



# THE CEDAR RIDGE QUARTERLY

## **PUMPKIN PATCH KIDS**

In case you missed it,  
take a photographic tour  
of our favorite non-  
Harvest Festival event

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## **NOTES FROM OUR FRIENDS**

We asked the community  
for some of your favorite  
holiday traditions, and the  
answers were lovely

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## **INVESTING IN OUR VISION**

If you've been waiting all  
year for financial details,  
we have everything you  
need right here

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# MATTHEW'S DESK



**MATTHEW DYER**  
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**Fall is traditionally** a season of gratefulness. We recently celebrated the harvest from our community farm, and gave thanks for God's beauty and bountiful provision through nature. Looking ahead, the Thanksgiving holiday will soon be here—and in this newsletter, you can read about all kinds of ways in which people in our community celebrate it. These have been difficult times for us all, and maintaining a thankful spirit is challenging and can perhaps even feel a little forced. And yet we recognize that in all the loss, pain and struggle, we are still surrounded by so much that nourishes and sustains us.

In our current series, A Few of Our Favorite Things, we're looking with gratitude at some of the things we cherish most—things that bring us joy and fulfillment, even during difficult times. Something I treasure most is this community, and probably many of us feel that way. It's easy to take our friendship and commitment to one another for granted, but in a world where there is so much loneliness, we can truly give thanks.

We are on a journey of personal transformation together, loving, supporting, challenging, and caring for one another as we go, and none of us could do it on our own.

We are daring to dream of heaven on earth together, and actively engaging in the beautiful struggle for peace and justice in our world. That could be a lonely struggle, but together we give one another hope.

So I want to thank you for being part of this community—for all your love and commitment, for all your grace and open-heartedness that makes space for people like me to belong. I don't take that for granted; I treasure it. In this newsletter you can read about all we've done together over the past year, and look ahead with hope to the next.

Fall is also a season of sacrifice: the trees surrender their leaves to replenish and nourish the earth. And our community is nurtured and sustained through all the sacrifices of people like you. Here you can read about all the serving, financial giving, caring, listening and loving that makes our community what it is. Somehow thankfulness and sacrifice seem to go hand-in-hand—in our letting go, we receive what we truly treasure. So with all my heart, I want to thank you.

*Matthew*



# ANNUAL PLAN

09.21 – 08.22

OUR GOAL FOR THIS COMING YEAR IS TO BE GOOD NEWS TO ONE ANOTHER AND IN OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, PRACTICAL HELP AND ADVOCACY. WE WILL AIM TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL BY:

(I) GROWING IN OUR CONFIDENCE AND ABILITY TO SUPPORT OTHERS EMOTIONALLY AND PRACTICALLY;

(II) WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS ON SPECIFIC ADVOCACY EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES; AND

(III) TREASURING OUR LIFE TOGETHER THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO READ MORE ABOUT OUR PLANS FOR THE YEAR.



**CRCC.ORG/OUR-PLANS**

# INVESTING IN OUR VISION

**Cedar Ridge is an incredibly big-hearted community.** Despite the hardships and uncertainties of the last year, members and attenders have continued to give generously. Cedar Ridge families and individuals donate 85-90% of the money we spend each year. We give to finance the vision to which we are committed. And we give as an expression of our vision—demonstrating good stewardship, generosity, service, and discipleship. Below is a summary of how we spent our income last year, and our plan for spending in the coming year.

Over the last 12 months, our operating expenses totaled approximately \$752,991. This was in addition to capital expenses of \$34,719. Our budget goal for September 2021–August 2022 is to finance the annual plan priorities detailed below through community donations of \$721,115, and rental income and grants amounting to \$138,750, for a total operating budget of \$859,864.

## **WORSHIP SERVICES**

### **FY22 BUDGET: \$103,514**

Whether we are meeting online or in person, gathering together as a diverse community is an essential way we experience more of God. Now, more than ever, we

recognize the need for community, and Sunday mornings will remain an inclusive space for all of us to worship and grow together. We will continue to invest in technologies that allow us to connect, and will adapt to changing guidelines regarding the pandemic throughout the year.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$96,361**

Over the last year, we engaged together in Reimagining Church, looked at lessons from A Christmas Carol, heard stories from our community through series such as Bottled Up and Stories of Transformation, found God in a variety of movies, went live with Church to Go, and explored Galilee through On the Trail with Jesus. We came together for outdoor services at Easter and through the summer, and remained accessible and united as a community via zoom.

## **CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

### **FY22 BUDGET: \$63,056**

Our children and youth leaders encourage and challenge our students to follow Jesus passionately and help make the world a better place, while welcoming doubts, questions, and struggles. This year we will focus on helping children and youth reconnect with one another and



with our community as a whole, and to engage with justice issues in age appropriate ways.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$55,910**

Middle and high school youth remained connected through weekly in-person gatherings on our property for much of the year, transitioning back to zoom hang-out times and game nights over the winter. We provided video-based preschool and elementary lessons for our younger children, in addition to periodic live gatherings online, prior to the return to in-person services. We also developed a Lenten series, Becoming Anti-Racist, for Cedar Ridge elementary school children.

### **PRAYER AND HEALING**

#### **FY22 BUDGET: \$85,195**

Through prayer, we experience the loving presence of God, which enables us to engage more healthily in the challenges, as well as the beauty of everyday life. We respond to the pain and suffering of both church members and our extended community through prayer, counseling, and practical support. Throughout the fall, we will hold prayer practice evenings, and we will continue to promote prayer as an integral part of discipleship for people of all ages.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$80,512**

We experienced God's presence together through monthly outdoor prayer practice evenings, a prayer vigil for racial justice on MLK Day, contemplative Lenten services, and prayer practices integrated into Sunday services, as well as through individual and group prayer practices. We developed meditations and made them available online. We responded to the pain and suffering of both church members and our extended community virtually and in-person through prayer, counseling, and practical support.

### **SMALL GROUPS**

#### **FY22 BUDGET: \$9,803**

Small groups provide a place to experience growth, community and servanthood. During the coming year, discipleship groups will continue to focus on encouraging and supporting members through this difficult time, as well as celebrating life together in safe and appropriate ways. In the fall, emotional support groups will provide a safe setting for people who have been struggling emotionally and mentally as a result of the pandemic.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$9,511**

Discipleship groups and other small groups—such as the Caring for Kids from





Hard Places group, Place of Rest for People of Color, and book study group—continued to meet (mainly virtually) throughout the year, providing encouragement, prayer, and practical support. Small groups have been of particular importance during the pandemic, which has increased a sense of loneliness and isolation for many of us.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### **FY22 BUDGET: \$19,406**

We will continue to engage in advocacy related to racial equity in public school funding and policing, and will hold Churchwide Days of Service with a focus on the underlying justice issues that perpetuate need. A screening of the movie “Just Mercy,” a panel discussion and associated racial justice book groups are scheduled for the spring for our church and wider community.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$18,264**

Achievements included delivery of approximately \$8,000 of food and gift cards to Greencastle families in need and 150 backpacks to Banneker Middles School; weekly farm food deliveries in partnership with Community Food Rescue; advocacy for more equitable public school funding, and reform in state and county criminal

justice systems; and a series of racial justice encounter groups to foster greater understanding of racism in our own lives and in our culture.

## **FARM**

### **FY22 BUDGET: \$23,520**

The farm is a visible demonstration of our commitment to economic justice, and a place we can experience the mystery and beauty of God in nature, both individually and as a community serving together. We will continue our focus on promoting food justice issues through the farm and on celebrating the harvest. We will also continue to partner with Manna Food Center to address food justice issues in our locality.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$21,823**

The 2021 farming season was our most productive ever, due largely to favorable weather and investment in a seedling light cart (funded by a Montgomery County grant). In addition to providing over 2 tons of fresh produce to hungry neighbors, we welcomed visitors onto our property through a spring planting day (hosted by the Easter Bunny), and Earth Day Celebration; and enjoyed community through monthly farm events. Mobilizing volunteers for weekly farm nights, however, continued to be a challenge.



## **GUATEMALA**

### **FY22 BUDGET: \$48,012**

In addition to our current projects in Ipala, we will install sinks at a preschool to promote hand-washing, and solar panels on low-income homes that currently have no electricity. We will develop a tool to help ensure funds are spent in ways that promote local justice and empowerment. And we will continue to encourage relationship building and prayer support between Ipaltecos and small groups at Cedar Ridge.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$44,245**

Travel to Ipala was not possible again this year, due to the pandemic, but we maintained contact with our partners through video calls, and worked to ensure alignment with Cedar Ridge's social justice guiding principles. Our work in Guatemala continued: we provided 54 scholarships to secondary school youth, contributed to a health fund that assists with medical needs, and twice delivered a week's basic food to 100 families.

## **LOCAL OUTREACH**

### **FY22 BUDGET: \$68,467**

Subject to current restrictions, we will organize safe and creative outreach activities such as a Pumpkin Patch and Movie Night in the fall, outdoor movies, and

games nights—which we will promote through roadside signage and direct mailings. We will participate in community events such as Burtonsville Day, and will adapt traditional events such as Advent in the Barn and the Creative Cup Coffee-house to the current conditions.

### **SPENDING IN FY21: \$62,703**

COVID restrictions limited possibilities for community outreach this past year. We hosted outdoor movies in the fall and spring, as well as yoga on the property. Community festivals were again canceled, but we continued to see a significant number of people from our local community enjoying our property, and we developed a number of themed meditations for the prayer walk to encourage thoughtful exploration.

## **FACILITIES**

### **FY22 BUDGET: \$407,880**

We will continue to rent out our facilities in ways that comply with state and county regulations, optimize rental income, and support our local community. We will invest in projects to improve our landscaping and drainage, and the seven-acre solar farm being constructed on our property is expected to become operational by spring. We will continue to use



our beautiful 63-acre property to host large and small community gatherings, and to provide a safe space for our children's Sunday programming.

**SPENDING IN FY21: \$363,661**

Rental occupancy and income increased significantly over the last financial year, with more church gatherings, and the addition of a preschool rental. We invested in air purification technologies to maximize safety for all occupants and replaced an HVAC unit. Agreement with a company to develop a solar farm on our meadow was finalized, and the stage was set for construction in the fall of 2021. Our well-maintained property continued to provide a peaceful refuge for many people within our church community and beyond.



# FROM THE FARM



**RUTH CAMPBELL**

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**Being grateful for the harvest** is almost cliché. Every craft store has plaques of weathered wood or rustic tin signs with pumpkins and apples and pithy sayings. “Thankful. Grateful. Blessed.” “Gather here with grateful hearts.” “Gratitude is the best attitude.” “Pumpkin kisses, and harvest wishes.” Et cetera!

It’s so easy in our society, where prepackaged food is available 24/7, and global supply chains ensure fresh produce is almost always “in season,” to forget that each harvest is a miracle.

And yet it is.



Just 6 months ago, we sowed the first seeds of 2021 on our little farm. If you were able to cut open even the tiniest seed, you would find the beginning of a plant—a couple of leaf-like parts and a root—along with food for when the time is right for the seed to germinate.

With sun, rain, and nutrients in the soil, these tiny miracles grew into plants on our farm. Some produced flowers that insects pollinated, and then the flowers developed into fruit. And though we weeded and watered, the food grew “naturally.” Miraculously.

Over 2 tons of harvest later, we sowed more seed—seeds that are growing into grasses and flowers that will add nutrients back into the soil to begin the process all over again next spring.

So this fall I am feeling “Thankful. Grateful. Blessed.” for all the ordinary everyday miracles of our life together as a community.

For the beautiful property we can use to farm. For the dedication of farm team members, rolling up their sleeves each year. For the many volunteers who—in the midst of pandemic living—made time to help on the farm. For the Easter Bunny, musicians, and sangria makers who made our work a celebration of community. And for God who gave us all these miracles—seeds, harvest, and community. “Pumpkin kisses and harvest wishes,” to you all!



# GUAT'S UP



**BRYAN PETERSON**

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## SOLAR POWER IN IPALA

**As progress continues** on the installation of the Solar Farm at Cedar Ridge, about three thousand miles away twenty families in Ipala, Guatemala will soon be receiving small solar panels on the roof of their homes. Members of CIDHER, our partners in Ipala, coincidentally initiated this project as they sought to meet the needs of local

families who currently have no electricity. In coordination with village leaders, they have identified families that use gas- or battery-operated lanterns or candles to provide lighting, and have to pay neighbors to charge their cell phones. Cell phones are the primary means by which most children in Ipala are participating in remote learning during the pandemic, so having the ability to charge their phones in their own home at no cost will be a significant help, as will the ability to do homework after sundown.

The solar panels themselves are much smaller than we are used to. They connect to batteries that will power about 2 or 3 lights in the home. That's certainly not enough power for refrigerators or big screen TVs, but it will provide for the basic electrical needs of these low-income Guatemalans. As part of our ongoing commitment to advance economic justice amongst the most vulnerable in Ipala, Cedar Ridge will be funding this pilot project, allowing families in Ipala to tap into the power of the sun.



# NOTES FROM OUR FRIENDS



**MELANIE GRIFFIN**

When I think of Thanksgiving, I think of abundance. It's not so much the second (or third) helpings of carbs and desserts, it's more a richness of spirit. I feel filled to the brim with love and gratitude. I think of my Mom and how after I became a vegetarian forty-plus years ago, she always made me a huge bowl of stuffing "with no meat juice." She'd make a big show of placing it in front of me and warning everyone else it was "especially for Marnie." That meant the world to me.

Most of my family is gone now, and Thanksgiving traditions are a thing of the past. But there's one tradition I keep, whether I'm celebrating with friends or by myself, as I have been during the pandemic. I start the day by putting on the lovely ornate cross that my father brought back from Jerusalem when I was a toddler. I've worn it every Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas for as long as I can remember. It has always fascinated me, as it seems to have moods. I never

know whether the amethyst will be shimmering lavender or brilliant blue. Either way, throughout the day, that necklace brings back decades of warm and loving memories of family and friends.



**TINICA MATHER**

I love my family of origin deeply but, like many families, there are some dark parts in our shared history. While there have been many beautiful moments of healing and reconciliation between family members, there are still some tender scars as well. So the holidays tend to feel a bit loaded.

Every year was the same: some guilt, some arguing, and a lot of stress. How would we divide up this year's holidays between multiple sets of grandparents and varied extended family while deftly trying to navigate the outcomes of divorces, the in-laws, and the tensions that come with a complicated family makeup. Our Thanksgivings typically involved a complex schedule of visiting or hosting as many different gatherings as we could

manage in a few days to be sure we were inclusive to everyone, avoiding as many hurt feelings as possible. Whatever decision we came to, we still very much enjoyed the company of our family, but there has always been an underlying heaviness to our get-togethers. Despite our best efforts, we were spread too thin and were sure to disappoint somebody on the list. Most holiday weekends ended with us feeling exhausted and a little bitter.

That changed four years ago when a friend of mine (shout out to Sue here!) decided she was going to begin hosting a “Friendsgiving” celebration for folks who didn’t have a place to land during the holiday. A potluck meal with the most delicious food and good conversations shared with an eclectic mix of friends and neighbors. We are unusual additions to the guest list maybe, since we have a large amount of family in the area, but we decided to forgo the madness that we had perpetuated with our own family celebrations and join in on the Friendsgiving day. No thorny dynamics, no awkward dinner conversations, and no guilt (well, mostly no guilt).

The diversion in tradition helped us to break the unhealthy, overly people-pleasing, slightly martyr-like pattern we had gotten ourselves into. Interestingly, our kids noticed the difference immediately. Steve and I were more at ease with them and each other. We were able to enjoy company, rest, and recharge. The world didn’t end when we announced to the family that we had alternative plans for the day. In fact, the change allowed for everyone in the family to step back and spend the time in a way that made more sense for them.

We still of course spend a lot of time with family, but something about setting Thanksgiving day aside to be with great friends has made us more thankful of the authentic community of people we now call our family of the heart.



### **TRISH AUDI**

Some of my favorite Thanksgiving traditions are traveling to upstate NY to Steve's relatives and having a huge Thanksgiving dinner, eating all the peanut butter pie, then going bowling the next day at the local—and very small/old—bowling alley. We used to buy a ton of snacks and take over the place for the afternoon. One year, we surprised our kids by meeting up with the Strykers who also have relatives in the same town. Crazy Thanksgiving fun! I have also recently enjoyed Thanksgivings where each of our kiddos makes a dish for the Thanksgiving meal. It's fun to see what they choose to make and the pride they show in their work.



### **CHARLES GUENET**

My family isn't big on Thanksgiving tradition, to be honest. If there is a tradition, it's that we do not stick to any one tradition when it comes to what animal we eat. We sometimes have turkey [cont'd.]

[cont'd.] but other years we'll have duck or goose and once we had rabbit. Also, because I grew up in a family very influenced by French customs, we always finish the meal with cheese and bread before moving on to dessert.



### CHAS FOSTER

One thing we do is make hand-turkeys—the old school trick of tracing your hand and then adding an eye and beak to the thumb. The challenge is to push this traditional format as far as we can in new directions—I have one made by each of our girls over a span of nearly 20 years. Looking back at this record of the growth of their hands and their creative ideas makes me even more thankful to have been a part of their lives.



### JONATHAN FREEMAN-COPPADGE

For several years in my birth family, our Thanksgiving tradition seemed to be that someone nearly died before or after the meal. There was the year my aunt piled flammable items on top of a stovetop burner. There was the year the old oven didn't light and filled with gas until it reached the pilot light and blew the door open. There was the year we made it to the end of the meal, believing we had cheated Death completely, until my brother and cousins ran in from the back yard screaming that someone was shooting at them. Sure enough, two hunters were sighting in their rifles a few fields over from my parents' rural Pennsylvania home, and the stray bullets were landing in our yard. We stayed away from the windows until the state police arrived, grateful for life and limb. Recent years have been calmer, but now there's a whole crop of grandkids to keep life interesting.



### WIL CORVEY

We don't always make it out of town to visit our folks right at Thanksgiving but we've been really fortunate to have friends in the area to share the holiday with over a potluck dinner. Sitting at a



[cont'd.] table of everyone's family favorites is a great reminder that we're all part of one big community. We love calling our families while cooking to spend time together and of course to remember all the tricks and secret ingredients.



### **BRIAN MCLAREN**

The older I get, the more I have to be grateful for. It's like each day adds a new deposit of experiences to my bank of blessings, and with every passing breath and heartbeat, I am a richer man. How sad to measure wealth only by a bank account. As the great Catholic theologian and mystic Josef Pieper said, "Happiness doesn't consist in having, but in appreciating."

I've been reading and savoring Robin Wall Kimmerer's masterpiece, "Braiding Sweetgrass." In it, she shares the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address. I have been so moved by this expression of thanks. Yes, it culminates in thanks to God, but it doesn't start with God. It starts by thanking our fellow creatures and then ends with God. That decision—to be sure we don't bypass our fellow creatures—strikes me as very wise. And I think it would please God.

It reminds me of another way of giving thanks I learned from a dear friend, Sr. Simone Campbell. First, we look at the delicious food on the table, and we think of the soil, the rain, the wind, and the labor of farmers who produced it. We say,

"Ahhhh." Then, we look around the table and look at all our companions, cherishing their company, and feeling gratitude for those who prepared the meal. We say, "Ahhhh." Then, we look up and utter a simple thanks to God, adding a kiss: "Ahhhh."

These beautiful traditions of thanks are becoming part of my life, thanks to the Haudenosaunee people and to Sr. Simone. How can I not be thankful, having been so blessed in so many millions of ways—including the friendship of you all! Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.



### **SHOBHA DUNCAN**

Life has been hard for me these past months. As you may know, my dear husband of nearly 46 years died in March of Covid. Bill's death was unexpected and a tragic loss. Despite this tragedy there are so many reasons to be grateful. I am grateful for family and friends who have surrounded me with love and care. The people of Cedar Ridge Community Church are incredibly generous and have helped me in numerous ways. I recently got a new puppy named Buddy who has brought so many smiles to me. He's a good little traveler and has made several trips with me already. If you want you can follow his adventures on Instagram: [\*\*@buddy\\_traveler14\*\*](#). I am learning from him how to be joyful and happy even in the midst of grief. Happy Thanksgiving, dear friends.

# PUMPKIN PATCH KIDS

**On Saturday, October 16th**, we invited our friends in the community to join us for pumpkin carving, an outdoor movie, s'mores, apple cider, and pizza. Unfortunately, we were rained out. But not to be deterred, we regrouped and invited the community to join us on October 17th! And the second time was the charm, because it was a beautiful day in every way imaginable. We're already looking forward to our next event.





