

COMMUNITY ON MISSION LAUNCH CLASS

WEEK #2 - EXEGETING THE COMMUNITY

Exegeting a city or neighborhood is the basic task of any missionary. To do so means listening to what people in a community consider to be their greatest needs and investigating the stories reflected in data of the community. When listening, we begin to hear what they value, what they hope for, what they fear, and what they perceive their greatest needs to be. Information that this is discovered through informal and more formal inquires, help to guide the missional community to pray for direction “on-site with insight.”

4 STEPS TO COMMUNITY EXEGESIS

STEP 1

Identify the Mission Area.

Identifying a mission area by a mileage radius may be a good place to start. The exact size of the radius will vary depending upon whether you are in an area that is urban, suburban or rural. A starting point might be to think of it as an area “small enough to be known, but big enough to live a lot of life in.”¹

Various types of barriers may define the boundaries of a community. These can be things like an interstate highway or Main Street, railroad tracks, large campuses like a school or business, or natural barriers like a river or hill. A tool like Percept² can help determine the boundaries for a missional community by drawing geographic lines.

STEP 2

Engage with People

One on one conversations with community leaders or focus groups of long-term citizens can be an invaluable way to gain perspective. Jesus instructed his disciples to search for a “worthy” person, or a “person of peace,” when they visited a village (Matthew 10:11; Luke 10:6). They were to “stay” with the worthy person until they left. The stories of those who have been in a community for many years or who have chosen a community based on a synergy of values can provide stories and perspectives that are not always obvious.

STEP 3

Engage the Data

Gathering data based on a geographic location can provide helpful insights for determining missional borders and potential community engagements.

Much of this information comes from census data that also analyzes past trends and future projections. No data point is positive or negative. They simply provide data points. Such research³, considers the following:

- Population Size
- Growth Rate or Decline
- Age Groups
- Ethnicity
- Housing Types
- Education Levels
- Income Levels
- Faith Backgrounds
- Lifestyle clusters
- Primary concerns
- Faith indicators
- Other Significant Cultural

Learn all you can from other community organizations:

- County Government Data
- Economic Development 1
- Community Development - Health Department
- City Government Data
- State Government
- School Districts / Local Schools
- Law Enforcement
- Healthcare Service
- Chamber of Commerce

STEP 4

Seek Revelation


As those called to be missionaries to our communities, the guidance of the Holy Spirit during our conversations and research is the essential part of our work.

One missional leader in NY reported, “as one member of our community prayed in our group, the Spirit guided her intercession toward a felt need she experienced while talking to friends in her neighborhood. As she poured out her heart to the Father, others began to pray in agreement, with increasing fervency. When our prayer time concluded, we came to agreement that the Spirit was guiding us to our mission.” Today that mission is to many families around them who have family members incarcerated in Upstate, NY.

RESOURCE #1

Denominational Organization –
Church of the Nazarene – Research Department Costs: Free
<https://nazarene.org/research>

MENU CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE FIND A CHURCH GIVE NOW



RESEARCH SERVICES

Nazarenes want to be effective in their ministries. To be effective, we follow God's directions and use the tools He's given us. One of these tools is good research. Below are some tools to help you in your ministry.

MENU CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE FIND A CHURCH GIVE NOW

These are the tools available from this page:

- **Find the statistics** for any Church of the Nazarene or any Nazarene district. Any local church membership, discipleship, attendance, or financial data reported to the Global Ministry Center is available in these reports. Summary reports contain the most-requested information and are our most popular pages. Comparative reports give more details along with information about other regional churches in the same size range. Detailed reports put all the available data into a downloadable spreadsheet format.
- Discover what a Canada or USA neighborhood is like with the Community Demographics report. Select a location and a radius, then get a listing showing age groups, occupations, ethnic groups, growth rates, and more. There are nine different reports available, but the Summary Overview is the place to start. (We are working on expanding this service to other world areas, but currently, just the Canada and USA data is online.)
- Learn about the religious make-up of any USA county (or its equivalent in some states). The **U.S. Religion Census** has congregational counts by county for 236 religious groups — Christian denominations, Jewish groups, Muslim, and others. Most groups also report the number of people associated with those congregations. This is available for USA counties, metro areas, states, and even Nazarene districts.

Research Services has additional resources to help Nazarenes, such as the **Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers**. These links give insights into another group of researchers available to help local churches. We also have information about recent or upcoming ANSR **meetings**.

And, of course, you may send additional queries straight to our **email account**.

Nazarene Research Services: Resourcing Nazarenes everywhere with timely, accurate information.

RESEARCH MENU

- CHURCH AND DISTRICT STATISTICS (GLOBAL)
- ANNUAL DENOMINATIONAL STATISTICS
- COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS (CANADA)
- COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS (U.S.)
- U.S. RELIGION CENSUS
- ASSOCIATION OF NAZARENE SOCIOLOGISTS & RESEARCHERS (ANSR)
- RESEARCH ON WHDL

RESOURCE #2

ARDA – The Association of Religious Data Archives

Costs: Free

<https://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/selectCounty.asp>

RESOURCE #3

Percept Report

Cost: \$219.00

<http://www.perceptgroup.com/Percept-Home.aspx>

OTHER POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Candid – Non-Profit Resource <https://learning.candid.org/resources/knowledge-base/demographic-information/>

Ethnographic Research starting point: <https://dguth-journalism.ku.edu/Ethnography.html>

Prayer Walking: <http://www.mappingcenter.org/blesseveryhome>

Footnotes

- 1 The New Parish, How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, and Community.
- 2 www.perceptgroup.com
- 3 www.perceptgroup.com, <https://nazarene.org/research>, <http://www.mappingcenter.org/blesseveryhome>, <https://www.thearda.com>. A deeper dive may invite the missionary to pursue ethnographic research. See <https://hbr.org/2009/03/ethnographic-research-a-key-to-strategy> or <https://dguth-journalism.ku.edu/Ethnography.html> for more information.