



Living the Resurrection

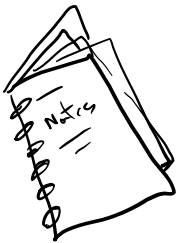
Helping congregations thrive

Becoming a Community-Centered Church

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As you consider ways to be a church in your area, here are three approaches or mindsets to get you started. Along the way, be sure to pause to discuss what your findings mean and how they might impact how God is asking you to do ministry.



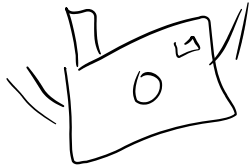
Be Anthropologists: become curious anthropologists of your community.

Tools: *Chamber of Commerce, Tourist Information, Demographics, the City, Realtors, Police Department, Political Leaders, School District, Library, Direct Observation and more.*

1. **Note** habits, major events/festivals, gathering places, what seems to matter to people, who is there (who is not).
2. **Gather** demographics, events calendar, lists of businesses, services, and religious/other organizations.
3. **Observe:** *Be curious, have fun, and put together a picture of your community.*
 - a. **Home.** Where and how are people sheltered? What is the average cost of homes in the area? Notice housing – how many rental properties, live and own home, are they multifamily units, how old are the homes, is this an area in transition, what do you notice about the lawns/outdoor space, do people seem to spend time outside, do they seem to be home much at all? What might these observations mean?
 - b. **Transportation.** How do people get around – bike, car (2 or 4 doors), minivans, bus, walking, scooters, etc.? What might this say about the people in the neighborhood?
 - c. **Social.** Where do people gather? What are they doing? Where do they seem to spend their leisure time (gardening, grilling, swimming, somewhere away from the

neighborhood, neighborhood coffee shops/restaurants, park, etc.). What does this mean or how might it reflect something of the lives of the people?

- d. **Food/basic needs.** Where do you think people get their groceries? Are you in a food desert? Where do hungry people go? How is the access to health care, childcare, etc.?
- e. **Employment.** What are the major employers in the area?
- f. **People** (race, ethnicity, age, education background, priorities, stage in life, religious, customs, etc.). Who is there; who is not there?
- g. **Institutions.** What are the businesses, schools, hospitals, social service agencies faith communities, and civic organizations? Who are the leaders



Be Tourists: *Find ways to engage, show up, and participate in the life of the community.*

Use the skills you bring when being a tourist - show up, explore, be curious, go on "field trips." Idea: Wear t-shirts that show you are part of your congregation – help people make the connection between you (someone who shows up and is active) and the ministry of the church.



Be Missionaries: *Be good neighbors who care deeply and are force for Gospel Goodness.*

1. **Engage** – how are neighbors looking to improve the community? How can you and your congregation be part of the effort to build up/improve the downtown community?
2. **Listen:** find ways to help out or join in work being done. Invite people/key leaders (business owners, principals/teachers, volunteers etc.) out for coffee to get to know them and ask what they think would make the downtown community better. *(Pro tip: one on one meeting is an art/skill, best to practice with each other first – it is a great way to learn more about each other!)* Who do you already know in these roles?
3. **Actively Pray.** Get a list of groups, businesses, agencies, churches, etc. – organize a prayer calendar so that the whole congregation is actively praying for the community leaders and groups by name. *Be bold and send a note or call – ask for prayer requests.*
4. **Prepare** – As a church ask these questions every chance you get: what does the work of building up the community have to do with Jesus? For that matter – what does Jesus have to do with the way you live your life?

- 5. Invite** – if God’s grace, love, hope changes everything about how you live, engage, cope, exist, etc. – then invite others into sharing what changes everything for them and then share your story/God’s story.

God changes everything about the priorities and ways this world operates. Invite people into creating a community that values each person, works for wholeness/peace, and that reflects God’s bold and merciful love – the love we experience most deeply in Jesus.