

Fall 2018 Discipleship Group Materials



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Introduction

We are part of an amazing story and on an incredible journey! It's a story of love, redemption, healing and joy. It's the divine story of God reconciling all things; a story of astonishing hope where nothing is impossible, and even the most desperate situations are turned upside down and love wins the day. Each of our journeys is part of this great story. We struggle and falter at times, but slowly and purposefully we can move towards a greater awareness of God's love, and yield to its creative power in our lives. As we are changed, we become change agents: agents of love, peace, and hope wherever we are. We all get to do this! We are all part of this story. And it's an adventure in untold fulfillment and happiness!

In this series, we will explore what Jesus meant when he said, "I have come that you may have life and life to the full!" (John 10:10). Following Jesus is not easy and there are struggles for sure, but underneath it all, a life of deep fulfillment and contentment is offered. As we see our own journeys more aligned with this bigger story, our lives can resonate with a greater sense of meaning and purpose. This might mean change, sacrifice, and letting go of certain things, but we receive so much more. Each week we'll explore a different aspect of our lives—both personally as individuals, and as people in community with others—and plot an adventurous and often surprising course towards meaning, fulfillment, and joy.

Overview

The seven weeks of the series will cover the following themes:

- September 9: The Great Adventure

 Jesus' invitation to find happiness through giving away our lives; to bring healing to a broken world, and to let that healing begin with us.
- September 16: Our Part in the Great Adventure
 Our community is unique because each of us is uniquely created and loved; and we all have a role to play in the body of Christ for the good of the world.
- September 23: Happiness through Purpose
 Experiencing discipleship and making a way for others through ownership of our mission and acts of service.
- September 30: Happiness through Friendship
 Jesus' call to community—to diverse, inclusive, and lovingly accepting friendships,
 where we can all experience healing and transformation.
- October 7: Happiness through Growth
 A celebration of growth, and a reflection on where we need to continue to grow—allowing the Spirit of Christ to work in us to make us more like Jesus.

- October 14: Happiness through Generosity
 Giving sets us free from the personal tyranny of anxiety about possessions and wealth; and the call to give cheerfully and thankfully to our church community.
- October 21: Commitment Sunday
 Re-dedicating ourselves to the adventure of following Jesus here at Cedar Ridge, and celebrating the joy and happiness this brings.

Practicalities

Messages

In this packet you will find the discussion questions for weeks 1-6. (Note: there are no discussion questions for week 7, the final week in this series.) The questions assume you have heard the message for that week, so if you were not able to be at Cedar Ridge that Sunday, please listen or watch the message online (www.crcc.org/messages/).

Annexes

In Annex 1, you will find the FY2019 annual plan for our church community.

In Annex 2, you will find the following documents related to expressing commitment at Cedar Ridge:

- A. Reflecting on Commitment and Membership
- B. Baptism at Cedar Ridge
- C. Ways to Serve
- D. Ways to Give

Additional Activities

The fall is an exciting season for our community! It is a time when we recommit to different ministry areas, review our plans and finances, and reach out to our community in friendship and service. Specific opportunities related to our annual plan goal *to be an inspiring* community that supports each and every member, and that is growing through outreach to friends and neighbors are described below. Let's all make an extra effort to make visitors and newcomers feel welcome.

Burtonsville Day—Saturday September 22

Help us pack out our hayride float at the Burtonsville Day Parade. Meet at Paint Branch High School at 9:30 AM and ride along in the old town parade. Adults and older students can walk behind the float to pick up trash along the parade route. (This public service has become our tradition.) Parade finishes at approximately 11:30 AM. Then stay for a fun festival at the Marilyn J Praisner community center until 3 PM and stop by the CRCC booth!

Ministry Fair—Sunday September 23, immediately after the service

Stay after the service to learn about the areas we are involved in as a community, and sign up to volunteer. (There are volunteer opportunities for children and youth, too!) This is also a great opportunity to join a discipleship group, if you are not yet in one. Is there an activity or area of interest that you care passionately about that is not yet represented at Cedar Ridge? Stop by the *Small Groups* table to make a suggestion for a group you would like to lead or participate in. There will be ice cream, prizes, and fun for all ages!

Harvest Festival—Saturday October 6, 4-7PM

Invite your neighbors and friends to celebrate with us another bountiful growing season on the farm. There will be food trucks, live music, hayrides, pumpkin carving, face painting, and more. All activities are free, but we ask that you bring an unexpired, non-perishable food item from the list below to benefit local organizations addressing hunger in our area. Pick up postcards in the Commons and give them to friends, or post them in local coffee shops and grocery stores. Sign up to help at the Ministry Fair, or by contacting Tinica Mather (tinicamather@gmail.com).

Most needed food items:

Grains

- Instant oatmeal packets, original flavor
- Brown rice (16 oz)
- Whole grain pasta (16 oz)

Protein

- Tuna, salmon or chicken in water
- Dry or canned beans (low sodium)
- Natural nut butters

Fruits & Vegetables

- Canned vegetables (low-sodium)
- Canned fruit (in juice)
- Fruit cups

Other Healthy Items

- Shelf-stable, individual milk boxes
- Cooking oils & spices
- Infant formula & baby foods

Annual Meeting—Sunday October 21, immediately after the service

In addition to voting on Board candidates, we will take an in-depth look at our finances and plans for the coming year. While only members are permitted to vote, we encourage everyone to participate in the meeting, including youth. Chili, soup, and bread will be served for lunch. Please bring a crockpot to share. Childcare (and a lunch of cheese pizza) will be available.

Week 1: The Great Adventure

One way or another we are all seeking happiness. A sense of wellbeing and contentment is often the major driving force in our lives, whether we are always conscious of it or not. But happiness is also illusive. Many of the things that seem to promise happiness (like material wealth, popularity or status) often fail to deliver, and the resulting dissatisfaction can drive us to greater frustration as we seek those same things even harder. Jesus offers an alternative and opens up a way of living that moves us away from self-centered pursuits and set us on a journey of love for others as well as ourselves. Paradoxically, such a life requires us to take the risk of not putting our own needs or happiness first. But this is not a negative life of self-neglect. Rather as we give our lives away, we find them. In this new way of personal growth, authentic relationships and service to others, we find a deeper meaning and a greater purpose to life that brings happiness. Not a fleeting happiness that's dependent on any given circumstance, but a deeper experience that transcends the ups and downs of life and might perhaps best be called joy.

As followers of Jesus at Cedar Ridge we encourage one another to take this risk and to set out on this adventure in happiness. In fact everything we do here is an invitation into this paradoxical journey. It's an invitation to partner with God in bringing healing to a broken world, and to let that healing begin with us. It's a higher calling to live a life of meaning, purpose and fulfillment. It's a journey we walk together, and our church is a community where we can each make this our reality. So a commitment to our vision is a commitment to live this incredible adventure!

This week's discussion questions

- 1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
- 2. What are the differences in your view between happiness and joy?
- 3. Can you describe a time when hardship and struggle led to a deeper sense of fulfillment and joy? What made this experience meaningful for you?
- 4. In what ways has your spiritual journey made you happier (or more joyful)? In what ways has it made you less happy, and why?

- 5. Read Matthew 4: 17-25.
 - What do you notice in this passage about healing, relationships and servanthood?
 - What do you notice about meaning, purpose, sacrifice and joy?
- 6. The speaker on Sunday suggested it's really important that our church (Cedar Ridge) flourishes and thrives. Do you agree or not, and why? What can you do to make this a reality?
- 7. Break into groups of 2 or 3, and each share about an area of your life where you long for a greater sense of fulfillment and joy. Take some time to pray for one another.

Reflection during the week

Set aside some time early this week to reflect on our community's two main objectives for the year ahead:

- To be an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates and seeks to learn from all our members—providing particular support to children and youth, older adults, and those who are marginalized.
- To increasingly reach out in friendship to people outside of our community—to grow in confidence, skills, and motivation to share our vision through our relationships with others.

Prayerfully consider the following:

- 1. How do you feel about these objectives? Do they feel like yours? What keeps them from being yours?
- 2. How could you make these a priority in your personal life? What would that look like? What changes do you need to make?
- 3. Think about your group and/or other relationships at Cedar Ridge. How could you help make these objectives a priority for your own community?

Week 2: Our Part in the Great Adventure

According to protestant theologians writing in the 17th century, the chief end of humankind is to love and enjoy God forever. Each of us is made uniquely in the image of God, and we therefore enjoy and are enjoyed by God in a distinctive, personal manner. This may be expressed in so many ways—such as how we exercise our creativity, our sense of humor, our varied relationships, and our recognition of God in the countless "little" things of everyday life. We each bring our distinctive outlook on life and insights into the divine mystery to Cedar Ridge. And together we create a truly unique community!

We are a community that seeks to bring God's reconciling love to our workplaces and neighborhoods, and that views following Jesus as something that impacts every area of our lives. We value authenticity—honestly and humbly acknowledging our doubts and questions, and embracing mystery. And we are committed to diversity and to the loving acceptance and inclusion of everyone. We all have a role to play in our community—our presence matters. Our smiles and words of encouragement have more impact than we can imagine. Our contributions—no matter how "small" or hidden—make a difference. We—ordinary people like you and I—are Cedar Ridge.

This week's discussion questions

- 1. Discuss your responses to last week's reflection exercise. How could you make the annual plan objectives a priority for you as an individual? As a group?
- 2. What did you take away from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was challenging for you?
- The speaker on Sunday said that God delights in us (Zephaniah 3:17), and that our uniqueness is reflected in our relationship with God (Revelation 2:17).
 - In what ways do you feel God delights in you?
 - If you know other group members well, how do you think God delights in them?
 - In what ways do you contribute your uniqueness to our church community?
- 4. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.
 - If Cedar Ridge were a physical human body, what part would you be?
 - Paul, the writer of this letter, says, "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable." Seemingly small acts of kindness or service, and

- simple words of encouragement or even challenge can have a significant impact on someone. Can you think of small acts or simple words by someone in our community that have impacted you?
- Keeping in mind your uniqueness, how might you bring joy to other parts of the body?
- 5. Break into groups of 2 or 3. Take a few minutes each to describe how you first came into contact with Cedar Ridge.
 - What was it that attracted you to the community?
 - What has kept you coming back over the years?
 - What needs in your life have been met through being a part of our community?
- 6. Take some time to pray, thanking God for each member of the group—their uniqueness, and all they bring to our community.

Reflection during the week

Take some time during the week to think and pray about what our community means to you, and write a brief paragraph summarizing your thoughts. Write honestly and authentically—avoiding religious language and not worrying about "the right" answers.

Think about your neighbors and friends. How might a community like ours benefit them? Pray for them, and invite them to the Harvest Festival on October 6, 4-7 PM.

Week 3: Happiness through Purpose

Jesus lived with a deep sense of purpose. He described it in a variety of ways such as "doing the will of my father' or "seeking and saving the lost." It looked different at various times, too: resolutely "setting his face towards Jerusalem," or tenderly "healing all who came to him." Jesus was driven by a higher purpose—to love, heal and lead us into union with God and a deep experience of life in the Kingdom of God. We are invited into the same purpose: as we experience all this ourselves we join the mission to share it and make a way for others. Everything we do in our church community is part of this purpose. Our mission is to be and make disciples—to experience it ourselves, and make a way for others to have the same benefit.

As a community on this mission, there are many things that need to "get done" and we all get to do them! We've all experienced to some degree the fulfillment accomplishing something. But this is especially rewarding when we are doing things for others, and when we have a sense that the task (however apparently mundane) is part of a higher purpose. Serving in this way brings a deep sense of joy and fulfillment of the Jesus paradox that to really live fully you have to give your life away. Cedar Ridge is a community where we get to live and serve in this way. Whether we serve because we have gifts and talents that are desperately needed, or because the job just needs doing, we are all invited to enjoy this adventure in purpose, meaning and fulfillment

This week's discussion questions

- 1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
- 2. Read Philippians 2:1-11 and discuss the following in light of the message on Sunday:
 - a. What does this passage say about a higher cosmic purpose?
 - b. What is the call to individual action?
 - c. How does the call to individual action towards others relate to the higher cosmic purpose?
- 3. Take a few moments reflect on last week's post-it note exercise. Sit in silence for a while and be consciously grateful for those things that you love about our community. Then go around the group and have everyone share those things again.

- 4. Now discuss:
 - a. How might the above passage challenge us as consumers of these benefits in our community?
 - b. How could you personally grow in ownership of our community and share those benefits with others?
- 5. Read Colossians 3:23-24 and Romans 12:1-8.
 - a. How do these passages apply to you personally when you reflect on the various things that need doing at Cedar Ridge and the various invitations to help out?
 - b. What motivates you most: seeing a job that just needs doing, or serving in ways that you are gifted?
 - c. What do you see that needs doing at Cedar Ridge?
 - d. What gifts do you have that seem needed at Cedar Ridge?
- 6. Go around the group and each share experiences from the Ministry Fair this past Sunday. In what roles (new or old) do you plan to serve this year? Then spend some open time praying for one another in these roles.

Practice during the week

Set some time aside early in the week to reflect on your "higher purpose." Visualize yourself as an "agent of love peace and hope" in your world. What does that look like? What kind of different behaviors would you adopt with this mindset? Imagine yourself as a member of the Cedar Ridge community and an owner of the Cedar Ridge mission. How could you make a way for others in the world you live in everyday? How might your interactions with others change?

Each morning before you head out for the day, return to this reflection and visualization of yourself. Invite God to empower you to live this way and then try to consciously take on the mindset as an owner of the mission to make a way for others.

At the end of each day reflect on how things went. Celebrate new positive ways you interacted and invite God to transform you.

Week 4: Happiness through Friendship

Jesus said to his closest companions and followers that he did not consider them servants but friends. Before going to trial and execution, he told the same people that he wanted to spend his final precious moments with them. Jesus seemed to long for friendship (just as we do) and take incredible joy in it. Clearly he spent important and much needed time alone, but in everything else he did, he did it with others, and in many ways his life was a celebration of community. But this was no ordinary community. Jesus' circle included Roman officials and anti-Roman freedom fighters, tax collectors and Pharisees, women and men, Pagans, Jews and Samaritans. The power of Jesus' love, acceptance and inclusion was evidenced by genuine diversity. And this was no show: these were truly friends. Jesus' life was an embodiment—an incarnation—of his higher purpose of reconciliation and healing.

The early Christ-following communities after Jesus embodied this same diversity and friendship. They were not only beneficiaries of this radical acceptance, but also extended it to others. Here at Cedar Ridge we are all descendants of this lineage, and are invited into the same adventure in friendship. Like all humans, we long to be fully known and fully accepted. But this is also a challenge: we have all experienced the joy of friendship and also the pain of rejection. We've all felt the comfort of inclusion but also the loneliness of being on the outside. So we are daring to dream that we can be a community where no one is alone. A community, like the one around Jesus, that is diverse in its beauty: black, white, male, female, young, old, gay, straight, married, single. A community that embraces difference, and is transformed by it. A community that demonstrates to the whole world that reconciliation and healing are possible.

This week's discussion questions

- Discuss your experience with last week's reflection exercise. How did your consciousness of "higher purpose" impact your week?
- 2. What did you take away from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was challenging for you?
- 3. Read Matthew 12: 46-50 and discuss what you think Jesus means.
 - How might we rethink "tradition family values" in light of this?
 - How could this apply to our church community?
 - How could this apply to your group?

- 4. What actions do we each need to take to be a more diversely integrated community at Cedar Ridge? How can you personally respond to this challenge?
- 5. Read Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4: 32-37.
 - What is appealing about the community described here?
 - What is challenging?
 - What things stands in the way of us experiencing this level of shared community today?
- 6. Break into groups of 2-3 and share honestly about your own personal current experience of friendship. What friendships can you celebrate? What loneliness are you experiencing at the moment? Listen without judging or try to "fix" thing, and then pray for one another.

Reflection during the week

Take an inventory of your friendships, relationships and associations.

- With whom do you feel you'd like to pursue a closer friendship? How could you make a deeper connection?
- Is there anyone to whom you have some kind of connection who is quite unlike you (in age, race, sexuality etc.)? How could you get to know them better?
- Who do you know who seems lonely or on the outside of your circle? How could you invite them in?

Spend some time reflecting and praying about each of the above, and then make a plan to take action.

Week 5: Happiness through Growth

In our culture, we celebrate all kinds of growth and progress, and this week we particularly pause to reflect on the bountiful harvest on our community farm. This harvest is not only measured in pounds of produce, but in families fed and encouraged, volunteers having a place to serve, awareness raised about food injustice, and community experienced as we work alongside one another. But the growth of farm produce also reminds us of our own growth—because we are all growing and changing, whether we like it or not!

As followers of Jesus, we do not want to stress and strive and try to "better ourselves" by an act of sheer will. Nor do we seek growth as the means to love and acceptance—we are already loved and accepted just as we are. Because we are loved, Jesus invites us into a process of growth and transformation that—while not always a comfortable process—leads to more profound happiness for ourselves and others. Spiritual growth, while in some ways a mystery, has very practical consequences in our lives. As we grow, we become more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle, faithful, self-controlled... in brief: more like Jesus.

This week's discussion questions

- 1. Discuss your experience with last week's inventory exercise. How did this exercise make you feel about your friendships, relationships and associations?
- 2. What did you take away from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was challenging for you?
- 3. Read Matthew 11:28-30. This brief (and oft-quoted!) saying of Jesus reflects two dimensions that we often consider to be in tension: action (taking on a yoke, carrying a burden, and learning) on one hand, and resting, on the other.
 - When you think about growing as a person, do you tend to be more actionoriented or more reflective/contemplative? Why do you think this is?
 - Are there specific areas of your life where you feel you need to rest and lay down a burden in order to grow?
 - Are there specific areas where you think you need to be more active in order to grow?

4. Read Galatians 5:22-23. It is easy to read this list and think, "I need to grow in all of those!" We can quickly move into an "action" orientation—or conversely, feel overwhelmed and want to give up!

Use this passage as a *Lectio Divinα* (sacred reading).

Read the passage through slowly. Take 5 min to sit quietly and ask God to help you identify areas where you most need to grow. Read the passage through twice more, slowly.

Reflect on any aspect of the fruit of the Spirit that stood out. How might this word be speaking to you or challenging you? Allow memories, thoughts or situations evoked by the word to rise up gently. Allow God to reveal to you how the word or phrase applies to your life. Ask, "What meaning does this have for me here and now? What does God want me to know or to see?" Spend time in silence, reflecting on the phrase and allowing it to interact with your life. Now read the passage again.

Respond to God. Open your heart to God and honestly share with God how you feel about your experience with the passage. These may be questions or doubts, or prayers of thanksgiving, petition, confession, lament, or praise.

Rest in God's presence. Allow your prayers to gently fade away and move into a time of simply resting in God's arms. Allow yourself freedom from thoughts, both mundane and holy. Open your mind, heart and soul to the fullness of God's love and peace. Rest.

5. Share with one another any reflections from this exercise. Each person in the group can identify one area for prayer. Write these down, and commit to praying for one another during the week ahead.

Practice during the week

Use your list from question 5 to pray for spiritual growth in the lives of each group member. You might choose a different group member to pray for each day, or pray for each member every day. Take time to also listen to God, and share with group members any words of encouragement you feel God might be giving to you.

Week 6: Happiness through Generosity

Jesus is quoted as saying it is better to give than receive. He taught that the more we hold on to things possessively the more miserable we become, whereas the more we trust in God's love and provision, the more free and content we are. Modern psychology research affirms this: money does not make us happy, and material possessions are ultimately unfulfilling. We all intuitively know this to be true as well. We've all experienced the joy that comes with helping someone else or giving to a good cause. Likewise, we've all felt the anxiety and stress that comes when we obsess about our own needs. At Christmas we take much greater pleasure when the gifts we give are received with joy than from what we get ourselves.

The Jesus wisdom about giving sets us free from the personal tyranny of anxiety about possessions and wealth. But it had a broader impact on the early communities of followers of Jesus. They shared their possessions and gave to the community as a whole so that it could thrive and flourish. These communities had expense budgets that were inevitable realities. Without them they could not continue the work of healing and reconciliation (the higher purpose of the kingdom of God). Likewise, at Cedar Ridge we are not only challenged into a more generous and giving lifestyle as a whole, but are all called to give to the common good within our own church community. We all have different capacities to give based on our circumstances, but we can each play our part with equal sacrifice. In this way we invest in the wellbeing of the community and make a way for others to benefit as we have. Our giving opens up a world of creative opportunity. And in doing so, we reap the benefit of the joy of generosity.

This week's discussion questions

- 1. What did you take away from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was challenging for you?
- 2. Read Matthew 19:23-26. Do you agree with this? Discuss how this applies to us today.
- 3. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. Discuss what it means to be a "cheerful giver."
 - What does "reluctance" look like?
 - What does "compulsion" look like?
 - How do reluctance and compulsion inhibit generosity?

- 4. The speaker on Sunday talked about "tithing" as giving 10% of our income to our church community. What is your reaction to this: reluctance, compulsion or cheerfulness?
- 5. What does the story of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1-4) and the story of the rich young man (Mark 10:17-27) teach us about generosity?
- 6. Break into groups of 2-3 and read Matthew 6:25-34. Share with one another your own struggles and anxieties about money. Then pray for one another's needs and invite God's love.

Reflection during the week

Set aside some time to read Matthew 6:25-34 on your own. Reflect silently on this passage and invite God's love. Imagine your whole life surrounded by and secure in God's love, and give thanks. Picture all your possessions as being gifts from God, and give thanks. In this spirit of thankfulness, reflect honestly and objectively on what you feel your financial responsibility is to your church community. If you feel any compulsion, let that go and surrender it to God's love. If you feel any reluctance, let that go and surrender it to God's love. What can you cheerfully and thankfully give to your church community? Set a goal, and then make a plan to give on a regular basis.

Week 7: Commitment Sunday

Each quarter we hold a Commitment Sunday, which is a special opportunity to celebrate community, and to renew our commitment to Jesus and to one another. During the Sunday service we welcome people into new membership, dedicate children to God (and ourselves to supporting them in their journey), and conduct baptisms. The service will be followed by a potluck lunch.

If you feel aligned with our vision and values, and are not yet a member, we encourage you to prayerfully consider becoming one—regardless of how long you have been attending Cedar Ridge. More information on membership is included in Annex 2. Please inform one of the pastors if you would like to become a member. (If you are unsure whether or not you are a member, contact the church office.)

As we draw this series to a close, we will all focus on re-dedicating ourselves to the adventure of following Jesus here at Cedar Ridge, and celebrating the joy and happiness this brings us as we offer joy and happiness to the world.

Annex 1: FY2019 Annual Plan

Introduction

Our vision as followers of Jesus is a world of love, peace, reconciliation and acceptance, and for this we strive, recognizing that change begins with us. The early followers of Jesus formed quite incredible communities. They were women and men, young and old, Jews and gentiles, pagans and Pharisees, tax-collectors and Zealots: a collection of very different people from very different backgrounds and perspectives, who came together in reconciliation and found an astonishing unity. They had their struggles, but the love they shared transcended their differences and was a sure sign of the presence of the "Kingdom of God" (the new way of life that Jesus taught and lived).

Our fractured and polarized society is in need of reconciliation like never before, and in the year ahead we will focus as a community on playing our part in that healing process. Firstly, we will continue to strive to be a truly diverse and accepting community where all people are valued and given a voice. To that end, we will continue our work in racial justice, and we will seek to integrate the needs and perspectives of older adults, children, and youth. We will also specifically work to renew and strengthen our vision and programs for children and youth. This intergenerational focus will be reflected in our churchwide activities and Sunday services, as well as in our decision-making as a community. In addition, we remain resolutely committed to welcoming and affirming all people, regardless of beliefs, gender, sexuality or ethnicity.

Secondly, we will reach out beyond our church community and strive to become better friends, better family members, better workers, and better neighbors. We want to share the hope, healing and creative possibility that following Jesus means. So, we will intentionally work to be good news in our families, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces, and invite others into our movement of healing and reconciliation.

All of this will take each of us stepping up to own our vision in new ways. Change begins with us, so let's each embrace the challenge to reach across the various barriers within our own church community and reach out to love and serve our neighbors.

Goal and Objectives

The goal for this coming year is to be an inspiring community that supports each and every member, and that is growing through outreach to friends and neighbors.

The objectives that contribute to this goal are as follows:

1. To be an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates and seeks to learn from all our members—providing particular support to children and youth, older adults, and those

- who are marginalized.
- 2. To increasingly reach out in friendship to people outside of our community—to grow in confidence, skills, and motivation to share our vision through our relationships with others.

Metrics and Associated Targets

The metrics that follow will be used to indicate progress towards achieving the two objectives described above. Understanding that quantitative measures do not tell the full story, and numerical targets may not be achieved for many reasons, these metrics will be used to inform prayerful reflection, rather than as objective performance standards.

Objective 1: To be an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates and seeks to learn from all our members

Metric 1a: Average weekly attendance on first Sundays

- Rationale: If we truly embrace being an integrated intergenerational community, we will value the times we all gather together to worship.
- Target: 15% higher than average for weeks that are not first Sundays or all ages services.
- Tracked by: Attendance records

Metric 1b: Percentage of members of strategic leadership teams who are people of color, and percentage under 30 years of age

- Rationale: We want to celebrate the rich diversity of our community, which includes ethnicity and age, and ensure diversity extends to positions of influence.
- Target: 10% increase in the number of people of color and 10% increase in the number of people who are under 30 within strategic leadership teams (Board of Trustees, Pastoral Team, children and youth leaders, worship team, and d-group leaders)
- *Tracked by:* Serving rosters in CCB.

Metric 1c: Increased strength of children and youth ministries as measured by (i) the number of children's volunteers serving 3 or more times per quarter, and (ii) the attendance of children and youth leaders at leadership meetings

- Rationale: Recruitment of additional children's leaders is core to the move to a relational basis for this ministry area. We want to strengthen and energize the leadership culture in these areas through the consistent contributions of diverse gifting and perspectives.
- Target: 25 children's leaders serving 3 or more times per quarter; and 75% of children and youth leaders attending relevant leadership meetings
- Tracked by: Serving schedules in CCB; attendance at leadership meetings

Objective 2: To increasingly reach out in friendship to people outside of our community Metric 2a: Number of newcomers registered in CCB

- Rationale: We want to grow numerically as a result of reaching out to friends and neighbors, and so want to see more people expressing interest in joining our community.
- Target: 30 people (all ages) registered in CCB as newcomers per quarter
- *Tracked by:* CCB records

Metric 2b: Percentage of churchwide events (excluding regular Sunday services) where non-members make up a third or more of the attendees

- Rationale: We want to encourage each other to invite friends and neighbors to our events.
- Target: 40% of churchwide events (excluding regular Sunday services)
- Tracked by: Attendance records and visual counts at events (NB: This will generally not be measured accurately, but will be intentionally estimated)

Metric 2c: Percentage of d-group members and MS/HS students inviting friends or neighbors to a Cedar Ridge event or activity

- Rationale: We want all Cedar Ridge members to own our vision and the objective of reaching out in friendship.
- *Target:* 80%
- Tracked by: Question asked by d-group and MS/HS leaders quarterly.

In addition to the annual plan metrics above, we will prepare for the biannual analysis of the strategic plan metrics, which will take place in September 2019. Preparations will include data collection throughout this year of the following:

Strategic Plan Metric 1.2: Annual attendance at Cedar Ridge off-site gatherings Strategic Plan Metric 4.3: Total attendance at prayer-focused events

Activities

To achieve the objectives listed above, the following set of activities is proposed. Although broken out by objective, the activities are mutually reinforcing and do not fully correspond to only one objective.

Activities principally contributing to Objective 1:

- Share stories during Sunday services, through panel discussions, video, and via electronic and print media
 - Illustrating intergenerational connections, to encourage people to find their passion through relationships, including through getting involved in children and youth ministry.
 - Addressing "God connections" made through Guatemala trips, social justice events, youth retreats, farm experiences, etc.
 - o Giving personal examples of repentance and action related to social justice

- Invite older adults, parents and youth to get involved with children and youth ministry through one-time or short-term engagements—such as serving as a guest speaker, leading a prayer practice, or helping with an activity or event—to expose people to the ministry, facilitate intergenerational connections, and potentially find new leaders.
- Recommit to the development of peer-reviewed, integrated Sunday content for children, youth and adults.
- Use Sunday adult and youth services (messages, announcements, opening items, prayers), discipleship materials, *Journey* and churchwide communications to reiterate collective financial ownership.
- Hold a racial equity in education workshop that deepens expertise within Cedar Ridge and helps establish contacts with like-minded groups, leading to the development of concrete steps that can engage many people from our community. Hold another workshop in the spring to increase our understanding of issues of racial injustice in our culture.
- Rethink and organize property workdays as churchwide intergenerational events.
- Identify and incorporate into Sunday services more non-musical forms of worship that are not distracting for non-participants, and work with youth to explore culturally appropriate forms of worship.
- Proactively invite people who have drifted away from Cedar Ridge to churchwide, intergenerational events.

Activities principally contributing to Objective 2:

- Encourage discipleship groups to reach out to friends, neighbors and former group members, both individually and through joint social events, and pray collectively for this.
- Facilitate outreach via the property through "friends and family" days on the farm, together with sporting activities; and through updating the prayer walk and promoting it during the Harvest Festival and other events.
- Highlight environmental justice issues through an event open to the public, as well as through farm signage, and Sunday content; and make the property more wildlife-friendly.
- Have a social justice-themed challenge series leading up to a service day, make social justice a stronger part of the messaging around the day, and encourage people to invite friends and neighbors.
- Continue to hold Spanish language classes, and investigate the feasibility of opening them up to the local community.
- Through an assessment trip by Cedar Ridge members with relevant development expertise, as well as through remote research and support, help CIDHER to expand in team size and capacity.
- Improve the look and safety of the property for visitors through removal of farmhouse addition and sealing up of main farmhouse.

Upcoming Series

Fall series

This series will focus on ownership of the goal and objectives of the annual plan. In support of being an integrated, intergenerational community, we will create a team to identify and catalyze ideas to move this forward in different ways, including recruiting additional children and youth ministry volunteers. We will also have an intergenerational creative activity illustrating diversity. In support of objective 2, on one or more Sunday mornings and through small group discussion materials, activities will walk people of all ages through the process of thinking why Cedar Ridge matters to them, and why and how to share their story in non-religious, authentic ways. One week will be designated for groups to hold social events for non-members.

Fall mini-series

This 3-week challenge series will focus specifically on being a good neighbor. We will connect neighborliness to incarnation, using relevant stories of Jesus.

Advent

The aim is to make this series super-inclusive, fun and engaging—something everyone can invite friends to. The series will be launched with an intergenerational Advent event in the Barn with crafts, live animals, hay wagon rides, and fair trade gifts. This will replace the Advent Party, which we have held for the last few years.

Winter series

This will be an invitational series on what is God like, framed around the various ways different temperaments, personalities and traditions see God. We will look at various approaches to reading the Bible, recognizing the richness of this diversity of tradition. The series will include in one or more Sunday services breakouts, panels or practices related to experiencing God through science, creativity, ritual, relationships, etc., and resources will be developed to help people continue to engage with God in diverse ways individually.

Winter mini-series

This will be a brief teaching series on money, encouraging ownership of our community and vision. (This may coincide with the start of fundraising activities for the farmhouse.)

Lent

This challenge series will explore various social justice issues that have local impacts. The series will include in a Day of Service, which will relate directly to the issues covered in the series. Challenge groups will form around specific social justice issues for weeks 2-4, and these groups will be supported in organizing service day projects.

Draft Fall and Winter Calendar 2018-19

Objective	Date	Event	Notes	
2	Fri Aug 24	Movie Night – <i>Coco</i>		
1	Sat Aug 25	Content Creation Workshop		
	Sun Aug 26	God in the Movies 4 – Coco	RR prayer	
2	Fri Aug 31	Farm and Movie Night – Happy Feet		
1	Sun Sept 2	God in the Movies 5 – Happy Feet	AAT, Labor Day weekend, prayer for kids and teachers returning to school	
	Sun Sept 9	Fall series 1	Re-launch	
	Sun Sept 16	Fall series 2		
1, 2	Sat Sept 22	Burtonsville Day		
1	Sun Sept 23	Fall series 3	Ministry/Groups Fair and ice cream	
	Sun Sept 30	Fall series 4	Journey 1	
1, 2	Sat Oct 6	Harvest Festival	Middle school sleepover	
1	Sun Oct 7	Fall series 5	First Sunday, Journey 2	
	Sun Oct 14	Fall series 6	Journey 3	
1	Sun Oct 21	Fall series 7	Commitment Sunday, Annual Meeting and potluck	
	Sun Oct 28	Fall mini-series 1		
1, 2	Sun Nov 4	Day of Service	First Sunday	
1	Sat Nov 10	Racial Equity in Education Workshop Youth laser tag (TBC)		
	Sun Nov 11	Fall mini-series 2		
	Sun Nov 18	Fall mini-series 3	Thanksgiving on 11/22.	
1	Sun Nov 26	Thanksgiving Service	Christmas decorating with lunch	
1, 2	Sat Dec 1	Intergenerational Advent in the Barn	Afternoon, hayrides, mulled wine, outreach-focused	
1	Sun Dec 2	Advent 1	AAT, Content Creation Workshop after the service	
	Sat Dec 8	Advent Quiet Day (TBC)		
	Sun Dec 9	Advent 2		

	Sun Dec 16	Advent 3	
	Sun Dec 23	Advent 4	
1	Mon Dec 24	Christmas Eve service (5:30PM)	AAT
	Sun Dec 30	Christmas/New Year	
1	Sun Jan 6	Winter series 1	First Sunday. Epiphany. Christmas un-decorating.
	Sat Jan 12	MS Retreat (TBC)	
	Sun Jan 13	Winter series 2	
	Sun Jan 20	Winter series 3	
1, 2	Mon Jan 21	Event TBD (possibly indoor service projects)	MLK Day
	Sun Jan 27	Winter series 4	
1, 2	Sat Feb 2	Creative Cup Coffeehouse—youthful, intergenerational, mature perspectives	Or following weekend (depending on the weather)
1	Sun Feb 3	Winter series 5	First Sunday
1	Sat Feb 9	Content Creation Workshop	
	Sun Feb 10	Winter series 6	Journey 1
	Sun Feb 17	Winter mini-series 1	Journey 2
	Sun Feb 24	Winter mini-series 2	Journey 3
1	Sun Mar 3	Winter mini-series 3	First Sunday, Commitment Sunday
	Wed Mar 6	Ash Wednesday	
	Sun Mar 10	Lent Challenge Series 1	
	Sun Mar 17	Lent Challenge Series 2	
	Sun Mar 24	Lent Challenge Series 3	
	Sat Mar 30	Lenten Quiet Day (TBC)	
	Sun Mar 31	Lent Challenge Series 4	
1	Sun Apr 7	Lent Challenge Series 5 – Day of Service	First Sunday
	Sun Apr 14	Lent Series 6	Palm Sunday
1, 2	Sun Apr 21	Easter Sunday	AAT
1, 2	Mon Apr 22	Earth Day—kid-friendly event (TBC)	

Annex 2: Expressing Commitment

A. Reflecting on Commitment and Membership

Below is the affirmation that people are invited to make when they want to commit themselves as members of Cedar Ridge. Read through the questions and ponder each one.

New Member Affirmation

Cedar Ridge Community Church invites you to join us in our journey of hope and transformation, being and making disciples of Jesus Christ, in authentic community, for the good of the world.

With God's help...

Will you commit to follow Jesus Christ? Will you be open and honest about your life, earnestly seeking to become a better person in every way and helping others do the same? Will you commit to growing spiritually into the person God created you to be?

Will you commit to other people?

Will you pursue life-giving, meaningful sacrificial relationships? Will you work to believe the best about others and work through differences; to be humble, forgiving and to listen and speak the truth in love? Will you share your gifts, time ad money with others to the best of your ability?

Will you commit to a life of servanthood?

Will you generously help those in need? Will you commit to include others and practice hospitality? Will you live a life that honors God by caring about people and the world God created?

Do you now commit to the vision, mission and values of this community?

Reflection

Take some time to reflect on the following question.

- 1. How have these past weeks of this series felt to you?
- 2. What's been most difficult?
- 3. What's been most surprising?
- 4. What's changed in you? Where have you seen yourself challenged or stretched?
- 5. What commitments to yourself, to God, and to others have you made?
- 6. What commitments are you planning to make?

Personal Response

Would you like to take up this invitation? Maybe you have been at Cedar Ridge for a while but have never taken this step. Perhaps you are new and would like to make a commitment. You might already be a member but want to renew your commitment. No one should feel pressured, but we do want to invite everyone into this exciting adventure of following Jesus and pursuing hope and transformation together.

Cedar Ridge welcomes people into new membership once each quarter. Our next Commitment Sunday is on October 21. Let one of the pastors know if you are interested in this deeper commitment to following Jesus at Cedar Ridge.

B. Baptism at Cedar Ridge

What is baptism?

Baptism is an ancient practice that followers of Jesus have been carrying out since the very beginning of the church. In fact, baptism even predates Jesus. His cousin (John the Baptist) was baptizing people in the river Jordan before Jesus came on the scene (Mark 1:4-8), and Jesus himself was baptized by John (Mark 1:9-11).

Baptism is a simple ceremony in which the body is covered in water in some way. Early in Christian history, it seems a lot of water was used and people were probably immersed (John baptized in a big river) but over the years different traditions have evolved. Some still use a big pool (or even a river or ocean) to completely immerse the person being baptized. Some pour varying amounts of water from a jar onto the head. As practices of infant baptism or christening developed, a small mark of water was used on the forehead. At Cedar Ridge we practice pouring water on the head. We are not opposed to the other forms, but that is just the practice we employ.

What does baptism mean?

Baptism is one of the traditional "sacraments" of the church, which means it is "an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace." In other words, baptism is a symbol or a practical metaphor for something very important. The actual act (and the way it is done) is not so important; it is what it represents on the inside that matters. It symbolizes many things, and each Christian tradition tends to emphasize one or more of them. At Cedar Ridge we view it in the following way:

- Baptism symbolizes repentance and forgiveness (Mark 1:4)
 - Repentance literally means changing our minds. It means rethinking; having our minds renewed and enlightened. It means taking on a new consciousness, and it is what Jesus called us to (Matthew 4:17). In this open state, we become aware of our brokenness, our mistakes, and where we have missed the mark in life. In this state, we are more open to God's love, and we can receive God's forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9). Baptism seems to have evolved from Jewish washing ceremonies, and there is an obvious symbolic cleansing element to the water. Baptism represents the continual washing away of the dark parts of our lives, and our conscious pursuit of the fresh start into which we are invited every day.
- Baptism symbolizes death and resurrection
 - It is perhaps easier to see this metaphor in the "full immersion" form of baptism. When we go under the water, it is like being buried; when we come up out of the water, it is like coming back to life. The symbolism here is that we are united with Christ and mysteriously participate in both his death and life (Romans 6:3-4). We let go of an old way of life in which we separated ourselves from Christ (we die to that way of life), and we embrace a new way of living in which we experience the very life and Spirit of Christ empowering us (we are resurrected to a new kind life). Baptism illustrates that we are "new creations" (2 Corinthians 5: 16-20) with a new hope for now and forever.

• Baptism represents our community with one another

We are baptized into a community (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). Somehow the water represents the ocean of unity in which we all swim. Jesus claimed we are all one as humanity, whether we see it yet or not, and baptism represents a surrender to and celebration of that reality. We are baptized into our local community (we celebrate our oneness with the people of Cedar Ridge). We are baptized into the church at large (we celebrate our oneness with all followers of Jesus). And we are baptized into the more mystical, universal community of God's family throughout time.

Who can get baptized at Cedar Ridge?

Everyone at Cedar Ridge is welcome and encouraged to be baptized. The only requirement is a desire and commitment to follow Jesus. Our practice is baptism for adults and younger people who can give their own consent and are making a conscious decision. This means that for people under 18 (in our youth and children ministries) wishing to get baptized, we include parents and guardians in the discussion. Also, we do not baptize anyone who expressly does not want to be baptized, even upon parental request.

We do not generally practice infant baptism at Cedar Ridge, preferring "child dedication." However, we greatly respect the tradition of infant baptism, and if this is important to you and your family, we encourage you to discuss this with a member of the pastoral staff.

How do I get baptized at Cedar Ridge?

Simply ask a member of pastoral staff or email us at questions@crcc.org and we will arrange a meeting to discuss this with you. About 3 times a year we hold a "Commitment Sunday" service at which we do baptisms, and you will be scheduled for one of those dates that works for you. During the service, one of the pastors will invite you to the front and you will have an opportunity to share some words with the congregation about why you want to get baptized (this is optional). Then you will be asked to kneel, and you will be asked to respond to the following 3 questions (which correspond to the three symbols of baptism above):

- 1. Do you repent of living life on your terms and doing things your own way?
- 2. Do you now give yourself to God and choose to follow the way of Jesus?
- 3. Do you now choose to be part of the community of Christ, to love, accept and respect all others?

After you respond positively to each of these, the pastor will say: "Upon your confession of faith, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen." The pastor will then pour some water from a jug onto your head. This will trickle onto your clothes, so we ask everyone to have an "assistant" on hand to give you a towel. People will applaud at this point, and you will then be asked to stand again and the pastor will pray for you. After this, you can go back to your seat.

You are warmly encouraged to invite family and friends to the service and join us afterwards as our whole church enjoy a potluck lunch to celebrate the commitments (including baptism) from that day.

C. Ways to Serve

Serving <u>at</u> Cedar Ridge

Whether we are serving at church by teaching the kids on Sunday morning, singing or playing an instrument as part of the worship team, or serving coffee and donuts, on the receiving end of that act of service are people—with names and faces, hearts and passions—tied together in spirit and moving towards Jesus. Serving is ultimately an outpouring, be it big or small, of love for God and love for one another.

What if we challenged ourselves to see serving as a spiritual discipline through which God is shaping us? Serving then becomes so much more than an obligation or a task to check off the list. It becomes an opportunity for growth and an expression of God's love in us.

Leading a discipleship group suddenly means going beyond facilitating discussions: it means being present with and available to those in our group and loving them no matter where they are in their journey. Helping with Cedar Ridge Kids on Sunday morning then means building relationships with those children that are an expression of God's love for them, and helping them see themselves as part of God's big story. Pulling weeds on our property or cleaning up after a messy potluck lunch becomes an offering of gratitude for the gift of being part of God's kingdom. And that kingdom is here; that kingdom is now; that kingdom begins with us!

Cedar Ridge has many serving opportunities, and you are encouraged to try a few areas that are of interest to you until you find a place that seems to be a good fit. We will provide you with all the support you need to get started. Check out the website (www.crcc.org/serve-us/serving-opportunities/), and feel free to contact the ministry leaders listed there to let us know how you would like to get involved.

Serving with Cedar Ridge

We want to make a lasting, sustainable, practical and relational impact on economic justice issues in our local community. The needs are numerous and can sometimes seem overwhelming, but through a prayerful process we have prioritized two particular areas for engagement: food and education. The pursuit of justice and equity in these areas brings together the work of our community farm, racial reconciliation team, and Guatemala partnerships.

Here are a few ongoing projects to participate in:

- During the school year, we deliver pre-packed bags of food to contribute to Greencastle Elementary School's food-in-backpacks program, providing grocery staples to help cover weekend meals for identified families in need.
- About three times a year, we invite other faith communities to join with us for a potluck breakfast together. We then send teams out into the community to serve in various projects.

 During our farm's growing season (typically between April and October) we grow fresh, chemical-free produce to benefit the hungry in our local area. Weekly food distributions are in collaboration with the Manna Food Center. Volunteers are always needed for growing and delivering produce.

More information, and ways to engage can be found on our website at www.crcc.org/get-involved/serving-locally/

Serving Globally

Cedar Ridge is developing a mutually beneficial partnership with the wonderful people of Ipala, Guatemala. Through regular trips, local events, and ongoing practical projects, we are fostering friendships with the women, men and children of this Central American town, and with immigrants living in the metro DC area. As we learn from and serve alongside each other, we are experiencing the goodness of the Kingdom of God.

Starting with our vision-inspired desire to reach out beyond global, cultural and political barriers to offer friendship and practical support, the Global Engagement team led our community through a thorough and prayerful process of selecting a developing country upon which we would focus our efforts. Through a series of God-directed circumstances, in 2009 we settled on Ipala, a town of 20,000 in southeastern Guatemala.

Since that time, over 50 of our youth and adults have ventured to the area, making friends, visiting schools, serving alongside local residents, and falling in love with this beautiful town and its surrounding villages.

Working throughout the year in cooperation with the *Comite Ipalteco de Hermanamiento* (CIDHER), the municipal government, and the *Ipaltecos Ausentes* group based in Maryland, Cedar Ridge is currently focused on providing educational opportunities for the children and youth of Ipala, and helping address the healthcare and environmental concerns of the community.

People of all ages at Cedar Ridge are engaged in this partnership through correspondence, planning, travel, playing soccer and participating in other events with our lpala-born neighbors, prayer, and providing financial support for scholarships and our other ongoing projects. Check out the website for more information (www.crcc.org/get-involved/our-guatemalan-partners/).

Each year we hold a Ministry Fair at which you can meet with people who serve in all different areas of our work at Cedar Ridge. This year, the fair will be after the service on September 23.

D. Ways to Give

At Cedar Ridge we are working together as a community to live out our vision of hope and transformation. Whether we are helping people find help and healing, running a community farm, serving in Guatemala, creating a loving and life-changing program for our young people or developing deeper ways to grow spiritually, all these things cost money. And our money comes from within that same community—each one of us giving to the work of our church as generously as we are able.

To view where our money is being spent this year, check out the annual budget at www.crcc.org/annual-budget/

Please prayerfully consider your own role in financially supporting your spiritual community here at Cedar Ridge.

There are several simple and secure ways to financially support Cedar Ridge:

- 1. **Online-Giving:** Make a one-time donation or set up a recurring gift online (https://pushpay.com/g/crccspencerville?src=hpp).
- 2. **Giving through the Cedar Ridge App:** Download the "Cedar Ridge Community Church" app for your iPhone or Android. Once you've set up your giving account, you can give in less than 10 seconds, no matter where you are.
- 3. **Text-to-Give:** Text CEDARRIDGE to 77977 and follow the link that you'll receive. (Standard message and data rates may apply.
- 4. **Access Online Giving Through Our Database**: When you are logged into the database, select the "Give" option from the left menu and set up a one-time or recurring gift.
- 5. **Automated Account Withdrawals:** Schedule withdrawals from your bank account by downloading and completing the attached form and returning it with a voided check to our bookkeeper, Diane Bush (dianeb@crcc.org)
- 6. Cash or Checks: Place an offering in one of the towers in the back of the auditorium or in one of the wooden boxes along the side walls. Checks can be made out to CRCC or Cedar Ridge Community Church. You may use an envelope (available at the wooden boxes) for cash gifts, and if you include your name and contact information on the envelope, we will include your donation on your annual giving statement. To mail in a contribution, send it to Bookkeeper, Cedar Ridge Community Church, 2410 Spencerville, MD 20868.

And if you already give regularly, you may be able to multiply your giving through a donation matching program at your place of employment.

For more information on giving, go to www.crcc.org/donations/

Authorization of Automated Debits (ACH Debits) Cedar Ridge Community Church Federal Tax Id #52-1350329

I (we) hereby authorize Cedar Ridge Community Church, hereinafter called CRCC, to initiate debit entries and to initiate, if necessary, credit and adjustments for any debit entries in error to my (our) checking [] savings [] account (select one) indicated below. I (we) authorize the depository named below, hereinafter called Bank, to debit and/or credit the same to such account.

Bank Name			
Branch			
City	State	Zip	
Transit/ABA #	Acc	ount #	
I (we) authorize CRCC to	initiate automated debit e	entries on ONE of the fo	llowing days:
[] The First Bu [] The 15 th of E	ay initiate debit entry for s siness Day of Each Month Each Month (or Following E dekend) initiate debit entr	initiate debit entry for \$ Business Day if 15 th is	
•	in in full force and effect u mination in such time and		
Name(s)			
Address			
Signature(s)	C	Date	
Please attach a voided o	check if a checking accoun	t is selected.	
*****	******	******	
	For CRC	C Use Only	
Date Received	Pro	ocessed By	
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		idge Community Churcl Diane Bush	

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2410 Spencerville Rd, Spencerville, MD 20868