

Penfield Presbyterian Church
1881 Jackson Rd.
Penfield NY 14526



2018 Congregational Grant Report

Name of Project:

"Mindfulness as Peacemaking"

In our advertising we used the title "Let It Begin With Me: Extending the Peace Within"

"Finally, brothers and sisters, fill your minds with beauty and truth. Meditate on whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is good, whatever is virtuous and praiseworthy. Keep to the script: whatever you learned and received and heard and saw in me—do it—and the God of peace will walk with you." Philippians 4:8-9 The Voice

Contact person(s) for project

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Program Dates:

10/8; 10/22; 11/5 & 11/19

Participants:

In total 21 people participated in at least one (1) of the sessions. 13 people participated in three (3) sessions and nine (9) people participated in all four (4) of the sessions. The participants also included nine (9) people who were not members or attendees of PPC; four (4) people returned from the spring series and five (5) of the new attendees were not participants in the spring. We are gratified to again have had such success with outreach outside the walls of the church.

HCT Funds Received: \$900

Separate session approved funds and donations of \$105 were also received.

Grant Funds Utilized to date: \$700

We have not yet used all of the funds due to unforeseen circumstances related to the interim ministry chapter our church is in the midst of. At the time of the grant request it was not known that there would be so many small group activities throughout the fall as part of the study process for creating our identity statement and mission narrative. It was determined that implementation of the on-line opportunity was not prudent in the fall since additional time commitments might create conflict and potentially interfere with the interim ministry activities.

It is our intention to utilize the remaining grant funds as intended in early 2019. We will need to be thoughtful about planning in order to attract participants and avoid interfering with the ongoing interim process.

Project Implementation:

- I. Four (4) Instructional and experiential workshops were provided

- II. A meal preceded each of the four (4) workshops. Fellowship and community-building is a wonderful element of sharing a meal. The mealtime was especially important for the people who were not affiliated with PPC as they had an opportunity to informally get to know others and to feel equally connected to the group. The meal was once again a critical element in the peacemaking effort of the workshops.
- III. The instructor introduced concepts and content in a lecture style format with power point slides and then provided “hands-on” experiences at each session. Key features of mindfulness are *practice* and *integrating the principles in daily life* – so each week we were offered the opportunity to actively participate in a variety of practices along with our learning. We were encouraged to do “homework” during the weeks in between and to do further exploration of the topics introduced. Summary sheets were provided following each session and related readings were distributed.
- IV. Course content
 - a. Peace-filled living begins with individuals as we expand our capacity for empathy and compassion and increase our emotional skills. Contemplative practices (mindfulness tools) can be transformative and foundational for relationship-building – *if they are practiced*. The workshops introduced new content and promoted *practice* (developing new habits/skills and strengthening new neural pathways).
 - b. Key components of the content included: compassion, self-awareness, self-management, empathy, mindful listening, happiness, and integrating mindfulness into daily life.
 - c. Review of some of the neuroscience was included as “mindfulness” is grounded in science as a healthy addition to our life, much like physical exercise.
 - d. Scriptural referents, supplementary information, and readings related to mindful Christianity and contemplative prayer practices was also provided.
- V. Outreach: In addition to the church members print and e-mail invitations for participation were shared with the Early Learning Center staff and families and through the PGV newsletter and e-mails. We were pleased to include nine (9) participants from the community. Five (5) were new this session and four (4) returned from the spring sessions.
- VI. **Impact on the congregation:** 1) The workshops seemed especially valuable for four church committee members who were dealing with an ongoing program crisis and personnel challenge; 2) Church members and community participants had the opportunity to deepen their relationships with each other through mindful listening practices; 3) The participants have acquired some new practices and skills to “make peace” within themselves, listen for God, and to use in their interactions with their families, friends, and co-workers. The ‘peace within’ ripples outward; 4) Since this was such a successful event there may be more willingness and motivation to pursue additional faith development opportunities for the congregation.
- VII. **Feedback from some participants:**
 - As you know I’ve had a real-life emergency where my mindful meditation prayer literally saved me. Journaling has also been enormously helpful, both in reflection and celebration. Thank you so much to all. This has been a life changer!
 - I especially appreciated the content related to self-compassion as I firmly believe we can’t have compassion toward others without it.

- I think the presenter was uniquely qualified and knowledgeable on the topic. John was genuinely passionate about our course material and it showed in the care he gave to presenting. He also did a superb offering comments with Q & A's.
- I wish more people would participate and learn these strategies and practices. As Christians we do indeed need to "make a joyful noise" and serve as peacemakers at home and in our community.
- The dinners served prior to each workshop afforded a special time of fellowship and personal interaction on the mindfulness topic and brought some new people to our church who may likely would not come otherwise.
- Integration with our Christian faith was given adequate attention which provided fodder for ongoing practice.
- I've extended my learning to the children I work with as I try to teach them to be peacemakers in the classroom.

VIII. **Action steps for the future:**

- To develop the on-line learning option as originally planned. We will use the remaining funds to further the peacemaking initiative in the church and community.
- To facilitate some related follow-up activities with those who are interested and to encourage ongoing practice of what we learned. Activities such as a book club or meditation group may be explored.

IX. **Comments:** We are deeply grateful to PGV for investing in this act of peacemaking and pursuit of compassion toward self and others.