

Strategies for Getting to Know Your Community

Continued...

- CONNECT WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES
- COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS



Preparing for the Community Interviews

Getting to know the community . . . personally!

While demographic studies are a very valuable tool, nothing beats 'boots on the ground' when it comes to understanding the community you have been called to serve. Interviews with community leaders are an excellent way to uncover where the congregation can build bridges into the community.

Who might be helpful to interview? Think of persons who would be able to give you insights into community trends and needs. Such persons in your community might include:

- Mayor
- Council Representatives
- Police Chief
- Fire Chief
- Home Owners' Association
- Realtors
- School Principals
- Hospital Administrators
- Social Service agencies
- Pastors of other congregations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Neighbors in your community

Who should make the interviews? Involve people in the interviews who will represent the congregation well and who will be at ease speaking with community leaders. It also needs to be people who are able to ask leading questions and then listen and learn from what they hear.

Keep the interviews simple: The purpose of the interview is to listen. After greetings, give a simple explanation that your congregation is conducting a series of community leader interviews to discover ways in which they can be of greater service to others. Then ask the community leader the following open-ended questions and let them talk. The first question is designed to be an easy ice breaker:

- What do you like most about living in this community?
- What are the greatest needs that you see in our community?
- How might the church be of service to you and/or the community?
- Where do you already see people coming together to make good things happen?

Preparing the Community Interviews Summary Report

Since this is a summary report, keep it to no more than one or two pages. After listing who was interviewed and by whom, briefly share key discoveries around the following three questions:

- What are the greatest unmet needs in our community?
- Where might our congregation be a blessing to the community?
- Where is God already at work through others that the congregation might choose to support?