

Toronto Southeast Presbytery Communications Plan *DRAFT #3.2*

1. Background

The Toronto Southeast Presbytery (TSP) of the Toronto Conference (TC) is one of four new presbyteries. It comprises three previously separate presbyteries with the objective to bring the resources within these presbyteries closer to; congregants and committees of the Presbytery and, to make the best use of the financial and human resources available.

The Communications Team acts within the Executive of the TS Presbytery. From the Governance Handbook of Toronto Southeast Presbytery (2009), the duties and responsibilities of the Communications Team are to:

1. develop and recommend for the consideration of the Presbytery, a communications policy (strategy) that deals with information needs of Presbyters and Congregations, the tools that would be used and the means of implementation;
2. provide for the implementation of the communications strategy by recruiting appropriate people to the necessary roles and tasks and providing necessary direction and oversight;
3. Regularly assess and review the effectiveness of the communications tools of Presbytery, making modifications that are consistent with the current policy and recommending changes to the policy (strategy) as appropriate.

In its restructuring paper (Toronto Conference Restructuring Project – Communications Strategy V3.1, March 10, 2009), Toronto Conference recommended that each of the four new Presbyteries develop a communications strategy in their first year of existence. The communications strategy must ensure an understanding of the Presbytery, its role and the services it provides. Following the guidelines outlined by Toronto Conference (TC), Toronto Southeast Presbytery is committed to ensuring effective communications with its employees, volunteers, Pastoral Charges and with Conference. Using a variety of creative means and with the resources available, our mandate will be to establish communication goals, implement, and seek continuous improvement of these goals. It is important that the communications strategy be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

2. Overall Goals/ Objectives

The Toronto Conference Restructuring Project developed a Communications Strategy for the conference and its presbyteries. Outlined in the Communications Strategy were the eight Conference Communication Goals revolving around announcing, motivating, educating, informing, and supporting decision making. Toronto Southeast Presbytery supports these eight goals and has modeled its strategy to support and contribute to their success. Since the audience for which the Toronto Conference communication is intended differs from that of Toronto Southeast Presbytery, the TSP Communication Team is recommending an implementation plan targeting no more than four of these objectives broken down to the Presbytery level.

Thus, the TSP Communication Team selected the following goals for Toronto Southeast to focus on:

- Ensuring that all Presbyteries have the information that they need to carry out their responsibilities;
- Ensuring that all members and staff of the presbytery are aware of and share in the values, objectives and goals of the TS Presbytery;
- Building effective relationships with members and adherents and creating opportunities for cross-congregational action in areas of passion;
- Sharing knowledge across Pastoral Charges of experiences and best practices in dealing with mission, service, changing demographics, finance, technology and property matters.

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It is essential that we measure TSP's success in achieving these goals as well as our contribution to the overall success of our Conference's goals.

3. Key Message per Target Audience

There are key messages that the Presbytery needs to deliver to our audiences. The best messages are short and simple. What should we consider when communicating? TSP messages are evolving but may include:

- Presbytery is a resource for Congregations and individual members of those Congregations;
- Welcoming tone in messages – 'part of a large family' and understanding of the Presbytery, its role and the services it provides;
- "What can presbytery do for you?" - resources available and where.

4. Target Audience

We will be limiting our audiences within the first year of operation, to:

Internal

- i) Presbytery committees, commissions, teams;
- ii) TS Presbytery Executive;
- iii) TS Presbytery Plenary;
- iv) our 58 congregations and,
- v) Individual congregants and committees in those congregations.

Completing a communication plan(s) for the above groups would be within our capacity to accomplish this year and would be an excellent basis for future communication plan(s) in subsequent years for other groups listed below,.

External

- Toronto Conference
- Other presbyteries
- Like-minded organizations
- Policy-makers (local and national)
- The media
- The public - including church seeker, community groups

5. Implementation Strategy

The following are the TSP Communications Team recommended goals, strategies and activities for executing the communications strategy and achieving each of the goals. Once objectives, goals, audiences and tools have been identified, the results will be quantified in a calendar grid outlining what projects will be acted on, by whom and when.

Goal:(Information needs)

Ensure that all Presbytery members have the information that they need to carry out their responsibilities.

Strategy:

- Confirm the TSP recommended mode (tools) for internal communications, ie. Electronic as our primary means.
- Reduce the numbers of printed copies for information distribution

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Circulation of information for those without e-mails

- a) we wish the communication to be as much as possible in an electronic form
- b) we wish to respect those who wish to receive the information but do not have access to email and will therefore send this by post.
- c) as an alternative those without emails will be encouraged to get information through their pastoral charge if possible.
- Develop a process flow chart to determine and validate which groups and individuals need what information.
- Determine when Presbytery can access and link to the Conference website.
- Ensure UCC and TC policies and educational opportunities are distributed within TSP.
- Utilize results from the Insight Survey (September/October 2009)

Activities:

- Ensure that contact information (e.g. email addresses) is current and accurate
- Identify alternative email contacts for presbyters or churches without email
- Educate presbyters on electronic "best practices".
 - With the next notice of meeting outline presbytery expectations re. information.
 - encourage people to read info such as minutes on line beforehand and to get out of the habit of having to have hard copies - make notes or print only what is necessary
 - remind people that the information will be on the screen
 - remind people that this is not just an exercise in efficiency but in good stewardship of our financial and natural resources
 - bring laptops, if absolutely must have all information at the meetings.

For future Plenary meetings, as much as possible have all information on the screen. If it requires a vote then it should be printed. Have a few copies of things like the agenda printed for those who want them or who forgot theirs and feel they need it.

- Review and update with TSP Executive, the current "minutes distribution list"
 - Reports of all committees need to be submitted to the TSP Executive
 - Committee and Executive reports are to be distributed to the Plenary
 - Reports and submissions of each of the four Presbytery Commissions will appear as an appendix to the Minutes

Notation, as of 09/21/2009 (after telephone blitz):

- 58 pastoral charges in Toronto Southeast Presbytery
- 11 presbyters who do not have email
-

4 churches identified without email

Goal: (Awareness)

Ensure that all are aware of the values, objectives and goals of the Presbytery and understand their contribution to reinforcing these.

Strategy:

Raise the profile of the new TS Presbytery amongst presbyters.

Distribute Conference Executive values, decisions, direction statements to all staff and to volunteers as they accept a volunteer position.

Activities:

- Prior to first TSP Plenary, send forth a personal letter of welcome and introduction from Presbytery Chair.
- Recommend meeting audio/visual set-ups for optimal communication
- Establish a vehicle for Presbyters to make suggestions and provide comments to Presbytery

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Goal: (Relationship)

Build effective relationships with members and adherents and create opportunities for cross-congregational actions in areas of passion.

Strategy:

Share the results of major accomplishments, decisions and support services with each Pastoral Charge (this information should be shared on the TC website as well).

Making our Presbytery a “community of faith”.

Maintain closer ties with congregations and promote healthy congregations through acknowledgment of volunteer contribution – welcoming new and, thanking resigning members of presbytery.

Activities:

- Produce an information sheet (site) for Presbytery Representatives to share with their congregations
- Suggest table groupings at Plenary to share congregation's accomplishments, books read, upcoming events
- On receipt from congregation's of notice of appointment or change of Presbyters, send expressions of Welcome and/or of Thanks for Service on behalf of TS Presbytery.

Goal: (Sharing)

Share knowledge across Pastoral Charges of experiences and best practices in dealing with mission, service, changing demographics, finance, technology and property matters.

Strategy:

Link in to the Conference's Finance and Property Administration's best practices and guidelines; Distribution of Advertisements on congregational and mission activities.

Activities:

- For “areas of passion” from the Goal above, a section (information page/site) on best practices in administrative, financial, property and mission service matters.
- Create an inventory of initiatives of congregations and, the skills and experiences resulting therefrom
- Establish forums to encourage communications and outside meetings of 'like-minded' individuals e.g., what outreach projects are your congregation involved in

6. Timeline

The four goals as set out will form the basis of our strategy for our first year as a new presbytery. The remaining goals will be revisited and addressed as time and resources permit.

7. Evaluation and Followup

The Goals also require some means to “Measure Success” – after the first, and/or second year.