



LEADER GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY AND CONGREGATION ASSESSMENT



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INTRODUCTION

The USA/Canada Church of the Nazarene desires to encourage, equip, empower, and engage church leaders in blessing our communities. One way we seek to do this is by equipping you to better understand your community and your congregation, so you can be a tangible blessing to the people outside of the church walls. This resource will serve as your guide to walking a team through these assessments.

The purpose of these assessments is to discover the ways your local church can strategically and intentionally fulfill the mission and embody the teachings of Jesus in your community. We want to actively and purposefully extend God's love, grace, and compassion beyond the confines of the church building, recognizing that living missionally goes beyond Sunday services and involves reaching out to those who may not have encountered the transformative love of Christ.

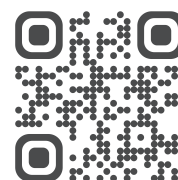
There are two outcomes you will achieve through the process laid out in this guide. The first one is that you will conduct a thorough examination of both the local community and the congregation to gain a deep understanding of the community's unique challenges, strengths, and aspirations and how your local church body can actively engage the community to enhance the community's wellbeing. This outcome serves as the foundation for developing targeted initiatives that align with the church's mission and values. At the end of this assessment, you will have a list of "possibility statements." These are to serve as a catalyst to help your leadership team determine "what's next" in blessing your community.

The second outcome is that each one of us will grow in Christlikeness and that God will use this experience to help us love others the way he loves them and to see people who might be different than us with his eyes. This process will serve as a discipleship opportunity for those on your team.

Our prayer is that this exercise will build you and your team. Many Christians have been discouraged by recent trends in our culture, but we believe God has invited us to partner with him in his mission of redemption and restoration. Our prayer is that your local church will be the hands and feet of Jesus right where he has placed you and that you will be a compelling witnessing community to which people will be drawn in order to experience the hope in Christ! But for that to happen, we have to be out among the community, beyond the walls of the church, building relationships and loving those that Jesus loves.

Refer to the [Blessing Our Community](#) website for more resources for spiritual formation and discipleship.

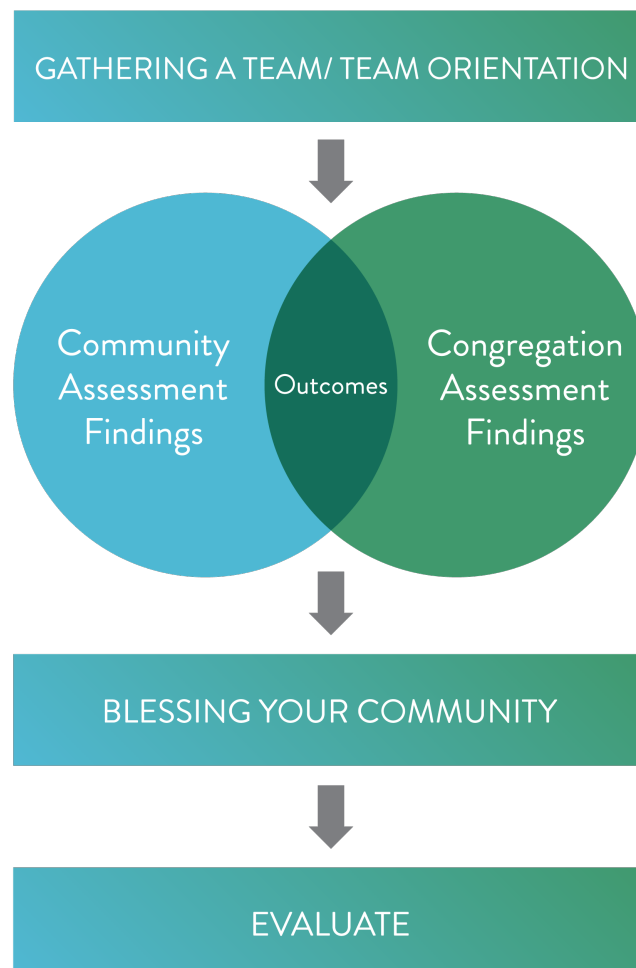
If you would like complimentary coaching on implementing this guide with your local church, please contact Kristi Senica at ksenica@usacanadaregion.org to set up a Zoom call.



PROCESS ROADMAP

Here is a brief overview of the process laid out in this guide.

1. **Gathering a Team.** We want you to walk through this process with other leaders you have identified in your local church.
2. **Team Orientation.** Plan a time to meet with the team to explain the vision and process.
3. **Community Assessment.** Discover the ways the Spirit is already moving in your community and the felt needs of your neighbors. Listen and observe your community with fresh eyes and ears.
4. **Congregation Assessment.** Take time to remember how God has used your local church in the past to bless the community and discover the current gifts and passions of your local body.
5. **Outcomes.** Assess the results of both the community assessment and congregation assessment to see where your local church will begin blessing your community. Pray and write possibility statements. Present the statements to this team and/or your church board/leadership team to create an action plan to begin a new work in your community.
6. **Bless Your Community.** Create a plan, invite people to participate, and be a blessing.
7. **Evaluate.** Evaluate what is working and what isn't, make adjustments as needed, and celebrate how God is moving!



GATHERING A TEAM

There are three options for building a team. They are each equally effective; it simply depends on the size of your church and the scope of the leadership teams you have in your congregation. You have the freedom to form this team in a manner that best suits your congregation and context.

Option 1

Your Church Board

Your team could be comprised simply of your church board. In many cases, this works just fine. Depending on the size of the church, your greatest opportunity for building a missional team already exists on your church board. If that is the case, certainly your church board can act as the visioning and planning team for blessing your community. If your local church board is already making community connections, GREAT; simply leverage the passion and ministry that is already present to further bless your community.

Option 2

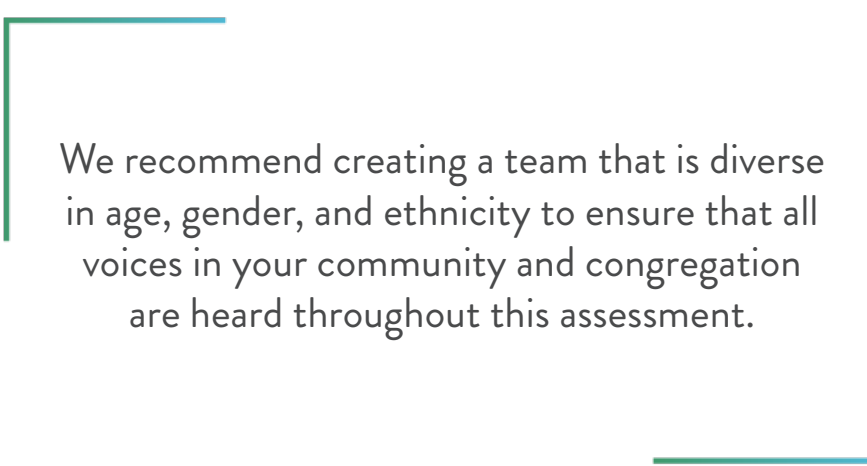
Your NMI Council

Your local NMI Council is filled with leadership that loves sharing the story of God. According to the Nazarene Manual, the local NMI council directs and facilitates the work of NMI in the local church. Your local NMI president and council can be a ready-made team to lead a Blessing Your Community effort.

Option 3

Create a Team

You could choose to create a team comprised of passionate individuals who love helping others and sharing Jesus to bless your community. You could combine people from the NMI Council and the church board as well. Work with your church board to create the team that best suits your congregation and ensures the greatest participation from your people.



We recommend creating a team that is diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity to ensure that all voices in your community and congregation are heard throughout this assessment.

TIMELINE

The duration of an assessment can vary significantly depending on various factors such as the size and complexity of the community, the scope of the assessment, available resources, and the specific goals and objectives of the assessment. Generally, a comprehensive community assessment may take anywhere from a few weeks to several months to complete.

Initial data collection and analysis, including gathering demographic information, conducting surveys and interviews, and reviewing existing literature, could take several weeks. Additionally, engaging with community and congregation members to gather insights and perspectives may require ongoing efforts over an extended period. Following data collection, the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of findings into a coherent assessment report also take time.

Furthermore, ongoing updates and revisions may be necessary to ensure that the assessment accurately reflects the evolving needs and dynamics of the community. Overall, while community assessments require careful planning and dedication of resources, their duration ultimately depends on the depth of understanding sought and the level of community involvement desired.

Determine a timeline that fits your context, but do not hesitate to slow down or move forward when you feel it is appropriate.

TEAM ORIENTATION

Time to complete: Approximately one hour.

Objective: To establish an understanding of the Blessing Our Community process and to begin forming a culture of blessing among your community. This orientation will serve as the first gathering of your team.

Explain:

- The purpose and the desired outcomes of this team
- Biblical rationale
- Overview of the process
- Overview of timeline
- Prayer

Purpose and Desired Outcomes

The purpose of these assessments is to discover the ways your local church strategically and intentionally can fulfill the mission and embody the teachings of Jesus in your community. We want to actively and purposefully extend God's love, grace, and compassion beyond the confines of the church building, recognizing that living missionally goes beyond Sunday services and involves reaching out to those who may not have encountered the transformative love of Christ.

There are two outcomes we hope you will achieve through the process laid out in this guide. The first one is that you will conduct a thorough examination of both the local community and the congregation to gain a deep understanding of the community's unique challenges, strengths, and aspirations and how your local church body can actively engage the community to enhance the community's wellbeing. This goal serves as the foundation for developing targeted initiatives that align with the church's mission and values. At the end of this assessment, you will have a list of "possibility statements." These are to serve as a catalyst to help your leadership team determine "what's next" in blessing your community.

The second outcome is that each one of us will grow in Christlikeness and that God will use this experience to help us love others the way he loves them and see people who might be different than us with his eyes. This process should serve as a discipleship opportunity for those on your team.

Biblical Rationale

Read Matthew 9:35-38.

Summary: Jesus was in close proximity to the crowds, not the elite religious people of his day. What he saw moved him with deep compassion, a compassion so strong that he felt it deep in his body and it moved him to action. These were people he saw as children of God who were created in his image and of immense worth. What he needed were workers to go out and declare that truth to them.

Q: As we consider blessing our community, what examples did Jesus give us in this passage?

Possible Answers:

- Jesus was out in the community.
- Jesus was meeting needs.
- Jesus was proclaiming the good news.
- Jesus' compassion extended beyond physical needs to spiritual needs. Jesus said to pray "to send workers into his harvest field." Jesus prayed for workers because the harvest is plentiful.
- We are the workers Jesus prayed for! This is our invitation to join him in his mission. We pray and seek for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Overview of the Process

1. **Community Assessment.** Discover the ways the Spirit is already moving in your community and the felt needs of your neighbors. Listen to and observe your community with fresh eyes and ears.
2. **Congregation Assessment.** Take time to remember how God has used your local church in the past to bless the community and discover the current gifts and passions of your local body.
3. **Outcomes.** Assess the results of both the community assessment and congregation assessment to see where your local church might begin blessing your community. Pray and write possibility statements. Present the statements to this team or your church board/leadership team to create an action plan to begin a new work in your community.
4. **Bless Your Community.** Create a plan, invite people to participate, and be a blessing.
5. **Evaluate.** Evaluate what is working and what isn't, make adjustments as needed, and celebrate how God is moving!

Overview of Timeline

Create a plan and set dates to meet as a team to review each aspect of these assessments. Determine how each team member will need to complete their portions of the assessment. To maximize your efforts, be flexible and don't rush the process.

Send your team from this meeting with a challenge to continue in prayer. Pray for this process, discernment, your church, and your community.

Prayer

Pray for:

- God's will in the entire process.
- The team—that God would give them discernment.
- The church—that God would reveal to each person how he loves them and desires to use them in his mission.
- The community—that God would reveal peacemakers who can help build bridges and that his will for the community becomes clear.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Time to complete: Approximately one hour, or more, if conversations are progressing well and people are engaged. Don't cut the time short if people are sharing.

Objective: To establish an understanding of how to complete a community assessment and to assign roles in the process.

Explain:

- Approaching the community with appreciation
- Demographics and asset mapping
- Exegeting the community
- Wrap-up and next steps

What you'll need:

- Artwork: You can find images of famous artwork online. Print out several different ones to use with your group. You can find free artwork at the [National Gallery of Art](#).
- For an in-depth conversation on appreciative inquiry and community assessment, check out the training video by Todd Keller on the [Blessing Our Community](#) website.
- Community assessment participant packets.

Approaching the community with appreciation

Rather than simply listing all the needs of the community, we are going to approach our community with appreciation and curiosity. In doing so, it forces us to reset our normal ways of thinking and processing information and can cause us to discover where the Spirit is already at work in our community. It can help us see how he is using people and organizations outside of the church to meet physical and emotional needs.

If we only approach our community with the needs at the forefront, we can easily become negative by seeing only the deficits. As the needs stack up, we get overwhelmed and start to see how incapable we might be at meeting the long list of needs. This forces us into a scarcity mindset. We see what we don't have and what the community desperately needs.

Read Philippians 1:9-11 and 4:8.

Moving from a scarcity mindset towards a more appreciative mindset is God-honoring. It allows us to use the language of blessing, hope, goodness, and grace. It takes practice but together we can do it.

Exercise:

The appreciative approach is based on an art term called the appreciative eye. We can develop this appreciative eye for our communities and our congregations. Take a few moments to practice developing your appreciative eye.

1. Break into groups of two and give each group a piece of art.
2. Ask them to look at it and find something they can appreciate about this piece of work, something beautiful.
3. Explain that they are working their appreciative eye, so it might be challenging; it might be kind of fun too if they get a crazier piece of art.
4. Questions to follow up: what did you find? Was it easy? Hard?
5. Challenge them. Say, "I want you to keep this appreciative inquiry and eye ideas in your mind as we work through this process."

Demographics and Asset Mapping

Leader Note: Step-by-step instructions for completing a demographic study and asset mapping are in the participant guide. You and your team should have that accessible as you walk through this process.

Why should we complete a demographic study?

A demographic study is crucial for a church to authentically engage and serve its community. By understanding the unique composition of the neighborhood—such as age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and family structures—the church gains insights into the diverse needs and challenges present. This knowledge forms the foundation for targeted, responsive initiatives, allowing the church to tailor its programs, services, and outreach efforts to effectively address specific community needs. A demographic study fosters a more informed, inclusive, and compassionate approach, enabling the church to build meaningful connections and truly meet the diverse needs of its neighbors.

Why should we complete an asset map?

A church should create an asset map of its community to gain a profound understanding of existing strengths and resources. This strategic initiative enables the church to identify where the Holy Spirit is already at work within the community—whether through local talents, organizations, or positive aspects. By recognizing and leveraging these assets, the church can align its mission with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, fostering a more impactful and collaborative approach to community engagement. The asset map serves as a roadmap, guiding the church to optimize its efforts, build meaningful partnerships, and empower local leadership—all essential elements in discerning and joining the Spirit's transformative work in the community.

Making an asset map offers a hands-on approach to discovering the many assets already present in your community.

When creating an asset map for your community, it's important to identify a wide range of assets that can contribute to the well-being and development of the community. Read through the following types of assets and the example of each that may be present in your community:

- **Physical assets.** This would include natural or manmade physical features in your community, such as parks, trails, bodies of water, farmland, community centers, gardens or other venues.
- **Human assets.** This would include individuals who are already a blessing to your community, including musicians and artists, immigrants and refugee groups, youth and senior citizens. It could also include community leaders and volunteers. Listening to stories from people in our community helps us better understand them as well as their background, culture, attitudes, values, and aspirations.
- **Social assets.** This would include strong community networks, such as civic organizations and clubs, neighborhood and community associations, and social groups formed around similar interests.
- **Economic assets.** This would include local businesses and industries as well as job opportunities or employment centers, entrepreneurial talents, financial institutions.
- **Institutional assets.** This would include educational institutions, local government and public services, such as libraries, healthcare facilities, or first responders.
- **Nonprofit assets.** This would include non-profit organizations and charities, health and social service agencies, such as religious organizations and churches, housing shelters, counseling centers, or programs for youth and children.

You will need one person to complete a demographic study and at least one person to create an asset map. **Please refer to the participant guide for complete instructions.** If you have a large team or willing individuals, invite more than one person to complete an asset map and then combine all the results into one master map. Completing more than one asset map will give you more diversity in the responses.

Once you have explained the demographics and asset mapping section of the participant guide, ask for volunteers to complete these. Give them a date to turn them into the leader.

Exegeting the Community

It can be easy for us to make assumptions about our community, but it is important for us to slow down, pause, and begin to take notice of things around our community that we might have missed. Many times, our community becomes so familiar that we overlook basic things. Many times, we think we know exactly what our neighbors need based on our own assumptions. We are so quick to come up with strategies and vision for our community that we forget that it is not about our vision but about God's vision and mission! We need to slow down, humble ourselves, and discern where God is already moving.

Exegeting the community is all about slowing down and discovering where God has already gone before us among our neighbors. We might find him at work in the least likely places! Remembering that we are partnering with God in our community and not on our own is critical to being a blessing.

There are three tasks to exegeting the community. They include **observations, interviews, and surveys.**

Leader Note: Invite your team to read the article on their own at the QR Code on the first page of this section of the participant guide. Invite them to use the reflection questions before they complete any additional parts of this section. The desire is that through this process, the Lord will give us eyes to see people different than us with his eyes, that he will give us a posture of humility and love as we connect with those in our community.

Observations

Leader Note: There is an outline of this section in the participant packet. Your team can follow along there as you share and then carry the outline with them as they observe their community.

Michael Mata, Nazarene pastor and community developer in Los Angeles, California, gives the following tips to guide us through exegeting our community through observation:

1. **Look at the structures.** Determine what kind of structures predominate or are being built: Are they residential or commercial? They will help determine whether it is a residential, business or some other district. The level of maintenance needed and currently employed can suggest if the residents or the landowners are able to maintain the community. Also, determine how long the buildings have been around. Usually, the style and materials used can suggest the period when the community or neighborhood was built. Are there changes in the uses of the structures? Is the theater now being used as a marketplace or a church? What other changes are occurring? Who is leaving and who is replacing them? Why is this happening?
2. **Look for “scraps of life.”** Do not overlook the artifacts people leave about their property: Do the artifacts reflect certain age groups or types of households? Are they ethnically or culturally specific? Are certain values articulated by them?
3. **Look at the signage.** Competitive marketing companies have done the demographic research and will promote products and services in a manner appropriate to the target populations who live in or frequent the area. Therefore, read the billboards to understand what is being sold. Is the language used the dominant language of the area? Who is the target audience? Likewise, read the window ads or signs placed by businesses or land owners to understand what is being sold and for how much. Also, make note of the kinds of items or services offered by the local businesses: Are they ethnically or culturally specific? Are they for the immediate residential community, or for others from “outside”? What do the costs say about the clientele? Do not overlook bumper or printed stickers as they reveal much about the people buying them: What religion or political perspective is being espoused? Where did they go to school? What is their ethnic ancestry?
4. **Look at space.** No, not outer space, but how space is used. Looking at the kinds of structures in a community is one way to assess how the local population or political powers interact with the space, i.e., how they define it or use the land. Most urban land is defined by topology: a river or mountain range, or by human construction, the placement of a rail system or freeway. These elements of the natural and built environment can become demarcation lines for certain communities. On a more personal level,

living spaces reveal certain values or priorities that residents may hold—for example, vehicles parked on what would be considered the front lawn or raising crops or livestock on the land immediately surrounding the residence. In some cultures, the front yard is an extension of the living room and everyone is welcome to participate in festive occasions. But in other cultures, the back yard or garden area is host to private celebrations.

5. **Sounds and smells.** Exegeting a neighborhood can be a sensory experience. Keep yourself familiar with the kinds of music played by the residents or heard on the street. Does the music cater to a specific age or cultural group? Also, you do not need to be a linguist to appreciate different languages as intonations and speech patterns will differ from one group to another. If you hear many different patterns, it may be a sign of a rich multicultural setting. Aromas can reveal preferences in certain foods, which in turn point out the ethnicity of the resident or restaurant clientele. The smells of an elegant boutique will certainly differ from the smells of an alleyway in skid row.
6. **Look for signs of hope.** Keep an eye out for evidence of God's people at work; they could be future partners and certainly key resource people. On an immediate level, look for the presence of churches and parachurch organizations. Read the leaflets handed out in the neighborhood or notices in the local paper about religious activities or programs.

Interviews and Surveys

The goal is to learn and understand the health of the community from a perspective other than our own. Explain at the beginning that your church desires to know the community better and how we might better be a true blessing to those around us. Let the interviewee talk and the interviewer be a good listener. Ask questions for clarification. Allow the conversation to flow where it might. Take notes as you go. Be sure to thank the person for his or her time. When you are done and on your own, reflect on the answers and what stood out to you. Share your findings with the team leader.

Interviews

Instructions:

Conduct interviews across as many of the categories of community leaders listed below as you are able. The more interviews you can conduct, the better. Multiple interviews per category is great too! If possible, conduct the interviews in the interviewee's context. However, a phone or Zoom interview might allow easier access to the individual.

- Education
- Health care provider
- Business
- Social services
- Law enforcement
- Elected officials
- Religious leaders from another faith tradition
- Real estate broker
- Community organizer

Interview questions:

- Describe your personal and/or your organization's role in the community.
- How do you view the overall health of the community (Think holistically, not just physically – strengths, problems, resources, needs)
- Are there any organizations that you know to be active and important to the health and wellbeing of our community?
- How do you view the presence and role of the church in the community?
- Is there anything else related to the surrounding community that they want to point out, something they might be passionate about?

Surveys

Instructions:

Conduct several surveys with your neighbors. The goal is to learn and understand their perspective on the community. Please note that the idea is to connect with people you already know or wish to build a relationship with. The idea is NOT to walk door to door unless that is acceptable in your cultural context.

Take notes, and when you are on your own, reflect on the conversation and what stood out to you. Share your findings with the team leader.

Start a conversation with a neighbor by asking a few questions.

- How long have you lived here?
- What do you like about this community?
- What would you like to see changed?
- Would you like to be part of that change?

Wrap-up and next steps

At the end of the community assessment training, each of the following tasks should be assigned to someone on the team:

- Demographic study
- Asset mapping
- Observations
- Community leader interviews
- Neighbor surveys

Small Teams: With a small team, you might need to assign multiple tasks to each person. This could mean your process takes longer than if you spread the tasks out. That is ok! If you have congregants with connections to community leaders who are not on this team, invite them to help with an interview. Keep in mind that the more information you can gather will be helpful.

Determine how you would like the information collected. You might ask everyone to submit their findings before the next meeting. In this case, as the leader, you would compile the information onto a master copy of the assessment to be presented at the outcomes meeting.

Alternatively, you may ask everyone to bring their findings to the outcomes meeting and present them at that time. The choice is yours.

CONGREGATION ASSESSMENT

Time to Complete: Approximately one hour.

Objective: To identify this congregation's unique strengths, passions, and how God might want to lead this church in blessing our community. Additionally, to establish an understanding of how to complete a congregation assessment and to assign roles in the process.

Explain:

- Approaching the congregation with appreciation
- Evaluating the strengths of the church
- Evaluating the potentials
- Wrap-up and next steps

What you'll need:

- A white board or large Post-it notes to write out notes

Approaching the congregation with appreciation

As we did with community assessment, we want to approach our congregation with appreciation. As we reflect on the past, discuss the present, and dream about the future, we don't want to get consumed by negativity. But we do recognize that the church has not gotten it right all the time. At times, we have even been the cause of heartache. Open this time with corporate prayer, confessing that we are sinners, that we have gotten it wrong or been disobedient to the call of God. We also want to acknowledge that God is at work in the people in our church, and he is going before us in our community.

As the leader, determine how you would like to spend this time. Will you pray? Will you invite others to pray? Will you have prayers written out to guide your team? You know your people and circumstances best, so you choose the words, but here are some areas you should include:

- Begin your prayer time by turning to God.
- Bring your complaints and pains to the Lord.
- Confess your sins to God.
- Boldly ask for God's help.
- Listen for God to speak.
- Give God your trust.
- Thank God for how you already see him working.

There is an ACTS Prayer Guide in the Resource Section of this guide, but be sensitive to the Spirit's moving during these moments before moving to the tasks at hand.

Evaluating the strengths of the church

During this portion of the assessment, you and your team will reflect on the past as well as the present. You will do this by going through a series of exercises together. Have one person serve as the scribe for this time or write them on large Post-it notes to serve as a visual.

Exercise 1: Reflecting on the past.

While the culture now might be different than it was 20, 15, or even 10 years ago, it is good to recognize where God has used the church in your community over the years. This doesn't mean we will just do what we did before. That might not fit with the current culture of your community. But it can give us an idea of the passions and spiritual gifts of your church.

Reflect together on the following questions. Write people's answers on a paper or large Post-it.

1. What has worked well in connecting with our community in the past? What are some ways our church has met the needs in our community?
2. Are there any stories of transformation within this congregation that began with our engagement in the community?
3. What have you valued in our congregation over the years related to how we love our neighbors?

Leader Note: As you walk through these questions, allow people to share their hearts, listen for their passions for the community. Identify what your church did well in the past to reach the lost through blessing the community. As you wrap up this exercise, close by celebrating how God has worked in the past. Be sensitive to the timeline. If it has been years since your church has done something well to bless the community and connect with people outside the church, name that. Close the time praying that God would renew the passions that you once had for the lost.

Exercise 2: Assessing the present.

This is where we will focus on the current ministries and practices of our congregation in blessing our community. Have someone write down responses or write them on a large Post-it note for everyone to see.

Discuss the following questions together:

1. What assets exist in our church? (This could be programs, facility, or people.)
2. How is our church currently perceived in the community?
3. Do we regularly have people in the community taking next steps in their journey of grace?
4. What would be lost in this community if our church were to disappear?

Leader Note: As you discuss the current state of your church as it relates to blessing your community, be open to creative assets you might have! Maybe your church doesn't have much in financial resources, but you have a large building. Maybe your church doesn't have a large facility, but you have people who are willing to serve. Don't let what you don't have hinder your vision for what you do have! You might discover through this portion that you have the potential to be better stewards of the assets and gifts God has given your local church. Don't be afraid to discuss that in the next section.

Evaluating the potential

You've reflected on the past. You've assessed the present. Now, it's time to dream about the future. It is important to allow space for people to speak. This is a time of dreaming.

Exercise 3: Imagine the future.

Discuss the following questions together. Write out the responses on a paper or large Post-it.

1. What are your passions as it relates to the church blessing our community?
2. Based on our community assessment, how is God stirring your heart for our community?
3. What assets, both in our congregation and our community, could our church tap into to be a blessing?
Are there any current ministries that could shift to become more community-focused so the blessing of them extends beyond the walls of the church?

Leader Note: Just because you discuss something during this time does not mean it will make it into the final plan for blessing your community. So, as the leader, set the tone. Set the stage for dreaming and for people to share their hearts freely. This is not the time to criticize someone's ideas no matter how crazy you might think the idea might be. It might be that the idea you first thought was completely crazy is the one the Spirit begins to stir in the hearts of your congregation! Isn't it like God to take something we think is impossible and make it happen? He gets the credit because we couldn't have done it without him!

Wrap-up and next steps

If your team is only capturing a small amount of input related to the congregation, ask people on the team to ask questions to their Sunday school class or small group. Have them bring the responses to the next meeting.

Questions to ask others:

1. Can you remember a time when our church was successfully blessing our community? What were we doing to love our neighbors well? Were people coming to Jesus and becoming Christlike disciples?
2. Are there ministries that are currently blessing our community well? Are we seeing people come to Jesus and become Christlike disciples through our initiatives to love people outside the church?
3. How would you like to see our church bless our community in the future? Are there things in the community you are passionate about?

OUTCOMES

Time to Complete: Approximately one hour.

Objective: To analyze our community and congregation assessment and discover areas of overlap to create several possibility statements.

Before the meeting: Make sure you have a summary of both the community and congregation assessments. You can create a write-up to give out to your team and walk through that or you can have the summaries on large Post-it notes for the team to see.

Explain:

- Findings from community assessment
- Findings from congregation assessment
- Discussion of possibilities
- Creating possibility statements

What you'll need:

- A summary of the community assessment
- A summary of the congregation assessment
- Large Post-it notes to write out important information and possibility statements

Findings from community assessment

Discuss the findings from each area of your community assessment:

- Demographic study
- Asset map
- Observations
- Community leader interviews
- Neighbor surveys

Questions to process these findings:

1. Are there any demographics that jump out to you? (Example might include a high percentage of children or senior citizens, perhaps you have a large population of Latino immigrants, etc.)
2. What were some of the top observations? What about assets?
3. Was there anything repeated in your interviews and surveys?
4. As your team went through the assessment, was there anything they felt God was speaking or stirring for them to continue to discover as a way to bless your community?
5. Make note of anything your team finds significant in the findings.

Findings from congregation assessment

Discuss the findings from each area of the congregation assessment:

- What assets does this church have that could be leveraged to make a transformational impact in your community?
- What ministries do you currently have that are blessing your community – meeting needs and building relational bridges to those outside the church?
- What passions does your congregation have for blessing your community?

Creating possibility statements

Now that you have discussed the findings from both assessments, it is time to put it all together. Look over all you have discussed and create 5-10 possibility statements to consider as a way forward in blessing our community. Hopefully, at this point, your team is starting to see connections and have dreams of what your church might tangibly do in your community! These statements will serve as the path forward in creating a plan to bless your community.

Here are some examples of possibility statements:

- We could pursue a partnership with the homeless alliance in our community utilizing our property and kitchen facilities and their traveling shower trucks and connections to this population to bless our neighbors without access to showers and a warm meal.
- We could pursue a partnership with the local school by providing a monthly meal as well as resources for teachers as a way to support and encourage them in their work.
- We could pursue creating an afterschool program with the apartment complex nearby in order to provide a safe environment for children to complete homework and hear Bible stories while they wait for their parents to get home from work.
- We could pursue creating a partnership with the local nursing home to bless the residents with singing, a message, and other various activities for their enjoyment while building relationships with them and brightening their day.
- We could pursue starting a recovery group by inviting the community as well as the recovery homes in the area to come to this group every week.

Instructions:

1. Together, make a list of 5-10 possibility statements
 - Each one should start with “We could pursue...” or something similar.
 - Be sure to include the assets that you could use from both the community and the congregation in the statement.
 - Be sure to include the need it would meet within your community.
2. These statements should be statements that you truly believe, with the power of the Spirit, that your congregation could implement in your community.

3. Once your team has come up with these statements, take them and have a time of prayer before coming back together to determine the next steps. Two or three will likely rise to the surface as the way forward in blessing your community.
4. Narrow your statements down to no more than three.
5. Depending on how your team is set up, there are several different options for how to determine which possibility statement you want to pursue as a local church.
 - If your team is also your church board, you will want to take steps to decide which statement you will begin pursuing.
 - If your team consists of leaders who are not on your board, you will need to submit your findings to the board for approval.
 - You know your church's process for approving new ministry initiatives so please follow your process.

Leader Note: It is important that you work towards loving your neighbor in ways that fit your community and congregation. Please do not attempt to recreate an idea you've heard because you or your team likes it if it does not fit what you heard from your assessments! It is also important that you discover a way that fits your congregation's gifts and resources! Partnering with other organizations that are already doing good work is a beautiful way to love your neighbors – both the ones you are serving and the ones you are serving with! Don't underestimate the power of showing up where God is already at work in your community!

BLESS YOUR COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

You have assessed both your community and your congregation and determined possible ways forward. Now is the time to put into action your outcomes. This will look different for each of us, but the next steps forward are getting started! Are you hoping to partner with another organization? Contact the leader and talk about where your church can best serve and get started. If you are hoping to start a partnership with a local school, contact the principal and ask when you can bring a meal and gifts for the teachers. You get the idea! It's time to be the salt and the light that Jesus has called us to be! Here are some items you need to consider no matter how you are a blessing:

1. Write a detailed description of your project or event. Be sure to include the following: who, what, where, when, and why.
2. Write down 3-5 desired outcomes of your project or event.
3. Make a list of responsibilities for your project or event. You might even need to create teams of people. Perhaps you have an administration team, a fundraising team, a promotion team, a setup and tear down team, etc. Include who will be responsible for what.
4. Create a timeline of when tasks need to be completed for your project or event.
5. Go, be a blessing!

EVALUATE

As you are out blessing your community, you might discover that something is not as effective as you had hoped. That's ok! Learn and shift your approach as needed. Pastor Jeff O'Rourke (Mosaic Christian Community, St. Paul, MN) shared that his church partnered with the local school to provide supplemental groceries to students and their families. They took the time to evaluate and discovered it was not going well at all! They had failed to realize that many students came from other cultures, so they were not familiar with the food being sent home and how to cook it, and many other students were in unsettled housing situations. Did they just keep sending food that was not being used? No! Did they give up? No! They shifted their approach and now provide a pantry with foods that can be microwaved, and it is meeting a need that it wasn't before. It also helped the church realize the challenges their immigrant and unhoused neighbors were facing, and they have added other opportunities to connect relationally with these neighbors while meeting their real needs.

Evaluate. Make changes as needed. Be open to God if he may be asking you to connect in ways you might not have imagined! Bring key leaders together to evaluate.

Here are some reflection questions to get you and your team started:

- What is going well?
- What is not going well?
- What might the Holy Spirit be telling us to change, tweak, or modify, to continue or not continue, invest more in or shift our investment in?
- Do we need to ask for more volunteers?
- Do we need to take more time in prayer, fasting, and listening to get more direction from the Spirit?
- What resources worked? What resources did not work?
- What are the ways in which we continue being a church that blesses our community?



RESOURCES

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANT GUIDE

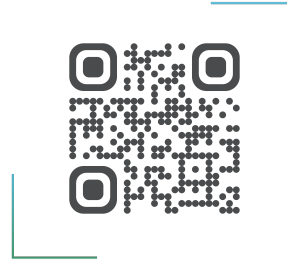
Demographic Study

Instructions: Use the following QR codes to perform a demographic study of your community.

Canadian Churches:



US Churches:



Follow the instructions to complete a report. Mark the radius your leadership team has determined.

Scan this QR Code to discover How-To videos if you need more help:



Once your report is produced, write responses to the following:

- Total population:
- Your community growth:
- Race, ethnicity, or language groups:
- Age:
- Education:
- Employment:
- Income:
- Household size/ family structure:
- Housing type/ home ownership rates:
- Any additional statistics worth noting:

Reflection Questions:

1. Do any of these statistics surprise you?

2. Are there any obvious people groups that we might want to explore how we can bless them? (i.e., single parents, immigrants, children, singles, young adults, senior citizens).

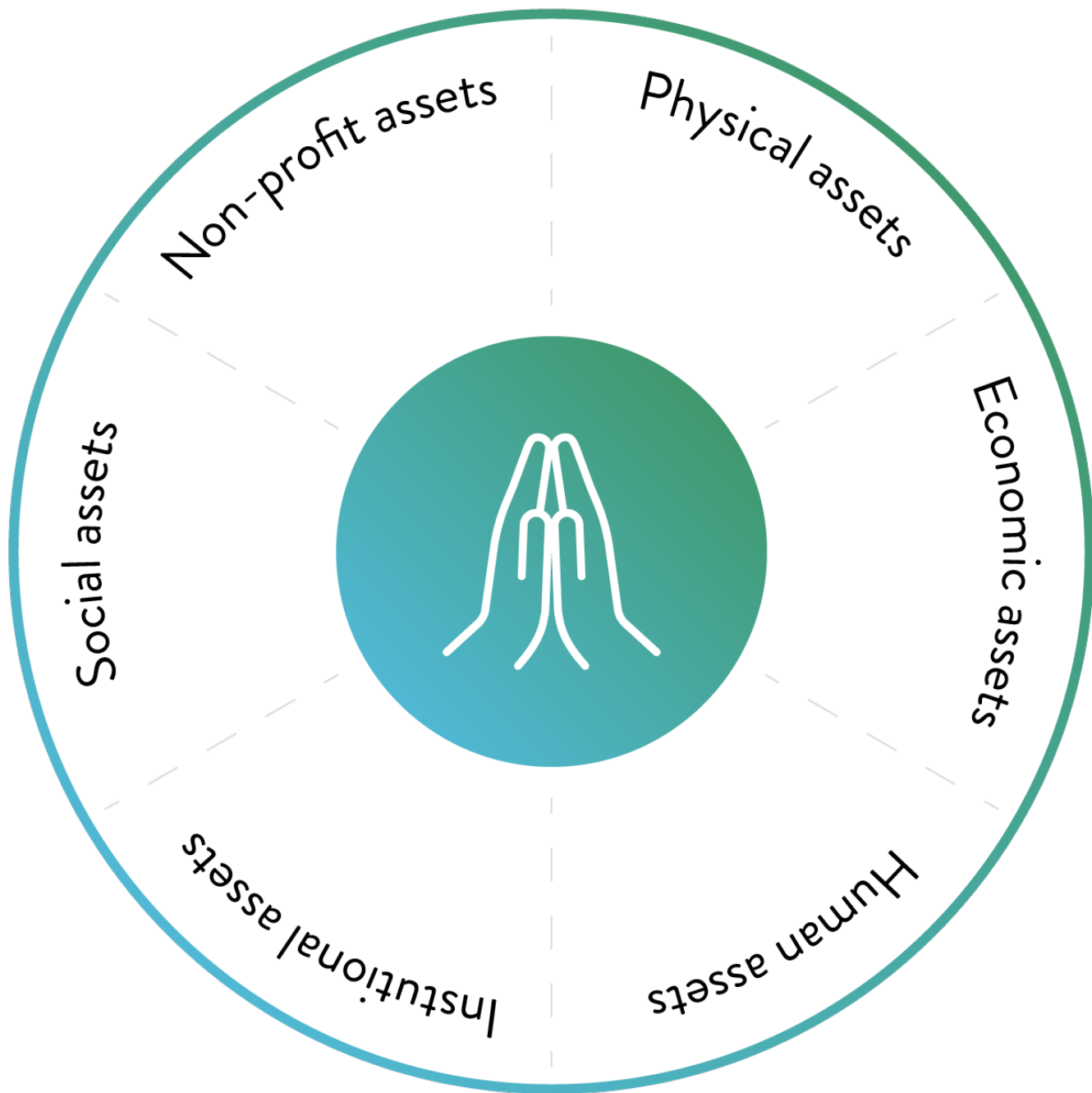
3. Are there any statistics that we might want to explore further to discover if it is an area that we might be able to be a blessing?



Asset Map

Instructions:

1. Consider the many types of assets present within your community:
 - Physical assets. This would include natural or manmade physical features in your community, such as parks, trails, bodies of water, farmland, community centers, gardens or other venues.
 - Human assets. This would include individuals who are already a blessing to your community, including musicians and artists, immigrants and refugee groups, youth and senior citizens. It could also include community leaders and volunteers.
 - Social assets. This would include strong community networks, such as civic organizations and clubs, neighborhood and community associations, and social groups formed around similar interests.
 - Economic assets. This would include local businesses and industries as well as job opportunities or employment centers, entrepreneurial talents, financial institutions.
 - Institutional assets. This would include educational institutions, local government and public services, such as libraries, healthcare facilities, or first responders.
 - Nonprofit assets. This would include non-profit organizations and charities, health and social service agencies, such as religious organizations and churches, housing shelters, counseling centers, or programs for youth and children.
2. Now that you have read through various types of assets, begin to fill out your map included in this guide by thinking through places you are already aware of.
3. Once you have thought through all the places you already know, begin to research additional assets. You can do this in several ways. First, by observation. Take your map with you and drive or walk around. Make notes of any places you discover. Second, ask your neighbors about any places they are aware of. Finally, research online through a Google Maps search or ask about assets within your digital connections, such as the Nextdoor app or community Facebook groups.
4. Once you have completed your map, answer the reflection questions on the back of your map.
5. When you have completed your asset map and reflection, turn it in to the team leader.



Asset Map Reflection Questions:

1. What are some assets you discovered that suprised you?

2. How has your view of your community changed through discovering assets? Has God revealed anything to you?

3. Are you noticing any potential partners or groups outside the church that are already making a difference in your community that your church might partner with?

4. Any additional thoughts or comments you wish to add?



Exegeting the Community

There are three tasks to exegeting the community. They include **observation, interviews, and surveys.**

Before beginning, we need to have the right posture. Scan the QR Code on this page to read an article about serving across cultures. The book the article is based on is required reading for all Nazarene missionaries but applies to us as we enter our communities too.



Once you have read the article consider the following questions:

- Which of the five abilities (openness, acceptance, trust, learning, understanding) for cross-cultural servanthood are you strong in? Which of the five abilities do you need to grow in? Why?
- Which of the four skills for openness (suspending judgement, tolerance for ambiguity, thinking gray, positive attribution) are you strong in? Which of the four skills for openness do you need to grow in? Why?
- How would developing the abilities for cross-cultural servanthood and skills for openness prepare you for serving and loving your neighbors and your community?

Seek to grow in these areas as you prepare to exegete your community!

Observation

Instructions:

In a group of 2-3, take a walk through the community around the church. Do this on different days and at different times of day to gather a broader view of the surrounding community. Use the provided outline to take notes on what you observe and experience. Discuss as a group what you discovered about the surrounding community. Complete the reflection questions.

Mailboxes, Stucco, and Graffiti

Learning to read and assess the story of your community

Introduction: Observing and interpreting your community

I. Space

- a. Physical
- b. Historical
- c. Political
- d. Personal/Cultural

II. Structures

- a. Original use or function of buildings/land-use (patterns)
- b. Size
- c. Architectural style
- d. Manners

III. Scraps of Life

- a. Unattended personal items
- b. Discarded artifacts

IV. Signage

- a. Billboards
- b. Window ads/Signs
- c. Graffiti: Unsanctioned and Sanctioned

V. Symbols

- a. Economic
- b. Political
- c. Religious/sacred

VI. Sounds and Smells

- a. Music and languages
- b. Aromas
- c. Specific Noises

VII. Signs of Hope (vs. Sites of Pain & Despair)

- a. Religious organizations
- b. Other organizations and programs
- c. Community-building activities

VIII. Social Interaction

- a. Social/Cultural groups
- b. Age
- c. Income

Reflection Questions:

1. What caught your attention? Why?

2. What kinds of questions, if any, arose as you pondered what you observed?

3. How did your observations line up with the data collected?

Interviews and Surveys

The goal is to learn and understand the health of the community from a perspective other than our own. Explain at the beginning that our church desires to know the community better and how we might better be a true blessing to those around us. Let the participants talk and the interviewer be a listener. Ask questions for clarification. Allow the conversation to flow where it might. Take notes as you go. Be sure to thank them for their time. When you are done and on your own, reflect on their answers and what stood out to you. Share your findings with the team leader.

Interviews

Instructions:

Conduct interviews in at least five of the categories of community leaders listed below. If possible, conduct the interviews in the interviewee's context. However, a phone or Zoom interview might allow easier access to the individual.

- Education
- Health care provider
- Business
- Social services
- Law enforcement
- Elected officials
- Religious leaders from another faith tradition
- Real estate broker
- Community organizer

Interview Questions:

- Describe your personal and/or your organization's role in the community.
- How do you view the overall health of the community? (Think holistically, not just physically - strengths, problems, resources, needs)
- Are there any organizations that you know to be active and important to the health and wellbeing of our community?
- How do you view the presence and role of the church in the community?
- Is there anything else related to the surrounding community that the interviewee wants to point out, something that he or she might be passionate about?

Surveys

Instructions:

Conduct several surveys with your neighbors. The goal is to learn and understand their perspective on the community. Please note: The idea is to connect with people you already know or wish to build a relationship with. The idea is NOT to walk door to door unless that is acceptable in your cultural context.

Take notes and when you are on your own. Reflect on the conversation and what stood out to you. Share your findings with the team leader.

Start a conversation with a neighbor by asking a few questions:

- How long have you lived here?
- What do you like about this community?
- What would you like to see changed?
- Would you like to be part of that change?

ACTS PRAYER GUIDE

Adoration – Praising God for who he is and what he has done.

- Psalm 103:1-5 (CEB)
 - Let my whole being bless the Lord! Let everything inside me bless his holy name! Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all his good deeds: how God forgives all your sins, heals all your sickness, saves your life from the pit, crowns you with faithful love and compassion, and satisfies you with plenty of good things so that your youth is made fresh like an eagle's.
- Psalm 34:1-3 (The Message)
 - I bless God every chance I get; my lungs expand with his praise. I live and breathe God; if things aren't going well, hear this and be happy: Join me in spreading the news, together let's get the word out.
- Revelation 4:11 (NIV)
 - "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Confession – Saying sorry for the hurt we've caused God and others.

- Psalm 51:1-4 (CEB)
 - Have mercy on me, God, according to your faithful love! Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great compassion! Wash me completely clean of my guilt; purify me from my sin! Because I know my wrongdoings, my sin is always right in front of me. I've sinned against you — you alone. I've committed evil in your sight. That's why you are justified when you render your verdict, completely correct when you issue your judgment.
- Psalm 32:5 (NIV)
 - "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.' And you forgave the guilt of my sin."
- 1 John 1:9 (NIV)
 - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Thanksgiving – Thanking God for all he has done for us.

- Psalm 100:4-5 (NIV)
 - "Enter your gates with thanksgiving and your courts with praise; give thanks to you and praise your name. For you, Lord, are good and your love endures forever; your faithfulness continues through all generations."
- Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)
 - "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Supplication – Asking God to grant us what we need.

- Psalm 67:1-2 (NIV)
 - “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us— so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.”
- Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)
 - “We pray that out of your glorious riches you may strengthen us with power through your Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And we pray that being rooted and established in love, we may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”

CONGREGATION ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Evaluating the strengths of the church

As a group, reflect on the past and how your congregation has been a blessing to your community. Then reflect on how your congregation is currently engaging people outside the church.

Exercise 1: Reflecting on the past.

Reflect together on the following questions. Take notes.

1. What has worked well in connecting with our community in the past? What are some ways our church has met the needs in our community?
2. Are there any stories of transformation within this congregation that began with our engagement in the community?
3. What have you valued in our congregation over the years related to how we love our neighbors?

Exercise 2: Assessing the present.

Discuss the following questions together. Take notes.

1. What assets exist in our church?
2. How is our church perceived in the community?
3. Do we regularly have people in the community taking next steps in their journey of grace?
4. What would be lost in this community if our church were to disappear?

Evaluating the potential

You've reflected on the past. You've assessed the present. Now, it's time to dream about the future. How might God be leading your local congregation to bless your community? Discuss the following questions together. Take notes.

1. What are your passions as it relates to the church blessing our community?
2. Based on our community assessment, how is God stirring your heart for our community?
3. What assets, both in our congregation and our community, could our church tap into to be a blessing?

Wrap-up and next Steps

If you want to gather more thoughts from your congregation, take the following questions to your Sunday school class or small group. Spend some time explaining what this team is doing and how we desire to connect with people outside the church through blessing our community, so we can bring people to Jesus and become more like Christ. Take notes and bring the responses back to the team.

Questions to ask others:

1. Can you remember a time when our church was successfully blessing our community? What were we doing to love our neighbors well? Were people coming to Jesus and becoming Christlike disciples?
2. Are there ministries that are currently blessing our community well? Are we seeing people come to Jesus and become Christlike disciples through our initiatives to love people outside the church?
3. How would you like to see our church bless our community in the future? Are there things in the community you are passionate about?