

Four Questions

1. What's the idea?

"Breathing Space" – an outreach using yoga (guided by a certified instructor) blended with Christian devotions, led by Pastor Ken Bieber and other church leaders.

People come to the gym, are led by the instructor in basic yoga stretches, and by Ken/other leader in moments of Scripture, guided meditation, and prayer from a Christian perspective.

Church members would not only offer choose one or both of the two times available each week to come, but have an event to invite neighbors who might not normally come to Sunday worship.

Requested grant: \$3,000: The grant would pay for a certified yoga instructor, publicity, equipment (such as mats, blocks, cleaning supplies), athletic microphones for instructors and devotional guides (we might also offer something more active like Zumba down the road), and other materials.

2. Why should we (Ignite) care? (Why's it important?)

- First, we live in a high stress, 24/7, media-saturated society. Breathing Space would offer Christians an opportunity to invite neighbors to unplug and de-stress for forty five minutes.
- Second, as the number of those who identify as 'nones' rises, yoga has exploded in popularity in the United States:

More than a third of Americans say they are very likely to try yoga in the next year. While the majority of yoga practitioners are women (70%), the number of American men doing yoga has more than doubled, going from 4 million in 2012 to 10 million in 2016. The number of American adults over 50 doing yoga has tripled over the last four years to reach 14 million.¹

- Third, River Terrace Church resides in a great context for such an outreach: a Big Ten University town with many non-religious citizens, as well as persons from international backgrounds who demonstrate an interest in spirituality.

¹ <http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/new-survey-reveals-the-rapid-rise-of-yoga-and-why-some-people-still-havent-tried-it-201603079179>

- Fourth, we have excellent facilities for this to work: a church building conveniently located with a full size gym in great condition.

3. Who's going to champion the idea?

Ken Bieber, Pastor of Outreach and Discipleship, who has served as a missionary in China and Taiwan, will head the team that plans and leads Breathing Space. Ken has a Doctor of Ministry in Global Leadership in the Twenty-first Century from Drew University Theological School, and is a Ph.D. student in missiology with the University of Pretoria, South Africa. His dissertation compares Christian missions with Buddhist missions. So Ken has the knowledge and experience to discern how to utilize yoga while maintaining faithfulness to Christian truth.

4. How's it going to ignite ministry? First within the church. Then, how could you see this going out?

- Many church activities center around food. In fact, River Terrace has a Wednesday evening Community Night meal during the school year. However, the emphasis is on eating, but not physical health. Breathing Space will provide twice-weekly opportunities for church members, their friends, and visitors to enjoy time to de-stress, stretch, and pray. We would become a healthier community as stewards of our physical bodies.
- Like most Christians in general, and Christian Reformed members in particular, our church members are hesitant, or lack confidence, to share their faith, or invite neighbors and co-workers to church. Breathing Space meets a genuine need as, for many people, yoga studios fill the place of church in providing spiritual renewal and a sense of community.
- Each Breathing Space session would invite participants to Sunday worship, Wednesday evening classes, and other activities. Breathing Space would allow people who might resist visiting our church an opportunity to be served by and interact with people from River Terrace.
- Breathing Space's content will easily be shared with other Christian Reformed congregations, whether we put together a document or post it online, and offer trainings (webinars, in person) for other churches. We could promote awareness of the outreach through *The Banner* and on The Network.