

## Game Plan for Defining Neighborhoods

### Background Vision 2—Embody the Biblical Command to Love Our Neighbors

We will create and curate tools and resources that equip our congregations and members to cultivate empowering and mutually transformative relationships with their neighbors within and beyond their specific context.

### Foreground Vision Initiative #5—(Plan for Defining Neighborhoods)

By the July 2021 Board Meeting, a task team composed of Board members (appointed by the Executive Committee) and Staff (appointed by the General Secretary) will have developed a road map/game plan (sequence of steps, resource requirements, and key specifications) for creating a resource (guide book? computer-aided tool?) for use by congregations in discovering and defining their “neighborhood” for missional focus.

Early on this appeared to be a straightforward, linear assignment, but the more the task team wrestled with it, the more we discovered that because there is a thirst amongst people of faith for a new way of being the Church God has called us to be, and given that there is a plethora of information and compelling stories from those who have dared to try different strategies and then share their experiences, our work in examining and distilling this information was challenging. Each member of the committee brought a different congregational perspective to the table and shared how each could benefit from these resources. We are grateful for the experience, knowledge, and insight that Stan Dueck provided as the staff member assigned to this team.

### Sequence of steps

1. We recognize the need for examining our present models of church structure and operation. This resource should help congregations ask the question—What is the unique value that our congregation brings to our neighborhood, our community and/or our world? How can we best embody the Gospel in our neighborhood in a way that builds relationships?
2. A renewed desire to listen to the Spirit as we discern what God is calling us to do in our neighborhoods. Perhaps there is a church prayer group that can be given this task as a spiritual resource.
3. Defining Neighborhood for each particular church’s context, including but not limited to geography. Some questions to consider—What does “neighborhood” look like in my location? What does “neighborhood” mean to our congregation? Where do we as a congregation have honest engagement and/or preexisting relationships? What does “neighborhood” look like to those split by the CBC? Suburban, urban, virtual? A church where parishioners do not live in the neighborhood? What critical questions/factors do we overlook that would help to better understand our community? Examples: influence of money and power, racial makeup of the community, presence of faith communities/religious groups, community rituals and symbols, care and wellbeing.

4. Promote existing resources within and beyond the Church of the Brethren:
  - a. New and Renew Conference
  - b. Archived webinars
  - c. Membership in Christian Community Development Association--COB is a member—contact Disciple Ministries for this free resource
  - d. PerceptGroup—[www.perceptgroup.com](http://www.perceptgroup.com)—access to demographic information about your geographic neighborhood
  - e. Fresh Expressions—[freshexpressionsus.org](http://freshexpressionsus.org)—building community by eating together
  - f. Parish Collective—[www.parishcollective.org](http://www.parishcollective.org)—connects and provides resources for people of faith in their particular neighborhoods
  - g. Good Neighbor Experiment Cohorts—cohort-based learning process for congregations who want to engage their community as a neighbor.
  - h. Ubuntu workshops through Intercultural Ministries (LaDonna Sanders Nkosi)
  - i. Urban Ministry - Atlanta Course

Recommendations:

1. We are not creating the resources but outlining what is needed. It was decided that the transmission of this information would best be accomplished as a collaborative process between Discipleship Ministries and the Office of Ministry, using staff inside and outside the denomination. Additional fundraising may be necessary.
2. A virtual resource library (rather than binders or hard copies) under the jurisdiction of Discipleship Ministries should be implemented and updated as needed. This could include a syllabus or flow chart for congregations to follow and have resources based on their context: i.e, urban, rural, inclusive, multi-racial, large, small, etc.
3. Resource cohorts could be implemented based on the type of “neighborhood” to help congregations with similarly identified neighborhoods collaborate and share resources.
4. Newslines, the COB website/social media, and District Executives would be means of communicating this resource to congregations.

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