

Cedar Ridge Annual Plan

August 2022

Introduction

As we look ahead to another year together as a church family, it seems we are finally beginning to emerge from the pandemic that has gripped the planet for nearly three years. There is good reason for hope, and fresh opportunity to live out our vision. But we are all still living with the scars and weariness of a very difficult season. We, like everyone else, have been battered by the pandemic—a tiny virus has wrought havoc on us physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and even spiritually. It has kept some of us distant from one another; it has interrupted our capacity to live out our vision in the usual ways, and in many respects it has challenged our faith. Along with current realities of war, violence, injustice, political polarization, and the devastating effects of climate change, the world can seem like a very dark place. We're all affected differently as individuals, but collectively we're asking: Will justice ever prevail? Can our world be healed? Is reconciliation possible? If God exists, does God care?

Jesus comes saying a resounding and courageous, "Yes"! That's why, as his followers, we have a vision of hope and transformation. But Jesus does not tell us everything is going to be OK; he doesn't deny the pain and suffering, or just say, "Look on the bright side!" Rather, he looks all the trauma squarely in the face and walks right into it all—with love. He calls to us, "Come with me and learn from me," and assures us, "I am with you!" so that together we can build the Kingdom of God—a "Beautiful City" out of the ruins and rubble, a "Beloved Community" out of the hatred and despair.

So, this year we are planning to work hard to draw close together as a community—to take time to listen to one another, to find out where we are struggling and what our most pressing needs are right now. From the oldest to the youngest we want to help reignite our passion to follow Jesus, to nurture meaning, purpose, and authentic hope for living in this beautiful but fractured world. Together we intend to strengthen our commitment to social justice, not just "out there" but within our own church family as we seek to become a more equitable, inclusive, just, and generous community. And as we draw close to God and to one another, our prayer is that faith will rise, hope will be rekindled and, above all, love will win the day.

Goal and Objectives

The goal for this coming year is two-fold: to regroup and strengthen our sense of community and belonging, and to reignite our individual and collective passion to follow Jesus.

The objectives that contribute to this goal are as follows:

1. To engage our community in a discernment process about how to move towards achievement of the goal.
2. To develop increasingly meaningful and relevant Sunday morning services for all age groups.
3. To create more opportunities for personal interconnection, particularly on Sundays.
4. To strengthen knowledge, passion and commitment around justice issues.

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:

- Pastoral staff will hold meetings with groups of Cedar Ridge members and attenders to receive input on needs and priorities in light of the trauma and upheaval of the past 3 years. Groups will include leaders of discipleship groups, people of color, leaders of Cedar Ridge Kids (CRK), youth leaders, and parents.
- Pastoral staff will lead a prayerful discernment process based on this input.

Activities principally contributing to Objective 2:

- For adults:
 - Messages will address real world issues and felt needs (as discerned through activities under Object 1), balancing the need for both nurture and challenge.
 - Services will include more experiential worship and contemplative space.
 - Sunday services will seek to incorporate more interactivity, and will encourage participation. As part of this, space will be made for community storytelling about ways in which we follow Jesus outside of Cedar Ridge.
- For youth:
 - Youth leadership will be increased to allow for middle and high school students to meet separately.
 - Youth will be better integrated into the vision of the church through approaches developed as a result of Objective 1.
 - Youth leaders will create content that is more relevant to Cedar Ridge youth, based on feedback from the consultative process under Objective 1.
- For children:
 - CRK leaders will develop content that starts where children are, as identified through the consultative process in Objective 1. This may mean less tracking with adult series.
 - CRK leaders, pastoral staff and parents will create more time and space for community and friendship amongst children.
 - Activities to support parents will be developed, based on learning from Objective 1.

Activities principally contributing to Objective 3:

- A variety of activities will be held after Sunday services, including the following:
 - Fun social activities such as ice cream sundaes, potlucks, kick ball and other games.
 - Short-term discussion groups that allow people to connect with others, and may provide an on-ramp to longer-term groups.
- Our annual events will also be held, modified where appropriate to facilitate increased social interaction:
 - Outdoor movie nights including games/activities and refreshments.
 - Engagement in local community events, including Burtonsville Day in the fall.
 - A return to our regular Harvest Festival.
 - An Advent in the Barn event.
 - A winter Creative Cup Coffeehouse.
 - Other social events TBD.

Activities principally contributing to Objective 4:

- The racial justice team will host a series of events TBD, based on the consultative process in Objective 1 and incorporating insights from the racial justice consultant we have engaged.

- We will continue (and develop new) activities related to racial justice in public education and criminal justice reform.
- We will remain responsive to the needs of Greencastle Elementary, as well as to Kemp Mill and/or other nearby schools requesting our assistance.
- The farm team will continue to develop our connection to Manna Food Center and Linkages to Learning for the delivery of farm produce.
- The farm team will also explore the possibility of becoming a site for Care Farming (therapeutic farming for people with learning disabilities).
- The Guatemala team will adopt a “challenge group” approach to promote a more in-depth and sustained engagement for justice in Ipala (and locally), which may include a visit to Ipala for some group members.
- The Guatemala team will ensure the use of our justice-oriented assessment tool for Cedar Ridge-funded projects in Guatemala.
- Pastoral staff and justice-related teams will create opportunities to increase the awareness and engagement of our community in the areas listed above.

Upcoming Series

The series descriptions below are tentative and will be influenced by a number of factors, particularly the learning coming from activities under Objective 1.

Fall series

In this series, we will explore why we follow Jesus. Pastoral staff will share from their own experience, as well as interviewing community members. The format will be interactive, with opportunities for Q&A.

Late fall series

We will look at the much quoted—but perhaps often misunderstood—letter by the Apostle Paul to the church in Rome. We will situate it in its historical and cultural context, and look at the main themes of the letter, and their significance for us today.

Advent

We will look at how the traditional themes of Christmas (hope, peace, love and joy) are treated in our north American culture, with references to popular Christmas movies, books, and poems.

Draft Calendar 2022-23

Date	Event	Notes
Mon Aug 29	Back to school for MCPS, HCPSS, PGCPs	
Sun Sep 4	God in Story	Labor Day weekend. Potluck picnic
Tue Sep 6	Prayer Practices Evening	Outdoors (weather permitting)
Sun Sept 11	Why I Follow Jesus 1	Invitation to reflect on own commitment
Sun Sep 18	Why I Follow Jesus 2	Ministry Fair and ice cream bars (outdoors)
Sat Sep 24	Burtonsville Day	
Sun Sep 25	Why I Follow Jesus 3	
Sat Oct 1	Harvest Festival	4-7PM
Sun Oct 2	Why I Follow Jesus 4	
Tue Oct 4	Prayer Practices Evening	Outdoors (weather permitting)

Fri Oct 7	Movie Night—7PM	Hot chocolate, popcorn, s'mores, projection activities; movie starts at 7:30PM
Sun Oct 9	Reading Romans 1	
Sun Oct 16	Reading Romans 2	Journey (outdoors?)
Sun Oct 23	Reading Romans 3	Journey (outdoors?)
Sun Oct 30	Day of Service	Breakfast outdoors
Sun Nov 6	Reading Romans 4	Community Sunday Annual Meeting
Sun Nov 13	Reading Romans 5	
Sun Nov 20	Reading Romans 6/Thanksgiving Service	Thanksgiving on 11/24 Christmas decorating, pizza lunch
Sun Nov 27	Cultural Christmas 1	
Sat Dec 3	Advent at the Barn	Hayrides, mulled wine, outreach-focused afternoon
Sun Dec 4	Cultural Christmas 2	
Tue Dec 6	Prayer Practices Evening	
Sat Dec 10	Advent Quiet Day	
Sun Dec 11	Cultural Christmas 3	
Sun Dec 18	Cultural Christmas 4	
Sat Dec 24	Christmas Eve service	5:30PM
Sun Jan 1	New Year's Service	AAT