

III. MIND MAPPING

OBJECTIVE:

The Mind Mapping exercise is a tool designed to assist church leaders gather demographic information to better understand the social context in which their church do ministry, and find alternatives to connect the mission of the their church with the spiritual hunger for God both within and outside the congregation.

RATIONALE:

- This section departs from the educated assumption that in the past people found the “door” to get in a church by themselves. This is not the case today, though. Churches, as any other business, are required to “research, position and sell” their “product” to potential consumers. This is not the language we are used to manage in doing theology or preaching the Gospel, but it is a reality we must reckon with if we want to create an impact in our society.
- Mind Mapping is a process of exploring what individuals really think inside, how they live, and what is important to them. This type of brainstorming session is founded on the idea that all behavior is based on beliefs. In order to change behavior, we have to understand the beliefs that drive the behavior.
- Essentially, Mind Mapping is a tool marketers use to shift thinking from “What are we selling?” to “What are consumers buying?” For our purposes, Mind Mapping allows us to see things from the perspective of our potential congregants, and subsequently, to tailor what we offer to fit our congregants.
- So, this tool offers us a process to identify potential groups among the unchurched and under-churched population residing in the proximities of the church location.
- Marketing is not:²
 - Education or communication alone (though there will typically be education and communication as a part of what you do)
 - “Selling” (though there will be times when you are asking people to make decisions about whether to do something or not)
 - Misleading people (though you will be making choices about what you communicate about the congregation)
 - Just doing programs and liturgies and hoping others will see the benefit and will come (though the quality of programs and liturgy are very important)

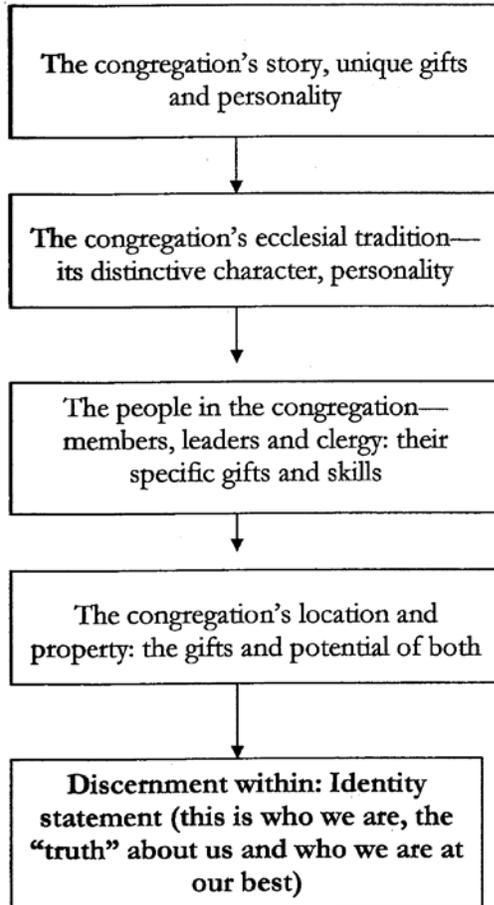
² This section is based on The College for Congregational Development – The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia materials. Unit 2: What Might it Mean to Market a Congregation? P. 102

RESOURCES NEEDED AND STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

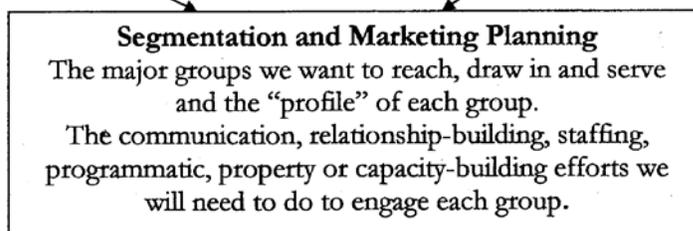
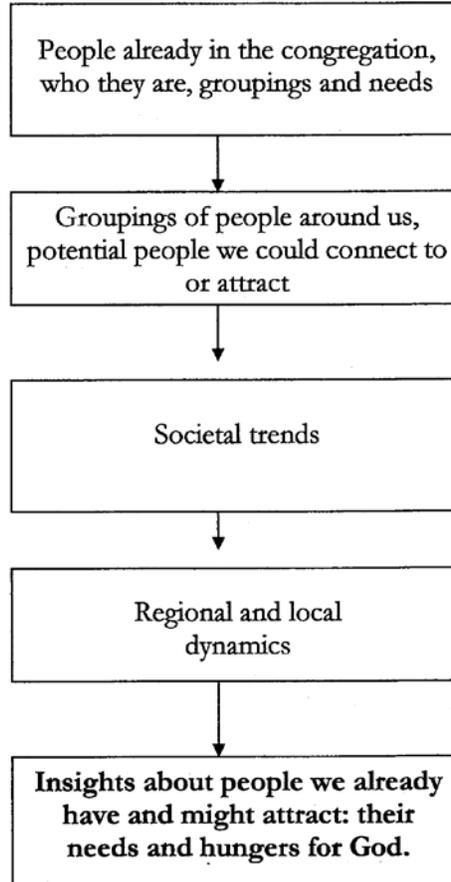
- This is a good visual guide³

The Marketing Process

Our Own Deep Gladness/Giftedness



The World's Hungers



³ This section is based on The College for Congregational Development – The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia materials. Unit 2: The Marketing Process P. 105

- All the demographic materials available that can help you understand the context in which you do ministry.
- Summarize all the demographic data in ways that become meaningful and useful in designing your next steps. For this, please follow the subsequent directions that will help you:
 - Formulate your "Focus Groups" or select the right "survey" you will use to understand better your social context (you can use a combination of the two instruments),
 - Define the populations you will select to include in your study,
 - Structure the questions or topics you will include during you're your focus group conversations or survey (remember that some company sale services to conduct church related surveys; the cost may be an issue to take into consideration)
- Reaching, Attracting and Retaining Specific Groups of People:⁴ Become an expert on your community and the area you believe you can and will draw from to reach new people. You can do this by working in the following areas to understand your community and to define the group(s) you want to reach.
 - Geographies - Identify where the people live whom you want to reach. Start with getting a sense of how many people live within a 5-mile area of your congregation (you can get this easily from Mission Insite or Percept, you can also visit your local chamber of commerce web site for additional local information.) This will give you a sense of what might be realistic in terms of your prospects for numerical growth. Also consider that a group is working on analyzing where your current membership lives-how far they come to get to you and why. This will help you understand how far to draw you geographical map in terms of potential participants/supporters/members.
 - Demographics - While you should not overdo demographic research, it's important to have a feel for who's actually in your area. What ages are those in your immediate area and how many people are in each age group? How many people are single and how many partnered or married? What is the ethnicity or culture of those in your area? What is the median income and average household income? What is the educational level? What occupations dominate?
 - Culture - Understanding the culture of your community is even more important than demographics. What is the mind-set of those in your community, the "air they breathe," the "shared assumptions" that the "artifacts" in the community and the espoused values point to? Businesses call this the "psychographics" of a group of people. What are the hopes, the fears, the ways of living (lifestyles), the values, the hurts, the needs of groups of people (to include important subcultures) in your area? The best way to uncover the answers to these questions is to talk to people!
 - Spiritual Life - What is the spiritual climate of the people in your area? What are their assumptions and beliefs about God and where God can be found? What are their assumptions and beliefs about church o.r "organized religion"? What is the church

⁴ This section is based on The College for Congregational Development – The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia materials. Unit 2: Thinking About Segments P. 107

background, if any, of those you might attract? Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail? Former Roman Catholics? Practicing Buddhists? Being aware of the religious/ spiritual frame of reference of those we seek to attract can help us in building a bridge from their experience to our congregation.

ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS:

- There are various data collections instruments that churches can use. Please contact my office to receive some of the samples we have available. Any of these tools can be adapted to the needs of specific congregations.
- The SWOT analysis instrument (acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, opportunities and Treats) is a very useful tool that can help the Task Group debrief all raw data presented to the group.

DEBRIEFING THE MIND MAPPING:

- Even though the initial work will be done by the Task Group in charge of this section, the big and deep reflection, or concluding reflection, should be done by the whole Visioning Team.
- Use the strategic vision development material to guide you through this process.
- Two different strategic Vision development models are here offered, but feel free to use any other alternative you might find more useful.
- Keep in mind the following guide lines while developing your strategic vision:
 - It is about the creation, building and maintaining of mutual relationships between a congregation and specific groups of people that sustain and benefit the former and help the latter move to increasingly more mature levels of Christian faith.
 - It is about the managing of these mutual relationships over time in terms of the congregation's resources and the involvement and support of those it serves.
 - It is about activities that affect how the congregation is perceived, but more than this, activities that influence behavior of those choosing to connect to and be involved across the important dimensions of the congregation's life (e.g. the decision to visit the congregation's website, the decision to visit the congregation, the decision to come back a second time, the decision to come to a newcomers' gathering, the decision to be received or confirmed, the decision to make a financial gift, the decision to participate in a centering prayer or mutual discernment group, etc).
 - The ability to notice, to listen to, to learn about and to respond to those within the congregation and those outside the congregation that the congregation would like to appeal to or attract.
 - It is related to "everything everyone does every day."

SWOT ANALYSIS FORM

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Explain the demographics of your congregation:
 - a. Age groups, for example, how many young families, singles, older adults
 - b. How do these age groups match the surrounding population where you are located?
 - c. How are the different needs of first and second generation members met?
 - d. Occupations. For example: What is the primary occupation or industry of most of your congregation? What other occupations are represented?
2. Any other relevant information or important background?
3. Is your congregation growing or declining? (please, explain)

STRENGTHS

4. Do you have a mission statement? (If yes, write it down)
5. What is your vision for the future of your congregation?
6. How does your mission help people recognize their specific spiritual gifts?
7. How are you helping people find the ministries that are good matches to their gifts?
8. Is the vicar building servant leaders or trying to do all the work him/ herself?
9. Who are you? Tell us about your congregation. What do you see as your purpose as a congregation?
10. Describe how evangelism happens in your community. List all the programs/services that you offer, both, to your congregation and your community
11. Of all that you do, list the three "things" that you are doing best. Why?
12. Resources: What are the various resources that the members of the congregation can provide? (labor, specific talents, money)
13. How many volunteer hours are people presently giving?
14. What functions and activities are volunteers performing and leading?
15. Are volunteers committing to ongoing responsibilities as well as single occasion opportunities?
16. Anything else you consider strength?

WEAKNESSES

17. What is your church not doing well? Why?
18. Is your meeting place appropriate to your needs? (Explain)
19. Is your church properly advertised or signed?
20. Based on who attend your church, does your congregation reflect your community?
21. What is your congregants' average commuting time?
22. Could you speak of any unmet community needs? Why?
23. Anything else you feel is a weakness? (Explain)

OPPORTUNITIES

24. What is the potential/current growth in your area?
25. What do you do to identify opportunities?
26. What is your process for encouraging people from "newcomer" to "member"?
27. How would you describe a fully committed member of the church?
28. How do you support members in their spiritual formation?
29. What does it mean to you to be an "Episcopalian" and how do you convey that within the congregation?