

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE MIDLANDS**Unapologetically Christian, Unapologetically Progressive****Pastor's Paragraphs****ARE YOU A MINDFUL PERSON?**

If you are an average person, you might be thinking: “What does it *matter* whether or not I am a mindful person? No offense, but frankly, I’m not interested! I don’t know what ‘mindful’ means, anyway; but it sounds pretty boring.” However, what would be your response if I were to tell you that there is a simple but marvelous technique that has been proven scientifically to reduce stress and pain, improve your health, increase your happiness and enable you to experience much deeper meaning in life? *Then*, would you be interested? Would you say to yourself: “Gosh, that’s unbelievable: I need to learn *more* about that amazing technique called mindfulness!”

As astonishing as it may seem, mindfulness wasn’t “born yesterday.” It is as *ancient* as the Hebrew religion, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and other spiritual teachings. But it is as up-to-date as contemporary scientific research at our most outstanding medical and other academic institutions.

Here are only a few significant findings about mindfulness. It actually can strengthen one’s immune system, lower harmful cortisol in the body, increase memory, help people to experience better sleep, increase compassion for oneself and others, reduce biases, and improve one’s ability to make wiser decisions. In fact, the *more* we practice mindfulness, the more *benefit* we derive and the more we are able to focus on that which is most important to us.

We can sum up the many benefits of mindfulness by saying that it enables us to *see more clearly* so that we can *respond more effectively*.

Some of us probably think that we *already* can do that fairly well, but new research at Harvard University indicates that our attention to even the most *important* areas of our life and wellbeing *wanders* an average of 47 percent of the time. That equates to about *half* of our waking life that we are *missing*—significant experiences for which, although we are not aware of it, we simply are *not* fully present. But the *good* news is that mindfulness can *change* all that, thereby enabling us to experience life more completely and meaningfully.

Our own ancient scriptures point to an important reality to which we need to give attention if we are to experience life most fully. The Apostle Paul indicated that we need to be transformed by the *renewing* of our minds! But how? The answer is related to our brains. We used to think that our brains are static and *cannot* change; however, one of the most significant scientific discoveries in the past 400 years is that the brain is malleable, it *can* change. That ability of the brain to change, to be “renewed,” as Paul put it, is called “neuroplasticity.” Fortunately, we don’t have to remember that technical term in order to experience its benefits! All we need to know from contemporary brain research is that our brains *can* be “rewired” in a way that can give us greater happiness, *regardless* of our *circumstances*!

And, thankfully, *mindfulness* is the simple, effective, life-changing technique that can enable beneficial change to take place.

Of course, we all need help from wise teachers who know more than we in order to learn *how* to utilize mindfulness to make life better and our relationships more rewarding. Unfortunately, though, the majority of people do not have access to such helpful guidance. However, that no longer is the case for those of us at CCM. So, read on to discover why.

We will begin the new year together with the privilege of being able to access the wisdom we need to improve our lives by learning *how* to practice mindfulness. The series—one session each month—will involve utilizing mindfulness to deal positively with anger, change, heartbreak, sexual experience, slowing the aging process, experiencing awe,

becoming more authentic, understanding our inner self, and other important areas that are vital for experiencing life at its best.

Our first session will take place on January 27th. Free of charge, it will be open not only to all CCMers but to anyone who is interested in experiencing a more vital, fulfilling life during the new year and in all future years.

So, let us end with the question with which we began. Are you a *mindful* person? If your answer is ‘yes,’ rejoice! You will now have an opportunity to *refine* your practice of mindfulness and receive even *better* benefits. And if your response is ‘no,’ I am *not* intentionally mindful and am not sure *how* to be, you too can rejoice! A golden opportunity to experience richer, more satisfying life and relationships is here for you—and not *just* for you, but for your friends and extended family, as well.

It’s still true. As always, CCM is here for all who want, not just to *exist*, but truly to *live*!

Oh, yes, let me add this: Whether you are a mindful person or not, I love each of you more deeply than you will ever know!

Your pastor and friend,

John

IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM*January, 2019*

Unless otherwise indicated in this space, CCM gathers for worship, education, and fellowship on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month.

Sunday, January 13 (2nd Sunday of the Month)**10:00 a.m. OUR NEW YEAR'S WORSHIP GATHERING**

It is a great privilege to announce that our proclaimer for today will be “one of our own:” Timothy Werts. Tim is a person who takes his spiritual journey with radical seriousness. Although he is an engineer by profession, the time and effort he expends seeking to learn about and experience that which is ultimate (one’s spiritual journey) exceeds that of most ordained *ministers*. Indeed, he probably has a more *mature understanding* of the human spiritual journey than does the average pastor! With the aforementioned information in mind, it is particularly fitting that he has been chosen to be the proclaimer for our New Year’s worship. John has asked him to reflect upon what he thinks that Jesus, if he were here physically, would say to us to help us experience a more meaningful new year. Therefore, that will be Tim’s topic. Worship will be followed by our usual opportunity for the congregation to engage in discussion of the message. (Out by about 12 noon)

Sunday, January 27 (4th Sunday of the Month)**10:00 a.m. THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SERIES: MINDFULNESS —
TRANSFORMING LIFE FOR THE BETTER**

Our pastor’s article in this newsletter introduced us to a technique that has the power to move us in the direction of a more fulfilling life—the scientifically validated practice of *mindfulness*. You may have heard about it, but you probably don’t know how to use it to derive its many benefits. This month, that will change; because, beginning *today* at CCM, you will have access to valuable “how to” wisdom that can give you the potential to experience practical, down-to-earth, undreamed of richness in your life and relationships.

To serve as our guides, we’ll have eleven different master teachers who will share their wisdom and experience with us. Each session will be important and will build on what you’ve learned from previous sessions; so if you want to receive the greatest

possible benefit, it will be important to do two things: 1st, *be on time for each session*, and 2nd, make a commitment to yourself to *be present for each session*.

By all means, feel free to invite family members, friends or anyone else you choose to join us. This just might be one of the most helpful experiences you'll ever have! (Out by 11:30 a.m. or before)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WHAT? NO BIRTHDAYS?

Yes, we *do* have some birthdays in January; but, unfortunately, our list of birthday dates has been misplaced. We hope to locate it in the future!

THANK YOU!

It was so caring of you to make me the grateful recipient of your incredibly thoughtful Christmas gift. As special as *any* gift from you always is, I constantly am aware that the very *best* gift you give me is your invaluable friendship and the privilege of sharing our spiritual journey throughout the year—and, especially, the past *twenty* years! So, for your “occasional gifts” *and* your “every-day-of-the-year gifts,” I can’t thank you enough; but know, always, that you’re deeply appreciated, always valued, and forever held close in my heart.

Your pastor and friend,

John

A Truth for the New Year:

THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS

TO WHOLENESS,

BUT

CCM

IS HERE FOR YOU!

**WHEREVER YOU ARE, THE DIFFERENCE
IS WORTH ANY DISTANCE!**

Our Telephone:

Senior Pastor: (803) 331-9999. Our mobile cell phone is more reliable than our landline phone, because it is on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If no one answers, it usually means that our pastor is in a meeting, in a counseling session, doing regular spiritual mentoring, or is involved in some other form of ministry; but he will return your call as soon as possible, so please be sure to leave a message.

Our Websites:

CommunityChurchMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

or

CommunityChurchOfTheMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

Our Mailing Address: P.O. Box 6946, Columbia, S.C. 29260-6946

Our Location: CCM usually gathers on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month, and any changes will be noted in our monthly newsletter. Please join us at the gorgeous Seven Oaks Community Center in beautiful Seven Oaks Park, 200 Leisure Lane (between St. Andrews and Piney Grove roads, just off I-26 West). When you enter the spacious parking lot, you'll see the main entrance to our newly renovated building on your right. Once you are inside the Reception Area, our meeting locality is on your left. For updates on our programming, to verify meeting times, to learn about changes in scheduling, or for any pastoral need, please feel free to call 331-9999, night or day.

ALWAYS, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!