

# QUARTERLY *Newsletter*



*CEDAR RIDGE COMMUNITY CHURCH*  
*SPRING 2023*

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# A NOTE

*from Matthew*



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**Over the past few weeks at Cedar Ridge, we have been taking a deep dive into some of the bigger questions about the meaning of life, the universe and everything.** In the series “Exploring the Depths,” we have searched the mysteries of who God is, what God is like, what’s the big deal about Jesus, and what does it mean to have faith. We’ve not solved these mysteries of course, and any answers that have delighted and inspired us, have themselves only raised still more questions. And that’s the beauty of it! The reality we call God is higher, deeper, and wider than we could ever fully comprehend; more timeless and eternal than we could ever measure. And so the journey goes on... ours is a faith in progress.

But in all our exploration, in all our longing and yearning for truth and meaning, we keep coming back to the simple reality that God is love. This “tremendous mystery” is not authoritarian or dominating but vulnerable, tender, yielding, deferential, and selfless. And this vulnerable love is inclusive, flowing out with acceptance, and receptively open to creative possibility. Jesus embodied this mystery, and demonstrated this kind of love for us. As Paul says: “The Son is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15).

If we want a glimpse of God, we look at Jesus. And Paul also reminds us that the way Jesus demonstrates this love is through humble, sacrificial servanthood (Philippians 2:5-11). That’s the nature of God, that’s the nature of love.

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That’s why, as followers of Jesus, service and practicing God’s love in tangible ways is so important to us. We don’t serve to gain favor or to be loved. We serve because we are loved. Through service we enter onto the same flow of love in the universe as Jesus. Ironically, through simple, practical service we sink deeper into the very mystery of God.



We see others and ourselves in a new light, and we resonate more strongly with the heartbeat of God. That's why we place such a high priority on service as a spiritual practice at Cedar Ridge . It's why every few months we make our "worship service" a "Day of Service." It's why we farm, why we partner with local public schools, and with our friends in Guatemala. It's why we work for justice, reach out to the lonely, and care for our planet. It's why we serve one another in all the myriad ways that make us a community where everyone belongs.

In this spring edition of our quarterly newsletter, you can read about many of the ways we do this. Let these stories inspire you to even greater love, and let's never give up serving our way deeper and deeper into the eternal heart of God.



# Becoming A Beloved Community



**Thank you to the more than 50 people who attended one of our Becoming a Beloved Community Gatherings during the last quarter.** We celebrated our history of engagement, our commitment to racial justice as an essential element of our vision, and our willingness to have open and honest conversations. We also discussed ways in which we could continue to grow in this area through more inclusive worship and staffing, making our commitment more visible on our property and in our communications, and the need for each of us to take responsibility for diversifying our relationships and making newcomers feel welcome. The summarized and collated notes from the gatherings are posted to our website at [www.crc.org/racial-justice](http://www.crc.org/racial-justice).

Our process is not over, and we will continue this dialogue in various formats in the months ahead. These conversations are themselves part of the justice and healing process. But this is not just about talk: we are already working to integrate feedback into various areas of our church life.

This includes efforts to increase the diversity of our worship experience, to become a more diverse staff, to make our commitments more

visible, and to increase our relational diversity through events and opportunities for deeper connection.

Our desire to become a beloved community is inspired by our love for Jesus. We are not trying to modify public behavior or force compliance, but rather, as followers of Jesus, we have the opportunity to get to the deep heart of the matter—to repent, to change and to truly embrace love. Let's each of us reflect on how we can engage and help in this vital aspect of our journey together.





## WORSHIP JAM *in the barn*

Nineteen people gathered together to sing and play music, eat chili, and enjoy one another's company. Brian Markley said of the evening, "We had a great time and got to sing quite a range of songs. I am really looking forward to the upcoming one in May."



## LENTEN *quiet day*

Ten of us celebrated the unconditional love of God that gives us the freedom to become our true selves through group contemplative practices, silence, self-examination, and walking the labyrinth.



"It is often hard to see God working in the midst of our struggles and pain. However, even on Holy Saturday, when Jesus has been buried and all seems lost, even when we don't see signs of new life, even before we see the first buds of spring, God is working. God is right here alongside us, in the midst of what we are experiencing." ~ Heather

# BRYAN'S *farewell potluck*

On Palm Sunday, we wished staff pastor Bryan Peterson a fond farewell with a potluck lunch, speeches, a collection of drawings from Cedar Ridge kids, and a photo collage which we all signed.



## GOOD NEWS *for Good Friday*

More than 50 people came out to engage with our interactive stations that focused on the current relevance of events from the Good Friday story. At one station, kids explored "What is truth" with a lie detector machine.





# EASTER SATURDAY

## *on the farm*

We welcomed community volunteers onto the property as we kicked off the 2023 farming season by planting lettuces, kale, collards and strawberries, and sowing seeds including carrots, radishes and onions—all with the help of the friendly Easter Bunny.





We had a wonderful celebration of the invincible power of Love and Life surrounded by the vibrancy of spring grass and buttercups, under a bright blue sky. After the service and an egg hunt, we enjoyed cupcakes and took photos to remember that we too are part of the Easter story.

# EASTER

## *Sunday*



# DAY *of* SERVICE

About 100 of us rolled up our sleeves and got to work—packaging supplies for the DC Diaper Bank, making up bags for people currently unhoused, beautifying local schools, making cards for nursing home residents and blankets for kids experiencing experiencing trauma, and working on the farm and property.





## Rachel



"My kids love coming here and working on the farm. We used to bring them to the property every Saturday during the pandemic to do the prayer walk. We taught them how to ride their bikes in this parking lot. We just had so much fun coming here to get away. I try to come out on a more regular basis to help with the farming, and let the boys wander around."



## Jenn

“

My brother got one a few years ago and he still likes it  
~ James

”



"We wanted to come together to make these blankets for the Linus Project. This project is meant for kids going through trauma, dealing with illness, etc. The project operates all over the state, but they try to distribute them as locally as possible."



## Ginger



"We spruced up the grounds of Greencastle Elementary by picking up trash, planting some flowers, doing some weeding, and also power washing a wall in the teachers' lounge area. There were some parents and children from the Greencastle school community serving along with us this time, which made it more fun. It was great to see the enthusiasm and joy in the children as they planted flowers and made the garden area pretty."



## A Young Cardmaker



"We made fun cards for the people that live in the nursing homes. We think it will make them very happy."

“

We hope to make 75 cards for everyone at Morningside including the staff, but if we make more that's great too.

~ Janet

”



## Mark



"As the property and facilities manager I was really grateful for everyone who came forward and helped with the projects inside and outside the church building. Window cleaning made for a brighter commons, chairs in the auditorium were wiped down, weeds and branches were pulled and trimmed, the playground was made safe for the little ones by removing tree roots and adding mulch, and more!"

## Faith

"Each year we grow about two tons of food. Come out on any Thursday and lend a hand!  
~ Ruth"



"I'm sowing radishes and carrots for families in need. The radishes grow quickly and show us where the seeds are planted. We harvest them first and then, later, the carrots."



# MEET

## *the Chestertons*



Hannah and Paul Chesterton have been attending Cedar Ridge for about five years, and in that time their family has grown. Micah was born four years ago, and Theo was adopted in October 2021. Hannah—a criminology professor at Catholic University—took time out to share a little of their story...

Paul and I have always wanted to adopt. It is something we've talked about since we met. About three years ago we started looking into international adoption and learned about the program in Ukraine. I traveled out there, but the first child we tried to adopt fell through, and we had to immediately select another child. After seeing photos of Theo, I traveled south to meet him at his orphanage in the Kherson region—an area that would later spend many months under Russian occupation.

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immediately see  
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child: very quiet  
and still, but alert  
and curious.

Once the adoption process was nearing completion, I returned to Ukraine—and this time my mum joined me from the UK. The situation at the orphanage was dire. Theo and his roommates received no visitors and spent their whole time lying in a crib. I visited every day for a week, taking Theo outside into the fresh air for the first time in years. I could immediately see that he was a sweet child: very quiet and still, but alert and curious. His expression seemed to say, "Hey, you're not from around here!" and he was fascinated by the puppies outside on the property.

I got to feed Theo and saw how frail and petite he was. His skin was almost translucent and he weighed a mere 20lbs, despite being almost 12 years old. He cried a lot and seemed to be in considerable pain. Years of neglect had made him hypersensitive to touch and easily overwhelmed by human interaction. It was a scary time: could we really take care of him? How would we even manage the long trip home?

But Theo was amazing! Perhaps his survival instincts kicked in—he sat calmly and quietly for the seemingly endless trip (including getting stuck in Turkey). Exhausted, he was sound asleep by the time we emerged from the airport to be greeted by Paul and Micah. We pushed the two strollers together so Micah could peer at his new brother. It was a sweet moment.

Since that time, Theo has changed enormously. He now loves to snuggle with us, touch our faces and hold hands. A hearing aid has allowed him to experience music—and he dances along to his favorite tunes. Thanks to regular physiotherapy he is able to stand and even take a few steps with help. He attends school and enjoys swimming.

One of the ongoing challenges is chronic GI issues and the resulting abdominal pain Theo experiences. He now has a feeding tube, which is helpful, and he is seeing a specialist. But he is often uncomfortable or in pain, and he vocalizes that at unpredictable times—including at church!

Micah is a wonderful brother to Theo, playing with him and giving him plenty of cuddles! It is heartwarming to see his love and acceptance.

If you don't know us yet, we are often in the back corner of the auditorium on a Sunday. Please stop by and say hi to our little family!





# CHANGING

## the world, one meal at a time



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In 1965 a NASA astronaut smuggled a corned beef sandwich onto the Gemini III mission. Two hours into the flight, he took the contraband snack out of his pocket and shared it with the mission commander before they both hastily tried to grab hold of all the floating rye breadcrumbs that threatened to drift behind an instrument panel... the things we do for food!

Most—but certainly not all—of us are food secure: we don't worry about not having enough to eat or to feed our family with. We can afford to buy fresh food at the grocery store. But 34 million Americans face hunger every day. Closer to home: one in every four school children here in Montgomery County are eligible for free or reduced-cost meals.

In our new series "A Wiser Way to Live" we will reflect on James' challenge to live out the way of love in all the practicalities of life. That includes food. We read:

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:15-17)



Food justice is an area we have targeted for many years at Cedar Ridge, recognizing God's gift of food has been denied to so many—and disproportionately to people of color, children, LGBTQ+, and senior members of our society.

We want a living, active faith—one that, for the 15th consecutive year, plants organic vegetables and fruit on our farm. One that distributes 2 tons of healthy food annually to families in need. One that welcomes scores of community volunteers onto our property each season to serve with us and learn about making the world a better place. A faith that consistently buys monthly food staples for 20 families in need at nearby Greencastle Elementary School.

This faith is not dramatic or showy. It doesn't draw huge crowds or win accolades. It is quiet, consistent, faithful—mundane, even. It is showing up to farm nights on a Thursday evening after a long day at work. It is stopping by at other times, even though your own garden needs attention. It is buying extra groceries at the store, despite the rising prices. It is small, but meaningful. It can change the world.



# FACILITIES

## update



**GINGER DONOHUE**



I enjoy home improvement shows and especially love to see the transformation of old homes once some elbow grease and imagination is applied. Through the years, my husband and I completed numerous projects that have transformed a few ugly, unkempt properties into functional beauties. The knowledge and skills gained over the years of projects is proving very helpful in my “facilities person” role on the Board of Trustees. With 63 acres of land, 3 aging buildings, 1 silo and a number of sheds to maintain, there is always something that needs attention. Consider that our newest structure, the main building, is now over 25 years old and building services such as HVAC are requiring replacement.

Currently, the Barn is getting some attention as we prepare the first floor for the use of our tenant, The Journey School. The school is expanding and will use rooms in both the Barn and main building for the 2023/24 school year. Before the next school year begins, we have a broken window to replace, a pesky issue with wasps we are trying to resolve (don’t forget this was built as a dairy barn), storage to sort through and clear out, and flooring to refresh.



The big project right now is the interior renovation of the Spencer-Carr Farmhouse. This is our chance to shine up the house and make it into usable space for our community.



As many of you know, our church took on the obligation to restore and maintain this historically significant building when we purchased our property almost 30 years ago.

We are currently working through the permitting phase, and the past few weeks have been focused on the water and septic design plans so we can receive the necessary approvals from Montgomery County. The renovation project will include restoring the windows, installing electric service, HVAC, plumbing and septic systems, as well as basic interior finishes. Our general contractor is scheduled to begin the project in earnest in about 5 months, so keep a look out for changes in the near future.

During my time serving in this capacity, I have been amazed at how much goes into keeping everything in working order, and the number of routine inspections required to stay in compliance with local authorities. All this is accomplished with volunteers and just one full-time staff member devoted to our facilities—thank you, Mark Hartley! (He is probably on the tractor mowing right now.)

It is a big job to keep up with everything, and your help is welcome! Working together we will continue to be good stewards of the property and buildings which are in our care.



# Metaphors For God Word Search

a	o	c	r	o	w	n	y	k	f
n	g	l	t	o	p	p	y	f	c
j	m	i	s	s	c	f	c	y	v
f	m	o	h	h	w	x	l	x	b
i	a	n	e	i	j	a	o	j	r
r	p	j	e	e	d	b	a	s	e
e	l	m	p	l	u	p	k	y	a
q	j	v	t	d	r	g	c	v	d
k	m	z	l	q	r	m	w	e	z
s	i	w	v	j	e	w	e	l	u





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