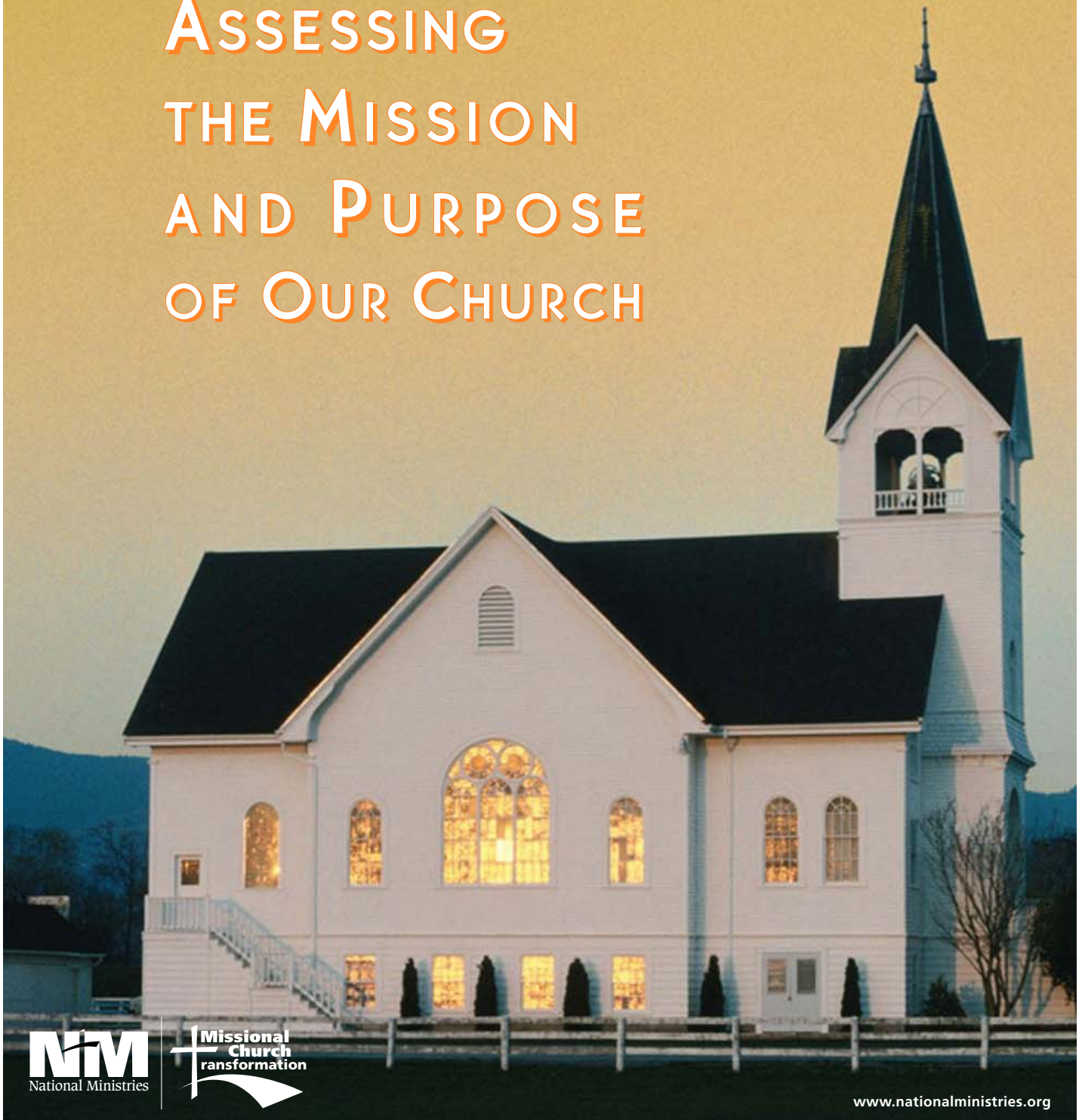


ASSESSING THE MISSION AND PURPOSE OF OUR CHURCH



Assessing the Mission and Purpose of Our Church

How to conduct a:

Community Fact-finding Study
Church Comparative Analysis
Missional Community Analysis

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Companion Assignment Study Guide
to the Missional Church Workshop

.....

Workshop and study guide developed by:

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Why Conduct a Community Fact-Finding Study and Community Analysis?

The Roman government amassed detailed census information in the time of Christ (Luke 2:1-5), but neither Jesus nor his followers could access that data. You could argue that, despite not having access to such data, Jesus and his company of 12 disciples, plus 70 more followers, successfully engaged in a mission that transformed the entire Roman Empire within two centuries — without such data and without conducting detailed sociological and cultural studies!

You could argue that, except for several passages in the Gospels and certain indicators in the Acts of the Apostles as well as in the Epistles. Jesus did not let the absence of computer databases stop him from giving the disciples a formula of observation and action that required contextual analysis. New Testament writers record that Jesus admonished his followers to look carefully at the context of communities and cultures in order to further the mission of the reign of God. We find the formula in Matthew 9:37—10:1, which tells about Jesus sending out the 12 disciples as their ministry commenced. Luke also records that Jesus sent 70 disciples into Galilee (Luke 10:1-3). John repeats it when narrating how Jesus wanted to raise the missional awareness of the disciples while traveling through Samaria (John 4:35).

What is the formula? It has three components: look, pray, and go. First, Jesus directed his followers: “Look to the fields and observe their harvest-readiness.” Next, he instructed them: “Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the harvest.” And finally, Jesus commissioned them to put feet to their observations and prayers: “Go into the mission field you have been observing and for which you have been praying!”

This study guide assumes that fact-finding and community analysis serve missional churches of the 21st century, just as Jesus’ three-part formula served the missional church of the first century. These activities will assist your church in *looking* at a specific harvest field in depth. The looking informs the second step — *praying* for resources God intends to send into that missional field. Those prayers, accompanied by fact finding and analysis, give believers the opportunity to go into an area they have studied.

Why should *your* church conduct a study and analysis? Simply put, this hands-on approach enables your church to follow the path of the first disciples. You will see the God-given missional potential of your specific mission field.

For those of you who like to know the thinking behind any assertion and those who need more convincing, seven top reasons for conducting a study and analysis follow.

Seven Top Reasons for Conducting a Study and Analysis

1. Study and analysis help you assess the condition of a community.

Jesus and the New Testament writers used agricultural illustrations that seem quaint, even obscure, to suburban and urban believers today. Some of us, however, know firsthand the meaning of the term “Sunday driver.” What were Sunday drivers doing? They drove slowly through their immediate countryside, making note of the seasonal and environmental conditions affecting their fields and those of their neighbors. Any farmer understood the significance of assessing the condition of fields in order to prepare the soil, plant crops, cultivate the ground, and harvest produce. Sunday drivers knew the value of assaying the potential harvest field on a regular, almost weekly, basis. They never assumed that looking at the fields resulted in harvest. They knew it was one step in the whole process of making a living and feeding a nation.

This missional survey and community analysis aim to help churches become “Sunday drivers” in order to determine the condition of their “mission fields.” God ripens the harvest, of course, but God chooses to include us in the work. “Sunday driving” for a fact-finding study and missional community analysis takes many forms, whether conducted on the Internet, from car windows, or from sidewalks in our church’s immediate community — all of which we will do in this study.

2. Through study and analysis, you discover what God is already doing in a community.

Avoid the trap of assuming that God will only work through a select church body to accomplish kingdom purposes. The fact-finding and analysis teams will seek to discover God’s ongoing work in the community. This includes discovering some of God’s activities through other churches, parachurch organizations, systems unrelated to churches, and community structures in the lives of individuals, both church and unchurched. This study asks such questions as these:

- Where do we see God at work in the lives of people living in this missional context?
- What is God doing in churches and other faith communities already present in the field?
- How do we see God using structures and organizations other than the church?

One question underlies all of the questions: “How can our church enter into the action of God in this community?” A closely related question is “What vision does God want to give our congregation concerning new kingdom ministries lacking in this community?”

Keep two cautions in mind as you gather information:

1. Ignore the temptation to conclude too quickly that your community does not need another ministry. Seldom do existing churches or organizations cover all the ministry needs in any given geographic area. Rarely does every population group receive adequate service

or become involved in missional ministry. A shortage of laborers jeopardizes our ministries far more than over-serving any given location. Partnerships and alliances that focus on a common task for the purpose of greater effectiveness can fill gaps in missing services.

2. Resist the temptation to try cloning as you look wistfully at Christian faith communities expanding around you. We certainly can learn from existing ministries. We may even decide that a similar approach might work in our own church. However, keep your mind open to entirely different approaches that may fit the character of your church better. As we said above, specific groups of people and their needs often go unnoticed. Reaching them will require different approaches.

Even in communities with large and growing churches, you will find an increasing number of unchurched people. Church attendance in the United States has declined for decades.

In communities with multiple social services, unmet needs still exist. New populations move into communities, economic conditions change, and existing populations age. Needs await your study and action.

Your task is to discover unchurched people and unmet needs. We don't want to eliminate mission fields; we want to help you discover mission opportunities.

Two primary questions should guide this work:

1. What is God doing in this community?
2. How can we as a faith community participate in the action of God?

3. Study and analysis help determine who is out there.

Rapid cultural and social change characterizes the 21st century. Communities shift rapidly as some people move out and others move in. Not only do individuals and families move, but also whole groups of people move as neighborhoods change ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Many churches served the needs and interests of their immediate neighborhoods when they were founded decades if not centuries ago. Those neighborhoods changed over time, and many members of the congregation relocated. Do you know your new neighbors? By and large, they have not replaced departing members.

Most of the congregations that became megachurches in the 1970s and 1980s used demographic studies to find suitable locations near their own kind of people. They created "attractional" churches. While many continue to attract "their kind of people," a growing number have discovered they no longer know their neighbors. Church leaders with a missional and evangelistic concern increasingly ask, "Are we reaching out to people now living close to our facilities, or are we only reaching our own kind of people?"

This study aims to help your faith community, regardless of its size, discover *who really is out there*. It asks the missional question “Who has God placed at and near our doorstep?” In determining your church’s missional potential, you will investigate these questions:

- Where do people gather?
- Who has already significantly responded to the Christian message?
- Who is relatively unreached?
- Of those groups unreached by Christ’s call to discipleship, how harvest-ready are they? Who may be particularly receptive to the Christian call?
- What resources do your neighbors have and contribute to God’s mission?
- What resources do your neighbors lack?

4. Through study and analysis, you can discover needs in your community.

God’s work of salvation addresses the mental, physical, social, economic, and spiritual needs of people to demonstrate the in-breaking power of the reign of God. The church, as the body of Christ in the world, must continue the ongoing ministry of Jesus, touching the lives of people, particularly in their time of need. A limited view of a community and its needs will short-circuit creative ministry. Too frequently churches chart the course of their future based primarily, if not exclusively, on the felt needs of their own members. Asking questions such as “What do we want?” and “What do we need?” tempts congregations to set mission and purpose statements that reinforce a self-serving faith community. Jesus, however, calls his followers to turn outward in our service, beginning with acts that demonstrate that we really do love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. We assess our own congregational needs for empowerment to serve the greater needs of the community as mission field. This study will reveal needs of people in the neighborhood as well as those of others who seek to serve the community’s best interests.

5. Study and analysis enable you to discover who is ready to respond to the Christian message and call to discipleship.

Harvest analogies in the New Testament indicate that people respond to Christ’s call to discipleship in their own time. Entire communities proved unreceptive to Jesus’ invitation to follow him into the mission of God’s reign. For this reason, some missional, evangelistic laborers plant, some water and cultivate, and others harvest — but not all at the same time! By the same analogy, Jesus made it clear that if his disciples do not invite those ripe for harvest to join us in following Jesus into God’s mission, the harvest may be lost!

Church growth studies demonstrate a strong connection between the amount of change in people's lives and their receptivity to the Christian message. That receptivity continues when people know their own needs. In a community analysis, we look for groups experiencing change, and those experiencing unmet needs, in order to focus on evangelism and harvest among the most receptive.

6. Through study and analysis, you can discover the most effective methods and ministries for the missional context.

A farmer does not harvest beans with a corn head on a combine. A doctor won't use a scalpel to check for a strep infection. A smart evangelist will not use the same methods for every person encountered. Nor will Christians, eager to serve, depend on one or two methods or programs to meet the ever-increasing diversity of missional opportunities.

Community analysis allows us to discover many ways people communicate so that we can minister effectively and powerfully. We need to know which media people use. We must understand their culture. The desire for effectiveness will drive us to learn the best ways to communicate the Gospel to responsive people. Church growth leader C. Peter Wagner once reported that most evangelism methods prove successful in about 8 percent of the situations where people apply them. Effective evangelistic ministries require flexibility and diversity. A community analysis provides insight on which approach to use and how to apply it.

A faithful witness demands other forms of missional engagement. In a community analysis, we look for needs that God calls the church to meet. Biblical justice demands our attention. What social services do people seek? What resources and means of empowerment will work? These questions and more will help churches become faith communities that serve the real needs of their communities with cultural and social sensitivity for those who reside there.

7. Study and analysis help you discover resources available for networking and partnership in mission.

A church lives in a broader community. When carrying out a kingdom mandate, it seeks both to transform the broader community and to partner with its resources. On one hand, churches seek to transform systems and structures, calling them to be servants of people as God intended. On the other hand, churches seek to collaborate with the systems and structures of a community to further the cause of justice and righteousness. This dual task impels churches to know what resources (commercial, private, public, individual, and corporate) the community has for its own transformation. A community contextual analysis often reveals that God has already provided those partners whom we will accompany on paths of service.

Addressing an additional concern: "Are we embracing business tactics?"

Businesses understand that they must know their customers, match products or services with the audience's characteristics, felt needs, or interests, and communicate with potential buyers in contextually and culturally appropriate terms to advertise and sell effectively. Advertisers cannot afford to waste precious dollars when starting, expanding, or transforming a business.

One could argue that the church, as a spiritual institution, ought not to embrace business tactics in communicating its message. "Shouldn't the church avoid commercialization?" we are often asked. Of course! But using the tools of commerce does not mean we have adopted the goals of business. We must recognize the validity of the tools and use them appropriately. While any church body seeking to be missional should refuse to use manipulative tactics, the church also needs to recognize that it does not exist in a cultural vacuum.

If businesses invest time and money to make money, how much more should churches recognize the importance of knowing the needs and interests of unreached people within its context? Who should care more about effective communication of the Good News to people who do not know Christ? The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22, NRSV).

Community Fact-Finding Study and Community Analysis for the Purpose of Missional Service

A Community Fact-Finding Study and Community Analysis for the Purpose of Missional Service are tools to guide churches in expanding missional ministries. These studies enable a church to identify and respond to specific needs and interests of the community beyond the church walls.

The process consists of three phases.

Phase 1: Missional Fact-Finding Study identifies general characteristics of a potential missional field. In phase 1, your church forms a Fact-Finding Research Team. This team gathers data from all available sources — U.S. Census Bureau, universities, and private, state, and local resources — describing the economic, social, and cultural makeup of an area under consideration for outreach. In addition to describing general characteristics of people living in the area, facts this team gathers will feed into the next steps:

- The team that does a comparative analysis of the congregation and community uses the written summary of the fact-finding study in phase 2.
- The team that does a community analysis uses the written summary of the fact-finding study in phase 3.

Phase 2: Comparative Fact-Finding Analysis of Congregation and Community raises questions about compatibilities and dissimilarities between church and community. Awareness of similarities can create “Aha!” moments for churches. Instead of resisting change, members may embrace the transformation needed within the church because it will be minimal. Communication with and service to unchurched people living around us becomes easier when they are our own kind of people. Identification of dissimilarities helps churches identify where they need information and training to meet their cross-cultural missional potential.

Phase 3: Community Analysis for Missional Church Service guides creation and growth of culturally and contextually appropriate missional evangelism and outreach. It enables a missional church to take a closer look at the community to identify:

- Residents as well as service providers
- Needs and interests of residents
- Resources and potential partners

Definition of Terms Related to Fact-Finding Study

Demographics: study of vital human population statistics used extensively by commerce and government to identify the average or typical characteristics of people who buy products or use services in a community. For this study, we will use the term “fact finding” in place of “demographics.” We will gather information to study characteristics such as age, ethnicity, home ownership, income, and marital status of people living near church facilities.

Community Analysis: direct observation of people yielding impressions of residents. Demographics deals in hard data. Community analysis connects investigators with people who live in and service the community. In this phase, the researcher enters into and observes the social and geographical context of the church’s study.

People Group: a significantly large group of people who identify themselves as belonging together socially, culturally, or based upon a common affinity. The determining factor in identifying a people group is the group’s own definition of belonging and commonality.

Demographics: How to Find Information for the Community Fact-Finding Study

The Internet provides many resources related to the religious, ethnic, and economic makeup of your community. Listed below are some resources pertaining to this fact-finding study.

- You can obtain free information directly from the U.S. Census Bureau Web site: <http://www.census.gov>. Near the top of the page, click “Search,” then follow the prompts.
- National Ministries provides access to both free and fee-for-service resources for demographic research at www.nationalministries.org. Go to Evangelism > Demographic Resources and follow instructions on that page.
- The Association of Religious Data Archives, at www.thearda.com, offers multiple community profiles based on social, educational, economic, and religious characteristics.
- The International Mission Board and North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention offer national origin data regarding people living in the United States. Their information is based on the last U.S. Census. See www.peoplegroups.info.
- Your community Map Team in phase 3 of this study may wish to use the resources of www.frappr.com to chart locations of residents and resource facilities.
- Several resources give information on the role of religion in American public life:
 - The Pew Foundation at www.pewforum.org
 - The Glenmary Home Missioners Organization at www.glenmary.org
 - The Association of Statisticians for American Religious Bodies (ASARB) at www.asarb.org

If you are part of an American Baptist church or are receiving this material as a part of a National Ministries–affiliated training workshop, contact Dr. Tom Johnson at tom.johnson@abc-usa.org for access to a demographic report on your geographic area. Zip code(s) or the intersection of specific streets, which you name, form the basis for this information.

Find other sources for demographic information for most geographic areas within the United States and Canada by browsing the multiple sources listed on the Internet under the topic “Demographics.”

Phase 1: Community Fact-Finding Survey Report Form

Fact-Finding Study Location: (In a large metropolitan area, give the name of the area and the suburb, community district, or subdivision. In smaller towns and rural areas, give county and township.)

Date of study completion: _____

Primary demographic resources used:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Dates of demographic resources:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Submitted by: _____

Purpose of this study:

Study Category 1: Population trends of the study area

Population (most recent census): _____

Population (previous census): _____

Forecast of population peak: _____

Housing:

In what year did residents most recently move into your community? _____

What is the average length of stay of renters in housing? _____

What is the average length of stay of homeowners in housing? _____

What population growth or decline pattern do you see in your community? (Check all descriptions that characterize your area.)

- Minimal growth — less than 2 percent or less than the average rate of our (choose and circle one: state/county) average
- Decline in population
- Generally steady growth pattern — more than 2 percent annual growth or an average rate better than our (choose and circle one: state/county) average
- Significantly above the average national growth pattern
- No reason to see a significant shift in growth rate in the next five years. (For example, industry is moving out or developers are anticipating same growth rate over the time period.)
- Future steady growth (of about _____ percent) anticipated over the next five years
- Future rapid growth (of about _____ percent) anticipated over the next five years
- Decline in growth rate (of about _____ percent) anticipated over the next five years
- Transition in the ethnic makeup of the community (describe):
- Transition in the social-economic class makeup of the community (describe):
- High turnover of the same economic social group (describe):

Study Category 2: Income patterns of the study area

The following questions address the economic growth pattern of the area studied. Check all statements below that characterize the area's economic growth patterns. (Note: Information provided through the National Ministries' resource will be on a per household basis.)

Average income per household: \$ _____ (current figures) \$ _____ (previous census figures)

Median income per household: \$ _____ (current figures) \$ _____ (previous census figures)

Percentage of households at or below the poverty level as defined by the federal census:

_____ (current figures) _____ (previous census figures)

Consider the cost of living in your area. Given that reality, how many residents probably live on an income that is insufficient to meet their needs?

What age groups and ethnic groups are most affected by poverty in this area? (Ask someone in the school district or county services about the number of subsidized lunches provided through the schools.)

A local realtor may help with additional questions, such as the following:

How much appreciation or depreciation do you see as houses sell?

Do people moving into this community consider themselves as moving upward or downward economically?

Are people who are moving into this community relocating from other parts of the city/township or from other localities outside of the city/township?

Using the above data, attempt to describe the economic pattern of the study area. Check the appropriate descriptions below. Add descriptive comments as you can.

- Declining income
- High unemployment _____ among males _____ among females
- Stable income pattern with a variety of employers
- Noticeably improving income patterns
- Gentrification, where lower-income or unemployed persons are displaced by middle-class or upper-income people moving into the area
- Upward mobility where the local population's economic base is improving, so people remain in the area and are upgrading their lifestyles
- Upward mobility with local population base changes resulting in migration out of one people group and influx of another
- Upward mobility with new development drawing people
- Economic transitional community with high turnover (usually characterized by apartments, rental homes, and trailer courts, for example, where upwardly mobile people — generally young couples or immigrant ethnic groups — live for a short time until they own property or move to a higher-income neighborhood)

List the most important industries or businesses that support your community's economy:

What is the rate of employment/unemployment in this area? (Sources such the U.S. Department of Labor Web site, found at www.bls.gov, and/or your state employment services agency can provide this information. On your state Economic Research and Information Center's website, go to the "LAUS," or Local Area Unemployment Statistics, section.) Include the number of the following:

_____ Unemployed males

_____ Unemployed females

What age groups are most affected by unemployment?

What percentage of households has one income? _____

What percentage of households has two incomes? _____

Study Category 3: Racial and ethnic groupings of the study area

From census figures, note the estimated racial/ethnic breakdown of the area studied, by number or percentage.

	Current	Previous
White non-Hispanic	_____	_____
Hispanic	_____	_____
Black	_____	_____
Asian	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

If possible, gather local information that more specifically identifies the racial/ethnic composition of the study area.

List languages spoken in the study area. (Local information is often available from the school district and social service providers. One source is the Modern Language Association's Interactive Language Map Data Center, found at http://www.mla.org/census_main.)

_____ Percentage or number of people who are U.S. citizens

_____ Percentage or number of people who are naturalized citizens

_____ Percentage or number of people who are foreign born, not citizens (Note: Some study areas will have a number of undocumented population groups. High visibility of a population group with a low census figure may be an indicator. School systems may also be a source for this general information.)

What ethnic groups appear to be present in small numbers in your community, according to the census data or local information sources? Do these same population groups appear in larger numbers in nearby communities or neighborhoods? Are these groups concentrated in your field of study?

Using categories below, attempt to describe the nature of racial or ethnic groupings represented in this community.

_____ Homogeneous community (predominately or exclusively one ethnic/racial group present)

What is/are the predominant ethnic/racial groups?

_____ Transitional community with _____
(identify specific racial/ethnic groups) migrating out of the area and
_____ (identify specific racial/ethnic groups)
migrating in

_____ Heterogeneous community with strong ethnic cohesion and clear ethnic boundaries apparent within the observation area

_____ Heterogeneous community, well integrated

Study Category 4: Age groupings in the study area

List age categories of residents in your study area and include the number of people in each. (Use the age categorizations of your particular demographic resource.)

What is the median age of the population in your study area? _____

What is the median age of the dominant racial/ethnic population groups in your area? Use the space below for a breakdown of groups and median age. Also, compare your figures with previous census figures.

Is one or more age group predominant in your study area?

Is an age group predominant among any of the racial/ethnic groups in your area?

Compare age demographic figures with previous years. What trends related to age groupings best describe the area you are researching? (Possible sources of this information may include a realtor, state or county Web site, county services, municipal Web site, school district, and planning commissions.) Check all categories that apply.

_____ Stable community growing old together. Age groups, with the exception of the number of infants and children, appear to be growing old together in the community.

_____ Out-migration of an age group (describe):

_____ In-migration of an age group (describe):

What is the marital status of the residents of your area of study?

Males:

_____ Married

_____ Widowed

_____ Divorced

_____ Unmarried, living with a partner

_____ Never married

Females:

_____ Married

_____ Widowed

_____ Divorced

_____ Unmarried, living with a partner

_____ Never married

How many households have children? List age groupings of children residing within the study area:

How many households with children are headed by:

_____ Single female head of household

_____ Single male head of household

_____ Two parents

_____ Two grandparents

_____ Single female grandparent

_____ Single male grandparent

_____ Other

How many residents are accommodated by group-living facilities (nonfamily)?

_____ Children ages 12 and younger

_____ Adolescents

_____ Senior citizens

_____ Developmentally disabled adults

_____ Educational institutions and related housing facilities, such as dorms and fraternity houses

_____ Long-term incarceration facilities, such as state or federal prisons

_____ Military base housing

_____ Other:

Study Category 5: Education levels in the study area

What number/percentage of adults in this area of study completed high school?

_____Males _____Females

What number/percentage of adults in this area of study attended college or vocational school?

_____Males _____Females

What number/percentage of adults in this area of study have/has college degrees?

_____Males _____Females

What number/percentage of adults in this area of study have/has post-college graduate degrees?

_____Males _____Females

Summary of Findings from This Community Fact-Finding Study

1. From your fact-finding study, write a brief description of the community.
2. Write and draw on a map the geographic parameters of the community investigated.
3. State why you feel your church should or should not expand its missional ministry in the field you are describing in this report. State clearly your preliminary conclusions and reasons for the recommendation. Fact finding in phase 1 launches an assessment of the real mission and purpose of your church. This information does not substitute for contact and on-site investigative work of the Community Analysis Team in phase 3.
4. An affirmative recommendation to investigate the area further moves the process into the next two stages: Comparative Fact-Finding Analysis of Congregation and Community and Community Analysis for Missional Church Service.

Note: Rarely does a fact-finding study provide enough information to determine that an area does not merit further investigation by your congregation. You will probably want to complete the comparative analysis (phase 2) before deciding, while basing your recommendation on data you gathered for phase 1. If your Fact-finding Team concludes that the area you studied does not merit further investigation, you have completed this study.

5. Identify and list hunches and discoveries related to missional issues and opportunities in the field of study. The Community Analysis Team will give special attention in phase 3 to the following hunches and discoveries made in this demographic study:
 - **Cultural mandate issues/opportunities (social service or social action):** List any potential missional activities that your research surfaced in the area of social service or social action. Include findings related both to existing services and to unmet needs within the field of study.
 - **Evangelistic mandate issues/opportunities (evangelism/church growth/church planting):** List your perceptions of potential and challenges related to communicating the Christian message in the study area. Include cultural and linguistic factors that need to be investigated further.
 - **Particular areas of interest or concern needing further investigation:** Make note of any findings or insights you have gleaned that the Community Analysis Team should consider when conducting that part of the study.

Phase 2: A Church Comparative Analysis

How to use these forms:

The following set of questions in phase 2 will help you compare characteristics of the population outside your church with the makeup of those who are a part of your church. In this section you will ask your faith community some of the same questions that you asked of your community in your Community Fact-Finding Study. You will then compare the results of your findings.

How is this comparison helpful? Churches that are quite similar in ethnicity, culture, age, economics, and so on to the population groups living within a community will have less difficulty in communicating and relating to the residents of that community. Similarly, church bodies that discover major differences, culturally and economically, between their congregation and their community can anticipate facing greater challenges to evangelistic communication and missional service in their context. These latter churches face the potential for greater conflict inside the church as diverse population groups are assimilated into church life.

Two cautionary notes:

1. If you discover, in this comparative study, that your church body is quite similar in its makeup to that of the general population of your community, do not assume that the church will find the process of initiating missional ministries or communicating the Christian message easy. Most church fellowships have failed to recognize the subcultural gap — the “stained-glass barrier” — that exists between churches and the culture, even when addressing the unchurched who are “our own kind of people.”
2. If you discover in this comparative study that your church body is quite dissimilar in its makeup to that of the general population of your community, do not assume that the church should pull out of the context and take its mission somewhere else. Ultimately, you may decide to relocate to an area having a larger population group made up of your kind of people. However, missional churches believe that God has called churches to enter into the entire world to initiate the disciple-making process. Although bridging cultural barriers is difficult work, the mandate for churches to do so is clear. Remember, Paul took the gospel into culturally unfamiliar territory on his missionary journeys. God calls us to do the same.

Answer the comparative questions as best you can at this stage of your investigation. Phase 3, Community Analysis, may change your initial assessments. This study will help subsequent teams discern the missional potential God has for your congregation.

Phase 2: Church Comparative Analysis Questionnaire

Comparison 1: Population trends in the church compared to the study area

Current number of your church members who reside in the study area: _____

Current number of your church members who reside outside the study area: _____

Number of members living in the study area five years ago: _____ ten years ago:

Identify the growth pattern of the church from descriptions of growth patterns listed below.
Check all statements that characterize the church:

- _____ Does not yet exist or is not located in the missional field of study
- _____ Minimal growth
- _____ Decline in membership and attendance
- _____ Generally steady growth pattern consistent with the growth pattern of the community
- _____ Growth significantly above the growth pattern of the community (the church is growing more rapidly than the community or in spite of community population decline)
- _____ No or little reason to see a significant shift in the church growth rate over the next five years
- _____ Steady growth over the next five years anticipated based on current trends and compatibility with the growth rate of the community
- _____ Rapid growth anticipated over the next five years
- _____ Decline in growth rate anticipated over the next five years
- _____ Stabilized membership and attendance figures anticipated over the next five years
- _____ Transition in ethnic makeup of the church's community (describe, including how transition in the church ethnic makeup compares with the study area):

- _____ Transition in socioeconomic class makeup of the community (describe, including how the transition in the church socioeconomic class makeup compares with the study area):

- _____ High turnover of same economic social group (describe, including how your church economic turnover in class makeup compares with the study area)

Comparison 2: Income patterns in the church compared to the study area

Compare the economic growth pattern of the church to the study area from the various descriptions of community economic growth patterns listed below.

Average income per church household is \$_____

Median income per church household is \$_____

Number/percentage of church households at or below the poverty level as defined by the federal census.

_____ households _____ percent of membership

Considering the cost of living in your area, determine a realistic number/percentage of church members living at a substandard income level.

_____ households _____ percent of membership

Use these categories to describe the income and standard of living pattern in your church, checking all statements that characterize the makeup of the church body:

_____ Declining income

_____ Percent of attendees currently unemployed _____ males _____ females

_____ Relatively stable income pattern for a cross-section of income sources

_____ Noticeably improving income pattern among attendees

_____ Growing number of lower-income or unemployed people from our church leaving the area because of rising property values and inward movement of upper-income people

_____ Growing number of our people moving into the area, refurbishing houses, and raising the general standard of living

_____ Upward mobility where church participants' economic base is improving and our people are remaining in the area while upgrading their lifestyles

_____ Upward mobility where our church people are moving out of the community

_____ Church attendees' finances improving along with the community economy, which reflects neighborhood trends

_____ Church experiencing the same out-migration of people as the community

_____ Church experiencing same in-migration of people of the same economic strata as the community

_____ New attendance reflecting incorporation of upwardly mobile people moving into the area with new housing development

_____ Congregation experiencing high turnover of membership and attendance that is representative of the community as a whole

_____ Percent of congregants renting apartments, houses, trailers, and so on

_____ Percent of our congregants intending to find a permanent residence other than where they currently live

Which industries or businesses support your church congregation's economic base?

Describe the extent of the involvement in these businesses by your congregation.

_____ Percentage of households in our church with one income

_____ Percentage of households in our church with two incomes

Comparison 3: Racial and ethnic groupings of the church compared to the study area

Using the categories below, attempt to describe the nature of the racial ethnic groupings represented in your church as compared to the community. Information above will help you identify which cultural groups in the community are present or missing from congregational life. Combined with further reflection about lifestyles and attitudes, spiritual calling, and data about religion in your community, it will also help you do the following:

- Develop missional endeavors
- Select, equip, and deploy salaried and volunteer leadership
- Customize or transform the church's ministries for other cultures
- Prioritize future conversations for awareness and cooperation with other community and religious partners

Describe the estimated racial/ethnic breakdown of the study area.

	Church	Study area
White non-Hispanic	_____percent	_____percent
Hispanic	_____percent	_____percent
Black	_____percent	_____percent
Asian	_____percent	_____percent
Other	_____percent	_____percent

List below the languages spoken in your church. Indicate which of these languages are spoken in the community. Which languages represented in the community are not present in your church?

Use the following definitions to describe the racial/ethnic groupings and characteristics of your church.

_____ Homogeneous (predominately or exclusively one ethnic/racial group in our worship, leadership, events, and activities), as described here:

_____ Transitional with _____ racial/ethnic group members moving out of area and _____ racial/ethnic groups participating in the church activities, as described here:

_____ Heterogeneous participation with two or more ethnic-cultural groups or services in another language within the congregation (such as Spanish language worship or Korean fellowship), as described here:

_____ Heterogeneous membership well integrated, with visible shared leadership and public representation of various ethnic and economic groups participating.

Comparison 4: Age groupings in the church compared to the study area

What is the median age of your:

Congregational makeup (members and participants)?

Average worship attendance on a good Sunday?

Congregational leadership?

How does the age distribution of your congregation compare with that of the study area? To identify age, marital status, race or cultural origin, and educational level of adult worshipers in this congregation, fill out the graph below. Use community census data collected in the fact-finding study. Then fill in the charts using data collected on the congregation. Compare this data to see to what extent the church reflects the demographics of the community.

Community Age Demographics: Birth Years

MALES

Age 0-5	6-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65-74	75+
#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

FEMALES

Age 0-5	6-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65-74	75+
#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Church Age Demographics: Birth Years

CHURCH MALES

Age 0-5	6-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65-74	75+
#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

CHURCH FEMALES

Age 0-5	6-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65-74	75+
#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

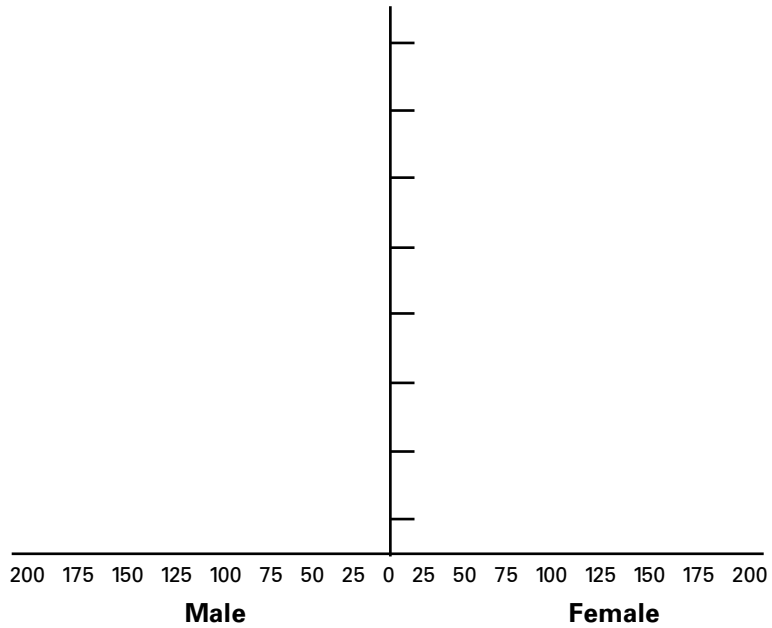
For a graphic picture of the age profiles, transfer figures to the grids below.

Our Church

Years

- 75 and older
- 65-74
- 45-64
- 25-34
- 18-24
- 12-17
- 6-11
- 0-5

Number in age group



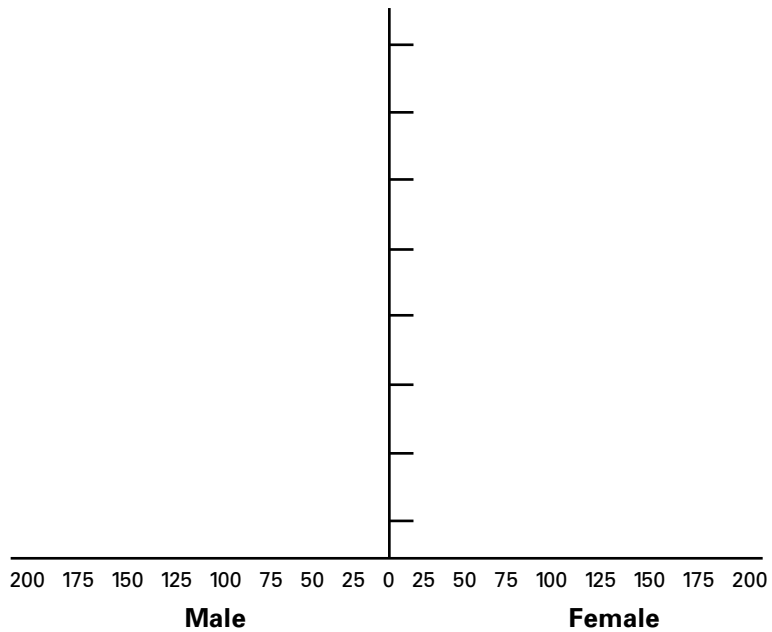
Using U.S. Census Figures

Transfer U.S. Census Figures to the Grid Below

Years

- 75 and older
- 65-74
- 45-64
- 25-34
- 18-24
- 12-17
- 6-11
- 0-5

Number in age group



Our Community

How does the age graph of the community compare with the age graph of the congregation? Where do they overlap? Where do they diverge? What does this information suggest about effective missional outreach in your community to age groups?

- What age categories in the community are represented in your church?

- What age categories in the community are underrepresented in your church?

- Does one or more age group predominate in your church, and how does that compare with the dominant age group represented in your community?

Comparison 5: Education levels in the church compared to the study area

This information will help you understand the level and style of communication that is most effective in your congregation and community. It will help shape sermons, communications, and resource development. Combined with reflection about lifestyles, attitudes, and spiritual calling, it can help you customize the presentation of the Christian message for a more diverse audience.

What number/percentage of adults in our church completed high school?

_____ Males _____ Females

What number/percentage of adults in our church attended college or vocational school?

_____ Males _____ Females

What number/percentage of adults in our church have/has college degrees?

_____ Males _____ Females

What number/percentage of adults in our church have/has post-college graduate degrees?

_____ Males _____ Females

Mobility:

What percentage of the community commutes to workplaces outside the community?

How many church participants living in the community commute outside of it to work?

Average distance people drive to:

- Work

_____ Members in your congregation/core group

_____ Residents in your community

- Shop

_____ Members in your congregation/core group

_____ Residents in your community

- Recreation

_____ Members in your congregation/core group

_____ Residents in your community

Describe temporary daytime or evening groups commuting into the community for the following:

- Work and vocational purposes.

- Education. (List vocational training and educational services present and who uses them.)

- Entertainment, including vacation. (List entertainment establishments and resources sought out by people living outside the community.)

What gaps may exist?

- Services, including shopping. (What shopping resources are evident? Which services appear to be lacking or underprovided?)

Marriage & Family: Combined with reflection about lifestyle, attitudes, and spiritual calling, this information will help you do the following:

- Anticipate turnover in congregational participation and leadership
- Design ministries and training programs to keep up with the mobility of residents
- Design the time lines of programs for spiritual formation and mission
- Define the “mission field” of your congregation beyond the neighborhood or town, based on those who work and play there and need specific, short-term outreach
- Consider issues of parking and accessibility

How many people are married or single?

In the congregation

In congregational leadership

In the community

	Church	Community
Married	%	%
Divorced/Separated	%	%
Widowed	%	%
Never Married	%	%
Households with children at home	%	%

Household Income

	% of Church	% of the Community
Less than 10,000		
10,000 - 29,999		
30,000 - 49,999		
50,000 - 69,999		
70,000 - 89,999		
Over 90,000		
Home Ownership		
Home Owners	%	%
Renters	%	%

To what extent does the income level of families in the church match that of the community and others it serves?

Compared to community income patterns, are the congregation's income levels higher or lower?

Are church members renters or homeowners? What does this tell you about the makeup of your congregation? For example, are they temporary residents, seniors no longer maintaining their own property, or permanent residents expecting to stay for a longer period of time (economically stable and able to maintain mortgage payments)? How do these patterns of home ownership, along with household incomes, match that of the community?

If your congregation increased its evangelistic witness in the community, what types of evangelism would it need to strengthen?

_____ Primarily crossing the "stained-glass barrier" of church culture to reach people otherwise culturally similar to our congregation

_____ Crossing both a "stained-glass barrier" and a cultural or subcultural barrier, such as age, income, educational level, and so on, to reach people dissimilar from our own congregation

_____ Crossing both a "stained-glass barrier" and a cultural or linguistic barrier to establish a language church or ethnic congregation that reflects the cultural diversity of the community

Write additional observations concerning the demographic character of the church compared to the demographic character of the community.

In light of your findings, summarize the compatibility of your church and its context.

Phase 3: Missional Community Analysis

Six or more people form a Missional Community Analysis Team for this phase of assessing the real mission and purpose of your church. The Community Analysis Team will divide into small research teams of from two to four members who will work on related assignments. The entire community analysis team will analyze insights and data collected by various smaller teams.

Small teams and their responsibilities include the following:

- Map Team is responsible for visually illustrating on a regional map all findings from the studies and community analyses to this point.
- Community Leaders and Key Systems Representatives Interview Team will identify community leaders and influential community structures and organizations and will interview selected representatives.
- Church Attendance Analysis Team will estimate the unchurched population of the community and uncover what God is doing through existing churches in the potential church field.
- Representative Population Opinion Team will gauge needs and interests expressed by representative members of the community who do not participate in your church.
- Look and Pray “Spiritual Lurking” Team will observe various people groups in the community in places where they gather for fun and entertainment.

The full Community Analysis Team consists of all members of the smaller teams. It may also include some members of the phase 1, Community Fact-Finding Study Team, and one or two members-at-large. This team will share the following responsibilities:

- Gathering, analyzing, and assimilating data from phases 1 and 2.
- Conversing and brainstorming about the missional potential based on shared observations.
- Recording recommendations with their rationale for or against initiating a missional activity, group, or church body in the study area. They will submit recommendations and rationale to the church and appropriate board or committee for consideration.

A more detailed description of each team’s responsibilities follows with report forms. Read the forms, discuss questions with the leader of this study, and choose the study team in which you wish to participate.

Phase 3: Missional Community Analysis Report Form

Community analysis study location (In a large metropolitan area, give the name of the metro area and the suburb, community district, or subdivision. In smaller towns and rural areas, give the name of the county and township.):

Date of study completion: _____

Community analysis participants on investigation teams

- 1. Map Team

- 2. Community Leaders and Key Systems Representatives Interview Team

- 3. Church Attendance Analysis Team

- 4. Representative Population Opinion Poll Team

- 5. Look and Pray "Spiritual Lurking" Team

Submitted by: _____

Purpose of Study:

Map Team Assignment and Report Form

The Map Team provides the whole Community Analysis Team with a visual image of the potential church field. This picture shows various environmental, social, and spiritual factors that will help to determine the readiness of the area for missional church endeavors. Mapping also gives the missional church team an orientation to the environmental factors of the potential missional field.

Equipment needed

- Detailed road/street map of the potential missional field
- City planning/zoning map
- Traffic-pattern or traffic-count map (if available)
- Topographical map (optional—this is most significant if hills or other natural geographic formations restrict residential development)
- Street guidebooks (for metro areas)
- Highlighter marker
- Transparencies for use as overlays
- Pencils
- Yellow Pages
- Local newspaper
- Paper and pens to record observations

Action Step 1: Secure maps and materials from local bookstores, Chamber of Commerce, city planning office, or county extension office.

Action Step 2:

- Select a street/road map as your working base or master map.
- Provide team members with additional individual copies of the map for their notations.
- Familiarize yourselves with the maps you have secured, such as their legends and additional information provided.

Action Step 3: You may want to create transparencies or computer-generated overlays of the master map for the purpose of visually presenting locations and boundaries of your study area. (You may choose to draw symbols directly on the map rather than use overlays; however, use of overlays helps to eliminate erasures and errors on the master map. Overlays also tend to portray a more vivid picture.) You are now ready to use color and symbols to picture the following information on the master map:

- **Zoning.** Color-code and block in the boundaries of industrial parks, commercial shopping centers, park and recreational locations, mobile home parks, multifamily-unit subdivisions and apartment complexes, single-family housing, undeveloped commercial property, and undeveloped residential property.
- **School district boundaries and school locations.** Identify the boundaries of school districts with a colored outline. Obtain the names of each school within the field of study and its enrollment figures. Mark the location of each school on the map key. Identify the locations of existing elementary and secondary schools with the symbol [S]. Also obtain the names and enrollment figures of each adult school, including vocational, college, university, and graduate schools. Use the symbol [GS] to identify the location of institutions of higher learning.
- **Traffic patterns and public transportation routes.** Demonstrate the most heavily traveled streets with a color-coded marker. Show public transportation routes. Mark walkways and overpasses over freeways or natural boundaries such as rivers that may help to unite or divide neighborhoods or sections of the city.
- **Church locations.** Show locations of churches with a [CH] or **cross**. On the map key, give the name of each church, its affiliation, and the size of its attending membership. Also note the names and locations of churches outside the specific boundaries of this study that are likely to draw attendance and participation from residents within your field of study. (You may want to secure this information in conjunction with the Church Analysis Team.)
- **Public services locations.** Show locations using the following grid, unless they are already marked on the map by its publisher. (This information can be secured in conjunction with the Community Leaders and Key Systems Representatives Interview Team.)

[H]	Hospital
[MD]	Clinic/Medical Offices/Public Health
[SS]	Social Services
[G]	Courthouse, Federal Buildings, City Offices
[P]	Police and Prisons (outline if large institutions)
[FD]	Fire Departments
[COM]	Chamber of Commerce

Community Leaders and Key Systems Representatives Interview Team Assignment and Report Forms

The primary responsibility of the Interview Team is to talk with representatives of the community, such as public service officials (for example, elected officials and heads of public service agencies), public servants (for example, police officers and social service workers), and representatives of systems and structures that help to shape and serve the community. People considered for interviews should minimally consist of the following:

- School officials and representatives
- Chamber of Commerce representative
- Social services and law enforcement personnel
- City planner or manager or other representatives
- Others your team deems significant relative to your study

Other people who should be considered for interviews include these:

- Executives of a major employer in the community
- Realtors and land developers
- Merchants and small business owners

These interviews will help you:

- Gain a deeper knowledge of the characteristics of the potential church field, including the composition of its population, resources and needs. (Remember that a missional church, whether new or established, serves its community.)
- Identify community needs that church ministry might address. (Remember to raise the question of community needs in your interviews, particularly needs related to the system or organization the person represents.)
- Identify key service agencies and personnel for the purpose of networking and partnering in community service and transformation.
- Gain visibility as a potential partner in the community. (You are creating some first impressions!)
- Discover means of supporting and ministering to community leaders and key systems representatives. (Remember, they are people too, and they are sometimes hassled by their work and the people they seek to serve.)

Action Step 1: Identify key services and systems of the community.

- Work with the Map Team in this process, since they will note locations of services and agencies.
- Sources include the Yellow Pages, Chamber of Commerce data, the public library, and information the Map Team gathers.

Action Step 2: Select agencies to investigate through interviews.

Action Step 3: Develop a concise set of interview questions for each potential interview. (See sample questions below.) Feel free to draw from these questions, but also raise the types of questions you feel need to be investigated in this specific church field.

Community Leaders and Key Systems Representatives Interview Sample Questions

- What is your general overview of the community, its makeup, and its attitude toward those you serve?
- What is the occupational makeup of the community and people you serve?
- What particular community, personal, or family needs are you aware of?
- What is the nature of families and households, such as the percentage of single-parent homes and working parents? What effect does home life seem to have on people you serve?
- What social or demographic differences do you see in this community?
- What is the extent of Aid to Dependent Children, welfare support, or other such programs at state and local levels?
- To what extent do you feel community cohesion exists?
- Do any churches or religious groups seem to be particularly influential in this community?
- Do you see churches as being supportive of your service/agency/institution?
- How might a church benefit your agency/institution/service in this community?
- What do I as a church leader need to know in order to effectively minister to this community?

Action Step 4: Make an appointment.

- Know the name of the person you want to interview.
- Identify yourself and state the purpose of your appointment.

Note: In some locations, time factors will not permit the investigation team to make appointments in advance. This is unfortunate but is part of the reality of this experimental program. Where key systems personnel are not available for interviews due to time constraints, gather information from others in that organization. Teams should use their discretion in this matter.

Action Step 5: Reconfirm your appointment before the interview.

Action Step 6: Conduct the interview.

- Arrive on time but expect delay. These are busy people.
- At the interview, introduce yourself and state the purpose of your visit.
- Show interest in what the person is doing — the job, program, responsibility, or agency.
- Take notes of responses to your questions.
- Receive printed material graciously and review it afterward. If possible, review any public materials about the agency in advance.
- Seek to discover information beyond what is available in print.
- Don't rush the interviewee, but watch for signs that you need to move quickly.
- Express thanks for the interview and for the information provided.

Action Step 7: Follow up your visit with a written note of appreciation.

Action Step 8: Review your team's findings and attempt to summarize your discoveries in a report. Include in this report any patterns you discern among service and community organizations as well as any specific partnering or networking resources you have discovered. This report will be shared with the entire Community Analysis Team.

Church Attendance Analysis Team Assignment and Report Forms

The Church Attendance Analysis Team will seek to do as follows:

- Discover churches within the area studied or which draw from the potential church field
- Locate these churches (working with the Map Team)
- Discover growing churches, people groups attracted to growing churches, and factors contributing to their growth
- Estimate the unchurched population of an area
- Identify the presence of faith communities and religious organizations other than those identified as Christian
- Identify Christian groups and organizations active in the community
- Determine church growth potential due to new arrivals to the community
- Project the evangelistic potential for the missional field
- In cooperation with church leadership, significant stakeholders, and the full Community Analysis Team, project a potential evangelistic growth figure for the congregation's missional ministry

Church and Religious Group Presence in the Study Area

(Use the telephone directory, Yellow Pages, and local community Web sites for this study.)

Other churches of your denomination present

_____ within a five- to fifteen-mile radius

_____ within a fifteen- to twenty-mile radius

List churches of your denomination that have expressed interest in assisting or partnering in missional ministry:

List churches of other denominations within a five-mile radius:

List any churches of other denominations who have expressed interest in partnering in missional ministries in your area. Briefly describe their expressed missional interest:

What other Christian groups are active in your community?

Parachurch organizations:

Informal faith gatherings:

What Christian partnerships are active in your community?

Clergy associations:

Ecumenical associations and faith-based services associated with a denomination (for example, Lutheran Social Services):

What religious faiths other than Christianity are active in your community?

What faith-based community services do these groups offer?

Prepare a graph that illustrates the profile of religious affiliation in your community (for example, United Church, Baptist, Mormon, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, no affiliation).

Church Attendance/Nonattendance Analysis

The stories of growing churches frequently reveal which people groups are receptive to the Christian message and what facets of that message people in your community find attractive. Through the study of existing churches in a community, we can also discover how many people are not attending church regularly (potential harvest field) and what types of people in the community are not attending churches at all (unreached people groups of the potential church field).

The following exercise and report form will help you determine the evangelistic potential of this church field. Follow the procedure and report form on the following pages step by step. Also, seek to interview church representatives from the growing churches in the community.

Step 1: Secure a list of all the churches within the study area from the Map Team. Include congregations that border the study area and tend to draw heavily from it. Include a telephone number for each congregation.

Step 2: Using available census/demographic data, enter on line 1 the total estimated population of the potential church field.

(1) _____

Step 3: Contact every church on your church listing (see Step 5). Ask for the average Sunday morning worship attendance over the past year. If they do not know, ask for an estimate of the previous week's attendance. Total the numbers you have gathered. Include your own group number in the figure. Use the form on the next page to record your figures.

Total the average Sunday morning attendance and record the figure on line 2.

(2) _____

Step 4: To arrive at a rough estimate of the total size of the church population of this potential church field, multiply the total average Sunday morning figure by two. Record the figure on line 3 below.

(3) _____

Step 5: Subtract the figure on line 3 from the estimated total population figure on line 1. This gives the approximate size of the unchurched population in the potential church field. Record your answer on line 4.

(4) _____

Make a church listing on a separate sheet of paper. List the names, addresses, and phone numbers, as well as the average worship attendance figures, for each church contacted.

Step 6: Project future growth of the potential church field. Ask the Community Fact-Finding Study Team (phase 1) to share population data they uncovered. This will help you determine the potential for growth and increased participation in missional outreach. Record figures on the lines below.

	POPULATION	PERCENT OF CHANGE
(5) 1980	_____	_____
(6) 1990	_____	_____
(7) 2000	_____	_____
(8) 2005	_____	_____
(9) 2010	_____	_____
	(PROJECTED)	

Record on line 10 the total population increase or decrease projected between 2005 and 2010.

(10) _____

Step 7: Determine the numeric evangelistic potential for the church field. If a population increase is anticipated, add the total figure of projected increase between 1990 and 2010 to the number of present, estimated, nonchurch attending population from line 4. Record your answer on line 11.

(11) _____

This total gives you the church field evangelism potential. It does not, of course, take into account various people groups. However, if your church and community have a similar demographic (homogeneity), your team has a basis for discussing what percentage of this population figure could be reached by your congregation with a minimum amount of cultural bridging.

Step 8: Interview pastors and/or church leaders of local growing churches.

- As a team, discuss what questions interviews should address.
- Make sure that the team coordinates any contacts with other churches so that you do not wear out your welcome with too many calls.
- Gather information from church Web sites so that some questions are already answered and you can spend your time on less readily accessible information.
- Collect printed material from the congregation, such as church bulletins, promotional material, statements of faith, and so on, whenever possible.
- After the interview, express your appreciation. Be sure to make notes of your findings and be prepared to record your discoveries and to debrief the entire analysis team.
- Helpful information to gather may include, but not be limited to, the following:
 1. To what people groups does the congregation minister?
 2. What people groups does the congregation recognize as being present in the community, though they are not reaching those groups?
 3. How long has the church been in existence?
 4. What are some theological characteristics of the church?
 5. What types of programs and ministries are they finding successful? From where do they draw their members?
 6. Approximately how many people attending are recent arrivals to the locale? Of new arrivals who attend church, from where have most come?
 7. What advice would the church's pastoral team or leadership give to another church leader or pastor desiring to lead a church in this community?

Community Needs Opinion Poll Assignment and Report Forms

A Community Needs Opinion Poll can help a team find information related to needs that people feel and express. It also can reveal expectations people have of churches in their community. Knocking on doors and talking to people gets the job done.

You may choose one of two community analysis interview forms below or create your own opinion poll that raises missional questions most fitting to your church's environment. Rick Warren developed this Community Needs Opinion Poll (modified here for your use). The second form is a tool created by the Center for Urban Congregation Renewal and is used with their permission.

Tips for conducting the poll:

- Select representative neighborhoods, which fit the target population for your new church outreach.
- Select a representative number of households to contact (5 percent is adequate). You don't need to cover every home to get a good representation on an opinion poll. Visit several representative neighborhoods of the community. (Housing should include rental, single-family, and multifamily homes, reflective of various income levels present in your community.)
- Select a day and time when people are apt to be available.
- Conduct the opinion poll as individuals. (Teams of two appear too much like cult groups.) Dress appropriately to fit the context. When people answer the door, take one step back so as to present a nonthreatening gesture. Where door-to-door interviews are not allowed or are met with resistance, conduct the opinion poll with people on the street or in public gathering places where you can find neighborhood residents.
- Introduce yourself by name. Identify the name of your church and mention that you want to make it a church geared to reaching many needs the community experiences. Then ask, "Would you mind answering a few questions for an opinion poll?"
- Do not judge or react negatively to answers. Remember, nonchurched people don't think or talk like churched people.
- Sometimes people have difficulty giving answers. Think about examples in advance that will prime the pump, such as child care needs, computer lessons, and so on. You might float ideas that the church is already considering. However, avoid loading the opinion poll with biased examples.
- Get the name and address of any person interested in getting more information about your church, but do not consider this interview as a means of evangelization or gaining membership from other congregations.
- As a team, tabulate these responses for the composite picture of the ministry needs of the community. Note any patterns of findings related to community needs expressed, perspectives and opinions related to the church, spiritual interest, and forms of spiritual expression.

Community Needs Opinion Poll Form

Are you a member of a nearby church? _____

What do you think is the greatest need in this community?

Why do you think most people don't attend church?

If you were looking for a church in this area, what kinds of things would you look for?

What advice would you give me as the pastor/a member of a local church? What, for example, could I/we do for you? What do we need to know about this community in order to be a vital part of it?

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Front Porch Interview Form

Date of visit: _____

How long has he/she lived in your service area? _____

How many in your household?

Adults _____ Youth (13–18) _____ Children (5–12) _____ Preschoolers _____

What are some specific concerns/dreams/desires that you have for:

1. Your neighborhood or lifestyle group?
2. Your family?
3. Life skills that would help your future?
4. Recreation that would be of interest to you or your family?
5. Spiritual issues or needs you wish to explore?
6. Other issues:

Interviewer's opinion about most fruitful point of future contact:

_____ (check if you need to write this on the back of this sheet)

Interviewer's name:

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Look and Pray “Spiritual Lurking” Team

The Look and Pray “Spiritual Lurking” Team will enter and observe two environments where unchurched people in your community hang out. One environment should be familiar to both you and the people group you want to reach. For the second observation experience, look for a place unfamiliar to you but common to the people group you are observing.

Jesus ate with sinners. Yet we tend to stick to people we know. Showing God’s love today requires that we go where the lost can be found. Some disciples relate to people beyond the “stained-glass barrier” of the church. Others find it difficult to initiate or maintain such relationships. As a result, many Christians, even those in evangelism training programs, express hesitancy and even fear about entering nonchurch social circles. We want you to develop this skill so that your church enters the world beyond the “stained-glass barrier” and you are familiar with that world beyond.

A missional church needs to do the following:

- Become familiar with, and therefore less self-conscious in, unchurched circles
- Cross cultural boundaries with people groups underrepresented in its congregation
- Provide opportunities for initiating new relationships with individuals in the groups being observed
- Understand worldviews, interests, and life perspectives of people so that the Christian message, when communicated, will be understood

Team Assignment

As a team, drive or walk through the community you are observing. Note gathering places of various people groups represented in the community. Particularly look for gathering places of people groups underrepresented in your church. Choose from two to four locations to observe in this study. At least one of these environments should be relatively familiar to your team members. At least two environments should reflect a cross-cultural or unfamiliar environment to most, if not all, team members. Your team members will choose one familiar and one unfamiliar environment each for on-site observation. Such observations, with the exception of safety issues, should be done individually, as team members may tend to stick to each other while observing either familiar or unfamiliar environments.

Each team member should spend a minimum of one occasion in the environment with which he or she is familiar. Here your team members are apt to meet people who are somewhat compatible with them and with the majority of your congregation. For example, team members who are interested in sports may spend time working out with strangers at a local health club or community center. A member interested in politics may attend a political rally or a caucus meeting within his or her precinct. As most successful evangelism efforts take place with “people of our own kind” or with whom we share an affinity, this exercise will enable your team to come into contact with people in the community who are more likely to share common interests or values with church members. Pick an environment your team members will be relatively comfortable in and enjoy.

Spend a minimum of one hour on two occasions in at least two environments where team members are apt to observe people whose interests and values are different from their own or from that of the common makeup of your congregation. For example, a team may choose to spend an hour observing behavior in a neighborhood bar or community nightclub that serves as a gathering for one or more people groups. A team member of an aging congregation that wants to reach out to the youth of the community may choose to attend a school sports event or chaperone a school dance in order to observe community youth in their familiar gathering places. Be creative, seeking to enter an environment with which you are not highly familiar (or even perhaps one you are uncomfortable entering) but which represents people groups from the community you are studying.

After conducting these observation exercises, gather as a team to record your findings. A report form for this purpose may be found on the next page. Share insights you have gained from your observations that might be beneficial to the broader Community Analysis Team.

Begin praying for the missional needs and interests you discerned through this exercise.

Look and Pray “Spiritual Lurking” Team Report Form

(Use this form for each observed environment in this team assignment.)

Read through this form before “lurking” to prepare yourself to notice features of the environment and people’s lives. It will also help you note feelings and observations of your self-awareness and your own competencies in crossing the “stained-glass barrier” and entering someone else’s world.

1. What environment did you choose for conducting this field assignment? What were your criteria for selecting it?
2. What preparation did you make before entering this environment?
3. Describe your feelings in anticipation of your observation experience and as you made preparations for it.
4. What people groups did you see in this context? What appeared to be their motivation for being there?
5. What did you note about the environment that made it comfortable or appealing to the people gathered there?
6. What did you note about the way people in this context related to each other? Observe body language and mannerisms as well as speech and talking.
7. Describe your feelings while going through the experience. Do your description in a stream-of-consciousness style, sharing your thoughts as you encountered the various sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of the unfamiliar environment.
8. How did you feel in the environment? Did you “fit” there?
9. What in the environment prompted specific responses you’ve described?
10. From your observations, what did you learn about:
 - Yourself?
 - The interests, needs, and views of those you observed?
 - Your church and its “stained-glass barrier” for the cultural group you are observing?

Community Analysis Team Recap

After each team has completed its research, gather all team members together as the Community Analysis Recap Team. This team will share the following responsibilities:

- Gathering, analyzing, and understanding data gathered in phases 1, 2, and 3 of this study. Every team member should hear and read reports of the other investigation teams.
- Conversing and brainstorming with each other concerning the church's missional potential based on shared observations and findings.
- Recording recommendations with the rationale for or against initiating a missional activity, group, or church body in the study area. Submit these recommendations and rationale to the church or appropriate board.

Community Analysis Team Recap Form

Each study team should share its team recap. As an entire group, listen carefully and note the following:

What community needs and interests have emerged in this study?

What opportunities for missional engagement in the community are the teams identifying?

Given your summary of needs, interests, and concerns among people groups in the study area, what ministry proposals emerge? If you faced no limitations, what missional ministries would you envision for church involvement?

Envision ways the church can partner and network with members of the people groups outside the church to address needs, interests, and concerns identified in this study.

What community information, trends, development, and so on do you need to keep in mind as the church develops a missional strategy for this demographic context?

Do you recommend that your church start a new missional ministry and/or expand its missional outreach in this community? ___Yes ___No
Give reasons for your recommendation.

What ministries does your church have that currently address needs and interests this study has revealed?

What existing ministries in your church might be transformed to serve a missional purpose revealed in this study?

If your church decided to address missional needs in your area, how do you envision that mission, given data you have gathered?

What assets do you feel the church has to offer that are compatible with the community outside the church?

What challenges can you anticipate in moving the church toward a missional response?