



Interactive Website Project

As a trusted voice in the Northwest, The Fig Tree energizes people and overcomes isolation by sharing stories of faith in action. Our Interactive Website Project expands our capacity to empower and encourage people to live their faith. It widens our reach and our mission as an independent, nonprofit organization promoting communication among people in the faith and nonprofit communities and breaking through divisions to build understanding and promote unity and action for the common good. Working with partners, we are developing our website as a regional model for communication and collaboration in the Northwest.

Information shapes awareness, perceptions and values. Access to information shapes our world. Communication fosters interpersonal relationships and resource sharing. The faith-in-action stories we report need only to be picked up by one or two people for an idea to spread.

Faith and nonprofit communities often chase mass media, reshaping their messages to fit into the mass media mindset. These communities, however, have vital stories that can reshape thinking and change lives. Our coverage moves from conflicts and problems to tell of people engaged in reconciliation and resolutions. It follows people from despair to hope.

We shape our media to engage our market with professional

journalism skills and leading-edge technologies. Our infrastructure can enhance relationships among the faith and nonprofit communities in the Northwest. Our partners include local, regional and national ecumenical, denominational, interfaith, nonprofit and higher education groups. While progress has been slower than hoped, we persist in working incrementally toward our goal.

The interactive website:

- **uses the power of stories** to inform, inspire and involve people to strengthen faith and nonprofit communities;
- **highlights both the needs** of the region and world **and the actions**, resources and events arising from our faith response;
- **empowers people** to act and encourages those acting by telling them they are not alone;
- **extends The Fig Tree's reach** among spiritual seekers and young people;
- **builds communities** of God's healing, justice and reconciliation, bringing people together and giving voice to those the mass media ignore.

More timely and less geographically bound than print media, web technology means we can report more, send it out more quickly and generate more faith in action. We now can include video, audio, and pdf files as we use the hosting of Gonzaga University. We will use interns to help prepare content. With email networks, we can draw hundreds of thousands of people

to our site—a leap from our newspaper's readership of 21,000.

The Fig Tree editor brings expertise as a professional journalist and sensitivity from local, regional, national and global ecumenical experience to the content to the website and newspaper. While searching for someone with web skills to devote half- to full-time to the website, editor Mary Stamp continues to improve her skills, implementing improvements each time we update it. Our decision to produce the 2007-08 Directory of Congregations and Community Resources means we have a full online directory—more than just links. We accomplished this with our full-time community outreach coordinator through AmeriCorps.

Gonzaga University provides office space and internet services. We offer both Gonzaga and Whitworth students educational and service-learning opportunities so they can experience what responsible media is before they join commercial media.

Funded like public radio and TV, the newspaper is available free with an invitation to sponsor. Along with advertising, our support is growing with an annual fund raiser and the directory of congregations and community resources. We seek grants to support the website's growing years, anticipating that online donations and ads will eventually support the website.