

## **GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY**

### **An Outline for Community Information Gathering**

Renewing a congregation involves connecting it to the context around it. Acts 1:8 reminds us that God's dream includes the whole world. It also reminds us that our part in God's work starts where we are. To be effective partners in God's mission congregations need to be connected to their communities. It is important to know who is there, what their lives are like and how they spend their time.

1. Read Acts 1:6-8. What does the text say to you?
  - a. Discuss the neighborhood(s) to which you have been sent by God.
  - b. Pray together for the community and its people.
  - c. Set a time when you can go out together, knock on doors and meet local residents.
  
2. Gather demographic information about your zip code(s).

Go to [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org), click on "Resources", then on "Demographic Information for Your Zip Code." Use your synod number/letter and the congregational ID number to access this free service.
  
3. Spend 2-3 hours visiting in the community. Go in teams of 2 people (if in a town, one for each side of the street).
  - a. Stay on the steps outside the door if possible. It will take longer and could put someone in an uncomfortable situation if you go inside.
  - b. Introduce yourself by name and congregation.
  - c. Explain that your congregation is trying to learn more about the community and ask if they have 3-5 minutes to answer questions.
  - d. If they agree, ask the following (take notes about their answers):
    - i. What are the best things about living in this community?
    - ii. What things could be improved about life here?
    - iii. What could a church do to help make life here better?
    - iv. Is there anything in your life that our congregation could pray about in our prayers for you?
  - e. Thank them for their time and ask if you can leave information about the congregation. Have available a postcard or sheet with :
    - i. A clear but simple message (maybe your mission/vision statement)
    - ii. The congregation's name, address, phone, e-mail, website, etc.
    - iii. Worship times
  
4. Assemble all the visitors together to:
  - a. Pray together and reread Acts 1:6-8. How does the text strike you now?
  - b. Discuss what people shared with you and what you see in the demographic information.
    - i. What do you remember most about the visits and why?
    - ii. Who lives in your community? (age, ethnicities, etc.)
    - iii. What do they do? (vocations, education, recreation, etc.)
    - iv. What is good about the community?
    - v. What could be improved?
    - vi. What suggestions did they have about the church's involvement in the community?
  - c. Pray for the community, especially those concerns shared during the visits.