



Our Journey as a Community

The History of Cedar Ridge

Cedar Ridge Community Church was started in 1982 by a small group of friends from a variety of Christian backgrounds, including [Brian McLaren](#) who became our first full-time pastor. The church grew over the next 14 years, moving from place to place to accommodate its increasing size, until in 1996, after an outpouring of sacrificial giving, Cedar Ridge became owners of a beautiful 63-acre historic property in Spencerville, Maryland. You can read more about the [history](#) of Cedar Ridge on our website.

After Brian left pastoral ministry to respond to his call as a writer and speaker in the public arena, [Matthew Dyer](#) took over leadership in 2006. Seeking greater clarity and purpose for the future, the people of Cedar Ridge engaged together in a year of "re-envisioning the church." Through this extensive process that included church-wide discussion and collaboration, a vision was formed based on the desire to become a people simply devoted to following Jesus and sharing God's love.

Since then, we've worked to define more clearly what this vision looks like as an expression of our life together as a community. In 2009, we established a community [farm](#), where we annually grow and give away thousands of pounds of produce to those in need. That same year, we also initiated a relational partnership with a community in [Guatemala](#), where we have been able to love and serve, and where many of our own people have been able to visit, learn and grow.

Over the years, we have become a much more diverse community. We are now open and affirming of our LGBTQ members and attenders. Even though we have a long way to go, we are more racially diverse and are proactively engaged in [racial justice and reconciliation](#). And we have made great strides in becoming a more integrated community for all ages, including [children and youth](#).

Your Turn!

Reflect on how you became part of Cedar Ridge, and when. This is part of our community's story, so take some time to describe it. Record your reflections in the box below.

Our Vision

Our vision is expressed in the statement below, but it is important to realize that a vision only becomes real if it inspires us to embrace it and live it out. Words on a page are powerless in and of themselves, but if they inspire us to live differently, they can change the world. Our vision statement is more poetic than corporate with the hope it will capture our imaginations with a beautiful dream of the future.

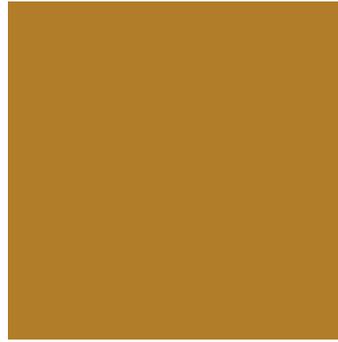
Cedar Ridge is a community of hope and transformation dedicated to following Jesus.

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.

At the heart of our vision is discipleship—following Jesus and his way with our whole beings. Discipleship happens in three inseparable ways:

- **Growth:** growing in our understanding and experience of God
- **Community:** developing enriching relationships with one another
- **Servanthood:** serving and caring for the world around us



Reflection

Take some time to reflect on the following questions and record your answers in the box below.

1. How does the vision make you feel?
2. What do you like and not like about the vision?
3. What is most challenging for you about this vision?
4. How have you experienced personal growth, community, and servanthood at Cedar Ridge?
5. How would you like to experience more of these things?

Finding Our Way Together

Leadership at Cedar Ridge

Unlike many churches, we don't have a denomination or a statement of beliefs to define who we are. We are an independent community church, composed of people from diverse faith backgrounds and none, held together by our shared desire to follow Jesus.

Following Jesus is a lifelong process—a journey—and we each set out from different places and walk unique paths. We do not all believe the same things, or agree on what is right behavior, but we share a common [vision](#) to follow Jesus through growth, community and servanthood.

We accept everyone (no exceptions!), and seek to support one another as we continue on our journey of faith. You can read more about what [holds us together](#) as a community on our website.

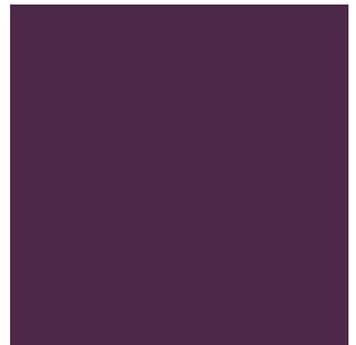
- [Pastoral staff](#) sets the spiritual direction for the church, working in conjunction with leaders from all areas of our community.
- Pastors and [staff](#) run the day-to-day activities of the church.
- As a non-profit, we have an elected [Board of Trustees](#) that makes sure we comply with all legal and financial requirements, holds the Lead Pastor accountable, and ensures we remain true to our vision.

Each year, the Pastoral Team works with leaders from across our community to develop an annual [plan](#) and [budget](#), which are reviewed and approved by the Board, and then shared with the community as a whole.

Your Turn!

Take a few moments to consider the following questions, and record your responses in the box below.

1. How has your spiritual life changed in the past 5 years?
2. If spirituality is a journey, would you say you are currently standing, walking, running or crawling?
3. How does the absence of a defined statement of beliefs at Cedar Ridge make you feel?



Our Activities

We often think about following Jesus in terms of growth, community, and servanthood—and our activities, programs, and events are planned with these three elements in mind.

We view [worship](#) as an integral part of discipleship in our daily lives. In addition, as a community, we gather to worship through music and song, as well as through other art forms and media. On the first Sunday of every month, we intentionally make this an intergenerational event.

[Children and youth](#) are a priority for us at Cedar Ridge, and we try to equip families (of all shapes and sizes) to help their kids grow in following Jesus. Since we believe discipleship is based in relationships, we encourage all adults to interact with children and youth, and take responsibility for their growth.

[Discipleship groups](#) provide a setting in which we can get to know one another better. By gathering in small groups, closer to where we live, we can better care for each other, help one another grow spiritually, and reach out to serve others together.

In addition to the care provided through discipleship groups, pastors and [congregational care](#) team members provide prayer, encouragement, and practical support to community members in need, so that no one is alone.

We want to deepen our awareness and understanding of historic and current [racial issues](#) that cause pain and inequities in our community and in society as a whole. Through events and ongoing activities, we seek to equip our community to live out God's vision of peace and justice.

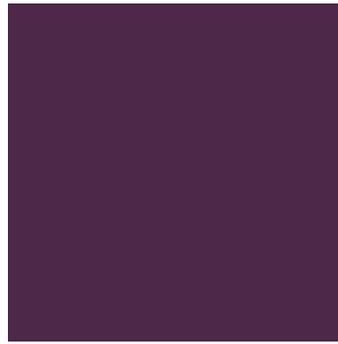
We partner with the people of Ipala, [Guatemala](#) to address education and health issues—helping, in a small way, to make the world a better, more just place.

Through the [Cedar Ridge farm](#), we provide fresh produce to neighbors in need, take a stand on the issue of food justice, and welcome neighbors onto our property to serve and to celebrate the harvest with us.

We also address local [economic justice](#) issues—particularly focused on education and food—through a variety of ways, including advocacy support for low-income schools, food and gift card collections, and serving meals at a women's shelter.

Twice a year, our community gathers for a potluck breakfast before departing in groups to [serve our community](#). There are projects for all ages and abilities, and we invite other faith communities, neighbors, and friends to join us in this practical way of being the change we want to see in the world.

Throughout the year, we host a variety of intergenerational events, all of which can be found on the [calendar](#) on our website.



Our Property

Cedar Ridge is located on 63 acres of woods and meadows, populated by a wide variety of wildlife. Bird boxes encourage nesting on the property, and [beehives](#) facilitate pollination and produce honey. Our land provides an opportunity for people to connect to nature, serve neighbors in need, and experience community.

The [prayer walk](#) integrates prayer and reflection with a 40-50 minute guided walk around the property. It includes a [labyrinth](#)—a sacred place of beauty and peace, where people come to draw closer to God. Walking the winding path of a labyrinth is an ancient spiritual practice dating back thousands of years. The playground is open to all children, and there are even [geocaches](#) hidden around the property. Take some time to explore! Or come out to help on a [property workday](#).

Reflection

Spend some time considering the following: What aspects of the life and work of our community excite you? Are any of these areas new to you? What would you like to learn more about? Are there things you would like to get more involved with? Write down your reflections in the box below.

Commitment to the Journey

Belonging at Cedar Ridge

We welcome everyone (no exceptions!) to be part of our diverse community, and we seek to provide the space and time for each person to develop spiritually at their own pace. At the same time, we recognize our [vision](#) of hope and transformation invites us into commitment to help make the dream a reality.

We experience more of heaven on earth as we commit to caring for one another, as we take responsibility for growing spiritually, and as we seek to serve rather than be served. This requires a conscious, purposeful, sustained commitment to Jesus, to one another, and to ourselves.

Such commitment is not a cause for guilt, pressure or anxiety: Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden is light. Rather, it is an exciting opportunity to partner with God in the work of reconciliation and healing—an invitation to help make the world a better place.

At Cedar Ridge, there are a number of ways of expressing commitment to following Jesus—both through personal discipleship, as well as through community engagement:

- **Membership**—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.
- **Baptism**—Our practice is baptism for adults and younger people who can give their own consent and are making a conscious decision to follow Jesus.
- **Child dedication**—As parents dedicate their children to God, we also dedicate ourselves to helping them teach and model the way of Jesus.

Your Turn!

Reflect on your own thoughts about commitment, and record your responses in the box below:

1. How does the word commitment make you feel, and why?
2. Do you feel more or less committed to following Jesus now than in the past? What has led to the difference?
3. Are there ways you (and your family) want to express commitment to following Jesus?



Owning the Vision

Our dream of heaven on earth will only become a reality as we each “own” the vision, make it ours, and begin to live it out. Following Jesus together in community therefore means a number of things for each of us:

It means being committed to engaging in the life of the church. Showing up to the service on Sundays, to [discipleship group](#) meetings, and other events brings encouragement to us and to others. By participating—rather than spectating or being consumers—we demonstrate that we *are* the church.

It means investing in relationships, making time for people, and putting our own concerns and needs aside to be present to others, listening with empathy, accepting one another in all our brokenness, and extending practical support. It means opening up our homes to one another, going deeper in some of our relationships, and widening our circles to include others in need of friendship.

It means focusing on our own spiritual growth to increasingly become agents of love, peace and hope. To become more like Jesus, we take on the practices that Jesus engaged in himself. Through [prayer](#) and [spiritual disciplines](#), we offer God space in us to help us change.

It means [giving financially](#) to fund the programs and activities that support our vision. We also give as a way of responding to our vision’s call to live simply and ethically, sharing our resources with others. We give regularly and sacrificially, recognizing that everything we have comes from God and belongs to God.

It means [serving](#) our community and our neighbors. This includes volunteering for specific tasks that need doing, as well as spontaneously responding when we see a need. We see serving as so much more than an obligation or a task: It is a spiritual discipline through which God shapes us. Serving is an opportunity for growth, and an expression of God’s love in us.

A Family Commitment

We recognize the decision of parents and other caregivers to be actively involved at Cedar Ridge typically has profound impacts on their children. We want to support families as they think through these issues, and consider the consequences for each family member. If you have questions or concerns about this, please feel free to contact [Trish Audi](#) (pastor for youth) or [Bryan Peterson](#) (pastor for children).



Reflection

Prayerfully consider your commitment to following Jesus at Cedar Ridge:

1. What does this look like for you?
2. How might you deepen or reaffirm your commitment?
3. What are the implications for your participation, relationships, spiritual growth, giving and serving?



CEDAR RIDGE
Community Church
a community of hope