



THE CEDAR RIDGE

QUARTERLY

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MATTHEW'S DESK



MATTHEW DYER
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Treasuring the Bible

The Bible really is a most amazing book. It's a library of books, of course, written across a span of multiple centuries—an anthology of ancient writings held sacred by various religious communities throughout history. And that includes our present-day community, right here at Cedar Ridge. Each week during our services we look to scripture for insight, challenge, and inspiration. In our personal lives we read scripture, meditate on scripture, pray scripture and even endeavor to experience scripture. As followers of Jesus, it holds a pivotal place in our lives—we treasure it!

The Bible has also had a profound influence on the social milieu in which we've all grown up. Its impact on the development of western culture for close to two millennia, while often subliminal, has been immense. Scripture has been used by ruling religious and political classes to oppress

and dominate all kinds of people groups, and yet it has also been a source of inspiration and empowerment to those same people groups to struggle for freedom and justice. How we read the Bible, how we choose to interpret it, has profound consequences.

But for centuries very few people could read the Bible. Originally written mostly in ancient Hebrew and Greek, it was eventually translated into Latin by Jerome at the turn of the fourth century. Latin was the language of the Roman Empire and the Roman Church, and, with few exceptions, only the ruling political and religious classes could read it. As Christianity spread over the course of the next thousand years, followers of Jesus had no scripture in their native tongues. So the religious hierarchy would read it for them and tell them what it meant!



It wasn't until the fearless struggle of people like Jan Hus in Bohemia and John Wycliffe in England in the fourteenth century that the Bible was translated into the vernacular, an endeavor viewed as a work of sedition by the religious authorities that they tried to violently suppress. Even then, it wasn't until Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the following century that the Bible could be distributed sufficiently to give even limited access to everyday people; and not until much more recently that literacy rates meant people like you and me could read it quite easily.

Today, the Bible has been translated into innumerable languages, and there are scores of different scholarly translations readily available to us in English. We have easy access to all manner of commentaries, language tools, and cultural

analysis at the touch of a keyboard, and most of us have benefited from the incredible gift of literacy—someone took the time to teach us to read. It's so easy to take all these things for granted. Ironically, it's perhaps even tempting to reduce our personal engagement with scripture to a reliance on religious leaders to tell us what it means (people's only option for most of the Bible's history). But we all have this incredible privilege to read it ourselves—to wrestle with it, discuss it, reflect on it, critique it, and ultimately to let it read us. So let's treasure the Bible, this precious gift, because how we read it, how we choose to interpret it personally, has profound consequences.

Matthew

AN ODE TO CEDAR RIDGE GIVERS



ALISON PASTERNAK
CRCC Treasurer

One hundred sixty thousand dollars
Was the giving goal the Board set
To fund Cedar Ridge's vision,
Pay our bills, and reduce our debt.

Five weeks was the timeframe
To achieve that giving goal.
The Board was apprehensive
But optimistic on the whole.

The campaign started slowly;
Donations came in at a crawl.
The Board feared the goal was too lofty
And that the campaign might stall.

Was Advent at the Barn too festive?
Was Santa's grotto too super?
Had Cedar Ridgers succumbed to
A mulled wine-induced stupor?

But then in the final week
Of the year-end giving campaign,
Our community moved into high gear
And entered the fast lane.

We reached 98 percent of the goal,
A true donation sensation!
On behalf of the entire Board,
I extend our deepest appreciation!

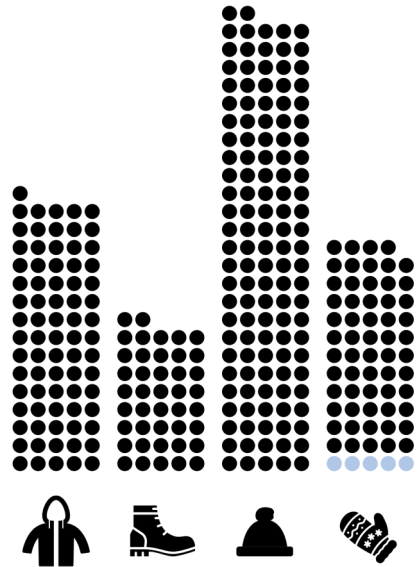




Solar Update

The Community Solar Farm at Cedar Ridge is nearly operational. 2,692 solar panels have been installed and wired and the system should be “energized” by BGE by the end of February. On a sunny summer day, the solar farm will generate and transmit into the power grid about 2MW—think twenty thousand 100-watt light bulbs—of clean, emissions-free energy. The solar farm is one of the ways Cedar Ridge is seeking to treasure the Earth and share our land and resources with our neighbors.

A LOOK BACK ON THE LAST QUARTER



● SCARVES

Winter Clothes Drive + Gift Cards

Through the generosity of this community, we provided approximately 50 winter coats, hats and pairs of gloves to families with students at Greencastle Elementary School. Nearby Spencerville Seventh Day Adventist joined in our initiative, allowing us to collectively donate **76 coats, 42 pairs of boots, 127 hats, 59 pairs of gloves and 5 scarves!**

In addition, Cedar Ridge gave Thanksgiving gift cards to every one of the 125 Greencastle staff as a token of our appreciation for their work in such a high-need, low-resource environment. Decorated with pictures drawn by our kids, these cards and gifts were very gratefully received.

Dear organization
Thank you for giving us socks, gloves,
hat and coat. We appreciate you
guy for giving us winter accessories.

Love, Gregory

From our community
to yours...





Advent at the Barn

On the afternoon of December 4, about 180 people celebrated the start of the Christmas season in and around our historic Barn. Santa and his elves welcomed younger visitors, and kids of all ages made s'mores at the fire pits, and took festive wagon rides around the property. While adults shopped for fair-trade gifts, children and youth selected gifts for loved ones in Santa's workshop, and everyone enjoyed desserts, mulled wine, hot chocolate and spiced cider under the heated tent. Then, as darkness fell, the side of the farmhouse was turned into a giant screen for selfies and artistic creations. Thank you to everyone who made this event so special!





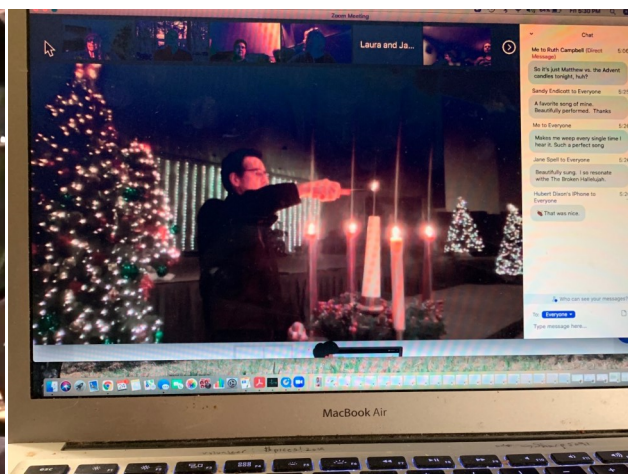
Advent Quiet Day

Saturday December 11 was our Advent Quiet Day, themed “Opening to Hope.” Ten people gathered in the Barn to make space for God and the hope of the season through poetry and scripture reading, contemplative prayer and silence, sharing encouragement and participation in communion.



Christmas Services

Facing COVID restrictions for a second year, our traditional Christmas service of readings, prayers and carols was held on Sunday December 19. With readers of all ages, and young carolers wearing animal masks as they sang the carol “Friendly Beasts,” we closed out our Advent series “Singing the Songs of Christmas” with a focus on the rousing African American spiritual “Go Tell It On the Mountain.” Over 200 of us gathered on zoom on Christmas Eve to celebrate the Light that transcends darkness—not just at Christmas, but the whole year through!



GUAT'S UP

Letters from Ipala

Recently, we received over 25 letters from scholarship students in Ipala, Guatemala. They are addressed to Cedar Ridge Community Church — all of us who are part of this community that is committed to advancing economic justice among the most vulnerable in Ipala. Below are some excerpts from a sweet, three-page letter handwritten in English by Calvin Ruben Rodas Martinez. He graduated in October from the public high school. His letter highlights the relationships we have been able to cultivate through our summer trips as well as some of the realities of the pandemic:

Hello, this is a thank you letter to the people who give me the help to continue with my studies through the scholarship . . . I wanted to thank you with all my heart for all the help that you have given my family and me in my studies and also for continuing to help me and the other scholarship holders despite these bad times for people due to the pandemic. I want to say thank you very much.

I would have wanted to say these words in person but because of the pandemic I could not . . . I would have wanted to live with you one more time—before my



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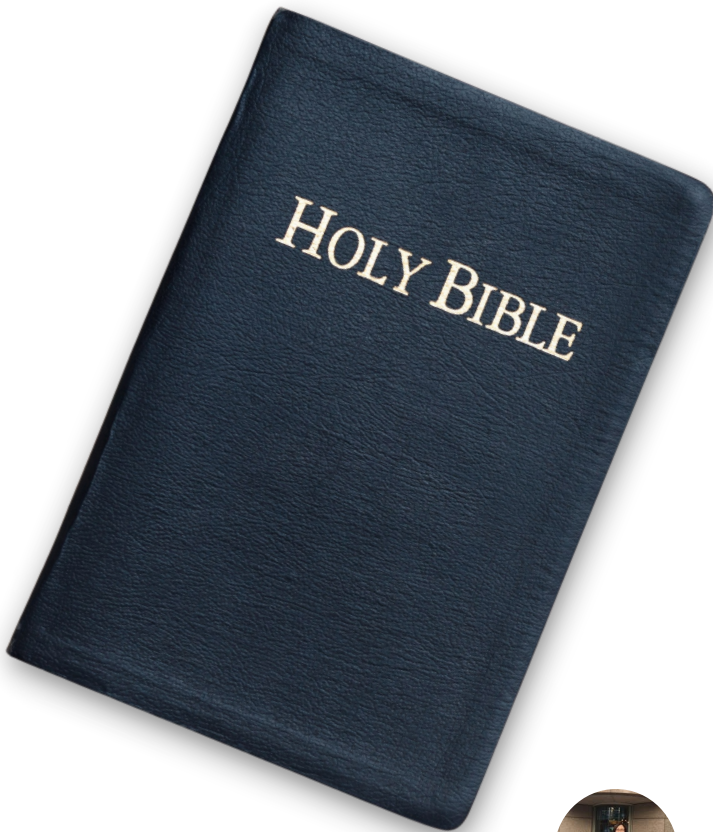


graduation—as we did every year when you come from so far to live with us and spend moments full of joy, laughing, playing, having fun, but given the situation of the pandemic we were not able to. Thank you very much for all those beautiful memories that I will carry in my heart. You are all my family. Goodbye, take care, Calvin loves you very much.

Cedar Ridge is pleased to be able to provide a financial boost to intelligent, hard-working, resilient, and motivated young people like Calvin, helping them to continue their education beyond the 6th grade. Please pray for teachers and children, including the 54 secondary students we help support, as they hope to return to their classrooms in January and February.

OUR FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES





JUDE 1:1-2

BY ANNA KIM



Several years ago, I got deeply hurt by someone close. Hurt is a feeling of emotional injury which can be caused by misunderstanding and/or miscommunication. During that time, I was desperate for God's comfort and presence to overcome mixed feelings of hurt and disappointment. Then I came across Jude 1:1-2 (NIV) "Called...loved...and kept.....Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance." Since then, it has been one of my favorite Bible verses.

I like the way Jude reassures his readers that we are "called" and "loved" by God the Father, and "kept" for Jesus Christ. This is true for every Christian, and what God wants for us is "mercy," "peace" and

"love" in abundance, not only for our well-being, but also toward others—especially to those who offended us. God wants us to experience such an overflowing amount of mercy, peace, and love for God and others, that we treat people with kindness and forgiveness. After all, those who receive mercy like me, strive to be a mercy-giver to others.

ROMANS 8

BY CINDY NORELL



And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. — Romans 8:28

I am a glass half full kind of person.

The job fair for teachers was a 2½ hour drive from my home. I had one goal in mind: get the job advertised to teach music in Dar es Salam, Tanzania in East Africa. At the time, my husband, Dan, had a calling to go to Africa and it looked like the place he would likely get a job in economic development was in Dar es Salam. The job interview itself went quite well until we got down to the nitty gritty details of the service agreement: accom-

panying spouses would be required to also teach in the school. Sadly, contract in front of me, I turned down the job, and as I drove the long route home, felt the whole thing had gone so very badly.

The thing is that I really was so very fortunate not to have signed a contract that day. It turned out that Dan did not get a position in Dar es Salam, but in Harare, Zimbabwe. And, the board of a Christian high school there had been praying for a music teacher. If I thought the 2½ hour drive was a long way to go for an interview, the next journey to Harare seemed interminable. But I can say, I felt a sense of peace throughout the journey. Accepted for the job, I was relieved to find the school also offered places for each of our three children. During my week's stay, I was able to find a place to live and buy furniture for our new home.

And so began our four-year stint in Zimbabwe. I taught music and English at the school, and Dan was able to work in economic development for Mennonite Economic Development Associates. And yes, there were hiccups along the way: my work permit did not appear for a few months, and one of my daughters was so very frightened about attending school those first few weeks that the two of us mostly spent time driving around Harare and talking instead of her attending classes. I still remember the headmaster at her school praying with us and reminding us that in the future we would look back and see how God had provided for us through all of this as our daughter would adjust to schooling in Zimbabwe. And he was right.

Looking back on the experience, I can feel gratitude that in this case “all things” did work out for good for those called according to his purpose. And yet, I am also reminded that not always do those “all things” appear to work out so well, at least not in the ways I would imagine.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of this past few years has been the wrenching apart of relationships due to the divisive political atmosphere. It has been emotionally exhausting to try to relate to and rebuild relations with my extended family. Maybe you are also familiar with the conflicts. Religious differences, masks or no masks, pulling out of Afghanistan, the current president or the past one. To boost or not to boost. Living in fear or taking precautions. In a casual conversation with a neighbor, I hear the familiar weary sigh—we both wish the whole Covid thing was over. We mourn the loss of good friends and good company.

It is at times like these that doubts that “all things” will work out for good start to creep in at the edges of my half glass full optimism. Broken relations take effort to rebuild as well as inner reflection. What is my part in it all? What lies in the circumstances of the present that will be healed with a passage of time? In short, what can I do? If we are to be conformed to the likeness of God's Son, and called to his purpose, how should I live?

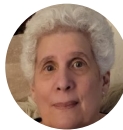
For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor any-

thing else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38.

I notice that the verse mentions separate us, not separate me, from the love of God. We are loved and nothing can separate us from that reality. Now, to trust and rely on that.

PSALM 23

BY JOYCE ROSE



Beginning with numerous illnesses and deaths of treasured family and friends since the year 2000,

I found myself needing more and more spiritual comfort and guidance. I've always been drawn to Psalm 23, but never had I analyzed its true meaning as it applies to what I was going through. To navigate my pain and losses, I finally deciphered Psalm 23 line by line and applied it to my life. In the first verse "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," I realized that no material possessions could comfort me and replace the loss I felt from my loved ones passing on. What I realized from repeatedly reading the Psalm is that the Lord has been guiding me all along, calming my thoughts and grief, and refreshing my body and spirit when I felt it difficult to continue.

In the second and third verses, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake", these verses calmed my mind and gave me the physical and emotional strength to carry on, despite the sheer exhaustion and weariness I felt caring for

my father in 2000, supporting my mother through his illness, while also struggling to maintain my own household and continuing to support my family.

In 2011, when I was preparing to retire, my husband fell ill, and once again, I required extreme physical and emotional strength to care for him for a period spanning close to seven years. The toll it took on my heart, body, and mind were beyond overwhelming; watching him deteriorate day by day at a snail's pace felt like torture for us all.

In the verse "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me", I have finally understood that there is a season for everyone and a cycle of life that must be followed according to His will. Whereas I lost my father and my husband at relatively early ages, I just celebrated my mother's 102nd birthday on January 5, 2022. What an amazing journey she has had, as the longest living relative across both our families.

In the verse "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," through the comfort and trust in the Lord, I don't fear the danger of enemies, as I know He is by my side and will protect me. I am enveloped in the comforting love of Jesus. As a believer in Christ, I realize that pain, suffering, and loss are all a part of His master plan. Though we can humanly never understand His decisions, I feel peace and salvation is awaiting me at the end.

**SING PRAISE,
FRUIT OF MY LIPS**
BASED ON PSALM 23
BY BOBBY WENTZ



He's a Good Shepherd,
my needs he provides
In green pastures he lets me lie
By cool waters my soul revives
In death's dark valley I have no fear
There's food on my table,
my Lord is near
This is the righteous path,
my journey now clear
Heal me, oh Lord, and I will be healed
Save me and I will be saved
You are the one I praise
Early in the morning,
give me strength each day
If I'm lost in the dark night
with no words to say
I'll sing praise
Lord by your command,
loving kindness at daylight
His song still within me
all through the night
I awake and my sleep is sweet
Prayers to the God of my life,
the hope of my life
So heal me, oh Lord, and I will be healed
Save me and I will be saved
You are the one I praise
Early in the morning,
give me strength each day
If I'm lost in the dark night
with no words to say
I'll sing praise

**LISTEN TO
THE RECORDED
VERSION »**



SCAN ME

ISAIAH 49:6
BY PATRICE WHITE



**It's underlined in the study Bible I used
for the first decade of my Christian life.**

"It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make you a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6. There's even a notation beside the verse, "ISM, 1977"—the summer I spent at the University of Wisconsin working on international student outreach.

While I know Isaiah was prophesying about how God would use the nation of Israel to accomplish his purposes in the world, at that point in my life I felt like those words were written for me. I was at a crossroads, still a student, making big decisions about what I would be and do with my life. And those words, "it is too small a thing" nudged me into further study and career choices that led me away from what was familiar and known. Those choices led me to spending over 3 decades in places like Somalia, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Pakistan, as well as to working with immigrants in this country.

While my understanding of what that verse means has changed, one thing I know for certain: We do not serve a tribal God whose love is limited to only those in certain, select or familiar groups. It's NEVER "us/them." We are ALL part of this human family. We serve the source of limitless love, who is in the process of reconciling all people to himself. Delightfully, we can be part of that process.

THE PSALMS

BY JAMES PEACHEY



I have often heard other Christians speak of their great love of the Bible, but I have always found reading the Bible to be difficult. My parents were both avid Bible readers, but somehow, they did not pass on that gene to me. I do credit them with instilling in me an appreciation of Psalms, which they each quoted from time to time. My father frequently would use Ps. 103: 1-2 as a meal blessing, and I suspect my mother acquired the plaque with Ps. 46:1 they used to display outside their apartment.

When my mother became off-and-on ill late in her life, I sometimes would read to her from Psalms, and I began to discover my own favorites. I eventually memorized Psalms 103, 19, and 139, which seem to capture beautifully different aspects of God's passionate love and boundless mercy for all creation in general, and for me in particular.

Psalms 139 probably tops the list because it is so tender, so intimate and so personal (except for a few verses near the end, where the text abruptly shifts to a vehement wish for God to destroy "the wicked"). As I reflect on it now, with some chagrin I think that I connect with Psalms because of three traits many of them share: they are short, focused on one or two themes, and easy to understand without additional context and explanation. Oh, and one more very important thing: there are so many beautiful musical settings of them!





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