

MADE BY THE **GRATEFUL** CRCC COMMUNITY



THE CEDAR RIDGE
QUARTERLY
FALL 2023

***LOOKING BACK
ON THE LAST
QUARTER***

Check out some pics
from our recent
community gatherings
and events.

***PUTTING FAITH
TO WORK ON
THE FARM***

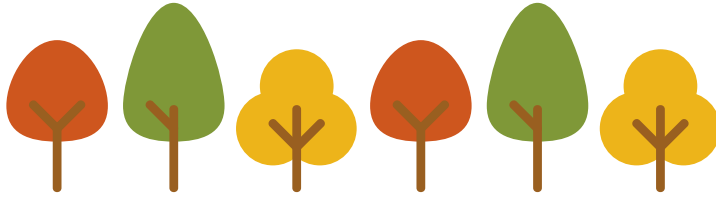
Lessons learned from
one person's year on
the farm.

***MAKING SENSE
OF THE DOLLARS
& CENTS***

A detailed look at our
finances and how your
generosity is making a
difference!

...AND SO MUCH MORE INSIDE THIS ISSUE!





Annual Plan

September 2023 – August 2024

As a community of hope and transformation, our goal for this year is to share our vision and welcome more people into our community.

We will aim to achieve this goal by (i) increasing our reach into the community so people are more aware of who we are; (ii) making Sunday gatherings more accessible to new people; and (iii) fostering greater diversity and inclusion within our church community.

You can read more about our plan for the year at crcc.org/our-plans.

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A NOTE FROM MATTHEW



MATTHEW DYER

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Fall is so often a spectacular time of year, and this season has been no exception. Crisp cool mornings, bright sunshine and brilliant blue skies have been the backdrop to a dazzling display of turning leaves that never disappoint. Nature seems to be throwing herself one final celebration of another year well spent and sharing it with the world before the peace and rest of winter. Even now there's remaining evidence of the loving toil of the growing season in the berries and fruits on the trees and shrubs on our property. Our resident and migrant birds are hurriedly gobbling them up – again, with an eye on the season to come.

This is a time of year when we too look back and ahead as a community. In this fall edition of our newsletter, we reflect on our own “growing season.” Some of the fruit is very tangible, like the amazing harvest from our farm, our partnerships with local schools, and our friends in Guatemala. Some of it is more hidden, like the hours of time given by volunteers to create our gathered experience on Sundays, nurture our children and youth, maintain our property, and cover all manner of tasks that make our community what it is. Some of it is very personal, like the friendships we share, the love, care and support we give each other during times of crisis and, just as practically, the financial generosity we all demonstrate as we collectively

give to the vision of our church. So, read on to hear stories from our community, an overview of the past year's activities and financial details, and a look ahead to what is to come. As you read, I'm sure like me, you'll be even more grateful and humbled to be a part of a community like ours.

And as we too prepare for shorter days and longer nights, and look ahead to the season of Advent, there's still other fruit to celebrate. Advent anticipates the celebration of incarnation – “God with us,” embodied in the birth of Jesus. And Cedar Ridge, for most of the time each week, is a community scattered throughout this region working as agents of love, peace, and hope wherever we are. We are “God with us” to our families, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our schools – and this is where most of our vision to follow Jesus is actually worked out. It's in the daily grind that incarnation becomes a reality. As we all do the hard work of intentionally opening ourselves to God's embracing presence, as we yield to the transformation we need in our own lives, and as we grow to become more like Jesus, incarnation happens. And as we live this way it makes the world a better place in all kinds of beautiful ways. So, the biggest impact our community makes is not just in our church activities but in the reality of our daily lives. We'll probably never be able to measure that but it's real, nonetheless. And that's worth celebrating!



MY YEAR ON THE FARM

Brian Markley

Now that the work on the farm has wrapped up for another season, it seems an appropriate time to stop and reflect on the past season. What first comes to my mind is how we have once again been blessed with an abundance of produce. We raised over a ton and a half of fruit and vegetables to share. I love the wonder of watching the seeds, seedlings, dirt, water, and sunlight turn into so much food. Seeing this miracle year after year really deepens my faith.

This has been a different sort of year for me. About the time our farm work was getting started, I was diagnosed with lung cancer. However, except for a few weeks in the middle of the summer, I was able to continue to come out on Thursday evenings through my first phase of treatment. I am so grateful for being able to be a part of the Farm Team this year.



The farm is special to me for a few reasons. First for me, it is a way to make my faith tangible. Using our efforts to provide good food for others is such good work for followers of Jesus to be engaged in.



There is also the joy of working with others on the farm. I am always encouraged to see the Farm Team folks on Thursday nights. They are special to me. This year we had more community service volunteers. It was nice to meet them and have a chance to show them some of what Cedar Ridge is about.

Lastly, the farm seems to me to be a good lesson in being faithful in little things. It requires ongoing, persistent effort to raise our produce. Our special events are very important as our team is small (hint). The turnout for Farm/Sangria nights is much appreciated. It is wonderful when we get so much done and have so much fun doing it. Still Thursday and Sunday, week after week, is necessary for this good work to succeed.

The farm is resting now for the winter. Next spring, we'll be back at it. Come on out and join in.

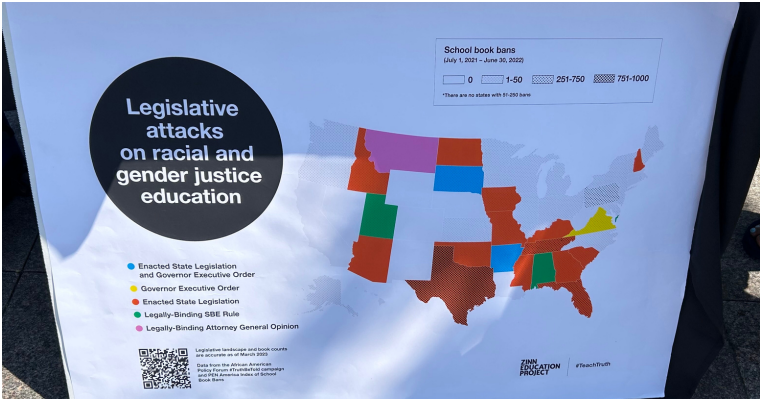


EVENTS ROUND UP



Teach Truth Day of Action

On June 10, a group from Cedar Ridge joined educators, students, and parents in Washington D.C. to speak out against anti-history education bills.



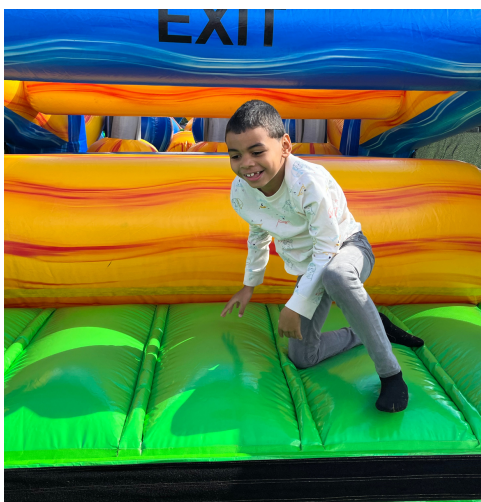
Summer Sundays & Sangria Nights

We celebrated community together after the Sunday service with food and fun, including an ice cream social, summer book swap, pizza and paddling pools, a cookout, Italian ices, and a potluck lunch. And we enjoyed monthly sangria nights on the farm—harvesting crops for hungry neighbors, and then sipping drinks, snacking, and listening to live music as the sun set.



Harvest Festival

Approximately 600 people celebrated another bountiful farm harvest on Sunday October 22. It was a beautiful fall day to carve and paint pumpkins, bounce, play games, get tattooed, ride a hay wagon, eat, drink, watch a magic show, and listen to music.





Day of Service

On the last Sunday in October, we served the neighborhood through projects to spruce up Greencastle Elementary, collect trash in nearby parks, prepare meals for the hungry, design Thanksgiving cards for assisted living residents, make toys for the county animal shelter, and craft gift items for cancer patients. In addition, we readied the farm for winter, and carried out seasonal maintenance tasks on our property.





A Visitor from Guatemala

We are so grateful for our ongoing friendship and partnership with the people of Ipala. We welcomed Rosa Alidia as she visited us this past summer. Rosa Alidia has been an important part of our connection in Ipala since the very beginning in 2010. And this year we have provided more families with solar panels to bring much needed clean energy to their homes.



MY TIME AS TREASURER



Alison Spock

My tenure on Cedar Ridge's Board of Trustees is quickly coming to an end. Under our bylaws, the maximum number of years a church member can serve on the Board is six years, and the end of my sixth year is rapidly approaching. It has been a great gig! I have truly enjoyed being on the Board for the past six years and Treasurer for the past five.

Prior to serving on the Board, I was Treasurer of my Homeowners Association. In many ways, that experience helped prepare me for my role at Cedar Ridge. However, there were some key differences. First, the HOA budget was far smaller than Cedar Ridge's budget. The annual budget of my HOA was roughly \$12,000 compared to \$850,000 for Cedar Ridge. Hence our church Board makes far more numerous and consequential financial decisions.

Second, my HOA Board was run entirely by volunteers, so I was solely responsible for all the financial duties for 11 years. In contrast, Cedar Ridge staff members handle the daily financial responsibilities of our church, which makes the Treasurer role at Cedar Ridge much more collegial and enjoyable.

The third big difference is that homeowners are required to pay their HOA dues whereas contributions to Cedar Ridge are voluntary. I don't miss chasing down my neighbors for their annual payments! On the other hand, mandatory payments meant that my HOA Board wasn't reliant on the goodwill of residents. At Cedar Ridge, we are dependent on the generosity of our community members to pay the bills and fund Cedar Ridge's vision. Fortunately, our community is incredibly generous! Multiple times over the past six years, the Board has set an ambitious giving goal and our

community members have stretched themselves to reach it. I cannot express the depth of my gratitude for Cedar Ridge givers.

I am also truly grateful for my fellow Board members. It has been an honor to serve alongside such fantastic people over the past six years. I have enjoyed our intense discussions on issues ranging from the mundane to the massive. In 2018 when I was considering taking on the role of Treasurer, I asked Steve Mather, the previous Treasurer, what would happen if staff were not available to perform their financial duties. Steve comfortably replied that the Board would pull together as a team to find a solution; I would not be left hanging. And that is what the Board feels like—a team. We may not have a mascot or wear spandex, but we are all passionately committed to Cedar Ridge’s vision. Special shout out to Melinda Anderson and Jen Hair, two gifted ladies who have chaired the Board with grace and strength.

I also want to express my deepest appreciation to Matthew. We all know how wise and loving he is. As a Board member, I have also glimpsed firsthand how dedicated Matthew is to Cedar Ridge and the extent to which he humbly makes sacrifices for our church community. Matthew is truly a servant leader, and we are incredibly fortunate to have him as our Lead Pastor.

Finally, I must thank Ruth. Her energy, intellect, and determination are inspiring! She can tackle any challenge and succeed. She has mastered all the financial systems and reports needed to manage a \$850,000 budget, and she makes it look easy. Working with Ruth was probably my favorite thing about being Treasurer.

Natalie Buffington will be taking over as Treasurer at the end of my term. Natalie is a retired member of the Air Force, a faithful volunteer on the church property, and a math enthusiast. Cedar Ridge will be in good hands with Natalie. And I hope she will enjoy the Treasurer gig every bit as much as I have!

MEET OUR NEW PASTOR



Wesley Bolden

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I was born and raised in metro Atlanta. My wife, Kim, is from Trinidad and Tobago, which is where she spent the first 19 years of her life. We met at a small Christian College in Atlanta and married shortly after graduation. We have moved several times in our 15 years of marriage. First, we moved from Atlanta to a small town in middle Georgia. From there we moved to New Jersey, then back to Atlanta, to Kentucky, and then two years ago, we moved to Montgomery County, Maryland. Each of these moves has been motivated by our commitment to the church. In each location, we have either served an established church, started a new one, or pursued an academic degree in preparation for ministry.

For most of my adult life, I have been a pastor. I started as an associate pastor, served as a lead pastor, and planted a new church ten years ago in Atlanta. However, I have been out of pastoral ministry for the past four years. During this time, I've worked as a coach and consultant for new church startups around the country and I've helped fund ministry in the Northeast with a Christian financial organization. That's what brought us to Maryland.

Shortly after moving to Montgomery County, MD, we felt like we had found a location to call “home.” We love the diversity that exists here. Personally, it helps me develop a global perspective and avoid getting siloed in an echo chamber of consensus. Daily, I’m reminded just how big our world is and how little I know! In this setting, I can't help but imagine what the church could accomplish if it reflected the diversity in the community around it.

Currently, I am a student at Boston University in the Doctor of Ministry Program (DMin), a professional degree program designed to fit in the life of those actively serving in ministry. In the DMin program, I've been privileged to engage the work of Howard Thurman, a pastor, theologian, mystic, and spiritual leader. Thurman has deep roots in the DMV as he served as Dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University (1932-1944). He also has a well-established legacy in Boston where he served as the first African-American Dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University (1953-1965). Between these two Dean of Chapel appointments, Thurman co-founded the first interracial church in the United States, aptly named Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (Fellowship Church). *The Howard Thurman Papers Project* acknowledges the significance of Fellowship Church: "Through the establishment of Fellowship Church, Thurman brought together people of different faiths, races, and classes in common worship and fellowship. This church has been designated as a national historic landmark for its creative ecclesiology and pioneering social vision." Thurman's work and vision deeply influences my thinking about the role of the church in society.

In my free time, I enjoy collecting and caring for houseplants. This is a budding hobby of mine. I appreciate the air-purifying and mood enhancing benefits of in-home greenery. Another interest is horology. I collect automatic and manual watches and love learning about the craftsmanship that makes them tick. In a world of digital technology and smartwatches, these engineering masterpieces help me to slow down and be centered in the present moment. Finally, I love brewing and drinking specialty coffees. I grind and brew a fresh cup of pour-over coffee every day. This deliberate, time-consuming process reminds me that something beautiful and delicious is made when we live with intentionality and purpose.

I am happy to be at Cedar Ridge and I look forward to being a part of what God is doing through this community!

SUPPORTING GREENCASTLE



RUTH CAMPBELL
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On Indigenous People's Day we hosted about 70 kids, family members, and staff from the Linkages to Learning Program at Greencastle and Montgomery Knolls elementary schools on our beautiful and spacious property. Despite the cold and cloudy start to the day, and the inevitable problems of late—and then lost—public school buses, our visitors arrived eager to engage in all our property has to offer.

The clouds soon cleared and the sun shone as we played games, did face painting, blew bubbles, and enjoyed the wide open space. After a pizza lunch, we walked the labyrinth and hiked the property, following animal tracks, collecting pretty leaves, practicing honeybee wiggle dances, and learning about solar along the way. After a visit to the playground, and ice cream for the hot and tired, we made s'mores around the fire pits and burned off the rest of the kids' energy before everyone piled back onto the bus and into cars, with the last of the farm harvest in tow.



This wonderful day of Cedar Ridge hospitality was made possible by the ongoing generosity of our community towards vulnerable families in our area. Over the last school year, we provided more than \$5,000-worth of food items, and now we are delivering monthly donations of toiletries and laundry detergent. We are also collecting winter coats, boots, hats and gloves so children can arrive at school dry and warm, no matter the weather. Along with other organizations, we assist families financially in times of crisis, and advocate for systemic justice and equitable school funding. Thank you for all the ways in which you give to this work, which helps give kids a chance to become all that God created them to be.



INVESTING in OUR vision



Cedar Ridge is an extraordinarily generous community. Families and individuals at Cedar Ridge donated 78% of the income we brought in last 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 \$776,365. This was in addition to capital expenses of \$74,729. Our budget goal for September 2023–August 2024 is to finance the annual plan priorities detailed below through community donations of \$721,115, and rental income and grants amounting to \$192,662, for a total operating budget of \$913,777.

Worship Services

FY24 Budget \$104,478

In the storm of life, we often lose our bearings, but coming together as a diverse community each week helps us recalibrate and reorientate as we experience more of God through one another. In the coming year, we will assess and address potential obstacles to newcomers feeling welcome and integrated, and will develop our online presence to nurture deeper community for people who are unable to attend in person. We will continue to work to increase the diversity of our worship experience through expansion of the worship team, and integration of new song sources.

* The final expenses total will be available at the annual meeting, following the external review of the FY23 accounts.

*The figures quoted include salaries of staff members who devote time to the respective ministry areas.

Spending in FY23 \$84,562

Over the last year, we explored why we follow Jesus, and struggled with hard questions; studied the books of Romans, 1 John, and James; celebrated Christmas culture, engaged in winter kindness, reflected on Jesus' heart cries from the cross, and learned from stories contained in modern movies and ancient Scriptures. We held "Worship Jam" sessions in the Barn for people interested in participating in the music team. And we increased all-age interaction through hands-on activities to launch each new series and Sunday worship that was inclusive of children.

Children and Youth

FY24 Budget \$53,846

Young people matter and are a priority for us. Jesus was always championing the cause of those who were viewed as small, those who had no voice and could easily be overlooked. Many of his closest followers were almost certainly very young. In an age where young people increasingly find church irrelevant, we seek to listen, support and authentically encourage our children and youth. This year we will focus on strengthening community and friendship for parents and children, as well as better integrating youth into the vision of our church.

Spending in FY23 \$49,414

Last year we held listening forums for parents, caregivers and children and youth leaders, which provided concrete suggestions for action. We developed a new curriculum for children, incorporating social justice, life issues, and Cedar Ridge distinctives. We reintroduced instruments for kids to play in the main service, and activity bags for younger attenders. We reopened the nursery and created a more welcoming space for elementary kids. Our youth team provided opportunities for community building through sleepovers in the barn, laser tag nights, game nights, and climbing at Adventure Park. On Sundays, they tracked with the same content as the main service in a safe and welcoming environment for youth to experience God's love on their journeys of faith.

Prayer and Healing

FY24 Budget \$125,078

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 year, we will hold prayer practice evenings, quiet days and other contemplative events, and we will continue to promote prayer as an integral part of discipleship for people of all ages.

Spending in FY23 \$85,144

We experienced God's presence together through monthly outdoor prayer practice evenings, quiet days, and contemplative Lenten services. In addition, prayer practices were integrated into Sunday services and promoted through our small groups. 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. The remaining \$4,100 in funds designated for COVID assistance was provided to community members experiencing particular financial hardship.



Small Groups

FY24 Budget \$10,578

Small groups provide a place to experience growth, community and servanthood. It's in the small spaces that we feel vulnerable enough to be fully known and discover the delight of being fully loved. During the coming year, we will establish new, short-term discussion groups to allow people to connect with others. Existing groups will continue to focus on encouraging and supporting members, as well as celebrating life together.

Spending in FY23 \$9,810

Discipleship groups continued to meet throughout the year, providing encouragement, prayer, and practical support to Cedar Ridge members and attenders. The book study group returned to meeting in person on a weekly basis.

Social Justice

FY24 Budget \$21,464

We want to do all we can to learn, act, speak and advocate for racial justice in our relationships, the systems in society in which we participate, and in our own church. We will continue to focus on activities related to racial and economic justice in public education, food access, and criminal justice reform, and will hold Churchwide Days of Service with a focus on the underlying justice issues that perpetuate need. We will continue community dialogue in various formats as part of the justice and healing process. And we will continue to seek out ways to support Greencastle Elementary, as well as other nearby schools requesting our assistance.



Spending in FY23 \$20,400

We held 5 listening sessions for over 50 people to identify ways we could become a more “Beloved Community,” and began implementing recommendations. In addition, we delivered \$9,000 worth of food and winter clothing to Greencastle families in need; \$2,600 in gift cards to the staff of Greencastle Elementary; weekly farm food deliveries in partnership with Manna Food Center, Linkages to Learning, and Community Food Rescue; a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day advocacy event focused on policing in public schools, and representation at the “Teach the Truth” rally; and numerous projects during our Churchwide Days of Service.

Farm

FY24 Budget \$27,925

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 and Linkages to Learning to address food justice issues in our locality. And we will host school groups, youth groups, and other teams and individuals on our property to join us in this work.

Spending in FY23 \$24,772

During the 2023 farming season, we grew, harvested and delivered 3,500 lbs of fresh produce to hungry neighbors. In addition, we hosted multiple school groups and youth groups, who learned about food security issues in Montgomery County before hiking the property on an environment-themed nature walk. We also welcomed visitors through a spring planting day (hosted by the Easter Bunny), and Earth Day Celebration, launched a Junior Farmer Program, and enjoyed community together through summer farm sangria nights.

Guatemala

FY24 Budget \$40,951

We will continue to focus on education through scholarships and support to schools, and the installation of solar panels in areas that don't have electricity so children can study more easily. We will continue to strengthen our friendship with a people who are rooted in a closer connection to the earth, a deeper dependency on one another, and a very vulnerable relationship to God, and to struggle with them for a more just society, both here and there.

Spending in FY23 \$48,951

This past year, we provided 57 scholarships to secondary school youth, contributed to a health fund that assists with medical needs, funded the installation of sinks to promote handwashing at a preschool, and completed the installation of solar panels to power 10 low-income homes. In July, we were delighted to have Rosa Alidia, a member of ACIDHER—our partner organization in Ipala—visit us at Cedar Ridge.

Local outreach

FY24 Budget \$58,005

We will continue to use seasonal mailers and roadside banners to inform local residents of events and activities, in addition to investigating the effectiveness of other forms of communication such as print, radio and online advertising. We will seek to identify local events that provide us with exposure to people who are looking for a community like ours. And we will again host our popular annual events—the Harvest Festival, and Christmas at the Barn—as well as other events to welcome people onto our property.



Spending in FY23 \$65,485

Last October, approximately 650 people came out to celebrate our farm harvest and to enjoy the beautiful fall weather that graced our rain-delayed Harvest Festival. We also hosted an outdoor movie night with s'mores, popcorn and hot chocolate, Christmas at the Barn with Santa and his elves, and an all-ages Creative Cup Coffee House. We participated in the annual Burtonsville Day festivities with our traditional hay wagon and booth.

Facilities

FY24 Budget \$448,661

Our 63 acres of property is one of the few areas in our locality that is preserved for nature and restricted from new builds. We have woods, pollinator meadows, a solar farm, a vegetable garden, and fields that provide space for recreation. We share our space with our local community as they walk their dogs, journey on our meditation trail and labyrinth, and use our facilities for events. This year we will complete our restoration of the historic farmhouse as a multipurpose meeting space. We will also improve our management of non-native invasive plants, and highlight native flora and fauna along our trails to make the beauty and enjoyment of our property more accessible to all.

Spending in FY23 \$387,828

During the year, we used our property for potlucks, cook-outs, and a wide variety of community social events in addition to our Easter service, Quiet Days, and monthly prayer practice evenings. We also continued to rent out our facilities to schools, churches, and community groups, as well as our solar energy partner, generating \$164,000 in income. During the year, we began work on the historic farmhouse, renovated the kitchen and bathrooms in the main building, made repairs following burst pipes, and upgraded our aging HVAC system.

SAVE THE DATE



Enjoy a family-friendly holiday celebration in and around our Barn. We'll have a Santa's grotto, fire pits and s'mores making, festive wagon rides, music, fair-trade gifts, Santa's workshop, and desserts, mulled wine and spiced cider under the tent. Invite friends and family for a wonderful, community-centered start to the holiday season.



Cedar Ridge Community Church
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