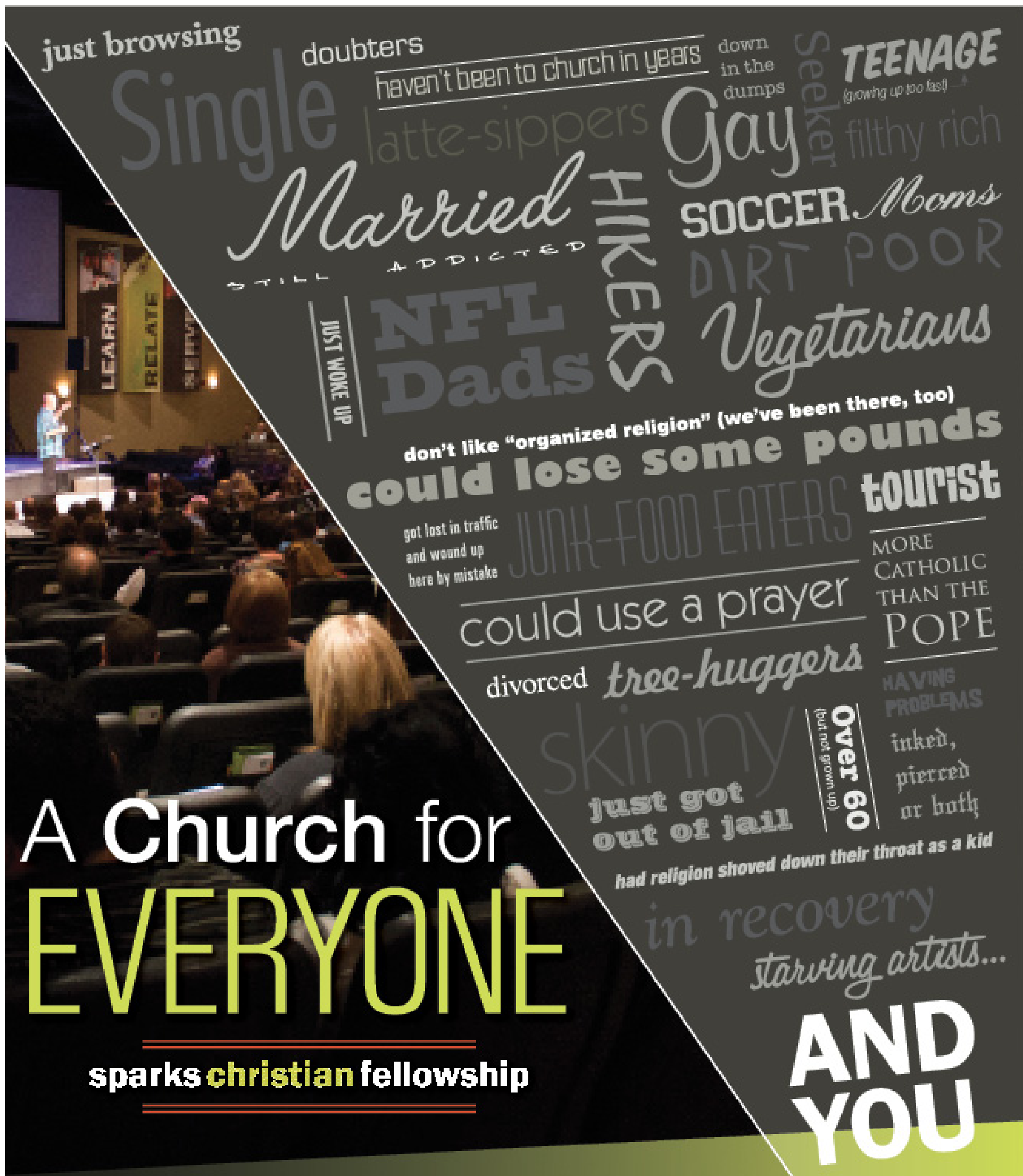




just browsing

Single

doubters

haven't been to church in years

down in the dumps

Secret

TEENAGE

(growing up too fast)

latte-sippers

Gay

filthy rich

SOCCER. Moms

DIRT POOR

Married

ADDICTED

Vegetarians

NFL Dads

JUST WOKE UP

don't like "organized religion" (we've been there, too)

could lose some pounds

got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake

JUNK-FOOD EATERS

tourist

could use a prayer

divorced

tree-huggers

skinny

just got out of jail

over 60 (but not grown up)

HAVING PROBLEMS

inked, pierced or both

had religion shoved down their throat as a kid

in recovery

starving artists...

A Church for EVERYONE

sparks **christian** fellowship

AND YOU

Pastor Scott Parker says sermons at Sparks Christian Fellowship avoid dogma and instead encourage parishioners to ask questions about faith and how it applies to their lives. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCF

A Church for Everyone

by Evan Tuchinsky

“Our goal was to reach out to people who don’t like church, who normally don’t go to church.”

Pastor Scott Parker
SCF Lead Pastor

Wherever you’re at in life, Find Hope @ SCF

If you’re a well-heeled follower of Christ, you’ll likely find a measure of comfort in any church. But what if you don’t fit the mold of a traditional churchgoer? What if you’re homeless or addicted? What if you’re considered an outcast or a misfit? What if you aren’t sure what you are — what you believe?

Sparks Christian Fellowship is a church that accepts everyone, wherever they are on their journey toward Christ. It accepts real people, who often have real problems. SCF offers support groups for people struggling with anything from substance abuse to divorce to loss.

The Past

SCF formed in 1990 as an offshoot of Reno Christian Fellowship, led by two pastors, Scott Parker and John Akers. They began with 90 members — many from RCF — gathering Sunday nights in Our Savior’s Lutheran Church.

“Our goal was to reach out to people who don’t like church, who normally don’t go to church,” Pastor Parker says. “We figured if we could get that segment, we should be able to reach other segments in our valley.”

The plan worked: SCF outgrew its adopted home in a year and sought to add Sunday morning services, which necessitated finding its own facility.

The Place

SCF moved to the Greenbrae Shopping Center in 1991. While not facing a main street, and not in a ritzy neighborhood, the church “grew by word of mouth,” Pastor Parker says. “We found ourselves in the perfect place at the perfect time.” It was the only interdenominational church in the vicinity, and while others have since opened, SCF continued to expand. Today, SCF has around 1,300 members.

Growth, however, isn’t the prime consideration, Pastor Parker says.

“We are perfectly situated to meet the growing needs of our immediate neighborhood. We love our community and are in the process of strategically addressing the most pressing needs.”

The Purpose

Connecting to people — in the church and in the community — matters at SCF. Serving people is one of the church’s pillars. Members come from nearby neighborhoods, but also from various cultures and groups.

“We attract people from every segment of society, which we feel is the heart of the gospel when you consider who Jesus hung out with,” Pastor Parker says.

Though SCF is an evangelical church, pastors avoid dogmatic stances and political positions in their sermons and lessons.

“We would rather have people leaving our services asking questions than finding answers,” Pastor Parker says. “That’s a great Sunday.”

SCF’s values: Sparks Christian Fellowship interviewed 300 of its members to find out what church means to them. What they said became SCF’s 7 Core Values. Watch for them throughout this publication.

Core value #1:
God passionately loves all people
// We do anything short of sin to share the hope of Christ

A CHURCH — IN A STRIPMALL?

You may have passed by the Greenbrae Shopping Center a hundred times and not realized that it’s owned by a church.

In 1991, Sparks Christian Fellowship needed a permanent home. Trouble was, no one with the necessary facilities would rent to SCF. (Schools and other public buildings carried restrictions.) The only suitable structures were outside Sparks.

So, Pastor Scott Parker says, when a friend showed him a vacant space in the shopping center, “literally it was our only option.” SCF leased 20,000 square feet, remodeled it with the help of contractors within the church, and opened what became known as “the Miracle on Greenbrae.”

A few years later, when the neighboring movie theater closed and SCF sought to expand, the shopping center owner offered to sell the entire mall. SCF agreed, inheriting a distinct array of occupants, including a liquor store and tattoo parlor.

“If you’re bugged by who our tenants are, then we’re definitely not the church for you,” Pastor Parker says, “because we’re probably going to say or do things that are really going to curl your hair.”



Sean Patterson knew he was a sinner, but despite his past, his mistakes (and his tattoos), he was accepted at Sparks Christian Fellowship.
PHOTO BY ALLISON YOUNG

Core value # 2:
We are a community
of hope and healing
// We welcome
everyone who comes
through our doors

Come as You Are

Sean didn't think he'd be welcomed at church (he was wrong)

"I'm a tattooed punk-rock kid ... but I walk into SCF and it's home."

Sean Patterson
SCF member

by Evan Tuchinsky

When Sean Patterson first walked into Sparks Christian Fellowship, he wouldn't have been surprised if the church fell down around him. Not because he had doubts about the structural integrity, or doubts about the ministry — he had doubts about himself.

"I always had my faith — I really never put it into practice," Sean says. "I always felt if I walked into this building, it would get struck by lightning or burn to the ground because I've been such a turd and I do know God."

Sean, a native of Reno whose parents divorced when he was a child, became a heavy drinker in high school.

By age 20, he'd racked up 18 charges of underage alcohol consumption. He turned 21 while "on vacation" (how he describes a stint in jail). And that's where he was when his best friend died while drinking and driving.

That tragedy, if not his subsequent DUI arrest, should have provided a wake-up call, but "instead of quitting drinking, I quit driving," Sean says. A disabling back injury didn't temper his hard

living, either. Only after a nine-day bender did he finally decide that something had to change.

At age 25, he asked to speak to a friend's parents. They offered to help and also steered him toward church.

Taking the first step through the front doors was hard.

"How does somebody who knows God walk into the church and not have the feeling of, 'Man, I've been such a sinner, I've been such a bad kid, I should not be going here?'" Sean says. "I shouldn't be welcome."

But he was.

Even though he looked like the punk-rock drummer he is — complete with tattoos and piercings — Sean found immediate acceptance at SCF. The camaraderie and support didn't waver with the discovery of a child born during his partying days.

SCF helped with his recovery and his relationship with his daughter, who's now 14. He got baptized on Aug. 19, 2005, and for the past seven years has been a key member of the Worship Team.

"I've had my ups and downs, and there's been connection and disconnection in the church with me in my journey," Sean says. "The church has always been there with open arms, willing to help me out."

"I'm a tattooed punk-rock kid — that's what you see. You look at me and I'm judged — but I walk into SCF and it's home."

NAVIGATE YOUR WAY AT SCF

The On Ramp

Walking into a church for the first time, seeing few familiar faces (if any) can daunt new members.

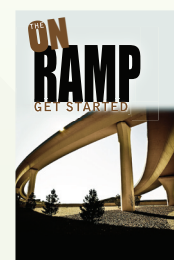
That's why Sparks Christian Fellowship created a special orientation class called The On Ramp. It starts the first week of each month (except July and December) on Sundays and rotates between the early and later morning service.

"You don't really get the gist of the whole vision until you go to On Ramp," SCF Executive Assistant Carol Smitherman says. "It's the best way to get connected. The church family here is warm and welcoming, and once you get connected that way, you come on a Sunday and see faces all around you that you know and feel like this is your church home."

The first session introduces members to the church and its history. The subsequent weeks cover each of SCF's Pillars: Learn, Relate and Serve. A different pastor or elder teaches each week, in a small group format.

FIND DIRECTION
@SCF

Visit www.scf.net/new-here/on-ramp/ to learn more or enroll in the next class.



Welcoming Arms

Bosco family keeps growing with trust in God

by Michelle Carl

There were more than a few times when Christy and Steve Bosco wondered if they were doing the right thing. *Are we the right family? What's going to happen down the road? Is this what God wants us to do?*

They already had four children (two each from previous marriages) and decided to adopt one, then another, then a third foster child into their lives. Despite their fears of adopting three children, all with special needs, the Boscos found room in their hearts (not to mention their home) to grow their family.

They couldn't have done it without their faith and the support from members of Sparks Christian Fellowship.

When Steve and Christy married in 2005, they didn't want to repeat mistakes from their previous marriages. They knew faith would play a huge role in that, so they immersed themselves in church.

"We knew we wanted to set a good example for our kids," Christy says.

At the time, Christy worked as a receptionist but yearned to do something more. The idea of fostering kept popping up, so the Boscos completed the process to become foster parents. Two days later, they got a call about Brady. Born with cerebral palsy at 27 weeks, Brady struggled to find a foster home because of his special needs.

"We decided we were going to jump in with both feet and hope for the best," Christy says.

Doctors didn't expect much for Brady — the Boscos were told he may never walk, talk or feed himself.

Brady, now 7, is beating all the odds. He loves the music at SCF and claps along to the songs. He can spout off sports statistics and players' names on his favorite teams — the Boston Red Sox and New England Patriots.

"We feel like we have had such great support with our church family and our immediate family," Christy says. "[They] kept telling us God has a bigger plan for him and you guys are a part of that plan."

Christy and Steve felt called upon again when Joe and then Luke came into their lives.

They adopted both of those boys and have also served as foster parents for many children over the years (including three currently).

Throughout the growth of their family, Sparks Christian Fellowship has supported them. Church members have been there to listen, pray for and

sometimes feed the Boscos ("and it's not a small feat to feed our family," Christy adds).

"I can't imagine doing life without them," she says.

The Boscos also feel like SCF has enriched their family. They feel blessed to be able to plant the seeds of faith with their foster children, many of whom may not otherwise get any exposure to church.

"[Children] really are our future and if we're not leading them in a positive spiritual direction, life definitely is not going to," she says. "SCF offers you the tools but there are also people there to walk through situations with you — and goodness knows life is tough sometimes."

"[Children] really are our future and if we're not leading them in a positive spiritual direction, life definitely is not going to. SCF offers you the tools."

Christy Bosco
SCF parent

Core value #3:
God's word is the life-giving authority
// We trust and obey it

A MESSAGE FOR ALL AGES

Youth ministries

Sparks Christian Fellowship knows that parents have the biggest impact on their child's faith. SCF supports parents in this important role during youth ministries.

FX

(first Sunday of the month)

Families get to explore faith together during FX, which stands for Family eXperience. FX is where kids bring their parents to learn. It's a 45-minute, high-energy production that provides an opportunity for parents and their kids to discuss and apply biblical truths.

"Everyone is learning the same thing, at their own levels," says Christy Bosco, a youth ministry coordinator. "You'd be surprised what I learn from my kids! Their point of view is so much more innocent and simpler."

Birth-5th grade = Wild Kingdom

(both Sunday services)

Every week in Wild Kingdom children get to participate in a dynamic learning experience. Whether it's jamming to music, interacting with a creative Bible lesson, or meeting in small groups to figure out how to apply the day's lesson to their lives, kids' lives are being transformed.

6th-12th grade = SCFyouth

(middle school 9 a.m., high school 7 p.m.)

This program encourages pre-teens and teens to get to know each other and learn about God and how he relates to our lives. Students are encouraged to ask questions and grow into a faith that is their own.

FIND FUN @ **SCF**

For more information, visit www.scf.net/ministries/.



Steve and Christy Bosco already had four children when they decided to become foster parents. They ended up adopting Brady and Joe, both 7, and Luke, 4.
PHOTO BY ALLISON YOUNG

Home Base

Dohn stopped partying once he found a new place to belong

by Evan Tuchinsky

After a promising baseball career crumbled, Dohn Matteoni turned to partying. He became a believer and started going to Sparks Christian Fellowship, where he found a new group of people to “do life” with.
PHOTO BY ALLISON YOUNG



As a catcher, Dohn Matteoni grew accustomed to giving signs to direct action on the baseball field. But it wasn't until he *received* a sign that he found fulfillment — away from athletics, in life.

Following a notable career at Reed High School in Sparks, Dohn caught the attention of professional scouts. He joined the team at Yuba College in Northern California, and his prospects seemed on an upward trajectory until he injured his knees in practice.

He returned to Sparks disappointed, his baseball dreams dashed. He got a delivery-company job and immersed himself in another of his pastimes: partying. “In that part of my life I was really into drugs and alcohol, sleeping around, so when I moved home I got into it really worse,” Dohn says. “I ended up with a DUI.”

The arrest, in 2011 at age 21, was covered by local media because of his name recognition. “It was embarrassing, for sure,” he says, and it not only prompted him to quit drinking, but also led him to Sparks Christian Fellowship, where his stepmother attended.

“Ultimately, about six months later, I fell back into partying,” Dohn says. “At that point in my life, I’d lived

a certain way for years ... it’s really hard to just quit cold turkey and try to just flip the switch.”

Still, he did not totally turn away from God. He prayed. In fact, one recurring prayer was for divine intervention in the life of his ex-girlfriend. In 2013, Dohn made plans to meet her for lunch, and he became awestruck when he saw her sitting outside a coffee house reading the Bible.

“I was like, ‘OK, I believe that God is true and real,’ because when you pray for something for two years and you walk up on it and see it’s happened ...

“I started going to church again,” he says, “and I started believing.”

Last summer Dohn took a mission trip to Guatemala, where he and other SCF members built churches in small towns. He developed close bonds with a number of participants, including a woman named Mary Sprinkel, who he knew in high school. Now she’s his girlfriend.

“That trip just totally changed my life,” he says. “I had friends reach out to me through SCF, people who I had just met, and they’re just the most caring, loving people.”

Dohn and Mary belong to an SCF group called 20somethings. It comprises around 40 young adults who use fellowship and faith to get through major transitions, such as enrolling in or graduating from college. Dohn, 24, has become a group leader and seen membership multiply.

“We’re there to walk through this Christian life with each other, help each other out, and learn from each other,” he says. “I have a huge passion for that.”

“We’re there to walk through this Christian life with each other, help each other out, and learn from each other.”

Dohn Matteoni
SCF 20somethings group leader

Core value #4:

We take God very seriously, we just don't take ourselves too seriously // We laugh often and pursue God with everything we have



“Ultimately, about six months later, I fell back into partying,” Dohn says. “At that point in my life, I’d lived

Sarah Smitherman was just 19 when she succumbed to a blood clot while hospitalized for a rare disorder. Her parents, Carol and Jim Smitherman, mourned the loss of their youngest child and suddenly found themselves with an empty nest.

Now, at least one night a week, their home is full again — with a church group for young adults. Sparks Christian Fellowship’s 20somethings has grown to around 40 members, meeting three nights a week.

Married couples gather Monday nights. Single 20somethings come Tuesday nights

to the home of Lance and Lisa Ardans (neighbors of the Smithermans) and/or Wednesday nights to the Smitherman home. They socialize over dinner, discuss Bible passages or questions, pray, then socialize some more.

“It’s a place where they can share and grow and learn,” Carol says, “and they do exactly that, while at the same time ministering to us.”

FIND FRIENDS
@SCF

Email MistyM@scf.net
for information on
20somethings.



LEADING A
FULL LIFE
20somethings

Charlotte Brothwell struggled with alcohol addiction until she began going to The Answer at Sparks Christian Fellowship. She now helps others overcome alcoholism by volunteering her story and offering support. PHOTO BY ALLISON YOUNG

A Place of Healing

Charlotte found support in battling alcoholism

by Mike Blount

Charlotte Brothwell was only 16 years old when she tried wine for the first time. A year later, she tried whiskey — then beer. It was the start of an addiction that would last most of the 77-year-old's life.

Through four marriages and seven children, Charlotte continued to abuse alcohol. At social occasions, she would often drink until she blacked out. When she was out partying and didn't come home, her eldest daughter would have to watch after her brothers and sisters. Charlotte knew she had a problem, but she was unsure of how to deal with it.

"The way I dealt with my unhappiness was to go have a drink," Charlotte says. "But when you're drinking and under the influence, you're absent from your kids and your family."

But Charlotte continued to struggle with alcoholism for 13 more years until she found support through Sparks Christian Fellowship. Charlotte and her family had been going to SCF for several years, so she already knew about The Answer, a Christ-centered recovery group for men and women struggling with drug and alcohol abuse. It is based on the same 12-step recovery program that is used by Alcoholics Anonymous.

Charlotte says going to the first meeting was a huge step for her.

"I listened as we went around the room, and when it became my turn, I nearly choked getting the words out of my mouth, 'My name is Charlotte and I am an alcoholic,'" she recalls. "That's the first step to healing — you have to admit you have a problem."

Charlotte says she felt comfortable and accepted by the group, which gave her the confidence to confront her addiction.

In November 2014, she celebrated 16 years of sobriety. She continues to attend meetings, even occasionally leading the group. She enjoys helping others by offering her personal story and encouragement.

The Answer changed her life for the better, she says. Now she's closer to God and her family, and she encourages anyone who is struggling with addiction to give the group a chance.

"I hope any newcomer feels like they've found a place where somebody gets it and they can get the help they need," Charlotte says. "That's the reason I keep going — because I believe in the power of God almighty to help us with our problems."

"I believe in the power of God almighty to help us with our problems."

Charlotte Brothwell
SCF member

In 1985, her best friend's 17-year-old daughter was killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. This was a pivotal moment for Charlotte, who says she began to realize the consequences of drinking alcohol.

"I grew up in a time when drinking and driving was pretty acceptable," she says. "But I really started to see how alcohol was affecting me and everyone around me. I felt like I could have been responsible for an accident like that, so I started being more careful with my drinking."

Core value #5:
God calls us to give
our very best // We
lead the way with
generosity

SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN THERE

Support and recovery

Sparks Christian Fellowship has many different support groups that offer a place to discover a new direction and move toward healing.

The Answer

A Christ-centered recovery group for men and women struggling with drug and alcohol abuse.

New Creation

A support group offering hope to women healing from the wounds of past or present sexual abuse.

Shadows to Sunlight

A support group dealing with all forms of domestic abuse, including verbal, spiritual, sexual, economic and/or emotional.

Grief Share

A support group to help survivors face the challenges of rebuilding their lives after the loss of a spouse, child, family member or friend.

Cross Roads

A Christ-centered group for men battling with pornography and other sexual issues.

FIND HELP @SCF For more information on support groups, email AnnaM@scf.net, call 775-331-2303 ext. 119 or visit scf.net/ministries/support-recovery-groups/.

Sparks Christian Fellowship raised \$18,000 to help construct an orphanage in India through Angel House. Fundraising was lead by small groups at the church.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGEL HOUSE



SHARED INTERESTS

Small Groups

Because Sparks Christian Fellowship has such a large and incredibly diverse membership, it's important to provide members with opportunities to connect with others. The small groups program was founded on the belief that the best relationships are developed in groups that are small enough for people to truly know one another.

The goal is for everyone at SCF to find a group that suits them, whatever their needs or interests.

Current groups include:

- » couples/marrieds
- » women
- » men
- » singles
- » intellectual
- » seniors

Best of all, if members can't find a group that meets their needs they can propose a new group. If approved, the member will receive training on how to be a group leader.



For information on small groups,
email AnaC@scf.net or call
775-331-2303, ext. 101.

Making Small Feel Big

Small groups raise funds for construction of orphanage in India

by Amanda Caraway

Core value #6:

We are not meant to follow Jesus alone
// We pursue authentic, deep-spirited relationships in small groups

Some people go to church to be part of something bigger. But finding something big comes from a much smaller place at Sparks Christian Fellowship.

Because of SCF's location and their motto "everyone is welcome," the church has experienced amazing growth and diversity since opening in the early 1990s.

"Many churches are located in the suburbs, but I love our location," says Brett Glanzmann, the pastor overseeing small groups. "It's likely we get noticed by people who otherwise wouldn't think to go to church when they're struggling."

The rapid growth is one of the reasons SCF made it a priority to develop small groups ministries. These groups offer different options throughout the week so that church members can find others with similar interests and struggles. The groups also help the large church feel smaller.

"People comment about the unlikely churchgoers seen at SCF, and I think the small groups help our diverse members connect better," Glanzmann says.

SCF is built on three pillars: Learn, Relate and Serve. Small groups were developed with the second pillar in mind, but church leaders soon decided the small groups could help members fulfill the third pillar. At SCF, serving means not only the local community, but the global community.

"Our service projects are not just about building membership in the local community," Glanzmann says. "Jesus calls us to serve and that means everywhere."

"I think the small groups help our diverse members connect better."

Brett Glanzmann
SCF small groups pastor

The leadership was looking for a fundraising project for the groups when church member Rebecca Hamlin informed them that the nonprofit Angel House needed assistance funding the construction of an orphanage in India. SCF's small groups were tasked with raising a large sum: \$17,500.

Hamlin reached out to all the small groups and helped brainstorm many creative ways to raise the funds, including a garage sale, bunco night and poker night.

"We had a lot of community support," she says. "One of our church members owns a landscaping company and

he donated a full weekend's worth of proceeds. We also approached a local Chili's and they donated a percentage of their earnings for one evening."

The fundraising efforts exceeded all expectations

— SCF raised more than \$18,000. The church donated the promised \$17,500 to Angel House and spent the additional money on shoes, backpacks and school supplies for the children. A few church members will fly to India in December for the dedication of the orphanage that they helped fund.

"Our group puts an emphasis on outreach and service," Hamlin says. "Making a difference in other's lives can help people feel less isolated."



You Belong Here

It's the place you never knew you belonged until you walked in the door. At Sparks Christian Fellowship, you'll feel at home, even if you've never been to church before. SCF offers two identical services on Sunday mornings that include upbeat, high-energy praise and worship. And you'll hear a message that is always challenging, engaging and applicable to life today.

Come as you are: Attire is casual and all are welcome!

Services: 9 and 11 a.m., Sunday mornings

For the hearing impaired: sign language translation during 9 a.m. service

SCF for the kids!

SCFyouth: Middle school at 9 a.m. Sundays, high school at 7 p.m. Sundays

Wild Kingdom: For birth through 5th grade at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sundays

sparks christian fellowship

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Sparks, NV 89431
(775) 331-2303
www.scf.net

 <https://www.facebook.com/sparkschristianfellowship>

 https://twitter.com/SCF_NV

 <http://instagram.com/scfnv>

OTHER WAYS TO BELONG

Support and Recovery

Find strength and support on your path toward healing.
Childcare available.

- » Open, drop-in groups
- » Registration-required classes
- » Community 12-step groups
- » One-on-one support

For help finding a group, call 775-331-2303, ext. 119 or visit <http://www.scf.net/ministries/support--recovery-groups/>

The On Ramp

New to SCF? New to Christ? Learn how to connect at this orientation that starts the first Sunday of every month.
<http://www.scf.net/new-here/on-ramp/>

First Wednesdays

SCF members gather for worship, prayer and communion on the first Wednesday of every month.

CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY

Sparks Christian Fellowship believes in social justice — making sure everyone's needs in the community are met. Through financial contributions, outreach and/or volunteering, SCF supports the following community groups that make a positive difference in our area and the world:

- » Angel Tree
- » Awaken
- » Child Evangelism Fellowship
- » Compassion International
- » Crisis Pregnancy Center
- » Food Bank of Northern Nevada
- » Good Shepherd's Clothes Closet
- » Habitat for Humanity
- » Hosanna Home/Esther's Closet
- » International Student Ministry of Reno
- » Interspersed Christian Fellowship
- » New Hope Recovery Ranch
- » Operation Christmas Child
- » Pathfinders
- » Reno-Sparks Gospel Mission
- » Reno Toy Run
- » Safe Embrace
- » Sierra Nevada Teen Ranch
- » Young Life of Northern Nevada
- » Youth First Reno/Sparks



Core value #7:
God calls us to love
all people // We spread
hope by meeting tangible
needs both locally
and globally

