

Where we are and what's next

- Sándor Paull, Lead Pastor



Paull

This has been a great year at Vine church. We had hundreds of people pitch in and help the new North Building come to fruition—it has become an important tool for our Youth, Life Groups, Discipleship Communities and Kid's Program. Facility is never our focus, making disciples is. But we need the space to meet the needs and invest in the people Jesus has brought to our family.

Many people have risen to the challenge of getting involved; that discipleship means so much more than Sunday attendance. Over the summer many have carved out time to commit to Small Group and serving. Many have committed themselves in giving and membership. The long-term results of these kinds of sacrifices will undoubtedly be felt in each individual and our church as a whole.

Jesus told us to plant a church in Carbondale for the "un-churched". That means we exist not for ourselves, but for those He is bringing and wants to save. This summer we talked about a renewed focus on inviting and loving those who are not Christians. We have seen many

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A team of volunteers from Vine Community Church carries the personal possessions of an incoming student into the Mae Smith residence hall during the first day of student move-in at Southern Illinois University. More than 170 Vine volunteers assisted during the three-day event, making numerous trips up elevators and down stairs. (Photo by Les O'Dell)

► **Not just once a year...**

Reaching out to college students through service and special events

Unloading car trunks and pickup truck beds then standing in line waiting for an elevator while toting boxes, television sets and luggage is probably not on anyone's list of fun activities, but for volunteers from Vine Community Church it's just one way of serving the church's primary target audience: students.

More than 170 people from Vine—ranging from junior high students to retirees—assisted new and returning Southern Illinois University students as they moved into the residence halls.

"I think it's a great outreach for the church and a great opportunity to help make the first day for freshmen a little less intimidating," Nate

Bisel says. Bisel was one among the Vine's current college students helping new students.

"We can make it easier for them and at the same time invite them to the church and our events," he said.

Staff Pastor Dan Digman told volunteers gathered for the first day of moving that the assistance makes a difference.

"People are really grateful for the help and we really do get students from this."

Kim Hoffman, who has been involved at Vine for more than a year agreed.

"It worked for me. Move-in help is why I'm here," she says.

See NEW STUDENTS, Page 2

Sept. 18 Vine Fall Party to mix friends, food and fun



Southern Illinois University students enjoy inflatable games, new friends and free food at last year's Fall Party. A semester's tuition will be given away this year. (Photo by Brandon Macier)

What do you get when you mix giant inflatables, human hamster balls, great barbecue, giveaways including a semester's worth of tuition and an opportunity to visit with both brand-new and long-time friends? Vine Community Church's Fall Party, of course.

Combining the annual fall student party welcoming new students

and the yearly anniversary party (which traditionally has been held in the spring and has often been canceled due to rain), the new Fall Party has something for everyone.

"We're celebrating our anniversary, but we're reaching out as well," explains Staff Pastor Steve Dame. "That makes me more excited about the party."

There's plenty to be excited about, with free barbecue from Great Boars of Fire, inflatables for kids and adults and lots of prizes, including a semester's worth of tuition to be awarded to a current SIU or John A. Logan College student just for attending the party. For an SIU undergraduate, the award tops \$3,600. SIU Chancellor Rita Cheng will make the scholarship presentation.

The party, set for 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 18, will be held at the student tailgating area west of the SIU Arena, near the Engineering Building. Many area residents know the area as the fireworks viewing area. The event will conclude at 4 p.m.

"The party always has so many inflatables, tons of food and new students to meet and invite—everything you could imagine in one afternoon," Kayla Bailey says. "It never leaves me unsatisfied at the end of the day!"



Weekend Services
Sundays at 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
and 5:30 p.m.

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New Students from Page 1



Vine volunteer Nate Bisel totes a box to a student's 16th floor room in Mae Smith Hall.

While the primary focus of the volunteers is just to serve the new students, Digman encouraged the team members to invite students to one of the church's first student events of the year, the Movie in the Parking Lot nights.

Many students who were helped with their belongings were grateful for the assistance and accepted the invitations to watch the movies.

"The help was very nice. I really appreciated it," Ben Thompson a junior transfer student from Clay City says. Thompson and his roommate attended the film as well.

"It was a lot of fun," he says. "The movie was terrible, but the people were great."

He says he met many new people and was even reunited with one friend from his hometown who already attends Vine.

"It increased my interest in the church," he says.

NEW
AROUND HERE?

Vine small groups bring people together to share, care and grow through relationships

Is it possible for people to really get connected and make friends in a church of nearly 1,900?

Thanks to an emphasis on small groups at Vine Community Church, the answer is an emphatic “YES!”

“Small groups are foundational to Vine Church in terms of the way we do ministry,” explains Staff Pastor Greg Darling. “They are a place where people can connect, be in relationship and be there for one another when needed. We think that in the Book of Acts, the early church shares a beautiful picture of what the church can look like in terms of being there for each other: they shared everything and took care of each other, prayed together and worshiped together regularly. That’s the model.”

Darling says there currently are 52 small groups meeting each week, not including those for youth and the Friday night Life Groups. Small Groups typically meet in individual homes one night per week. The average group has about 10 members.

According to the Vine’s website, Small Groups are for everyone.

“Small Groups are for the members of the church and for those who have never even set foot inside our door; they are for those who have been following Jesus for decades and for those who are just curious and not sure what to believe; they are for college students, retired grandparents, and everyone in between. If you have a pulse, there is a Small Group for you.”

Darling adds that attending a Small Group is an important step in becoming active in the church.



“Ministry happens through relationships and relationships happen in small groups.”

— Greg Darling

“Small groups are for anyone that is wanting to get plugged in to Vine Church. It’s important for people who want to be a part of the church,” he says, noting that 66 percent of people who attend the Vine are in a Small Group.

At a group meeting, time is usually set aside for hanging out and getting to know one another (often with snacks), then the group leader will foster a Bible discussion on one or more Scripture passages.

But the key to Small Groups, Darling says, is making friends.

“Small Groups embrace the importance of real ministry happening through relationships,” Darling adds. “To me that’s one of the pinnacles of who we are and how we do ministry. Our small group leaders provide pastoral care that allows us to be a large church yet still have real relationships with people. Ministry happens through relationships and relationships hap-

pen in Small Groups,” he says.

Adam Testa, who attends Nathan Emrick’s Tuesday night group says Small Group has given him a sense of belonging.

“Small Group is an opportunity to get to know other people in the church on a more personal level,” Testa says. “Through my years at the Vine, I’ve been part of several small groups, and I still have close friends from each different one. It adds a true sense of community and helps prevent oneself from ever feeling alone.”

For those looking to join a group, church leaders suggest trying several groups to find the right one. Information on groups is available in the church lobby or at www.vinecommunitychurch.com/small-groups/. Another opportunity to learn about groups is at monthly Discipleship Community gatherings.

2011 Vine Football League season kicks off Sept. 25

A Vine church tradition resumes Sunday afternoon, Sept. 25 with the return of Vine Football League games at the Carbondale Super-block.

More than 100 men and women are expected to play in the co-ed flag-football league this year, commissioner T.J. Cowan says.

“We’ll have eight complete teams again this year, with four games going on simultaneously,” he says.

Cowan says that VFL rules are structured to maintain a Christian atmosphere and to keep players safe. He adds that one of the goals of VFL is to reach out to players who do not have a church home. It seems to work.

“VFL was extremely important in my becoming part of the church,” explains Pat Skiersch, who was invited to play two seasons ago. “I met a lot of new people with similar interests and built friendships. My captain that first season is now my small group leader.”

Games during the nine-week VFL season start each Sunday at 1:45 p.m. A regular season and



Redskins captain Kayla Bailey eludes Chiefs defenders during the fourth quarter of the 2010 Vine Football League championship game last November. Registration for the 2011 VFL season is now underway with games starting Sunday, Sept. 25. VFL is open to anyone age 18 or older. (Photo by Brandon Macier)

a divisional playoff culminate in a league championship, Nov. 20. Last year’s season finale went to overtime.

Individual honors for attributes such as sportsmanship and overall improvement are awarded at the season’s end. Games are administered by a group of volunteer officials from the church.

“I sometimes think we have more fun as referees than the players do,” second-year official John Forbes explains. He adds organizers are looking for a few more volunteer

referees so that there will be at least two officials for each VFL game in 2011.

“Most everyone who plays has a great attitude; our job is easy.”

The Vine Football League is open to anyone age 18 or older, regardless of skill level. Additional information and registration is available online at

www.vinecommunitychurch.com/vfl.

To learn more about serving as an official or to volunteer, call Les O’Dell at (618) 203-3312 or email lowriter@rocketmail.com.

3 on 3 Basketball tournament reaches out to the community



By all accounts, Vine Church’s first-ever three-on-three basketball tournament was a tremendous success with 38 teams, hundreds of participants and spectators and dozens of volunteers.

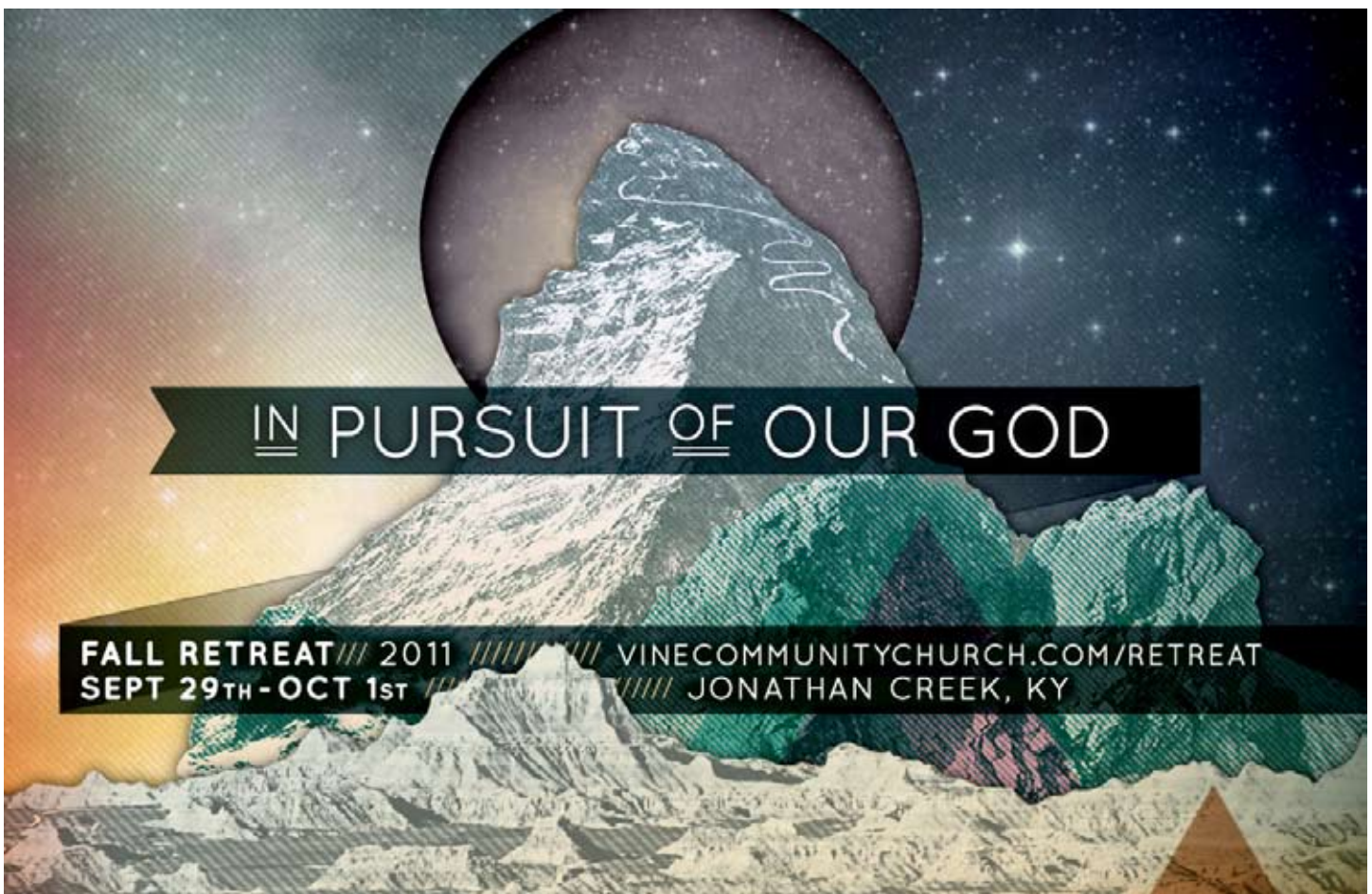
“It far exceeded our expectations,” says Nick Sellers, pastoral assistant. Sellers assisted in the planning of the event and was a player.

The teams faced-off in an NCAA-style bracket, with the winner of each half-court game advancing to the next round. Games were played on the church’s outdoor court as well as in the North Building.

Each team organizer was encouraged to include at least one un-churched player on his or her team, leading to many first-time visitors to the church. The tournament was won by a team called “The Orphanage.”

Many players encouraged Vine to make the tourney an annual event, something Staff Pastor Dan Digman says is likely.

“I would think that there is no chance we won’t do this again.”



IN PURSUIT OF OUR GOD

FALL RETREAT // 2011 // VINECOMMUNITYCHURCH.COM/RETREAT
 SEPT 29TH - OCT 1ST // JONATHAN CREEK, KY

Getting closer to God by “Retreating”

Vine Church’s annual fall retreat provides longtime church members and those who have just begun attending recently a great opportunity to grow in both faith and friendships.

The 2011 Fall Retreat will be Sept. 29 - Oct. 1 at the beautiful Jonathan Creek Camp near Hardin, Ky., the same site as each summer’s youth camp.

The retreat will feature powerful worship, extensive teaching and multiple opportunities to receive prayer and to pray for others. Perhaps what makes retreats and similar events so memorable is that, simply put, God “shows up” in very personal and powerful ways, according to those who attend.

“Retreats provide an incredible opportunity for spiritual growth because Jesus honors the sacrifice of our time and money; and because he responds to the desire of those who attend for more of Him,” Lead Pastor Sándor Paull says. “These times are critical for the development of individual disciples in their faith, but also to re-focus the core of the church to the mission we have set before us.”

Paull says that attendance at retreats and conferences can help attendees grow their faith in ways not possible simply by attending weekend services and Small Groups.

At the 2011 Summer Conference he gave ten reasons why God does so much as these events:

- #1 We expect God to do more. = FAITH!
- #2 We take greater risks. (Worship, prayer ministry, etc.)
- #3 We benefit from each other’s gifts.
- #4 Lots of people have been fasting & praying for this week.
- #5 God honors the sacrifice of our time, money & enduring spiritual attack!
- #6 Fewer distractions from life. (Kids, work, classes, etc.)
- #7 It’s a safe place.
- #8 We’re not in a hurry—have more time.
- #9 Father prepares/empowers us for what we need to be in our local churches.
- #10 God loves this “no name, no account” group of churches and demonstrates it!

Information and registration for the retreat is available at www.vinecommunitychurch.com/retreat.



**2011 Summer Youth
Camp was...**

UNTHINKABLE

Photos by Joyce Li En Yong





Witnessing God's Work

By any account, John Gund was having a tough summer. The SIU senior in English education was away from home — like he has been most summers recently — working as a counselor at a Christian camp while practically all of his family members were suffering from a variety of health problems. Then, to top it off, the Wisconsin bugs had made a buffet out of John's arms and legs.

"It was the hardest summer of my life," Gund says.

He thought things would get better when he returned to Carbondale for his senior year. They didn't. What looked to Gund to be a mosquito bite on one knee began to trouble him.

"I noticed that one of the mosquito bites on my knee was starting to hurt, and it was swelling up and starting to turn black in the center. I figured it was a spider bite," he recalls. "Over three to four days it doubled in size every single day. It hurt worse than anything I've ever had before.

A trip to the physician's office gave him an answer: he had been bitten by a brown recluse spider.

"The doctor cut out a piece—I had a hole about the size of a nickel and a half-inch deep or more in my knee—and shoved it full with gauze."

Gund says not only was the bite infected and inflamed, but the flesh around the bite was dying. His doctor told him that sometimes a similar bite on the knee could lead to loss of function in the leg.

A member of Vine, Gund turned to God and others in the church for prayer.

"I really knew God could heal it. I was praying, my wife was praying, my small group leader was praying. A couple of the pastors prayed for me and nothing



major was happening with it. Finally at Team Vine, I was planning on praying for other people, but just as I was hobbling up front, I knew God was saying for me to get more prayer. A couple of people began to pray for me and I immediately felt the Spirit start to come over me. It was really intense. I just overwhelmingly felt God's presence."

Gund says that instantly the pain was gone and when he removed the bandage, the hole was dramatically smaller and there was no sign of infection whatsoever.

He adds that his doctor "flipped out," so he shared with her his belief that God healed his knee.

Today, all that remains is a small scab—and deepened faith.

"What I got out of this whole experience is how truly humbling and awesome it is when Jesus uses our weaknesses to further His glory and His kingdom. There is no greater joy that I can express than to be a part of that."

Lead pastor launches worldwide Internet ministry effort

By Sir Tanly Nottru

Sándor Paull knows the value of building a brand to sell a product.

Through his tenure as a successful businessman selling quality wares such as over-priced movie tickets and pagers, Paull learned a few tricks of the trade.

Now he's ready to move into the realm of evangelical entrepreneurship. This fall, Paull plans to launch his own Internet-based church at SandorPaull.com.

"It's a name that people all across the country associate with beauty,



knowledge and downright excellence," Paull answered when asked about the new movement's name. "It was kind of a no-brainer."

At Vine Church in Carbondale, Paull has met numerous SIU students, which has also helped prepare him for this new venture.

"Social media seems to be all the craze these days," he said. "I try to imagine how different things would have been if the Sermon on the Mount had been delivered via Twitter instead. That's the image I'm trying to capture with this new project."

While many insiders don't take Paull's plans too seriously, those who wish to follow his vociferous online venture can do so at www.SandorPaull.com.

-Adam Testa

Editor's note: Look for more "not-so-true" news in each Vine Newsletter.

Paull

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wonderful people come and visit as a result of our invitations.

There is much to look forward to this fall! We are celebrating our 15th anniversary with a Fall Party on September 18th. Our Fall Retreat is September 29th – October 1st. There is what I believe will be a foundational series on the Holy Spirit starting in October. Please continue to faithfully pray that Jesus gets glory for all the lives He is changing in our family—I pray that it includes mine and yours.

Sándor Paull can be reached via email at spaull@vinecommunitychurch.com.

DC

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"DC is the once-a-month meeting where the groups from a particular night meet together at the church instead of in the individual homes," Darling says.

Each DC, which gathers either in the Vine Auditorium or the new North Building, combines several small groups together for a time of worship, teaching, taking the Lord's Supper and prayer ministry time.

"It's a way of turning what feels like multiple Small Groups in the church into an intermediate-sized community where you know more people than just your group," he adds.

The Discipleship Communities are multi-generational, so members of college-aged Small Groups, for example, can get to know older people in the church. Each DC is led by a pastor who oversees the Small Groups from that particular night. The topic covered during DC will serve as the basis for discussions in Small Groups during the following few weeks, Darling says.



WHAT'S COMING UP?

Mark your calendar for these upcoming events:

Sept. 18: Fall Party

Sept. 20: Dating & Sex: A Right Perspective

Sept. 25: VFL Season Begins

Sept. 29 - Oct. 1: Fall Retreat

Oct. 3 - 7, 11-12: Discipleship Communities

Oct. 8: East Sycamore Street Lunch

Oct. 9: Hands-On Prayer Clinic

Oct. 11: Mission Motherhood

Oct. 15: Team Vine

Oct. 22: Father/Son Chili Cookoff

Oct. 23: Vine Series - Freedom

Oct. 28: Kids Fall Party

Oct. 31 - Nov. 4, 8-9: Discipleship Communities

Nov. 5: Cultural Show

Nov. 12: East Sycamore Street Lunch

Nov. 12: Team Vine

Nov. 13: Vine Series - Service

Nov. 19: En Route

Nov. 20: Thanksgiving Food Giveaway

Nov. 20: VFL Championship