

## Name

### Do you have a suggestion for a new name for the Network?

The responses were given on a scale of 1-5 (1 being “poor” and 5 representing those who felt the title was excellent) and resulted in the following almost normal distribution:

<b>1 (poor)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 (excellent)</b>
<b>15%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>

There were 109 fuller written responses to the request for suggestions which introduced a wide range with many respondents giving several alternatives. (The prize goes to the person who gave eleven alternative names.)

Respondents who offered choices and comments on the name fell into two groups: those who wished to retain the name and those who offered alternative titles.

#### For Retaining The Name

Thirty five respondents said they did not have a suggestion for a new name for the Network. Some of these went on to explain their reasons for retaining the present name or to offer an explanatory extension of the name, or make suggestions about enhancing the name.

Reasons for retaining the present title name were given by those who felt the name was positive both in terms of its “roots” and the opportunity for explaining it to others. To quote

**“It is important to recognize and celebrate our ‘roots’. Knowing the source and reason for the Network and being able to explain this, is positive and affirming.”**

**“Some of the criticism of the title ... arises from a desire to be “all things to all people (which the network cannot be) or not having seen the series, or read the book which ‘grounds’ the network’s existence.”**

(But no-one commented on links with international Sea of Faith Groups as a reason for retaining the title)

A second small group had introduced their own metaphor as an explanation for the title. For example

**“The ‘sea’ metaphor depicts a journey, a faith journey for some, and cast as wide as the membership itself. I still like Cupitt’s link with Mathew Arnold’s poem. I am suggesting we retain the name “Sea of Faith”**

Then there were respondents who offered an explanatory extension of the title:

**“Sea of Faith Network – Exploring Beyond Religion. I think we risk too much loss of identity if we change our name at this stage, but an additional statement might help to clarify our vision for those who have difficulty with the current name”.**

**“Sea of Faiths Network - Add an S to the word ‘Faith’. The dogmatic meaning of ‘faith’ isn’t necessarily dominant. There is faith in oneself, in one’s community in the reality of the seasons etc are all evoked by the word faith”**

**“Add a short explanation phase which could be changed periodically as the situation changes e.g. a Forum for exploring spirituality/ for discussion of human spirituality/ for religious discussion or a network for exploring spirituality etc”.**

## For Changing The Name

While there was enthusiasm for a change of name — 49 new alternative names were offered — it was apparent that the choice of a new title was more difficult and this was also influenced by a desire to retain the SOF initials. Some who considered a new name were also hesitant –

**“We must be careful not to choose a name too similar to other groups which may be church or crank oriented. Changing the name is not as easy as it sounds”.**

**“The rub will come in an attempt to find a name which accurately meets everyone’s expectations. The name does not need to explain it all”.**

Reasons for changing can be summarized in two quotes:

**“It doesn’t accurately explain to outsiders what the network exists for. My friends and relations imagine it as a church based organisation – a long explanation is necessary to explain”.**

**“I think it does, or may arouse misleading expectations for people who don’t know the provenance”**

In summary, only three suggested titles appeared more than twice and respondents indicated that these had arisen in the previous discussion at Conference.

The seven titles which were most acceptable, and the times they were suggested were

**Forum of Seekers (6); Seekers Forum (6); Seedbed of Faith (5); Open Forum (2); Searchers for Truth (2); Seekers Open Forum (2); Faith at Sea (2)** — in that it is still growing and learning.

In view of the wide range of suggested titles and some of the comments I then went on to look at the words used in these alternative titles.

The words introduced most often were: **Forum (24); Seekers (17); Faith (12); Open (9); and Spiritual/Spirituality (8)**

Clearly the discussion at Conference, and in particular the comments about the word ‘faith’ had stimulated interest and thought. Here the use of the word faith possibly indicated that, for many, it did not necessarily have negative connotations.

However, apart from positive comments about the word “forum”, comments about specific words used were without exception comments about the word “faith” and included:

**“The word Faith could suggest that the Network has a particularly strong Faith i.e. Credo, which they would pre judge as something they didn’t want to become involved with.”**

**“The word faith has too much baggage for normal people.”**

**“If you incorporate the word “faith” you need to acknowledge “faith” across the spectrum of religion, including the fundamental Christians and not denigrate them.”**

## Summary

Over several Conferences the title ‘The Sea of Faith Network’ has been debated. Given the material obtained in the questionnaire it is clear that the membership has a range of responses to it, and reasons for changing or retaining it.

At the 2009 Conference in Hamilton the motion was moved and carried:

**“That the name “Sea of Faith” be retained”.**

For me, reading all the responses has given me a greater appreciation of the title and confidence in explaining it to others. Then last year our local group reviewed the book and the television series and I realised how apt the title is – with or without the poem.

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*Natali Allen*