



THE QUARTERLY

Cedar Ridge Newsletter

Set Free by Love

MARCH 2019

Lent is a season of paradox and seeming contradiction. On the one hand, it's a sober, even dark time, when we reflect on our own weakness and the brokenness of humanity. We acknowledge our own limitations and mortality embodied in the Lenten refrain "From dust we have come, and to dust we shall return." But it's also a season of hope and optimism. As we wrestle with the challenge to grow and embrace change, we see fresh potential for ourselves and re-imagine a new humanity.

Lent, of course, leads us into Easter – another paradoxical season. After the apparent triumph of Jesus' popular entry into Jerusalem, where he was greeted like royalty, just a few days later the crowds (swayed by religious and political power) are baying for his execution. Easter is a time of painful death and sacrifice. Good Friday is dark. But it's also a time of light and great love. If the manipulative set up and brutal execution of Jesus' reveals all that is broken in the human condition, Jesus' compassionate, active non-violence and forgiveness reveal the power of divine love. Easter is a time of resurrection and hope that can never be quenched. Love brought Jesus back to life, and love sets humanity free.

We are exploring this theme at Cedar Ridge in our Lenten series "Breaking the Chains." The 40 days of Lent represent the 40 days that Jesus spent alone in the desert. The Gospel of Luke records Jesus leaving the desert and going to his home synagogue where he reads from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4: 18-19) The love embodied in the human dust of Jesus' humanity can set us all free. And Jesus calls his followers to be and do the same. So this Lent, we are focusing on how we can grow to be more like Jesus, to be agents of justice and freedom in our world: through our relationships and conversations, through our actions, through

social and political engagement, and by embodying love that overcomes the power of injustice.

As we walk through Lent towards the cross, death, resurrection and hope, we find that Easter is not about a violent God requiring punishment for all the ills of humanity, but about God's love setting us free from them all. And that's good news worth sharing! ●

Matthew

Matthew Dyer, Lead Pastor



Around & About Community News Farm Update

A Letter From Our Board Treasurer

Inside Story Stop Talking and Listen An Interview with Our Board Chair

Perspectives Loneliness Talking to My Kids About Easter

Guat's Up A Trip Down Memory Trail



AROUND & ABOUT

Community News



Although winter offers some reprieve from mowing and weeding at Cedar Ridge, there's no shortage of projects when it comes to maintaining the property. Mark Hartley, Property and Facilities Manager, worked with Hometown Tree Experts last fall to remove four trees because they posed a danger of falling. Rest assured, they gave one of our trees one last hug (photo above) before taking it down. The hollowed-out trunk pictured here shows just how precarious this old tree was. In addition, half of the barn roof was replaced due to storm damage from March of 2018.



Our resident hawk is evidence that life is bustling behind the snowy scene of winter at Cedar Ridge. Property workdays are held every other Saturday, from 8 AM to noon. Check the calendar to find out when the next one is, and come on out to help us prepare the property for spring! ●



On Saturday, February 2, Cedar Ridge held its fifth Creative Cup Coffee House, featuring musical guest, Marissa Zechinato, and an art exhibit titled, "We Art," which showcased the work of Cedar Ridgers of all ages. The auditorium was transformed into a cozy space as we enjoyed a special performance by Marissa, now in her twenties, who grew up singing on the worship team at Cedar Ridge. Open mic participants shared their creativity with us in song and poetry, and the evening was made complete by MCs, Gabriel Gotiangco and Paige Shelburne, who hosted the show with good humor. Thanks to everyone who contributed their artwork, talents, and desserts and made for a wonderful evening together. ●



The Cedar Ridge Farm Team Needs You!

By: Ruth Campbell, Pastor of Ministry Development



According to my (somewhat wacky) calendar, today, February 27, is "strawberry day." Yippee! A great excuse to get out the whipped cream, and eat a bowlful in celebration. I love strawberries. But the ones you find in the grocery stores in February are NOTHING compared to the deep red, sweet and juicy strawberries that grow on the Cedar Ridge farm. Our neighbors in need are always so grateful for the freshly picked berries. (And I love eating the ones that are slightly damaged!) But the farm right now is all mud and dead yellow cover crops. Strawberry growing seems a long way off...

Except, my calendar also informs me that it is exactly 3 weeks until spring! Hard to believe. But in my garden, under the decomposing leaves I didn't get around to raking, crocus and daffodils are pushing up their leaves. Furthermore, Safeway is full of Easter eggs and Paas dying kits, so it must be true: spring is on its way!

So it's time to lay aside your February face*, dig out your boots, and dream of gardens filled with fragrant flowers, leafy lettuce, bendy beans, rosy radishes, crunchy carrots, and... um... zucchinis.

Join the farm team this year, and help us plan our 11th successful year of growing fresh, organic produce for neighbors who lack the resources to buy them. Come and learn with us how to tell a Japanese beetle from a Colorado potato bug. Organize events, train volunteers, or just get your hands dirty for a really good cause. All skill levels welcome! Enthusiasm and energy appreciated! Contact ruthc@crcc.org for more information. ●



*"You have such a February face, so full of frost, and storm and cloudiness."
William Shakespeare (Much Ado About Nothing)



Have you seen the new TV series “Dr. Pimple Popper”? Yeah, me neither. But say we happened to stumble across the show while flipping through channels and say we forced ourselves to watch it for five minutes without covering our eyes, I suspect you (okay, I) would be repulsed by what we witnessed. Dr. Pimple Popper would be treating a patient’s nasty cyst, giant growth, or oozing skin condition. Regrettably, that type of scene cannot be unseen (from what I hear).



Cedar Ridge farmhouse

Have you noticed anything equally revolting on Cedar Ridge’s property? No, probably not. But you know what is unsightly? The farmhouse addition. It’s dilapidated, it’s ugly, and it’s collapsing. Thankfully, that blemish is in the process of being removed! The farmhouse addition will soon be a distant memory.

The contractor will not only dismantle the addition, but will also seal up the original farmhouse to look attractive. In 1986, the Spencer/Carr farm was designated as a protected property under Montgomery County’s Historic Preservation Ordinance. When Cedar Ridge purchased the property in 1995, we accepted the legal requirements for the land and historic buildings, including preserving the farmhouse. So, by sealing up the farmhouse we are adhering to the obligations we accepted when we purchased the Spencer/Carr farm 24 years ago.

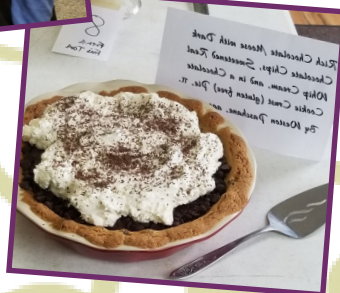
As you may recall, during our 2018 year-end giving campaign we raised nearly \$27,000 for the farmhouse project. Many thanks to all who contributed to the campaign! Your generosity made a sizable dent in the project’s expenses. Thank you!

As “research” for this article, I forced myself to watch a full episode of “Dr. Pimple Popper.” You know what I saw? Joy! Pure joy on the patients’ faces as their lives changed forever—similar to how many of us will feel once the dilapidated addition has been removed. I suspect that the joy of Dr. Pimple Popper’s patients is compounded by the fact that their treatment is free. Ours, not so much. We must pay our contractor. Meanwhile, we must also pay our church’s regular bills, ministry expenses, and mortgage. So, please continue to give generously to Cedar Ridge this spring as the blemish is removed from our beautiful property. There is joy in giving, too! ●



Illustration of farmhouse after repairs

Announcing the Pie Contest Winners



On Sunday, March 3, Cedar Ridge named two first-prize winners for fruit and non-fruit dessert pies. Weston Paschane (left) won the golden pie server for his home-made chocolate mousse pie (below), complete with a cookie crust. Wil Corvey won first place for fruit pies with his homemade key lime pie. And Jennifer Iverson took home a whisk for “honorable mention” for her blueberry pie. Steve Mather organized a panel of judges (below) from the board which included: Gina Anderson, Alison Pasternak and daughter, Jenna, along with Jeff Thomas and Hubert Dixon. ●



the art of conversation

Stop Talking and Listen

By: Andrew House

During my time in Houston, I once heard an East Texas scholar share an insight on opinions. In a thick, memorable twang, he said, "Opinions are kinda' like armpits. Usually people have a few and sometimes they stink... the problem is that you can't always smell your own stink." As someone who has lots of opinions on lots of topics, this remains particularly convicting. Nevertheless, I relish the opportunity for a debate, which ends with the smug satisfaction of being right. Bring on the cutting one-liners that make my point and crush the opponent! Not surprisingly, this does not build much community.

Last summer during the "We Can Work It Out" series, we had a homework assignment to seek out and listen to someone with a different political perspective from our own. Fortunately, our discipleship group includes people from a pretty broad political spectrum, so two of us decided to have a few beers and listen to each other.

Going into the conversation, we assumed we did not agree on much politically. As it turns out, we don't agree on much politically. It's also safe to assume that our political views remained unchanged. We found as the evening progressed that our personal values are not particularly disparate. We just have different ideas about government's role in the process. By listening to the other's story, their perspective starts to make sense. I did not go into the conversation with an intent to change anyone. So, while I did not change anyone's political positions, I found myself changed. I gained a deeper understanding of who they are, a better perspective than just my own, and a genuine friendship.



This is not an isolated experiment in humanity. As our relationships move forward, every time we listen to another's story, we gain perspective. I can only experience life through my own eyes and in my own shoes. Too often I think we are comfortable to surround ourselves with people who agree with us—people who don't challenge that perspective. In doing this, we create a community that is safe only for similar viewpoints, and we lose perspective rather quickly.

I do believe strongly that we are created to experience life in community. Moreover, greater diversity enriches that community's collective experience. Our church community seeks out diversity in many areas, but it seems to stop short of political diversity. I wondered why that is. Perhaps the diversity is here, and we just need to create safer spaces to hear each other. Perhaps the terminology we use alienates more conservative visitors. Perhaps political discord makes us uncomfortable—and goodness, we shouldn't be uncomfortable at church!

Having the heart of Christ is not a political issue. There is not an urban, liberal Jesus, or a rural, conservative Jesus. Just The One. The Bible speaks of one body with many parts. Pushing ourselves to be inclusive of differing perspectives is very much part of Jesus' heart for us. When we avoid differing perspectives, it's a little like a bunch of ears trying to figure out how something tastes. They need to hang out with some mouths to figure it out. They both need the noses to let them know about the stinking armpits, too. ●

Andrew House has been attending Cedar Ridge with his wife, Sarah, and children, James, Micah, and Eve since January 2016. He is a scientist / operations director in the biotech industry and enjoys spending time outdoors with his family.

Photos: (back row) Andrew with group members, Joe Tonkin, John Fuller, (front row) Sarah House, Rachel Ban Tonkin, and Jennifer Fuller.

An Interview with Board Chair, Melinda Anderson

By: Ruth Campbell

Melinda Anderson is chair of the Cedar Ridge board, mother of a college freshman, professional writer, and social activist. I sat down with her to ask the obvious question: how does she find the time and energy for it all?!

Ruth: Melinda, what's this about you being a social activist? It all sounds very radical. Do you use spray paint, or just stick to megaphones to make your point?

Melinda: Neither! I'm engaged in education activism: I've worked with a number of youth organizations in Baltimore and DC around campaigns for funding, less restrictive dress codes, and the use of police in schools. Education exists for students, but so often it is adult voices that influence decisions. As a communications specialist, I want to support young people as they try to make their learning environments better and safer.

Ruth: Is this something you have always been actively engaged in?

Melinda: No. As a single mother, I wasn't able to be engaged in activism when my son was very young. I work for an education association, and so was advocating in a professional context, but slowly I made it a more personal issue. The shooting of Trayvon Martin in 2012 was a pivotal event for me. Trayvon was where he was because he had been suspended from school for something very minor and questionable. That started to make me think about all the ramifications of advocacy in education. As my son moved into middle school and then into high school, I made the time to engage in this issue.

Ruth: What would you say to those of us who want to do something, but worry that we just don't have the time or energy?

Melinda: First, identify something that impacts you personally, or something that raises questions for you. Personal experiences drive you to want to get involved. For me, I often think about my son when I am working with youth organizations, and I see him in them as they fight to improve their learning environment. I find that very inspiring.

Second, start small. We don't need to be an iconic activist like MLK, but we can all be people working in small ways for social good. Talk to your friends about the issues that inspire you. Activism is not complicated: it is simply people coming together who want to enact change.

And third, there is always going to be an ebb and flow; there will be times you need to put down the baton, and someone else will pick it up. That's just life, and it's okay. Sometimes you need to unplug. But the important thing is to keep moving forward, and over time, find ways to reengage in ways that are realistic for you.

I've never regretted time I've given to trying to improve the conditions of communities I've worked with. I have always walked away satisfied. That's not because we have necessarily had successes, but because people have come together to change their lives and change others' lives. And that is always going to be time well spent. ●

Melinda Anderson has been attending Cedar Ridge since 2005 with her son, Colin.



High School Murder Mystery Night



It was a night of intrigue and fun for the High School group in February when they held a murder mystery night, Mardi Gras style. Everyone came dressed in character and spent the evening asking questions, eating great food, and trying to figure out who the murderer was. ●



As we concluded our series, "Positively Lonely" on March 3, we asked Amanda to share a little about loneliness and how we can leverage it to make meaningful connections.

Loneliness comes with being human. From an evolutionary perspective, it relates to our survival as communal creatures, and from an existential perspective, it relates to our intrinsic desire for belonging. While it can be an uncomfortable and at times distressing emotion to experience, it can also be an impetus towards deepening relationships. As a mental health therapist, I know the problem is widespread. Clients frequently share that they can feel alone even when surrounded by other people, and they struggle to connect with others on a meaningful level. As a single mom of a toddler, I am also quite familiar with this experience. I choose to interpret loneliness as a longing for community, and a signal from myself that things may be out of balance and I need to make space for connection. In fact, one of the reasons I started attending CRCC was to join a community that valued depth in relationships. Even so, as an introvert, it is still hard at times to find my place. So what to do if you're stuck?

Here are some things that have worked for me, and that I have been inspired by in others.

Join a Discipleship Group

I engage in friendly small talk on Sunday mornings, but find it hard to deepen relationships in that short period of time. As an introvert, I also tend to be overwhelmed in large group settings, and it can be hard to know how to connect following the church service. Joining a discipleship group gave me the opportunity to connect to a smaller group on a much deeper level. It gave me a chance to know and be known in our church community. I encourage anyone who is struggling with feeling connected or wants to deepen relationships to consider joining a discipleship group. It provides the sense of belonging that comes with being part of a group, gives you something to look forward to during the week, and helps stave off loneliness. Click [here](#) to join a discipleship group.

Volunteer

Volunteering is a way of meeting others, being part of a group, and creating new experiences. Again, for shy people (like myself), it is sometimes easier to get to know others when there is a task to focus on. Volunteering also brings the benefits of altruism, and can help you find more meaning in your life, both of which can bring greater happiness and life satisfaction – all of which can decrease loneliness. Farm season is right around the corner, and we have our service days throughout the year, but the Cedar Ridge website also provides [a list of projects and volunteer opportunities](#). You may also consider getting involved closer to home with your local community. The website, Idealist.org, has many volunteer opportunities posted.

Find Support Online

Cedar Ridge has a community Facebook page which can be a place to reach out and connect in-between services. It can also be a place to share events in our larger community that may be of interest. To join this group and stay connected throughout the week, click [here](#).

Strengthen Existing Relationships

I was inspired when I heard about a practice that Jennifer and Paul Anderson started in their family. I first saw it through Jennifer's Instagram post "Can We Lower the Bar For Eating Together?" @kids.eat.in.color. In an effort to make connections and practice hospitality, she and Paul decided to make Sunday night a special time and began inviting over for dinner friends, people they missed, or even people they wanted to get to know better. Their emphasis is not on "entertaining," which can come with such pressure, but instead on "connecting." In fact, one of the things I loved most was that the photo accompanying this post showed her boys enjoying pizza at the table in their underwear! Jennifer and Paul shared that as a family they have been able to connect to all sorts of people – different ages, with kids, without kids, married and single. Her boys have even been involved in suggesting invitations, such as their preschool teacher and her husband. She encouraged letting go of perfectionistic expectations, and giving yourself permission to make a simple meal or even order out. Even if I can't do this weekly, it struck me as such a simple but profound way to foster connection. ●



Amanda Bechtel, pictured here with her son, Asher, is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and Art Therapist.

I dreaded talking about theology with my kids for so long.

I don't want to give them my baggage, and there's a lot of mystery to embrace. I grew up in some fear- and guilt-based communities. My earliest encounter with the "gospel" included me begging God not to let me go to hell if I died that night. I was a horrible person for making someone else die. The "gospel" was literally the worst news I had ever heard in my life!

Last year Matthew talked about different metaphors for why Christ died. I hadn't realized how much guilt I was shouldering through other metaphors. Matthew's metaphor of Jesus dying and having so much love he "burst back into life" was so inspiring to me. It was genuinely good news. And it turned out to be just what I needed when my son, Marcus (4 at the time) started asking questions one night.

Marcus: "Jesus loves children?"

Me: "Yes, Jesus really loves children."

Marcus: "Jesus is alive?"

Me: "Yes, he's alive, but we can't see him."

Marcus: "Is he following me?"

Me: "No, he's everywhere."

Marcus: "Is he hiding under the couch cushion right there?"

Me: "No....he's just everywhere with us."

Marcus: "And he died?"

Me: "Yes, he died."

Marcus: "Did people kill him?"

Me: "Yes."

Marcus: "Why?"

Me: "Because they didn't like him. But he came back to life."

Marcus: "How?"

Me: "He had so much love that he burst back into life."

Marcus: "He had so much love he burst back into life?"

Me: "Yep."

Marcus was inspired. His face lit up, he perked up and bounced away. He told his brother about it later. All I could think was, "Good news. He just got some purely good news!" It was such good news he had to tell his brother about it.

I still don't really want to talk theology with my kids. I'm not confident I have the right answers. But I feel inspired to love more freely knowing that Jesus had so much love he burst back into life and exploded his love all over the world. That's the reality I want to live in and share with my little guys. ●



Jennifer, (above) with her husband, Paul, and two boys, Marcus and Matthew, is a Registered Dietitian, helping families eat more vegetables @kids.eat.in.color on Instagram, and is a nutritionist consultant to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS

Several of our Middle School students and their brave leaders headed to Summit Lake Camp for a weekend retreat in the mountains of northern Maryland at the end of February. They had fun playing games and going snow-tubing, and spent time exploring the mystery of God and God's love for us. ●



GUAT'S Up

A Trip Down Memory Trail

By: Bryan Peterson



On a warm July day in 2011, fourteen students and five adult leaders followed a Peace Corps volunteer up a narrow, wooded path along the top of the Ipala volcano. On that hike, and on that first trip to Ipala, everything we saw was new to us. We didn't know

where the path would take us; we were surprised by the beauty that surrounded us, and each person we met was a new acquaintance, so we simply entrusted ourselves to the one who was leading the way. On that adventure, the Cedar Ridge travel team blazed a trail, both literally and figuratively, for seventy-seven community members who would follow a similar path to the Central American town in upcoming years. Now, nearly eight years after that first visit, many church members fondly speak of the people of Ipala as being like "family," and refer to traveling to Ipala as feeling like "going home."

On January 5, 2019, over forty youth and adults gathered in the barn for a Guatemala Trip Reunion party. Participants played some Guatemala-inspired games, caught up with their teammates, reflected on memorable moments and lasting impacts, and watched video highlights from eight years' worth of partnership trips (you can see that video at the Guatemala display in the zoo corridor).

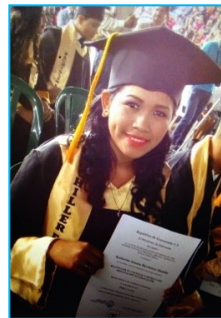


Reflecting on those memories brought a fresh appreciation for how these intense travel experiences have cultivated intergenerational relationships across our community. Shared conversations, service, challenges and laughter have allowed young people and adults to

connect in ways that are difficult to replicate in other settings. Many of these connections have remained and strengthened over the years.

We also noticed the important role these trips play in our ongoing engagement with Guatemala. Our commitment to a relational partnership with our friends in Ipala has been truly enriched by showing up, year after year, to grow in our mutual understanding and trust.

These trips also allow travelers to see first-hand the results of the ongoing, collaborative work of our Guatemala team and our partners on the ground in Ipala.



Throughout the years, we've also had the opportunity to see children grow, mature and thrive. The story of Katherine Barrientos is one example. We first met Katherine in 2011, when she was probably eleven years old. She lives in a neighborhood near our hotel and took a keen interest in our team, showing up for our first-ever pool party. Shortly thereafter, Katherine became one of the recipients of a need-based scholarship that Cedar Ridge funds. Each year, various members of our team spent time with Katherine, and were so proud last year to celebrate her graduation from high school. It's been heart-warming to see this determined girl turn into a young woman who is seeking to help break the cycle of poverty in her family.

Spending time in Ipala has deepened and broadened the lives and perspectives of many, and we look forward to blazing new trails with our Guatemalan friends in the years ahead. ●

We still have openings for our 2019 Guatemala travel team. Contact Bryan Peterson ASAP for more details on our July 6-15 trip.



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