



# THE QUARTERLY

## Cedar Ridge Newsletter



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Welcome to the spring edition of our Quarterly Newsletter. Recently as a community we have been exploring the whole concept of worship, and this edition is a collective expression of the many different forms, preferences and ways in which we do that. Worship is often associated with paying homage to or appeasing an angry, intolerant God who we want to keep on our side. Historically, fear has often been a religious motivation, but we have been discovering the reality of worship rooted in love.



God is Love, and our worship is an open invitation to consciously surrender to that Love. It's a celebration of an amazing reality: far from being an imposition of a controlling authority, God is One who turns that kind of hierarchy on its head and welcomes us into communion. God is with us, in us, and one with us! Worship celebrates and brings us back to this beautiful truth.

Worship also inspires us and challenges us to live our whole lives in this reality. So we worship inclusively together, not just on our own. We worship in different styles and traditions because not everyone is like us. We worship by loving, serving, and being generous towards others. We worship by striving for justice in society, and treasuring our planet. We worship through music, art, story, poetry and in the splendor of nature because somehow these things take our breath away, leave us speechless, and draw us into the divine reality of love. Throughout this newsletter you'll read about ways people in our community express worship, and I hope it will inspire you to worship too. ●

*Matthew*

Matthew Dyer, Lead Pastor



## Interfaith Day of Service and Earth Day Celebration

By: Tinica Mather

As Cedar Ridge wraps up our series on Worship, *When Words are Not Enough*, I took a bit of time to look back over the discipleship group material and came across a few recurring themes: connection, community, presence, practice, and service.

Back on Earth Day, April 22, Cedar Ridge hosted an Interfaith Day of Service. We gathered for a potluck breakfast together and then headed out to work on various service projects, both on and off the church campus. Alongside us were close to 80 volunteers from local organizations and communities including Walter Reed, neighboring mosques and synagogues, and students from local middle and high schools.

As it was Earth Day, there were a number of other projects happening across the region where people were intentionally caring for our world. We are not necessarily unique in our desire to serve those around us, but making it an act of worship gives it a more layered meaning. We have such a cool congregation, with members working in a variety of roles serving those in need in our community, whether at their jobs or as volunteers in their own geographic areas. But something unique happens when we serve corporately as a church community and invite our neighbors to participate alongside us! Our service together becomes larger than an individual act: a connective celebration of our community in God. We're actively following our vision, being present and living as agents of God's love, peace, and hope in our beautiful but often hurting world.

Words are not enough. By serving as a community, we take seriously our responsibility to care for one another. We strengthen the bonds of community, we bring something positive to our neighbors, and we practice the presence of God. We serve others, treasure the earth, and pursue social justice from an attitude of worship. We take part in the larger melody of God's kingdom here on earth, connecting to a natural rhythm. ●

*Volunteers from Cedar Ridge and neighboring faith communities joined together in a number of projects, serving at Cedar Ridge and in our local area in support of several organizations: The DC Diaper Bank, Sophia House Women's Shelter, Wider Circle, Linus Project and others.*







# SPRING Highlights



In March, the Lenten Quiet Day offered an opportunity to disconnect and quiet our minds as we prepared for Holy Week and Easter. Participants shared a day of contemplative practices including prayer, meditation, and silence, in order to deepen their connection with God and one another. Many quiet corners of the property including the barn, the labyrinth, and the prayer walk were used as sacred spaces to experience God.



Also in May Cedar Ridge Kids explored connections between the teachings of Jesus and the property at Cedar Ridge during "Getting Beneath the Surface," the community-wide series on some of Jesus parables. On the final day of the series, kids heard the parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27), in which Jesus underscores the great value of putting his teachings into practice. After being invited to be "wise



In April, Cedar Ridgers attended the Rally to End Racism in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.



builders" in life, our kindergarten and elementary students then took up screwdrivers and went to work building bird boxes for the Eastern bluebirds that make their homes on the land at Cedar Ridge. Working with the cedar wood that had been pre-cut, drilled, and marked by Harry Stone and Mark Hartley, the kids and their adult helpers worked together to assemble eight bird boxes. These boxes are being installed along the fence line of our property, replacing some of the well-worn boxes hung many years ago, and will soon be a safe place for birds to nest right here in our backyard. Thanks to Rachel Bibee, Jennifer Fuller, Jonathan Glenny, Chuck Packett, photographer Jennifer Anderson and the hard-working children for their excellent work on this intergenerational building project. ●

In May, we gathered on a Friday night for Wine & Worship, a time to unwind, relax, and sing in a no-pressure atmosphere. Folks brought drinks, snacks, an instrument, and their voice. Brian Markley and Caroline Ferrante brought packets of sheet music, and the group relaxed on couches in the Barn while singing together (no solos!) The next W&W is Friday, July 20 and 7 PM. Feel free to bring a printout of a song you might like to share with everyone, and we'll make copies.





# Learning to "Let Go" On the Farm

By: Ruth Campbell,  
Pastor of Ministry Development



I admit it: I'm a control freak. I don't have to be in control myself, but I really need to feel *someone* is in control. From that perspective, overseeing the farm is one of the most frustrating, anxiety-inducing responsibilities I could have been given!

Take this spring for example: we saw night temperatures dip to near freezing throughout the whole month of April, but once we planted our frost-hardy seeds, the mercury shot up, and we were experiencing 90-degree weather by May 2. We had almost no rain for two weeks after planting, but once we bought a drip irrigation system, it began to rain—and didn't stop for much of the next three weeks, turning the plots to mud and delaying our second round of planting. As Mark Twain put it: "Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it."

And it's not just the weather. Every year we encounter new pests: from adorably destructive groundhogs, to "Hitchcockesque" mocking birds; from muculent slugs to iridescent beetles, powdery mildew to sticky orange mite eggs. None of us on the farm team "manages" the farm—we just try to keep up!

For our tenth year of farming, we have

invested in a part-time expert for the summer (meet Andrea/right). I kind of hoped she would be in control, but it seems not. Andrea has great suggestions for things we might try, ways to lessen the risks, and ideas for improvements. But when it comes to weather, pests, and other unknowns, all we can do is adapt as best we can... And so it is with life.

Control is an illusion. When we think we "have it all together" is when, so often, things start to unravel. And saying "God is in control" leaves me with more questions than answers. When the unexpected happens in life, we adapt—knowing God is with us in the learning and changing and moving on.

So, if you are okay with not being in control, come and join us on the farm this season. Plant seeds with no guarantee of germination. Pull weeds that will regrow in a week. Recognize that there is so much of life we cannot regulate. And then step back and watch God's creation burst forth into fruitfulness. Harvest the thousands of pounds of nutritious crops that miraculously mature each year on our little farm. Enjoy co-creating with God and letting go of the need to be in control... or try. Baby steps. That's all I can manage. ●



*Andrea Barnhart lives in nearby Burtonsville, and has spent the last 9 years managing Red Wiggler Community Farm in Germantown. She is working at Cedar Ridge part-time through the summer to help us develop and document best practice in community farming. She writes: "I am excited about this opportunity to share my farming knowledge and engage volunteers and the community in my passion of growing and eating local vegetables." Andrea grew up on a dairy farm in southwest Virginia where she developed a love of the outdoors, farming, and the Hokies. In her spare time, she enjoys biking, cooking, and playing the guitar. Please help make Andrea feel very welcome at Cedar Ridge!*



Each year on our half-acre farm, we grow over a ton of organic fruit and vegetables that we distribute locally to low-income families experiencing hunger. Join us on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings, or stop by the farm shed anytime to help out with the current tasks posted on the door. To find out more, check out [www.crc.org/farm](http://www.crc.org/farm) or contact [thefarm@crc.org](mailto:thefarm@crc.org).

So what, truly, is worship? A passionate, sweet-sounding song? A raw, sincere prayer? The beauty of God hiding in a wild honeysuckle vine? It's all of this, but far more. As I reflect on these kinds of experiences, it's far more about the attitude—the mind frame surrounding actions, rather than the actions themselves. That's where this "worship" thing for me gets bigger really quick.

I've shared before that I consider it an opportunity, a responsibility, and a genuine privilege to serve on the Board of Trustees at Cedar Ridge. In a real way, I see it as an "act" of worship. Reviewing our annual budget, sharing perspectives on our monthly financial reports, serving alongside other Board members in leadership through challenging issues—these all become for me authentic expressions of worship. When I approach the role of Treasurer in the right frame of mind and heart, these duties produce a moment, or better yet, an ongoing practice of worship.

In many ways, it's not *what* I do, but *how* I do it. I can acknowledge God in all aspects of my life. As I interact with my wife, I have many moments when I can express gratitude and support. After a tough moment (or day, or week) at work, I can consider the bigger picture and reorient myself within God's kingdom. When I wash dishes after dinner, I can imagine the way Jesus extended his love to his followers as a servant. Even writing a short article for the Cedar Ridge newsletter, I can embrace the ways that we all remain connected to each other day after day, in this community, pursuing our vision together.

In much the same way, *how* we give is just as important as *what* we give. Regardless of what we contribute in dollars and cents, it's important that we understand our offering to be part of our response to God, instead of an obligation. Giving becomes an extension of worship in which we respond to God's goodness and provision in our lives with gratefulness. It's a way of practicing thankfulness for all God is doing, and yet another way to stay connected to one another. We give as part of a larger community; each individual act of generosity comes together for the good of the whole community. Like the many parts of a beautiful song, each contribution is part of our melody and ultimately brings God's kingdom to life right here in Spencerville, MD.

This summer many of us will be away for more than one weekend, which often impacts giving at Cedar Ridge. I'd like to encourage you to set up a "rhythm" of worshipful giving by setting up a recurring gift. And if you've already done that, would you consider increasing your regular gift or perhaps using the giving option in the Cedar Ridge App to match a summer expense? It could be several trips out for ice cream or tickets to a baseball game—whatever you choose to match is a way of responding to God's goodness this summer with an act of worship by giving. ●



Photo: Steve holds up a project sign for others to join him at the Interfaith Day of Service back in April of this year.

## Out and About With Cedar Ridge

On Saturday, May 12, Cedar Ridge participated in the Laurel Main Street Festival for our first time. Our booth highlighted the farm, bees, and Guatemala projects, along with an opportunity to make a bookmark and try on a bee-keeping costume, complete with a smoking tool used to calm the bees when tending the hives.

Special thanks to Debra Lampton who helped set up the booth before 7 AM, with Sarah Burke, Director of Administration and Communication. A handful of volunteers from Cedar Ridge who live in Laurel joined us as we shared with hundreds of passers-by about our vision, extending the welcome to join us at Cedar Ridge.

Join us next month, on Saturday, July 7, for the Maple Lawn Festival where we will have a booth during the afternoon hours. Email [sarahb@crcc.org](mailto:sarahb@crcc.org) to find out more! ●



Photos: (Top right) Ruth and Debra setting up the booth, (Bottom left to right) kids trying on the bee costume with Ruth, and Sarah posing with the mascot from John and Ginger Donohue's neighboring booth.



# When Words Are Not Enough

We asked a few people to share about different ways they worship and experience connection with God that is beyond words. Here's what they shared . . .

## Simplifying Life As an Act of Worship

By: Hannah Guedenet



"Join us for a Lenten workshop on Simplifying Life"—my heart leapt as I heard those words one Sunday morning. Oh my gosh, I would love nothing more than to simplify. With two kids, a demanding job with lots of international

travel, and a house, life often feels suffocating, overwhelming, and insanely busy, as though life is just racing forward at warp speed. I feel like I'm barely hanging on for the ride. Then there's the guilt that comes with it and the voice inside my head telling me that I'm not enough – not a good enough mother, not doing enough in my marriage or my church, not contributing enough in my job.

For the past year or so, I routinely got this crazy idea that our family needs to move. If we just moved somewhere else in the US or in the world, life would be slower, less hectic, more centered. It is easy to buy into the narrative that our busyness is a result of living in the DC metro area and that we are helpless to resist it. That we're surrounded by people who are constantly on the go, pushing their kids to do more and be more. I've struggled with how to slow things down and not be swept away by the current.

Walking into Melanie's Simplifying Life workshop, I was shocked that it wasn't filled with more people. How does everyone at CRCC not feel like they need to simplify life? The first contemplative practice had us confronting the ugly voices in our heads, that say, "that was so stupid," "your sister's house is never this dirty," "you're going on another trip?" Melanie asked us to hear the voices, to feel the guilt, shame, regret that their words evoke. And then, imagine Jesus is sitting in front of you speaking words of love.

Suddenly, tears were streaming down my face. Jesus was saying "YOU ARE ENOUGH." I realized that all I had been craving was to hear those words spoken to my innermost being. Not to have a friend, my boss, or even my husband tell me that I'm great (which I usually just brush off as nice words), but to have the lover of my soul look at me lovingly and tell me that I am enough. It was like a dam broke inside

of me that freed me to stop focusing on all that I wasn't doing and be more intentional and present in what I was.

I started making small choices in my daily life. I try to remember to stop "should-ing" myself and those around me. Before saying yes to some activity or time commitment, I take a moment to examine what's motivating me to say yes. I started reading Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations (cac.org). I set my phone to automatically turn to silent mode every day from 6-8:30pm, pretty much the largest chunk of time I spend with my girls during the week, a time I'm often unnecessarily distracted by my phone. I have discontinued most of my social media accounts.

I also try to take more breaths. To stop in the moments of craziness and just breathe. Practicing centering prayer has been another way I've been able to add stillness in my day. For 20 minutes in the morning, there's nothing for me to do or accomplish. All I have to do is just be, and there's something freeing and restorative about that.

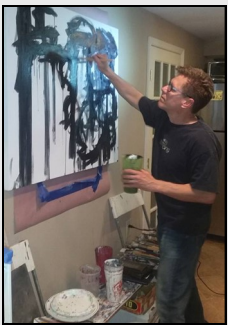
Through the contemplative practices, discussions, and personal reflection of the Lenten workshop, I came away with a clear vision: simplifying my life doesn't involve any dramatic moves or life changes. It is about the choices I make in each moment. Do I choose to give grace to myself and others? Do I choose to show love and receive love from those around me? Do I take the time to connect with God's life source flowing through me, just waiting for me to quiet my mind? When I can answer yes, the noise and chaos around me reduces to a soft hum, and life is simplified. ●



Photo: Hannah attends Cedar Ridge with her husband, Charles and two daughters, Adeline and Charlotte.

# Creativity As an Act of Worship

By: Harry Stone



Cedar Ridge has been my spiritual home for some time now. One thing that really stands out about our church is the wide variety of ways our members creatively express themselves in the worship and serving of God. Our members include a host of creative people. We are blessed with extraordinarily talented people who attend our place of worship. We have witnessed their gifts and the connections to God the Creator.

God is the ultimate creative force. After all, we read in Genesis 1 how God created the heavens and the earth, along with basically everything else, including mankind. We learn that God created mankind in his own image. Also, in this chapter we can sense God's pleasure in creating. The Bible says: God saw all that he had made and it was very good. God was pleased after inspecting his good work.

The Creator put creativity and the satisfaction it brings into each of us. Everyone has some creative talent or specialty that is God-given. It could be math, drawing, cooking or anything else that brings out your need for creativity. A lot of people will say they have no creativity, but it's just that they haven't noticed it or unlocked it yet.

One of the best places to witness the love of God through creativity is in our Children's Ministry. I have been blessed to serve by helping straighten the kids' rooms after service. When we go in there, we usually find artwork created by the children. The talent blows me away. You can feel God's love instantly. The colors, the subject matter, and the compositions are tremendous. We find a lot of drawings of rainbows, one of God's gifts to us. Each one is different; fat lines, skinny lines; some have figures while others have flowers. But what they all have in common is feeling that God was present while the children were creating. These little drawings honor God, re-creating his creation.

When I plan a new painting I am usually inspired by something. It may be something in the news, a work of art by another artist, a quote or maybe even one of the drawings by the children. There are a couple of paintings I am planning based on the drawings I found in the children's ministry. One is so inventive; I never could have realized it on my own. It took the innocence and creativity of a child. The drawing is from a lesson on Revelation 21:1, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth...." It depicts swings hanging from square cloudlike forms with brightly colored babies and children swinging. What a beautiful image! These images roll around in my brain for a while, creating a painting in my mind. So every time I

think about the painting, I also think about God and how it relates to the things going on in my life. I find myself in worship and praising God. While these beautiful images delight God and draw him close, there have been other times I have felt God's presence instantly while painting. There are times creativity calls on God.

During periods of stress in my life, I have often turned to painting as a way to center myself. One such time was when my twelve-year old dog, Astro (also my best friend) became very ill from a liver problem. It was suggested that we may have to put him down. We went to several different vets, and finally found one who recommended a drug she thought might help. We gave him the medicine and he seemed to be getting a little better but still required a lot of attention.

Then one day Astro became very lethargic, and I noticed that he was bleeding. The stress and sorrow was over-powering; it felt hopeless. I felt the need to paint the emotions going on inside me—the sadness, disappointment, worry and yet, gratitude that God had already given us a few more weeks with him. All of these emotions I rapidly painted in a self-portrait with Astro. It was done in a frenzy, using all of my energy culminating into me falling to my knees completely spent and praying. God was there. I thanked God for giving us Astro for as long as he did. Then I felt the power of God. God can do all things. So, I asked a bold prayer. I didn't ask God to give us Astro for another month or year. I asked God to give us Astro till he was sixteen years old. And guess what, Astro got better and lived to sixteen and a half! Praise be to God.



These are just a couple of examples of my interactions with God through creativity. Every member of our church probably has a story of how they serve and worship God through creativity. We observe creativity every Sunday through our pastoral team, the sound and technical people, along with the music from singers and band members. Also the events we have like the Creative Cup nights and the plays we have enjoyed. What a creative place we have to worship and create! ●



Photos: (Top left) Harry painting in his studio. (Middle) The painting Harry describes of himself and his beloved dog, titled, "Astro and Harry."

Harry has attended Cedar Ridge for several years and was the featured artist at the first annual Creative Cup Coffee House in 2015.



## Soul-singing Worship

By: Rebecca Stryker

There's a path through the woods near my house that I walk through almost every day. When I first enter the woods and leave suburbia behind, I am greeted by a forest of tulip poplars, which stand incredibly tall, straight, and majestic. These trees make a canopy about 100 feet above my head: their arms lifted toward the sky, their leaves angled towards the direction of the sun, soaking in as much as they can. It takes my breath away almost every time I walk into the woods. Looking up at them, I am instantly humbled and righted. I am reminded that there is so much in my life that is bigger than me—that God is bigger than me—and that thought gives me peace.

Worship can mean different things to different people, but to me, it means "God is the top block." I cannot describe this any other way. I don't have an analogy but, instead, just a picture and a sound in my head of a stack of blocks, kind of like magnetic legos. And at the top of the stack is the king block. When that block "clicks" into place on top of the others, it means that order is restored. What should be at the top now is, and all is right.

People here at Cedar Ridge probably know me best from being a face and voice on the worship team. I really love to sing. But I'm going to confess to you that there are many times when I'm singing and not even close to worshipping. My mind gets distracted by life, or even sometimes by the music itself. My heart isn't in the right place. The top block is sitting on the ground, waiting.

When I worship, and I mean truly worship, my heart and soul are set with the top block in place. God is supreme. No matter what is going on in my life—whether things are fine and dandy, or I've just messed up magnificently—God is where God should be, and I know I'm okay. God awakens my soul, and I feel like one of those tulip poplars: my arms lifted towards heaven, my gaze on the Son. The lyrics of the song swarm from my mouth to my heart to my soul, and it's a mystical experience (again, hard to explain). When I am worshipping in spirit and in truth, my soul sings, not just my voice. The order of things is right when God is being worshipped, and it feeds my soul with peace and joy.

Thankfully, worshipping God does not have to be limited to Sunday mornings. There are times throughout my week, even when I'm in the trenches trying to force-feed algebra to 13 year-olds, when I remember who is the top block.

When I am reminded that God is bigger than me and far more able than me, and when I am re-aligned to living for God's purposes rather than my own, once again, my soul sings. It's a beautiful expression of worship when we do our all unto God—when we love fiercely and live purposefully.

I get jealous of the trees sometimes. They seem to have worship all figured out; it certainly looks like they're worshipping all the time. Maybe that's yet another beautiful facet of God's kingdom coming to Earth, coming to us. Every day, every moment is an opportunity to worship and to soak in God's love and humbly live out God's purpose. ●

Photo: Rebecca is a Middle School Math teacher and also serves as a leader in the Middle School Group and as a worship leader on Sunday mornings. She attends Cedar Ridge with her husband, Ethan and their three children, Tim, Maddie, and Collin.



## Environmental Stewardship As an Act of Worship

By: Ben Campbell

Dominion: seems like a simple word. A few brief verses in Genesis declare humans to have "dominion" over the birds, the fish in the sea, and everything that lives on the land. This has played itself out in a power relationship described by terms like "conquest" of nature, expansion of "civilization", carving out a society, and "control" or "management" of the environment. Such words produce a mentality that humans are apart from nature. Like the slippery slope of the "other" that has manifest in our relations with "others" from different countries, ethnicities, cultures or religions, it is thinking that tends to exclude, alienate, and feed into dynamics where someone or something is going to lose.

And lose, the environment has. The current extinction rate of species is 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate—the estimate of how many species would go extinct without human-induced habitat loss, pollution or hunting species to extinction. News raising environmental alarms is so frequent as to be numbing. Last week, carbon dioxide levels hit 410 parts per million (ppm), the highest level in 800,000 years. Just a few years ago, climate scientists warned against exceeding 400 ppm, or temperatures would go above the two degrees Celsius seen as a threshold for catastrophic climate change. ...but what are a few ppm or degrees Celsius among friends? What could possibly go wrong?





In considering ourselves to be distinct from the rest of creation, we have also come to value the environment only in terms of what we can obtain from it. Neo-Classical economics only considers a natural resource like a tree, water or soil as having value when it is put to productive use as timber, fuel or energy. While recent economic theory has gotten better at defining the “value” of the environment, resources continue to be mined at unsustainable rates because current needs are valued much more than future ones. Plastics have washed out to sea because the sea belongs to no one, and now the planet has a flotsam of plastics circulating in the Pacific Ocean twice the size of Texas.

Would our relationship change if our values were different? What does dominion look like to God? The word for dominion in Genesis is the Hebrew “*radah*.” While it does mean to rule, let’s look at the traits that God expects from rulers. In Psalm 72, *radah* is used as “rule” again, referring to Solomon’s coronation. Speaking of his “rule” over subjects, it says:

*He delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight. (Psalm 72:12-14, NRSV)*

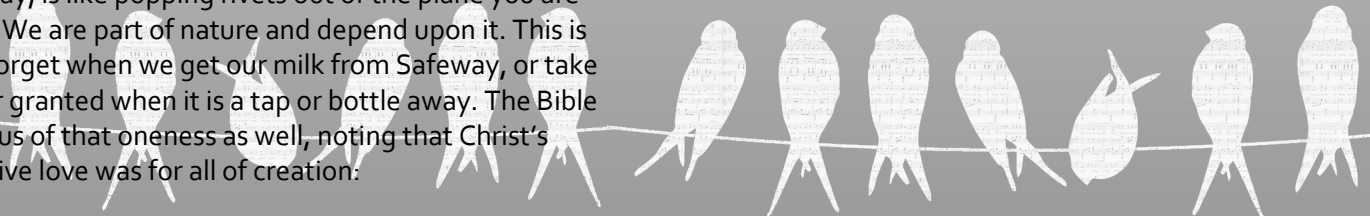
It is a loving relationship of service to those who are ruled. It is care and compassionate stewardship. In shifting from dominion to stewardship, we remind ourselves of our relationship with the environment, and our dependence on it for the air we breathe, water we drink, soils to grow food, and habitat to regulate temperatures. Energy pyramids illustrate the web of interconnected resources passing necessary nutrients from the sun to plants to animals. Removing parts of that network, as biologist Paul Ehrlich used to say, is like popping rivets out of the plane you are flying in. We are part of nature and depend upon it. This is easy to forget when we get our milk from Safeway, or take water for granted when it is a tap or bottle away. The Bible reminds us of that oneness as well, noting that Christ’s redemptive love was for all of creation:

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 15-20, NIV)*

Through Christ, there is no “other.” In the most loving gesture of self-sacrifice, Christ demonstrated what his “supremacy” looked like. If Christ’s redemption and love applies to all creation, how should that impact how we engage with the environment? What does dominion look like if it is viewed through a lens of service and self-sacrifice?

I cannot begin to speak for Jesus (even speaking for my wife is a recipe for trouble!), but in Matthew 25, Jesus reminds us that we will be judged by our actions. In this story, the king separates the goats from the sheep by pointing to the former as those who did not clothe the naked, feed the poor, or visit the prisoners. If Jesus were writing marketing materials for the World Wildlife Fund, perhaps this separation between the goats and sheep would go like this: “Depart from me because you used more than you needed, treated the oceans as a trash can, polluted the air, and thought so little of others that you let them carry the costs of your lifestyle.” Perhaps we would be more sheep-like if we treated dominion as service, redemption as a gift to all of creation, and being good stewards of the environment as a means to love and worship God. ●

*Ben works for the federal government’s Millennium Challenge Corporation as an environmental specialist. He has been a member of Cedar Ridge for nine years. Ben is married to Ruth, and they have two teenage sons, Luke and Joel.*



# LOVING Our Latino Neighbors



Since 2010, Cedar Ridgers have been interacting with and traveling to Guatemala to meet the people of Ipala. But every day, members of Cedar Ridge learn, shop, work, play, eat, drive and worship with scores of Latino immigrants in our own communities. In fact, in 2016 there were 198,533 Maryland residents who were born in El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala, or Honduras. El Salvadoran immigrants are by far the highest foreign-born population group in Maryland, Virginia, and DC. While our commitment to partnering with the people living in Guatemala remains strong, we also want to love and support the Spanish-speaking women, men, and children living all around us, particularly during a time of fear and uncertainty for many. Read ahead to learn about a couple of ways we are seeking to reach out in love to our Latino neighbors.

## “The Heart of Immigration”

By: Bryan Peterson,  
 Pastor of Children and Operations

On March 9, our Guatemala and Economic Justice Teams hosted “The Heart of Immigration,” an evening designed to help us hear real stories that take us behind the headlines. We watched clips of an award-winning documentary called “The Other Side of Immigration,” which shares compelling personal stories of why Mexicans feel they have no choice but to come to the United States in order to make a better life for their families who are

impoverished by the lack of opportunities, government corruption, and unfair competition in their homeland. Check with Bryan Peterson if you’d like to borrow this insightful video.

Four panelists (photo above) took turns sharing their personal immigration stories:

*Carlos Hernandez*, an electrician who was born in Ipala, told his story of coming to the US twice and how he experienced the love and support of an American church community during a significant medical crisis.

*Dr. Ronald Luna* is a professor of Geography at the University of Maryland who shared the above statistics as part of a brief look at some of the facts of immigration in our area. He also told of coming to Silver Spring as a child with his undocumented family, getting a PhD from University of Maryland, and pastoring Iglesia Ebenezer, a church that meets in the Barn on Sunday evenings. He is passionate about seeing immigrant youth succeed academically.

*Gerson Elias*, a twenty-something college graduate working with a well-known accounting firm, experienced separation from loved ones as he came to the US as a boy. He is personally concerned about the termination of the Temporary Protected Status of Salvadorans. He

is worried about the prospect of being deported to a country that he does not know when TPS ends in September 2019. He has recorded some of his feelings in this video [http://zoomin.tv/video/#!/spa\\_es/latest\\_videos/815343](http://zoomin.tv/video/#!/spa_es/latest_videos/815343).

*Mayra Herrera* works with the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center, focusing her efforts on helping Latino youth, many who were “unaccompanied minors” and came to be reunited with their parents. She helps students at High Point High School in Beltsville overcome the challenges they face daily.

Our own Tinica Mather also relayed some of the fears and economic struggles faced by immigrant children and families at Greencastle Elementary School.

The event was about hearing stories and gaining understanding. We were encouraged to see real people behind the immigration “issue.” We learned about the very real concerns faced by Latino immigrants, but also heard inspiring stories of being loved and befriended by neighbors, being supported by their faith, and overcoming the odds through hard work and determination. We were also inspired to be like Jesus, who broke down cultural barriers to welcome, include, and love the people around him.

*(Continued next page)*



## Spanish Lessons

By: Gina Richardson

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in late April, a diverse group of adults and youth gathered after the 10 AM service in room 202 to participate in the first of eight Spanish lessons. The class was being taught by Luis Castro, a native Spanish speaker originally from Peru, now living in Maryland. Mr. Castro taught a Spanish class at Cedar Ridge several years ago and was pleased to be asked back again.

Everyone in the class was given a printed assignment sheet as Mr. Castro explained the lesson. It was not long before everyone in the class was speaking Spanish, as each person was prompted to repeat a word or phrase and to engage in dialog with each other. The one-hour-and-fifteen-minute interactive class was engaging and fun because of Mr. Castro's conversational method of teaching. We are thankful to Mr. Castro for giving us a discount on the lesson price as a way of supporting the work Cedar Ridge is doing in Guatemala.

Since 2008, Cedar Ridge has been seeking to offer friendship and support to the people of Ipala, Guatemala. One way we have done this has been to send a team to Ipala for a ten-day trip during the summer. When our Guatemala team was planning the trip for this summer, they decided to schedule Spanish lessons for the travel team. Billy Earles is



on the travel team and signed up to take the class because he wants to better communicate with our partners and friends in Ipala, saying "I can speak German, but that won't help in Ipala."

Lina Kim, who is also in the class and going on the trip says, "Being Korean American, I am pleasantly surprised when I meet someone who is not Korean, and they can say a few words in my native language. If we can say just a few words in Spanish to our friends in Ipala, it would make them happy that we took the time to learn the language."

Cedar Ridge has been seeking to strengthen our relationships with the local Guatemalan and Latino immigrant community, so the class is open to anyone who wants to learn. Class participant, Jeanne Triplett, who isn't going on the trip, had this to say: "I took Spanish 1, 2, 3, and 4, but I need to replenish. Spanish is spoken all around us, and we need to understand it." ●

## Meet the Team: **GUATEMALA TRIP 2018**



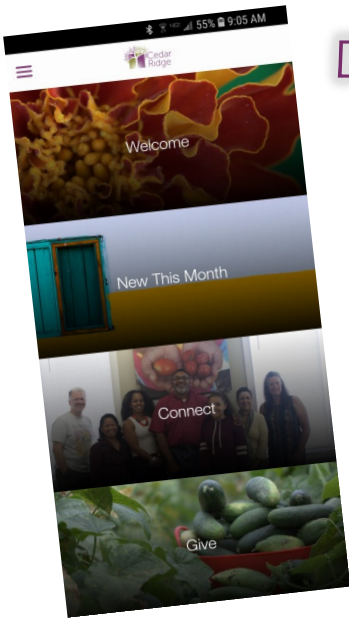
From July 7-16, twenty students and adults will be in Ipala, Guatemala for our 2018 Partnership Trip. This trip is one part of Cedar Ridge's ongoing relationship with the people of Ipala. It's about economic justice, partnership, friendship, community, servanthood, and personal transformation.

Please be praying for our team, led by Trish Audi, Sal Chairez, Deb Frew, and Mara Lopez, and consider supporting our students by participating in the Car Wash fundraiser to be held June 10. ●

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Imagine a community that dares to dream of heaven on earth; a community where everyone is accepted and respected and their journey cherished, regardless of their background, beliefs or place in society; where everyone looks out for the concerns of others and no one is alone. Imagine a community of peace and safety where it's possible to shelter from the frenzied pace of life, in order to slow down and explore the mystery and meaning of our existence; where we can take time to address the roots of our anxieties and pain; a place of hope where we can find help and healing and the power to change, no matter how desperate our situation. 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.

Imagine that community scattered throughout the region around Washington, Baltimore and beyond working as agents of love, peace and hope wherever they are: serving our neighbors, caring for the poor, helping the oppressed. Imagine a community of people who live simply and ethically, who share their land and resources with their neighbors; a community that treasures the Earth and reaches out beyond global, cultural and political barriers to offer friendship and practical support.

Imagine a community of people who make the world a better place.



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