

A photograph of a man with a beard and a woman celebrating at night. The man is in the foreground, smiling broadly with his mouth open, and his right arm is raised. The woman is behind him, also smiling and holding a sparkler. The background is filled with out-of-focus lights and more sparklers, creating a festive atmosphere.

STARTING NEW PLACES

FOR NEW PEOPLE

EQUIPPING WORLD-CHANGING DISCIPLES UMCdiscipleship.org



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church



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“TO THE WEAK I BECAME WEAK, SO THAT I MIGHT WIN THE WEAK. I HAVE BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE, THAT I MIGHT BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME.”

1 Corinthians 9:22

Though we'd like to think that we follow the Apostle Paul's example of becoming all things to reach all people, realistically, people are naturally attracted to (and attract) certain kinds of folks. Your church will typically include those who share similar interests or life experiences. Example: A mother with two preschool kids will probably reach young moms with preschoolers more easily than she will connect with college-age singles or age-fifty-something empty-nest families.

If your church wants to create new places for new people, it's important to understand the people you currently influence, those you want to reach, and some of the barriers you'll need to overcome to connect with those outside your natural-affinity groups. Try using these questions to start discussions with committees, small groups, and ministry teams. Compare notes with other people from your congregation and brainstorm an action plan to create something new through your church.

USE THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE KINDS OF FOLKS WITH WHOM YOU MOST EASILY RELATE, AND/OR WHICH ENERGIZE YOU. WRITE A PARAGRAPH OR TWO DESCRIBING YOUR PERSONAL AFFINITY GROUP(S).

Where do you find these people in your mission field, if at all?

What kinds of people do you wish to reach who are outside your most natural-affinity group?

What kinds of people will you need on your team to help you understand and connect with people you want to reach?

NOW, ABOUT YOUR CHURCH... LET'S THINK ABOUT YOUR CHURCH'S APPEAL IN THE COMMUNITY.

What sets your church apart from the neighboring churches?

What do you offer that they do not?

How does your church family respond to people who are different from them?

Which people, among your church's members, most enjoy getting out into the community and meeting new people?

What do your church's neighbors (businesses, residents, government, etc.) say about your church?

What difference is your church making in your community?

How can your church be really distinctive?

How can you express the uniqueness of your church in words that will interest your focus population?

What do demographic reports and census information tell you about your community?

What do you know about the community that's not in the "official" reports (observations, parts of town where things happen, thought/influence leaders, etc.)?

What do you believe to be true about your community (and maybe it was true twenty years ago) that needs to be verified now?

What are the three biggest unmet and/or growing social services needs in your community?

1.

2.

3.

How will you ask people what they need?

What are some specific questions could you ask people to determine those needs?

What organizations would you approach to learn more about the needs in your community? *(See next page for some of our favorite suggestions)*

Sometimes you can partner with other organizations to meet community needs. Rather than starting new ministries, consider making your members available to support the good works that are already happening. Arrange to meet with representatives of these types of organizations:

1. Police
2. School Systems
3. Medical Professionals
4. Community Organizations (Rotary, Lions, etc.)
5. Government Organizations
6. Non-profit Organizations (United Way, Food Bank, etc.)
7. Your Neighbors (businesses and individuals)
8. Social Networks (online and in-person)

What are the top ten places where people gather in your community (be specific)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

What do these places tell you about how people spend their leisure time?

What else is happening (besides worship) on Sunday mornings in your community?

What types of community activities could you host in your church building (something you're not already doing)?

What would be a good neutral site for your members to get to know people in the community?

What could your church do for the community, with no strings attached and no expectation of any type of financial or other gain?

What three action steps will you implement based on what you've done with this resource? And when will you do them?

1.

By (Date):

2.

By (Date):

3.

By (Date):