



# Who Is My Neighbor?

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A Harvest 2020 New Faith Community





## A Harvest 2020 New Faith Community



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*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."  
- Acts 1:8*

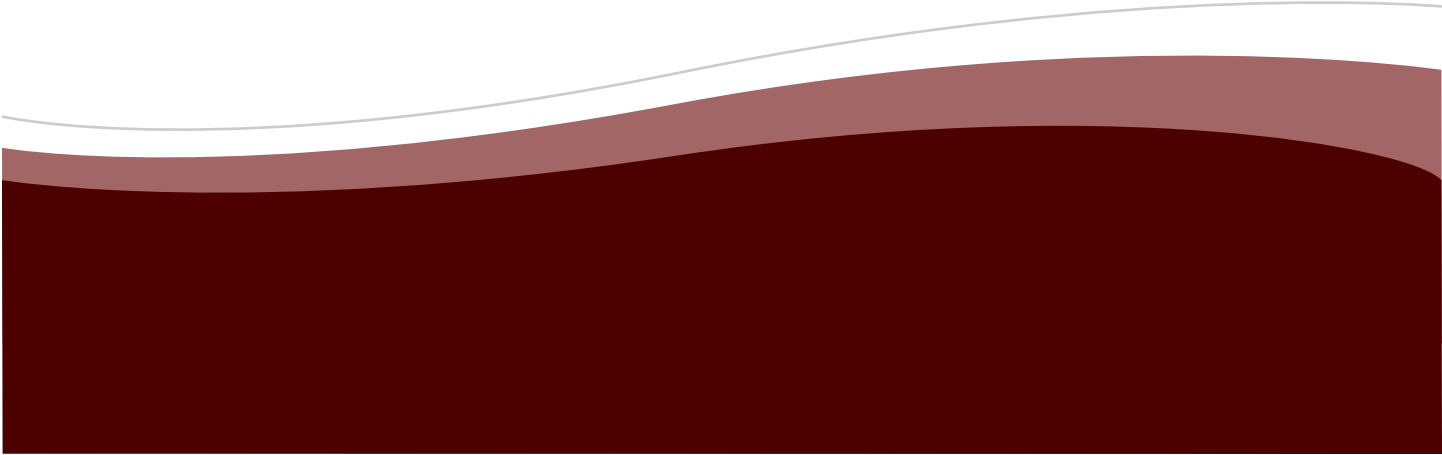
The purpose of this document is to help churches discern their mission field. Many of us we still live in the old children's saying: "Here's the church, here's the steeple, open the doors and see all the people." But it might be wise for the church to live out a new saying: "Here's the church, here's the steeple, open the doors and go out to serve the people." Remember, Jesus ministered and taught to whomever he encountered, all places, everywhere, in the temple, on the streets, even at a wedding. We are called to do the same. The church must be where life is lived.

## Try This Exercise:

Re-write the scripture by adding the following information to begin to understand your mission field:

- a. Name of your city/town;
- b. Name of a local place where people gather;
- c. Name of a local school;
- d. Name of local park, sporting facility;
- e. Name of local mission .

**"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in (a) \_\_\_\_\_, and at (b) \_\_\_\_\_ and (c) \_\_\_\_\_, and (d) \_\_\_\_\_ and (e) \_\_\_\_\_, and to the ends of the (f) \_\_\_\_\_." - Acts 1:8**





# Who Is My Neighbor?

Keep in mind, your church probably has a long and rich history of doing ministry well. After all, most of the churches in the United Methodist Church are older and have been around for decades if not centuries. That is, to say the least, impressive. What your church has to offer is still very relevant today. Let's figure out how to broaden those who might listen to the message in your community.

In their prime, United Methodist Churches were pillars of their communities. They provided education, hope, community, food, shelter and faith to thousands and millions. So, let's use **PILLAR** as our way to rethink church. It is an acronym by which you can help your church once again reach out to your community and become a foundation of Christ's love to people who are currently not being touched by the church.

**P** r a y  
**I** d e n t i f y  
**L** e a r n  
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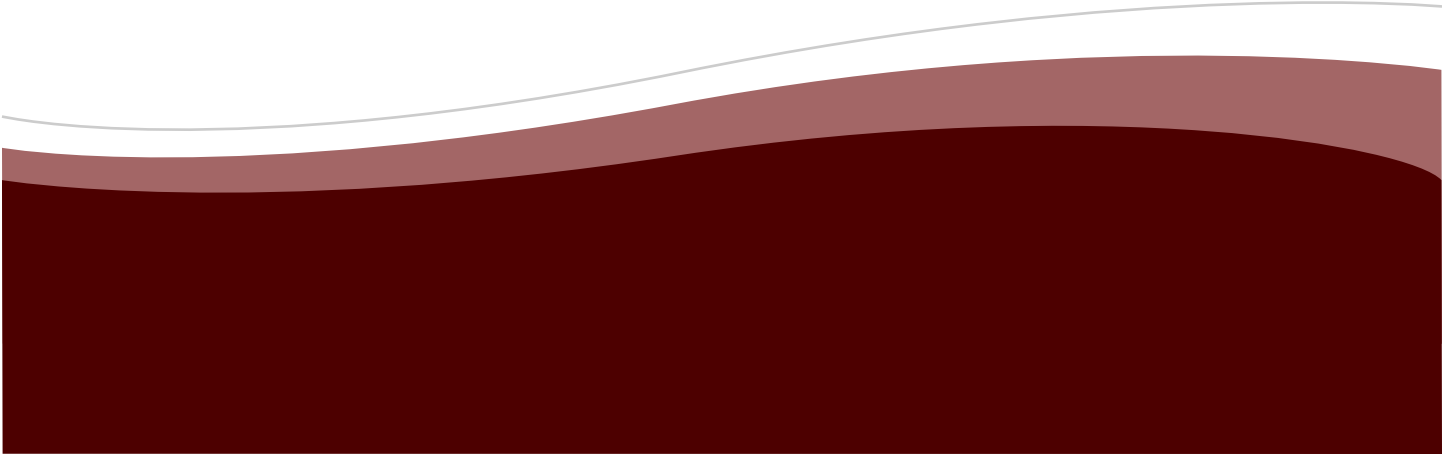




# Pray

*"Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live."  
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (The Message)*

This should be obvious, but unfortunately, many churches forget about prayer. We will vote on the minutes, but fail to open the meeting in prayer. We will ask for adjournment but not ask for blessings over our work. We are quick to do the work of the church but often fail to make room for Christ.

1. Envelope your outreach into the community with prayer. Begin in your sanctuary and classrooms. Give thanks to God for all the good things that have happened, that are happening and that will happen within the walls of the church. Ask for help in bringing the ministries of the church beyond the walls.
  2. Step outside your building and pray for your town/community/neighborhood and the areas you serve.
  3. Break into teams and drive around your town/community/neighborhood, stopping at various points along the way, praying for those who have yet to hear the message of Christ that your church will be sharing. (Maybe try prayer circles with various groups walking a certain distance radius around your church praying for those who are in that area).
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# Identify

*Identify the mission field you have been entrusted with. Do you think you know your mission field?  
Do you think you know your neighbors? Do you really?  
Try these simple quizzes and see how you do:*

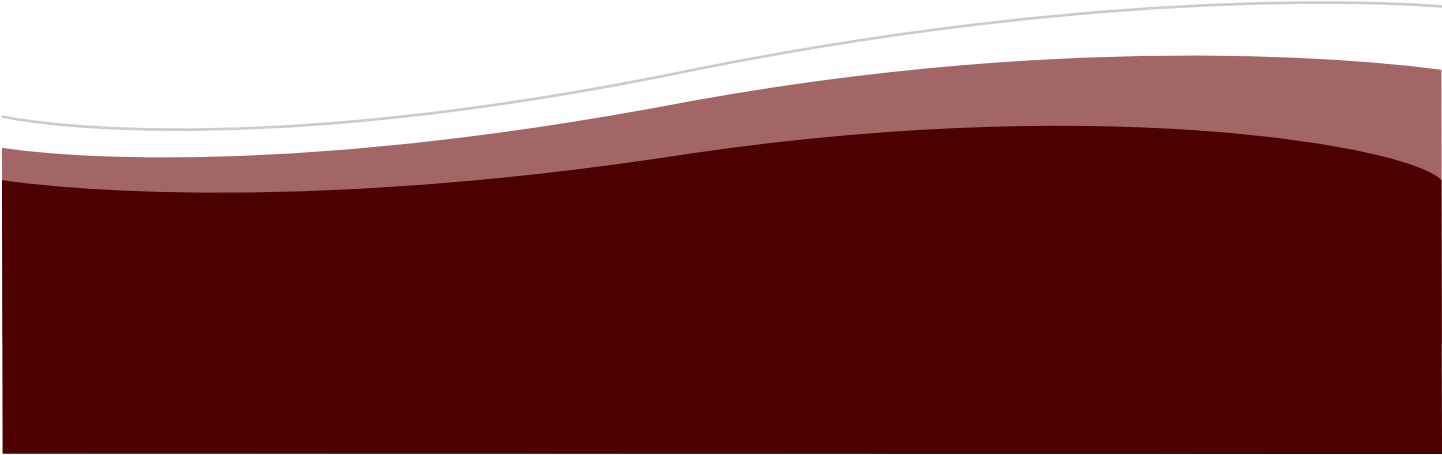
## **Who is my neighbor?**

1. What are the names of the people who live three homes down from you on either side and behind you?
2. What do they do for a living?
3. What are the things they like to do for fun?
4. What church/faith community do they attend (if any)?
5. Are they struggling with anything? What needs do they have?

## **Who is the church's neighbor?**

1. Who are the people/businesses that are within three buildings of the church on each direction? If a business, what are the names of the workers?
2. What are their biggest needs?
3. If there are homes (ask the questions above from quiz #1).
4. If there are businesses: What type of business? How is their business? Are there any struggles? Are there any needs that could be met by the church? Are there any resources that could benefit the church? Are there any ways to partner with the businesses?

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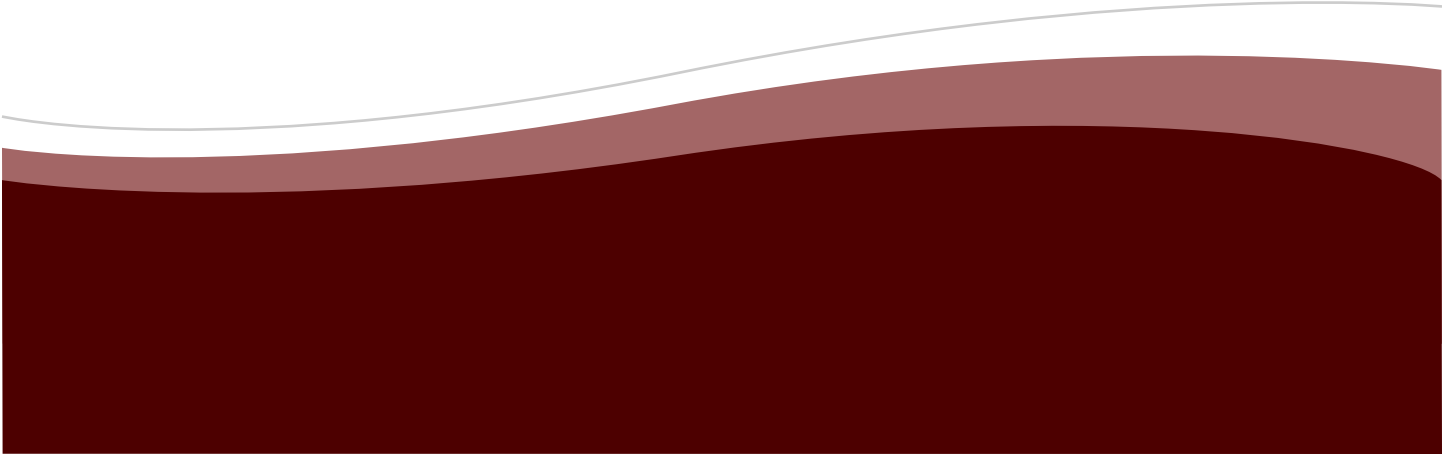


# Identify

The purpose and assumption of these simple quizzes is to help us realize that we probably do not fully know our own neighbors yet alone our mission field. Even if we know our neighbors' names and some things about them, do we really know them intimately? A primary responsibility all Christians have is to help create communities of believers and these are to be deep and intimate communities. So, after prayer, our next task is to prayerfully identify our mission field. Where are we to build community? Is it within the borders of our town/city? Is it a geographic area? Is your church a regional church (pulling from various towns and cities)?

## Try This Exercise:

Place a local map on a corkboard in the Sanctuary and ask congregation members over the next few weeks to place a pin where they live. This will help you identify more about your community as it stands. Is your mission field bigger than you think? Is it smaller? Make a decision as to what will be the borders of your mission field. Who will you serve? What communities will you serve?



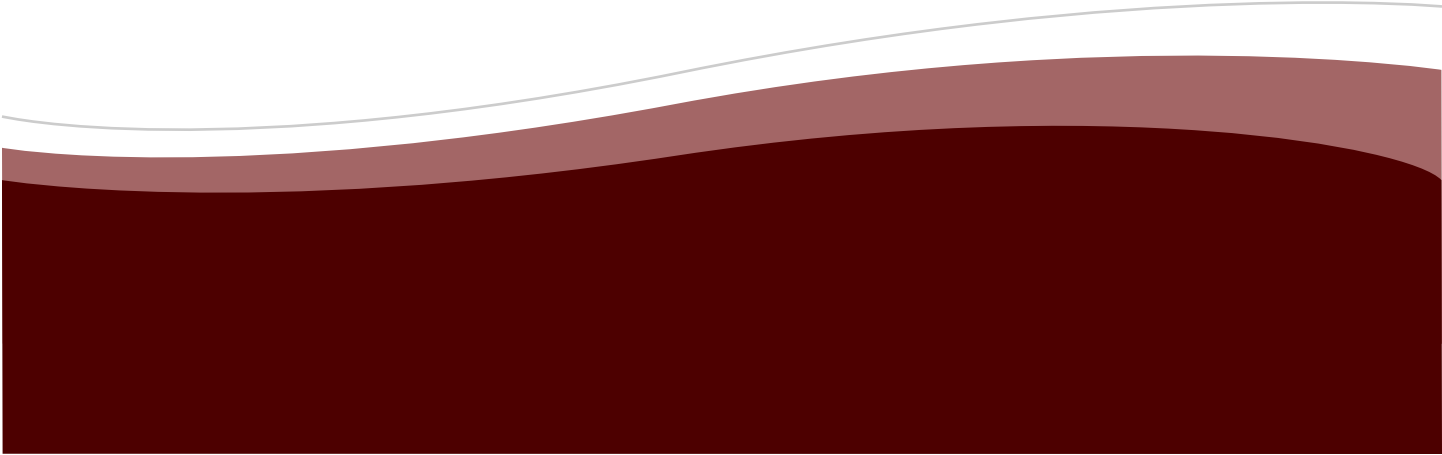


# Learn

*Learn your mission field! Here are three essentials:*

1. **Identify Demographics:** Use demographic tools, such as the ones listed at the end of this document.
2. **Ask:** Where are people gathering? Why do they gather there? Drive around your mission field at different times of the day and take notes about where people are.
3. **Think Outside of the Box.** Consider the elements of your mission field that may not be thought of. Examples include:
  - **Storage units:** Often this is the first place people will go when there is a dramatic change in their lives, including loss of loved ones, divorce, business failures and moves. Speak to the manager, you may be surprised how much people share with them.
  - **Laundromat:** Another source of persons in transition. Also, it is a great way to share time with people. After all, laundry takes a while. Consider doing a weekly Bible Study there. Ask permission first OR take turns doing your own laundry there when you have the study.
  - **Library:** There are all kinds of persons using the library. This is a great place to have children's programs. Consider offering children's reading groups. Consider who else might be using the library? Many people who do not have or cannot afford the internet at home, use the library as a resource. Recently, I came to discover that many people who use the internet at libraries are looking for jobs.

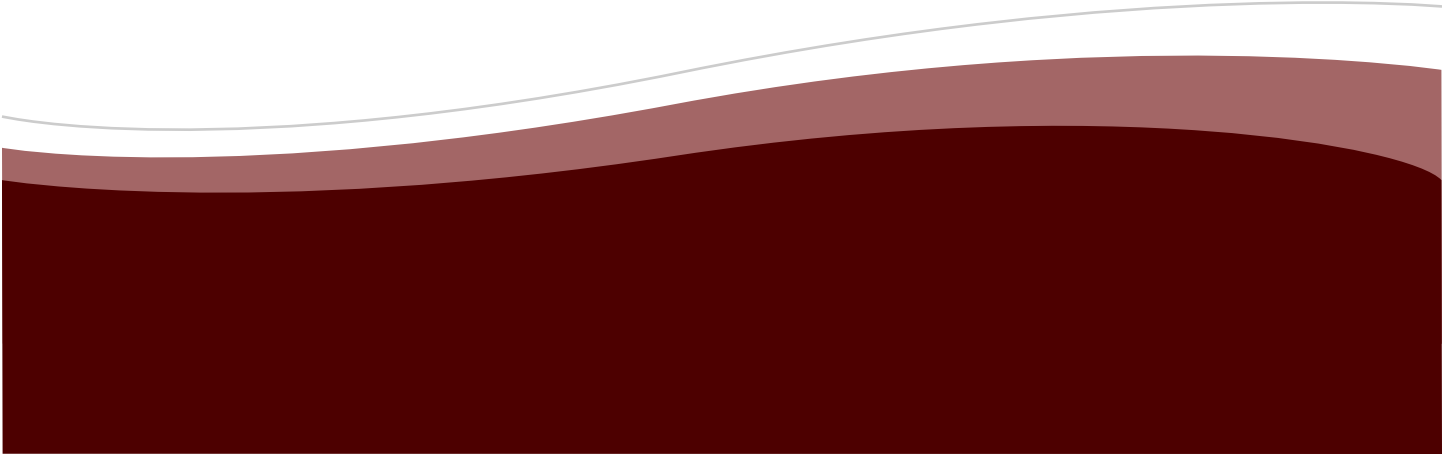
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# Learn

- **News media:** Have volunteers read the local papers or online news through the evangelism lens. Most of us read based on only those things that pertain to us or through our own lens. What might it be like to read these resources through the lens of your church's evangelism? Look for persons going through transitions. How could your church help? What are the issues facing the people of your faith community?
  - **Funeral Homes:** We often take the relationships between the funeral homes and churches for granted. Many people have services without the presence of a pastor or church community. This provides an awesome opportunity for your church to reach out and partner with the funeral home to provide services. Cookies/punch for memorial services or even lunches for family members could be provided for those suffering. Consider a Befrienders or Stephen Ministry connection to the Funeral Home.
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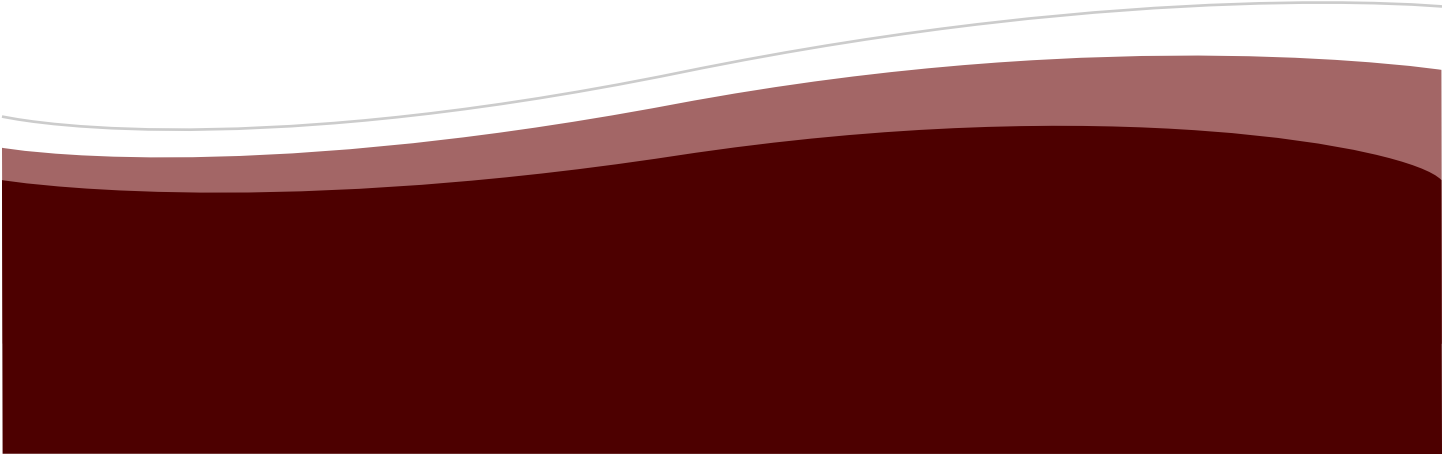
# Listen

*Take time to listen to the needs of those in the mission field. Do not assume that you understand the needs and that what you are currently offering is meeting the needs.*

For example, in the suburbs of Chicago, we all think we are providing a great service to children by doing a Vacation Bible Study. However, for many this is nothing more than a glorified babysitting service. Are the needs of suburban children different? We are finding that many of the suburban kids need something different than another program. There is a great need to teach generosity and to help teach that competitive sports are not the only thing that defines us.

## **Create Focus Groups:**

Focus groups are a great way to discover more about the needs of your community and how your church and its ministries are known, perceived or effective. Be able to put ego aside and LISTEN to what the community is telling you.

1. Post questions on Facebook and allow people to answer.
  2. Use SURVEY MONKEY (an online tool) to create surveys to have members send out to friends or family asking for information about the community or the church.
  3. Create a small (8-10) person focus group to ask questions about the needs of the community. Offer to pay the first 10 to sign up \$25 to participate.
  4. Go to various locations (stores, coffee shops, library) and ask people questions to discover how your church is perceived in the community.
  5. Create home groups for members to invite neighbors and friends to discover how the church is perceived.
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# Adapt

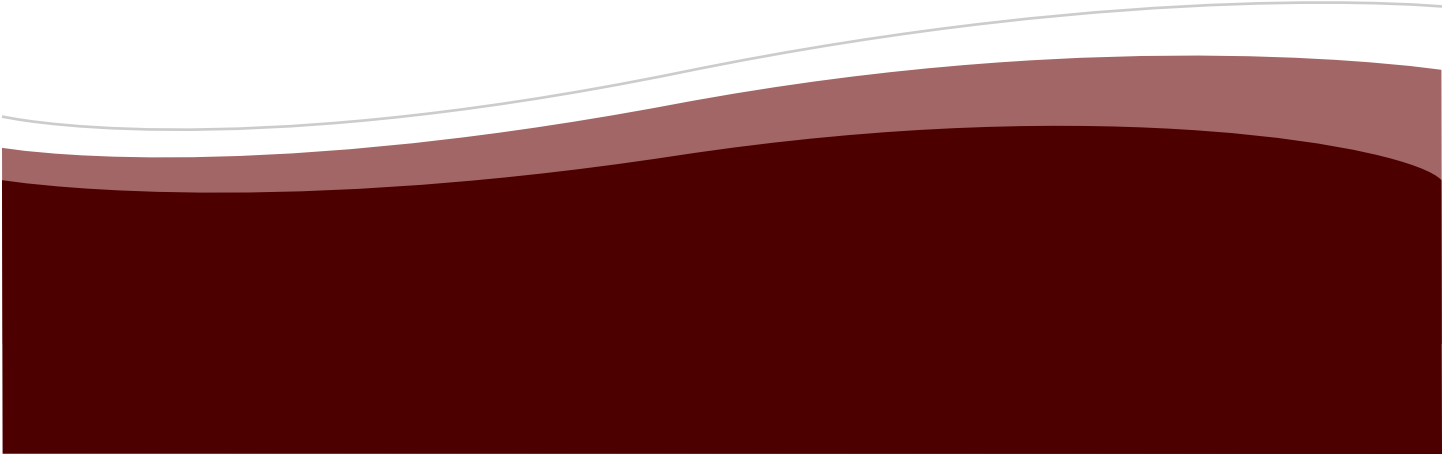
*After prayer, identifying the mission field, listening and learning, the responsibility now resides in the leaders of the church to DO SOMETHING about what you have just learned. Are you going to keep doing the same thing, or will you consider how you might adapt to be relevant in the current culture?*

**I want to be clear, I am not suggesting the church needs to change its message.**

I believe the fundamental message the church provides has not changed in thousands of years. However, I am suggesting you consider how you share that message and how you bring that message to your community so they can come to understand its relevance in their lives. How are you going to get out from behind the walls of your church and be more in the community?

**For example, how many churches have believed offering a new style of worship was the way to attract new worshippers?**

Many historic churches offered up new “contemporary” worship services only to see them fail within months. Why? The music was good, the message was engaging and the style was well conceived. What they didn’t realize is that their potential audience may have LOVED the worship but there was no way to get them through the front door. Maybe if they had considered an alternative venue, such as a theater, school or (yes) even a bar, those same people might have taken a risk to try it out. For many, an historic church is a barrier.





# Rethink Again!

*There is a famous story about the chocolate company, Hershey's. Their executives thought they could reduce costs by eliminating much of its advertising because, at the time, everyone seemed to know the brand. Profits dropped dramatically. They immediately reinstated their advertising budget.*

The church can fall into the same trap. We often think everyone knows about us, our ministries or our programs. We think that what we provide still meets the needs of the communities. That is a dangerous assumption. A healthy church is always willing to rethink and discern how God is calling it to serve not only God but our communities as well.

***To continue to be a pillar of faith in our communities, we must continually go through the steps of P.I.L.L.A.R.***





# Demographic Tools

*Information from <http://www.newchurches.com/demographic-websites/>:*

[American Fact Finder \(US Census Bureau\)](http://factfinder2.census.gov/) - Probably the best overall site available for obtaining FREE data tables and color coded maps. Simply enter an address of interest and then follow the on-screen instructions. A huge number of data tables and maps are available. Maps can be zoomed to obtain closer views. <http://factfinder2.census.gov/>

[US Census Bureau \(2000 Census Homepage\)](http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html) - Gateway to all 2000 US census information. <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>

[Church Marketing Solutions](http://www.church-marketing.com/) - Church Marketing Solutions provides free demographic reports for church planters. <http://www.church-marketing.com/>

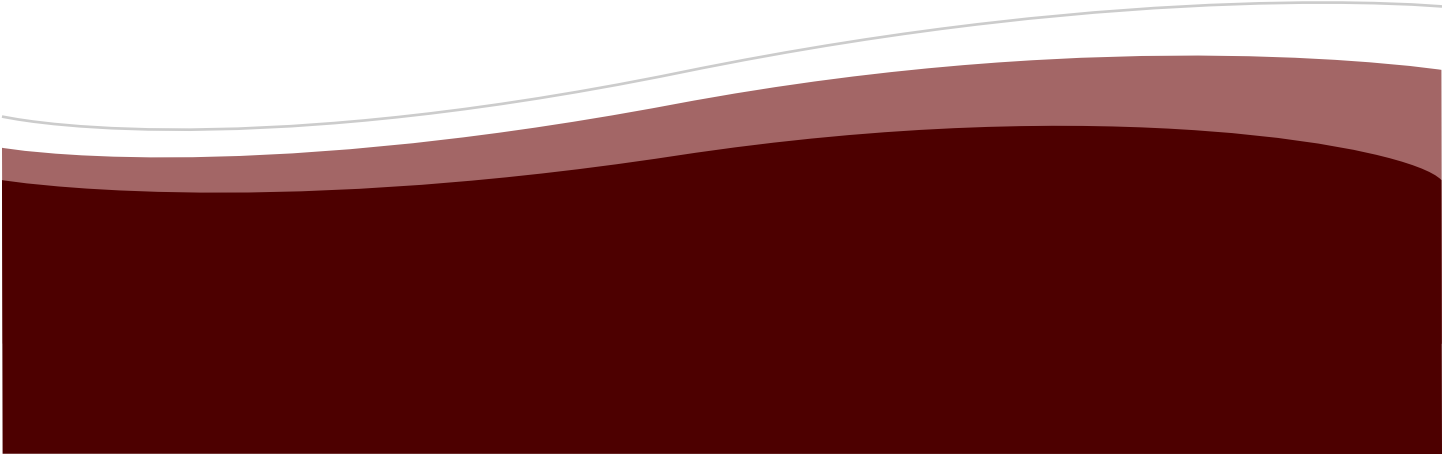
[ESRI Business Information](http://www.esri.com/data/esri_data/tapestry) - Great free summary. [http://www.esri.com/data/esri\\_data/tapestry](http://www.esri.com/data/esri_data/tapestry)

[Melissa Data](http://www.melissadata.com/Lookups/) - Great overall information. <http://www.melissadata.com/Lookups/>

[FreeDemographics.com](http://www.freedemographics.com/) - This is an online application that lets you review 2010 U. S. Census data. <http://www.freedemographics.com/>

[Link2Lead \(Percept\)](http://www.freedemographics.com/) - Link2Lead.com is a new web site for local church pastors and lay leaders. Here you can download FREE demographic reports by Percept, the leading information provider to religious organizations for the past 18 years, and our growing client family of over 300 denominational regional bodies and national offices from all across the United States. You must be affiliated with a participating denomination to download the free reports. <http://www.freedemographics.com/>

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# Demographic Tools

[The Right Site](http://www.easidemographics.com/) - Good site for free and paid reports. To enter the site and obtain free reports, you must sign up for a free membership. <http://www.easidemographics.com/>

[MapStats](http://www.fedstats.gov/qf/) - This provides access to the full range of official statistical information produced by the Federal government without having to know in advance which Federal agency produces which particular statistic. <http://www.fedstats.gov/qf/>

[Percept](http://www.perceptgroup.com) - Premier "for fee" demographic data for churches. Select "products" from the main menu. <http://www.perceptgroup.com>

*Check with your conference office for possible discounts in demographic materials.*



