, Food Service Lead

It was a total joy to be part of the Global Leadership Team. It was exciting to be part of such a big undertaking, and was so rewarding when it all came together. We had terrific volunteers that helped everything run smoothly. Willow Creek has done an outstanding job organizing all the necessary details. Kris Jarvis, Onsite Event Manager

Everyone did an amazing job in whatever area they were in. I heard feedback from people from CPC that attended, and they felt our church did an amazing job of hosting and they were very impressed with how smoothly and graciously everything was handled. It was a pleasure to be a part of the team! Elaine Hilbelink, Conference Information Center Lead

[Register now](#), VCC attendee code, "13GLOBAL" (no spaces).

Stephen WHAT?



You may have heard rumblings of a new opportunity coming to our congregation called Stephen Ministry. This is basically a ministry that works to train, equip and support individual caregivers who are listeners and provide support for those who are going through crisis and change.

One video calls these caregivers “the After People”, those who come in as the eyes and ears and presence of Jesus when the meals and cards or calls and encouragements have stopped. Many times people take months or even years to process grief and pain. A Stephen caregiver serves this individual by being “there” with ears to listen and a willingness to pray and walk through this season with the individual.

If you would like to know more about the possibility of being a Stephen Ministry caregiver—what it is and what it ISN’T (and what the training and support would be)—we are offering a brief informational lunch after church on June 9 (12:15-1:30PM) in the Hall. We’d love to have you join us...even if you’re just curious! For more information, contact Jay Ashcraft at jashcraft@vcclive.org.

June/July Dates

Kidz Kickoff to Summer: Sunday, June 2
Informational meeting: Sunday, June 2, 12:15PM
Parents Night Out: Saturday, June 8, 5:00PM
Young Families BBQ: Sunday, June 9, 12:00PM
Stephen’s Ministry meeting: Sunday, June 9, 12:15PM
Informational meeting: Sunday, June 9, 7:00PM
HS ‘Xtreme Camp: June 16-21
Sports Camp Team 45: June 17-21
MS ‘Xtreme Camp: June 22-27
Brown Bag Sunday: Sunday, June 23

Sports Camp: June 24-28
Women’s summer study begins: June 25 & 26
iINVERSION communication meeting: June 30
Wild & Wacky Wednesday: July 17
Children’s Blank Canvas: July 23-24, 9:00AM
North Ireland mission trip: July 19-27

Looking ahead, save the date for Fall retreats!

Women’s Retreat: October 18-20
Men’s Retreat: November 1-2