THE CEDAR RIDGE

QUARTERLY

SPRING 2022



Matthew's Desk

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Seven Haiku

From the Farm

Guat's Up

When Cedar Ridge was There for Me

Matthew's Desk



MATTHEW DYER matthewd@crcc.org

Welcome to the spring edition of The Quarterly. Our theme is "community"-something we treasure and value so highly at Cedar Ridge. The hardships of the past couple of years have challenged our family bond in ways we could never have imagined. If someone had told us at the beginning of 2020 that we would spend so many months not being able to gather at church or in our smalls groups, that our outreach and service programs would have to be severely modified, or that our friendships and sources of counsel and encouragement would all have to reconfigure online, I think we might have been tempted to wonder if we'd still be a church together at the end of it all!

But something quite remarkable has happened. Over these two years we have cared, served, given, sacrificed and loved our hearts out for one another. The response of our community has been a measure of the deep bond we share, and this is what has carried us through. The power of this community we experience together has a much deeper source than just "liking" each other—we are caught up in God's love! As we each find our home in divine love, we find one another right there too, and experience a transcendent acceptance and affection for one another. We truly are "one in the Spirit."

In this newsletter you can read about what we do together practically as a community, as well as personal stories about how people from Cedar Ridge have experienced the healing love of others being there for them. We can find great encouragement in looking back and remembering stories like this, reminding ourselves of what is truly meaningful in our lives. And as we look forward, let's allow that meaning to empower us into deeper community. We are emerging from the challenges of the past two years, but we face a new challenge now to gather in-person again, to re-engage with our mission together, and to reach out to the world around us with God's love.

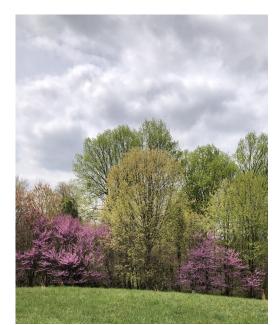
One consistent theme in all these stories is "compassionate presence"-the wav someone was simply "there" for us when we needed it. In theological terms we call this "incarnation" and experience the epitome of this in Jesus as "God with us." But we too are the presence of God in the world-an incarnation of love to one another and to a world in need of compassion. This physical presence is what we have missed so much, and its importance to us has perhaps never been more heartfelt. The greatest gift we are able to give is our own self-simply being present to and for another with an open and compassionate heart.

So, as we emerge from the pandemic (and as our own health situation permits), let's go out of our way to give ourselves and be present to one another as together we write new stories of hope and healing.









Last Quarter Review

CREATIVE OPEN HOUSE







Over 60 people turned out to our COVID-safe Creative Open House in February. A beautiful "gallery" graced the back of the auditorium. During the evening, a variety of musicians performed, artists of all ages created collages, crosswords were (semi-) completed and prizes won, and lots of happy chatter filled the room as we gathered together as a community.







In March, we learned more about potentially transformative tools for spiritual growth through online and in -person workshops.

The topics were

- Journaling through Lent,
- The Enneagram, and
- Art for healing and expression.





15 of us gathered for the Lenten Quiet Day in the historic barn, and engaged in group contemplative practices, communion, silent prayer, and walking the property.



EASTER SATURDAY ON THE FARM





Neighborhood volunteers joined us in making the spring beds and planting 512 seedlings on our community farm. Even the Easter Bunny stopped by to offer a helping... paw.











Together we celebrated the victory of life over death, and love over hate, on a beautiful (if chilly) morning.

EASTER SUNDAY





EARTH DAY CELEBRATION













We gathered together to celebrate the completion of the community solar farm on our property. Then we learned about the environment through a themed property walk, hands-on explanation of solar power generation, climate change advocacy, viewing of electric cars, and visit to the beehives. We also beautified two local elementary schools, picked up trash in neighborhood parks, and worked on the farm and Cedar Ridge property.







SOLAR RIBBON CUTTING



Cedar Ridge members joined solar company representatives, local legislators, and other partners to officially mark the completion of the largest community solar project in Montgomery County.





SEVEN HAIKU INSPIRED BY CEDAR RIDGE'S EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

Drone Bees These males cannot sting. They drink nectar, laze, and mate. Endless vacation.

Worker Bees They're female (of course) Pros in nectar collection and pollination.

By Alison Spock

The Farm Two tons of produce we plant, grow, and give away. Shared vegetation.

Solar Panels Converting sunlight to energy—church and suncollaboration.

Offsite Projects Picking up litter, beautifying schools—caring for God's creation.

Offering Tower Silently it stands, welcoming donations with appreciation.

By the Way Did you notice that the last words of my haiku rhyme with donation?

Just a gentle reminder that we need consistent giving from our community in order to fund Cedar Ridge's vision, pay our bills, and maintain our beautiful property and facilities. Your financial support is greatly appreciated!

From the Farm GNARLY ROOTS

By Hannah

During the recent Lenten Quiet Day, I grabbed a trowel and some gloves from the farm shed and got busy digging in the dirt. The task before me was to weed the strawberry beds. Overall, the task was rather simple. It was a windy and cool day, but the sun occasionally peeked from behind the clouds and spread warmth on my back and arms. I made my way down the bed, being mindful of my handiwork as I carefully weeded out the unwanted green growth interspersed among the fresh shoots of leaves coming up from the crown of the strawberry plant.

At the end of the bed, I encountered a weed that only had a few green leaves above the surface, but as I tugged on it and started digging around the roots, I uncovered a web of gnarly roots. The weed had obviously been cut back at the surface several times, but the roots had continued to multiply and thicken.

After about 5 minutes of tugging and digging, I sat back feeling a bit defeated. I really wasn't sure how to get this thing out of the ground. I could easily have just let it stay—it was obvious that it had defeated



other gardeners before me, but I tend to be of the stubborn variety. I headed back to the farm shed to grab another—and hopefully more effective—tool.

Ten sweaty and somewhat agitated minutes later (so much for a peaceful Quiet Day), I gave the weed a massive tug and up it came. I pulled about 8 inches of root growth from the soil.



Later in the barn, I reflected on my experience on the farm. Instead of walking away from the gnarly root, I put in the time, patience, strength, and determination to weed it out. How often could I say the same for my spiritual journey?

I began to ask myself the following questions, and I invite you to use these questions to reflect on your own journey:

- How easy is it for me to stay at the surface level in my journey?
- What gnarly roots are there in my heart that need my time and attention?
- What tools am I equipping myself with to address my gnarly roots?
- How can I immerse myself in God's love while I do this hard work?

I invite you to join us as we continue to care for the farm that God has gifted us with. Join us on Thursday nights from 6-8pm, and keep an eye on the Community Flyer for details on upcoming community nights on the farm. May God bless our farm and guide our hearts as we weed out our gnarly roots.



GUAT'S UP CATCHING UP WITH ACIDHER

Relationships form a key component of our approach to our work in Guatemala. We've chosen to focus on one particular town in the world, as opposed to many scattered locations, so that we can build some long-term friendships with the people there.

Since 2010, we've made annual trips to Ipala to strengthen those relational bonds. Although the pandemic brought those visits to a screeching halt in 2020 and 2021, our Guatemala team has maintained contact with our partners, and we thought we'd share some updates on some of our friends in Ipala. These are the current members of our partner NGO, now called ACIDHER.



Lusvin Javier has a variety of business interests including a cable TV company and cattle. He also manages the professional soccer club in Ipala.

Lusvin was instrumental in the long process of upgrading ACIDHER's non-government organization status, which was completed this spring. He and his family are expecting a fourth child later this year!

Rosa Alidia Mayorga is a teacher at the public middle school in Ipala and serves as the Director of the AC-IDHER Computer Center. She is also active in the Catholic church, which unfortunately had to be torn down last year due to structural instability.



They are currently raising funds to rebuild this major landmark in Ipala.

Mynor Albanez experienced has joys and sorrows during the last two years. He lost his job as a flooring salesman early in the pandemic and has returned to driving a *tuc tuc* (taxi) throughout the week. Rising gas prices add to



the challenge of this work. Mynor's mother also passed away in 2020, but he welcomed his first grandchild earlier this year. He continues to make bracelets and other jewelry in his free time.



Karen Pinto is the main teacher at the ACIDHER Computer Center, which provides low-cost computer classes for up to 180 lowincome students. Much of the last two

years has involved assigning remote homework and reliance upon smartphones (when available), but students have recently returned to meeting in person in smaller groups.

Deysi Vargas teaches preschoolers at a village in the municipality of Ipa-



la. Teachers like Deysi often provided take-home handouts students for and communicated with families through WhatsApp. Students recently have returned to in person

learning on a part-time basis. Deysi

also got married and welcomed her first child, Eithan Mateo.



Tavy Juarez assists local residents with healthcare needs and has oper-

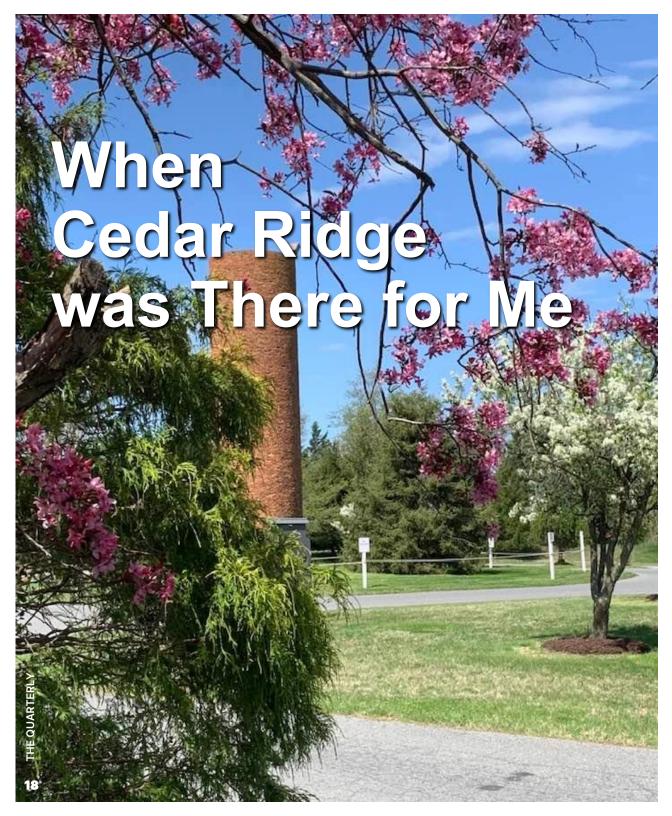


ated a small store in Ipala with her mother. Unfortunately, Tavy's mother passed away April. in Please pray that she will sense the love and peace of God in the days ahead.

Myriam Padilla became the director of an innovative public preschool in Ipala. The school has recently wel-

comed children back to the building. They will soon be installing handwashing sinks on their grounds as a pilot project with funding from Cedar Ridge.





Nancy Hughes

When I moved to Maryland in 2005, a friend at home in Pennsylvania mentioned Cedar Ridge Community



Church where her daughter attended. I finally started going to CRCC in 2007 and I felt such warmth immediately. The most supportive friendships I have made since coming to Maryland have been at CRCC. I found people at work lived far and wide, so it was a challenge to make friends.

I have enjoyed all the creativity of the pastoral care team, particularly with the adaptations to offering services during the pandemic on Zoom. I have seen the growth and outreach to the community at CRCC. It has been fun to lend a hand on the farm, taking part in the Harvest Festivals, and participating on the Burtonsville Day wagon, the quiet days in the Barn, the Advent evenings in the Barn, and special programs. There is no shortage of ways to participate, and all are welcome and encouraged to do so.

One of my most powerful experiences for me at CRCC has been through the small groups. I have been involved in three different small groups since I first started participating in groups. The friends I have made have supported me through good times such as the birth of grandchildren, and not so good times like when my job ended, I had a cancer diagnosis, or when my brother passed away unexpectedly in 2020 during the pandemic in another state which I could not easily travel to due to travel restrictions. I have also had the opportunity to provide support to them at times as well. We pray for

each other, send meals, have visits, and anything else we can do for each other to celebrate and support each other. Life just has twists and turns for sure. We don't know God's plan for us. The support of the wonderful folks at CRCC has been so vital to my life. I cannot imagine my life without them all.

Steve Mather

Five years ago, we found ourselves at one of our lowest points. We were financially struggling wi



debt—medical bills, credit cards, taxes. We lived in a lovely home and shared nice food on the table, but it seemed we would soon lose nearly all of it. One reason that contributed to this was a sense of shame. We didn't want to seem poor or needy to anyone, perhaps with the lone exception of our parents and siblings. Our pride, perceived independence, and individualism had unexpectedly brought us to this dark valley.

That's the moment when our extended family, our D-Group members and other dear friends at Cedar Ridge were there, standing beside us when we needed them most.

Our Cedar Ridge family members pooled their resources to stunningly gift us with \$10,000. A collective and practical miracle. Even more lifesaving was the process leading up to that gift. We finally chose to become more honest, more vulnerable. Sharing our fears and struggles, asking for help in different ways, learning of friends in similarly painful situations—this was spiritual and emotional transformation for us. Cedar Ridge is the family we've been a part of our entire adult lives, where we've served and led and grown in many ways. And when we shared the need for help, our friends were there for us to love us and journey with us in ways we couldn't have imagined.

To us, Cedar Ridge is more our community and family than just our church.



Tara Rose

I have been attending the Cedar Ridge Safe Place for People of Color (POC) group, led by Rory Anderson,



for over two years. This group has been the best source of comfort, support, and sisterhood for me in years, for which I am truly grateful. I must pay special tribute to Rory, who has been the epitome of a loving, caring, supportive leader. The special haven that Rory created for our group has allowed us to openly share and express ourselves freely and without fear or limitation.

The people in this group are the core center of support and speak to how "we" are the church. At the beginning of COVID, I, like millions of other people, was laid off from my job due to COVID budget cuts. For the first time ever, I was unemployed for several months, and unemployment was so backed up with numerous cases due to COVID layoffs, it took me over six months to receive part of my unemployment benefits. Thankfully, I had savings, but that grew short over this timeframe. Being independent and financially secure was always of high importance to me and losing this became very depressing. Despite my continuous faith in God and belief that He would provide in His time (not mine), it became a challenge for me to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

In addition to God (first and foremost), and a few close family members and friends, it was the love, encouragement, and support of my POC group that pulled me out of a dark and depressing place and uplifted my spirit. A few members of the group shared similar stories of their unemployment experiences, and how they overcame them and grew stronger in the process. They always have kind words, show their support, and emphasize that this is a safe place for sharing, caring, and love. I feel the love from this group every time we meet, and in between those times as well.

After seven long and emotional months, I finally received and accepted a great job offer. Although painful, this experience was indeed one of growth, learning, and transformation for me, and I overcame one of my most difficult challenges – the art of patience. To this day, I still struggle with it, but to a far lesser degree. We have had many discussions around the topic of patience in my POC group, and I discovered that I am not alone in my journey to conquer this challenge.

Hearing other stories from group members helps to strengthen my resolve and lets me know that I can do this, one day at a time. It also further emphasizes the importance of a strong support system and communion with others who are in similar situations. My gratitude for life has increased leaps and bounds, and I was awakened to the reality of God's need to humble us all at some points in our life – to place us in difficult positions to achieve growth and bear fruit in His will.

I am still at the same job I accepted almost two years ago and have been growing and thriving. I continue to share my experiences with my POC group, I listen to theirs, and the common equation is caring, love, and encouragement. To me, this is the definition of how "we" are the church. There is never judgment nor questions, just unconditional love and acceptance, for which I am forever grateful.

Jennifer Iverson

The community at Cedar Ridge has been an anchor for me over the last fifteen years, through



the good and the bad. It is true that I met my best friends there, but there is also something about the community at large, gathering together, week after week, year after year, that gives me great comfort. I'm an introvert, so you might not catch me being very chatty! I prefer to hide in the kitchen making coffee, or in the barn making sangria on Farm Night...but just being around our combined goodness-failingsstriving-quirkiness makes me happy. And I know I am better because of it.

As we have started to be together in person again, I love looking around and just SEEING everyone. Sometimes I stand in the back of church taking it all in - watching friends, families, being surprised by new babies and the giant kids that are no longer babies. A few weeks ago, during service, I noticed one of my good friends taking a picture of the screen during Matthew's Cornerstone message. It said:

What is my pattern? What fruit am I bearing? Be faithful over time. Take heart!

And I felt so grateful in that moment, grateful that I had a friend who was asking herself those questions, and wanting to be faithful. Grateful to be a part of a community that values those things.

Ethan Stryker

Community means the most to me during the everyday rhythms of life. It seems like just making



through another week is hard enough, and being a part of a community is the kind of support I have come to rely on. When Rebecca and I started working with the middle school youth group a number of years ago, we had no idea what impact all of the relationships would have on our lives. At first it was more of a chore with fun mixed in. trying to 'deal with' the boundless energy of middle schoolers, but over the years this balance has shifted. It has been really gratifying getting to see so many kids become wonderful young adults, and now our middle school / high school gatherings have become something that I look forward to.

The community of youth leaders is what has really helped me to enjoy the experience even more and I am so thankful for everyone who we have worked with these past years. It has been great to see how we all complement each other's strengths and how we pick up each other's slack all the time, like fitting pieces



together in a puzzle. It really hit me a few weeks ago as we went through Lent that we were getting just as much out of our discussions as the youth were, if not more.

Back when we used to do retreats in the BC era (Before COVID), we all got to know each other on a deeper level, and who else would agree to doing sleepovers in the barn during fall daylight savings time?? The pandemic put up new challenges, but through it all we have been there for each other.

And finally, I can't get away with talking about the youth without giving a shout out to Trish Audi, as she is a tremendous cat herder. And I'm just referring to how she keeps us leaders on task! She has been the glue that has kept this community together and I'm really grateful for all of it.

Lisa Dobbins

I started to attend Cedar Ridge around six years ago after a sudden and devastating loss the year before. I needed a change in direc-



tion, not feeling I knew just where God meant for me to go. A dear friend, Sue Hoye invited me to attend Cedar Ridge. I came, not knowing anyone else and immediately found a warm welcome from dear Colleen Heitkamp.

I found comfort in the extended invitations of others as well. Lead Pastor Matthew Dyer reached out right away, wanting to get to know new parishioners. He invited me to talk and more importantly listened. Matthew sincerely wanted to support me and help me to heal in my deep and complicated grief.

Margy Lee took a moment to say hello and asked me to join in with a creative group that was meeting after services, and we have since become friends. Lisa Dyer and Cyndie Widmer welcomed me into their Discipleship group along with all the other members. Pastor Ruth Campbell joined me for coffee as she continued to reach out in support and friendship.

There is the lovely Melanie Griffith, always encouraging with her warm smile and genuine interest in my wellbeing; friendly Beverly who so graciously doled out donuts and bagels each Sunday morning; Pastor Bryan Peterson, who is so patient and understanding as I pursue where God wants me to serve, and oh, so many others.

As I continue to grow, learn and develop new relationships at Cedar Ridge, I find it a positive community with a purposeful future. The Cedar Ridge community encourages me to embrace and develop my own strengths, helping me to learn to trust in others again. We need each other and we are stronger together. At Cedar Ridge I have found friendship, support, and a safe and encouraging community with others who want to understand my journey.

Sandy Endicott

I thought 2020 was going to be a great year since I had decided to retire in April. How great was that going



to be! Traveling, no stress from work, doing what I want, visiting friends and family more – life was grand.

In January, I learned that my oldest nephew needed to have surgery to remove a tumor on his pituitary gland that was pressing on his optic nerve and causing peripheral vision problems. This was a very risky surgery. February - we found out that one of my sisters had lung cancer that was spreading throughout her body. All of us were totally shocked. March – my brother-in-law was having chest pains and needed a quadruple bypass, and everything closed down due to covid. My sister could not be with him at all during the surgery or his hospital stay. My stress level was at an all-time high and I was feeling like I couldn't take any more bad news. Then in May, my dear friend, Colleen was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Covid was raging which kept all of us isolated and stressed. At times, I felt like everything was so upside down, out of control, and moving too fast in a direction so unanticipated at the beginning of the year. What was happening?? Everything was falling apart.

Both my brother-in-law and nephew recovered wonderfully from their surgeries. Sadly, I lost my sister and Colleen within 10 days of each other in the fall of 2020.

During those dark, difficult days of uncertainty and loss, I was so very thankful to have our Cedar Ridge Community. The messages and weekly services, prayers, support of my small group and leadership team, calls and cards from those reaching out to me, helped see me through and keep me sane. Even though we met through zoom, I looked forward to getting together for Sunday services and Tuesdays for small group. I felt like my relationships were strengthened and I learned to be more vulnerable in sharing my needs, which is not easy for me to do.

Now in 2022, the sun is shining again, and Spring is bursting with new life and brilliant colors. One important thing 2020 taught me was that I can't do this life journey alone. I receive so much encouragement and strength by walking together with others sharing our struggles, challenges, and good times. I love and appreciate our Cedar Ridge Family, and it is so refreshing to be meeting in person and being together with everyone.



Yohance Ford

When it comes to Cedar Ridge and community I have so many stories it's hard to pick just one. I've appreciat-



ed community here at Cedar Ridge in our youth groups, in our small groups, as a youth leader, during retreats, in the service and during many other events. For me, Cedar Ridge and "community" are pretty synonymous.

There is one story that does stick out to me though. It took place when I was a high schooler here at Cedar Ridge and it was the simple act of a ride. One ordinary school year Saturday, Steve Shandy, a Cedar Ridger and youth group leader at the time, gave us rides to and from our homes to a park to play a football game he helped organize for us.

This simple act of a ride left a pretty significant impression on me for a number of reasons. Like the fact that Steve wasn't able to play with us, he normally would, but instead only picked us up and dropped us off. He apparently had a couple of errands to run like many adults do on the weekend. He also had his young kids with him when he gave us the ride because as I'm learning, parenting is nearly a 24x7 job.

I also noticed that Steve didn't live particularly close to me or the other guys he picked up. Generally, I think all these reasons revolve around the fact that Steve sacrificed time and energy simply so a few young members of the Cedar Ridge



community could have a good time hanging out with each other.

To me, especially at the time, this act of being there for us meant a lot. It still means a lot to me and it has played a significant part in how important community is to me. I also think this ride is a great example of how simple acts can strengthen communities.

Heidi Mansen

About a year after I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2010, I woke in the middle of the night with



severe chest pain and was unable to breathe. It was so intense and scary that Mike immediately called 911. We later learned that what I was experiencing was a typical "MS squeeze" where the muscles around your diaphragm and middle back tighten and literally squeeze your breath away.

As the EMT helped me onto the stretcher to take me to the hospital, our twin sons, Doug and Greg, age 11, and daughter, Ella, age 6 appeared in the doorway with fright-

ened faces. Mike looked at me with a look of panic. He quickly told me that he and the kids would get dressed and would follow me to the hospital. When they arrived, he was told that the kids were too young to go beyond the ER lobby. I remember looking at the contacts on my work phone and the first person I saw was Melinda Anderson. Melinda was our friend from our CRCC disciple group who had a son a little younger than our twins.

I don't remember the call, or even whether I made it or Mike, but her phone sent us directly to voicemail at 3:30 in the morning. Shortly after 6 am Melinda heard our panicked message and immediately called us to say she was on her way to the hospital. Melinda fed the kids breakfast and dropped them off at their school reassuring them that everything would be ok. We are so grateful for her and that she could be there to calm and give love to our kids at this rather scary time.

Our family is very blessed by so many Cedar Ridge friends, who are like family and have our backs in times of need. Over the years, numerous CRCC members have brought us food, written cards, visited us in the hospital, and are always keeping us in their prayers. In fact, as I write this today, we are in the hospital with Mike suffering from vertigo and we are grateful for the Ormsby family who took Ella to school. We love everyone at Cedar Ridge and are greatly blessed by this community!

Jennifer Hair

When I reflect on the past nine years at Cedar Ridge, I easily recall many examples of how the people of our



community and the beautiful church property have provided me with comfort, love, and support. During the pandemic years, interactions with my discipleship group and volunteering on the farm have felt especially meaningful.

Shortly after I began attending Cedar Ridge, I plugged into a discipleship group as an opportunity to meet members in my local area. In hindsight, connecting with this smaller group to share meals and engage in honest conversation (without fear of judgment) solidified my desire to belong to our church community. Over the years, the composition of my group has changed—friends moved away or embarked on new paths—but our core group persisted.

"COVID-19" When became а household name, I felt frightened and uncertain about the future. When so many opportunities to connect disappeared, my group continued to meet via Zoom, and even expanded our circle to include some new faces. Regular Zoom chats to check-in and process our fears were instrumental in helping me cope with the world's changes. Later, as weather permitted, my group would gather outside-sometimes hiking around the church property or sitting socially-distanced around a campfire.

I have a favorite memory of a winter gathering when we sat around a fire (bundled up with hats, coats, and blankets), sipped warm drinks, and ate takeout. It makes me smile to think of our commitment to spending time together. Our interactions, wherever they may be, have always felt therapeutic; I've always left our time together feeling better than when it began.

The Cedar Ridge farm has served as a respite for me and my family, especially during the pandemic. During the spring of 2020, my family sowed seeds at home, later planted the seedlings in their designated plot on the farm, and pridefully watched them grow into big, beautiful heads of lettuce.

Last year, we made a commitment to attend Thursday farm nights whenever possible. Farm nights provided a needed break from our busy weekly schedules and an opportunity to pause and truly appreciate the scenic beauty of the property.



Getting our hands dirty sowing seeds, pulling weeds, and collecting fruits of the harvest was both relaxing and gratifying. It also afforded us the chance to work alongside and build connections with a variety of folks, some of whom I only met because of the farm. My children, Dahlia and Christopher, especially enjoyed driving the wheelbarrows (*usually* avoiding people and keeping their loads intact) and weighing the harvested produce.

I feel grateful for how Cedar Ridge has been there for me in the past, and I look forward to both new and familiar ways that Cedar Ridge will be there for me in the future!





Cedar Ridge Community Church 2410 Spencerville Rd Spencerville, MD 20868 www.crcc.org