

Understanding Your Community A Handbook

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1.0 Preamble

Jesus' ministry was characterized by constant self-denial. Jesus had no selfish motives in His ministry, rather he came for his people, "that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). In Philippians, Paul writes that Jesus "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of servant ... and became obedient to death, even death on a cross" (2:7-8).

Jesus' final command, as recorded by Mark's gospel, is for his disciples to continue His ministry in the same self-denying fashion: "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Peter, Thomas, Paul and the other early evangelists did so in faith, undergirded by prayer, to establish local churches in every community in which they preached.

God's agape love, his self-denying love for His people which culminated in Jesus' death, is our model for ministry as churches and individuals. Jesus emphasized this as he commissioned his followers to go out during His life, and in the Great Commission before his Ascension. Paul reiterates Jesus' words, exhorting Timothy to "Preach the word!" to a world ignoring God.

One basic underlying assumption of this handbook is that Jesus still charges his disciples, those who believe in Him and seek to obey Him as Saviour and Lord, to share the gospel with others. God still uses those of us who believe in Him as His primary method of convicting the world of sin.

Another assumption is that the most effective method of sharing the good news is still the local church. Certainly individuals are the instruments God uses to reach other people, but these individuals need to be nurtured and supported in prayer and resources by a local body of believers.

A final assumption is that, in accordance with Paul's teaching, every believer has been entrusted by God with at least one spiritual gift for ministry, from encouragement to evangelism. Thus every believer is a minister, capable of serving God with his or her God-given gifts and abilities.

As new communities are developed or existing neighbourhoods grow, churches need to be established as lights set on a hill. This handbook will be a useful tool to understand unchurched areas and thus provide essential insights for ministry.

In existing neighbourhoods, local churches ought to have a local "zone of responsibility". Many members may come from beyond the local area of the church, particularly in large cities. But churches need to develop a vision of ministry to their local context. Although many members may commute from other areas, churches also need to be concerned to minister to their immediate areas.

Biblically, churches, as the body of Christ in their community, need to serve their neighbourhood. This handbook will be a guide to established churches seeking to understand their local mission field.

2.0 Introduction

A community without a church has been described as a body without a soul or an explorer without a compass.¹ Such a neighbourhood is a place of darkness with no light.

On the other hand, a church cannot exist without a community; a church exists to be God's ambassador to the people of a community. Reflecting the selfless love of Christ for his church, the church is to selflessly love its community. The local church is the light on the hill, providing hope, purpose and comfort in a world of hopelessness, meaninglessness and loneliness (Ecclesiastes 4).

The purpose of the church, as the people of God seeking to serve Him, is realized as the church ministers to the people of its neighbourhood. To do so, the church must understand the characteristics, needs and concerns of the people in its community.

Every person Jesus spoke with was unique; He spoke with each differently, in the way best suited to minister to each person's needs. So too, every community is unique, and every church must develop an approach to ministry adapted to the needs and concerns of its neighbourhood. To do so, a local church must understand its local area.

This is the basis of contextualized ministry: ministry designed to be relevant to the local community in which a church is located, designed to meet the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of its residents.

The purpose of this handbook is simply to help local churches explore their neighbours and develop contextualized ministries, ministries designed to serve their local communities.

This handbook is a step-by-step guide for your church, as you examine in detail the dynamics, concerns and needs of your community, to facilitate either the development of new ministries, or the planting of new congregations.

This book will help churches reach beyond their own fellowship to reach new people with the gospel in the name of Christ, in obedience to Jesus' words (Matthew 28:19-20).

3.0 Contextualized Ministry

When Nehemiah, cupbearer to the king of Persia, heard of the suffering and needs of his people in Jerusalem, Scripture records that he "sat down and wept ... mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (1:4). In his prayer, Nehemiah prayed for the salvation of God's people (1:5-11).

Nehemiah risked his high position in court, set aside the comforts of the royal palace and ventured into the wilderness in order to obey God's call (2:1-10). He begged leave from the king and set out for Jerusalem where he took stock of his resources and the people with whom he would have to work (2:20).

¹ E.E. Jones, *Strategies for New Churches* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

Nehemiah provides a model for contextualized ministry. Like Jesus, Nehemiah was committed to selfless service to meet a specific need; he sought God's will, obeyed regardless of cost by analyzing the task and organizing to meet the need at hand.

Nehemiah's example illustrates at least five essential components necessary to either developing new ministries in the local church, or planting a new congregation:

1. a commitment to spiritual growth, prayer and seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance (Neh. 1:11, Acts 2:42)
2. a commitment to faithful obedience to the Word of God and to the Spirit's leading (Neh. 2:1-10, John 14:21, James 1:22-25)
3. a self-evaluation of the spiritual and physical resources of the local church (Ezra 2, 8, I Corinthians 12-14)
4. a thorough examination of the local community's character and needs (Neh. 2:11-16, Acts 17:16)
5. a prayerful ministry to meet the needs with which the Holy Spirit is challenging the church (Neh. 3:17-20, I Timothy 3:14-15)

The first three steps are well covered in other books and will not be discussed here in any detail. These steps are critical to preparing for outreach.

Equally critical, however, is a through understanding of the community in which the church seeks to minister and the development of programmes explicitly geared to the needs of that community (steps four and five). That is what this handbook seeks to provide.

4.0 Why Study Your Community?

When Peter preached to the Jews in Jerusalem he quoted the Jewish Scriptures to prove that Jesus was their promised Messiah (Acts 2:14-41). When Paul preached to the Greeks in Athens, he quoted Greek poets and used illustrations from Athenian culture to share the gospel (Acts 17:16-34). The methods Peter and Paul used were very different, one quoted prophets and psalms, the other Greek philosophers and the inscriptions on pagan altars, yet their message was the same. Both preached the good news that, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, anyone who repented and was baptized could be forgiven and receive eternal life.

Peter and Paul are models of contextualized ministry. For the Jews, a sermon using Greek illustrations would have meant nothing. Similarly for the Greeks, an exposition of Joel, a book they had probably never heard of, would have been pointless. Yet by knowing the cultures to which they were speaking, both apostles were able to bring the eternal Word of God to different peoples.

The challenge for churches is to be as sensitive to culture as were Peter and Paul. The ministries, programmes and ideas that work in a large inner city church are inappropriate for a rural church and vice versa. The ideas that worked with youth even ten years ago may no longer be relevant. The form of worship that was appropriate in the past may be a stumbling block today. However the gospel itself must never be compromised. Ezra Jones argues that "the church fails to fulfill its

purpose when it assumes that the context in which it ministers is the same in every place, that the channels of effective ministry are eternally valid.”²

Communities are changing. Virtually no community is the same now as it was thirty years ago. People move in, others move out.

Some communities change socially; the ethnic makeup of the area may change ... the number of families, and the number of children, may either decrease or increase ... the number of singles, childless couples, or single parents may increase or decrease ... the social status of residents may change as either working class or middle class persons move out or move in.

Other communities change physically. Older homes may either become rundown and abandoned, subdivided into suites, or renovated. Single family homes may be destroyed to make way for apartments, condominiums and townhouses.

Yet other neighbourhoods, particularly in the suburbs, never even existed thirty years ago, yet are now thriving communities.

As neighbourhoods change, many people who attend their local church move out of the community. However very often they maintain ties with the church, and commute in from elsewhere.

However the challenge for the church is to maintain ministry within its local context. Sometimes a church continues programmes appropriate to its commuters but ceases to be relevant to the new residents of its local area.

Thus, although a church may be physically present in a community, the community is essentially unchurched.

It may well be important for a church to maintain ministries for its members who come from afar, but a church is also called to be the body of Christ to its community. Jones argues that a church also fails to fulfill its purpose “when it does not adequately understand its constituency and the distinctive methods necessary for serving them.”³

The local church without a ministry appropriate to its community has been likened to a lamp hidden under a bowl (Matthew 5:15).

We have the light of life; we need to hold it in such a way that our communities see the light and can understand, in relevant terms, what the light means to them.

When Peter addressed the Jews in Jerusalem he helped his neighbours understand Jesus by speaking in terms that drew on their cultural background. When Paul spoke to the Athenians he knew that Jewish tradition was foreign to them, so he taught using more appropriate illustrations. The apostles adapted the medium, but never the message.

² E.E. Jones, *Strategies for New Churches* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

³ Ibid.

This handbook will help churches understand their communities so that they, following the biblical model, may reach their communities effectively.

5.0 How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is a workbook for churches interested in developing new ministries or planting new churches. It provides a step-by-step guide to gathering information helpful for designing contextualized ministries, and for understanding and interpreting that information for ministry.

Gathering the information may be done either by one individual or by several who divide up the task.

The most critical step is interpreting the information once it is assembled.

This is best done by a group that includes at least one pastor and some of the lay leaders, ideally with other lay persons who are interested in outreach or in being involved in ministry.

As the church considers the character and needs of the community, new ideas for ministry will emerge. The more people involved in this process, the more creative ideas will emerge, and the more people who may become involved in ministry.

More importantly, lay leaders and members of the congregation need to perceive the needs and ministry opportunities in their community, and see themselves as the leaders of, or at least participants in, new ministries.

All members of the church have gifts and skills for ministry; by discovering the needs in their neighbourhood, members may be encouraged to develop ministries using their gifts.

It is important, then, that after the initial gathering of information as many lay people as possible be encouraged to be a part of the interpretation process. This includes prioritizing the ministries to be undertaken and ensuring that resources are available to accomplish the task.

One possible method might be to schedule a one day retreat for church leaders and members interested in either new ministries or a new church plant after most of the information has been assembled.

The day might be scheduled as follows:

9:00	Arrival
9:15 – 9:45	Worship in song and prayer
9:45 – 10:15	Teaching on God's vision for the church
10:45 – 12:00	Review of gathered information – demographic data
12:00 – 12:15	Opportunity to write down ideas
12:15 – 1:15	Lunch
1:15 – 2:15	Review of gathered information – other data
2:15 – 3:30	Dream and prayer time
3:30	Finish

6.0 Steps to Understanding a Community

6.1 Step One: Defining Your Community

The book of Nehemiah begins with some of Nehemiah's kinfolk arriving in Persia from Jerusalem telling of hardship and desolation. Yet before he hurried to Jerusalem, Scripture records that Nehemiah questioned them about the state of affairs in Jerusalem (1:1-3). Having heard more and understood exactly what the problems and needs were in Jerusalem, Nehemiah prayed to God for the city, and then began to formulate a plan of action.

The first step in solving any problem is to define the exact nature of the problem. Similarly, the first step to understanding a community is to define the community, to determine its boundaries. Within these boundaries is the community that the church will study, seek to understand, and develop contextualized ministries.

If your church is in a town where there is only one denominational church, you may wish to consider the entire town, plus, perhaps, some of the surrounding countryside as your community.

If your church is in a larger town or city, where there are several or many churches, your church will need to define its local community as a specific area within the town or city. Most cities or towns have distinct, although not always precisely defined, communities which may be helpful for churches to use as guidelines.

Communities are best defined using natural barriers as borders (features which people do not naturally cross to do everyday things like attend school, go to the corner store or play tennis – for example, rivers, bays, large parks, major streets, highways and railway tracks often form effective barriers to everyday movement). As your church tries to define its community, try to use these natural barriers as boundaries.

The first essential need is one, or several, good road maps of your town or city. These maps will help you define and understand some characteristics of your community. Distinct colours (such as different colour felt pens) should be used to:

1. Locate your church
2. Locate other churches of your denomination
3. Roughly divide the city into “zones of responsibility” among the churches of your denomination around yours, using natural barriers (you may wish to consult other churches as to what they consider their community).

If your zone of responsibility covers an area less than a mile in each direction from your church, you will likely want to study the entire area.

If your zone of responsibility is quite large, you may want to subdivide the area into two or more communities. Again, use natural barriers and mark these on the map.

If your church is located in a distinct community in your town or city, you will want to keep the rough boundaries of the community in mind as you identify your communities. In many areas of

the city, communities are poorly defined, but in other areas they are very distinct, characterized by distinctive social characteristics which will influence the ministry of local churches.

Most city and municipal planning departments subdivide towns and cities into communities for planning purposes. These communities generally are very good guides for churches to follow. Your local planning department can provide maps, and a lot of other very helpful information about each community. This will be discussed further in section 6.4.

Yet a final aspect to keep in mind as you define your community is the census information, provided by Statistics Canada. If you choose to obtain this data manually (see section 6.3), it is important to realize that for smaller towns (with populations less than 100,000), information is only available for the town as a whole, but that for urban areas statistics are available by subdivisions of the urban area, called census tracts. Census tracts are small local areas for which statistics are provided. Maps of census tracts accompany census information, and attention may be given to the boundaries of these tracts as you determine your community boundaries to make data collection easier.

However, now that census data are available via personal computer (see Section 6.3), this permits you to easily obtain data for any zone of responsibility that you may wish to define. This means that you are not necessarily limited to defining your zone of responsibility based on Statistics Canada divisions.

6.2 Step Two: Asking the Right Questions

The next three steps all involve information gathering. As you seek to learn about your community, you will want to be asking two types of questions: questions of content and questions of context.

Questions of Content

Questions of content seek to find out factual information about the past, present or future characteristics of a community.

For example, the following are all questions of content:

Who lived in our community in 2001? 1996? 1991? (over the most recent 3 past censuses)

How many single parents live in our community?

When will these houses be removed to build apartments?

Questions of content are straight forward factual objective questions. The answers will help you profile your community, the changes that have happened, and the changes that will happen. It is important to be as specific and accurate as possible in order to arrive at a realistic picture of your community.

Questions of Context

In contrast with the questions of content, questions of context ask why and how the community is the way it is, and how and why certain changes have occurred and others are taking place. For example, the following are questions of context:

Why has the number of immigrants in our community changed?

Why are there so few children in our community?

Why do you think these businesses are locating in our area?

Questions of context are less easy to answer than questions of content; indeed answers may vary considerably if you were to ask a social worker and a real estate agent. These questions tend to be more subjective and speculative. But they are indispensable, for the answers will provide rich insights into the issues affecting individuals, their needs, and ministry opportunities.

As you begin to collect information, keep these two questions in mind. Remember to be as specific and accurate as possible.

6.3 Step Three: Data Collection I – Demographics

After Nehemiah had completed restoring the wall around Jerusalem, but before any of the houses had been rebuilt, he found the record of all the Jews who had returned to the city (Neh. 7). Reading genealogical lists is one of the least exciting aspects of the Old Testament study, but is indispensable for understanding the society of the time. For some, census information may seem equally unexciting, but it is equally indispensable.

As you begin to study your community, you probably had an idea of many of the characteristics of the neighbourhood. For example, you probably have a good sense of the age and ethnic complexion of your community. However, objective information is helpful to highlight characteristics you may not have realized, or to confirm your impressions. The best source of this information is the census.

Census data provides a very thorough profile of a community – from the ages of residents to the types of accommodation in which they live. It is a very wide-ranging, detailed, and accurate snapshot of your community at one period in time. As you work your way through the form below, many of the trends will confirm those you have sensed before. Others will provide helpful new insights into the character – and needs – of your community.

Purpose: a. to provide an objective portrait of the present character of the community under study

b. to discover population trends over time (if done for several years).

Method: This involves two components. The *research* component of the step may be undertaken by one individual. The *group discussion* that follows is best undertaken by all individuals interested in the church plant or in developing new ministries (either in a special meeting or in the context of a one day retreat as outlined earlier).

A. Research: data may be obtained manually, or by using the internet

- a. Obtain census data for your neighbourhood from:
 - i. your local public library (Statistics Canada publications)
 - ii. your local municipal hall
 - iii. Statistics Canada website (www.statscan.ca)
- b. With this information, fill out the table provided (in Appendix I) for the most recent census
- c. If resources permit, fill out similar forms for earlier years to facilitate comparison. More general data has been provided on the form to allow some comparisons.

B. Group Discussion

The census information gathered above will have provided a detailed, thorough portrait of your community. In order to be more easily understood, it is best to work through the information section by section.

In the context of a special meeting or at a retreat, a chairperson should lead discussion, briefly summarizing the statistics for each section (age, ethnicity, etc.) and then inviting comment.

Again, questions of both content (do we have a lot of children? older adults? Asians? apartment dwellers? professionals?) and context (why is our community the way it is?) are important

The questionnaire for the neighbourhood walk, on page 19, may provide a helpful framework for discussion of the census information.

6.4 Step Four: Data Collection II – Community Experts

Census information gives a detailed, precise picture of what your community was like on census days. Information from the census may confirm what you thought about your neighbourhood or it may raise new questions.

However, although the census information is invaluable, it is never exactly up-to-date. Because the census is only taken every five years, it may not be completely accurate in rapidly changing neighbourhoods. Similarly, it makes no inferences for the future direction of change in your neighbourhood.

Particularly in quickly growing communities, other sources of information are invaluable.

Fortunately, there are experts in any community who can update census information, describe the current situation and identify future possibilities. These include city and municipal planning agencies, police departments, school boards, health professionals, social workers, and so on.

You may have many of these local experts in your own congregation which you can use to gather much of this information. Otherwise, contacting outside agencies is an excellent method of making contacts and building bridges to others working in the community.

Purpose: To update census information and understand past trends and future possibilities for our community. Also, to identify some of the concerns and needs in the community and to avoid duplication of services.

Method: Either one person, or several people, should contact each of the agencies listed in the questionnaire below (either by telephone or in person) and ask the questions listed. Other questions may be asked as appropriate.

The answers to these questions should be shared during a special meeting or retreat by the person who gathered them with others interested in church planting or outreach. Ample opportunity should be left for questions and discussion.

Data Collection II – Community Experts Questionnaire

1. City or Municipal Planning Department

Questions including:

How has this community changed socially and commercially over the last ten years?
(ethnic changes? social status changes?)

What changes do you anticipate over the next ten years? twenty years?

Are there any plans to re-zone any of the community? (new commercial development? high-rise development? condominiums?)

Reflecting on your census information, why do you think these age/ethnic/income groups live in this community?

Will it change?

What do you think are the most serious problems and needs in the community?

2. The local police force, social workers, health officers, community centre directors
Questions including:

How would you describe this area at present?

From your point of view, has it changed at all in recent years?

How do you see it changing in the future?

What do you think are the most serious problems in the community?

What are the biggest needs in the community?

Is there any way our church could assist you in your programmes?

3. The local school board or school principal
Questions including:

Has this community changed in recent years?

Are there more/less children than ten years ago?

What do you think will happen to enrolment in the future?

Are there adequate daycare/recreational services in the community?

What are the most serious problems or needs of the community?

Is there any way our church could assist you in your programmes?

4. Local business people (particularly real estate agents)

Questions including:

How have you noticed the community change in recent years?

How has your clientele changed?

What do you think will happen to this community in the future?

What are the most serious problems or needs in the community?

6.5 Step Five: Data Collection III – Community Services

The final step in gathering information is to quickly survey the other churches and organizations providing services in the community.

Through your study, you have no doubt begun to see some needs in the community and places where your church may be able to help.

It is important, however, to know the type of services already available in the community.

Many churches, government agencies, community centres and service clubs may work in your community. It is helpful to know what services do exist. You may not wish to double-up on services provided elsewhere. Or, you may discover some needs which are not being met by anyone in the community. Even if services do exist, you may wish to provide a Christian alternative.

If, for instance, your community has a lot of children, but also an abundance of daycare facilities, your church may not make daycare a priority. On the other hand, if few daycare facilities exist, your church may want to develop a programme. Or, even if daycare services exist, you may want to begin your own, but you will benefit from knowing about the other centres in your area.

Included below are two brief questionnaires – one for churches in your community, and the other for neighbourhood services. Information may be obtained either by telephone or by personal visit.

Data Collection III – Church Questionnaire

You may wish to introduce this questionnaire by saying, “My name is _____. I am a member of _____ church. We are doing a survey to discover what services are offered in our community to help us better plan our programmes. (We want to complement those services already available rather than duplicating programmes unnecessarily). Could I please ask you a few questions about your church? ...” You may want to offer to share the results of your survey with them.

Name of Church: _____ Location: _____

1. How many people attend your church?

How many are children?	youth?
young singles?	young marrieds?
middle-aged?	seniors?

2. Where do most of your people live? (Do they commute or do they live in the local area?)

3. What do you consider to be your service area or parish? (specific boundaries)

4. What services do you provide?

a. Sunday worship?	How many services?	How many attend each?
What one or two phrases/ words would describe your worship?		

- b. Sunday school? For what ages? How many involved?
- c. Bible studies? How many? How many involved?
- d. Day care? How many involved?
- e. Boys/ girls clubs (Cubs, Brownies, etc.)? How many involved?
- f. Vacation Bible School? How many involved?
- g. Young peoples' groups? How many involved?
- h. Young couples' groups? How many involved?
- i. Family programmes? How many involved?
- j. Seniors' programmes? How many involved?
- k. Programmes for shut-ins? How many involved?
- l. Hospital visitation? How many involved?
- m. Other programmes?
_____ How many involved?
_____ How many involved?

5. What do you think are your strongest areas of ministry?

6. What do you think are your weakest areas of ministry?

(7. Is there any way that our church could help you?)

6.6 Step Six: The Neighbourhood Walk

Although Nehemiah had been told about the situation in Jerusalem, when he arrived at the city, the first step he took towards rebuilding the city was to take a few companions and skirt the walls to see how serious the problem really was (Neh. 2:11-16). Similarly, Paul, before he began speaking to the Athenians, had obviously walked the streets of the city and was somewhat familiar with the context to which he spoke in Acts 17.

The demographics and trends you have gathered from the census and community sources provide a thorough picture of the community. But in order to move from accumulating information to developing actual ministries to people, it is useful to take careful walks through different areas of your neighbourhood, asking questions which will help understand the needs and ministry opportunities.

You may wish to go on walks (or drives) through the distinct parts of your neighbourhood.

If you are studying your town, you may wish to walk around distinct residential areas, commercial strips and malls.

In urban neighbourhoods, you may wish to examine distinct residential areas plus commercial zones.

Method: Identify a part of your neighbourhood that is relatively easy to walk around (for example, a commercial area or a residential section).

Walk through this specific segment of your community looking at several aspects of the area: the people, the housing, the businesses. As you do so, ask questions of content and context. Try, also, to think about the needs and opportunities for ministry in each area.

The questionnaire that follows will provide both a helpful outline of the types of things that you will want to look for, and a checklist for the information you will gather.

The walk may be best lead by either (or both):

- d. an “expert” on the community (a real estate agent, city planner, etc.) who will be familiar with certain aspects of the neighbourhood
- e. an outsider, who may be able to point out things which those familiar with the community may miss.

The pastor, lay leaders, plus interested members of the congregation should all be encouraged to take part in this exercise.

Neighbourhood Walk Questionnaire

Think about these questions as you walk through different sections of your community. You will probably not be able to answer all of them, but they will help you see new things in your neighbourhood. Be as specific and accurate as you can in your answers. Feel free to jot down other observations.

A. People: Looking at the people you see ...

	None	Few	Several	Many	N/A	Other observations
1. How many of each age group seem to live here?						
Children						
Youth						
Young adults						
Middle aged						
Seniors						
2. How many of each ethnic group seem to live here?						
Caucasian						
Asian						
East Indian						
Native Indian						
Other (specify)						
3. How many of each income group seem to live here?						
Wealthy						
Middle income						
Low income						
4. From observing the community would you say that this is a family neighbourhood? An area of childless couples? A singles area? A retirement community?						
5. Does the neighbourhood appear to be racially mixed or is it predominantly one ethnic group?						

Looking at the age, ethnic and income groups in the area, begin to think about the types of ministries that might be appropriate ...

B. Housing: Looking at the housing ...

	None	Few	Several	Many	N/A	Other observations
1. How many of each type of housing do you notice?						
Single family						
Duplexes						
Apartments						
Condos/Townhomes						
2. How mobile do people appear to be?						
Places for rent						
Places for sale						
3. What is the condition of the residences?						
Well cared for						
In disrepair						
4. How old do you think the housing is?						
5. Are there any areas of new development? What type of housing is being built? What types of people will live there?						
6. If older housing is being torn down, is it being replaced by single family homes? Apartments? Condominiums? Businesses? Industry?						
7. Does the community appear to have changed in the last ten years? Are there any clues as to how it will change in the next ten years?						

Looking at the housing in the area, continue to think about the types of ministries that might be appropriate ...

C. Lifestyle: Looking at clues to the lifestyle of residents ...

	None	Few	Several	Many	N/A	Other observations
1. What do people drive?						
Compacts						

Sedans						
Mini Vans						
Sports Cars						
Luxury Cars						
Trucks/Vans						
2. How many cars are:						
New						
Older, well-kept						
In disrepair						
3. How many homes have clues to the lifestyle of their owners:						
Pools						
Tennis courts						
Large gardens						
Slides/ swings, etc.						
Satellite dishes						
Other (specify)						
4. What shopping opportunities are there?						
Family restaurants						
Fast food						
Discount stores						
Specialty shops						
Fitness centres						
5. What appear to be the meeting places in the community for youth or singles?						
For families with children?						
For seniors?						
6. Do you think people leave the community to shop?						
To work?						
For entertainment?						

Remember to keep in mind the implications that these lifestyle characteristics may have for ministry ...

D. Community Services: Looking at the community services available to residents ...

	None	Few	Several	Many	N/A	Other observations
1. How many parks are there?						
2. How many health facilities are there?						
Emergency rooms						
Family doctor's offices						
Walk-in clinics						
Alternative healthcare						
Dental						
Optical						
3. What government offices are there in the community?						
Post office						
Employment centre						
Welfare						
Immigration						
Municipal offices						
4. What other recreation facilities are there in the community?						
5. What schools and daycare facilities are there?						
6. What churches are there in the community?						
Can you tell what programmes they run?						

Again, looking at this information, continue to think about the types of ministries that might be appropriate ...

7.0 Identifying Needs and Ministry Opportunities

The results of Nehemiah's inspection of the walls and analysis of the situation was a thorough understanding of all the problems associated with rebuilding the city. Then he could prioritize the work. First, recognizing a need for security, Nehemiah had the walls rebuilt. After that, houses were constructed.

From your first walk through the neighbourhood, the census, and information from community resource persons, and the information you have gathered about community services, you will have gathered and discussed a large amount of information on your community.

The next step is to prayerfully consider the needs in the community. As you have talked about the neighbourhood, many needs will have become apparent.

As a group, begin asking God in prayer to help you discern the needs of your community.

Then reviewing your information, as a group brainstorm about the needs in your community. List as many as you can.

(At this point, do not worry about whether or not your church can minister to these needs; just as no individual Christian has all the gifts for ministry, neither does one individual church have all the gifts for ministry or would not need to grow. But God does provide each church with the gifts for the tasks He wants the church to do.)

List of Needs:

Looking back at the needs you have identified, discuss how each is, or is not, being met by other churches or organizations in your community.

Again, looking at the needs, what are opportunities for ministry in the community?

8.0 Daring to Dream

When Nehemiah and the Jews decided that the wall ought to be rebuilt around Jerusalem the surrounding rulers scoffed at their dreams. They ridiculed the Jews: "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble — burned as they are?" (4:2) Yet the Israelites responded by praying, rededicating themselves to God and the task at hand (4:4-6).

This is the time, having done all the preliminaries, to approach God in faith, trusting Him for the resources, to discover what your church can do to serve Him in your community.

This discussion, which should be open to all those interested in planting a new church or new ministries, should be opened in prayer, thanking God for the information and direction He has given, and rededicating your church and yourselves to obedience. The time should be dedicated to His service and His glory.

Following a time of consecrating prayer, the group may individually, in small groups or as a larger group, dream about the future ministries which could develop in your church. Suggestions for possible ministries should be written down.

After at least half an hour of this, the ideas should be gathered together and presented to the larger group.

Each idea ought then to be prayed about specifically.

9.0 Prioritizing the Vision

Under God's guidance, the Jews were able to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Yet this was only possible with a well organized plan mobilizing both the physical resources and the labour to accomplish the task.

As your church dreams and prays through possible ministry opportunities, it is important to prioritize the programmes.

It may be best to begin with only one project and establish it firmly, rather than trying to coordinate several at once. As new ministries are consolidated, others may be initiated. With prayer, then, ministry projects should be prioritized.

And, with prayer, responsible individuals should be appointed and dedicated to begin to study how to implement the task.

Appendix I: Table for Demographic Profile

Community:

Census Tracts or Subdivisions:

Boundaries:

		Your Community		Canada	Notes
		Total	Percent	Percent	
Total Population:					
Age Groups					
	0-4				
	5-14				
	15-24				
	25-34				
	35-44				
	45-54				
	55-64				
	65-74				
	75-84				
	85 and over				
Population age fifteen years and over					
Marital Status (15+)					
	Common-law				
	Single				
	Married				
	Separated				
	Divorced				
	Widowed				
Mother tongue					
	English				
	French				
	Chinese				
	German				
	Punjabi				
	Italian				
	Dutch				
	Other				
Mobility Status – Place of Residence 1 Year Ago					
	Same address				
	Same province, diff. add.				
	Different province				
Mobility Status – Place of Residence 5 Years Ago					
	Same address				
	Same province, diff. add.				
	Different province				
Immigration Characteristics					
	Canadian born				
	Immigrated before ____				
	Immigrated ____ to ____				
	Non-permanent residents				

Ethnic origin:					
	Aboriginal				
	Total Visible Minorities				
	Chinese				
	South Asian				
	Black				
	Filipino				
	Latin American				
	Southeast Asian				
	Arab				
	West Asian				
	Korean				
	Japanese				
	Visible Minority, n.i.e.				
	Multiple Visible Minority				
	Others				
School Attendance					
	15+ Attending full-time				
	15-19 Attending full-time				
	20-24 Attending full-time				
	15+ Attending part-time				
	15-19 Attending part-time				
	20-24 Attending part-time				
Highest Level of Schooling					
	Total pop. 20-34				
	% less than h.s. education				
	% h.s. graduate				
	% trades cert. / diploma				
	% college cert. / diploma				
	% university graduate				
	Total pop. 35-44				
	% less than h.s. education				
	% h.s. graduate				
	% trades cert. / diploma				
	% college cert. / diploma				
	% university graduate				
	Total pop. 45-64				
	% less than h.s. education				
	% h.s. graduate				
	% trades cert. / diploma				
	% college cert. / diploma				
	% university graduate				
	Total pop.				
Place of Work Status					
	Worked at home				
	Worked outside Canada				
	No fixed workplace address				
	Worked at usual place				
Mode of transportation to work					
	Car/Truck/Van Driver				
	Car/Truck/Van Passenger				
	Public Transit				
	Walked or bicycled				
	Other method				

Unemployment rate					
Occupation					
	Management				
	Business, finance & administration				
	Natural and applied sciences and related occupations				
	Health				
	Social science, education, government service and religion				
	Art, culture, recreation and sport				
	Sales and service				
	Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations				
	Occupations unique to primary industry				
	Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities				
Dwelling characteristics:					
	Owned				
	Rented				
	Single family				
	Apartments, townhouses, etc.				
Total number of families					
Family characteristics:					
	Husband-wife fams.				
	No children				
	Children				
	Lone parent fams.				
Total households					
Avg # of persons per household					
Household income (\$):					
	0 – 4,999				
	5,000 – 9,999				
	10,000 – 19,999				
	20,000 – 29,999				
	30,000 – 39,999				
	40,000 – 49,999				
	50,000 and over				