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Neighborhood Exercise

(Revised 2/27/2025)

Use Steps One and Two to create a picture of your neighborhood context. Then use Step Three to augment your picture with statistical information. Use Step Four to develop a picture of your church membership. Finally, use Step Five to compare your picture of your neighborhood with your picture of your church --what observations can you make?

Picture of Neighborhood Context

Step One:

Draw a simple map of your church and the surrounding area. Include:

- Your church
- Structures around it
- Who are your neighbors? Who lives here? Works here?
- Where do people gather?
- What activities really go on?

Step Two:

Be curious. Listen in order to act.

- Where do you see God present and active in your map? Where is community being built, justice being served, encouragement being offered?
- Where is it harder for you to see God present and active?

- Where or among whom (think specific groups) in your map does the presence of God cry out for cultivation, expression or strengthening? What might people’s hunger be?
- How do your neighbors relate to you? What do they think of the church? How do they feel about the church?
- How might you and your congregation either build on where God is more apparent (via partnering) or provide something new in a place or to a people who have few resources supporting them? How could this strengthen the energy between the people inside your church and your neighbors?
- How could you create or improve relationships so that people outside of the church membership feel like they can be accepted as “me” and be valued for who they are?
- How could you create or improve relationships to be mutually interdependent (instead of living into power imbalance and undermining people’s agency and empowerment)?

Step 3: Use population information from the MapDash Neighborhood Insights report to round out your picture of your neighborhood. (As an alternative to MapDash, you can use information from VPAP -- Virginia Public Access Project, by county -- and the U.S. Census Data by district.)

- Population Growth (5 year projection): _____
- Percentage of people who are white: _____
- Percentage of persons of color: _____ (Also note distinctions where important in your area)
- Top Lifestyle segments: (read descriptions and see if different or similar to your congregation’s membership)

- Gen Alpha (ages <6): _____
- GenZ (ages 6-23): _____
- Millennial (ages 24-41): _____
- Gen X (ages 42-57): _____

- Baby Boomer (ages 58-76): _____
- Silent / Greatest Gen (ages 77+): _____
- Household income median: _____
- White Collar / Blue Collar / Services employment mix:
- Public School / Private School mix: _____
- Percentage of workers who commute over 30 minutes: _____
- Households with disability: _____
- Percentage of religiously unaffiliated persons: _____
- Gifts to charities higher or lower than national average: _____
- Percentage of volunteers higher or lower than national average: _____
- Percentage Households below poverty level: _____
- Percentage of households without Internet access: _____
- Percentage of households rent burdened: _____
- Percentage of households mortgage burdened: _____
- Housing instability score: _____

Picture of Church Context

Step Four:

Use available information to create a picture of your congregation.

- Total Active Members (line 12) _____
- Total Estimated Active Participants (non-members, line 13)
- Gen Alpha (ages <6): _____
- GenZ (ages 6-23): _____
- Millennial (ages 24-41): _____
- Gen X (ages 42-57): _____
- Baby Boomer (ages 58-76): _____
- Silent / Greatest Gen (ages 77+): _____

Number of members who received communion at least three times in the year
(Communicants in Good Standing) ages 16 and up: _____

Number of members who received communion at least three times in the year
(Communicants in Good Standing) under age 16: _____

Average Sunday Attendance: _____

Up or down from last year? _____ From two years ago? _____

Membership: _____

Up or down from last year? _____ From two years ago? _____

Plate and pledge dollars: _____

Up or down from last year? _____ From two years ago? _____

Operating Expenses: _____

Up or down from last year? _____ From two years ago? _____

Major Improvements and Capital Expenditures: _____

Up or down from last year? _____ From two years ago? _____

Number of active participants who are:

White _____

Persons of color _____

Is there religious education or spiritual formation for adults? _____

Number of adults involved _____

Number of children and youth engaged in religious education or spiritual formation

Step Five

Compare your picture of your neighborhood with your picture of your church -- what observations can you make? As you pray and reflect on Holy Scriptures, where do you sense passion and energy? And is it aligned with the Gospel's mission of inviting the children of God to experience the transforming power of the ministry of Jesus?

Resources

- Your church parochial report
- Your church year end financial statement for the past two years
- Episcopal Church's tool Explore Individual Parochial Report Trends, <https://generalconvention.org/explore-parochial-report-trends/>
- MapDash Neighborhood Insights report (Contact Rev. Shirley Smith Graham)
- Census data <https://data.census.gov/profile> detailed
- Virginia Public Access Project www.vpap.org/demographics/