



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

seeking the goodwill of your neighborhood

Community engagement is a strategic process of involvement in a particular social group or geographic context (i.e. town, neighborhood, city block) with the purpose of understanding and improving the community's well-being.

When asked what the greatest command was, Jesus said that it was to love God with every fiber of our being but that the second greatest command was of equal importance—to care for our neighbors in the same way we care for ourselves (Matthew 22:37). As congregations, we are called to do the same and the practices of community engagement can help.

We are called to love our neighbors. We can't love our neighbors in meaningful and relevant ways if we don't know them. This community engagement process will allow you to get to know, listen to, and learn from your neighbors.

The Process

This community engagement process is conducted over 2 months and is comprised of three phases:

- Phase 1 - Congregational Assessment**
- Phase 2 - Community Engagement**
- Phase 3 - Our Commitments**

To get started sign up to join a cohort, build a team, participate in an introductory session and begin selecting and scheduling your activities.

“He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’”

– Jesus, Matthew 22:37

Celebrant:

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People:

I will, with God's help.

Celebrant:

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People:

I will, with God's help.

Celebrant:

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People:

I will, with God's help.

– Book of Common Prayer, Baptismal Covenant

Form a Community Engagement Team Build a team of at least three people - one person to act as facilitator, one to document learnings, and one to ensure that updates are regularly shared with the congregation.

Participate in an Introduction Session Teams from multiple churches will going through this process together as a cohort and participate in an introduction session to get a better feel for the vision, purpose, and process.

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
– Jesus, Matthew 18:3-4

*“One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a **holy curiosity.**”*
– Albert Einstein

Select Activities and Schedule Them Each church will complete a number of key activities that all of the churches will do. There are also optional activities; your team will be invited to decide from among them which ones you’d like to do.

Holy Curiosity

During his earthly ministry, Jesus invited his followers to become like children—filled with awe and wonder—in order that they might access God’s dream, the kingdom of heaven. In this dream of God’s is an imagination for all that God hopes for the world: redemption, reconciliation, and renewal. The invitation to each faith community is to partner with the Spirit in ushering this dream into reality.

To do so requires that we become curious about what God might be doing that we have not yet noticed. To use a term coined by Albert Einstein, our task is to be filled with “holy curiosity.” We want to curiously seek out and discern what God is up to in the world. Like Einstein, this requires that we act a little like scientists, seeking out and testing ideas.

A Missional Hypothesis¹

A scientist is bound to the scientific method; you ask a question, collect information, establish a hypothesis, and then conduct experiments to determine whether your hypothesis is right. If it does not work, you go back and collect more information and try again. If it does work, you move forward. In community engagement work, this process is intended to help you develop a “missional hypothesis.”

To begin, let’s take a moment to establish your missional hypothesis regarding the neighborhood around your church campus. If you were to guess what it is that God is longing for in your community, what would it be?

Summarize your missional hypothesis here:

<p>We wonder if God is _____ in our community.</p> <p>We wonder if the Spirit is calling us to _____ in our community.</p>
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¹ Modified from “Missional Communities: Episcopal Diocese of Texas.” *Missional Communities | Episcopal Diocese of Texas*, <https://www.epicenter.org/missional-communities/>.

Answering Questions

Now that you've documented your missional hypothesis, let's address a few other questions you may have.

Who is involved?

- A team of at least 2-3 members from your congregation to serve as representatives of your church community
- The EDSD Missioner for Community Engagement and EDSD ministries and resources as your guide and support team

What will we be doing?

Outwardly-focused spiritual practices such as loving your neighbors, prayer, and listening to the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction.

- Engaging in an interactive, activity-based, and relational journey
- Reflecting on your church history, culture, and values
- Exploring and learning about the context in which your church is geographically and culturally located
- Spending time with and learning from your neighbors

Where will this happen?

The neighborhood/community in which your church is located. We will help you define the boundaries of your church community. Activities you will engage in throughout this process will take place, some meetings will take place in person at your church or a place of your choosing, others will take place on-line, and an important aspect of this process will be spending time in your community—walking or driving the streets, getting to know local businesses and community organizations, and more.

When will this take place?

You will be invited to join a cohort and take this journey with teams from several other churches. The steps we will guide you through will take approximately 2 months. Then, if this process is done well, it will cause shifts in the way your church community thinks and does church. Community engagement will become integrated into your culture and will be ongoing.

What are possible outcomes of this process?

This work will be energizing and exciting. You will be part of God's story in the lives of others, and they will be part of yours. It will take time, it will be messy, and it will be worth it.

- You will know your neighbors and your neighbors will know you—for the first time or in more meaningful ways
- You may become regular customers at local businesses, join community groups, work with local non-profits, faith communities, or schools; and be in relationship with neighbors and community stakeholders.
- You may re-evaluate current ministries considering the new values and priorities you develop

Helpful Mindset

As you begin this work, here are some helpful reminders about how to approach this work:

Cultivate a posture of curiosity and openness to a process (vs. a program)

Nurture a desire to partner with God in loving your neighbors and neighborhood

Be prepared to see strengths in your community as well as needs

Be open to growth and change—in your ministries, culture, focus, etc.

Expect God to show up!

Visit EDSD.org to find all your resources

edsd.org/community-engagement-home



PHASE 1 | Congregational Assessment



To uncover the good news in your neighborhood we need to see the good news in our own lives and congregation first. You can't share good news you haven't experienced. So, let's conduct some exercises to expose God's good news in the life of this congregation.

Using MissionInsite

You will use demographic data made available by the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego through MissionInsite to begin exploring your community. Accessing this data requires that a representative of your congregation [register on the MissionInsite website](#) using the diocesan agency register code (3353D).



If you need help with registration, [here is a tutorial](#).

Once your registration is complete, you will generate a demographic report on the community around your church. [Here is a tutorial](#).

Based on the area you have just pulled data on, select a specific area of focus. The higher the population density, the smaller this area will be. In urban areas it might be only a few blocks. In suburban areas it may be 3 to 5 miles depending on density.

With this new data in hand, what surprised you? What excites you? What are you curious about? What do you want to learn more about?

During Phase 1, your congregation is asked to complete four self-assessment activities focused on gathering information and reflecting on your church community's history, values, and priorities.

- ✓ **MissionInsite Study**
- ✓ **Congregational Timeline**
- ✓ **Missional Readiness Survey**
- ✓ **Congregational Asset Inventory**

Share Your Progress

Creating a physical map helps you track progress as you move through this process. Select a way to visually share your progress with the congregation. This can be done physically—maybe a periodically updated poster in the narthex—or electronically on your website. If in print, decide on the size of paper you want to work with. It's easier to draw with markers on flip chart size newsprint, which you would then photograph and post. Alternatively, you could use smaller markers to work on an 8.5 X11" sheet of plain paper, which you would then scan into a PDF format and upload. Mark your map to clarify which blocks or parts of the community you have already assessed and those you still need to. It will be helpful to designate one person to collect the information and manage your progress. This may be someone passionate about this effort yet unavailable to participate in prayer walks or mapping due to schedule or physical limitation.



Congregational Timeline²

To uncover the good news in your neighborhood we need to see the good news in our own lives and congregation first. You can't share good news you haven't experienced. So, let's conduct an experiment to expose God's good news in the life of this congregation by drafting a congregational timeline. As the website Studying Congregations states:

"Understanding who you are today means beginning that story in the longer history of your congregation. You could read lots of old documents or official histories, but it's just as important to know what stories people are carrying in their heads and perhaps sharing at coffee hour."



You will need butcher paper or flip charts, along with markers of different colors. Begin documenting your findings as you interview members or look at archival documents. Pay close attention to adaptability to change throughout a congregation's history, responses to population and social changes, etc.

Follow the tutorial provided by Studying Congregations to conduct this exercise found [here](#).

You will draw a line across your paper beginning with the founding of the parish until now. It will look something like this:

Founding

Now

² Adapted from "Talking Through History." *Studying Congregations*, <https://studyingcongregations.org/talking-through-history/>.

Mapping Your Congregation³ (optional)

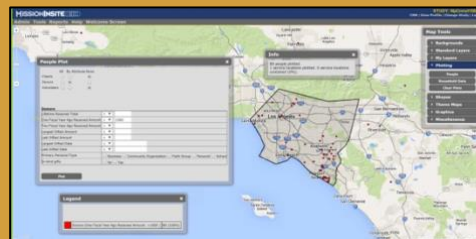
You can also use MissionInsite to map your congregation's households. This offers a visual representation of where your congregation lives, which has many possibilities. Knowing where households are clustered can help you:

Build a small group ministry based on those who live in proximity to each other

Determine neighborhood ministry opportunities

Create a care ministry based on proximity

Empower members to reach out to new visitors nearby



The first step to mapping members requires exporting member home addresses into a .csv or .xlsx file. Once completed, you can log in to MissionInsite, click on the "People Plot" icon and begin the process.

If you need assistance, [here is a tutorial](#).

Missional Readiness⁴



The purpose of the Missional Readiness survey is to reflect on the missional efforts of a congregation; an opportunity for members and leaders to share thoughts about their contributions to sharing the good news of Christ's Kingdom. It is brief and members will be able to complete this quickly. It asks questions about members' comfort with talking about their faith, member engagement with ministries off campus, financial commitment of parish to outreach and awareness of surrounding neighborhood. This will be ideally conducted electronically using [this link](#).

Direct members to link provided

Members will select your congregation

Complete the survey

All responses will be shared with you and congregational leadership. Be sure to give members a limited window of time to complete the survey. If this is not feasible for your congregation, the survey can be completed using physical copies. A .pdf of the survey can be [downloaded here](#).

³ Modified from "Missional Communities: Episcopal Diocese of Texas." *Missional Communities | Episcopal Diocese of Texas*, <https://www.epicenter.org/missional-communities/>.

⁴ Ibid.

Congregational Asset Inventory⁵

Every congregation has a unique charism and call. A congregational asset inventory is intended to draw out the gifts a congregation has to offer to community engagement. There are 3 phases to conducting a congregational asset inventory: interviewing current members, reviewing congregational history, and identifying perspective of the congregation from those outside.



Introduce the idea to your congregation that it has gifts—ideas, abilities, hopes—to offer the surrounding neighborhood

Using the Congregational Timeline, locate historic information—narrative or archival—on the relationship between the congregation and its community throughout its existence





Identify community leaders, stakeholders and neighbors outside the church that share their perspective on the contributions of the congregation to the community

Categorize your findings within four categories. Gifts of the head are things about which this congregation is knowledgeable (i.e., a congregation who has legal expertise). Gifts of the heart are those things about which the congregation is passionate (i.e., a congregation may be passionate about refugee advocacy). Gifts of the hands are those things about which the congregation has expertise at doing (i.e., a congregation who has several capable gardeners). Other gifts include your campus—the physical space you can share with your surrounding community. Document your findings on the following form.

You can download physical copies of this form [here](#).

⁵ Modified from CityNet & Long Beach Connections (citynet.org).



 Gifts of the Head Things we are knowledgeable	 Gifts of the Heart Things we are passionate	 Gifts of the Hands Things we are good at doing
 Other Gifts What are the gifts your campus offers to the surrounding community?		

Congratulations!

You have completed Phase 1 of the Community Engagement process. Make sure to [visit this link](#) and update your progress. Also, take a moment to stop and reflect on how your missional hypothesis may have evolved since you started below.

Summarize your missional hypothesis here:

Visit [EDSD.org](https://edsd.org) to find all your resources

edsd.org/community-engagement-home



PHASE 2 | Community Engagement



You have already collected demographic data about the community you will engage with. But data alone is not enough—you need to spend time in your community paying attention to the context, listening to our neighbors, and listening to God. The following exercises will help you discover the good news of what God is doing in your community.

Visual Tour (low contact)

Like a prayer walk or windshield survey, a visual tour is an opportunity to walk through your neighborhood and discover what God is doing in this place. From Studying Congregations, “images themselves offer an important way to help others ‘see’ what is going on in, through, and beyond congregations.” After completing a visual tour, it is important to decide how you will share what you have discovered with your congregation. These images can be shared along with the map you are frequently updating for the congregation.

Regarding this exercise, the Studying Congregations website states:



“Whatever technology one employs, one should think of cameras as tools for collecting information and photographs as a way to explore questions. [...] In preparation, it is helpful to think about what kinds of information one wants to collect. [...] In what ways is God at work in your congregation, neighborhood, or city? What needs or opportunities are present near your congregation’s place of worship? What is it like to walk, bike, or take public transportation to your congregation’s place of meeting? What does it look like to live in this neighborhood? Who are our neighbors?”⁶

During Phase 2, your congregation is invited to select from several community engagement practices - including at least one low contact and one relational/interactive option.

- ✓ Prayer Walks
- ✓ Windshield Survey
- ✓ Visual Tour
- ✓ Campus Tour
- ✓ Information Interviews
- ✓ Community Asset Map

⁶ Williams, Roman. “Walking with Cameras.” *Studying Congregations*, 20 Apr. 2016, <https://studyingcongregations.org/walking-with-cameras/>.

Windshield Surveys⁷ (low contact)

Invite members of your group to conduct a “windshield survey” of the area you have selected. This experiment is designed to guide you towards collecting information about the community by listening to God, observing the neighborhood, and maybe even meeting individuals in the neighborhood. Always go in groups of two or more. As you pay attention to the community, consider answering questions such:

What do you notice about the physical environment?

What do you notice about the social environment?

What do you notice about the individuals you know, meet, or observe?

What do you see God doing in the community?



Debrief together after you complete your windshield surveys. Keep record of the blocks covered and your reflection. Did this confirm or deny any of your missional hypothesis? Document this.

You can download physical copies of this form [here](#).

⁷ Modified from “Missional Communities: Episcopal Diocese of Texas.” *Missional Communities | Episcopal Diocese of Texas*, <https://www.epicenter.org/missional-communities/>.

Windshield Surveys⁸

Observers: _____

Weather: _____ Temperature: _____

City: _____ Neighborhood: _____

Day/Date/Time: _____

What To Bring:

survey forms	camera
cell phone	clipboard
pen/pencil	water

<p>Neighborhood Boundaries What are the boundaries of the neighborhood Are there commercial streets or areas? Does the neighborhood have an identity, a visible name?</p>	
<p>Housing What is the age of housing, types of architecture, construction material? How many stories? Are there single, multifamily dwellings, mobile homes? Do houses have space/lawns around them? Are they well groomed? What is the general condition of the houses? Are there signs of disrepair (broken doors, windows, railings)? Are there cars in driveways? Does it appear everyone is at work? Are there vacant homes, dilapidated buildings? Are there many houses for sale? Are there streetlights, sidewalks?</p>	
<p>Open Spaces How much open space is there? Are there parks and recreational areas in the neighborhood? Are they lighted? Is the open space public or private? Who uses it? Is there trash, rubble, or abandoned property in open spaces?</p>	
<p>Shopping Areas What types of stores are in the area (shopping centers, neighborhood stores, grocery stores, drug stores, laundries, etc.)? How are these resources distributed in the area? Are they spread throughout? What language are signs in?</p>	
<p>Schools Are there schools in the neighborhood? Public or private? Play areas, athletic fields connected to schools? Are school grounds in good repair? School bus stops or crossing guards?</p>	
<p>Religion What churches do you see? Who uses the churches? Do you see evidence of their use for other than purely religious purposes?</p>	
<p>Protective Services What evidence do you see of police, fire, and emergency services? Are there fire stations, fire hydrants? Do houses have security systems? Is there evidence of a neighborhood watch program? Are there emergency services?</p>	

Continued on next page.

⁸ Adapted from *Guidelines for a Windshield Survey*, Indiana School of Nursing, Department of Community Health Nursing.



<p>Human Services Where are hospitals and health services located? Are there physician offices, clinics, or dentist offices? Are there alternative medical centers? Are social agencies available (WIC, etc.)? Are there senior centers or childcare facilities?</p>	
<p>Transportation How do people get around the neighborhood (car, bus, train, bike, walk)? Are the streets and roads conducive to good transportation and community life? Are bus stops or public transportation signs visible? Is this a high-traffic area? Are speed limit signs posted? Is there a highway nearby?</p>	
<p>Neighborhood Life Whom do you see on the streets (adults, children, teenagers, elderly)? What ethnic or racial groups are part of the neighborhood? Are there informal gathering places? What are they and whom do they serve? Are there social clubs or cultural organizations? Is there evidence of interaction between residents? Is there evidence of homelessness? Are there parks or other recreational facilities in the neighborhood? Are they public or private? What animals do you see?</p>	
<p>Additional Notes</p>	

Debrief together after you complete your windshield surveys. Keep record of the blocks covered and your reflections. Did this confirm or deny any of your missional hypothesis? Document this.

Prayer Walks (low contact)

After having driven through your community, it is time to pray through your community. Use the Neighborhood Prayer Walks guide from The Episcopal Church for designing your prayer walks available [here](#).



Debrief together after you complete your windshield surveys. Keep record of the blocks covered and your reflections. Did this confirm or deny any of your missional hypothesis? Document this.

<p>Signs of Hope Where do you see evidence of God's grace and God's people at work? Look for churches and nonprofit organizations, children playing, uplifting artwork, symbols of faith, social gatherings, gardens. Look especially for the assets that could be connected to neighborhood needs.</p>	
<p>Signs of Need Look for evidence of hardship, hurt or injustice. Is that you see specific to areas or affecting the neighborhood as a whole? Be aware of the marginalized people and social problems are often hidden, especially in communities that appear well-off.</p>	

You can download physical copies of this form [here](#).

By now, you should have an increasing sense of who you know and who you would like to know better. Use the following form to document the names and relationships you now know of.

Relationship Inventory⁹

External Relationships: (with people, not already church members)	Name the key people you know:	Rate these relationships: (weak, okay, strong)	What does this relationship offer? (expertise, experience, relationships, funding)
Religious (clergy and lay leaders from other traditions)			
Education (principals, teachers, librarians, childcare directors)			
Community/Cultural (civic club leaders, community organizers)			
Communications (journalists, radio dj's, podcasters)			
Services (officers, fire fighters)			
Health (social workers, physicians, nurses)			
Economic (business owners, realtors)			
Civic (council members, mayor, community liaisons)			
Regular Folks!			

You can download physical copies of this form [here](#).

⁹ Modified from *Holy Currencies Incubation*: Kaleidoscope Institute & Adapted from N. Bracht & L. Kingsbury, 1990, Community Organization Principles in Health Promotion, in N. Bracht, ed., *Health Promotion at the Community Level*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park.

Information Interviews (high contact)

Using the list of relationships from your Relationship Inventory, you and your team will now document, and schedule some “information interviews.”

An information interview, or one-to-one relational meeting is an intentional, well-framed conversation between two people. It is the basic building block of all relational (or community) organizing, a potent tool for community formation and movement building. It connects head and heart, motivation (why we act) and strategy (how we act) and requires us to meet the other with open ears and hearts, sharing and receiving stories of what matters most. You will do 70% of the listening and 30% of the talking.

**You will do
70% of the
listening
and 30% of
the talking**

Use the One-to-One Relational Meetings guide from The Episcopal Church as a instruction for these conversations available [here](#). After your conversation, can you answer questions such as:

What is this person passionate about?

Are they looking for spiritual resources?

Are they looking for community?

What are they good at?

What are they interested in?

What is their story?

What can you invite them to?

Keep record of who you have and have not yet met with—along with your reflections. Did these conversations confirm or deny your missional hypothesis? Document this.

Campus Tours (high contact)



As congregations, we are called to discern how best to steward our campuses in a spiritually fulfilling *and* financially sustainable manner. The following is intended to help bring into that discernment the care of our neighbors, just as Jesus commanded us.

Your church building is place where worship and ministry happen. It is a space that reflects the art and architecture of your context and different eras. Your congregation has gifts to offer, but it also has needs. It may have physical space but needs financial resources in order maintain it. The community around your church also has strengths and needs. This exercise is intended to assist you in discerning how your gifts might be paired with the gifts of your neighbors so that however you move forward it is sustainable for all.

Using the Relationship Inventory worksheet, develop a list of community member and stakeholders that you can invite to your campus—possibly even to worship with your congregation. These can be informal or well-prepared visits to your church campus. In any case, remain open to learning from and dreaming with your potential partners. Introduce yourself and your church. Learn about the work, mission, etc. of the visiting group. Tour your facilities, sharing how and when it is used. Keep the following questions in mind and ask some version of them:

What ways could our campus be a resource to the neighborhood/community?

What neighborhood/community needs make sense in spaces with our architecture?

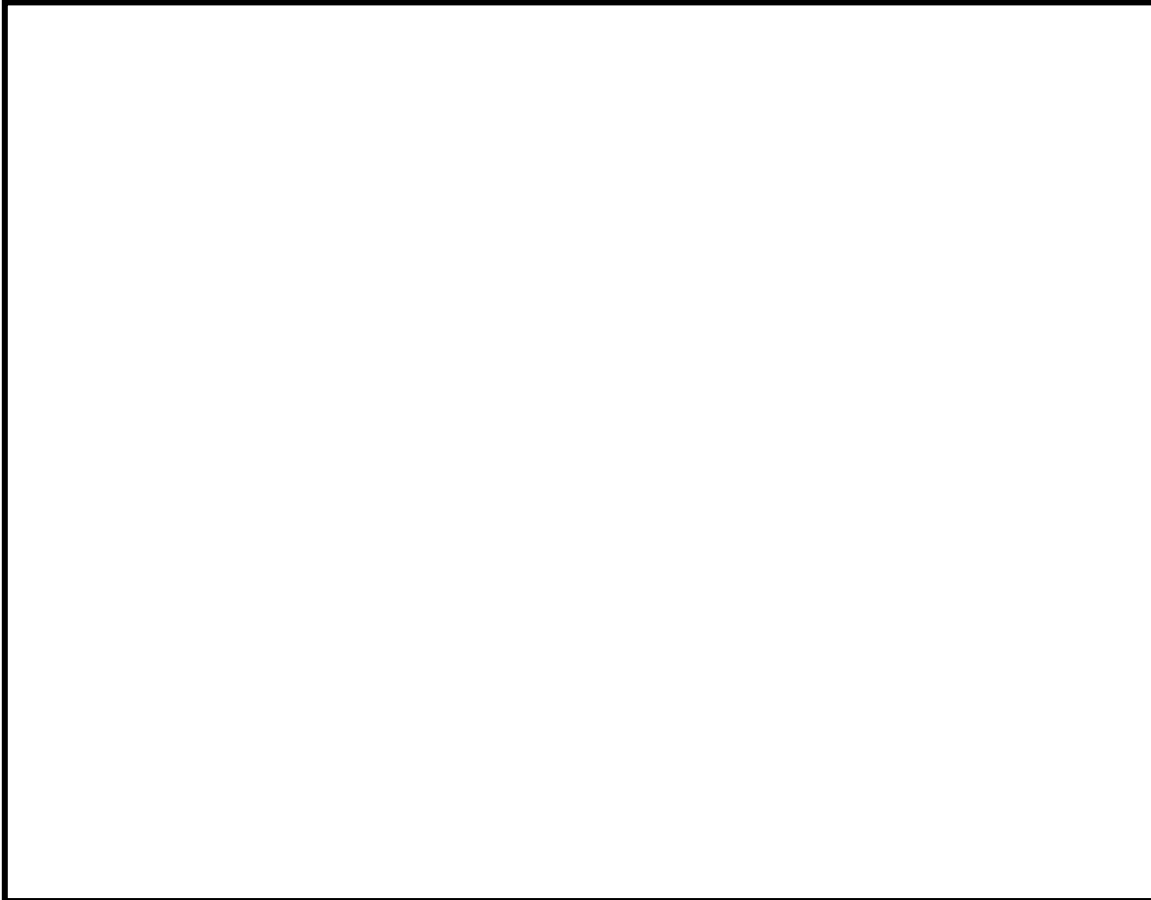
What ways could we partner to plan and implement projects that use of our space?

This assessment process will assist your congregation in determining how to use its physical resources in a manner that allows the congregation to thrive while integrating into the wellbeing of the entire community.

When entering into a rental agreement, please review applicable diocesan canons and consult with the diocesan CFO, the Rev. Canon Jeff Martinhauk at jmartinhauk@edsd.org.

Community Asset Map¹⁰ (low contact)

Think about your ministry context. Draw a few square blocks church at the center and make notes of all the people you know in the neighborhood. Whose names and stories do you know? Where do people live, work and play? Who are the stakeholders in the community? Who is left out within the community? List as much detail as you can about the social and physical environment.



As you review your map, ask yourself the following questions:

Who do we need to learn from?

Whose story needs to be heard?

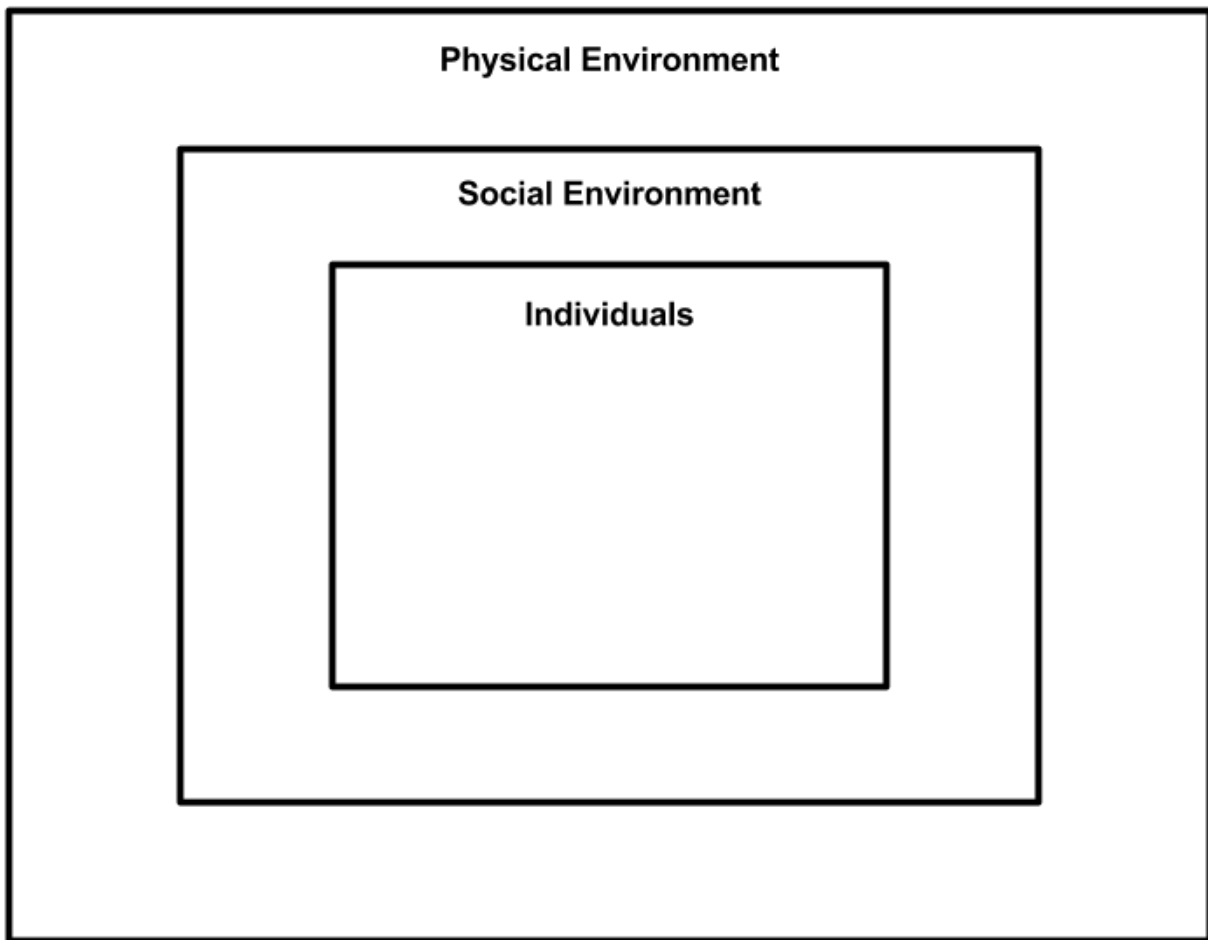
Who can we partner with right now?

Using the information, you have just mapped out, along with all the other information you have now collected, take a few moments to make an “Asset Map.” An asset map catalogs all the gifts—or assets—a community has in the individuals that participate, its geography and social make-up. Catalog those using the form on the following page.

You can download physical copies of this form [here](#).

¹⁰ Modified from “Getting to Know the Neighborhood,” a resource from the Young Adult Ministries of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, www.edow.org/youngadults

Community Asset Map¹¹



NOTES:

¹¹ Kretzmann & McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications

Congratulations!

You have completed Phase 2 of the Community Engagement process. Make sure to [visit this link](#) and update your progress. Also, take a moment to stop and reflect on how your missional hypothesis may have evolved since you started below.

Summarize your missional hypothesis here:

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meeting Guide

Opening (10 min)

Prayer Prayers from the Book of Common Prayer on the following pages are appropriate (e.g. 58, 100, 101, 814, 815 and Various Occasions no. 16.).

Scripture Foothold Possibilities to draw on:

Nehemiah 2.11-18	Luke 10.1-9
Jeremiah 29.4-8	Luke 10.25-37
Micah 6:8	John 13:34-35

Scripture Reflection Offer 2-3 questions for folks to reflect on

- What is the Spirit saying to you through this passage?
- What is the Spirit saying to your congregation through this passage?
- What is the Spirit saying about your neighborhood through this passage?

Debrief (10 min)

Missional Hypothesis Each team/individual shares an update on their missional hypothesis

- What has changed about your hypothesis?
- What are you curious about at this stage?

Training (40 min)

Exercise Descriptions Found in handbook for each next phase

Q&A

- What excites you about what's next?
- What concerns do you have?
- What do you need? Who can offer help?

Reminder Remind participants of what will be reviewed next time and the date and time

Closing Prayer Invite a different participant each time

You can download physical copies of this form [here](#).