

Web Site Working Group

Report to Church Council - February 28, 2006

Visitors to a web site have high expectations that the information presented meets at least three criteria:

1. Comprehensive
2. Accurate
3. Timely & 'fresh'

If any one of these criteria is not met, visitors tend to discount the value of a site and are less likely to return in the future. The magnitude of the resulting devaluation is affected by many factors, including the time it takes to find what is being sought and whether or not such information can be found at all after a 'reasonable' time period.

Among other purposes, one critical reason for expending resources on our web site is to create a mechanism for members and friends to more actively participate in the church-related activities as well as foster a sense of communality that extends beyond normal physical here-and-now, face-to-face contact.

Ensuring that our web site satisfies both the needs of visitors and the will of the Congregation is a complex task and requires us to focus on both the 'forest' and the 'trees' at the same time.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Among the current opportunities to serve the church by helping to create a distinctive excellence for this highly visible and important communications vehicle are:

Redesign of The 'Useful Links' Page

Our web site contains a page to help visitors go beyond our site and explore interesting topics and points of view residing on other sites that are related to our core mission. We've accumulated a number of internet resources that may provide useful information for our members and friends...as well as others who visit. It's now time to do a better job in organizing these data into a more useful format. This page should be redesigned to better reflect how people are expected to use it. The order with which headings are displayed generally go a long way towards making a site useful for visitors. A standard set of categories (headings and sub-headings) needs to be created.

Methods, criteria and standards of evaluating suggested new resources need to be developed and administered.

Create Staff Biographical Sketches

The information page about our staff has never been completed. Visitors, especially newcomers and people from near and far who may want to join us in worship, will find such biographical sketches particularly useful...mostly because our choice of staff reflects a telling picture about us as a congregation. Besides these sketches, staff photos should be updates; the pictures currently on the site were originally scanned from the last directory.

Manage Leadership Data - Part I

Selected information about the lay leadership representing our Congregation as Officers and on the various Boards and Committees can be accessed from the church site. It is now the end of February...more than a month after our Annual Meeting...and we still don't have important information about our leadership units. For instance, except for the names of members, the chairs are generally unknown to the WSWG. And, even the names may have changes in some cases without that information getting back to the WSWG. There is an opportunity here for a focused person to manage this type of information and insure it gets onto the website in a timely manner.

Manage Leadership Data - Part II

Members and friends of our church should be able to quickly and easily contact any of our lay leadership with church-related questions, comments or criticisms...that's part of being open to members and friends of our community and welcoming to those who are not yet members or friends. Today, both email and telephone communications are common methods for reaching. For many, email is the method of choice. It is ubiquitous, asynchronous, and auto documenting. Almost anyone can have a free email account...even if they don't have their own computer. People often think of things at times that are inappropriate to call someone. The WSWG has developed a procedure to enable our lay leaders to either give or deny permission to publish individual

telephone numbers on the site. The WSWG has also developed the software technology to let site visitors email individual lay leaders WITHOUT revealing email addresses to the sender. So far only a handful of permission notifications have been filed (of about 90 lay leadership positions, we have received permission notifications for 15). There is a need for a person to manage this process.

Manage Leadership Data - Part III

Are there other groups which should be represented on the lay leadership page? I have no idea. What is needed is a person who could investigate and make recommendations on this issue.

Manage The Events Calendar

The WSWG has developed a method to display a simple, clean & clear calendar of events. However, entering the data for each event needs to follow a more organized procedure. Secure data entry forms have been constructed and are awaiting a dependable volunteer to manage this function.

Manage The Newsfeed

We've recently set up the technical capability to extent our influence and increase our visibility beyond our own web site. Currently, the NHCC newsfeed is also published on the CT-UCC site. We're in the process of trying to automate this function but, for the time being, the original file needs human editing to keep it current. Fortunately, it's a very small file and editing is simple and straightforward. On the other side of the equation, we would like to find other site owners who would also like to include our newsfeed. Searching them out and contacting them with this objective in mind will foster the NHCC mission.

Manage Emergency Announcements

The recent snowstorm caused many of us to change our plans but it also provided an opportunity to test the ability of our web site to deliver timely announcements about cancellations and schedule changes. WSWG is developing a secure interface to allow non-technical persons to create emergency announcements in real time. Ideally, a two-person team could serve the church in support of this important function.