

First E Collaboration Intranet

“its purpose, how you envision us using it”

Currently We Have Very Shallow, Basic Information Centrally Controlled and With Very Limited Updating

The Internet offers a powerful tool not only for advertising, but also for collaborating and getting work done. The guilds, committees, projects, and assorted groups at First E have sensed this second point. They have also accepted as a given that our in-house Web site (Figure 1) does not have the capability to enable the second point. So, what do they do? They have setup Yahoo! Groups and Google Groups, as well as separate email lists. This resourcefulness has helped forward the mission of First E. Unfortunately, it has also led to some drawbacks.

For example, individuals are listed on multiple groups and mailing lists with no central repository of history accessible to / owned by First E as a record. Email-based collaboration is very effective at transmitting and broadcasting messages but does not do a good job at filtering and converging on key points. As a result, newcomers face a daunting task of finding key information and understanding the purpose and workings of the guilds, committees, projects, groups, etc. (“groups”) The old Web site does not even list the groups. So, individuals joining First E have little digital means to explore and find out what groups are doing and how to get involved.

Even the Board faces this problem when trying to know what the groups are doing. The individual group Web pages each have different email addresses, access standards and Web addresses. These are not gathered in any one place. While the group leaders need autonomy and integration with email to get work done, they would benefit from being able to collaborate with each other more easily. They, as well as group members and newcomers, would also benefit from having a uniform location to go to connect with First E activity.

Figure 1 Current Web Site

The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta
Established 1978 UUA Affiliate Celebration of Life, Sundays 11am
OUR CONGREGATION | AN EXISTENTIALIST | HISTORY & FOUNDERS | ACTIVITIES/EVENTS | HOW TO FIND US

CELEBRATING 31 YEARS OF DELIBERATE DIVERSITY

We come together to encourage individual spiritual journeys, which help us explore new definitions of what it means to be human. As a viable spiritual alternative, we seek to serve as a catalyst to make this ideal accessible to all.

Acknowledging and accepting our differences, respecting individual freedom, and aspiring to meet spiritual, intellectual and emotional needs, we reach out for spiritual bonding among and beyond ourselves.

Existentialism is the subjective experience, not some preset essence that determines what a human becomes.

There are many paths to truth, but we do not believe that there is one belief system that is higher than another—one that is true and that others are not. Each person must seek their own path and find their own truth.

Members of our congregation will self-identify as Jewish, Catholic, Christian, Buddhist, Pagan—whatever their own internal self feels is truth for them. But we all come together to celebrate that variety, that we can all exist differently and yet

The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta
470 Candler Park Dr., NE
Atlanta, GA 30307
404.378.5570
office@firstexistentialist.org
[Login to Internal Site](#)

Let's Expand Our Basic Information Sharing and Updating To Capture Our Various Streams of Activity in One Place (for several reasons)

Powerful internet technologies developed in the past five years are revolutionizing non-profit organizing and capabilities. Look at the last presidential election and the ways in which online activity was leveraged to effect change. Almost every non-profit Web page now includes tools such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication), forums and blogs, which enable *people* to monitor and post news as it happens.

These *people* are end-users, not just the one webmaster on whom everyone used to wait for Web site updates. As a result of this shift to end-user control, Web sites are now more participatory and interactive. The tools to achieve these capabilities are very inexpensive or even free! They enable powerful new ways of interacting to be hosted directly on the firstexistentialist.org Web site and add the benefit of giving First E an archive of its digital organizational history. They have key abilities such as access control permissions and search, and they will enable First E's groups to continue the online organizing they want to conduct with minimal interference if the groups do not want to change the way they are already doing things (more on this later). These are the reasons the communications guild (mostly me, Dominic) has developed the new site for First E. Now I would like to introduce it to you. Here is the front page of the collaboration site, accessible through the "internal" link at www.firstexistentialist.org (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Home Page of Collaboration / Intranet Site

The screenshot shows the home page of the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta's collaboration site. At the top left is a circular logo with text around the perimeter. To its right is a search bar with the text "Search this site:" and a "Search" button. Below the logo and search bar is the title "First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta" in a blue font. A navigation bar below the title contains "Home" and "Calendar" buttons. Underneath is a horizontal menu with links for "Art", "Buildings & Grounds", "Communications", "Education", and "Social Justice". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a "WebTeam" section with a list of links: "My workspace", "Groups", "Invite a friend", "My Unread", "My account", "Create content", "Recent posts", "Feed aggregator", "Administer", and "Log out". Below this is a "My groups" section with a "Group" dropdown and a "New" button, followed by a list of groups: "Art Guild", "Buildings and Grounds", "Communications Guild", "Education Guild", and "Social Justice Guild". The right column has a "Home" section with "View", "Edit", and "Track" buttons. Below this is a welcome message: "Welcome to the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta's collaboration space. Members and friends are welcome to register and participate in the congregation's activities. You are also welcome to browse the available public resources such as our calendar. To get back to the front page of the information Web site, where you can find information about Sunday Services, Renting the building, our philosophy, and directions to the building, please click here." At the bottom of the right column are subscription links: "Subscribe to: This post", "Subscribe to: Posts of type Page", "Subscribe to: Posts by WebTeam", "Printer-friendly version", and "Send to friend".

Welcome to a Sample of What a First E Can Do With the New Site: Social Justice Guild Page

The Social Justice Guild Web page is shown below in large resolution so that you can read all of the pieces (Figure 3). Below, you will find a discussion of the features here and what they can do. But, before that discussion, please note that the Web page you see online may not exactly match the Web page you see below, because this is a dynamic Web page. Other groups may be added to the blue bar, and other tabs may be added above the blue bar. For example, there will soon be a tab for people who are logged in that reads “Tools.” It will house our archive of design materials (logo, letterhead design) and digital masters for printed materials. There will also be a tab for “News” including archives of newsletters and the weekly email blasts, news from other UU congregations too!

Figure 3 Social Justice Guild Web Page

The screenshot shows the Social Justice Guild web page. At the top left is the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta logo. Below it is the site name in blue. A navigation bar contains 'Home' and 'Calendar' tabs, and a secondary bar lists 'Art Buildings & Grounds Communications Education Social Justice'. The main content area is titled 'Social Justice Guild' and includes a search box, a 'WebTeam' sidebar with links like 'My workspace' and 'Groups', and a central post titled 'Post number 2' with a text area and subscription options. A right sidebar shows 'Social Justice Guild' actions like 'Create Group Post' and 'Recent members'.

Let’s begin by walking through the pieces of the Web page you see in Figure 3. Beginning with the top, left, you see the logo and name of the site, with two navigation bars immediately below. The navigation bars provide easy access for any individual to see the calendar and names of all of the First E guilds (groups). In Figure 3, the browser is visiting the Social Justice guild page. You can see the words “Social Justice” in bold white in Figure 3, indicating that the link has been clicked and is active.

Directly below the blue bar is *breadcrumb* (“Home :: Groups”). This is a term taken from the story of Hansel and Gretel to indicate a trail explaining how this page links back to the home page. It helps viewers always understand where they are in the Web site and feel comfortable.

Below the breadcrumb is the group search box. When browsing a group Web page, a special search box dedicated to searching the content of that group only shows up in this spot.

Below the group search box is the name of the current user who is logged into the site. In this case, it is the special Web development username (“WebTeam”), which is a special account used in creating the site. Most of the time, this will be usernames such as Dominic Thomas, shelbysmith, or Robert Stewart (the first three users to self register!), whoever is logged in and viewing a page.

The special command options available to each logged in user are listed below their username. The WebTeam account has a lot of options, many of which are confusing and complex. Most accounts will have the following options show up:

<i>Tool</i>	<i>Functions</i>
My Workspace	This space gathers a user’s whole history of posts in one place.
Groups	This list provides access to all First E groups in which a user is a member.
Invite a friend	This is a command that presents a form to send an email invitation to someone who may be interested in becoming a member and contributing to the collaboration site.
My Unread	This is a list of unread messages across all of a user’s groups.
My Account	This is a place where users can change their picture or member details in their profile. They can also manage their user invitations and personal notifications and subscriptions on the site. Notifications and subscriptions are tools that send alerts by a user’s selected means (typically email) when new content is posted to a topic, group, discussion or page on which a user subscribes or asks for notification.
Create content	This command allows users to create various types of content depending on their role on the Web site (the roles are anonymous user, authenticated user, board, chair, member, and webteam). Generally, anonymous users have very little access and can only read. Members and authenticated enable contribution of posts, subscriptions and membership and participation in groups. Chair, Board, and WebTeam have expanded permissions to create new

	pages, manage their own groups, and edit existing content or remove it if it is flagged as offensive. The roles may overlap. Every authenticated member and up automatically gets a blog space of their own.
Recent posts	This is a list of recent posts by the user.
Feed aggregator	This is a tool for collecting news from the Web onto the First E site.
Logout	This is a logout command.
OTHER TOOLS	Over time, this set of tools will get refined and improved. There are plans for a member directory and contact forms in the future, for example.

Below the commands list area is a list (also known as a “block”) called “My Groups.” This block lists all of the groups to which a user belongs, and if there is new public content posted to any group, there will be a red “new” in the second column next to the name of the group to draw the user’s attention. The list is clickable.

Next, we look at the middle column in the center of the Web page. This is the main content area. On this page it is displaying the main content of the Social Justice guild, beginning with the name of the guild then six content tabs below (View, Forums, Edit, Revisions, Track, Broadcast). You may not see all of these tabs, depending on the content in a group.

You might also see a Wiki tab show up if the group creates a wiki. Since there were two test postings added to this group during development, you see a revisions tab. The group administrator(s) (Guild Chair(s)) can use this tab to revert to older editions if offensive changes are made or if offensive or inaccurate information is added (which can only be done by guild members -> membership is controlled by the guild chair(s)). Also, for each post, you can see that there are options to print, subscribe, see more posts by that user, share the post to Facebook or other sites, etc.

However, we are getting ahead of ourselves, in order to post to a group, one needs to look at the group commands list to the right of the main content area. It is a block labeled “Social Justice Guild,” and you can see an option there to “Create Group Post.” The Posts in the **View tab** show up on the front page of the group’s space, and *they are public announcements anyone, including anonymous browsers can read*. This is a good place to post events and activities so that potential or new members can see what the guild does.

The **Forums tab** contains the group’s forums. *Forums are private to the group*, and the forums (a discussion board) has its own email address, in the case of the Social Justice guild it is socialjustice@firstexistentialist.org. (The email addresses must be setup by the WebTeam, and they are made to be the name of the group with no abbreviations, underscores, nor periods. If your group is not setup or you do not know the email address, contact a Web team member in the Communications guild to help you.)

*Only members of this group can add/read discussion topics and responses to the **forums**.* This includes sending content in via email. The Web site will check if the submitting email address is a member of the group. If so, it will accept the content. If not, it will refuse the content. The group chairs may allow open access to the forums, but this is discouraged. The forums are a place to post group meeting minutes and private deliberations. They are a space that all board members and Web team members can view. This is a good and necessary authority of the Board, because they have voluntarily taken on liability for the whole organization when they agreed to serve. They have a duty to know what is happening. The Web team has access in case they need to help resolve technical issues.

The “**Edit**” **tab** enables users with administrative control of a group to edit the group’s settings, such as the group mission and goals (listed in the light blue box below the group tabs). Please be very careful in editing this basic group information other than the mission and yearly goals. Settings such as the group name should not be modified. Perhaps, we will be able to limit the interface to stop such errors from occurring in the future, but for now, there are a lot of options presented for editing, most of which should not be touched. For more information if you are a guild chair, ask for a tutorial from a Web team member.

The “**Track**” **tab** shows how visitors to the group page arrived. It may be useful in understanding the marketing of the group and whether advertisements worked.

The broadcast tab allows for sending messages to all of the group members.

Moving back to the **right column at the top**, we have the **group commands block**. There are options here to create wiki content for the group. A wiki is an easy to edit Web page group members share and edit. Pictures and files can be uploaded and added too. The next two commands connect to creating group posts and forum messages. The next command allows group administrators to manage group content. The next item enables inviting others to joint the group. The next shows a page with pictures and names of all group members, clicking on a picture or name takes you to the user’s profile page, where they might post information about themselves, as well as contact information. The final option allows group chairs to manage members in the group (adding and deleting memberships or promoting members to group administrators).

The next block shows Recent Members of the group who have joined, posted, etc.

The final block gives options for managing group notifications, including RSS feeds for public content.

For now, this is our introduction document for the new collaboration Web site. There are trainings planned for guild chairs and volunteer leaders within First E. Please contact the communications guild for training.