**\*\*Transforming Presbyteries through Digital Networks\*\***

**Background**

Several years ago, the presbyteries in Georgia were granted funds from the synod to explore a change in presbytery boundaries. Although our presbytery together with the Presbytery of Florida explored potential boundary changes, *ultimately*, we committed to more informal partnerships through shared ministries such as the Dogwood Acres Summer Camp. In the meantime, funds have remained in synod accounts with small portions being used by Flint River, Greater Atlanta, and Savannah presbyteries to do exploratory work around shared computer networks. The synod extended the time frame for application and use of the funds in response to a request from all presbyteries. As a result, conversation among the leadership of Flint River, Northeast Georgia, and Cherokee has revealed that **connectivity and communication seem to be some of the biggest challenges for our congregations**. With shrinking staffs on both the congregational – and presbytery – level, **training of volunteers to expand our efforts to communicate the Gospel in our communities and to remain connected with the presbytery is a significant need**.

By applying for this grant, our presbyteries hope to accomplish the following together:

* Determine best practices for being faithful disciples while using social media
* Collaborate creatively around mission, educational, and evangelism opportunities through social media and online tools connected to its use
* Build community between our presbyteries and between our congregations
* Share resources of every kind so that our shared witness reach may increase in both scope and effectiveness

**Proposed Project**

The three presbyteries will cooperate to provide the following:

* theological and biblical foundations for our understanding of “digital discipleship”
* practical training and strategies to establish digital and social media ministries in congregations throughout the three presbyteries

The project is modeled on a program currently underway in the presbyteries of New Brunswick, Monmouth, Elizabeth, and West Jersey and will have two key parts:

1. A **Joint Learning Opportunity** hosted at Columbia Seminary to build relationships among Georgia Presbyterians and facilitate conversation and imagination regarding the use of digital and social media for the sharing of the Gospel in a networked age.
2. **Engagement of a Digital Communications Consultant** who will help churches establish online ministries that nurture their health and growth through the improvement of each congregation’s digital communication and overall communication within-- and beyond -- the church walls. All congregations in all three presbyteries will be invited to participate and will benefit from the following:

* Assessment of online presence for every congregation in each participating presbytery
* Training presentations offered at various events
* One-on-one assistance with developing individual congregation digital communication plans (for churches that choose to participate)
* Regular monitoring of congregational posts and online presences
* Ongoing one-on-one assistance for church staff and volunteers, training them and answering questions
* Editorial calendar and posting assistance as needed for both congregations and presbyteries
* Videography event to create excellent publicity between presbyteries – and within – presbyteries.

**Next Steps**

**Shared Event with Congregational Leaders which is completely underwritten by Synod Grant**

Facilities and leadership for a joint learning opportunity have been secured for **October 12-13, 2018 at Columbia Seminary**. Ralph Watkins will keynote on Friday evening, and John and Jenn Fong will facilitate events for Saturday including a panel discussion, keynote, and small group conversations. The day will conclude with hands-on social media work by all participants. **All participants should bring a laptop or tablet**.

Registration deadline for Columbia event will be **Thursday, September 27th at 3 PM**.

Please complete the form below and e-mail it to [jdenney@flintriverpresbytery.org](mailto:jdenney@flintriverpresbytery.org). Remember that there is NO CHARGE for this event!

Each congregation should plan to select 2-3 individuals who exhibit the following gifts:

* a natural interest in – and commitment to – intentional outreach and authentic evangelism
* some basic knowledge of – and comfort with -- using social media
* willingness to serve as representative learners, data sharers, and consultant liaison

Please return to the presbytery office – take a picture of the completed form and send it to June’s e-mail or simply e-mail the information in the usual way. If you take a picture and send it, be sure it is easy to read!

I/we plan to attend the “TRANSFORMING PRESBYTERIES THRU DIGITAL NETWORKS event on October 12-13th.

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Congregation Represented\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What do you hope to take away from this event? What do you hope to learn?

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