



PRESBYTERY OF SHEPPARDS AND LAPSLEY

*“partner with and equip present and emerging PC(USA) faith communities
in central Alabama to serve Christ and our neighbors”*

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Friends in Christ,

Are you interested in a fresh future for your church? Are you willing to help your congregation *embrace change*?

Are you struggling with . . .

- a building too big and a membership too small?
- a neighborhood changing faster than your ministry?
- an unclear mission for an uncertain future?
- tired people and a discouraged leadership?
- empty offering plates that match emptying pews?
- a nagging feeling that your church must somehow “change,” but an uncertainty about what kind of change God is leading you to undertake?

If you are resigned to your church's current condition; if you are too busy to look at new possibilities; and, too unwilling to think differently about your challenges, read no further. If you are unable or unwilling to advocate significant change in your church, then read no further.

On the other hand, if you truly believe the promise of Holy Scripture that the Spirit helps us *even in our weakness* (see Rom. 8.26), please read on. By continuing to read, you are affirming your conviction that, “By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us . . . (Lk. 1.78).

A fresh future for *your* church is the goal of a ministry Presbytery is set to embark upon, beginning with our November 10th meeting at First Church of Wetumpka. We ask you to make every effort to be present at this fall meeting of our Presbytery.

There, we will unveil the dynamics of an initiative our Commission on Ministry is taking in conjunction with PneuMatrix, a ministry for church revitalization led by the Rev. Jim Kitchens and the Rev. Deborah Wright. This program has had a positive impact in Pittsburgh Presbytery and is now a partner with the Presbyterian Foundation; more information can be found on Facebook by [clicking here](#). We are confident that this program can make a difference here in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley. While the Revs. Kitchens and Wright will be “outside” consultants, they will be training eight of our most effective church officers to be local program apprentices.

In the first year of this program, up to eight of our congregations will be selected by COM for hands-on participation. The only qualification your church needs to be a candidate for first-year participation is a willingness to learn from and not be trapped by the past, to be open to fresh expressions of God's will for your church, to make a commitment to stick with the process over the entire 12 months, and then to make a choice about your future. In subsequent years, more churches will be added to the program with the trained and now experienced apprentices available to continue this vital work within our Presbytery. The Presbytery has voted to cover the cost of the consultants and the training with funds that can be used only for church development and renewal.

We know that many models for “being church” that worked a few years ago are no longer effective in maintaining congregational health. Many churches feel stale and stuck in the past, and do not know how to change in ways that are faithful to God’s dream for their neighborhoods and communities. *But we don’t have to live this way!* Please come to the November 10th meeting of Presbytery in Wetumpka to hear more about this initiative. If you need more information now, [click here](#) to go to the Presbytery of Sheppard & Lapsley’s web site. God’s Spirit is a fresh breeze of new life blowing in and through this Presbytery!

Sid Burgess, Jane Clayton, Dana Waters, & Jay Wilkins

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)

PneuMatrix

Consultants Helping Presbyteries and their Churches Engage with the Adaptive Challenges Facing American Congregations

The focus of our work

- Our work assists presbyteries in engaging congregations facing adaptive challenges to help them discern faithful options for their future.
- Working with a cluster of congregations lowers the anxiety level of each congregation over what it would be if the single church were doing this work alone.
- The engagement trains and gives on the job experience to a cohort of adaptive change apprentices, who work with the consultants during the yearlong engagement. They provide a “bench” of adaptive change agents who can continue the work with additional clusters of congregations in year two and beyond.

How we engage in this work

- Engagement is for one year with consultants (a second year led by adaptive change apprentices is highly encouraged)
- Work with up to eight congregations (presbytery chooses)
- Each congregation chooses a leadership team to work with lead the process in their church, pastor serves as *ex officio* member (but not moderator)
- One adaptive change apprentice for each congregation is selected (presbytery suggests, consultant chooses the apprentices)
- Consultants are on site three times (beginning/middle/end)
- Consultants train apprentices in adaptive change theory via monthly Skype/GoToMeeting calls
- Each apprentice meets with the leadership team of his/her assigned congregation each time they meet / consultants regularly Skype into the meetings
- Consultants have monthly phone conversation with the pastor of each church

Outcomes from the engagement

- Most churches will make significant decisions about their future (including decisions to begin the process of closing the church)
- Other churches may use the process to define new vision/goals
- The presbytery has several Adaptive Change Advisors who can continue the work with another round of churches



ADAPTIVE CHANGE CONGREGATION

APPLICATION

CONGREGATION INFORMATION

CHURCH	PRESBYTERY	
STREET ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP
PHONE	WEBSITE	
PASTOR	PHONE	EMAIL

ABOUT YOUR CHURCH

DESCRIBE YOUR CONGREGATION
WHO WILL SERVE ON YOUR ADAPTIVE CHANGE TEAM?

ISSUES AND EXPECTATIONS

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR CONGREGATION'S ISSUES?
WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?