

Pleasantville Presbyterian Church
Worshipping Community Proposal
January 2019

- 1) Describe the discernment process: We began with seeing a need to reach out to people who had been part of our congregation, but had moved away, and struggled to find a church community in their new location. The original conversation was focused around increasingly extending rings of circles – one for people who were currently available for worship on Sunday morning, a larger circle for those who were connected to us, but no longer available in Pleasantville at 10 AM on Sunday mornings, and a third circle for people who are not currently aware of our ministry. We created a program called digital connections and began sending out emails that allowed for a richer connection and experience than a newsletter. We imagined them as a second worship opportunity that came out on Sunday afternoons. Included in the email have been inspirational and biblical quotes, and YouTube versions of the sermon from Sunday's worship service. The sermon included images that go with the audio recording, enhancing the listeners experience with images chosen to bring meaning to the words. Eventually we added links to videos of the music presented that Sunday, finding that people felt much more connected to worship when music was part of what we were offering.

When the program began, we very quickly saw that people were participating from a variety of places, even from different countries. The audience went beyond people who used to be part of our community. We began to hear a need for people who had been pushed out of their church, or whose church had left the denomination, to find a worshipping community where they felt welcome. These disenfranchised people were looking for a way to connect, and often couldn't find one in their local area. We also included these worship opportunities on our Facebook page – with positive results.

Our next discernment was whether the people who were connecting with us digitally would be interested in participating in adult education online. We

began email and Facebook groups for an Adult Education curriculum written by our Pastor, called Creative Writing as a Spiritual Practice, and had thirty participants from around the country, varying in age from 18 to 85. Some of these people already connected with us online, others came first through this ministry.

We can now identify 87 people who are not currently active members who regularly participate with our digital connection. About two thirds of those people have an identifiable connection to our congregation, and one third have made connection through someone who has referred them to this ministry. Our current discernment centers around whether we can find ways to connect to a larger group of people, who are struggling to find a worshipping community where they live, and whether this is a separate ministry from Pleasantville Presbyterian Church. Are we beginning a new worshipping community, or is this an extension of what we do in person in Pleasantville, New York? We are asking for this grant to help us plant the seeds that will enable us to answer these questions. We have identified at least four church leaders and three young adult interns with a passion for this form of outreach, and they will serve as a discernment team along with our Pastor going forward.

- 2) New – We seek to reach out to people who have felt disenfranchised, and even de-churched from their prior congregations. We see this ministry as offering healing and welcoming opportunities; we find that already we have been able to reach out to people who have experienced a scarcity of opportunities to worship with an inclusive ministry in their area. We hope to offer more chances to build community in the future, through making connections between participants.

Worshipping – We are passionate about sowing seeds of faith, by offering Scripture, sermons, worship music and visual representations of Christian community. We offer opportunities for prayer and reflection in each digital communication as well. The worship experience includes chances to grow in faith through taking the Word into the world. As we continue to grow the variety of what we offer to God’s people beyond the walls of this place -

we hope to offer more interactive experiences, so that people can connect more with one another, and plug into opportunities to live out Christ's call in their own communities. We imagine having gatherings/regional retreats in which participants get to know one another and have the chance to share in the sacraments together.

Community – we envision increased educational opportunities, interactive devotionals, possibilities of retreats to give people an opportunity to meet face-to-face, children's ministries that enhance the online experience, and the possibility of a program that will help people discover mission and advocacy opportunities in their area. At the moment, digital connections is included in the leadership model and budget of Pleasantville Presbyterian Church, which gives it very little overhead. Some people who have been active through the digital ministry have started responding to stewardship opportunities – not enough to pay for the additional costs of the program, but enough to give us a chance to see that there is potential that people are willing and wanting to be part of.

- 3) We have accountability to Pleasantville Presbyterian Church through our Pastor and our leadership team. Reports and analytics are presented monthly. We are accountable to Hudson River Presbytery, have communicated with the stated clerk, and are planning to establish a relationship with the Committee on Ministry.
- 4) Because we have started this ministry, we have good data on what is happening in the ministry currently. Through our email program, facebook and adult ed online offerings, we can identify 87 current active participants. We will be able to track growth and hope to answer our questions about whether this ministry is becoming its own community, with a larger identity, or is what we began with – a second worship service of Pleasantville Presbyterian Church. If the growth is small, or if the participants remain connected to Pleasantville Presbyterian Church, but not to each other, we will continue the ministry in its current form. If we see a new chapter ahead, we will go forward in applying for the grants that come next as we help the community establish its own identity.

5) We intend to fund work with a technological consultant who will guide us through the process of increasing our digital ministry beyond its current level –particularly looking for a way that establishes community among the participants. We also recognize that while we have upgraded our audio equipment, we will need to add video technology as we grow our digital offerings.

New worshipping community	3500	
Presbytery	0	
Synod	0	
Seed Grant	7500	
Pleasantville Presbyterian	<u>30000</u>	(In kind cost of 10% of Pastor, Technology Personnel, Equipment)
	41000	