

Aggregated Feedback

Overarching Theme Papers

Sharing the Vision

Suggestions:

- Advertise events, including social justice events, on WGTS community calendar: 70% of WGTS listenership don't go to church. We need to find the disaffected.
- Be more pro-active in advertising this church—I wish I had found it sooner. The search terms I used to find Cedar Ridge were “liberal evangelical,” “gay-friendly,” “open-minded.”
- Use Value Pak to reach out to more people.
- Use social media and standard marketing. Use search engine optimization on our website. Collaborate with other churches like us online to create a network.
- Use meetup.com for activities and services, e.g., for the racial reconciliation prayer circle, CRCC forums, creative cups, service days, farm days. Start a CRCC group and invite others, and partner with other groups.
- We need to develop an elevator pitch to explain what Cedar Ridge is all about - and how we don't think we have the whole truth.
- Need to think through: what's in it for us? What's in it for them? We need an elevator speech: 1-2 sentences that uniquely describes Cedar Ridge. We do not know all the answers. We follow Jesus.
- Let's wear nametags, sit in different seats, and make an effort to greet someone we don't know on a Sunday morning.
- Could we have different color nametags or stickers saying "I'm a hugger" or "Just a handshake, please." Something clever but that allows non-huggers to feel safe.
- Encourage non-pastors to join pastors in sermons to help share a wider variety of stories.
- We need to build relationships with people—they will come because they know us.
- Need to find ways to deepen connections with newcomers. Be intentional—introduce yourself to someone you don't know for first 7 minutes; and invite community to greet newcomers at CR7M; recognizing and cultivating the “spirituality of hospitality.”
- We should agree to talk to people we don't know (well) for the first 10 minutes after the service—before just talking with our friends.
- Invite people into our mission, rather than into our worship service.
- Hold ice cream socials on Sunday mornings – have a sticker on the bulletin.
- Have a Sunday evening service for young people.
- House Concerts would be a good fit at CR to draw people in, support local artists, and encourage generosity (Julie W and Jon E have contacts and interest in making this happen).
- Encourage meet-ups to connect people in our community, get together for coffee, etc.
- We should hold an Alpha course or something similar for unchurched people wanting an open discussion on God.
- We should hold more gatherings: gardening/farming, beer/sangria, bonfires, movie on the barn, etc.
- We should hold more outdoors services with or without the traditional Sunday service format.
- Plan for interfaith events around Thanksgiving.
- Find something in common with other churches—feeding the homeless, study specific books in Bible, etc. Maybe create a discipleship series with another church.

- Engage with other churches (maybe over joint Sunday lunches rotating among churches) to see how needs and resources can be combined to make a greater impact on local neighborhoods in areas such as food scarcity/hunger, tutoring, parental mentoring, and economic counseling.

Perspectives:

- I like how this church is a place I feel comfortable inviting any of my friends, regardless of their religion, or if they follow a religion or not.
- I think sharing our vision is especially important in this political climate when a lot of people don't feel safe and there is so much judgment and division.
- We want to be a safe place—but not so safe that we hold back from challenging one another.
- We should welcome new people and help them understand about Jesus.
- For Cedar Ridge to share our vision, we have to actually stand up for people and help people, rather than just saying we do.
- I think if we had a deeper sense of God's love for us and for others, we would want to share it more. But we are too consumer-minded, and think about "what's in it for me?" lacking a real concern for people outside our community.
- Sharing the vision is very important. As a service to people, we need to be and teach a better way of following Jesus. I think intentionally attracting people to join our community and mobilizing members as ambassadors are the most critical. Both will require being able to describe what we believe and why without talking (too much) about what we don't believe.
- Our worship and Sunday experience is our first impression. Let's ask ourselves: If I were searching for a progressive Christian church with a strong sense of social justice, what would that service look like? I don't think we are answering that question very well, even though I know we are working on it.
- Day of Service helps address logistical (time, distance) obstacles that prevent us from sharing.
- Forming coalitions with other groups/orgs would be great, but at what cost? Do we have capacity to join networks, or are we spreading ourselves too thin?
- Inhibiting factors to inviting others to CRCC are:
 - fear of being judged by neighbors/friends if they know we are churchgoers
 - coworkers are too cerebral for the music we play/sing
 - Millennials and Gen X are not amenable to church—start with farm and service days
- We are not hard to find if you are looking, but not accessible by public transportation.
- We are not very pushy in our marketing—people find us by random.
- We call ourselves a "community church" so should partner more with local churches.
- Using "likeminded" negates all of our talk about being open and inclusive and working with people different from us.
- Why do we say "like-minded"? Does everyone have to think like me? Could be off-putting to newcomers.
- I don't want to turn our events into "commercials" – I was embarrassed at the last harvest festival when the hayride was turned into a church commercial and people couldn't enjoy the ride or the property – people feel that stuff right away, feels inauthentic.
- We need more and better communication about needs and activities in order to be more inclusive. Many people don't know about things they could participate in.
- Tithing is my responsibility as my Christian walk with the Lord. Rich sermons with scripture encourage more giving. More sermons, word bible-based. Less talking. Put the talking part in announcements (1 minute or less). Love Cedar Ridge but increase word of Jesus Christ.

Advancing Social Justice

Suggestions:

- Create a list of organizations with which to connect if individuals are interested.
- We could have a listserv for social justice community outreach. We'd love to know what others are doing in their own communities—are they working for non-profits, advocacy, community organizing, etc.? That work could be included on the listserv or CRCC website or in the Commons to help other CRCC members connect with work going on in their communities.
- We need to know more about political and social justice advocacy happenings in the area—what votes are happening, meetings being held, marches, etc. We could send CRCC folks as representatives.
- We would like to have regular exposure to social justice issues—book studies, documentary screenings, etc., on a regular basis.
- Invite social justice speakers to speak once a month on social justice topics. For example, International Justice Mission, Bread for the World, World Vision, Bryan Stevenson organization, etc.
- Play a TED talk on some social justice topic, followed by pastoral response and Q/A from the audience
- We could offer resources for WIC/SNAP/FARMS on our farm/outreach page. We should be sure to offer that information at our farm produce booth at Greencastle/ECCC.
- We need to include immigrant/refugee communities in our plans for social justice: Spanish classes, English classes, resources, partner with CASA, sanctuary spaces (become a support for sanctuary churches), helping undocumented families navigate WIC/SNAP/FARMS.
- We should consider making Cedar Ridge a sanctuary church.
- Coordinate with Greencastle PTA (help do fundraising, getting people involved, etc.).
- We need initiatives where all ages can get involved in order to model a concern for social justice to our children.
- Our church could help people by giving food to the homeless and giving toys to kids who don't have any.
- Look into what happens to weekend food for Green Castle Elementary School students during the summer break. Food scarcity doesn't take a vacation.
- We could help an animal shelter.
- For people who want to become advocates, CRCC could hold a workshop on what people could do in advocacy. Jon Sutton has worked in state advocacy and would be willing to help lead a workshop. Others in the congregation might also be willing to help, such as Rory Anderson and Melanie Griffith.
- If we have immigration lawyers in the community, we could provide once a month immigration counseling, and/or assist with completing applications for naturalization OR we could partner and support the other agencies who already provide such services;
- Affordable housing is affected by the budget cuts more than before: my agency (HOC) put a freeze on issuing Section 8 vouchers to low income families. 200 out of 400 selected were sent letters stating that we cannot issue vouchers for them at the moment. Perhaps, we could encourage people to call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and advocate for people who are affected by the budget cuts.

Perspectives:

- I'm challenged to get out of my comfort zone and make connections with people that are different than me on a consistent basis.

- It is hard to let go of fear. To give will not be my loss in what really counts.
- We can't just think the church or government can change social injustice. Each one of us investing in relationships is needed.
- I was at the Holocaust museum this week. I asked myself if I would have been a person that risked my life to help Jews. I realized that the degree I'm helping the refugee or oppressed today was my answer.
- Build awareness, move from complacency to mobilization.
- We should list and encourage the social justice work already going on from members.
- As followers of Jesus, we should have more of a profound sense of dissatisfaction with injustice than we have currently.
- I'm interested in the issues of human trafficking, the current immigration/refugee crisis, and anywhere there are human rights violations. That includes the crisis in the justice system with mass incarceration and racial and economic bias -- also, ending solitary confinement, and any form of torture. NRCAT is an organization that is doing great work in this area.
- I'm not so sure I prefer the modern term of social justice but like using the words of Jesus talking about love, caring for the widow, and the foreigner.
- I hope we can inspire children in schools. Maybe we could have more children's events here at church or go and volunteer more in schools.
- There is tension between educating people on social justice, and creating safe space to share personal stories. We are sometimes too quick to judge people's perspectives as "wrong" and then the space does not feel safe.
- I think we are often not a "safe space" around contentious issues. This creates fear about saying the "wrong" thing and causing offence. We are not always good at suspending judgment and listening to intent.
- I love this paper.
- I would like to advance social justice, but I have trouble knowing how to get started.
- We need to create a balance between centralized/corporate serving and decentralized/individual serving.
- We like that CRCC isn't territorial—that we are open to community partnerships, and that we aren't trying to reinvent the wheel, but work with existing programs and initiatives.
- Education policy is very complex—could CRCC really make an impact in that field?
- Will our work at schools expand to other communities?

Prioritizing Relationships

Suggestions:

- CR can help kids get to know one another better by providing venues to talk, play and eat together, or go on a camping trip.
- Organize social activities to allow people to build relationships.
- Help people connect with each other who are going through similar difficulties, struggles, or life phases.
- More congregational sharing about personal struggles would make this feel more like a safe place.
- To create safe space we need to have a venue or process to work through conflict in ministries/relationship conflicts—to talk it through (maybe like a Quaker group).
- We need more training in listening skills, empathy, etc.

Perspectives:

- Everybody's looking at their phones. I always smile at people, but now nobody looks at me anymore. You have to work hard to establish any kind of relationship.
- Relationships need to develop organically around some kind of commonality. We have to take the time to find out what we have in common.
- Sometimes I don't open up as much as I should. It's a risk. I don't really have any true, deep friendships—people I trust to share everything with.
- I love the idea that we should allow ourselves to be less efficient in order to foster relationships along the way. That's so countercultural!
- I really want to have deep relationships—not just to be busy making small talk with a lot of people—that's exhausting!
- The prioritizing relationships paper is great, but hard as most of us are in multiple communities and friendships.
- Having a good time matters to me.
- My experience at CRCC includes many positive things, but the thing that keeps me from more involvement is the difficulties I've had working in ministries when there is conflict about/around direction, activities, etc., and the inability of leaders to speak to and work through those conflicts. It is in part the ability to let go, listen, and be authentic about myself that leads to stronger relationships and safety. We need more mature leaders in ministries and groups that can work through conflicts without wounding others. Personal awareness of my own issues allows me to pour out love and grace when there are conflicts with others. How can we help each other grow in these types of authentic, loving relationships?
- Unfortunately, I don't think relationships are that much of a priority for our community as a whole. We have busy lives, family commitments, church attendance is inconsistent—I don't think we are truly invested in one another's lives—or even think we should be.
- The paper makes it sound like relationships are all about hard work—where is the fun? Just being together and having a good time goes a long way in achieving these goals. It doesn't always need to be so serious.
- I like to develop relationships with diverse people, but do best when I can get to know people in small groups or one-on-one.

Cultivating Openness to God's Presence

Suggestions:

- As many of you know, I seek to follow a contemplative path. This is transformation. I am in favor of contemplative retreats. If we could all (myself included) take God that seriously, that deeply, be that surrendered, it would change everything. Thank you for this opportunity to provide input.

Perspectives:

- I long to experience more of God's presence in my everyday life, but when times are hard, it can be difficult to find God—even through prayer and worship.
- God wants us to look to the children for guidance. Let us see their joy in just playing, laughing, having fun. Not everything needs to be dark and serious.

Ministry Area Papers

Children and Youth

Suggestions:

- We can create a safe space in MS/HS by avoiding judgment and talking about real world events and applications.
- A MS youth group / small group outside of church would be good if there was food, it was relaxed and fun and focused on building relationships—not as structured as on Sundays
- HS interested in a monthly or quarterly get together outside of Sundays—not interested in connecting virtually
- MS/HS—we would like worship every week—not just on First Sundays. We could use Spotify at the beginning of group time to play worship songs; or we could have a youth worship group.
- We could move the picnic tables to promote more intergenerational interaction.
- We need training/guidance for college students to be small group leaders and mentors for HS.
- The transition after college may be difficult for structural reasons rather than cultural. HS/college grads may need personal invitations to join a group or spend time with older adults.
- It is difficult for youth to join and contribute to formal forums. There should be a youth planning group or advisory board for strategic planning.
- There should be more discussion of communion and baptism in youth groups. Commitment Sundays should be on a First Sunday so youth can see baptism.
- As a pre-school mom, I would appreciate support for parenting—a parenting group and a list of emergency babysitters (possibly teens).
- Organize a parents' night out: bring kids in PJs to church for activities while parents go out.
- We should mix up groups on churchwide Service Days to promote intergenerational interaction.
- Use service days to prepare care packages for college students, or incorporate this into other Sundays.
- Elementary children love packing the Christmas boxes. It's one of the 2 services they don't want to miss—the other is Christmas Eve so they can collect a box to give away.

Perspectives:

- Youth/MS would like more leaders so we can meet in smaller groups and outside of Sunday.
- I don't want more MS leaders; I like to share a bond with the leaders we have.
- We (high schoolers) don't have much time to meet outside of Sunday morning.
- I (HS student) don't want a separate college-age group; I want to continue joining with the HS group.
- College students often want to join adult service. The first year of college it might be more comfortable to join youth, but this is not necessarily best for older college students.
- It's hard to share something personal with other HS students when not everyone is listening and they are distracted by their phones.
- HS youth are often on cell phones during warm up time, so there is little interaction.
- I am looking for opportunities for involvement and to build relationships and mentorships.
- Can we use technology to promote more connection among youth?

Discipleship Groups

Suggestions:

- Consider forming a discipleship group that meets on Sunday immediately after church to discuss the message.
- Members of the pastoral team should visit small groups so the church as a whole gets to know them. This would help with sharing the gospel and inviting others to come to church.
- Create a charter for focused groups, clarify the mission/intention and communicate it on the website so others can join. List focus, capacity, day/time and let people “shop” for a group themselves. Make this more visible online and include a map.
- Organize a group on an early Saturday evening for parents of young children and arrange a babysitter. This is a huge need.
- Potluck Sunday afternoon in the Barn as a potential meeting place for those with young children.
- Set up an electronic small group—people can Skype in—that might appeal to people who are far away or younger. The personal growth challenge could be to attend meetings electronically (maybe reading and discussing a book), and then have in person times (maybe a potluck) to deepen relationships.

Perspectives:

- Interesting that we are opening to the idea of other forms of groups. I think this needs some guidance so we don't again become a church of groups.
- I have long been a fan of “mission groups” a la Church of the Savior. These do not always need to be about social justice, but they need to be about something that serves the kingdom. Creativity and worship meet that standard, I think.
- The feeling of belonging to church grows with being part of a small group.
- Groups are not static; members change over time, which is a good thing as it broadens the dynamic and discussions of the group.
- I value multi-purpose groups, not those with a specific purpose. Focus could change: what then?
- I have been at CRCC for 12 years and have not been able to stay with a group because “kid friendly” groups meet at awkward times. This is very frustrating.
- Quarterly Bee in the Barn was a way to get to know people in deeper ways, which is needed.
- Small group participation was exhausting—getting there and family logistics can be more trouble than it is worth.
- Commitment of small group participants is lacking—joining should mean doing life together, being faithful to attend and to ask for help; to be there for one another. If people don't feel cherished in the group, they can skip attending because they don't feel missed. Leaders need training to better deepen relationships among members. Too much of a focus on the material and an agenda does not allow for enough discussion.

Farm

Suggestions:

- Conduct a “surprise visit to the farm” where Matthew interrupts the message to force everyone out onto the farm so they build a connection to it.
- Form a formal partnership with a local high school—conduct field trips during the school day to the farm.

- We need more events to get people onto the farm—maybe farm and then watch a movie.
- We could have a 1-minute farm testimony each Sunday.
- We could send text reminders (via the CRCC app?) to remind people it is farming night.
- Make it more appealing through rewards, social aspects, a petting farm.
- Get d-groups on the farm –encourage them to bring a picnic and make it a social time.
- Market Friday social events as a way to unwind and bring friends.
- Use a rototiller to make the rows to increase yields.
- Use daikon radish as a cover crop—plant in fall, decomposes naturally, and no weeds in the spring.

Perspectives:

- We have excellent farm leadership! We would get more turnout either before or after the Sunday service.
- Scale up, get a tractor, and grow just one or two things. Pick your own fruit trees would bring in the community. A pumpkin patch would get the kids onto the property.

Finance

Suggestions:

- Publically give God thanks for our own individual and corporate resources.
- Remind people again at the end of the service to give on their way out.
- Conduct a series on money—it is a powerful influence, and we need to be open about it, address our discomfort with talking about it, look at how we handle money (ties to social justice and ethical consumerism). The last series on money was too careful and not sufficiently challenging.
- Fold the pitch for giving into the end of the Journey class.
- Report where money is going with vivid connection to our ministries—produce a printed report and use social media.

Perspectives:

- Need more communication—direct and from Melinda (it can be awkward for Matthew).
- Emphasize giving in a holistic way as an act of worship—and to give more as a way of worshipping more.
- Give reminders to people that all we have is from God, our offerings are honoring him; we worship in community and part of community is giving both time and money to keep our community going.
- We are hitting up the same people and it is a shrinking pool; we need to increase membership—and/or decrease spending.
- Promoting giving 10% as a specific amount scares off people who are not open to this. Catholics and Lutherans are not used to talking about money, but they pass the plate, which creates a good rhythm.

Guatemala

Suggestions:

- Repeat exercise from past of letters from and to scholarship students.
- Encourage congregation to support (through prayer and material support) those who travel and build the relationships with those in Ipala.

- We should share more with the CRCC congregation about what we learn and how God works in us while we are in Ipala.
- We could pray more for the needs of Ipala—rainy season prayers. And they can pray for us—so it is mutual.
- Get in touch with Riverdale Elementary School, which Ipaltecos attend.
- Groups could visit Ipalteco churches in our area.
- One-on-one friendship building locally to grow together and share languages.
- More churchwide Service Day involvement in Guatemala projects.
- More soccer games and cookouts with Ipaltecos.
- If we hold Spanish classes and invite neighbors, we should offer food—maybe Guatemalan food.

Perspectives:

- We should do more to promote interfaith and unity in Ipala.
- Deportation issues are important because parents are afraid to fill out school papers to fund schools, missing out on Title I funding. We should help address the fear and uncertainty in the local immigrant community—but how?

Prayer and Healing

Suggestions:

- Hold regular, 1-hour, silent candlelight prayer services in the sanctuary.
- We could have a contemplative Sunday with lots of opportunities to do different things, including a “gospel hallelujah” in the barn and quiet time in the sanctuary.
- Pastors could connect people (respecting confidentiality) who are going through similar issues such as chronic pain, to form a small group for prayer and healing and mutual support.
- Use more traditional, familiar prayers—drawing from different traditions, using written prayers (e.g., Book of Common Prayer) and less extemporaneous prayer.
- We could chant sick people’s names as a prayer practice.
- Set up a database for ministry leaders so they can post prayer requests.

Perspectives:

- Change the P&H mission statement, esp. "Our priority is help in troubled times" to something like: "Offer guidance and support for (contemplative) prayer practices to cultivate Christ consciousness ("mind of Christ" - Phil. 2:5). To me there is a direct correlation between prayer practice and denying self/losing our lives to save them - prayer as a practical way to identify and start stripping away self-protective narratives and strategies in order to realize the oneness with God that is already true and live out of that true self in unitive (non-dualistic) consciousness. I would be glad to support this with the occasional workshop, panel, etc.
- We struggle to find balance between inner and outer, integrating prayer and action.
- Art can be creative healing work that becomes beauty and inspiration to others.
- We can practice integrating inner/outer by praying while driving, gardening, walking, being physical in other ways.
- Centering prayer helps me balance my inner state so I can respond outwardly in a healthy way."
- God feels near me when I sit quietly, say prayers, or am out in nature.

Property

Suggestions:

- The Lazlos would like to set up a Go Fund Me to raise money for the playground.
- The Chesapeake Bay Foundation may be able to provide grants.
- We could think about using Guatemalan contractors/laborers to demolish the addition to the farmhouse, and other non-historic work on the property.
- We could have a geocache location on our property. People would come here to find it and see how nice Cedar Ridge is.
- We should get schools onto the property more—on the farm, hiking, etc.
- Get CRCC in touch with people/neighborhood churches and homes to improve sidewalk/bike path access along route 198.

Perspectives:

- The poor condition of the farmhouse sends a message to the neighborhood that we can't take care of our property—we should make it a priority to fix it.
- Parking is in bad condition (muddy), which is not welcoming to people.
- The neighborhood does not care about having a Spencerville museum—there are other, more important historical sites. It is unfortunate that we are listed as historic. It might be difficult to make the farmhouse much of a community hub.
- Camping on the property is fun, and you can socialize with others.
- Our property could be a tool of outreach for our young people who see skateboarding space as a way to connect with others.
- The property is special to me because it is very peaceful and quiet—a good place to think and pray.
- We still believe in a place called home.

Worship

Suggestions:

- More cultural variety in the worship music.
- Keep diversifying our songs to reflect cultural heritage.
- Don't have complicated songs. I don't want to make a mistake and get caught out.
- Need a singable range for males and females. Most people are self-conscious.
- We need more repetition across the weeks, and more childlike songs (musically).
- More repetition! One song to sing every week for a series or a month.
- Need more of a cue in the Commons that the music is starting.
- Give more invitations to stand, kneel, tithe, physically move and participate.
- Bring down lights during communion.
- Provide more verbal cueing when the PowerPoint is slow.

Perspectives:

- I like that we sing old songs but change the words to fit us here and now.
- The worship is getting better and better – less showboaty and more simple.
- Love the *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou* songs.
- We need to sing for emotional release.
- We are still too performance oriented.

- I like singable songs (not necessarily familiar radio songs). The move away from radio songs is more accessible.
- Worship is more than music—we need to involve the arts.
- What does the balance of our Sunday morning services show us about our priorities: 75% message; 15% communion; 2% prayer... we need more prayer.
- Intergenerational integration is key! Let kids be more involved and less separate. Keep opening songs for all ages, and then dismiss.
- I really like having more songs at the beginning of the service.
- We need more leadership into God's presence—coaching and cueing and interacting.
- Leaders need to be worshipping and be more expressive in their worship.
- Encourage the congregation to help people connect with God.
- Worship is really good – there is variety and the leaders are great. I like it starting fast and then going slow.
- I like the Christian pop songs.
- Stop playing songs that aren't how I speak.
- Check out Wendell Kimbrough.
- Songs we like (different people listed their favorites): Come Thou fount, Amazing grace, Chris Tomlin, classic hymns, Thank you Lord (spiritual), You are my peace, You brought me this far by faith, Better is one day, Lord's prayer, scriptural songs, ridiculously simple songs, familiar simple songs, gospel music.