

COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

2008 Annual Report

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The Communications Group

On November 18, 2008, the Church Council approved a motion to change the name of the Web Site Working Group to the Communications Group and expand its organizational role to focus on serving NHCC's mass communication activities.

MISSION

The Communications Group seeks to provide general assistance to staff and internal church groups in their effort to efficiently, effectively, and creatively communicate the ministry of North Haven Congregational Church to its members, friends, and the larger community.

OPERATIONAL ROLE

The CommGroup's organizational function is advisory in nature and action, and a service organization to others at North Haven Congregational Church. As such, it will help provide technical and management resources, specialized knowledge related to communications processes and procedures, and planning advice and recommendations as to how to use available communications channels to accomplish specific goals and objectives.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The CommGroup has been initially structured to focus on four distinct service areas:

Media Relations Team

The Media Relations Team focuses on developing and maintaining ongoing relations with members of the press for the purpose of increasing the media's awareness and attention on the activities and work of North Haven Congregational Church and its Members. The Media Relations Team is envisioned to be the repository of information about the various media and a central service group to anyone at NHCC who requests assistance with contacting the press.

Print Publication Team

The Print Publication Team provides technical and production assistance for NHCC's publishing activities. These activities include, but not necessarily limited to: *The Window*, *The Weekly Bulletin*, and the *Annual Report*. This team is envisioned to focus on continuous process improvement of our production processes, improving readability, and increasing readership of NHCC's print publications.

Editorial Team

The Editorial Team provides assistance to our staff and internal NHCC groups in reporting, writing, and editing the content of church publications. This team will also be available to assist the Media Relations Team in developing content for press releases designed to bring the goals and activities of NHCC into focus of the various media serving our larger community.

The Web Team

The Web Team inherits the original functions of the Web Site Working Group and is responsible for creating and maintaining an online platform that facilitates open communications among its constituencies, provides access to a repository of governing and operational documents, and increases the visibility of NHCC's mission to the larger community. This team is envisioned to include both non-technical and technical people who ensure the quality, integrity, and relevance of online content to be congruent with the common focus and beliefs held by the Congregation as a whole.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The CommGroup provides a rich spectrum of opportunities for those whose interests may include writing and editing, media relations, photography, graphic design, publication planning and production, programming, and many others. A great opportunity both to be of service AND to expand your personal knowledge and skills.

No Experience Necessary! Don't let the lack of experience or knowledge stop you. If your interest is genuine, we can teach you.

REVIEW OF MAJOR COMMGROUP ACTIVITIES DURING 2008

The Media Relations Team began construction of a media contact database in early spring. This effort was originally focused on support for a specific fund-raising activity and was not very well organized at the time. We expect to formalize this effort for 2009.

During 2008, the Print Publications Team provided specific assistance to help re-design *The Window* to increase its readability and enable subsequent posting to our web site. This project also began streamlining the publishing process.

The Editorial Team created press releases related to the Build-A-Thon, resulting in good coverage in the local press over several weeks.

The Web Team re-designed the underlying architecture of our web site to be compliant with federal accessibility guidelines. This change enables web visitors with certain visual disabilities and properly configured web browsers to automatically translate the content of our web site into a form they can use. While much of the prep work has been done, additional effort is required to fully comply with these guidelines.

A major objective of the Web Team since its inception has been to help build community and fellowship among our members and friends. Our web site provides our church community with an additional, virtual and asynchronous dimension of contact and sharing...every minute of every day. Towards this end, notable initiatives for 2008 include:

- At the request of the Web Team the Church Council approved a resolution to publish the Minutes of its meetings on our web site, beginning with the meeting of March 18, 2008. Note that the Minutes of the Board of Finance have been online since 2004 and have continued uninterrupted since then. Having these essential operational documents published online enables awareness by the community and allows our entire community to participate, albeit virtually and passively, in the operation of our Congregation. We encourage each Board and Committee to consider posting their own Minutes online.
- The Web Team and the Print Publication Team were instrumental in enabling publishing *The Window* on our web site. As a result of these efforts and those of our office staff, we can now enjoy instantaneous and inexpensive access to not only the current issue of *The Window*, but also to all archived back issues, starting with the November 2008 issue.
- Other important documents available online include: Annual Reports (since 2005), By-Laws, Safe Church Policy, and various operational forms. *Please suggest other documents that you'd like to see online.*

- Our web site now has a section, Biblical Reference, where a visitor could search and read specific sections of the Bible. The actual texts are hosted by BibleGateway and are available in several versions and many languages.
- One section, Lectionary Readings, was originally proposed by Ken Welch and is currently maintained by Carol Munson. We can now partially prepare for Worship on a weekly basis by visiting this section of our web site. No problem if we've missed attending church last week and wonder what the 'story line' was! The web page displays the Readings the previous week and the next four weeks.

Web Site Statistics: Since it's inception on December 17, 2004, our web site has had 77,504 not necessarily unique visitors, an average of about 50 visitors each and every day for 1,576 days. These visitors came from 10,435 distinct Internet addresses throughout the world.

During 2008, we had 30,580 visits, an average of 83.6/day and representing an increase of about 12,000 visits over the total number of visits during 2007.

COMMGROUP GOALS & OBJECTIVES - 2009

Major Goals For 2009

- Update the media contact list to reflect changes that may have occurred in the industry during 2008.
- Improve templates and procedures for producing production masters of *The Window*.
- Evaluate other NHCC mass publications for possible template design and production improvement needs.
- Reach out to other internal groups to provide, tutor, or arrange for press release development and distribution.
- Educate lay leadership on the value of being listed in the web site directory to facilitate direct communications between individual Members and specific leaders.

Web Team Detail Discussion

During 2009, the Web Team will intensify its effort to educate and assist other internal NHCC groups who can use our web site to promote their own agenda with this technology as well as provide a more timely, reliable and effective communication channel for its specialized constituency.

Recall, the primary mission of the Web Team is to create and maintain an effective platform to enable web-based communication. Creating the information, the content, published on the web site falls outside the charter of the Web Team. Content creation is the responsibility of those who have something to say. During this start-up period (since December 17, 2004), the Web Team has purposely diverted some of its time and attention to selectively creating much of the online content. This was done primarily to help demonstrate how our web site can be used by individuals and groups within our community to promote their own agenda.

However, this 'promotional' phase has taken longer than expected and has extracted a toll on the continuing quality and reliability of the web site itself. Projects related to improving the site have been delayed, stretched out, or cancelled for the foreseeable future. More importantly, essential technical housekeeping, such as periodic database backups, have often not been

executed on a timely basis, and can result in the total shutdown of our web site if the databases become corrupted...and they often do.

There are several areas of the web site that are currently underutilized. Important sections for which web-based technology could easily be used to greatly amplify our own efforts include: Volunteer Opportunities, News, and Christian Education. These sections are database driven and could easily have more exciting and dynamic content directly entered through a secure online data input form by individuals or internal groups who want to promulgate such information.