



# Getting Beneath *the Surface*

April 8 – May 6, 2018

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## Introduction

We all long to live a meaningful life—to understand its complexities and to embrace its simplicity. But who can show us the way? Jesus was a captivating teacher, and many of his most memorable teachings were conveyed as parables. These are short (usually) metaphorical stories that were so artistic, vivid and compelling, they could be remembered after just one telling. Using analogies in the natural and everyday world of first century Palestine, Jesus created a body of teaching that reveals deep truth about the nature of life, God and humanity. These stories are usually quite simple, but contain paradoxes, surprises and cryptic elements that demand deeper reflection and contemplation. The richer meaning lies just beneath the surface of the story, and to hear one of Jesus' parables means to be drawn deeper into the sometimes hidden mystery and meaning of life. In this series we will do just that.

Many of Jesus' metaphors were agricultural, and this is a time of year when our property and farm are springing into life. There is all manner of energy and life just beneath the surface of our piece of the earth, and we can help it burst through in productive and creative ways. So this series will have an agricultural feel with opportunities to experience our beautiful 63-acre property and serve on our community farm. Opportunities include the following:

### **Sunday April 8, 11:45AM**

- Come to room 203 to hear about plans for the farm in 2018, visit the plot and the shed, and find out how you can get involved this season.
- Grab a ride in the hay wagon or take a stroll with friends to the back of our property and experience the beauty of our land.

### **Saturday April 14, 8AM-12 noon**

- Join Mark Hartley and other volunteers in taking care of our property. Projects include weeding, painting, and other seasonal maintenance.

### **Sunday April 15, 11:45AM**

- Come out to the farm to help prepare for next week's Day of Service; weed the strawberry beds for replanting, and fix holes in the fence to keep out groundhogs.
- Grab a ride in the hay wagon or take a stroll with friends to the back of our property and experience the beauty of this place.

### **Sunday April 22, 9AM breakfast, 10AM-12 noon projects**

- Celebrate Earth Day at our Interfaith Day of Service, where we will join with other local faith communities to serve on projects that advance the health of our planet.

## Saturday April 28, 8AM-12 noon

- Join Mark Hartley and other volunteers in taking care of our property. Projects include weeding, painting, and other seasonal maintenance.

In this packet you will find discussion questions for weeks 1, 2 and 4. The questions assume you have heard the message for that week, so if you were unable to be at Cedar Ridge that Sunday, please listen or watch the message online ([www.crc.org/messages/](http://www.crc.org/messages/)) or via the Cedar Ridge app. As always, if you have questions or comments on the material in this series, please send them to us at [questions@crc.org](mailto:questions@crc.org).

## About our Property

Nestled between the metro areas surrounding D.C. and Baltimore, our 63-acre property at 2410 Spencerville Road in Montgomery County, Maryland was purchased by Cedar Ridge Community Church in 1996. We constructed a church building and opened our doors in 1998. Since that time, we have developed the property in the following ways:

- A 40- to 50-minute prayer walk circles the back part of the property and includes 17 stations for prayer and meditation.
- The historic barn, built in 1910, was renovated in 2001 and again adding more structural security in 2008. It hosts our youth programs, a Montessori middle school, a Spanish-speaking church, and other *ad hoc* events.
- A labyrinth was installed in 2007 as a permanent, colored brick installation in the medieval style, loosely based on the labyrinth in the Chartres cathedral in France.
- A half-acre farm, launched in 2009, uses organic principles and volunteer labor to produce 1-2 tons of fresh vegetables and fruit each year to feed our hungry neighbors.
- Beehives have been installed on the property, often producing hundreds of pounds of honey each year, and promoting healthy bee colonies.
- The buildings and grounds have been developed and rented out to accommodate numerous events ranging from weddings and funerals to larger-scale festivals.
- In 2017, 4 geocaches were added to the property—hidden objects found through a treasure hunt using coordinates (see [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) for more details).
- We have placed bird boxes along our fences, sowed wild flowers, and maintained 'no-mow' meadows to provide an inviting habitat for foxes, rabbits, deer, and an endless variety of birds and butterflies.

A map of our property can be found in Annex 1. A history of the property and information about the farmhouse are given in Annex 2.

## Getting Beneath the Surface

### Week 1: The Sower

#### Matthew 13:1-23

This is one of Jesus' most famous parables and has often been seen as a template for his parables in general because it is one that Jesus also explains to his disciples. As readers, we are given privileged status as "insiders" who get to hear the interpretation and meaning. On one level this is helpful because we get an explanation of what is beneath the surface of the parable. But here there is another twist: the explanation is pretty obvious and not particularly cryptic. So rather than focusing on Jesus' explanation of this particular story, perhaps we should focus on what he is saying about his teachings in general. This is a parable about parables; it is a teaching about teaching. The irony is that he is talking about the nature of understanding, but his disciples don't understand it!

This week we explore that conundrum a little further and seek a deeper meaning in the parable. Our goal is to become both better hearers and better doers, so we will look at the various obstacles we face (comparisons to the soil types in the story) and especially focus on how we can cultivate a heart condition and receptivity more like the good soil. Specifically, we will follow the paradoxical spiral of Jesus' teaching that "whoever has, will be given more" and look at humility, innocence, weakness and the sense of having nothing to lose as fertile soil for the Kingdom of God to bear fruit. We will also consider the generous, indiscriminate and inclusive way in which the Kingdom of God is shared—whether it is received or not—and the vulnerability of God's love that does not force its way, but can be as readily rejected as accepted.

#### This week's discussion questions

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
2. In this series we are seeking to get "beneath the surface" of Jesus' teaching. Why do you think Jesus taught in parables, and how might mystery and paradox help us grasp a deeper meaning?
3. Read Matthew 13:11-15. Is this a fair statement (is it just)? The speaker on Sunday gave one explanation for this: do you agree? What do you think Jesus means by it and why?

4. Read Matthew 13:1-23. In this parable, the seed is scattered indiscriminately.
  - According to Jesus, how do we know whether or not the seed has landed on good soil—in our heart or someone else’s?
  - Read two earlier teachings of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-2 and 15-20. How do these apply to this question?
  - What challenges could we take from this personally?
5. Review each of the soil types in the parable and discuss how each applies to our own lives here and now. What re-thinking, adjustment of attitude, or action do we need to take as a result of this?
6. The speaker on Sunday suggested that the nature of the “good soil” might not be immediately obvious. Rather than religious, spiritual, or psychological “competence” being the criterion of the good soil, Jesus points to humility, vulnerability and weakness as the source of fertility for the Kingdom of God.
  - Do you agree with this?
  - What challenges does this present to us?
  - Look at earlier teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:3-11 and Matthew 9:10-13. What light do these passages shed on the concept of fertile soil?
7. Spend some time praying for one another to be more like fertile soil, and to overcome any particular obstacles to this you are currently facing.

### **Exercises during the week**

Discuss ways your group can engage with our farm. Make plans for a regular commitment to serve throughout this season.

Set a date to gather as a group to walk our beautiful property at Cedar Ridge. You could walk the prayer-walk route or simply roam around. As you walk, discuss how you could better take advantage of this gift.

Consider coming out for an hour or two to the property workday on Saturday.

## Getting Beneath the Surface

### Week 2: The Two Sons and the Tenants

#### Matthew 21:28-46

Vineyards held great social, cultural and religious importance in ancient Israel, and were used metaphorically in poetry and song. The prophet Isaiah, writing at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, describes Israel as a vine carefully planted and tended by God; but instead of producing good fruit (righteousness and justice), the nation produced bad fruit (violence and oppression). This vineyard became a “wasteland” when the Assyrian and Babylonian armies defeated Israel and took many of its inhabitants into exile.

When the religious leaders of the day ask Jesus what authority he has to teach in the temple courts, he retells this parable to show that the prophets, poets, songwriters, and even history itself all point to him. Jesus will allow himself to be killed by the religious leaders, and yet will ultimately be vindicated as the Son of God. This week, we will explore how through this parable Jesus contrasts the persistent, vulnerable love of God with the religious leaders’ hardness of heart. We will also consider how he reiterates the prophets’ call to forget empty religion and live lives of righteousness and justice. In addition, we will ponder the picture that runs throughout scripture of a hopeful, inclusive future—a budding, blossoming, fruit-bearing vineyard that fills the whole world.

#### This week’s discussion questions

1. Did you get out onto the Cedar Ridge property this week? If so, what were your impressions? What signs of life did you see? What appeared overgrown?
2. What struck you about the message on Sunday? What did you find most helpful? What was most difficult or challenging?
3. Read Isaiah 5:1-7, “The Song of the Vineyard.”
  - How is God portrayed in this passage?
  - On Sunday, the speaker suggested the overriding sentiment was grief, rather than anger. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
  - The Jewish people had a strong sense of national identity. In what ways are we “responsible” for the failings of our country?
  - What are the implications of this scripture for our pursuit of righteousness and justice? How might this play out practically in our daily lives?

4. Read Matthew 21:28-32.
  - How do you think the religious leaders felt when they heard this parable?
  - How do you feel when you read this parable?
  - Are there areas of your life where you are aware of a gap between your words and your actions?
  
5. Read Matthew 21:33-46.
  - What are some of the important changes Jesus made to this story?
  - What does this story tell us about the chief priests and elders?
  - What does Jesus say about his authority through this parable?
  - What does this parable suggest about God's interactions with humankind?
  - Read John 15:1-5. How does this passage impact our understanding of God's relationship with people?
  
6. How would you describe your outlook towards the future—at the individual, national and global levels? Are you hopeful? Pessimistic? Uncertain? Read Isaiah 27:2-6. What does this passage say about the future? Pray for one another and for our country that we might increasingly produce righteousness and justice.

### **Exercises during the week**

National and international news can often seem depressingly hopeless. But God's promise is that the Kingdom of God will one day fill the whole world, bringing justice and righteousness. As you read or listen to the news this week, pray that more of God's Kingdom will come; and look for ways to promote justice and righteousness in your own life.

Stop by the farm at any time, borrow gloves and tools from the farm shed (it is unlocked, but the handle is sometimes stiff!), and weed the strawberry beds in anticipation of replanting them during our Day of Service next Sunday.

## Getting Beneath the Surface

### Week 3: Interfaith Day of Service and Earth Day Celebration

This Earth Day, join us as we partner with friends from other local faith communities to work together to serve our community. We will begin with a potluck breakfast at 9AM before starting on-site and neighborhood service projects at 10AM.

To sign up to bring breakfast items or supplies, or to reserve your place with a favorite project, check our website at [www.crc.org/get-involved/serve](http://www.crc.org/get-involved/serve)

Don't miss this family-friendly, fun and meaningful event—and bring along your friends, neighbors and relatives. There will be projects suitable for all ages and abilities. Community service and Student Service Learning hours are available.

## Getting Beneath the Surface

### Week 4: The Treasure and the Pearl

#### Matthew 13:44-46

This week's message focuses on two tweet-sized parables that speak metaphorically about looking beneath the surface, weighing our priorities, and discovering the joy of Jesus and his kingdom. This kingdom is compared to a person who finds something of great value and then goes "all in" in order to obtain it. In one case, it seems that the treasure finder accidentally stumbles upon a hidden treasure, while the second story features a long-time seeker. In both cases, the finders act decisively to sell everything they own to gain that prize, and their decision changes everything.

Through these parables, Jesus invites us to go "all in" and embrace his kingdom, daring to dream of heaven on earth. While literally selling all our possessions is rarely a prerequisite, we may find we need to let go of certain beliefs, behaviors, uncertainties, fears, securities, reputations, and distractions in order to fully enjoy the life God intends for us. All around us, we can see examples of people who are pursuing this kingdom out of love for Jesus, no matter what the cost, by showing self-giving love, forgiving those who hurt them, speaking truth to power, sacrificing financially, and so on. This week, we will try to allow these parables to get beneath the surface of our lives, exploring what might be holding us back from going "all in," and encouraging each other to see what is hidden and put our confidence in Jesus.

#### This week's discussion questions

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
2. The speaker on Sunday suggested that the kingdom of heaven is in many ways hidden or unseen.
  - Why might people who make decisions based on this unseen reality be considered foolish or irrational?
  - In what ways were the treasure finder and merchant in Matthew 13:44-46 making risky decisions?
  - Why do you think they decided to go all in anyways?
3. In what ways are Jesus and his kingdom of unmatched value in your life? What is it about following Jesus that brings you great joy? If you haven't yet found this joy or "supremely valuable treasure," what is it about Jesus that initially appeals to you?

4. Read the passages below. What did Jesus' disciples and Paul let go of or renounce in order to seek Jesus and his kingdom? In your own words, what did they gain from it?
  - Matthew 19:27-30
  - Philippians 3:3-14
5. The speaker shared several examples of people going "all in" for the kingdom. Which, if any, of these illustrations resonated with or inspired you?
6. Quietly reflect upon ways in which Jesus may be inviting you to embrace his kingdom and his ways wholeheartedly. Is there anything that is making you hesitant to do so? Is there anything you need to let go of? Write out what you're sensing, perhaps beginning with "the kingdom of heaven is like letting go of \_\_\_\_\_ and then \_\_\_\_\_." If you are comfortable doing so, share with a friend or with the group.
7. Spend time praying for each other to find joy and the courage to go "all in."

### **Exercises during the week**

Geocaching is a fun way to enjoy nature and explore, and could be a great exercise for your group or family to get to know the Cedar Ridge property a little better. Geocaching is the recreational activity of hunting for and finding a hidden object using coordinates or waypoints. You can start by going to the website [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) to find caches near you. Use the geocache app or GPS to zero in on a cache, and log your find. There are four geocaches on the Cedar Ridge property. Happy hunting!

If you did not do the exercises from one of the previous weeks, re-read them and consider committing to one or more.

## Getting Beneath the Surface

### Week 5: Parable Presented by the Youth

In this 5<sup>th</sup> week of the series, high school youth and their leaders will deliver the message on a parable told by Jesus. The discussion questions will be available online and in hard copy in the Commons on Sunday May 6<sup>th</sup>.

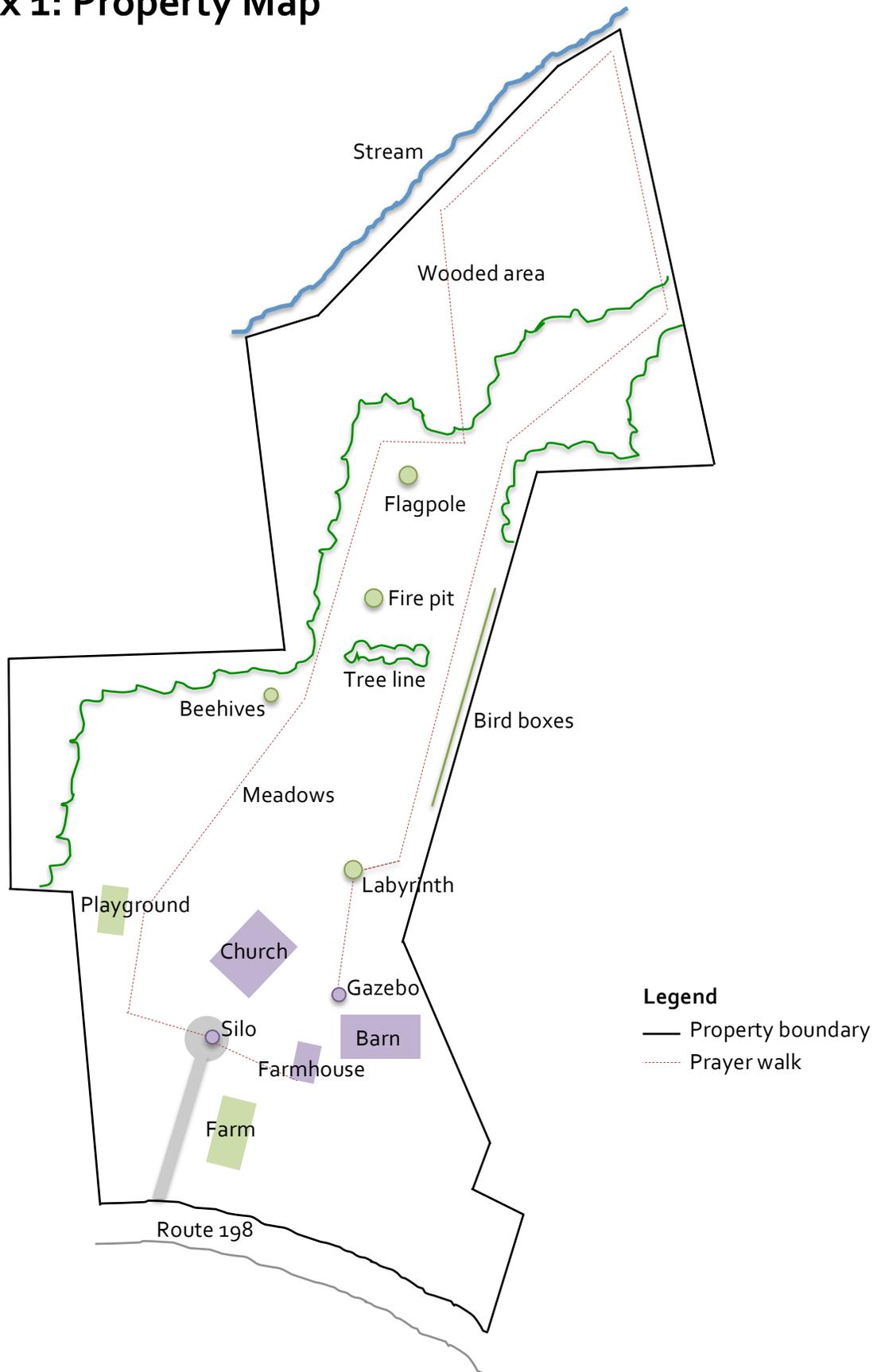
#### Exercises during the week

We are now in the midst of spring: the freezing cold of winter is behind us, and the scorching heat and humidity of summer is still several months away. Enjoy this time of warmth, growth, and beauty to explore our property. Take an hour to traverse the prayer walk, which starts by the gazebo to the right of the church. Behind the gazebo you will find a mailbox containing guides to this walk around our property.

Alternatively, spend some time praying, reflecting and simply enjoying creation at the picnic tables or by the labyrinth. If you have children, take them to the playground on the left side of our property, beyond the parking lot. Thank God for our community, our property, and the wonder of creation!

Consider coming out for an hour or two to the property workday on Saturday. Lend a hand with painting, weeding and other seasonal tasks. All ages and abilities welcome.

# Annex 1: Property Map



## Annex 2: Brief History of the Cedar Ridge Property

In 1703, a 600-acre tract of land was conveyed by the Lord Proprietor of Maryland and surveyed for Mark Richardson.<sup>1</sup> This land was named Bear (or Bare) Bacon—reputedly because of the wild animals that roamed the area.<sup>2</sup> Adjoining or possibly overlapping land in the same vicinity was patented in 1715 as “Snowden’s Manor Enlarged” in what was then Prince George’s County.<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County was formed out of Prince George’s County in 1776.

In the 1740s, Anglicans began moving into this part of Maryland, including the Duvall family.<sup>4</sup> Lewis (Louis) H. Duvall was born in Prince George’s County in 1827. He purchased 251 acres of Bear Bacon from Isaac B. Iglehart in 1851 for \$600.<sup>5</sup> Iglehart had bought the property the previous year from Elias Ellicott of Prince George’s County in payment of a debt of \$333.34 plus interest.<sup>6</sup> This may be the same Elias Ellicott who co-founded the Muirkirk Furnace in Prince George’s County in 1847 with his brother Andrew. Although Quakers had long opposed slavery (Sandy Spring Quakers, for example, banished households from meetings for holding slaves in 1781), the brothers relied on slave labor to operate the furnace.<sup>7</sup>

Duvall married Mary Jane Spencer (1834-1904) in 1853, and they had 8 children. Mary Jane’s passing was noted in the Annals of Sandy Spring:

“Also on 20 November, Mary J., wife of Louis H. Duvall, of Spencerville, passed from earth. Although not actually a resident of Sandy Spring, she was well known to many of our people, for she was active in the temperance movement, and ready to help in any good work. She will be keenly missed and long remembered by many outside her own immediate circle of relatives and friends.”<sup>8</sup>

In April 1855, Lewis Duvall sold 122 acres of Bear Bacon to his father-in-law, William H. Spencer (1805-1892) for \$610.<sup>9</sup> William Spencer, together with his wife and five children, other relatives and neighbors from Southampton Township, Pennsylvania, arrived in this area, originally called Drayton,<sup>10</sup> in 1848.<sup>11</sup> This small community, formed by Spencer on the Laurel Road (present day Spencerville Road), connected the Quaker settlements of Sandy Spring and

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<sup>1</sup> “The History of Montgomery County, Maryland” by Thomas H. S. Boyd (1879), p 32

<sup>2</sup> Volume 1 of the Annals of Sandy Spring, p xvii

<sup>3</sup> Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-80 (PACS D3.39)

<sup>4</sup> Volume 6 of the Annals of Sandy Spring, p 14

<sup>5</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., STS 5/449

<sup>6</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., STS 4/367

<sup>7</sup> Meyer, Eugene L. (February 3, 1999). *Reliving A Time Cast In Iron*. Washington Post

<sup>8</sup> The Annals of Sandy Spring, Volume 3, p 303-304

<sup>9</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 4/485

<sup>10</sup> Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-80 (PACS D3.39)

<sup>11</sup> Lord, Elizabeth, M. (1976). *Burtonsville Heritage: Genealogically Speaking*.

Ashton with the railroad line at Laurel. Drayton was renamed Spencerville in William Spencer's honor, and he became the first postmaster of Spencerville in 1859.<sup>12</sup>

William Spencer bought 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  acres from the William Holmes estate (also known as Bealls Manor) in or before 1856<sup>13</sup> and farmed the land, which was noted as being productive for wheat, corn and hay.<sup>14</sup> He is thought to have built the front part of the farmhouse around 1855 and the addition circa 1870.<sup>15</sup> Since William Spencer owned several parcels of land, and there are no maps available showing the property lines for these parcels, there is confusion in the records as to whether the farmhouse was built on Bare Bacon,<sup>16</sup> or (more likely) on adjoining land, such as land from the William Holmes estate.

William Spencer sold both the 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  acres from the William Holmes estate and the 122-acre Bare Bacon tract to his son-in-law Charles Dickenson in 1857 for \$2000—together with 3 horses, 2 mules, 5 cows, 3 wagons, a cart, 4 ploughs, 3 harnesses, 7 beds, 500 bushels of corn, winter grain, furniture and farming implements for an additional \$1000.<sup>17</sup> William Spencer repurchased the land for the same price of \$2000 from his daughter Amelia A. Dickenson in 1859,<sup>18</sup> following the death of Charles the previous year.

William Spencer sold Bare Bacon to his son Hiriam Spencer in 1861 for \$1000.<sup>19</sup> Hiriam married in 1868,<sup>20</sup> and died two years later from tuberculosis at the age of 31. In compliance with a court order, his property was sold at auction. Hiriam had greatly increased the value of Bare Bacon with a large house (the Spencer/Oursler house located behind Burtonsville Park at 15920 Oursler Road<sup>21</sup>) smokehouse, icehouse, and orchards.<sup>22</sup> William Spencer repurchased Bare Bacon in 1873 for \$4650 through the court-ordered Trustee sale<sup>23</sup> and one month later, took out a mortgage on the property for \$1000 from Thomas Conley, which was transferred to Joseph Stabler in 1886.<sup>24</sup>

In 1871, William Spencer purchased 35 $\frac{1}{4}$  acres of Snowden's Manor Enlarged from Charles and Sarah Stabler for \$616.87. Ten years later, he sold this land, the 122-acre Bare Bacon and the

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<sup>12</sup> Geraci, Ron, Vicki Walker, and Linda Donnaray. (1976). *Old Building Survey of Burtonsville Area*. Sponsored by the Bicentennial Committee, Burtonsville, Md. See also *The Annals of Sandy Spring*, Volume 6.

<sup>13</sup> Montgomery County Commissioners Tax Assessment Book of 1853-63, p 326

<sup>14</sup> Boyd, T.H.S. (1879) *The History of Montgomery County, Maryland, from its Earliest Settlement in 1650 to 1879*. p.142

<sup>15</sup> The date is based on the date that William Spencer purchased the property, tax assessments, and appearance on the Martenet and Bond map of 1865.

<sup>16</sup> As claimed in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-55 (PACS D3.32)

<sup>17</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 5/593

<sup>18</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 7/349

<sup>19</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 8/485

<sup>20</sup> Lord, Elizabeth, M. (1976). *Burtonsville Heritage: Genealogically Speaking*.

<sup>21</sup> See Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-58 (PACS D3.29)

<sup>22</sup> Montgomery County Equity Case Record, 193 (1870).

<sup>23</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., EBP 11/165

<sup>24</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., EBP 10/201

91¾-acre William Holmes estate—less 23 acres, which had been sold off previously—together with 3 horses, 5 wagons, 4 cows, 9 hogs, 4 harnesses, crops of wheat and corn, a mule, a hay rack, a mower and household and kitchen furniture to his daughter, Margaret Jamison for \$3,000.<sup>25</sup>

The William Spencer household is described in the 1880 census as including William (a 75 year old widowed farmer); John Spencer (his 36 year old son) and U.W. Jamison (his son-in-law) who worked on the farm; Margaret Jamison (his 47 year old daughter); and Laura Johnson, an 18 year old black servant.<sup>26</sup>

William Spencer died in 1892, and Joseph Stabler began mortgage foreclosure procedures against Margaret Jamison the following year, which led to the sale in 1894 of Bare Bacon for \$1342.<sup>27</sup>

Margaret lived on the remaining property until her death about 1905, at which point, her only living child, Anna Wilson,<sup>28</sup> sold the house on 62½ acres, referred to as Snowden's Manor Enlarged (or "whatever name or names the same may be known or called"), to farmer Edward Carr for \$3,100.<sup>29</sup> The Carr family added outbuildings to the property during the 1920s.<sup>30</sup> Edward died in 1956, leaving the farm to his wife Laura and their children Gilbert and Clara. At that time, the farm consisted of the farmhouse, two tenant houses and various outbuildings.<sup>31</sup> Later, Laura conveyed the house to Gilbert and Clara.<sup>32</sup> Clara Carr was the owner of the farm until her death in 1986. Cedar Ridge Community Church purchased the farm from the estates of Gilbert and Clara Carr in December 1995.

## Description of the Farmhouse

The farmhouse (Spencer/Carr House) was originally constructed ca. 1855, and is a rare surviving example of a once common farmhouse type locally identified as the "Spencerville style." The symmetrical building, with a near flat roof, is a variation of the three-bay I-house form that adds a distinctive third (attic) level decorated by vernacular Greek Revival frieze band windows directly beneath the cornice. (See photo on next page.)

The main block of this three-story house has six-over-six sash windows on the first and second floors, and shorter three-over-three windows on the third floor. The three-over-three windows were unique to the time, and give the house architectural significance. The hip-roofed front

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<sup>25</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., EBP 25/36

<sup>26</sup> 1880 Census cited in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-58 (PACS D3.29)

<sup>27</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JA 44/164

<sup>28</sup> Jenkins, Howard, M. (1904), *Genealogical Sketch of the Descendants of Samuel Spencer of Pennsylvania*.

<sup>29</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., 184/167

<sup>30</sup> Montgomery County Commissioners Tax Assessment Books cited in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-55 (PACS D3.32)

<sup>31</sup> Will #19407, Montgomery County Register of Wills cited in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-58 (PACS D3.29)

<sup>32</sup> Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., 320/174

porch is shorter than most front porches found in Burtonsville; it being only half as long as the house. It has chamfered posts and elaborate corner brackets. The gable ends are plain, with a pair of small two-over-four windows in the gable. A chimney rises from within each gable end. This main block contains a central stair flanked by one room on either side. There is a full depth basement under this portion of the house, which was rare for the time. There is no stair hall, and access to the slightly later rear addition is through the room to the left.



**The farmhouse in 1973**

The frame rear addition containing the kitchen is only two stories high. There are two box stairs, each containing winder steps, at each end of this addition, providing access to the second floor. A box spiral stair in the main house connects the second and third floors. The rear wing originally consisted of a frame two-story room. The kitchen room was added later, probably during the 1870s, and the porch to the west of the wing is enclosed.

Unusually for farmhouses of this period, the studs, second floor and roof framing are milled (rather than hand-hewn) lumber. Species range from pine to oak, and both circular and band saws were used, suggesting the lumber came from different mills. The house was sheathed in dimensional boards (of varying widths but consistent thickness) laid diagonally, and then lap

siding was applied. This was uncommon for the day—typical practice being lap siding only—and would have made the frame exceptionally strong.

The lack of an open-hearth fireplace and the presence of chimneys with thimbles (holes to receive stovepipes) suggest the house was heated with iron stoves, as pioneered by Benjamin Franklin a generation before. The presence of an old well under the rear addition to the house may indicate early indoor plumbing, with a hand pump at the wellhead, later replaced by an electrical pump.

### **Recent Changes to the Property**

In 1973, the Spencer/Carr farm was visited by a park historian from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), and nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places with the National Parks Service. The property was visited by a surveyor from the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) in 1981, and inventoried by a representative of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in 1982. The farmhouse was described at that time as being “well preserved.” In 1986, the entire property was designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and therefore protected under the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code.

When Cedar Ridge purchased the property in 1995, the farmhouse was in very poor condition: it had been unoccupied for at least nine years, had been vandalized by local youth, and was infested with various animals and insects. While restoring the farmhouse was a priority for Cedar Ridge (as indicated by the repeated discussions held with the M-NCPPC, as well as internal Cedar Ridge communications), all available funds were required for the construction of the church building.

In late 1996, Cedar Ridge contacted Neubauer-Sohn Consulting Engineers to conduct a structural study of the farmhouse. The technical drawings were reviewed the following year by Dave Morrison, who noted access issues with shoring up the basement under the main block of the house. Additional studies of the basement were conducted by WQQM Architects, who described the foundational problems as “very severe.” They recommended temporary support through shoring, cribbing and jacks, and the replacement of the foundation walls and footings.

In 1998, Cedar Ridge requested a proposal from WQQM Architects for design services to rehabilitate the original 3-story block of the farmhouse and seal up the connection to the rear addition. The proposal for these services was priced at \$7,360. SPN, Inc., provided a proposal for the renovation based on WQQM Architects design, and estimated the cost to be \$175,883.

Such funds were unavailable at the time, as the church building was still under construction, but volunteer work was undertaken to remove debris from the farmhouse, and ready it for rehabilitation.

The Cedar Ridge property was again inspected by the MHT in 2001, to ensure the new church building had not interfered with the "architectural integrity and distinction of the house." The new construction did not interfere with the historic house. MHT staff noted: "The house itself remains intact, if in a somewhat deteriorated condition."

Based on the findings of the structural studies of the farmhouse, Cedar Ridge discussed with the HPC the possibility of removing the rear addition to the house.

In 2001, the historic barn was determined to be in need of immediate attention as the barn sills were rotten, and this was noted by professionals to be a liability and of concern for collapse. All Cedar Ridge resources were therefore put to barn renovation. Robert Schwartz Associates Architects was hired and SPN Construction completed the barn renovation at a cost of \$902,832.

In 2003, M-NCPPC conducted a site visit to inspect the farmhouse. Staff described the house as "in extremely poor condition... Damage is severe, even apparently structurally threatening on 1870s wing. Building is open to the elements... Windows were recently vandalized..." The officials noted the immediate need to close the house to protect it from the elements, as well as the longer-term need to develop and implement a preservation plan. Cedar Ridge staff again asked about demolishing the addition, and was told that it was not usually permissible, but could be possible as part of a restoration plan, particularly if the restored house was opened to the public.

The following repairs were made by Cedar Ridge in an effort to preserve the structure: All the windows were boarded with plywood to protect from further vandalism of the windows. The plywood was painted to mimic a 6-over-6 window to preserve the view from the road. The exterior siding was scraped and painted to preserve the original wood siding. The gutters were cleaned and repaired to keep water away from the building.

In 2003 and 2004, Cedar Ridge made inquiries about available grants to support the rehabilitation of the farmhouse, but these inquiries did not lead to concrete funding opportunities. Discussions with Habitat for Humanity to restore the farmhouse fell through when their plans to build other structures on the property conflicted with zoning limitations.

From 2003 to 2008 a local contractor worked extensively to restore much of the exterior I-frame of the house. The front porch foundation was repaired, the rotten porch floor was replaced in-kind with tongue and groove wood, the siding restored and painted, the foundation holes filled to prevent further pest infestation, gutters were cleared and secured, and the roof was patched to prevent water infiltration. Non-historic dilapidated basement doors were replaced with a new a wood hatch to secure the basement from vandals and animals. The well was securely covered. The roof on the back addition was also patched.

In 2008, a structural engineer inspected the historic barn and determined it was still not stable, despite the expensive professional renovation. Cedar Ridge raised an additional \$224,809 and

employed Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber for one year to secure, restore and re-open the barn. This effort left no funds for work on the farmhouse restoration.

In 2011, Cedar Ridge met with the HPC to discuss the historic requirements for our buildings and property. Cedar Ridge staff was told it was unlikely that we would be able to obtain approval for demolition of the addition to the farmhouse. We were also instructed to have a professional review of the foundation, framing and roof issues to give an overview of needed repairs.

Cedar Ridge therefore contacted Heritage Building and Renovation, Inc., who recommended using volunteers to gut the interior to expose all of the structure, contracting an architect to produce "as built" drawings, and hiring a structural engineer to inspect the building. Heritage would then provide an estimate of cost, which could range from \$100K to \$400K.

Cedar Ridge drew up a rehabilitation plan, but other cost demands meant that funding was not available for implementation of the plan. Cedar Ridge investigated the establishment of a farming enterprise to help fund the renovation, but the unexpected relocation of key personnel meant this plan was no longer feasible.

In 2015, Cedar Ridge hired ARC Environmental to conduct an assessment of the property, including the farmhouse. The report read: "The rear addition is dilapidated and beyond feasible rehabilitation. It is unstable, unsafe, and at risk of collapse, creating a dangerous condition." The report noted that the first priority should be the removal of the electrical drop from this part of the house. The main block of the farmhouse was considered to be in better condition, and could eventually be restored. The estimated cost of repairing the exterior of the main block and demolishing the rear portion was up to \$91,500. This would include relocating the electrical service drop, repairing the foundations, replacing the cellar doors, reframing the front porch and adding new flooring, and replacing the roof.

Despite ongoing efforts to keep water away from the house and keep it sealed from the elements, the side wall of the addition to the farmhouse separated from the floor joists and the second story partially collapsed in late 2015 while Cedar Ridge was in the process of renegotiating the mortgage to release funds for needed property repairs.

Cedar Ridge has relocated the electrical drop, as instructed by ARC Environmental as a first step for the farmhouse, and continues to move forward with recommended repairs to other structures on the property. In the coming weeks, we will hire an architect to work with us and the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission to develop a plan for our farmhouse. We anticipate a two-stage process, which we hope will lead to (i) the removal of the rear addition and stabilization of the main farmhouse, and (ii) the eventual restoration of the farmhouse. We look forward to beginning to see some tangible improvements in the coming months.