

## 2024\_1\_14 Report on Seekers Website needs Deborah Sokolove

The Seekers website is a large, complex, WordPress installation that serves Seekers current members and alumni, the wider progressive Christian community, and some unknown number of people both in the immediate Takoma Park and DC area who are looking for spiritual community and/or to hold meetings and events. Created as a personal project and gift to the congregation by Jeffrey Silverstone when we were still at 2025, the first version of the website was primarily text-based and required facility with HTML programming to maintain. At that time, it was primarily an ongoing archive of Seekers sermons, liturgies, and other documents.

Soon after we moved to Carroll Street, it was decided that Seekers wanted more input to the look and content of what had become our public face on the internet, and an ad-hoc committee hired a firm recommended by Aeren Martinez and Jeannine Carraciolo, who was a web designer at that firm as well as a member of the church, to convert it to a more visually-oriented content management system called Joomla. This change theoretically allowed information and images to be updated regularly by representatives of mission groups and other members of the congregation. As I recall, Peter and Aeren were the main contributors to the website content at that time, while I primarily posted Celebration Circle materials.

When Aeren and Jeannine moved to Texas, we no longer had an advocate at the web-design firm and no one else had the requisite skills to work with Joomla. Therefore, another ad-hoc group was formed to oversee moving the website to DreamHost and converting to WordPress, which both Deborah and Katie were familiar with. While others were involved in an advisory capacity, this work was done primarily by Peter, Katie, and Deborah. Once the conversion was completed and the new website approved by Stewards, the intention was that each mission group or other Seekers entity would maintain its own area. However, Peter, Katie, and I continued to do the bulk of the maintenance work.

A few years ago, yet another ad hoc group was formed to do some re-organization and content updating. When this work was complete, the group disbanded, and I continued to do most of the behind-the-scenes maintenance as well as CC posting. Over time, especially during the pandemic period, this work became increasingly onerous. Many of the pages now have incorrect or outdated information and/or broken links, and there is some serious back-end maintenance needed that is beyond my technical skill and ability to learn.

As is clear from this history, at no time has the Seekers website ever come under the call or oversight of any mission group. Jeffrey was not a member of any mission group when he created the website. Both Aeren and Jeannine were members of mission groups, but their work on the website was not part of those commitments. And while Katie, Peter, and I are all members of Time and Space, that mission group has never taken on the website as part of its Call, although they do support us as individuals in our work on it.

At this time, it is clear that the website is deteriorating because no individual or group is doing the necessary updates and oversight that are needed to keep the website looking fresh, inviting, and relevant. What follows is a list of necessary tasks, more-or-less in the order of technical complexity. And while all of the technical pieces can be done by someone outside of Seekers, it will be necessary for

some person or group to oversee that work and to make sure that the information on the website is correct and inviting. Here is the list:

1. Regular posting of news, sermons, SCG classes, Stewards minutes, and other events
2. Upkeep of existing pages and posts
  - a. Monitoring and repairing broken links
  - b. Updating incorrect and outdated information
  - c. Clearing out old pages and media that are no longer in use
3. Upkeep of individual and technical connectivity
  - a. Maintaining Access to members' area
  - b. Keeping track of renewal notices for domain and webhosting
4. Upkeep of website security and overall site health
  - a. Keeping the site backed up
  - b. Security patches and updates of various kinds