**Community Discovery**

**Take one hour on two separate occasions to discover your community within a one or two mile radius from your church building. Take a pad with you and take notes.** Walk the streets. Drive the roads. Read the signs. Observe. Observe the faces of the people in the stores, shops, and gas stations. Observe the way people drive, the magazines they read in the Barber Shop, the Beauty Salon or the check-out line. Is the neighborhood residential? Who lives there? Children? Older People? What do people do there? Are they walking dogs? Are they biking? Are they playing a sport? Watch the faces of those who are waiting...for the light to change, for the bus or in a restaurant. Observe what they are carrying...literally and emotionally. Observe how they treat each other? Observe the beauty in your community. Where is it? Homes? Buildings? Architecture? People? Look for the simple things. Come back with a list of things on a sheet of paper that you have observed.

In small groups, answer some of the following questions.

1. What are the demographics? What kinds of housing options exist? Who is moving into your community?
2. Who are the cultural heroes in your local and regional culture? What/Who are the "gods" in your culture? What kind of music do people tend to listen to? What lyrics do they have committed to memory, and what story is that calling them into?
3. What are the physical signs of wealth? Are the displaced people treated as full human beings?
4. How do the various institutions deal with immigrants—as people made in the image of God or a problem?
5. What does security look like? How is authority viewed in your culture?
6. What are the social conflicts that are currently being dealt with?
7. How does the history of your culture affect life today? What are the prime landmarks, and how do they shape the narrative of the neighborhood?
8. What are people’s dreams and hopes? What are their fears and stresses?
9. What do people think about God, about Jesus, or about the church?
10. What places of worship are in the neighborhood and what do they tell us? What is the reputation of the religious leaders churches in the neighborhood?
11. Which companies are the primary employers of the city? Do the primary employers look out for the common good of the city or their own good?
12. Does the police force look out for the underprivileged or add to the divisiveness of the city? Do the lawmakers and judges treat the people with fairness or with favoritism? Who are the most powerful people in the area and do they promote justice or their own welfare?
13. What are the primary educational institutions and how are they shaping the lives of the children and the area? Does everybody have equal opportunity when it comes to education?
14. What are the greatest needs in the community? Who is addressing those needs?

**Congregational Reflection**

1. Whatshouldour church be known for in this community? If our church ceased to exist, what would the community miss? What does the rest of the community know about our church?
2. Are we focusing our time, money, leadership, and prayer on the things that will produce life change and community impact?
3. Is there a clear path to help people take steps in discipleship? Have we taken the time to identify what a fully-devoted follower of Christ looks like?
4. Are we empowering the people of God to do God’s work?  Do our people see their ministry happening only at the church or have they become missionaries to their families, their neighborhoods, their workplaces, their schools, etc.?
5. Are we developing leaders?
6. Is our community any different because of our ministries?

**Ministries and Needs Assessment**

What would your community miss if your church ceased to exist? What would you want your community to say about your church after its death? (Feel free to go out and ask your community these questions.)

What are the three greatest needs of the people who live within a 2-5 mile radius from the front door of your church? (Use the observations from the Community Discovery tool.)

Interview the principal of the local school or the fire or police chief. What do they say are the three greatest needs in your community?

List the ministries of your church. Then, describe how each ministry works toward making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. If you discover ministries where you cannot understand how they help make disciples, invite conversation about the reasons with the leadership team of the church. Do you need to reframe these ministries? Do you need to discontinue these ministries?

Connect each ministry with a related need in your community. What do you discover? Where do you see the gaps? What gifts has God given you to address those needs? Who in your community can you partner with to help you meet those needs?

What ONE or TWO steps can you take next to align your ministry opportunities with the needs of the community and the mission of the church to make disciples for the transformation of the world? Make a plan to address these one or two steps.

**Further resources:** MissionInsite, Readiness 360, Community Discovery, Congregational Reflection, The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development