

# SLWG Preliminary Report

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The SLWG has been tasked with considering how Servant Leadership functions within Seekers Church and provide recommendations for the future structure. We primarily used questionnaires to guide our understanding. We gathered information from Seekers overall, mission groups, current and previous paid staff, and members of the Servant Leadership Team. It is clear from the surveys that the Servant Leadership Team (SLT) is expected to hold the tension between doing business and building relationships. Overall the surveys would suggest that SLT has done and is doing an effective job of serving individual and mission group needs, but from the feedback in the servant leadership team responses that is coming at a significant personal cost.

## Data Highlights

### Individual Surveys

- The results of the individual surveys confirm what others reported anecdotally that it is anticipated that the needs of the congregation are going to increase over the next 10 years, primarily due to the aging of its members.
- In addition to this general aging, Seekers needs to anticipate increased demands on the community:
  - 63.6% of respondents said that they anticipate needing assistance with 'individual care' in the next 10 years.
  - 29% report that they do not have a support system outside of Seekers.
- The survey also identified that communication patterns may not be meeting the needs of our membership. Of note, 48% of respondents said they are not sure about how to offer support. While we could make various recommendations about increasing our communication tools, that is only effective if the people we are trying to reach pay attention to that communication mode. A follow up with individual members of Seekers about their communication channels and other topics (such as skills/gifts) would be a good next step.

### Mission Groups

- Most mission groups are open for new community members to join them but do not spend a lot of time advertising that information. There does seem to be value in having an exploration period of time.

- While SLT attempted to allocate the pastoral care of church members who are not in mission groups to various mission groups, the success of that effort is not consistent.
- All mission groups identified the importance of SLT - particularly when addressing conflict within the group. Mission groups noted these other positives for SLT: case management, pastoral counseling, building bridges between the groups, facilitating connections
- Mission groups expressed concern about their own aging composition and what the implications of that will be on continuing the work/call of the group
- The COVID pandemic has both created opportunities (easier to have meetings gather across geographic boundaries via Zoom) as well as challenges (technical issues and lack of physical contact)

## Servant Leadership Team

- Most of those who have been (and currently are) on the Servant Leadership Team were encouraged by someone else in the faith community to consider applying.
- While most did not feel particularly skilled at pastoral care, learning their own way to provide this has given a sense of deep satisfaction.
- All of the SLT members named as a challenge the work of administering the Holy Spirit Fund
- Pastoral work each week varies as to the amount of time needed and who needs the support. The work requires being available nearly 24/7 but does not mean spending 168 hours a week doing it.

# Some Questions and Preliminary Draft Responses

## How many people do you recommend be on the Servant Leadership Team?

We are not formally making a recommendation on the number of people, but 3-4 individuals do allow for different skills and different demands on the time involved. One recommendation that we do seem to have consensus around is the need for additional administrative support for a variety of service needs and communication requests. We have not yet clarified whether the administrative person that we recommend is a more junior member of the Servant Leadership Team or a support person. For the sake of each member, we do recommend a limit of 15 years.

## What compensation do you recommend?

The current manner of compensating the Servant Leadership Team provides recognition of the value of the work. At the same time, this minimal compensation means that a person choosing to take this position must have other financial means to live (retired, a family second income). If the applicant pool is not sufficient, this compensation approach should be revisited. We would rather have the best individual possible fill this role rather than limit the options because of compensation. Please note, our expectation is that the admin person would be compensated on a more traditional hourly rate.

## What length of tenure?

We do believe that a 3 year commitment to the role is appropriate. By that same token, it is not necessary to continue in the role for longer than 3 years. Ideally, both the Servant Leadership Team composition and the Stewards can provide historical memory and context.

## Does the Servant Leadership Team member need to be a Steward?

We are not all in agreement on this. It may be best to consider being a steward as one factor in the overall selection process. The administrative person does not need to be a Steward.

## What seems to work well with the current set-up/structure?

- Current SLT members have the needed flexibility (time, money, skills, willingness) to fulfill the call. Balancing organizational/management skills with listening/caring.
- Mission Groups, Stewards, and others contribute a lot to community life.
- Stewards are ultimate decision-makers in lots of respects
- Having a team of SLT members helps avoid burn-out
- Compensation is an indication that the work is valued and important

## What challenges have been identified with the current set-up/structure?

- Holy Spirit Fund Administration
- Congregation is becoming more needy (age, economics) while SLT is also aging
- Needing 2 Stewards in every Mission Group may limit the creation of new groups

## Are there ways in which our current structure, pathways or habits inhibit people moving into leadership roles at Seekers?

- SLT Requirement to be a Steward and in a Mission Group means they are already committing significant time to Seekers and need to be able to commit even more
- SLT Requires extreme flexibility
  - Similar to paid ministers/pastors - the tasks are unclear and, as such, no clear expectations around time commitment
  - Stipend is not a living wage (asking people to be available full-time without full-time pay generally will limit the pool of potential SLT members to those who are economically privileged)

## Some musings from the SLWG's discussions:

As the group reviewed the data that was gathered and our own experiences as part of this faith community, we also want to share our thoughts that do not specifically relate to the SLT.

### A bit more on the pastoring:

The SLT does not substitute for the mission group but complements it. In that role, they may help people develop leadership skills, shepherd newcomers, create an invitational environment, and create multiple pathways to engagement. They may find they need to encourage new groups to form for short term efforts and build collaboration.

### A bit about change:

Seekers has supported change in the past - mission groups have come and gone, SLT members have changed. While change is not easy, shifts have occurred in the past. The annual cycle of recommitment allows each individual that option to change. But there isn't a similar recommitment evaluation for the structure(s) in place - no annual assessment of the call of each mission group or annual assessment of the structure of Stewards or of Seekers church continuing to exist. The annual individual recommitment allows people to leave and find new homes for their faith journeys.

In addition, Zoom options for meetings and services have been helpful for many and may continue beyond the COVID circumstances. This is an advantage to some and a concern to others.

### A bit about belonging and commitment:

Most mission groups named that they are the place of primary belonging and commitment. The level of commitment to be in a mission group can be hard for individuals - challenges of work commitments and parenting can limit the time for this commitment. Health issues can impact the ability to spend time in this commitment level as well.

There are potentially 35 adults that name some level of belonging to Seekers but do not belong within a mission group. For these adults, the primary place of belonging may be smaller informal sharing groups or reflect an expectation that Sunday worship is sufficient to address their current spiritual needs.

## A bit about the Holy Spirit fund process:

There seemed to be a general consensus among SLT of the challenges involved in administering the Holy Spirit fund. It is not clear if there has been any active conversation with nonprofit organizations that administer similar funding needs to help guide and support the approach Seekers has used.

## Next Steps

### Listening Sessions

We know that people have different communication patterns, we believe another format for input would be listening sessions. There is a plan to offer these over a month period shortly. The sessions are open to all but we hope to include members who did not respond to the individual survey. Engaging a broader swath of the community in this process is one way we hope to address the difficulty of change and invite brainstorming from being together.

### Finalize the Recommendations

While draft recommendations have been presented in writing to the overall workgroup, the group has not been able to gather as a whole to discuss.