

VINEYARD VISION

a publication of the peninsula vineyard | spring 2012

mission

receive | *respond* | risk

SO THAT THE TRANSFORMING LOVE OF
JESUS CAN BE EXPERIENCED IN THE
COMMUNITIES OF THE SILICON VALLEY

Why do we need a mission?

I have been thinking about this question for some time. Sometimes God gives his people a specific word or direction or emphasis to be focused on for a period of time. I believe we need a mission when God seeks to mobilize and focus us as a community to help us achieve and fulfill our vision. I am excited and encouraged to say that I believe he has given us one.

First, let me say a word about our vision. Have you ever taken the time to look at VCFP's vision? If not, I would encourage

you to do so—it is quite hopeful and inspiring. You can find it here: <http://vcfp.org/about-us/our-beliefs/>. Our vision is our overarching purpose and objective as a church. Our vision is whom we hope and long and aspire to be in the days, months and years ahead. It is how we believe we are called to reflect and live out whom we believe God to be and his purposes in this world and in our lives. This is different from a mission, which, as I described above, is a specific focus given for a set period of time.

Second, having a mission is not new for us. As a church, we had our first mission back in 2005. It served to give VCFP a greater outward focus and yielded really good fruit in terms of our connection to local and international ministries who we continue to partner with. As we reflected on that mission we realized that God wanted us to build on it and create a new mission statement.

So, for the past year, we (the staff and Board) have been listening to God, to

(Continued on next page)

scripture, to members of the church, and to each other – in hopes of discerning a mission for us a church to embrace for the next 3 years. By the grace of God, we believe we have heard what that mission is to be:

Receive, Respond, Risk so that the transforming love of Jesus can be experienced in the communities of the Silicon Valley

During the next number of weeks we are going to be addressing each of the parts of this mission statement in order to flesh out what we think this means and can look like for us as individuals and as a church over the next 3 years. I encourage you try and make it to church over the next 5 weeks to hear for yourself what God is saying to you and to our church through this mission. If you can't make it, please listen to the podcast.

While there is lots about the mission that I am excited about, which you will be hearing lots about in the days ahead, let me share with you what has excited me about the process. While it has been a long process, I believe that God was doing something important for us as a church.

For example, we (the staff team) had a number of meetings where we talked, then listened to God, then talked some more, then listened to God some more. There

was one evening where we were near the end of our time and it looked like we were not even close to coming up with something that we could come together on. Then it happened! We prayed one last time, there were a few tweaks and we all sat there completely amazed at what just happened. It felt like a miracle.

That meeting was a parable for me and for us as we begin this mission together. I believe God was clarifying that he is the one who is leading us and that he will give us what we need and do what needs to be done to get us where he wants to take us. It clearly involves our participation. We had to sit there and wrestle and pray that night, but it was clear that the result, the fruit, the mission was from God.

I want to invite you into a process of receiving, responding and risking for yourself and for this church. I believe that God is going to be filling out for all of us what this will look like in our individual lives– taking into account where we live, what we do, where we are in our faith, where we are in our life stage, etc. etc. I also believe God is going to give greater clarity as to how he wants us to live out this mission as a body–as a group of people seeking to follow Jesus together.

Begin to dream, with me, what it will look like in 3 years if we really seek to receive,

respond and risk– as individuals and as a community. Specifically, imagine what God might do through us for the Silicon Valley. Read the “Vivid Description” further on in this newsletter to fuel your own dreams and prayers. May God hear our prayers and bless and fulfill these dreams in the days ahead. To the glory of his name and his kingdom.

With Affection and Appreciation for
You All,
Your Lead Patient,
Alex



the van riesen family

2012 VCFP Mission Vivid Description: A Picture of What We’d Like to Be



By the end of 2015 we want to be a community deeply saturated in the call of God to **“Receive, Respond, Risk so that the Transforming Love of Jesus can be Experienced in the communities of the Silicon Valley”**. We are praying for and imagining a vivid picture of how the Holy Spirit might transform us as a community as we pursue this mission. Here are a few snapshots of where we hope that God is leading us:

Like the Acts 2 community, we are experiencing the constant flow of the Holy Spirit in our midst. We are a group of people who expect that God has something good for us all the time. All who have joined with us are hearing fresh words from God that are a great encouragement and give new direction. We have lots of stories of miraculous healings , supernatural encounters with God, and clear words from God for individuals, our community and the Silicon Valley. Our youth and children are experiencing the presence and the healing power of God. People who are new or who are visiting our church go away with a sense of the real presence of God in our midst. People show up at every gathering expecting to receive something new and refreshing.

We are a people who are teachable and eager to learn more. We intentionally put ourselves in places of receiving every good gift of God. People have made tough choices in their lives and schedules so that they can have more space for pursuing the spiritual journey. There is a passion for knowing more about the Bible and how to apply it in their lives. There is a palpable sense of eagerness to grow in our faith and depth of experience of God.

We believe that our God is an active, living God. Therefore, when He prompts or directs us to act, we listen. We are people who are able to open up and express our

joy and gratitude. We are experiencing more freedom in worship. Our friendships are full of the active presence and guidance of God.

Because we are constantly receiving from and responding to God, we are a people who are filled with a desire to pour ourselves and our resources out to bless others. We are able to take risks because we know that God has our back. More people are discovering their gifts and strengths as they try out different ways to serve and give. We are known in our communities as people who are generous with our time, money, possessions and relationships.

Knowing that the spiritual journey is a long obedience in the same direction, we are also constantly making adjustments in our lives so that we can be more aligned with God. People in our midst are taking big risks with their careers, families, and life trajectories because of the intervention of God. Even though we live in the busy and driven Silicon Valley, we are not afraid to make space for God. Our schedules and commitments are shaped by a desire to receive from and respond to God.

As we grow in our call to be people who receive from God, respond to God and take risks in obedience to God, we are seeing the fruit of being this close to God. We are taking risks as a church community to try things that we never have before. We are free to have bold, natural conversations with our friends about the great things that God is doing in our lives. We are praying for and with people all around us. We are rejoicing as people are experiencing the love of Jesus and deciding to follow Him. To us, the Silicon Valley is not just a place of money, superficial connectedness and success but of true spiritual transformation because of the presence of Jesus and His people. ■



Last August I injured my back, damaging a joint and the nerves around it. Despite therapy, injections in the spinal joints and drugs for pain management, I’ve spent most days in chronic pain. It was hard. I felt my life had come to a standstill. I hardly left my home, I was miserable and it scared me the way the pain affected my spirit. I had seen both family and friends handle chronic pain negatively, despairing, leaking out resentment and bitterness to those around them. I didn’t want that for me, for my family or friends, so I asked God for help.

He reminded me of the story in Luke where Jesus heals eleven lepers but only one returned to give thanks. As I imagined this healed leper returning, I felt God say, “despite the pain, come and give thanks to Me.” At first it felt strange to give thanks as usually in pain I would cry out for help. But as I came with my offering of thanks, there was an exchange that took place; a peace, an unexpected joy, deeper intimacy with God.

As I continued to do this daily, a stirring came. God was asking me to pray for the sick. Initially I thought it would be for people I knew, so I interceded quietly at home. Yet God specifically was asking me to lay hands on the sick. It seemed ridiculous considering my condition, but God confirmed it a week later when a friend approach me to attend a support group for those who were suffering and dying of cancer.

Initially I just listened to their experiences, sometimes quietly standing at the back interceding for each of them as they shared. As I prayed for them, I felt for the first time I was entering into a new spiritual realm, a realm where life meets death. Where eternal things mattered and for me, a perspective change.

One day in this group, a man in his wheelchair came to my aid because he saw I was in pain. I wanted to minister to him but despite his frailness he was eager to serve and pray for me. I was somewhat reluctant to reveal my own pain, it seemed so small compared to his, but as this man prayed, God revealed to me something about the sick. That their identity is not just that of a sick person. Despite their limitations, they need a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging. God was using this sick man to minister to me and in turn God was using my pain to minister to him. It was a humble moment, an unforgettable moment, but an important moment. My view of those who are sick changed. I had a new awareness of their other needs and the reality that just because they are sick doesn’t mean God won’t use them.

In my encounter with this sick man, I realized I too have struggled with a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging. I felt old. Everyone around me seemed younger, moved faster, seemed smarter. In January, God changed that view when I went on the Prayer Ministry training trip to a church in LA, a church where the congregation was predominately in their 20-30s.

I had an amazing time, it was so life-giving, but there was one moment that really touched me. On Sunday morning during prayer ministry, I was called into a prayer group and asked to end their prayer by speaking a blessing over a young graduate student. As I sat down, I felt God wanting me to first ask for her forgiveness on behalf of her mother. Turned out this student was currently estranged from her mother these past 4 years. The student was a little hesitant at first. It was something she hadn’t done in prayer before, but the leader asked her to trust me and as we prayed God spoke his love into her pain. It was a precious moment, one that profoundly touched her, especially in having an older woman speak forgiveness to her. As I walked away, God spoke to me, saying, “I know you feel old but I have just used you as an Elizabeth in a Mary’s world.” I felt a jolt in my spirit, a weight lift and insecurities about life and age falling away.

How rich my life has been these past 7 months. I assumed at the beginning that I would lose life because of my condition, but instead a new life has been revealed; a life that has grown me, sharpened my spiritual senses, brought joy in the darkest of places and an intimacy with Christ that is deeper, richer than it has ever been. ■

Blog Book Review: *When God Talks Back*

by Tanya Luhrmann

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tanya-luhrmann/when-god-talks-back_b_1373277.html



From the staff: Tanya Luhrmann, who many of us at VCFP have had the pleasure of knowing for several years now, has just released a book entitled When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God. In it, she writes of her observations within two Vineyard communities (including our own) over several years.

Since its release in March, the book has received quite some attention, stirring up a colorful crop of opinions and responses. For us, it holds a more personal significance as a valuable piece of insight from a knowledgeable and trusted scholar who has been with our community for years. This book opens up a dialogue about prayer between the Christian and secular academic communities, and as such can be a great resource for us all.

We invite you to read Tanya's comments about her book (which were blogged on huffingtonpost.com), parts of which are excerpted below. And, of course, we invite you to read the book itself.

I am an anthropologist. More than 10 years ago now I was in pursuit of a project on religion and community when a young, blond, giggly California beach girl told me that I should have a cup of coffee with God. She loved hanging out with the Lord, she said.

That conversation blew my mind. Ten years of hard work later, I have begun to understand—with the eyes of a social scientist—what she meant.

Millions and millions of Americans experience themselves as having a personal relationship with God that is as vivid and intimate as a child’s imaginary friend. They go for walks with God. They go on dates with God. Sometimes they set a place at the dinner table for God and sit down across from the place setting to talk things over with Him. Exactly how many Americans have so intimate a relationship is a little hard to determine, but that is the kind of relationship many evangelicals seek. Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life*—more than 25 million copies sold—says that God should be your “best friend.” Dallas Willard, a beloved evangelical author, explains that God’s face-to-face conversations with Moses are the “normal human life God intended for us.” In 2008, the Pew Foundation found that more than a quarter of all Americans said that God had given them a direct revelation.

Why has this way of imagining God become so popular for modern Americans? It is not the first time that God has inflamed the American senses. Over the course of our history, there have been periods when people have sought to experience God intensely and

immediately. Historians have called them “great awakenings.” No doubt these yearnings are fueled by different motivations at different times. In this era, the yearning may be fueled by secular doubt. No Christian in America is unaware that there are other Americans who are not Christian, and are not even believers; and that may be unsettling, for the knowledge raises the possibility that one’s own beliefs are hollow. The quest to experience God with personal immediacy may arise out of this climate of doubt, for a God you can feel and hear and talk to can dispel the anxiety raised by a neighbor’s skeptical look.

The harder question is how. Evolutionary psychologists have argued that the fundamentals of religion are undergirded by our cognitive structures, so that the idea of an invisible agent automatically seems plausible. But it is one thing to feel intuitively that there might be a God, and another to sit down across from an empty table setting for a conversation and believe that you are not talking to the empty air. What I saw as an anthropologist was that experiencing God vividly required work. It required skill and it required practice. People had to practice imagining that God was present again and again. This does not mean that God is imaginary: the senses capture only the material world, not an immaterial one. It does mean that those who sought to use their imagination had to learn to take what they imagined seriously, and not treat it as ephemeral thought.

MAY 6

Join us for an open discussion about this book on May 6th at Red Rock Cafe, 7 p.m. (see website to RSVP)

What I found so striking as an anthropologist is that prayer changed people, not so much morally or emotionally, although prayer might change people in these ways, but in their capacity to imagine. Prayer changed the way people used their imagination and it changed the quality of their imagination, so that what they imagined felt more real to them. They became able to feel God beside them as they walked. They experienced God as talking back. They needed to use a new “theory of mind” to do this—they needed to be taught that what happened in their imaginations could be real. But when they practiced taking what they imagined seriously, they began to feel that they had evidence that God was real and responding to them.

It is important to recognize the trained imagination at work in evangelical prayer because otherwise this style of faith can seem incomprehensible, even foolish, to onlookers. It is neither. These evangelicals are using a style of faith practice used by the desert fathers and medieval monks and—in different forms—by different faith communities around the world. They use these practices because these practices make God more real. In a world full of secular skepticism, that can be useful. ■

Music Review

by Vickey Kazarian

David Crowder Band

Give Us Rest

Six Step Records

This 36-song collection—the band’s final album—is heartfelt and eclectic, including such influences as Gregorian chants, four-on-the-floor rock and Johnny Cash. Yet it comes together wonderfully as powerful, authentic worship music. The best worship album I’ve heard in years. ■

Receiving from God at work

by Marius Milner

If your work environment is like mine, you probably feel pressure to be on the go most of the time, highly focused on solving multiple complex problems at once. If you work with other people, you are expected to handle their interruptions cheerfully, and then get right back to what you were doing before as if nothing had happened.

Where is there room for God in this tumult? I spent a significant amount of time believing that all I needed to do was to treat others well, in order to be a model of Jesus to them; and then if I insert some prayer and Bible reading somewhere outside of work, everything will just fall into place and God will infuse my work. This then could lead to the ability to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17).

After trying this for years, I can tell you it didn’t work for me. My work certainly didn’t feel God-infused. Worse, I was finding it harder to focus on the important tasks and being easily distracted by less important things. Procrastination resulted in discouragement when tackling harder problems, and eventually to frustration at some of the overachievers around me. This leads to a gradual wasting away that ends with burnout or other symptoms of stress. It also lead me to feeling far from God.

While I recognized that I was thus suffering to varying degrees, a friend introduced me to some ways that have allowed me to receive from God, reduced my stress level, and led me to be more present. This in turn has allowed me not only to focus better at work but also to be more attentive to what God is doing both in my life and around me.

Let me describe the one thing that has proven to be the most helpful. It is quite ancient, and has even recently been backed up by neurological research that proves some of the benefits I’ve noticed, most notably ability to focus and more balanced emotions. To me it was new, easy to learn and blend into my work day.

The tool is known by many names. I’ll call it Centering Prayer. It’s quite simple. I find

I like to take a word or phrase and imagine it infusing my breath as I inhale, or resting on my breath as I exhale. My goal is to do this for perhaps 5 minutes, but I choose whatever length of time I can manage.

During those few minutes, all sorts of distracting thoughts come to mind because my brain is operating quite normally. When that happens, I acknowledge the fact non-judgmentally, let go of the thought, and gently direct my attention back to where it was. If it helps, I lay the thought at the foot of the cross and move on. At the end of the time, I thank God for giving me an opportunity to stop.

When I said this technique is ancient, it dates back at least as far as the Desert Fathers in the 5th Century A.D. In *The Way of the Heart*, Henri Nouwen describes three fundamental practices that they followed: Solitude, Silence and Prayer. Centering Prayer has the advantage of allowing you to practice all three in whatever dose you find helpful and even in the middle of a high tech work environment like mine.

It also gives me an opportunity to rest completely in God’s peace. As a side benefit it is also training me to better notice and handle distracting thoughts, which leads to better focus on what is happening in the moment.

I try to do this in the middle of the morning or afternoon, any time when things seem like they are getting too busy and I’m starting to lose my ability to focus. I’m grateful to God that He has given me a simple way to receive from Him in the midst of a busy workplace. I can focus more clearly on what He is doing in my work, in me, and in those around me. ■

a quiet place to sit and adopt a posture that allows me to be fully alert, so I don’t drift into a nap. I try to relax so I’m not distracted. While in this alert yet relaxed state, I focus my attention on one thing, such as a single word (“Jesus”, “mercy”, “peace”, etc). Sometimes I dwell on a short phrase from the Jesus Prayer, which in full reads: “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”.



Artwork by Marius Milner

Remembering Venessa Walton

by John McDonough

The following reflects what John expressed in remembrance of Venessa at the celebration of her life on March 10th.

Good morning! My name is John, and it’s an honor to be here with you, and to be part of this celebration of the life of Venessa Walton.

My friendship with Venessa began about nine years ago, and has been marked by joy, faith, and great humor.

While I don’t remember all the details, I remember chatting with her one day when she was staying at the Moffett Motel in Mountain View, and then we spoke later on by phone, and she explained that after I visited her a man showed up at her motel room and attempted to persuade her to pay her money he believed she owed him. I asked Venessa if she thought the man carried a gun, and she responded that she believed he did. Venessa pointed out that the man came to her room right around the time I had left, and then she told me something truly startling—she told me she said to the man, “You see that man? (meaning me!) He’s from the church. He will deal with you!” And a part of me has wanted to ask Venessa, “You told a man who may have been carrying a gun that I would deal with him?” Yet that was Venessa! She could say things with great authority and conviction. And she could say things that were extremely funny!

I learned the true meaning of the word tenacity from Venessa Walton. She could

be very, very persistent. Even with a number of physical ailments and memories of difficult things, she faced life with a tenacious courage. She could ride in her wheelchair for miles on major roads including, as she once reported, Highway 237.

She had a way of seeing life as a series of tests, and to her mind, passing each test became an objective, a kind of daily aim. Often, when I asked how she was doing, she would respond, “Fantastic! I woke up!”

That really encourages me! What a way to look at life: that we have all been given the gift of waking up today, that regardless of the challenges we face, we can live life today with faith and purpose. When asked how we are doing, we can choose to say “Fantastic!”

In a life in which she acknowledged God our Father with solemnity and reverence, Venessa had a way of saying something like, “God gives us 15,000 miracles each day.” Meaning, that is approximately the number of breaths a human being might take in a single day. She had the ability to see God’s little miracles and to help others see the miraculous reality in which we live. Venessa had the breath of life in her.

As I have reflected on my friendship with Venessa Walton, I remember God’s love shining through her like a sunrise on a clear morning. I feel her love. Her delight. Her conviction. And her faith. ■



Family News

Births

Sydney Kay & Amber Ruth Castillo on 1/13/12 to Tony & Laura
Cosette Amber Gieseke on 1/17/12 to Dan & Jessie
Kaila Mia Lock on 2/12/12 to Adrian & Seisha

Deaths

Venessa Walton on 2/18/12

Free Coffee!

by Katie Fantin

At 7:30 a.m., on a brisk April morning, a handful of VCFP friends gathered at the train station with a few armloads of supplies: a card table, some sugar packets, stacks of cups and lids, a cambro full of java, and an orange sign that read: "FREE COFFEE." Katie Fantin, who organized the gathering, writes about it here.

WHAT'S THE OCCASION?

We heard that question probably 20 times as a group of six of us from VCFP stood near the CalTrain station on California Avenue handing out free Starbucks coffee on a recent Thursday morning.

We each had a slightly different answer...

WE ARE A
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

NO OCCASION

WE ARE HAVING AN EASTER
SERVICE. HERE'S A FLYER IF YOU
WOULD LIKE TO COME.

WE JUST WANTED TO
DO SOMETHING NICE.

Occasionally we heard...

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

And we had the same answers.

People seemed pretty surprised that a group of people would stand out in 45-degree weather and hand out coffee at 7:30 a.m. on weekday, for free. No occasion, no catch. Just a desire to get to know our community and talk about Jesus when given the opportunity.

We met a guy on his way to an interview, got to hear about his life and pray for him. We met another man who was thinking deeply about spiritual things and many others who were just trying to wake up and make their train. There wasn't any pressure to talk, if we asked a question and person didn't respond, they still got their coffee.

No occasion, no catch. Just a bit of coffee and a chance to chat about Jesus. Not a bad way to start the day! ■

Want to hand out some free coffee?

Contact Katie Fantin for more info at katie@vcfp.org.

An Interview with John Raimondo,

a jail-ministry volunteer

VCFP has been serving with CIC Ministries in Santa Clara County Jails for the last 10 years. Our volunteers serve weekly and/or monthly. We took a minute to interview a VCFP jail ministry volunteer, John Raimondo.

How long have you been at Vineyard?

JR: 15 years

What made you decide to serve in the jail ministry?

JR: Dave Robinson, the Executive Director of CIC came and spoke about four years ago and his words really moved me. It took me a little while to decide to serve, but that was where I got my start. I was also feeling called to pray for people and serving in the jail seemed to be a really good way to do that.

What do you do and how often do you go?

JR: I go to the women's side on Sunday afternoon's, because it works well with my schedule (there is also a bible study weekly on the men's side but I wasn't able to make that) I go once a month, with a team from church, and usually I help with the prayer groups that we break up into after a bible study.

What did you expect jail to be like?

JR: I thought the jail was scary and there were a lot of rules. When I went to the training, there seemed to be a sense of, "If you mess up you are out" with a lot of responsibility and not a lot of room for error. I realize now that was part of the process of helping volunteers think about whether this ministry was a good fit for them.

What was going into jail actually like?

JR: The very first time I went it was it scary. There was a big fence and wire and it seemed really intense and real. I had never gone into a secured prison before. The first couple of times I just sat and observed. It was amazing to me to watch women reading the bible and

worshipping even in the jail. They would cry and express their hearts to God and my heart went out to them. I also noticed how much they seemed to be glad that we were there, that it was helpful to them that we would come into the jail and try and encourage them.

What do you like about going to the jail?

JR: Whenever I go, I feel peace and God's love, and presence in such a powerful way. I find myself filled with compassion and a desire to pray for and care about the inmates in a way I would have never imagined. I also love seeing God minister his love to them.

And actually one of the really cool things is that at the end of last year, when Alex asked us to do the Looking Forward, Looking Back exercise during the Sunday service, I realized that one of the riskiest things I did over the year was go to jail, but it was also one of the highlights of my year too! Its great to realize that what I felt like was such a risk also has been such a gift to me!

What is the hardest thing?

JR: Probably the hardest thing about it now though is carving out the time every month to go. You would think it would be easy to do since its only once a month, but it since it takes some time to travel there, it can a 3 ½-4 hour commitment. But it is totally worth it really because I get the blessing, much more so even than the women in the jail I think! I would say to anyone who can go, you should! ■

For more info on how to get involved with VCFP Jail ministry, go to <http://vcfp.org/ministries/outreach-ministries/local-outreach/> or contact Katie Fantin at katie@vcfp.org

Dreams for UCSC by Mindy Schrag

Mindy Schrag, the author of this piece, attended VCFP for several years. We now support her in her role as InterVarsity staff at UC Santa Cruz.

Interruption.

I'm at large group: InterVarsity at UC Santa Cruz gathered for worship and teaching.

And in the middle of the sermon, someone starts talking back.

Loudly.

He's high. Or tripping on acid. He wandered in because he heard the music from his dorm room.

All I can think is: how do I get this guy out of here? This is so uncomfortable.

And then I remember Jesus' words from Mark: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."

Jesus starts to open my eyes. He is in this room: he is in the students I have come to love, who are so hospitable and welcoming... to people that feel safe. But he is not only here; he is outside, hanging out with Interrupting High Guy and his unsafe friends.

And I start to dream.

I see all of UCSC impacted by the gospel.

Not just a quiet group of students hiding from the craziness.

But hippies.

Bohemians from Kresge.

Video game nerds from Crown.

People who came to UCSC never having experienced Jesus.

People who have streaked across campus in the rain.

People who have smoked pot.

Have woken up the next morning after a one-night stand.

Gathering to learn about Jesus

Having their lives transformed

Their worlds blown up.

I see a movement of prayer

The Holy Spirit invading lives

A reliance on the power and direction of God.

I see leaders developed, sent into the world.

I see a heart for justice that goes deeper than political protests and shapes how people live.

I see ethnicity and culture celebrated as students intentionally cross barriers and love others.

I see the depth of community extended beyond the inner circles.

Close friendships with non-Christians.

Sharing life with people who wouldn't otherwise know Jesus.

Curiosity.

Passion.

I see healing.

A freedom from shame as students seek prayer ministry and support.

I see God's name glorified by beautiful, broken, quirky UCSC Banana Slugs. ■

(Continued on next page)

An Interview with Rachel Gong

a member of our church

We talked to Rachel Gong, a member of our church and PhD candidate in Sociology at Stanford University.

How did you come to be in this area and at our church?

I came to the Bay Area for graduate school in 2007, and I visited a few churches when I first arrived. I stayed at VCFP because I liked the teaching and musical worship, and I especially liked that worship followed the sermon, giving me a chance to reflect on the message.

Tell us a little about your background?

I grew up in Malaysia, and first came to the US for college. I spent two years intending to major in chemical engineering and suffering through all manner of problem sets, experiments, and equations before I saw the light and majored in sociology instead. After graduating, I worked at a software startup in Silicon Alley (not Valley) and then a biotech company in Southern California. Then I thought regular hours and disposable income were a fair trade for autonomy and flexibility, and I've been reconsidering that ever since.

What's your research on?

My dissertation examines how anti-human trafficking activists use the web (including, but not limited to, social media) to organize, collaborate, and engage. I'm trying to figure out if and why different uses of the web have different outcomes, depending on the activist's goals. For example, Twitter hashtags may be a good way to spread word about a big event, while interactive graphics can make abstract statistics more understandable. I'm also interested in how norms of participation differ online and offline, and how each affects the other.

How did you get interested in this?

One of the reasons I became interested in studying the internet and even considered

grad school was because of my fascination with how norms diffuse. I wanted to explore how online behaviors, regulated through (at that time) a limited interface, translated to offline behaviors. As far as linking this to human trafficking, I'd heard of the issue before, but only in passing, and I got a lot more detailed information at the Freedom Summit in 2009. I wanted to get more involved in the issue, and it was around the time I needed to develop a dissertation proposal, so I tried to kill two birds with one stone.

How does your faith in God intersect with your research?

I think it's less of an intersection and more of a foundation. I believe God works in my life for His glory and my good, so I believe He set me along this path and this particular project for a purpose, even if I don't fully understand it. I didn't set out to study the issue of human trafficking because I'm a social justice advocate; I stumbled into it because God opened the right doors at the right times.

Even though the anti-human trafficking movement is closely associated with faith-based activism, I don't see my research on it as more spiritual or more holy than research on any other topic. I have heard other Christian academics worry that their work on, for example, fluid flow and viscosity, is more secular and therefore less spiritual and less important to God, but I don't necessarily agree with that. I believe God has created each person with unique talents and gifts, and He's glorified when they use them, regardless of the field. For my part, God brought me away from the engineering career I thought I would have and into the social sciences, a move I never saw coming.

Having said that, I'm very much motivated by Micah 6:8. "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." ■

Upcoming Events

APRIL

29th : Newcomer's Gathering - Digging In, 3 p.m. at Giles' home in Mountain View. Dinner and Childcare provided. Please register on our website "I'm New" page or email **Ron: thegilesman@gmail.com**

MAY

1st : Men's Monthly Breakfast, 7.15 a.m. at Baji's, Mountain View. Contact **Ron, thegilesman@gmail.com**

6th : Hot Dog Fundraiser – enjoy awesome hot dogs, amazing chilli, great company after church for lunch and raise money for our youth group. Contact **matt@vcfp.org**.

6th : Author Evening: Book Discussion – 7 p.m. Come join us at Red Rock Cafe on Castro St, in Mountain View, for an evening with Tanya Lurhmann. Tanya will be discussing her newly released book, *When God Talks Back*. Light snacks and hot drinks provided. Bring friends! (see website to RSVP)

19th : Seminar on Money- the principles and practicalities behind money and how we use it for God's Kingdom, 9.30am at Foothill Covenant Church. Check website and Bulletin for details, contact **katie@vcfp.org**

JUNE

2nd : Hot Meals – come join us for all or part of this time as we prep and serve food for our local homeless population. Contact **katie@vcfp.org**

3rd : Graduation Sunday and Picnic – celebrate our kids, youth and adults who are graduating and join us afterwards for an all-church picnic on the lawn

JULY

1st : Summer Scripture Dig In, 5:30 p.m. @ Red Rock Cafe, Castro Street. Join us for a summer scripture study and time to have fellowship and dinner together. Contact **liz@vcfp.org**

29th : Service Day, after church join us for a few hours as we serve the local community, contact **katie@vcfp.org**

AUGUST

4th : Summer Scripture Dig In, 9 a.m. Join us for a summer scripture study and time to have fellowship and breakfast together. Contact **liz@vcfp.org**

26th : Baptism, 3pm Join us for a wonderful celebration of those who want to publicly affirm their faith in Jesus. If you or your child is interested in baptism, please contact **liz@vcfp.org**.

SEPTEMBER

9th : Church Life Meeting, 12-1:30pm Join us for news and updates about the life of our church, as well as a chance to ask questions and pray together. Contact **liz@vcfp.org**

OCTOBER

12-14th : All Church Weekend - REGISTER IN MAY. Contact **liz@vcfp.org**

Spotlight

Matt Gustafson



We sat down to chat with Matt Gustafson, Director of Youth Ministries and Communication

So, how long have you been a Christian and how did you come to faith?

I've been a Christian for as long as I can remember. I learned about God in school, in church, and at home all through my childhood, and believed in Him as early as I could've properly believed in anything. There was a rough patch of doubt at one point along the way, but after an experience with God in a labyrinth in the middle of Nicaragua, I've trusted His existence ever since.

What did you do before you worked at the church?

They called me a Director of Recruitment & HR. I worked for an educational consulting company and, aside from the HR, I got to teach math to high school students. The kids were great. I have to say, I miss the math (and the people too).

What made you want this job?

God. Volunteering in youth ministry started to become the thing I couldn't wait to do during nights and weekends. It was fulfilling, and God was in it. It had been a growing desire for years and...here we are!

What is the best and worst thing about this job?

I love teaching the Word, especially to young people who are ready to learn and have their lives changed by God. If only the whole thing required less paperwork...

What does "communications" mean?

Communications basically means all (except people) that represents something about VCFP. This can include website, Facebook, newsletter, emails, bulletins, brochures, programs, signage, etc.

Anything else we should know :) ?

Wish i had time to answer that! ■



VINEYARD

Christian Fellowship of the Peninsula

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"The Church is not a club for membership; rather it is a community for transformation." - Rev. Jim Clarke

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Upcoming Events

See detailed Event Calender on page 10 and 11

4/29 : Newcomer's Gathering - Digging

5/1: Men's Monthly Breakfast

5/6: Hot Dog Fundraiser

5/6 : Author Book Discussion

5/19: Seminar on Money

6/2: Hot Meals

6/3: Graduation Sunday and Picnic

7/1: Summer Scripture Dig In

7/29: Service Day

8/4: Summer Scripture Dig In

8/26: Baptism

9/9: Church Life Meeting.

10/12-10/14: All Church Weekend —
registration in May

Contacts

There are many ministry opportunities in our church and we encourage you to explore them. Below are listed some key ministry contacts. If you have other questions, or are not sure where to connect please feel free to talk to any of our staff, call (650) 327-5727, email the office at info@vcfp.org or contact the leaders specified below.

Children's Ministries: Liz Milner, liz@vcfp.org

Facilities & Sunday Morning Ministries: Katie Fantin, katie@vcfp.org

Grief Support: Karen Ratzlaff, karen_ratzlaff@hotmail.com

Hospitality & Welcome: Winnie Shou, winian@gmail.com

Local & International Outreach: Katie Fantin, katie@vcfp.org

Mentoring (Individual, Pre-marital, Marriage, Spiritual Direction):
Sharon Wada & Jim Hart, sharon@vcfp.org, arpjimhart@aol.com

Men's Ministry: Ron Giles, thegilesman@gmail.com

Newsletter: Matt Gustafson, matt@vcfp.org

Projection & Audio-Visual Ministry: Ian Shou, winian@gmail.com

Prayer Ministry: Jon Wada, wadavision@sbcglobal.net

Small Group Ministry: Susan Van Riesen & Liz Milner, liz@vcfp.org

Sound Ministry: Marius Milner, mariusm@gmail.com

Women's Ministry: Liz Milner, liz@vcfp.org

Worship Ministry: Greg Gibbons, greggibbons@yahoo.com

Youth Ministry: Matt Gustafson, matt@vcfp.org