

Cedar Ridge Annual Plan

August 2021

Introduction

The pandemic has been such a dominant force in our lives for the past 20 months, and we are finally beginning to enjoy some freedoms and connections that we previously took for granted. But after a season of “hunkering down” and endurance, many of us are now finding the space to reflect on the toll the pandemic has taken. We’ve all struggled in different ways—we’ve experienced the loss of loved ones, and the disruption of work, family and social life, and we’ve lived under a cloud of fear. We’ve also seen horrendous inequities in our culture exposed, and seen friends and neighbors struggle, too. But we have also prevailed—as a church family we have rallied together to support one another, to stay close, and to reach out to our local community whenever we’ve been able. And in this new space, we are also reflecting on how our values and priorities have been challenged—we are seeing what we truly treasure more clearly, and perhaps rediscovering meaning in our lives.

Jesus came bringing good news to a people who were tired, disappointed, oppressed, and felt forgotten. Jesus lived life with these people and, although he never promised life would be easy, he invited everyone to share in this good news—to both receive hope and healing, and give it away to others. As followers of Jesus and as fellow strugglers, we have all experienced this good news—it has sustained us and kept us. So, as we look ahead to the coming year, we want to nurture that hope and healing within us, and treasure the life it gives us. We want to share this good news with our friends, family, neighbors and coworkers who have also experienced emotional loss and isolation, economic hardship, and even a sense of despair. And we want to be agents of change in our culture that is reeling from the pain of injustice and inequity, and longing for healing.

This year we will focus on bringing hope and healing in our own life-spaces of work, neighborhoods, families and friendships. We won’t do this by preaching at anyone but by growing in the art of listening, empathy, and compassionate presence. We’ll honestly and sensitively share our lives like Jesus did, helping and supporting people as they process what they have been going through. We’ll also focus on reaching out to our local community around Cedar Ridge and our partners in Guatemala to help practically with economic hardships and challenges, while continuing our struggle for social justice and lasting systemic change. And as in-person gatherings become possible once more, we will celebrate being a church family together again, cherishing the joy of friendship and delighting in the beauty of life that we’ve perhaps previously taken for granted. Through some of our most treasured traditional events like the Harvest Festival, Burtonsville Day, outdoor movie nights, and our various Christmas celebrations, as well as other new events, we’ll invite our local community to join with us in experiencing some long overdue fun and sharing in the good news.

Goal and Objectives

The goal for this coming year is to be good news to one another and in our community through emotional support, practical help and advocacy.

The objectives that contribute to this goal are as follows:

1. To grow in our confidence and ability to support others emotionally and practically.
2. To work with our partners on specific advocacy efforts to address systemic inequities.
3. To treasure our life together through community 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:

- A fall series on nurturing hope and healing within us, and inspiring and equipping each one of us to reach out to others in everyday home, work and community settings.
- Small groups focused on dealing with grief and anxiety related to the pandemic, led by professional counselors and designed for Cedar Ridge members and their friends to attend.
- Economic assistance to those in need locally through an end-of-year fundraiser in support of specific needs at Greencastle Elementary School, supplemented by unused Cedar Ridge COVID assistance funds.
- Assistance to hard-hit communities in Ipala, Guatemala, including the installation of sinks at local schools to promote hand-washing.

Activities principally contributing to Objective 2:

- Advocacy related to racial equity in public school funding and policing.
- Churchwide Days of Service with a focus on the underlying justice issues that perpetuate need.
- A community screening of the movie "Just Mercy" and a presentation/discussion featuring a panel of experts in the spring.
- A series of documentaries and discussions on racial justice issues following on from the "Just Mercy" event.

Activities principally contributing to Objective 3:

- Engagement in local community events, including Burtonsville Day in the fall, and street festivals next summer.
- Outdoor movie nights with games/activities and refreshments, to which we invite the local community.
- If the situation permits, a Harvest Festival-type event in the fall, scaled as needed in response to limitations related to the pandemic and the availability of volunteers.
- Periodic churchwide potluck lunches following the Sunday service, as appropriate to the current health concerns and as prevailing comfort levels.
- An Advent in the Barn event, adapted to the current situation, to which the community is invited.
- A winter Creative Cup Coffeehouse and other social events TBD.

Upcoming Series

The series descriptions below are tentative and will be influenced by a number of factors, including current events, cultural pressures, and community responses to previous series.

Fall series

In this series, we will explore what it means to be “good news” both to ourselves and to people who may be struggling in various ways. As the context of the pandemic changes, there is a need and an opportunity to reach out to neighbors and colleagues, ask how they are doing, and provide encouragement and support as appropriate. We will focus on empathetic listening, simple ways to show hospitality and neighborly help, and ways to talk about hope and healing in a culturally appropriate way.

Late fall series

In this series we will focus on the things we treasure most. Covering the harvest season through to Thanksgiving, we will look not only at the things that we cherish, but also at how the pandemic has caused us to see our values and treasures in a new light. The series will include stories and sharing from members of our community.

Advent

In this series, we will explore the history, meaning and traditions related to some familiar Christmas carols.

Metrics

The metrics that follow will be used to indicate progress towards achieving the goal and 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.

Metric 1: A consistent increase in in-person attendance at Sunday morning services (in the absence of the re-imposition of COVID-related restrictions).

- *Rationale:* Safe in-person attendance reflects growing emotional confidence and a value placed on community interaction.
- *Target:* Weekly average attendance increases each month through the year.
- *Tracked by:* Physical count made by sound technician and C&Y attendance records.

Metric 2: A consistent decrease in the number of members “struggling” as reported by group leaders.

- *Rationale:* As we move forward collectively from a particularly difficult period, we want to see people grow in emotional, spiritual and practical health and wholeness.
- *Target:* Aggregate number of people struggling decreases each quarter.
- *Tracked by:* Quarterly surveys of d-group and youth leaders.

Due to the abnormal nature of the last year, the biannual analysis of the [strategic plan](#) metrics will be delayed from September 2021 to September 2022.

Draft Fall and Winter Calendar 2021-22

Date	Event	Notes
Mon Aug 30	Back to school for MCPS & HCPSS	PGCPS is Sept 8
Sun Sep 5		Labor Day weekend, AAT
Sun Sept 12	Fall series 1	Ministry Fair and lemonade/sundaes (outdoors)
Sun Sep 19	Fall series 2	
Tue Sep 21	Emotional Support Group session 1	Online and in-person
Fri Sep 24	Movie Night	
Sat Sep 25	Burtonsville Day	
Sun Sep 26	Fall series 3	Journey 1
Tue Sep 28	Prayer Practices Evening	
Fri Oct 1	Movie Night	
Sun Oct 3	Fall series 4	Journey 2
Tue Oct 5	Emotional Support Group session 2	Online and in-person
Sun Oct 10	Late fall series 1	AAT. Journey 3
Tue Oct 12	Emotional Support Group session 3	Online and in-person
Sat Oct 16	Pumpkin Patch and Movie Night	Middle school sleepover?
Sun Oct 17	Late fall series 1 (Harvest Service)	Possibly an outdoors service
Sun Oct 24	Late fall series 3	
Tue Oct 26	Prayer Practices Evening	
Sun Oct 31	Halloween Day of Service	Breakfast
Sun Nov 7	Late fall series 4	Community Sunday Annual Meeting and potluck lunch
Sun Nov 14	Late fall series 5	
Sun Nov 21	Thanksgiving Service	AAT. Thanksgiving on 11/25 Christmas decorating
Tue Nov 23	Prayer Practices Evening	
Sun Nov 28	Advent 1	
Sat Dec 4	Advent in the Barn	Hayrides, mulled wine, outreach-focused afternoon
Sun Dec 5	Advent 2	
Sat Dec 11	Advent Quiet Day	
Sun Dec 12	Advent 3	
Sun Dec 19	Advent 4	
Fri Dec 24	Christmas Eve service (5:30PM)	AAT
Sun Dec 26	Christmas	
Sun Jan 2	New Year	First Sunday. Christmas un-decorating
Sun Jan 9	Winter series 1	
Sun Jan 16	Winter series 2	
Mon Jan 17	Event TBD (possibly indoor service projects)	MLK Day
Sun Jan 23	Winter series 3	
Sun Jan 30	Winter series 4	

Sat Feb 5	Creative Cup Coffeehouse	Or following weekend (depending on the weather)
Sun Feb 6	Late winter series 1	First Sunday
Sun Feb 13	Late winter series 2	Journey 1
Sun Feb 20	Late winter series 3	Journey 2
Sun Feb 27	Late winter series 4	Journey 3
Wed Mar 2	Ash Wednesday	
Sun Mar 6	Lent Challenge Series 1	First Sunday. Community Sunday
Sun Mar 13	Lent Challenge Series 2	
Sun Mar 20	Lent Challenge Series 3	
Sun Mar 27	Lent Challenge Series 4	
Sat Apr 2	Lenten Quiet Day	
Sun Apr 3	Lent Challenge Series 5	
Sun Apr 10	Lent Challenge Series 6	First Sunday. Palm Sunday
Fri Apr 15	Good Friday	
Sun Apr 17	Easter Sunday	Sunrise service and 10AM AAT
Sun Apr 24	Service Day and Earth Day Celebration	Earth Day is 4/22