



the Quarterly

Cedar Ridge Newsletter

March 2018



This is the season of Lent: a time where we traditionally reflect on our inner lives, and are mindful of how we need to change. Our theme this year is "Creating Safe Space." In some ways this has become a popular term in our culture (a "buzzword" perhaps), but during these seven weeks of the season, we plan to honestly and authentically explore how we can become safer people. That means safer for ourselves (safe to be our true selves) as well as safer for others. Just imagine if we were to populate our world with people living out of a core of humble self-acceptance, who create space all around them. Space that invites others into dialogue, friendship, discovery, healing and love.

We can be such people! But that inevitably means working on ourselves. The greatest gift we can give to those we love, to those who need to be heard, and to the whole world is to work at ourselves—and Lent gives us a perfect opportunity. This kind of self-work is never easy and will no doubt feel uncomfortable. But safety and comfort are far from the same thing. In fact, safe space (space where we can be truly vulnerable) might very often feel uncomfortable. But that is the nature of Lent. It's a season that remembers Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness. It's a willing surrender to the uncomfortable disruption of the wilderness as we take time to look at the hard and dark places in our hearts, the well-trodden paths of habit and behavior that need to change, and the coping mechanisms of excuse and denial in which we find temporary comfort (but not real safety).



This newsletter is full of articles that reflect on this Lenten theme. You can also read about the Lenten Challenge Groups that each focus on one of the four topics we'll be addressing: Simplifying Life, Being Authentic, Becoming a Safer Person, and Reducing Marginalization. I encourage you to join one of these groups. They'll run after the services on Sundays March 4, 11 & 18. Each group will stay focused on that one topic throughout the series, so it's a great way to stay committed to one of the challenges. If you are in a discipleship group, you can temporarily join one of these groups for the season or encourage your group to take up one of the challenges together.

Let's embrace discomfort this Lenten season to work at ourselves and make safe space for others to find acceptance, healing and hope. ■

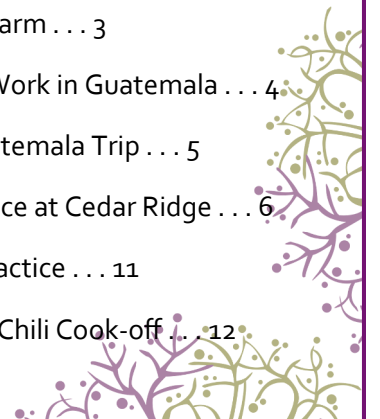
Matthew

Matthew Dyer, Lead Pastor



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AROUND & ABOUT

Cedar Ridge Holds Fourth Annual Creative Cup Coffee House



By: Sarah Burke



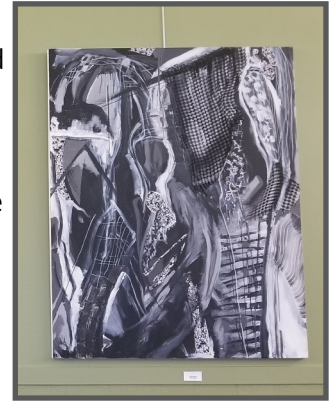
Caroline Ferrante and the Whole Magilla, who kicked off the evening with an opening set.

On January 20, Cedar Ridge held its fourth Creative Cup Coffee House, together with an art show titled, "Breaking Down Barriers," in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Over 100 people attended the evening, enjoying the music of guest artist, Crys Matthews, together with



Adults and children gathered in the auditorium for music, crafts, and open mic for writers and musicians to share their creative gifts. A highlight of the performances was two poems written and performed by Roberta Mather in American Sign Language and interpreted to voice by Tinica Mather.

Meanwhile, the Commons was transformed into an art gallery, where artists from Cedar Ridge and our local community, displayed their work in keeping with the theme of the show. Among the work featured for the evening were two paintings by local artist, Sobia Ahmad, titled, "The Muslim" (photo on the right) and "White Chiffon." Sobia describes her technique, "Using head scarves, Islamic tiles, and calligraphy, I try to understand the nuances of how identities are in constant flux due to both internal and external factors."



Gina Richardson, long-time Cedar Ridger and resident artist, displayed a portrait painted by herself of Marian Anderson (photo on the left), an African-American contralto and one of the most celebrated singers of the twentieth century. After being denied the ability to perform at Constitution Hall because of her race, Miss Anderson made history on

April 9, 1939 in her performance at the Lincoln Memorial. More than 75,000 people of all races attended, raising awareness of the problem of discrimination in America.

Special thanks to the many volunteers and artists who contributed to making the evening a success! ■



Photo (right): Margy Constable's "Women Breaking Down Barriers Dress," a historical rendition of clothing worn during the Women's Suffrage Movement.; (top left) Caroline Ferrante and The Whole Magilla; (center) Crys Matthews on stage; (bottom) adults and kids enjoying the craft table



CATCHING UP WITH

SUVIA EVANS, MS YOUTH VOLUNTEER

I began working with the children's ministry when we first arrived at Cedar Ridge because church nurseries had been a lifeline when we were new parents. It had meant so much to me that there was a safe place I could leave my children. It was a huge gift to be able to focus on God without worrying about the kids. This is a gift I wanted to give to others. I worked in the nursery here for 2 years.

I still love working with the little ones, but I saw them for such a short time in their life. Just as we were beginning to develop a relationship, they were ready to move on to the 2-year-old classroom. I considered moving up with the kids several different times, but I knew that wouldn't work for me. I enjoy toddlers, but don't do as well teaching the young elementary-aged kids. While others love working with first graders, my frustration peaks at

that age. I start really enjoying working with the students again as they come out of elementary school. So I jumped over to the Barn. I primarily work with the middle school group, with some flexibility to help out with the high school group when there is need.

I have only been working with the middle schoolers for two months, and am really enjoying getting to know them better. It is a privilege to get a glimpse into their lives, their thought processes, their experiences. They can be so goofy and yet have great insights at the same time. I can see how working with these students will help me grow personally. In order to help lead the lessons, I end up thinking about what I really believe, and which aspects of those beliefs are the most important. I love that middle and high school kids demand authenticity and



are beginning to wrestle with life.

While I am enjoying the work and expect it will be belief-changing for me, I really started working with the youth to make a difference. I want to help other parents by helping provide a safe environment for their kids to hang out and hopefully grow closer to God. I want to help the leaders by taking some of the burden off their shoulders. And most importantly, I hope that by showing up week after week, I'll show the love of Jesus to the students. And if a kid needs help, they'll know me and can call on me. ■



The farm always feels to me like an authentic place. It is literally and metaphorically "down to earth." We dig around in the dirt with our hands; and our sweat and aching muscles are rewarded with tangible food that is needed and appreciated by hungry neighbors. We are a community that plans together, labors together, and celebrates the harvest together. That's about as real as life gets.

It also feels to me like a safe space: a place to talk, to think, to pray. There are jobs for all ages and skill levels, and no one is an expert. Sometimes we pull out the plants and keep the weeds. We over-water, or forget to water. In frustration, we yell at the groundhogs, and curse the squash beetles. And yet, each year the little wagon makes its endless trips from the farm to the barn, overflowing with produce.

In 2018 our farm will be in its 10th year! That's a whole decade of annually providing over a ton of fresh, delicious and healthy produce to those in need. Each year we welcome our neighbors onto our property to serve alongside

us, and tally about 900 person-hours of work on the farm. These are achievements we can be proud of! The farm at Cedar Ridge is a tangible, significant, meaningful outworking of our vision to be a community of hope and transformation.

With that in mind, I hope you will commit to serving with us this year. We need as many people as possible to pitch in and help. And if you are inspired by our vision to farm, are able to commit a little additional time, and don't mind learning from mistakes (your own and those of others), please contact me about joining the Farm Team (ruthc@crcc.org). Thank you! ■



GUAT'S UP: AN UPDATE ON OUR WORK IN GUATEMALA

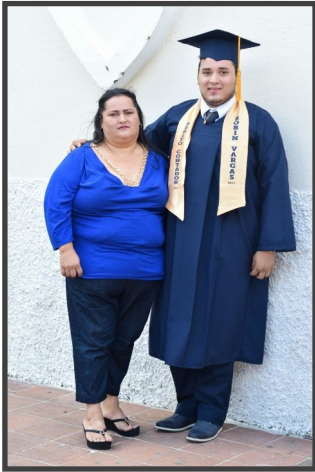


By: Bryan Peterson

Here are some highlights of what's been happening in our partnership with the people of Ipala, Guatemala.



Over the past several months, our Guatemala Team has enjoyed participating in several **video calls with CIDHER**, our partners in Ipala. During those calls, we've heard from graduates of our scholarship program, a recipient of medicine we fund, and the principals of two parochial schools which receive scholarship funding. In the process, we were able to witness the monthly accountability process that all recipients go through. They all shared their deep appreciation



for the generosity of Cedar Ridge, and mentioned how they regularly pray for our people.



Our "**Healthy Homes**" Advent Project brought in \$6900, which will fund roofs and floors for the neediest families in Ipala. Mynor Albanez, treasurer of CIDHER, was very touched by that news, knowing it will impact a lot of beneficiaries, who will provide the labor for the work being done in their homes. We'll have a more detailed report of how many roofs and floors are provided, and will share pictures of the families as we are able. Thank you for your generous support of this new project!



The children and youth of Cedar Ridge were also amazingly generous this Christmas season. They raised \$243 over the course of a couple of weeks in order to provide **annual lesson books to first-graders in Ipala** who can't pay for their own. Nearly 100 books were distributed to village and neighborhood schools as they began their school year in January. Way to go!



To date, 89 youth and adults from Cedar Ridge have traveled to Ipala on one of our **annual partnership trips**. Plans are underway for our 2018 excursion, which will take place July 7-16. If you're interested in joining us, please contact Bryan Peterson or Trish Audi as soon as possible. And stay tuned for ways you can support the team as our student travelers raise funds for their trip.



The Guatemala Team has been working on several initiatives to help our community take the next steps in our commitment to global engagement both locally and in Guatemala. We're developing a **more permanent display for Cedar Ridge** people to get a look at various elements of our ongoing work in Ipala. We're looking to schedule **spring Spanish classes**, and on March 9 we're co-hosting a documentary screening and discussion on issues facing immigrants in our area. For more information on how you can get involved, talk with one of the members of our team: Deb Frew (leader), Vernon Archer, Salvador Chairez, Chas. Foster, Carlos Hernandez, Mara Lopez, Bryan Peterson, and Gina Richardson. ■



A Look Back at Last Year's Guatemala Trip With Mother-Daughter Duo, Andrea and DeAnnah Bell



Q: Tell us a little about yourself and how long you've been attending Cedar Ridge.

My name is Andrea Hall, and I have been coming to Cedar Ridge for over 6 years. I work for Prince George's County Public Schools in the Early Childhood office as a specialist.

My name is DeAnnah Bell and I have been attending Cedar Ridge since 4th grade. I am now a 9th grade student at John F. Kennedy High School.

Q: What inspired you to go on the Guatemala trip last summer?

I thought it was a good idea for DeAnnah and I to go on the trip; we do a lot locally to volunteer. She has also been in a Spanish Immersion program since kindergarten, and this was a good way for us to give back.

My mom thought it was a good idea for us to go, and for me since I was not able to go a trip to Spain with my school.

Q: Over all, what was most impactful about the trip? And what projects did you help with?

I think DeAnnah and I still today talk about the students we met and how moving it was to meet them especially, a child like Diego who so wanted to get to know us. The people of Guatemala were so welcoming and so appreciated for what felt like small things that we did.

What was most impactful for me was meeting other children and when we saw them later, they would remember us. I can most recall "Diego" because he talked a lot at the school we visited. Later when we served needy families a meal and gave out vitamins, he came with his grandfather. He was excited to show us words he learned in English.



I helped at a school talking and working with students, at the pool, washing the children's hair before they went in the pool and serving cookies and juice at the pool, as well as serving meals and giving out vitamins.

Q: What did you appreciate about this trip as compared to other places you've visited?

I have traveled to Jamaica and Canada with my family for vacations and to visit other family who lived in those countries. This trip was different because I felt like I was giving back something to people who really needed it.

I have been to other countries and the experience was not the same because they were more vacation trips. My entire preparation for the trip was different and I had to be open to what the culture and the experience would be about.

Q: What else would you like to share about the trip that was memorable to you?

I think that the church leadership team did an amazing job planning activities for the group members to partake in. There was not one experience that was not emotionally moving and at the same time spiritually rewarding.

The night time activities to get to know people from the church were fun. I also learned that I shared a lot in common with the high school students in Guatemala. I did a dance with students from a high school—it was a little embarrassing but also fun. ■

INSIDE STORY



During the Lenten series, "Creating Safe Space," small groups will form around specific challenges for weeks 3-5 of this series. These challenges are: simplifying life, being authentic, becoming a safer person and reducing marginalization. We asked a few of the group leaders to share their insights and experience within each of the four areas.

simplifying life

By: Melanie Griffin



My friends find it amusing that I'm leading a group called "Simplifying Life."

"Your life is anything but simple. You're never home, you're always running in and out. . . . How many jobs can you have at once?"

I can't argue with them. Most of the time I can't even find my car keys. I'm not leading the group because I'm an expert; I'm leading the group because I want to simplify my own life and share the challenge with others. I want to create space to listen to my own heart and to that "still, small voice" of God. I enjoy doing a lot of different things, but I want to be more intentional about my choices and fully aware of what motivates my decisions about how I spend my time, money, and emotional energy — my life, really.

I got rid of my TV more than ten years ago because watching TV was a colossal waste of time and it depressed me. I'm a bit out of the pop culture loop, but somehow I don't think that troubles God. I rarely regret that decision. But if I spend my evenings mindlessly

cruising social media, is that really an improvement? Is that bringing me any closer to the person I want to be? When I first started coming to Cedar Ridge and seriously following Jesus twenty-five years ago, I had a deep yearning for peace and balance in my life. I wasn't sure what was out of kilter, but I knew something was. I was rising rapidly in the environmental lobbying career I had always dreamed of, I had a lot of friends, I had just bought a house, yet I was not at peace.

My "ah-ha" moment came during a church retreat in West Virginia. I was sitting in the woods, praying. All of a sudden, the mountains around me exploded in echoing gunshots — it was hunting season. I felt ill. I've never liked guns, not at all, and I've been an ethical vegetarian since I was a teenager. The reason I felt sick, though, was that God had revealed to me that I had a tough choice to make. I had recently been promoted into a highly sought-after position at the Sierra Club, a position with a multi-million dollar budget, a network of field staff, and the personal attention of the executive director. The job was doing outreach to hunters.

To make a long story short, I stepped down. It was not easy. My boss thought I was nuts. But God had shown me with the crack of a rifle that I was headed in the wrong direction — away from my core values and my true self. Had I stayed in the job, I would have been working very long hours from a very unhealthy place. It was a good job, but it was not my job. As long as I was living to please or impress others or to make a lot of money, I was essentially living someone else's life.

That weekend retreat made clear to me the importance of intentionally stepping away from the distractions of life and finding safe space to do a "values check." Am I honoring my deepest values? Am I becoming the person God intends me to be? We don't always need to take a whole weekend or even a day. Quiet time in the car or a walk with the dog can provide a mini-sabbath to "get back to center" if we are intentional about our focus. We need to create the time and space to center on God and connect with our feelings, motivations, and true longings.

That's the hope for our Simplifying Life challenge group. We will set aside intentional time to discover the unnecessary complexity, potentially unhealthy motivations, and misplaced priorities in our lives. Because, when our bodies are too busy to rest and our minds are too cluttered to think clearly, how can we "seek first the kingdom of God" and authentically love our neighbors?

Through conversation, prayer practices and self-reflective exercises, we will examine how we spend our precious time and how we might want to change. We will ask God to reveal what unhealthy beliefs and motivations might drive our behavior and our cluttered thinking.

Each of us is unique. What constitutes a healthy, sustainable rhythm of life will look different for everyone, and it will vary in different seasons of our lives. There is no "one size fits all" approach to simplifying life. Our struggles are different, our needs are different, and our addictions and distractions are different. So we will strive to be a truly safe space without judgement or shame. We trust the Holy Spirit will bring an atmosphere of love and compassion for ourselves and others.

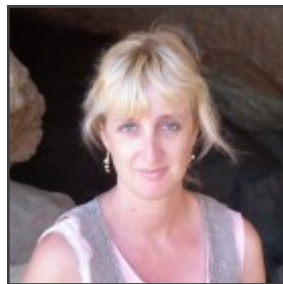
I look forward to taking this Lenten journey with you as we seek a simpler, more sustainable and joyful rhythm for our lives!

"Glory belongs to God, whose power is at work in us. By this power God can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine." Ephesians 3:20

Melanie Griffin serves on the Pastoral Team, leading Cedar Ridge's Prayer and Healing Ministry.

being authentic

By: Ruth Campbell



The idea of being my authentic self is both exciting and scary for me. I'm English—and we are taught from an early age to be proper, and to keep a stiff upper lip. When something bad happens, Americans sign up for therapy, but Brits make a nice hot cup of tea! Coming from a culture that conflates introspection with self-absorption, even asking the question, "Who am I, really?" was initially a big stretch for me.

When I did seriously ask that question, I realized I didn't know the answer. I had a lot of ideas of who other people thought I was. I had strong feelings about who I was NOT. My church upbringing had planted the idea that I was a "sinner" whom God loved—but whom, I suspected, God didn't really like. Beyond that, I wasn't too sure.

Life events—marriage, motherhood, change in career—as well as the evolution of my beliefs, all introduced uncertainty for me about who I really am. And being unsure of my identity was particularly unsettling for me as someone who struggles with depression. On dark days, the voices in my

head tell me I am someone who is unloved and unlovable, worthless and insignificant.

But now I have that all sorted out. I have discovered and am totally confident in my real self, and no longer ever struggle with low self-esteem. Through this 3-week challenge series, you too, can achieve total enlightenment.

...well, maybe not!!! Sorry if I got you excited, there. Sarcasm is another very English trait!

Seriously, this is a long journey—one I feel I have barely begun. But through time alone with God—on long walks, or sitting by the fire with a Bible (and, of course, a nice hot cup of tea)—I'm growing into a deeper sense both of who God is and who I am, as someone made in God's image.

I'm loved. Fully loved because God's infinite love is bigger and more powerful than all my insecurities. Unconditionally loved in a way that overwhelms me, even when self-doubt says I'm not worth loving. Passionately and personally loved: God knows who I am even when I don't, and rejoices over me with singing!

Getting to know who I am—my strengths and weaknesses, aspirations and frustrations, all my idiosyncrasies—is helping me to become less concerned with other people's opinions of me. It's taken me a surprisingly long time to finally realize that who I am is not actually impacted by who you think I am. I don't need to desperately seek the approval of others. And the more I see how much God loves me, the more I feel that it's okay to be me. Much more than okay, in fact! I'm unique and special, and really rather lovely... And so are you!

So I hope you will engage through this series in the adventure of being your authentic self. In the Being Authentic challenge group, we will make space to be aware of God's presence with us. One thing that has helped me to feel closer to God has been to read stories about Jesus in the gospels and to use my imagination to be there with him, sharing the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and emotions of the experience. Seeing in my mind's eye how Jesus responds to broken, hurting people, as well as those who think they have it all together, reveals a great deal about how God feels towards me.

We will also take some time to think about who we are, as distinct from who we think we *should* be, or who others say we are. Personality tests—though far from infallible!—can be a great way to bring clarity about our strengths and weaknesses; and our values are core to our identity. We will look at both of these aspects of self, and see

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how we are applying them in our every day life.

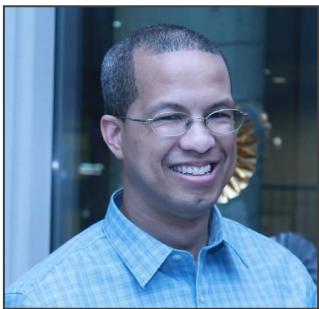
The psychologist David Benner wrote this: "We do not find our true self by seeking it. Rather, we find it by seeking God. ...in finding God we find our truest and deepest self. The anthropological question (Who am I?) and the theological question (Who is God?) are fundamentally inseparable. It is by losing our self in God that we discover our true identity."

This Lent, I hope you will find the time to "lose yourself in God"—to see yourself as the unique you whom God adores; and to have the confidence to surrender your identity back to God as you continue journey of becoming the person you were created to be.

Ruth Campbell is Pastor for Ministry Development at Cedar Ridge

becoming a safer person

By: Rephael Houston and Colleen Heitkamp



In 2009, I joined a prayer group at Cedar Ridge. It was a transformative experience in the sense of deepening my love for the community and God. Every other week, for several

months, we would come together and pray for healing. We would listen to each other's life stories and ask for God to speak truth into our lives. Week after week of hearing the stories that weighed down people in our community, and watching some people move out of the hurts of their past changed me.

I could see the work of holding people's stories is also part of the healing. I witnessed a community that didn't reject anyone but demonstrated radical acceptance. People were grappling with decades of pain and trauma surrounded by love and compassion. No one was pushed to go further or more in-depth than they wanted to go. Everyone was welcome to just be or participate. I felt that we had started to live out part of Cedar Ridge's vision:

Imagine a community of people devoted to following Jesus together, learning to live like him and helping one another grow in their relationship with God; where we are gradually transformed to become better people: better friends, better family members, better workers, better neighbors; becoming people who enjoy life to the full and who can also deal with adversity well, learning to grow through failure

and suffering.

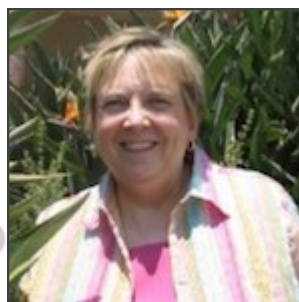
The prayer circle welcomed human failure and suffering and celebrated breakthroughs. I have tried to continue the practices of the prayer group. I want others to feel that type of love and safety that I found. I want others to know they are welcomed and loved at this moment just as they are.

It is hard to find a place where people can gather just to heal. Cedar Ridge has been a place of healing and transformation for me. Our culture tells us to hide our wounds. Yet I have seen the transformation that comes from openly discussing our wounds and praying for healing.

Rev. Gregory J. Boyle discussed this type of healing in his 2017 Laetare Address to the University of Notre Dame. He recounted a story of a former gang member who struggled with the impact of being abused as a child. The abuse left visible scars into adulthood that he would often try to hide. However, over time, his perspective changed, "But now I welcome my wounds. I run my fingers over my scars. My wounds are my friends. After all, how can I help heal the wounded if I don't welcome my own wounds?"

When I look back, maybe it wasn't just witnessing others transformation that was important. It was also me participating in the prayer practices. It was me being able to welcome my wounds and feel the safety of the community. There must be a dynamic loop between being and witnessing vulnerability. I joined the group hoping for some transformation for myself and found something more.

Rephael Houston has been attending Cedar Ridge since 2005. He is a member of the Prayer Team and serves as a prayer servant during the Sunday worship service.



I hate conflict and I hate failure. My default is to please people so they are never disappointed in me. I hate the feeling of shame that comes from looking like I'm stupid. I hate the feeling of regret from hurting someone I love. I hate the prospect of someone pointing out my shortcomings. If I can't hide my shortcomings, I at least want to defend them. I want to be understood!

In reality though, when I've been vulnerable about those insecurities and failures I've experienced the compassion presence of my family and friends. I've enjoyed the transformational sense of acceptance and of being heard. The safe people in my life have accepted me in my failures.

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They have loved me even when they have known who I am. That love and understanding have helped me to accept myself and to change. Having experienced that love, I've wanted to be a safe person who gives that gift of love to others.

As much as I want to be safe person, I've been learning about ways in which I am not. Sometimes others don't feel like I'm listening and understanding their point of view. This has been an area where I was initially totally blind. It's much easier to be safe when someone comes to me with their weaknesses and pain. What does it mean to be a safe person when someone approaches me with my own weaknesses?

One of the things I loved about legal work during my career was debating cases and facts and legal theories. The environment at work was such that no one took these debates personally. The thrill of those debates, however, does not always translate well outside of the office and into the realm of family and friends. It definitely doesn't translate well on social media! When I default to full attorney mode I can come off a trifle arrogant and condescending. I try to poke holes in other people's logic. I assault them with facts. That's just part of the process, right? Actually, to them it's not. Much to my surprise, I have made people cry.

It turns out that the skills of listening and practicing a compassionate presence are just as valuable in a conflict situation as in other situations. The same skills that make us someone people can safely turn to when they are being vulnerable and authentic make us safe to approach in times of conflict. Can people approach me and tell me they felt I dismissed their opinion? Are they afraid of me? Do I keep them at arm's length? Do they feel safe in approaching me?

Recently I had a conflict while discussing politics with a friend I've known for over 30 years. We both needed to apologize to each other, and we both listened to one another. We both put ourselves in the other's place and communicated that we could understand how the other might have felt about certain things that were said. Ultimately we really both just wanted to be heard and understood. We had to be safe people who could be approached in order to truly resolve the conflict. There is so much conflict in our world today. We all contribute to it in our family, with our friends, and sometimes in our communities. We will all make mistakes but we can change when we are safe people who can listen to others when they approach us about our shortcomings.

Colleen Heitkamp is on the Pastoral Team, serving as the Pastor of Connections.

creating safe space at Cedar Ridge

reducing marginalization

By: Hubert Dixon

Both as individuals and collectively, I think we are engaged in an ongoing conversation about how to build community. It is relatively easy to build community with those who are like us, but when we look at the teachings and life examples of Jesus, we see that he hung out with all kinds of different people on "the margins." He shared his life with a wide diversity of people within and beyond his own community. If we want to live a more Christ-like existence, we need to attempt to follow this example.



The challenge to reach out and build community with people we are unfamiliar with is an essential part of creating safe space. Fear is a big threat to safe space: we fear what we do not know. As we become more familiar and comfortable with different cultures, we find there is less and less to be afraid of.

I was recently sharing stories with my daughter about my college days. Part of the reason why I wanted to go away to college was that my world was rather small in some ways. Although I always had my relatives and a group of friends, going to college gave me an opportunity to live amongst a whole world of folks that I had never experienced before. I remember a conversation I had while doing my laundry with a fellow student from Venezuela. I had never met anyone from Venezuela before, and was surprised to realize during our discussion of politics, world events, and current affairs just how much we had in common.

Often people think they need to learn specific skills to reach out to people who are unfamiliar, but I wonder if that is really true. Getting to know people is a skill we already possess—and making friends does not happen through a set formula. Perhaps the real challenge is our own mindset. Think back to those times—perhaps as a young adult—when you were more willing to take the risk of getting to know people seemingly different from you. Do we really lack the opportunity to reach out, now that we are older? Or are we

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just so busy that we do not even notice the opportunities we do have to get to know others—unfamiliar people at church, in our neighborhoods or workplaces?

Something my wife, Sarah, and I have done from time to time is to invite over friends from different parts of our world—work colleagues, friends made through our daughter’s school, neighbors, etc. We don’t necessarily know what they have in common other than being friends with us. By simply providing some food and space to hang out and get to know each other, we have been privileged to be part of some great conversations and emerging friendships.

Our hope, then, is that the Reducing Marginalization challenge group will provide an opportunity for people to ask questions and find some ways to expand community with folks they have not yet had the pleasure to get to know. We won’t be teaching a whole new set of skills, but we will share ideas together. And I think it is going to be a lot of fun!

Hubert has been attending Cedar Ridge for several years and has led workshops about Racial Justice and Reconciliation.

safe space for the journey

By: Matthew Dyer



In this season of Lent where we are taking up the challenge to create safe space, we are also running a group called “Journey.” This is a three-week series of discussions about the vision, values and philosophy of our community, as well as an exploration of how our church works and how to get

involved. If you have not been part of a Journey group before I would highly recommend it. We ask anyone who wants to become a member of our community to go through it first. But even if you are not ready for that kind of commitment yet, it’s a great way to find out more about Cedar Ridge, meet some of our leaders, and get to know other people too.

Journey is a safe space to bring questions and doubts as well as to share our own faith-journeys. We are so fortunate to draw people from many diverse spiritual backgrounds; this creates a rich environment of mutual respect, learning and challenge. It’s an open, no-pressure environment where we hope to encourage one another in our own journey, as well as share more about what it means to follow Jesus at Cedar Ridge. That of course is the defining feature of our journey together at Cedar Ridge: following Jesus. But this is not

some kind of religious constraint or conformity. We all have a different story and we are all in a different process. At Cedar Ridge we cherish that diversity and endeavor to create safe space for it. What holds us together is that we have each chosen to pursue our unique journey together. Journey of transformation (transformation of ourselves and the world we live in) is just too hard to go it alone: we need one another!

In the Journey group we especially take time to explore all aspects of our vision because commitment to our community really means a commitment to the vision that we share together. But there is a fascinating paradox here. Our vision is a commitment to follow Jesus and therefore a commitment to the vision that Jesus had. He called this “the Kingdom of God.” This can be a confusing term for us today because “kingdom” has connotations of kings, laws, authority and coercion. But for Jesus it was an invitation to freedom. It was a metaphor he used to express a vision for what life could be like when we are fully immersed in God’s love. It has personal implications—God’s love transforms us into more loving, kind, peaceful people. And it has social implications—as God’s love, working through us, reaches out with compassion towards others and confronts systems of injustice in our culture.

The Kingdom of God is far bigger than any church. It becomes a reality wherever people seek and experience unity with God. We can live it at work and school, in our families and neighborhoods, in our private lives and our public ones. It’s the kind of reality that Jesus lived as a human who was in full union with God. He mixed with all kinds of people in all kinds of places and was not constrained by a religious institution. And there’s the paradox! A commitment to our vision is actually a commitment to the Kingdom of God first and foremost and ironically not to our church! As soon as we equate an institution (like our church) with the Kingdom, the space becomes very unsafe because our goals will be self-serving and we’ll begin to use institutional authority to control people for the benefit of that institution. Jesus never did this, nor should we.

So at the Journey group our goal is not to gain recruits to our church but to encourage and empower seekers of the Kingdom. Our vision dares to dream of heaven on earth; to be transformed people who transform the world; to be the change we want to see in the world. Our church is simply a gathering of people who are on that journey together, supporting one another and making safe space for one another to seek the Kingdom with everything we have. I hope you can join us! ■

Financial Giving As a Lenten Practice

By: Deanna French

For Christians throughout history, Lent has been a time for self-reflection and spiritual growth marked by the practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, making it the perfect time to talk about financial stewardship. Not a topic most churches or Christians are comfortable talking about, but stewardship and generosity are foundational aspects of Christian life and underpin everything the Church does.

Often a church's stewardship strategy consists of the weekly offering, the periodic financial campaigns for missions or youth projects, and the emergency appeal when confronted with a budget shortfall. But shouldn't stewardship be more? Instead of being an obligatory act done every so often, giving should be framed as a lifetime of worship before the Lord, shifting away from getting money to pay bills to creating a giving tradition where the congregation can experience the joy of generosity and of being faithful disciples.

The Cedar Ridge vision calls us to live simply and ethically and share our resources with others. Our giving is therefore both a means to an end—financing progress towards our vision—as well as a reflection of our vision—an expression of good stewardship, generosity, service, and discipleship. All of our resources—people, property, facilities, and money—belong to God and are dedicated to the pursuit of our vision of following Jesus and making the world a better place.

Our vision leads to a financial approach with the following characteristics:

- **Generosity:** As agents of love, hope, and peace, we want to use our resources to encourage, strengthen, and empower people. Therefore, we seek to give more than to receive.
- **Openness:** Our aim is to foster trust within our church community with respect to finance, so that people can be confident giving to a general fund knowing the money will be used efficiently towards our vision.
- **Ownership/Membership:** We belong to something so much greater than any one of us individually. We are thus motivated to give, serve, love, and care – collectively “taking responsibility” for the health and well-being of the body.
- **Discipleship:** We give to our church community sacrificially, as an act of worship and a spiritual practice; and cheerfully, knowing that we are resourcing our vision for the Kingdom of God. As with all aspects of discipleship, we are on a journey: we all desire to grow in wisdom and discipline. We seek to become better managers of our money, both in generating income and spending wisely.

Whether we are focused on creating a safe space for spiritual growth, developing loving and life-changing programs for our children, enabling transformational healing through prayer, or courageously working towards a more just world through our farm and our relationship with our Guatemalan partners, it can't be done without your generous contributions. So, this year, instead of *giving up* something for Lent, consider *doing something*. Prayerfully consider giving



generously of your time, talent, and resources to support our spiritual community here at Cedar Ridge.

Generosity is a spiritual practice that reflects an attitude of heart and mind. It's not how much we are each able to give that matters as much as that we give regularly. However you are led to practice stewardship at Cedar Ridge, please know it is recognized and appreciated by all.

Cedar Ridge is committed to creating an ongoing conversation about generosity and giving, keeping our community inspired and informed through regular communication. For more information about how to get involved in our various ministries, review our annual budget, or give a financial gift, please visit the [Cedar Ridge website](http://cedarridge.org) (crcc.org). ■



Deanna serves on the Board of Trustees and has been attending Cedar Ridge for 13 years along with her two daughters who are now both in college. What she especially loves about our community is the atmosphere - there is no pressure to be anyone but yourself and you can focus on your journey with God.



Announcing the Winner of the Chili Cook-Off

Photo: Erin Perkins was the first to arrive to set up her chili display!

Over twenty crock-pots of meat and vegetarian chili were set up in the commons on Sunday, February 11, for the Potluck and Chili Cook-off to compete for the golden ladle and a prize spot in this edition of the Quarterly, featuring the winning recipe. Samples of each chili were gathered and set up in a tasting room where a panel of judges scored each contender based on flavor, presentation, and uniqueness. Each chili was assigned a number or letter and judged anonymously, with the highest overall score determining the first place winner.

The winner of the vegetarian chili competition was Hannah Guedenet, who won for best flavor and presentation and Rachel Bibee winning for uniqueness. Winning for uniqueness in the meat chili completion was Gina Richardson, with first place in flavor and presentation and the highest combined score going to Erin and Sean Perkins who took home the golden ladle. Thanks to everyone who contributed their chili, making for a tasty potluck! ■

We all know that some of the best recipes are not written down. Here's a list of the key ingredients in the Perkins' Award Winning Recipe:

- 2 pounds of Beef 90/10
- 2 cans of Dark Kidney Beans (Hanover brand)
- 1 16oz can of diced tomatoes
- 2 small cans of tomato paste
- 1 tbsp. chili pepper



Photos: (Below) The panel of judges tasted over twenty different chilies, making for a suspenseful calculation of the score to determine the winter of the golden ladle! (Above) Sean, the chef behind the winning recipe, poses for a selfie with wife, Erin, who set up the chili, which also won for best presentation.



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