

# VINEYARD VISION

a publication of the peninsula vineyard | spring 2015



*The  
Now  
and The  
Not Yet*



I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:1,2)

I have been thinking a lot about the concept of transformation recently. The dictionary defines “transformation” as “a thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance.” A stronger synonym is “metamorphosis,” which describes a biological process that comes close to the idea of rebirth. Three things strike me about our transformation: it involves all of who we are; it happens over and over again; and, it is not finished in this lifetime.

Our transformation process involves all of who we are. The writer of the book of Romans, a man named Paul, invites the reader to do a really strange thing. He invites them to “present their bodies as a living sacrifice...” This is strange because the hearers would be used to presenting an animal as a sacrifice to God but not their own bodies. The idea of an “animal sacrifice” was to offer something to appease God or to take the place of what God might feel the need to do to mankind. Paul is saying God does not want the animal substitute: he wants you and me. God wants us. He wants all of us. He wants us to be the sacrifice because God wants to transform every part of us: our minds, our souls, our wills, our desires, our values, our actions, our hopes, and our dreams. This is great news for us because in the process of being

transformed we are able to figure out what is really good in this life: good for us and good for others!

Our transformation process happens over and over again. God is not about some simple transformation, but the entire remaking and overhaul that causes each one of us to look more and more like Jesus. Because that transformation involves all of who we are, it does not happen just once or twice . . . but over and over and over again during the course of our lives. Paul talks about the “renewing of our minds.” That is not just the acquisition of information or knowledge about God, but it is the experience of God himself, which renews and remakes us each time we experience him. It is God’s intent that this process of transformation is taking us somewhere. It is making us more and more like Jesus. Becoming like him is a process that happens during every stage of our lives, and will look different for each of us and in each stage of life.

Finally, this process of transformation that involves all of us and happens over and over is not finished in our lifetime. Throughout the history of the Vineyard church movement, we have used a phrase to describe this—“The now and the not yet.” As individuals, it means that we remember

**He wants us to be the sacrifice because God wants to transform every part of us: our minds, our souls, our wills, our desires, our values, our actions, our hopes, and our dreams.**

and celebrate how God has transformed us AND look forward to how he will continue to do that until we are complete in Heaven. As a community of faith, it means that we experience God's kingdom at work in our world now, but also look forward to when it will be established in full. That means that we will experience miracles, but also see prayers answered differently than we hoped. We will celebrate the way we see movement forward, and grieve the ways the kingdom feels like it is not coming fast enough. We live in that tension as we experience God together.

Although this is a message important to remember at all times, especially during this Easter season, we should celebrate the ways we have seen God at work and experienced his presence. It is in reflection on our own lives, and our life as a community, that we can see how God has been establishing his kingdom in our lives and moving us forward. We saw that powerfully last Easter when we had over 400 people at church, with over 75 first time visitors. We also saw that during our Summer Sermon Series as we explored some of the difficult questions that come up for us when we talk about spiritual life with our friends. God is equipping us to be a community that lives out the transformation we are experiencing

in the midst of the relationships where we live work and play.

It will also be important for us to be open to the next steps of transformation he has for us as individuals and as a church in the days ahead. The reason for the "renewal of our minds" in Romans 12:2 is so that we can "discern the will of God." That tells me that this process of transformation is not some obvious list of next steps, but something we need to discern as we are being transformed over time. That discernment is something we need both for ourselves and for the life of our church.

This newsletter features individuals from our community reflecting on their lives and celebrating the "now," but in the process, they reflect on what God wants to do in their lives and the church community at large (the "not yet"). I hope that they will encourage you to think about how God has transformed you and also to discern how God wants you to continue to grow. I also hope this letter will lead you to pray for our church as a whole, and discernment for the leaders about our communal transformation to look more and more like Jesus.



the van riesen family

**In The Process of Transformation  
With You All,  
Alex Van Riesen  
Lead Pastor, VCFP**



## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Throughout the year, stories of God's work abound in this community. Some are surprising. Some seem mundane, normal. And others are downright miraculous. All of them point to a good God who desires our flourishing, and who brings his kingdom to earth through, in, and around us. These stories of God's work are signs of a spiritual vibrancy. We are alive!

A new season begs some important questions of us: who are we, and how does God want to use us this year? We learned a lot through an identity survey taken last fall. This is a community marked by its authenticity, prayer ministry, humility, and care for surrounding communities. As we welcome new things, through which God is giving us renewed energy — a new name, redesign, new office, worship space, and staff alignment — let us continue in the qualities God has built into our community. May we see a year full of God's kingdom now, and hope of what is yet to come!

In Christ,  
James Chu and Matt Gustafson,  
*Editors*

## MUSIC REVIEW

by Vickey Kazarian

### THE ART OF CELEBRATION

REND COLLECTIVE



## Integrity

An indie folk worship band from Northern Ireland, **Rend Collective** puts out simple, beautiful music that sounds like a lot like Mumford and Sons. The upbeat songs on their 2014 release *The Art of Celebration* burst with an infectious abandonment to joy, and they push past the standard worship song cliches to express the depths of God's love and its heartfelt impact on the believer. On "Finally Free," they sing: "Your mercy rains from heaven, like confetti at a wedding." Throughout the collection, there is the affirmation that God alone is our source of life, our hope for personal change. You can almost picture King David dancing to this. ■

## TAKEN ON TRUST

BY TERRY WAITE

Our conception of trusting in God often carries heroic ideals: the martyr who has a gun pointed at her head but remains steadfast; the father who lets his son drown to save another's son because the son is homeward bound. We admire the individuals who trust in God so deeply, who trust that He will provide even in the afterlife. We admire that they are led to extraordinary feats. I call this the "traditional trust narrative:" those who trust God are able to do extraordinary feats.

At its core, *Taken on Trust* challenges this traditional conception. Terry Waite was taken hostage in Lebanon in 1987. He remained in solitary confinement for four years and remained a captive for more than 1,700 days. *Taken on Trust* is his autobiographical, stream-of-consciousness recollection of those days, flitting in and out of deeper recollections of his past life: starting with growing up, joining the army, traveling to China and countries in Africa, working to release hostages in Lebanon, and culminating in how he was eventually captured.

What is remarkable about his autobiography is not (just) his trust but his vulnerability and weaknesses. He lies to his captors; he becomes obsessed with the TV set; his compassion for his guards quickly deteriorates (although he did return in 2012 to reconcile with his guards). The comparatively mundane

frustrations of not being able to go to the bathroom, always eating sandwiches and pita, or having a tooth abscess steadily chip away at his trust in God. Most of all: the boredom of solitary confinement and nothing but his own thoughts causes the most anguish.

What sets his account apart from the traditional narrative is that trust is tested over time: in the dreadfully mundane. Terry suggests three key lessons. First, it is often easier to trust God when a gun is held to your head for 10 seconds than it is to languish and rot in a prison cell with no clear outcome. Second, humans are natural "meaning-makers." During extended times of great trial, one of our greatest abilities is to integrate our past to explain our future. For example, his recollection of his past experiences helps to endow daily events with new meaning and dispel the burrowing, spirit-liquefying hopelessness and boredom of extended imprisonment.

Third, and maybe most importantly for us, there is no magic bullet for trust. In the day to day, trust is best built in the dreadfully mundane. Terry is reduced to citing verses by memory, and he repeatedly recollects God's shepherd nature—guiding us through the valley of death. He eventually lands on a Bible and a book of prayer (along with a couple of Penguin-edition books and *Brother's Karamazov*). Books, as he says, were more important to him than food. The habit of meditating day by day

upon the Bible demonstrates equal (if not more) trust than heroic one-time acts.

All in all, I recommend the book for those who have a long weekend to spare. Be forewarned, the book is quite long and the stream-of-consciousness approach is difficult to follow. I admit that I skipped past many repetitive paragraphs of the book (in some ways, Terry is attempting to take you into his experience in prison and experience the repetition of life there). But the resulting lessons are well worth the effort. ■





I also want to thank each and every one of you who supported us along the way, and those who attended our special Nicaragua lunch and story-telling session. As we decompressed from such an amazing trip, most, if not all of us have relished in any chance we have had to tell our stories and to relive the special moments and fond memories of Nicaragua, and Brazos de Amor. This article provides another opportunity for reflection and for a look to the future in VCFP, Nicaragua, and, as we liked to say, towards 'Mission, Life.'

### Go Deeper

The connections made were invaluable and I can't wait for the next opportunity to return. I know that many of us feel the same way. And as I look back on the trip and to the precious moments, one theme seems to capture the catalyst for these special moments. That theme for me in Nicaragua, and perhaps in church and: beyond is: *go deeper*. Do more, risk more, put in more. When based in love and with good intentions, what we put in, we tend to get back in spades. One way that this trip helped me to go deeper was by learning how to be thankful and joyful by minimizing the clutter in my life. Those who we met and helped were very appreciative and humble, and most of all, they were thankful for what they had. For instance, a mother of two small children, living in one room, in the poorest of conditions, was grateful that her children had books and that they had shelter. The boys and girls at Brazos de Amor were full of life, energy and enthusiasm. And while I can't pretend to understand their experiences and what they have encountered, I was frequently taken back by their energy, by their spirits and by their warmth. It was amazing to be around people who were always present and living life in a simple and meaningful way. Personally, I am trying to focus on minimizing, mostly in regard to extra clothes, and clutter that surrounds me in my home. I think that this will help prevent distractions and help me to focus more on being present.

The biggest opportunity for me to "go deeper" on the trip was when Matt and Ron

suggested that I provide my testimony at the older boys' house one evening at Brazos de Amor. I tried to recall some of my high school teaching methodologies from two decades earlier. My testimony was based on a change that I encountered after the birth of my daughter Ava. The gift of having a child helped me to gain focus on how to fully love, support, guide, and praise another. Before Ava, my focuses were on fun, friends, going out, and living for just myself. And as I gave my testimony, I tried to impart wisdom, guidance, and provide real answers to some blunt questions that were asked of me. After the session, I felt that I gave it my best and I hoped that I was able to demonstrate a truthfulness and a sincere interest in the boys and their well-being.

### Going Deeper, But Reaping the Benefits

When I think about digging deeper and how that can reap benefits, I never imagined how soon my testimony from the previous night would come to bear fruit. The very next evening, half of the team went to watch a local soccer match, rooting for our very own Arms of Love team: the boys that I'd spoken to on the previous night. The setting was a special one, outside under the lights on a terrific turf field, surrounded by a fence on all sides. Just before the game, Augusto, the coach, asked me to make the pre-game speech, to be translated by Ronnie. In a split second, I was honored, excited, motivated, and touched. And I dove right in as the boys huddled around me before they took the field. In my speech, I encouraged the boys to support each other, to love each other, and to let their closeness keep them strong and to play together.

The Arms of Love team started out well, just missing some scoring opportunities. Then it got rough. One nothing, turned into two to nothing in a matter of seconds. By halftime, it was 4-1, Arms of Love trailing. But this team didn't give up. They climbed back one goal at a time to even the score late in the game. But soon after, a penalty kick put them behind again. Determined and driven, the boys pushed on and tied the game. A minute

later, Arms of Love had their first chance to pull ahead. They scored another goal and Brazos de Amor led for the first time. Everyone went crazy. Ten seconds later, the horn sounded. The crowd and the players erupted even louder, with an amazing, nail-biting, emotional 7-6 victory!! The cheers were so loud that Ted and Kelly, our hosts, heard us celebrating while out to dinner across the street. Singing the entire bus ride home, it was quite an electrifying experience for the boys and a huge win for The Arms of Love.

I can't tell you how proud we were of the boys and how lucky we felt to be a part of those thrilling moments. We sang and cheered for the entire bus ride back to Brazos de Amor. I feel so fortunate and proud to have had that opportunity, in Nicaragua, with a group of boys I'd met just a few days earlier. I'll always be grateful to have had the chance to share in such a special, exciting and meaningful experience. I prepared and shared a testimony and as a result, I received something so precious that it will be with me for all of my days. How cool is that?!

### What's Next?

As I think about the next trip to Nicaragua, I want to encourage those interested to ask questions, to take the chance, or to talk to and support those who do take the next journey. As we learned from our fearless leaders and from our mission guides and friends (Ted and Kelly) it is not Mission, Nicaragua, it is Mission, Life. And if we go deeper, and go just a bit out of our comfort zones, whether in Nicaragua, at Church, at home, or elsewhere, we might just get back some special and lasting moments. And even if we sometimes stumble, isn't it worth a small blip, when the outcomes can be so special, to us, and to those who we strive to connect with and help?! ■



## CITY IMPACT STORY

by Matthew Young

But where sin increased,  
God's grace increased even more.

(Romans 5:20)

On July 26, 2014 I joined 1600+ other fellow believers of all ages and places to serve in the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco. The weekend was appropriately named "City Impact". The Tenderloin is a neighborhood that most people avoid and have given up on because of the desperate poverty: people strung out on drugs, prostitution, crime, vices, and injustices. It's also one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the City. So why would someone serve there when he could serve elsewhere?

That's exactly what I told myself last year when a friend of mine encouraged me to check out City Impact. I reasoned, I'm already involved in serving the poor here via (the excellent) Hot Meals program as well as other ministry responsibilities. I suppose the Lord had to work in my heart for about a year before I felt inspired to jump at the opportunity when it came up again.

This time, I wanted to see God's supernatural grace manifest in the midst of raging despair, hopelessness and injustice—to be part of His flowing river of life to those who might never have experienced Him.

I was especially intrigued with how this outreach was organized and how it emphasized ministering to the whole person—not just their poverty or drug addiction—in order to truly impact the Tenderloin community. It's a good model to emulate elsewhere and provided me a glimpse of how it's done. Some services the volunteers provided include: grooming people's pets, free dental care, medical and chiropractic care, foot washing, beauty treatment, lunch meals, meal deliveries, street worship, walking intercessory prayer teams, and street ministry—all united with His love on our hands and hearts, His prayers on our spirits, and His words on our mouths.

For those involved in street ministry like myself, we went out into the streets in smaller groups of people meeting the folks there and ministering to them. The goal was to give dignity to those living on the street. We did so by interacting with them in a personal way—most who probably hadn't experienced a genuinely loving human interaction in years. We would ask, "How are you?", and people often opened up immediately by telling us their story. We took the opportunity right then and there to bless them in praying for them to experience our supernatural God—and if necessary, escort them to Jones Street, where the additional City Impact stations could provide for them in their time of great need.

With my team, I met people who were really down and out—and their stories were very difficult. Yet I felt God's presence and grace as we met folks. I felt honored to lift their stories up to our heavenly Father as we prayed for them. One woman who had been on the street for 20 years, really started to choke up when she was able to say for the first time that she wished to be reconciled to her sisters living "normally" somewhere near Modesto—and further voiced her desire to get off the street. The whole team teared up with her. After praying for her, we suggested that she head over to Jones Street to receive additional care and assistance. As with anyone who lives on the street for so long, the woman didn't immediately trust a source of assistance that sounded too good to be true. It took us another 45 minutes to escort her several blocks to Jones Street—which required us to have patience, persistence and humor—we couldn't take ourselves seriously.

On another occasion, we met a man who didn't have a home and basically was dumped onto the street after receiving an operation at the hospital. They literally just placed him on the street in a wheelchair. As we were ministering to him, I learned to see the best him as God saw him, and prayed that he see himself in God's eyes, both then and in the future. His friend David sat down next to him to watch us; I asked if David if he



**As I prayed quietly, I felt the Holy Spirit prompting me to press in and call out the true treasure in David. Suddenly, his name was highlighted in my mind. So I said, “Do you know what your name David means?”**

also wanted prayer. He declined. As I prayed quietly, I felt the Holy Spirit prompting me to press in and call out the true treasure in David. Suddenly, his name was highlighted in my mind. So I said, “Do you know what your name David means?” He said, “No.” I replied, “It means that you are a man after God’s heart.” David suddenly perked up. One of my teammates chimed in, “You are a warrior. You are to protect other people.” Then he really perked up. I think that was all he could handle at the moment. He said, “You guys are anointed,” and smiled. Then I asked the man in the wheelchair if he would like to be wheeled over to Jones Street where he could receive additional care, and so we did.

We ministered to a prostitute, a backslidden (as he put it) former pastor living on the street, a man addicted to strong drugs, and others. Too many stories of God’s grace through us breaking through through their bitter tears and yet such joy for us in the midst of such despair.

When I reflect back on that weekend, one final story comes to mind. His name was Jeremiah. He was a teenager from Louisiana in search for a better future and finding it difficult to navigate life on the streets. I asked him, “How’s it going?” He said, “Fine.” Then I decided to cut to the chase: “I like to pray for people. Would you like me

to pray for you?” He said, “Yes,” a yes with an expectation that something was going to happen. I felt that there was faith in him.

I asked Jeremiah if there was something in particular he wanted prayer for. He said his left knee hurt badly, making it hard to walk. So, I laid hands on his knee and asked what his pain level was—10 being the worst what would it be. It was a 9. I asked the Holy Spirit to come and heal his knee. After about five minutes of praying, Jeremiah’s eyes got real wide, and I saw a grin on his face. He started doing knee bends and said, “It’s gone! It’s healed!—I don’t feel the pain.” I affirmed that it was the Lord’s loving on him that made him well. I felt God’s nudge to call out the meaning in Jeremiah name and spoke the words of Jeremiah (29:11): For I know the plans I have for you plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

To end the day, we enjoyed additional teaching, worship, and prayer at the Warfield Theater. I was moved by 1600+ folks from various churches all united together in worship -- a glimpse of what is to come! Twice, a picture popped into my mind: an aerial view of San Francisco with waves and waves coming from our worship service and expanding to cover all the corners of the San Francisco, continuing to reach the whole Bay Area. I think those waves were

God’s love, mercy, and power washing over our entire region. He is bringing people back to Himself through Jesus. As the Lord said to Jonah, “Should I not have concern for the great city...in which there are a hundred and twenty thousand people...?” (Jonah 4:11) By the end of the weekend, I was tired but refreshed. I hope to do it again. ■



## BOARD SPOTLIGHT: JON WHITE

### **How long have you attended VCFP?**

My wife, Susan, and I have attended VCFP for six years.

### **What have you enjoyed most about being at VCFP?**

I have enjoyed building strong friendships through involvement in small groups.

### **Tell us about your work here in the Bay Area.**

I work for Abode Services, which is now the largest homeless services and housing provider in the Bay Area. I oversee the development and property management of Abode's affordable and supportive housing projects. This job has allowed me to utilize my housing development experience that I obtained as a civil engineer and use it for a Kingdom purpose. While my work is often difficult and filled with the messiness of lives stuck in poverty, it is very rewarding to be able to provide safe, supportive, and affordable homes for the most vulnerable folks in our community that would not be given a chance by much of society. My job allows me the privilege of being able to advocate for justice and compassion in relationship to housing through conversations with builders, bankers, city planning commissioners and council members, county supervisors, and state representatives. It has often given me an opportunity to share about my faith because I am clear that I am doing my job as a result of my faith in Jesus.

### **I understand your connection to the Vineyard began before VCFP, and that you were even on church staff once upon a time?**

Before we moved here, we were looking for someplace for Susan to do post-doc research in biology that coincided with a place that had a strong Vineyard Church. Our Vineyard Church in New Jersey was very important to us and hard to leave. While I was there, I went through the Vineyard Leadership Institute program. In fact, I was on staff with that church for the last year while Susan was finishing up her PhD. I was responsible for Community Outreach and Social Justice. That experience really solidified my desire to work at a job that was mission-driven instead of profit-driven. The experience was integral in my decision to pursue non-profit work when we moved here. I had several conversations before we moved out here about what God was doing at VCFP as well as in East Palo Alto (where I now live in the same neighborhood as Katie Fantin and Steve Fosth).

### **How do you think God has been working at VCFP in your time here? What is one memorable example?**

God is transforming this church into an outward-focused church that is culturally relevant to the post Christian secular Bay Area. It is exciting to see very smart people experience God and make life changing decisions as a result of that experience. I think the All Church Weekend with Dave Schmelzer was an integral part of that shift in focus.

### **What ministries have you been a part of at VCFP?**

I have been involved in small groups since about the first week we were in the area. Susan and I have led a small group for much of the time we were here. I have also been involved with the jail ministry for almost the whole time we have been here, which has really been a highlight of my time with VCFP. It is generally one of the best times of my week. I have volunteered occasionally with Hot Meals as well. Most recently, I have joined the church Board of Directors and now help Alex to discern what God is doing in our church and how we can better align ourselves with what He is doing.

### **Tell us a little about your family.**

My wife, Susan, and I have been married for 17 years and we have a 4 year old son, Joshua, and a 1.5 year old daughter, Gabriella. Joshua loves to read books, do puzzles, ask questions and create things by using his imagination. Gabriella likes to read books, swing, and harass her brother in any way she can. Susan now teaches Biology at Canada College and is on the worship team as a singer.

### **And finally, if you had an entire day where you could do anything you wanted, what would you do?**

My life has been particularly busy and tiring lately, so I would probably choose to take a long nap. ☺

■

# YOUNG AND BOLD

a speech by Haley Stringer

*Back in October 2014, at prayer conference hosted by the Mid-Peninsula Vineyard, a teenager in our church had a powerful experience — one that prompted her to write a speech about her faith and its importance in her life. She gave the speech in public. Read the full transcript, with the speech topic included, below.*



## Speech Topic:

### What is one of the most important lessons you have learned from your family?

My mom had to go to college to discover the most important relationship in her life. My dad had to go all the way to England. I am fortunate enough to discover it as a child. My parents taught me this lesson through their own life stories. The most important thing I learned from my family is how lucky I am to know God at such a young age. My faith affects my choices and views of the world.

For my mom, her formula to happiness was getting good grades to get into a good college. This would lead to a high-powered job and strong sense of security. Throughout high school, getting straight A's was more important than anything else. Her best friends were her textbooks. My mom got into Stanford and was surprised to learn that grades aren't everything. She started going to a Christian fellowship and learned about the road less traveled, a path where grades are not your life. She started a relationship with God, and for the first time felt truly happy. She got her first C, and changed her career path to writing. She also got her first real friendships. God changed my mom's life.

For my dad, he thought the secret to life was to get everyone to like you and have as much fun as possible. One problem with these two goals is that it can cause you to be dishonest. It doesn't tell you what's right or wrong. It can lead you to make shortsighted decisions that don't consider your future. When my dad was in college, he met a man named Duncan who told him about God's love. My dad realized that his fun-loving, people-pleasing life left him pretty empty. So, he decided to follow God. It wasn't that he had nothing better to do; it was that he experienced that God was real. God changed my dad's life.

I was introduced to faith at a young age, and it affects my choices and views of the world. First, I'm not afraid to admit when I've done something wrong. One day, we were driving home from a camping trip. I had recently been arguing with my six-year-old brother. A Christian song came on, and I felt compelled to apologize. So, I did. Second, I learned that your identity is not through your achievements, so it's OK to fail. One year ago, I tried out for a soccer team called the West Valley Magic. I didn't make the team. However, the next season, I tried out again, and this time, I got on. Lastly, I learned that I don't have to handle all of my problems on my own. I used to get really nervous before soccer games. I went to a prayer ministry conference and received prayer for my fear. After that, I was not nearly as nervous before soccer games. God is still changing my life.

The most important thing I learned from my family is how lucky I am to know God at such a young age. My mom and dad discovered him in college, and it caused them to both change their goals in life. Knowing Him affects my choices and views. I am excited that I am only at the beginning of this amazing relationship, and I have my whole life to discover him more. ■



## THE VOICE

by Anna

There's a little voice inside my head  
It sometimes speaks to me  
It says "rules are made to be broken  
so go ahead and steal that cookie"

But then another voice pipes up,  
"Don't do it, oh no no!  
If you steal that cookie,  
it'll get you in trouble so."

Sometimes I'll follow the second voice  
and ask before I eat,  
but other times I'll follow the first one,  
and I won't get any treat.

I rarely hear the third voice,  
that says either way is fine.

I always agree with that one,  
cookies are divine.

■

## NOT YET TREE

### A SONNET

by John McDonough

You pluck the Pippin, shuck its leaves, resigned  
to stand this hill, this cloudy farm, twisting  
this rusted stem, this lifeline to branchling,  
a deeper you cannot name. Rub its blind  
green skin against your fleece, and line  
your teeth along its flesh. The thin-skinned,  
you tell yourself, are always running, stung.  
You chew what's tart and piney; now you find  
it's tarter: more than what came before, spite  
hardening the bolus—a maligned mass. Don't  
spit. Don't leave. Is the seed within confined  
by the very bolus you cannot name? Bright  
in parting clouds, you cull the seed that won't  
malign and earth it, water it, now softened.

■

# THE NOW AND THE NOT YET

by James Lee

The theme of this year's newsletter struck me as a reminder to the way my late granddad lived his life. I remember him praising the Lord in the church choir and copying out scripture passages on a seemingly daily basis. Not originally a Christian and hailing from China, my granddad was a seafaring merchant docking in ports throughout the Fujian province in his twenties. Yet the events that ensued shows that God had plans in relocating my granddad both geographically and spiritually. Somewhere between an unexpected run in with pirates that left him abandoned on the island of Taiwan, the Second World War, and the rise of Red China, my granddad opened his heart to Christ who acted as a firm foundation in turbulent times. So began seventy long years living and hoping for the "now and the not yet."

I was asked to write about my experience leading worship at the men's retreat this year. I must confess that it is not only the theme of this newsletter that reminds me of my granddad. The men's retreat began on the week that I returned from my granddad's funeral, so for me, leading worship at this particular time was entwined with a dull painful sadness of his passing.

Apart from obvious emotional trauma experienced when encountered with the loss of a loved family member, I was confronted with other challenges. First, as a worship leader on the guitar, I struggled with the blunt fact that I have no guitar. Beside the mere matter of ownership, I was certain that my skills had deteriorated since moving to the States from my home in London. I had no significant practice time on the musical instrument since January this year.

In fact, I had not even planned on leading worship so soon. Earlier in the summer, it was my thinking that, until I had both a guitar and at least one year's commitment to the worship team, I would hold off on

serving musically in the church that I now called my home. Nonetheless, throughout the year I yearned to lead worship—a position where I felt called. So I vocalized my desire in prayer and with friends. Finally, a friend encouraged me to just take the step and trust that God would do the rest, so with no plan or confidence in my future, I contacted Vicky who soon responded with an invitation to audition.

The audition itself was painless. It was on stage after service one Sunday. I strummed on a borrowed guitar, stamped my feet like a personal metronome, and sang at the top of my voice. A handful of the current worship team listened and I tried feebly not to fret about their decision. Later that day via a phone call I was consoled by unsought words of encouragement from a member of the team who was at the audition. His words reminded me that the original purpose of the audition was to find a lead worshiper that would help bring the congregation to the heart of worship as opposed to any other tangential distractions. A few days later I was notified of a successful audition and proceeded onto what only can be described as a 6-month "in house preparation stage" where new worship team members are updated with current songs and learn to play nice with the other team members to become "Sunday service ready".

The men's retreat was around the corner and I had the opportunity to lead a worship session. In preparation the team and I communicated through e-mail and finalised the song selection. However, on the day of the departure to the retreat that I realized I had not yet printed song sheets for everyone. In a flashback to my younger self when I was just starting in the worship band in London I remembered that we seldom used the printer anyway. It was therefore my thinking that I would just hand write the songs and chords for my fellow team members. I thought that copying out fifteen pages of

music in a worshipful attitude would be a unique and effective exercise to do for quiet time over the retreat. Idealistic as this may sound I would now think twice before starting any further hand transcription as I had forgotten how slow it was.

In spite of all of these trials, I learned that I can still praise God in the present. The worship session came and went and, upon reflection, I am reminded of the bridge to Chris Tomlin's "How Can I Keep from Singing." The song is a poignant reminder that whatever obstacles or hurdles present themselves to me I can keep on praising—this is the beauty of praising God now. In italics it goes, "I can sing in the troubled times, sing when I win." This line speaks to the experience and troubles I felt due to my granddad's death. Yet I can win by rejoicing and serving the Lord. "I can sing when I lose my step, and fall down again." I will carry on worshipping even when I lose my guitar, fall out of practise (or fall printerless). "I can sing 'cause You pick me up, sing 'cause You're there. I can sing when You hear me Lord, when I call to You in prayer." As a worship team member, I will keep in that communication with the Living God.

In addition, the song is a great reminder that, even as we praise God now, we can look forward to Christ's return: "I can sing with my last breath, sing for I know. That I'll sing with the angels and the saints around the throne." This reminder is a great comfort to me. I do know was that my granddad was singing hymns before he died. Although I do not have the theological capacity to comprehend if he is still singing them in front of His throne "now," I'm sure we will all be singing praising Him in the "not yet".





## THE PURSUIT OF JOY

by James Stoner Holk

My name is James and I've been coming to the Vineyard in Palo Alto since August of last year. While I've had experience with the Vineyard before, that's not where I started with God. I grew up in a Presbyterian church that taught the Bible but didn't teach much about the currently available power of the Holy Spirit.

My childhood church was full of caring and godly people. They loved God and loved each other. Through that church, I learned a great deal about the Bible and what it meant to display the constancy of faithful service. It was in that church that I learned about the importance of good theology and the value of honoring the scriptures. I still honor and love that church and all the people who invested in me.

In college, though, I wanted a change of pace. I started going to Coast Vineyard in San Diego. This was the church started by Don Williams, one of the early theologians of the Vineyard movement. It was at this church that I first heard anything more than theology about the Holy Spirit. They taught about and practiced ministry in healing and the spiritual gifts like words of knowledge and discernment of spirits. I enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and the genuine enjoyment of worship displayed by many people at church. Plus the Vineyard still had a high regard for the Word of God that I had seen growing up.

However, even as I learned and grew in these matters of the Holy Spirit, there was still a disconnect. I would sometimes pray for people who were sick or injured, but I never saw them get better any faster than a normal healing process. And while I was

growing closer to God and experiencing more of His guidance in my life, I didn't seem to be "on fire," as some people said they felt. My response to these lacks was the conclusion that healing wasn't one of my gifts and that I had simply outgrown the "puppy love" phase of my belief. Most importantly, while I knew that Christian life was supposed to be full of joy, I did not necessarily feel in the here and now.

But God is better than we know. It doesn't matter how good we think God is, He is still better than that. Around a year ago, at a healing ministry conference, God awoke me to the reality that all of the fruit of the Spirit should be seen in a believer's life.

In Galatians chapter 5, the apostle Paul writes that the Holy Spirit should produce, among other things, joy in a Christian. I was not unfamiliar with the fruit of the Spirit; I had even led a small group in college just studying the book of Galatians over the course of a year! But I had over-spiritualized and distanced some of the fruit. I had interpreted joy to be a thing mostly for heaven after we die. At best, I believed joy would be a feeling of being able to endure the sufferings of this life.

An important point that I should mention about why I had this far-off view of joy is that I had struggled with depression my whole adult life. It's hard to convey the feeling of depression in writing, but it often felt like life was not worth living. It felt that any good done by people was just a vain push against social and spiritual entropy. Yes, there were moments of love and happiness, but I believed that my only true relief from the misery of the world would come at the first

of either my death or the second coming of Jesus. Little did I know that God is better than that.

At that healing ministry conference around a year ago I was annoyed by the speaker. I was annoyed because it was most of the way through the first of three sessions, and he kept on talking about the goodness of God. Of course I knew about the goodness of God, but I came to learn more about effective prayer for healing. But this speaker would just not shut up about how good God is and how much he enjoyed His presence. And he wouldn't stop laughing. It wasn't a stupid laughter, but a kind of a goofy chuckle, as though he had just finished a session of being tickled and might start laughing uproariously any moment.

Eventually, I started to get what the speaker was talking about. God loves us and wants us to enjoy Him. In ministry, we are meant to start from that place of love with God, but not just love. The gift of the Holy Spirit shouldn't just bring us into love with God, but also joy, peace, and all the other fruit. And this speaker was displaying a joy and freedom that I had never seen so clearly before. I now believe that it had been present before in other believers, I just hadn't seen it.

Although it was a healing ministry conference, I didn't learn much about effective methods of healing from that conference. But I was filled with a burning desire to have that enjoyment of God displayed by the speaker. Held against my stoic suffering through depression, there really wasn't much of a competition of which was more attractive. Joy (and peace etc.) did not ap-



pear in my life right away. But having seen it in person and being convinced that it was part of the rightful inheritance of a believer, I pursued it. Through reading my Bible and plenty of books, listening to sermons, praying, and waiting, God freed me from depression and brought me into joy.

It wasn't until months after that conference in my pursuit of joy that I realized that I hadn't been depressed for multiple weeks. It's been almost a year now since I was last depressed, whereas before I would have no more than a couple weeks between episodes. My joy certainly is not complete. But likewise, neither is my love or peace. Instead, I'm in a better place now because of the growing presence of God in my life, and the more I grow the Spirit, the more of His fruit is produced in me.

For others suffering under depression or any similar affliction, I want to encourage you that there was no single event that brought me into freedom. Instead, I was given a hope: that there is nothing in our bodies, our minds, or our spirits that is beyond the reach of God to bring healing, wholeness, and all that was purchased on the cross. There are no believers condemned to "just deal with it." God invites us into his presence where there is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). ■

## FAMILY NEWS

### Births

Liliana Priscilla Bloom on 2/4/15  
to Jedd & Jenny

Caroline Yang Lew on 1/19/15  
to Darren & Ling

Luke Joseph Hare on 1/3/15  
to Josh & Lydia

Emmanuel Chung on 10/29/14  
to Eddie & Clarisse

Samuel Hunter Chan on 10/25/14  
to Terah & Michelle

Kaelyn Lock on 5/7/2014  
to Adrian & Seisha

## KID'S CORNER

#5

Greetings to all!

*"For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations."*

— Psalm 100:5 —

When I was a teen, I was blessed by getting to volunteer in children's ministries. I got to help kids and at the same time be deeply impacted by the faith of the adults I served with.

God shows his faithfulness to our community as generations interact with one another, and we as a church are practicing this more and more. Examples include our youth volunteering with our kids, youth and adults serving along side each other in our Nicaragua mission's trip, and all of us celebrating the baptism of children, youth and adults.

Upcoming Intergenerational Events:

**April 5** **Easter Service at Cubberly (today)**  
Family friendly Easter service and brunch

**April 24-26** **Men & Kids Campout**

**May 10 & Sept 20** **Baby Dedication**  
If you are interested in having your baby dedicated, contact Arpenny Hart: [arpenny@vcfp.org](mailto:arpenny@vcfp.org)

**May 31** **Celebration Sunday**  
Children pre-K and up will join our adult service as we celebrate our ministry year together. Baptisms for children, youth, and adults are also planned for this event. If your child is interested in being baptized, email [arpenny@vcfp.org](mailto:arpenny@vcfp.org).

**October 2-4** **All-Church Weekend**



# VINEYARD

Christian Fellowship of the Peninsula

Office: 744 San Antonio Road, Suite 22, Palo Alto, CA 94306  
Website: [www.vcfp.org](http://www.vcfp.org)

“The Church is not a club for membership; rather it is a community for transformation.” – Rev. Jim Clarke

## Vision staff

**Managing Editor**  
Matt Gustafson / [matt@vcfp.org](mailto:matt@vcfp.org)

**Content Editor**  
James Chu

**Distribution**  
Lisa Woody / [lisa@vcfp.org](mailto:lisa@vcfp.org)

**Design Layout**  
Christina Lim-Carlson / [chris\\_y\\_lim@yahoo.com](mailto:chris_y_lim@yahoo.com)

## 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](mailto:info@vcfp.org) or contact the leaders specified below.

Adult Ministries . . . . . Susan Van Riesen [susan@vcfp.org](mailto:susan@vcfp.org)  
(including women’s, small groups and more!)

Children’s Ministries. . . . . Arpenny Hart, [arpenny@vcfp.org](mailto:arpenny@vcfp.org)

Sunday Morning Ministries . . . . . Jeremy Fiala [jeremy.fiala@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.fiala@gmail.com)

Grief Support . . . . . Karen Ratzlaff, [karen\\_ratzlaff@hotmail.com](mailto:karen_ratzlaff@hotmail.com)

Local & International Outreach . . . . . Katie Fantin, [katie@vcfp.org](mailto:katie@vcfp.org)

Spiritual Formation, Family Ministries . . . . . Sharon Wada, [sharon@vcfp.org](mailto:sharon@vcfp.org)  
(including pre-marital and marriage mentoring) . . . . . Jim Hart, [arpjimhart@aol.com](mailto:arpjimhart@aol.com)

Men’s Ministry . . . . . Ron Giles, [thegilesman@gmail.com](mailto:thegilesman@gmail.com)

Newsletter . . . . . Matt Gustafson, [matt@vcfp.org](mailto:matt@vcfp.org),

Projection & Audio-Visual Ministry . . . . . Ian Shou, [winian@gmail.com](mailto:winian@gmail.com)

Prayer Ministry . . . . . Jon Wada, [jonwada24@gmail.com](mailto:jonwada24@gmail.com)

Sound Ministry . . . . . Marius Milner, [mariusm@gmail.com](mailto:mariusm@gmail.com)

Worship Ministry . . . . . Katie Fantin, [katie@vcfp.org](mailto:katie@vcfp.org)

Youth Ministry . . . . . Matt Gustafson, [matt@vcfp.org](mailto:matt@vcfp.org)