

Community Evaluation

How does one know if a community needs a new church?

Purpose: To help determine what communities to target for church planting. This somewhat extended procedure is designed to answer the question: “Should we seriously consider planting a new church in _____?”

Gather General Information:

- Determine population of the area from the latest census data (<http://www.census.gov/>) and/or local estimates.
- Find out how many students are enrolled in the local school system.
- Discover growth projections from the Chamber of Commerce, government, commercial, and industrial leaders.
- List all churches in the area. (Note: Using an online yellow pages search and importing the data to a spreadsheet greatly expedites the process to follow)

Determine the Need for Evangelism

- Divide the list of churches into three groups: Protestant, Catholic, and Cults.
- Divide the list of protestant churches into two groups: those hold the basics of biblical faith where people would hear the gospel (Evangelical Protestant), and those that do not hold the basics of biblical faith where people would probably not hear the gospel (Non-Evangelical Protestant).
- Talk to knowledgeable people in the community or call the churches to determine the approximate number of people involved in each of the Evangelical Protestant churches.

Subtract the total number of people involved in Evangelical Protestant churches from the total area population. You now have an estimation of the community’s need for evangelistic ministries.

Create a Church Profile of the Community

Divide the Evangelical Protestant Churches into three groups:

- a. Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches.
- b. Incompatible churches -- non-Charismatic/Pentecostal but with doctrinal positions you would not feel comfortable working with. **Make this determination on doctrinal position and not on style of ministry.**
- c. Possibly Compatible Churches -- you will probably need to visit these churches before making a final determination concerning the need of a new church in the community.

Create a chart of all the churches in the community using these categories: Catholic, Cult, Non-Evangelical Protestant, Pentecostal/Charismatic, Incompatible, and Compatible. For the last three groups, include the number of attendees. This is your Church Profile of the Community.

Describe the Compatible Churches

Investigate the Compatible Churches (c. above) and write a brief description of each. Some questions to consider in this description are:

- Are these churches vibrant and growing, or are they plateaued and stagnant?
- Do these churches focus on a particular niche group – Hispanics, cowboys, seniors, boomers, busters, teens?
- What is the style of ministry of these churches – liturgical? Contemporary? Traditional? Evangelistic? Bible teaching?

Write a Spiritual Profile of the Community

A spiritual profile should include the following:

- How strong and how aggressive are the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in the community? The Incompatible Churches? The Compatible Churches?
- Does the community have any vibrant ministries among students?
- What percentage of religious people in the community are Catholic?
- How well entrenched are cult groups in the community?
- Does the community have strong denominational loyalties?
- What variety of church styles and sizes make up the Evangelical Community?
- How is this community viewed from the outside? Religious? Pagan? High moral standards? High living? Crime infested?

Draw Conclusions

Using all the collected data, write a brief summary of your conclusions:

- We should (should not) seriously consider planting a new church in _____ because:
- This community has unique spiritual needs in the areas of _____.