

NEIGHBOR INTERVIEWS

THE BEST WAY TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY



“To answer before listening— that is folly and shame.” – Proverbs 18:13 (NIV)

The church is notorious for starting ministries without ever asking the community if the ministry is wanted or needed. In neighbor interviews we seek direct feedback from our community by asking good questions in a way that invites honesty.

GETTING STARTED

Brainstorm a list of people to interview: As a listening team think about people in your community who might offer you a valuable perspective of your community.

A few ideas: A person who works in the neighborhood, a person who lives in the neighborhood, a local politician, an artist, a social worker, a school counselor, an older person, a younger person, a parent, a single person, etc.

Reach out to them: Call, text, or ask them in person. Tell them what your church is up to and what you are hoping to learn and why. Ask them if they would be willing to talk to you for 30 minutes in person (the ideal) or over the phone.

Plan some good questions: Good questions are open-ended, often they begin with the word "what". Pick 4-6 questions and don't hesitate to follow up an answer with, "Would you be willing to tell me more about that?" Some examples:

Tell me a bit about yourself.

What are you passionate about?

What brought you to this community?

Where do you like to spend your time in the community?

What do you love about this community?

What would you change about this community?

How would you describe your spiritual life?

What are your spiritual practices?

How do you feel about organized religion?

What would you look for in a spiritual community?

Do you have any hopes, dreams, or longings you would be willing to share?

Who is someone else I should talk to?

Jot down what you learn: I like to take notes after a conversation, but if you are worried you won't remember, take a few notes as you talk. Put as much down on paper afterwards so you can share with the rest of the listening team later.

Show your appreciation: Be sure to thank your neighbor and consider offering them a small token of appreciation (lunch afterwards, a small gift card, etc).