

## RETREAT # 1

# Gathering the Stories



## Preparations for the Retreat

- Session appoints a Discernment Team
- Pastor/Facilitator reviews process for the retreat
- Pastor/Facilitator reviews Dwelling in the Word
- Discernment Team sets time and place for retreat
- Discernment Team plans for meals/location and info
- Needed for the Retreat
  - Large Paper or White Board
  - Copies of retreat # 1 and Appendices for Retreat # 1
  - Copy of Dwelling in the Word – Luke 10: 1 -12
  - Snacks, beverages lunch

### ZOOM/Online meeting Preparation

- Team is familiarized with online/virtual meeting platform
- Needed for retreat: electronic versions of retreat #1 and Dwelling in the Word
- Distribution of the agenda with timing and breaks
- Distribution of login information

### Possible Retreat AGENDA

Introductions  
 Dwelling in the Word  
 Considering Why we tell our stories  
 Planning the TimeLine Event  
 Planning the Demographics gathering  
 Planning the Drive Around  
 Assignments, time line and Smart Plans

# Retreat #1: How will we gather the stories?

## Dwelling in the Word

### Instructions

Read Luke 10: 1 -12 aloud. Others can follow along in Bibles or handouts, or can simply listen.

Allow some silence to unfold after the reading.

Each person finds a reasonably friendly-looking stranger to listen to, asking the stranger to say what picture or question popped up or where his or her imagination was caught as the passage was read. The pair listens to one another well enough to report what the other has said. They also exchange names, so that each can introduce the other during the reporting.

The pairs return to the larger group and introduce their partners and say what they heard from one another. The retreat leader(s) make sure that everyone has been introduced and, if there's time, some further discussion of the passage can take place.

Take time to reflect together on ways Dwelling in the Word can be used in the Congregation during this discernment or transitional time.

### NOTE ABOUT DWELLING IN THE WORD

Dwelling in the Word will be used at each retreat event. It will also be part of the congregation events. Luke 10:1 -12 will be the scripture except for the congregational discernment event.

# ZOOM Instructions for Dwelling in the Word

Meet on ZOOM or other video conferencing apps.

Read Luke 10: 1 -12 aloud and share the scripture on the screen.

Allow some silence to unfold after the reading.

Prior to the beginning of Dwelling in the Word portion set up breakout rooms for pairs. Allow for 15 minutes in the breakout rooms. When you have completed the reading and a time of silence open the breakout rooms. If possible, set the break out rooms for random or manually pair people who do not know each other well.

Each pair spends time sharing what spoke to them from the scripture reading. Pay attention to what the other says so when they return from the breakout room, they share the name of their “reasonably friendly looking stranger” and what they heard.

The retreat leader(s) make sure that everyone has been introduced and, if there’s time, some further discussion of the passage can take place.

Take time to reflect together on ways Dwelling in the Word can be used in the Congregation during this discernment or transitional time.

## Considering Where and When and Why: Telling our Story

### **Read or print the following for the discernment team:**

*We consider many things in order to discern God's preferred future for the congregation. We engage in conversation with each other about the direction of the congregation, review its history and its present, and its vision. Most of all we lay our concerns, joys, and our hopes before God and lift up in prayer that the Holy Spirit will lead us to where God is calling.*

As the Discernment Team, take time to think and discuss together the stories about the transition points of the congregation at this time and place. What are the "in-between" events, stories and times?

Ask participants to:

- Share a story of when a transition went well, when it did not go well. *The transition does not have to be the transition of the congregation.*
- Share one time you were part of a transition in this congregation or another congregation.
- Where do you see a pattern in these stories? Where do they diverge? What are the feelings expressed in these stories.

Keep notes of responses in order to refer back during Retreat # 3

[ZOOM Version: This exercise can be done as written with Zoom or other video conferencing apps.](#)



*The Discernment Team plans for the events between retreats. The congregational events between Retreat 1 and Retreat 2 are:*

- *Congregational Timeline Event*
- *The Demographic Study*

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## Planning the Timeline Event

Gathering the stories between Retreats 1 and 2 will be in different forms. There are several opportunities to tell, collect, and reflect on stories. The Timeline event will be looking at the congregation's history through the stories that are told.

### TIMELINE EVENT

**Purpose:**

The Discernment Team will host a timeline event attended by congregation participants.

Possible outcomes:

- Engaging in a structured conversation about the past, present and future.
- Building Leadership Capacity
- Opportunity to focus on the Spiritual character of the church, putting God at the center
  - Dwelling in the Word
  - Asking what God has provided in the past
  - Beginning to consider God's call to the congregation
  - Discussing why reflecting on our history can be important to understanding our call as a community of faith

# The Time Line Event

## Preparation

- Lots of space to roll out paper such as a long wall or several long tables end to end.
  - Long paper or large paper tapes together
  - Markers or pens (red, blue, green)
  - Sticky notes – red, blue and green
  - camera or video camera.
1. Set a date for the event and invite the congregation to attend. This could be after church during “fellowship time” or a congregational lunch or an evening dinner or Saturday lunch. The event takes about 1 hour (without a meal). Plan for two hours with a meal.
  2. Tape a long series of papers onto a long wall or table lined up end to end. Mark out the years from the founding through the present. For congregations who are a couple of centuries old give more space to the modern era and just a small space for the past centuries for someone to add a story or remembrance.
  3. Identify people to serve as recorder of stories and/or a video person. Recorder of stories– This needs to be a person who is willing to take notes by hand or on a computer. *See instructions for the Recorder of Stories.* Video person (optional) – Invite someone with a camera or video recorder to tell stories about what they wrote on the timeline. This could be developed into a video for the congregation and the new pastor.

## Instructions

Facilitator:

Remind people that they are present to share stories about the congregation as a community in the different places of the timeline.

Begin with Dwelling in the Word, Luke 10: 1 -12. (see Dwelling in the Word Instructions)

Following Dwelling in the Word, participants are to write brief stories or phrases on different color “sticky notes” about their experiences/story within the timeline of the congregation. The notes are then placed on the timeline within or under the dates of the church’s history.

**Red** for a time that was good or great or positive,  
**Blue** for the time that was difficult, hard or conflicted,  
**Green (or Yellow)** for the time when they could see the work of the Holy Spirit, a time of growth.

Following a time of writing and adding the notes to the timeline, the facilitator will close the gathering by engaging the participants in conversation about some of the information or patterns that have emerged. The scribe(s) will capture the responses on large paper or computer.

Questions to ask:

- What jumps out at you?
- Where are most of the stories (around what decade, years, eras)
- How do the colors tell the story of the church?
- What do you see that gives you "pause"? What gives you hope? What makes you laugh? What saddens you heart?
- Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit?

### **Add Biblical stories to the Timeline (Optional)**

Divide into small groups of 4 to 5 and for 10 minutes share Biblical stories that relate to events in the timeline. Small groups report to the larger group. If the gathering is not large this could also be done as a larger group conversation.

Recorder of Stories should capture responses on large paper or computer.

- Where do we see ourselves in the Biblical narrative?
- What have we learned about ourselves? (the good, the bad and the ugly need to be lifted up)
- Where do we laugh? Where do we pause? Where do we feel sadness or anger? Where do we see hope?

If possible, leave the timeline up for a few weeks allowing people to view and reflect. Make sticky notes available, along with instructions, for people to add to the timeline.

### **Recorder of Stories Instructions**

During the entire event, the role of the recorder of stories is to write down participants' comments without commentary. The recorder of stories should focus on recording the stories so that they may be shared on YouTube, Facebook or other social media.



## ZOOM Version

### VIRTUAL TIMELINE EVENT

Planning the virtual timeline event



### Preparation

- Download and install Google's collaborative whiteboard app - Jamboard - to your device.
- Jamboard allows you to upload an image to use as a background. This will serve as your timeline.
  - A simple way to do this is to draw a timeline on a piece of legal-size paper (8.5in x 14in) then take a photograph using a smartphone. Send this photo to your computer.
  - When you are in Jamboard, click on "set background" and select the box with the image icon. You can then upload your image.
  - You can also draw a timeline directly in Jamboard using the "Pen" tool.
- To access Jamboard on your computer you will need to be logged into your Google account in a Google Chrome browser.
  - Open a new tab and select the google "waffle" (a square consisting of nine dots) and select Jamboard.
  - You can also access this tool by typing <https://jamboard.google.com> into your browser.

Recorder (s) of Stories – This needs to be a person (or persons) who is willing to take notes on the computer and create sticky notes in Jamboard. See instructions below for the Recorder of Stories

Zoom Host – The zoom host will moderate the meeting and needs to be familiar with Zoom breakout rooms. It is recommended that the retreat be recorded using Zoom's recording feature.

Ask participants to share stories about their own history with the congregation to be placed on the timeline by the scribes. Instruct participant that their story should include the event, approximate date (month/year) and whether it was a red, blue or green event for them. This will be done using the chat feature. The stories should be brief or short statements and include approximate date (month/year) that will be displayed as a sticky

note in Jamboard. Each participant can write as many stories as they wish. Each story should be created on a different sticky note. The note is placed on the timeline nearest to the date of the story.

The Recorder (s) of Stories will use different color sticky notes to tell their stories:

- Red/Pink for a time that was good or great or positive,
- Blue for the time that was difficult, hard or conflicted,
- Green for the time when they could see the work of the Holy Spirit, a time of growth.

Once all stories are posted on Jamboard, take time to reflect on the timeline. Ask the participants these questions and make sure the Recorder of Stories is writing down their responses:

- What jumps out at you?
- Where are most of the stories (around what decade, years, eras) o How do the colors tell the story of the church?
- What do you see that gives you “pause”? What gives you hope? What makes you laugh? What saddens you heart?
- Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit?

## Add Biblical stories to the Timeline

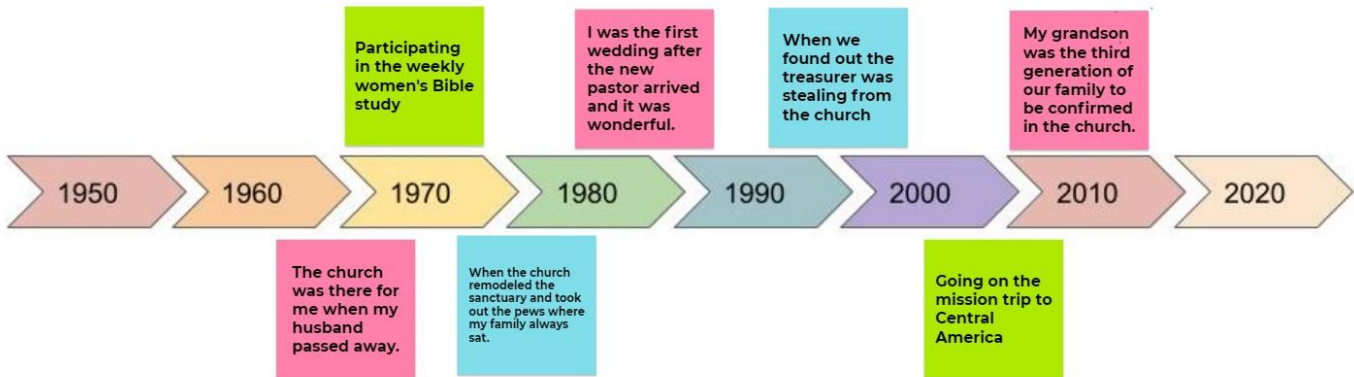
Following a time of reflection, divide the group into small groups of 4 to 5 using zooms breakout feature. In the breakout rooms, share Biblical stories that relate to events in the timeline so others can view them. Allow enough time in break out rooms for everyone to have an opportunity to share.

When the small groups have ended spend time in the large group to reflect on the congregation’s story and God’s story. Small groups share their Biblical stories with the entire group. Using the "add image" button you can create a collage on Jamboard that tells about your conversation.

- Where do we see ourselves in the Biblical narrative? o What have we learned about ourselves? (the good, the bad and the ugly need to be lifted up)
- Where do we laugh? Where do we pause? Where do we feel sadness or anger? Where do we see hope?

When you are finished, you can download the Jamboard as a .pdf and share it with the congregation. This allows people to see it, reflect on it. If they would like to add something to it, they can email the scribe and it will be added to the Jamboard.

# Jamboard Timeline



# Planning the Demographic Study

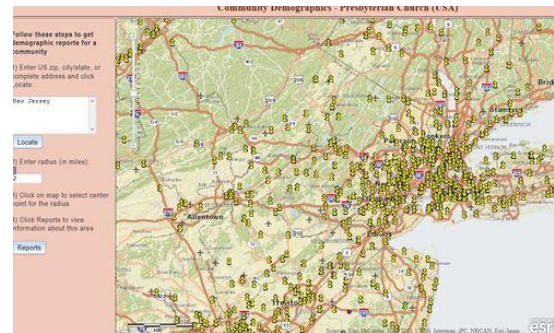
Understanding the demographics of the community/neighborhood is important to understanding the congregation's story. Does the congregation reflect the neighborhood/community in which the church lives? How has the community changed over the years and has the congregation adapted to those changes? Where is God calling the congregation to minister in our neighborhood/community. This part of the process sets the foundation for next steps. Take time to do a deep dive into the community and the opportunities to meet God in mission and ministry there.

## The Demographics of the Community: The story of the neighborhood and community

The Discernment Team or a small group appointed by the Discernment Team will complete a **two-part Demographic Study**, gathering facts about the neighborhood of the church and the people who live there.

### Part 1 – Who lives in the church's neighborhood

Recruit a small team to complete this part of the work, gathering the facts of human population regarding size and density, distribution and vital statistics. (see Part 1- Demographics Study)



### Part 2 - Consider what the neighborhood looks like. Really.

Part 2 is about taking an intentional look at the community surrounding the church. This part of the demographics study is about looking deeply at the neighborhood and where God is at work.

## Part 1 - The Demographics Study – the Process

*Demographics*: the statistics of human population with reference to size and density, distribution and vital statistics

This study can be done by a smaller group/steering team who will make a presentation to a larger group (Session or congregation) on their findings and reflections. The team may use the PCUSA website. PCUSA Research Services provides demographic information for your congregation's neighborhood or use the Executive or Fullinsite Reports from Missioninsite.org

**PRESBYTERY OF THE HIGHLANDS CONGREGATIONS – Contact the  
Presbytery office about the availability of Mission Insite  
demographic reports**

### The PCUSA RESEARCH DEMOGRAPHICS

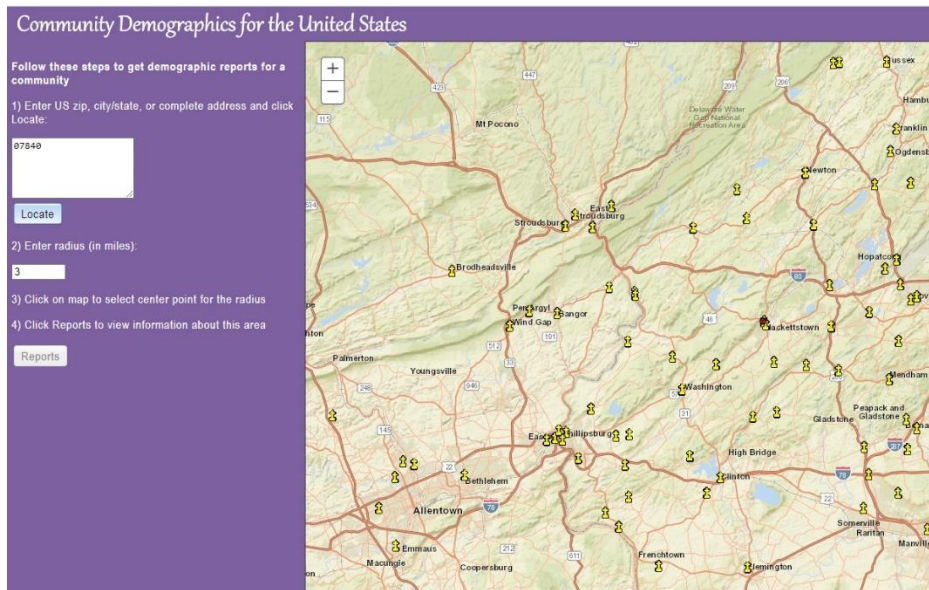
You can locate the PCUSA Research Services Demographics in two ways:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/research-services/demographic-report/>

<http://maps.nazarene.org/DemographicsPresbyterian/>

#### 1. Searching the Neighborhood Demographic Report

Using the webpages listed above, you can search the Neighborhood Demographic Report application by entering either a zip code or a specific city and state. To search by zip code, just enter the five-digit zip code of your church's local community. To use the city/state option, enter a city name and then select the state from the dropdown box. After you've entered the zip code or city/state option, click the "Search" button, or you can click on the map and use the zoom functions to zero in on your area of interest.



**Search Results:** The Demographic Report database will display a map of the area you selected. The map shows major highways and each Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation. Urban areas often appear cluttered on this map, but you can use the Zoom functions to adjust the display.

## 2. Getting the Details

**Zoom In:** Use the + button on the top left of the map to display a smaller area of the map in more detail. Zooming in will reveal roads and PC(USA) congregations in the map area.

**Zoom Out:** Use the — button on the top left of the map to view a larger area.

To the left of the map, you'll find an area labeled Reports. Click on the report button to get additional information. Click on the reports you wish to view for your identified area.

### 3. Demographic Data Fields (provided from U.S. Census)

Each option in "Select a Report" displays a map and several graphs for a particular topic; they also show comparisons with data for the United States nationally. Reports are based on the 2020 Census.

- **Summary overview**
  - Displays Growth Rate, Household with Children, Adult Age Groups, Housing Types, Educational Attainment for adults, Average Household Income, Major Races
- **Population and growth**
  - Displays population change based on information from the 2000 to 2010 US Census.
- **Family structure**
  - Displays family types and single adults
- **Age groups:**
  - Displays detailed age breakdown of the neighborhood population including younger generation, young adults, middle adults and older adults.
- **Housing types**
  - Displays number of housing units by housing type, Housing age, Renter Occupied and rental values, owner occupied and housing values.
- **Education levels**
  - Displays educational attainment of adults, Private school enrollment.
- **Economic indicators**
  - Displays household income, poverty level, Occupation categories.
- **Culture**
  - Displays population across major racial ethnic groups (white, non- Hispanic; African American, non-Hispanic; Native American, non-Hispanic; Asian American, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; other); a map shows areas of population concentration.
- **Language**
  - Displays non-English speaking

Another option for demographics:

## MISSIONINSITE DEMOGRAPHIC REPORTS

Missioninsite: Community Engagement Specialists for Faith and Nonprofit Groups [Missioninsite.com](http://Missioninsite.com)

If you chose this option will need either the ExecutiveInsite Report or the Fullinsite Report. The other reports listed do not provide enough information.

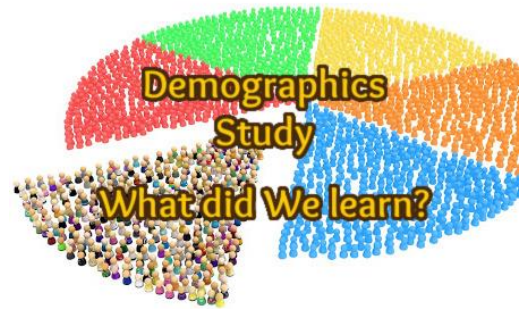
## UPDATE January 2024

### The presbytery has a limited time subscription to ASC MissionInsite

Please check with either Jeanne or Steve at the Presbytery office for additional information.

### We have the Demographics study, now what?

What Did We Learn from the Demographics and the neighborhood tour?



Most people are not interested or glaze over when looking at demographics. Others find it to be the most exciting information ever gathered. This section aims for the middle of those two extremes. The intention is to have a conversation about where your church lives, the neighborhood surrounding your congregation. Even though the world may feel like everything is going virtual God is still at work in your neighborhood.

### Who participates in this conversation?

The planning team should invite session members and other church leaders to join them for a conversation about what was discovered through the demographic study.

### Conversation Event

The planning team or the demographic team present the information from the demographics report and the community tour to the gathered group. This could be done by powerpoint, written report or brief introduction of the finding before each conversation point. Appoint ahead of time someone to be the Recorder of Stories. Capturing the responses assists with other events in the near future.



## Summary Overview

Review the multiple charts and levels of information.

Ask these questions:

What stands out? What is different from your perception of your neighborhood? What is new to you?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

## Wait a Minute – Why are we writing a paragraph?

Thanks for asking...For those of you who are working on the discernment process to move forward with searching for a new pastor, you must submit a WRITTEN report to the Missional Ministry Team. You will find helpful hints throughout this report on information you need to capture for this report. If you don't have this info they are going to ask you for it and thus delaying the report being approved. Do it now. Write down a brief response to each section and you will be saving yourself time in the end. Another helpful hint...it says paragraph but if you bullet point a summary of the responses that will work also.

## Population and Growth

Review the Population change and growth information.

Questions:

Have you observed changes in the population in the church community? How has that population change already affected your congregation?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

## **Family Structures and Age Groups**

### *Family Types and Single Adults*

Review the Family Types and Single Adults Charts found in the Family Structure Report.

Questions:

How does that match your understanding of your neighborhood?

### *Households with Children (charts found in Summary Overview Report)*

Compare the Household with Children to Single parent households and other related tables.

Questions:

What strikes you about those numbers? How does that percentage compare to your congregation?

### *Age Groups*

Review the Charts found in this section.

Questions:

What are the largest age groups in your neighborhood? How does that compare to your congregation's membership?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

## Housing Types

Review the Housing Types and related tables. What strikes you about the information? What are the possibilities of renting or purchasing in your area? Could a new pastor or someone new to area afford in to live in the neighborhood? What can you learn from looking at the Housing Types?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

## Education Levels

Review the Education Levels.

Questions:

How do the education levels of your area compare to your congregation? What are some learnings from your review of this table?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

## Economic Indicators

Review the Average Income.

Questions:

How does it compare to the US average? How does the US poverty level for your area compare to your congregation? What strikes you about the Occupation tables? How do those tables compare to your congregation?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

## Culture and Language

Review the Culture and language

Questions:

What is the largest Cultural Group in your area? What are the other groups in your area? How does that percentage compare to your congregation? Is your congregation prepared to welcome those who come from different cultures or speak a language different from the language of the congregation?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

### What Else Did You Learn?

There is always that other stuff that emerges. What is that? What didn't get discussed?

**Recorder of stories captures the responses and writes a paragraph summarizing the conversation.**

## ZOOM Version

The demographic study itself is online info therefore the instructions are the same. The presentation can be done by ZOOM or video conferencing. The conversation could be done in 2 hours or less.

## DEMOGRAPHICS STUDY Part 2 Instructions

Step 1 - The Discernment team or a small group walk or drive around the church's neighborhood on a nice **Saturday afternoon**. While touring the neighborhood, ask these questions.

- What do you see about the housing?
- Who are the people walking around the area? Are there people walking around the area. If not, where do people gather for recreation or shopping.
- Are there mostly retail or residential properties? What are the retail stores? Small business? Corporate retail?
- What are the demographics seen on the streets or in the parks or out and about in the area?
- What else do you notice?

Step 2. Following the walk or drive gather at a place to talk with the team about what everyone learned and observed.

Ask these questions:

- What is our neighborhood? This could be actual geography or a metaphor or an observation.
- Who are your neighbors? Are they like you? Does the church membership reflect the neighborhood?
- What does hospitality look like in your congregation?
- How would you welcome the neighbors you have identified?
- What steps do you need to take to welcome the neighbors?

### ZOOM Version for Part 2

Step 1 - The Discernment team, individually or masked and socially distanced, walk or drive around the church's neighborhood on a nice Saturday afternoon. Ask these questions while touring the neighborhood:

- What do you see about the housing?
- Who are the people walking around the area? If not, where do people gather for recreation or shopping.
- Are there mostly retail or residential properties? What are the retail stores? Small business? Corporate retail?
- What are the demographics seen on the streets or in the parks or out and about in the area?

- What else do you notice?

Step 2. Following the walk or drive, gather online to discuss what you learned from your walk/drive around the neighborhood.

Ask these questions:

- What is our neighborhood? This could be actual geography or a metaphor or an observation.
  - Who are your neighbors? Are they like you? Does the church membership reflect the neighborhood?
  - What does hospitality look like in your congregation?
  - How would you welcome the neighbors you have identified?
  - What steps do you need to take to welcome the neighbors?

### Important

The findings and observations are especially important to your foundational understanding of where God is calling. *Do not skip over the section about conversations. This is critical.*

## Next Steps Worksheet

Fill out the steps worksheet or some sort of online project management app such as Google Keeps or Trello. Make sure everyone has a copy or has access to the online project management app.

This is especially important. Don't skip this step

## Closing – Reading Luke 10: 1 -12

Dwell in the Word once again by reading together Acts 9. Then close Retreat #1 with prayer.

## Next Steps Worksheet for Retreat #1

What will we put on the calendar? Who will do this?

- Dates for Retreats #2 \_\_\_\_\_ and #3 \_\_\_\_\_
- Date for the timeline event \_\_\_\_\_
- Date for the meeting to reflect on the timeline event \_\_\_\_\_

Who will we need to recruit? Who will do this?

- Teammates for the demographic study
  
- Teammates for the timeline event  
Recorder of Stories?  
Video?

What supplies or resources will we need? Who will do this?

- for the demographic study
  
- for the timeline event

