

Meeting Community Needs Assessment Pack



CONGREGATION & VISITORS



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This Assessment Pack from BuildingChurchLeaders.com is a collection of tools to use with your leadership team. Each tool has been designed to help you and your team measure how well your church meets the needs of its community.

Here's how to use your Building Church Leaders assessments with your board, committees, or staff:

- ◆ Print and photocopy the assessment tool you'd like to use (you have permission to photocopy for church or educational use).
- ◆ Hand it to your team to complete.
- ◆ Lead a discussion based on the team's answers.

For more assessment packs, complete training themes, or other training tools for church leadership, see our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

Turning the Church Inside Out

Make the transition to outward- focused ministry.

Matthew 9:35–38

A mindset of ministry to others is the sign of an outward-focused church. Congregations that serve the physical and spiritual needs of their communities are seen as good neighbors. But becoming an outward focused church requires a big effort; for some it seems impossible. Use this checklist to evaluate where you are and to inspire the next steps for turning your church inside out.

- Our leaders possess a vision for ministry to the community.
- We pray for the social and spiritual needs of our church and community.
- Our congregation understands the close biblical relationship between service and evangelism.
- Members of our church, especially leaders, are familiar with the needs of our community.
- Church leaders understand and model evangelism.
- We offer a course to train the congregation in sharing their faith. We require this course for leaders.
- People are encouraged, not pushed, into service.
- We invite the congregation to serve by reminding them of the lasting impact of their work.
- We utilize our most available workforce (i.e. youth, seniors, stay-at-home parents).
- Service opportunities match the skills, desires, and availability of our congregation.
- We try to match service opportunities with the most pressing needs.
- The congregation supports our vision and is educated in our ministry needs.
- The congregation feels the freedom to suggest new outreach opportunities.
- Our leaders serve as cheerleaders for the church's workers and ministries.
- We celebrate service and changed lives through testimonies on a regular basis.
- We combine with other churches that share our values for local outreach.

—CHARLES ROESELIS

Discuss

1. Jesus proclaimed the Good News with healing, feeding, and teaching. How well does our church link the social and spiritual implications of the gospel?
2. What are the benefits to partnering with other churches? What are the important issues to clarify with other churches before engaging in outreach with them?
3. What are three ways we can assess the needs of our community?

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The Reputable Church

To have a positive impact in the community, a church must tend to its reputation.

Proverbs 22:1

What do the people in your neighborhood think of your church? It may not seem like an important question, but a church that is a bad neighbor is ineffective in its community. Cultivating a reputation that glorifies God takes work. Assess your reputation in the following areas by circling your choice of responses and elaborating on the answer.

Appear welcoming. Churches do most of their work behind closed doors. Because of this, many neighbors have no occasion to observe the church when gathered. Events and programs that are held outside or advertised to the community create a feeling of welcome that will invite neighbors to discover the church for the first time. Of course, nothing can replace the feeling of hospitality inside a church.

Our church hosts events that welcome the community.

We do this well

We need to work on this

Listen to one another. Before making decisions that will affect your neighbors, invite their feedback to your proposal. A community rallied against a church expansion or outreach event is a sad thing. Meet with them before the event, listen to their concerns, and try to respond graciously.

We have systems set up to dialogue with our neighbors.

We do this well

We need to work on this

Be part of their world. Churches are sometimes seen as standoffish. But putting a float in the town parade, participating in community events, and making your church available for community programs will not go unnoticed.

Our church is involved in community life.

We do this well

We need to work on this

THE REPUTABLE CHURCH (CONTINUED)

Show them kindness. Let your neighbors know that you care about their salvation and are ready to help them in other ways. Perform service projects free of charge to help locals fix, clean, or paint their houses. Set a goal of reaching out to your community at times other than when you want them to show up for a program or outreach event.

We have ministries of kindness and service that we offer for free to the community.

We do this well

We need to work on this

Outward appearance. Weeds, overgrown hedges, burned-out lights, and battered signs send the wrong message. Caring for your grounds is a good way to communicate to the neighbors that your church is a friendly place.

Our building and grounds are in good condition.

We do this well

We need to work on this

Turn the other cheek. Cultivate a good reputation by resolving tense situations with your neighbors. Create goodwill by settling concerns to their satisfaction whenever possible. You'll find the good relationship and witness to be well worth the price.

We are willing to settle our neighbors' concerns with our church.

We do this well

We need to work on this

—JOHN BEUKEMA

Discuss

1. In which of the above categories would we like to see improvement? What steps can we take to make these improvements?
2. What should our neighbors know about our church? What should we know about them?
3. List several community functions in which the church could participate.

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS**In Touch with the Community**

Follow the example of Nehemiah's compassion, faith, and planning.

Nehemiah 2:17–18

Nehemiah understood the implications of his brother's report on the city of Jerusalem: "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." (Neh. 1:3). Nehemiah changed the course of his life based on accurate and compelling information. He also prayed, gathered resources, organized others.

Use the assessment below each statement to measure how close your church is to realizing and meeting the needs of its community. Rate yourself as proficient, mediocre, or needing work.

Step 1: Compassion Precedes Strategy

Attitude and commitment come before action and results. Look to the community to inform you of their needs; look to God to inform you of his solutions.

Members of my church have a heart for serving others.

Rather than presuming to know what people need, my church listens to the needs and dreams of others, and puts resources where the community needs them.

My church works hard to gather and evaluate the needs of our community.

proficient

mediocre

needs work

Step 2: Research the Needs

Nehemiah gathered information about the needs of Jerusalem before he began to work; we should do no less.

I know where to find pertinent information on the issues facing my community.

My church uses demographic and economic information to effectively serve our community.

We have contacted community groups to assess how we can best address the needs of our city.

proficient

mediocre

needs work

Step 3: From Concept to Concrete

Engaging your church in ministries of social outreach provides a good opportunity for reaching the physical and spiritual needs of others. These ministries can either be based inside or outside your church.

We set goals in accordance with our church vision and community needs.

Our church has strong working relationships with other churches and nonprofit organizations in our area.

Our church encourages its members to serve as volunteers in both church and non-church charitable work.

proficient

mediocre

needs work

—RICK RUSAW AND ERIC SWANSON

Discuss

1. What are some of the benefits and challenges we can expect if we follow the approach outlined above?
2. What are some possibilities for easing the strain a plan like this could have on our resources?
3. What are the perils of assuming, before research and prayer, we know the greatest community needs?

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS**Research Your Community**

Census data can be put to work for your church's outreach program.

Numbers 1:2

Too many churches lack good information about their parish. Neighborhood change is reported anecdotally: "Did you see the old hospital is being converted to condos?" or "They're putting an addition on the elementary school." Under this method of gathering information, churches risk failing to respond to demographic changes in a timely manner and adapting their ministries to reach the community.

An informative, free resource that provides demographic information is the U.S. Census Bureau. Visit www.factfinder.census.gov to learn more about how your neighborhood breaks down demographically. Many statistics are available for your town, even your neighborhood. Other statistics will help you observe trends in your township or county. Comparing statistics from the 1990 survey to the 2000 survey (and for some areas, the 2005 survey) will help you see specific trends that interest you.

Here are some examples of searches and the questions they should raise:

Use the ZIP code search to learn who lives in your neighborhood, their age, sex, race, and average income.

- *How representative is our church of the surrounding community?*

Search neighboring areas and find out how they compare to your area.

- *Are you on the border of a low (or high) income community?*
- *Are there many people of different ethnic backgrounds living nearby?*
- *Is our community experiencing change?*
- *How can we reach out to these communities?*

Search your city or ZIP code in the people tab to discover the age, sex, education, disability, employment, language, income, poverty, household structure, and ethnicity of your region.

- *What surprises you about these statistics?*

Create a fact sheet for your community. Click any of the map tabs to view the statistics charted on a map of your area.

- *Where do members of our congregation live?*
- *How does this relate to the populations of single parents, the elderly, or other ethnic groups?*

Use the population estimates program to visualize the growth of your county.

- *Is our area growing or declining in population?*
- *What is the death rate, birth rate, and immigration rate of our county's population growth?*

—TED KRUSE

Discuss

1. Does our church represent a cross-section of the community, or do we specialize in ministry to a particular group?
2. How can we adapt worship or Sunday school programs to demographic changes?
3. Is our current outreach strategy effectively reaching our community? If not, what steps can we take to improve it?

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS**Responding to Change**

Evaluate your church's ability to respond to ethnic, economic, and leadership changes.

Proverbs 22:2

Change can wear a variety of masks: among them, changes in the local economy, ethnic makeup, and leadership turnover. How a congregation is prepared to respond to times of change can transform a potentially disastrous situation into a divinely granted opportunity. The more rapid the change is, the more difficult it is for a church to adjust. Evaluate your church's ability to respond to demographic shifts and leadership changes, and see how well your church is prepared for an influx of newcomers or for new leadership to step up. Put a check mark in all the boxes that describe your church.

- Our church is open to newcomers, even those of a different ethnic or economic status.
- Our congregation faces demographic change that affects our missions and outreach to newcomers.
- We do not assume that newcomers understand church life or grasp basic Christian beliefs.
- We have a strategy for maintaining the “community feel” of our church in the midst of change.
- We see ethnic diversity within our church as an opportunity to faithfully reflect the unity that Christ made possible.
- Church leaders model and encourage cross-cultural relationships in our congregation and in the local community.
- Our leadership, administration, and worship styles accurately reflect the diversity of our congregation.
- Church leaders are regularly engaged in discipling, teaching, and training others.
- Our church prepares for change by praying for our congregation, leadership team, and newcomers.

—STEVE MATHEWSON, CAREY CASEY, DEE DUKE

Discuss

1. From whom can we expect the most resistance to new people coming into the congregation?
2. What are the advantages of diversity within the local body of Christ?
3. Does our leadership style encourage people to engage in ministry?

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Meeting the Needs of Single Parents

Intentionality is the key to effectively assist those raising children by themselves.

Luke 7:12–15

There are countless single parents in churches today accomplishing nearly everything alone: working full-time, keeping house, maintaining the car, paying the bills, and ferrying the kids to school, church, Little League, and piano lessons.

While many churches are helping single parents with practical and financial needs, the churches that most effectively assist single parents also listen to the needs of the heart. These churches succeed not because of programs and budgets, but because they respond to emotional needs and prayer requests. They also listen to what single parents desire most: to be valued, participate in a supportive community, and be empowered to build a new and healthy family life.

For each category, assess your church's ability in reaching out to single parents. Circle a number on a scale of 1 (never happens) to 5 (always happens).

Awareness—We get to know the single parents attending our church, and become familiar with the emotional and physical needs they face. 1 2 3 4 5

Welcome—We accommodate single parents in our church through programs that enable them to have a social life. Childcare is provided throughout the week to enable the involvement of our church's single parents in various ministries. 1 2 3 4 5

Fellowship—Single parents (and their children) are given the opportunity to participate in support-group settings. Single parents feel welcome mixing with other groups in the church. 1 2 3 4 5

Value—Single parents are honored as a valuable segment of our congregation through programs that support their needs, as well as ministries that highlight their contribution. 1 2 3 4 5

Listening—Single parents are regularly given the opportunity to provide feedback on the amount of support and acceptance they feel from the church as a whole. 1 2 3 4 5

Support—Our church provides, or refers, counseling for single parents. 1 2 3 4 5

Provision—Our church seeks to support the needs of single parents by soliciting donations on their behalf. 1 2 3 4 5

Empowerment—Our church enables and encourages single parents to build healthy family lives through the services and opportunities we provide. 1 2 3 4 5

—BARBARA SCHILLER

Discuss

1. How do texts like Psalm 68:5, James 1:27, and the ministry of Jesus to widows (Luke 7:11–17) address how we approach single parents in our church?
2. Is our church missing opportunities with single parents by not anticipating the challenges they face?
3. Based on the categories we fell short in, what are some steps we can take to ensure that our church is a safe and welcoming place for single parents?