



GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL LOVE AVENUE TOOLKIT

Thank you for taking the time to prayerfully discern the next steps for your Love Avenue. We participate in the Love Avenue because the love of Christ compels us to share his love and join him in making disciples.

The key functions of the Love Avenue are:

- **Corporately and individually engaging within our neighborhood, with tangible acts that reflect the love of God.**
- **Discerning what Jesus is doing in our neighborhoods and participating with the Spirit to engage with our neighbors in ways that lead to a response to Christ.**
- **Creating spaces where neighbors experience joyful celebration of life together with pathways connecting back to the life of the church and celebration of Christ.**



The purpose of these tools is to help you discern your next steps as you build out your Love Avenue. Not every church will be at the same starting point. If you need more background information or tools, please visit resources.gci.org/love. This is not just for a one-time use; we encourage you to periodically reflect and reevaluate as you continue to engage your neighborhood.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL:

Each session outlines best practices and reflection questions. Use the included reflection questions to contextualize the principles and practices to meet the needs of your congregation and neighborhood.

We are cheering you on, and championing you in prayer as you respond to Jesus' invitation to participate with him in building the church and expanding the kingdom.



Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels."
For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, "Peace be within you."
Psalm 122:6-8



Join us in prayer:
Father, Son, and Spirit, we follow your lead and answer your call as we share your love with our neighbors. Give us the eyes to see and the wisdom to respond to the needs we see around us. Fill us with compassion as we join in with the suffering of all who share our city. Grant us peace, favor, and wisdom as we invite our neighbors into deeper relationship with you.

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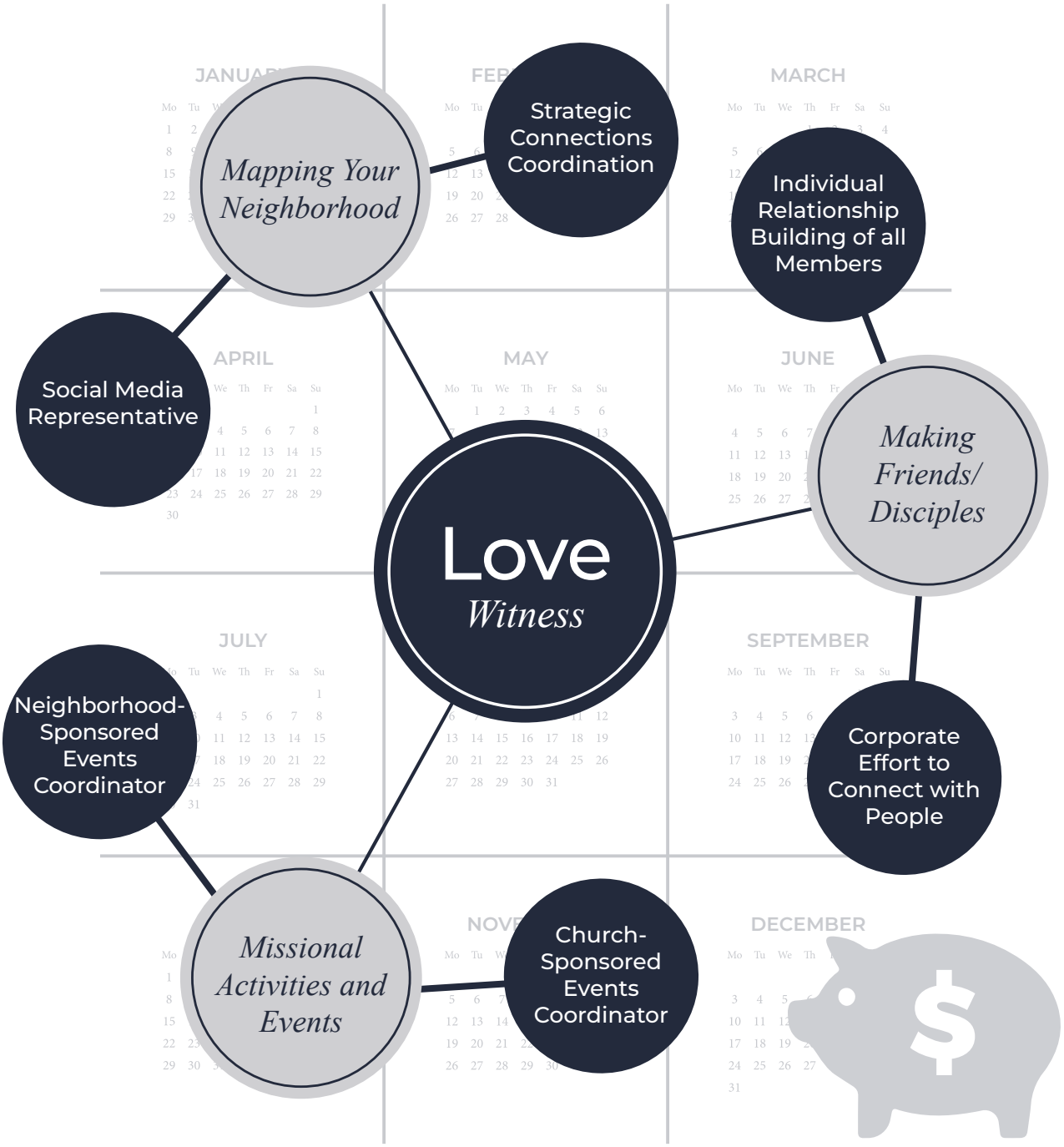
GROWING A HEALTHY
LOVE AVENUE



SESSION 1

WHAT IS A HEALTHY
LOVE AVENUE?

HEALTHY MINISTRY IS
TEAM BASED



PASTOR LED

HEALTHY

LOVE AVENUE

It is the person and presence of Jesus calling us to love; inviting us to join him in making new disciples; and empowering us through his Spirit to build the church and expand the Kingdom.



The calling on the ministry to engage our community with tangible acts that reflect the love of God. It is the love of Christ that compels us to proclaim the message and connect with those who don't yet know they are reconciled!

P R O C E S S



Looks like:

- Going to local events.
- Strategic Connections Coordination.
- Joining neighborhood Facebook Pages and Community Groups.

For instance:

- Prayer walks.
- Visiting Farmers markets, YMCA, etc.

Contextualize:

- Identify groups in your community. Who lives here? What is their experience?
- What do we as a church share in common with our community?
- After 6 months of engaging the community are we making adjustments?

Looks like:

- Being in the marketplace daily.
- Offering church facilities as a community activity center.

For instance:

- Hanging out at a coffee shop or joining a health club.
- Participating in community programs, and groups (Book Club, coaching, etc.)

Contextualize:

- How can I add strategic routine to my daily rhythms?
- Having an orientation of focusing on others.
- Beyond individual efforts, how do we collectively engage with our neighbors and deepen those relationships?

Looks like:

- Serving and loving the community with a purpose and intentional connection back to the life of the church.

For instance:

- A Back to School Fair followed by a Blessing of the Children.
- Celebrating a recent neighborhood camp.

Contextualize:

- What skills or abilities does my neighborhood engagement team have?
- Does our annual calendar have events that are inviting to neighbors, guests, and friends?
- Do our church events reflect our values and advance our shared vision?

Reflect

Healthy Church involves a corporate desire to share Christ's love with all our neighbors.

Are we following up after initially reaching out?

Are our neighborhood events connecting back to the life of the church?

Are we creating a sustainable rhythm of neighborhood events?



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



When we participate in the Love Avenue, we are responding to the Great Commandment and Great Commission: to love God and neighbor and to join Jesus in making disciples. In the same way that Jesus entered our world to reveal the greatness and goodness of God, we as the Church body are called to enter our neighborhoods to be salt and light sharing the love of Christ. As the Father sent the Son, we are sent to participate in building his kingdom. You may hear these practices referred to as **missional rhythms**.

A healthy Love Avenue embodies mission:

A **missional church** understands that the church is a sent organism to participate in Jesus' everyday mission to the world in our everyday environments.

- It activates the missional mind, heart and hands for gospel proclamation and demonstration in everyday life.
- It discerns Jesus' movements in our everyday spaces and engages missionally.
- It creates spaces for shared life, where disciple-making can take place.

Mission has its source, meaning and motivation in the Triune God. The Father has sent the Son into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to reconcile humans and the whole creation to himself. Since God is the missionary and the Holy Spirit has been sent forth into all the world ahead of the church, the church's mission derives from the mission of God. As body of Christ and community of God's people, the church is called to proclaim and embody the Good News of God's reign in all its dimensions in anticipation of the final and full manifestation of God's victory through Jesus Christ.
- Howard Snyder

What does it mean to be a missional church?

- Missionary living is an act of love and flows from the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- The missionary work of Christ is not finished. Through the church, Jesus continues his work.
- In union with Christ, his work is done only in the power of the Spirit.

What are the markers of a healthy Love Avenue?

- A healthy theological understanding of mission; ministry flows from the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Trusting that Jesus is in the neighborhood, and we are participating with him.
- There is a clearly defined focus neighborhood where the congregation is relationally connected.
- Both the congregation and members are active in their focus neighborhood and the church is known as a safe place.
- The congregation partners with neighborhood stakeholders in all stages of Love Avenue events.
- There are intentional connection points from missional events back to the life of the church.
- The church has a good presence in the community; the neighborhood recognizes the congregation's efforts as loving.



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



Reflection Questions:

1. What elements of missional church and a healthy Love Avenue do you have in place?
2. What gaps do you see in your Love Avenue?
3. What are some shifts that need to take place in your church for healthier missional rhythms and Love Avenue?

Prayer Point:

- If you **do not have a focus neighborhood**, begin to ask God to reveal the community he is calling you to serve.
- If you **do have a focus neighborhood**, pray for your neighbors and ask God to show you how to love them.



GROWING A HEALTHY
LOVE AVENUE



SESSION 2

WHY BEING A MISSIONAL
CHURCH MATTERS



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



The Christian life is an integrated life. As the Trinity is three in one, we are called to live out our faith both as individuals and in community. As the apostle Paul likens in his first letter to the Corinthians, “the way God designed our bodies is a model for our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part” (12:12-13 MSG). Through the Great Commission and Great Commandment, we are called to love. As the Father sent the Son, Jesus sends and the Spirit empowers us to live missionally. Missional health is found in learning to love our neighbors and participate with Jesus in his work in our neighborhoods.

The church is a living organism sent by Jesus to participate in his everyday mission in the world. We are a sent people compelled by love to join him in the expansion of his kingdom.

Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

- **The Great Commission** does not flow from an obligated heart. It is a lifestyle in the rhythms of daily living (while they go).
- The goal is always to make disciples. It is about pointing people to Christ. The believer joins the spiritual family (baptism).
- Discipleship is not only theoretical, but also demonstrated and occurs in close relationships.
- It does not occur in isolation from the presence of Christ. He is the main evangelist!

Jesus answered, “The first [commandment] is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31)

- The Great Commission does not exist separate from **the Great Commandment**. The missionary God works because he loves.
- Since the mission is participatory, it flows from love towards God above all else.

The Great Commission is powered by the Great Commandment. We live missionally because we love our neighbor.

“If the nature of God as Trinity models your relational calling, then the incarnation of God demonstrates your missional calling to live into time and place. When God chose to enter the world, it was not in some ethereal generic manner but in a particular family, in a particular town, in a particular country with particular socio-religious practices. Just as Christ ‘became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood’ (John 1:14 MSG), so also the people that comprise the local church in the parish are meant to be a tangible expression of God’s love in the everyday reality of life.” - Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish*, pgs. 26-27



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



TOOL: WHO ARE WE AS A CONGREGATION?

A healthy Love Avenue not only embraces the call to be missional, it also embodies the incarnation in a focus neighborhood, shining the light and sharing the love of Christ. **Gospel demonstration must come before gospel proclamation.** One way to share the love of Christ is to consider the needs of your focus neighborhood and the ways God has gifted your congregation.

We will be coming back to the graphic throughout the sessions. Begin to prayerfully complete **The Congregation's Gifting & Purpose** section.

To complete the activity as a team:

- Supplies needed: large poster, post-its, pens.
- Set up: Write "the Congregation's Gifting and Purpose" at the top of posterboard.

Instructions:

1. Hand out pens and a pack of post-its to each participant.
2. Begin with prayer asking the Spirit to guide your conversation and reveal how he has equipped and prepared your conversation for good work.
3. Ask the questions below one category at a time. (Add any additional questions or categories you think would be relevant.)
4. Give the participants time to write their answers on a post-it note.
5. After you have gone through the questions, re-read the first question.
 - a. Have all participants stick their responses to the question on posterboard.
 - b. After all the responses are on the board, review the answers looking for themes and similarities.
 - c. Repeat this process with all the questions.
6. Document the giftings and purposes that you've drawn out in the graphic organizer below. Keep a working list as you continue in the discernment process.
7. End the meeting in prayer.



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



Reflection Questions:

Experiences

What life experiences have your members had, inside the church context and outside of that context? What skills do they have that could be used to engage your focus neighborhoods? What has your ministry done well? What do you leave undone?

Passions

What are your members passionate about? What “fires them up”? Don't know? Ask. Examples include strong families, helping the poor and oppressed, reconciliation, racial harmony, serving, Christian education, counseling, financial responsibility, etc. Knowing their hobbies can provide insights into their passions. What are future possibilities for this ministry? What are our core values as a congregation?

Spiritual gifts

What are the predominate spiritual gifts in your congregation? **A good way to find out is to conduct a spiritual gifts inventory before this exercise.**

After the categories are processed, discuss as a group the question below:

How does the integration of the Great Commandment and Great Commission inform our practice of missional participation? What is our congregation's posture in engaging our neighbors?

Spiritual Gifts Reading Recommendations

Spiritual Gifts: A Practical Guide to How God Works Through You
by David Francis



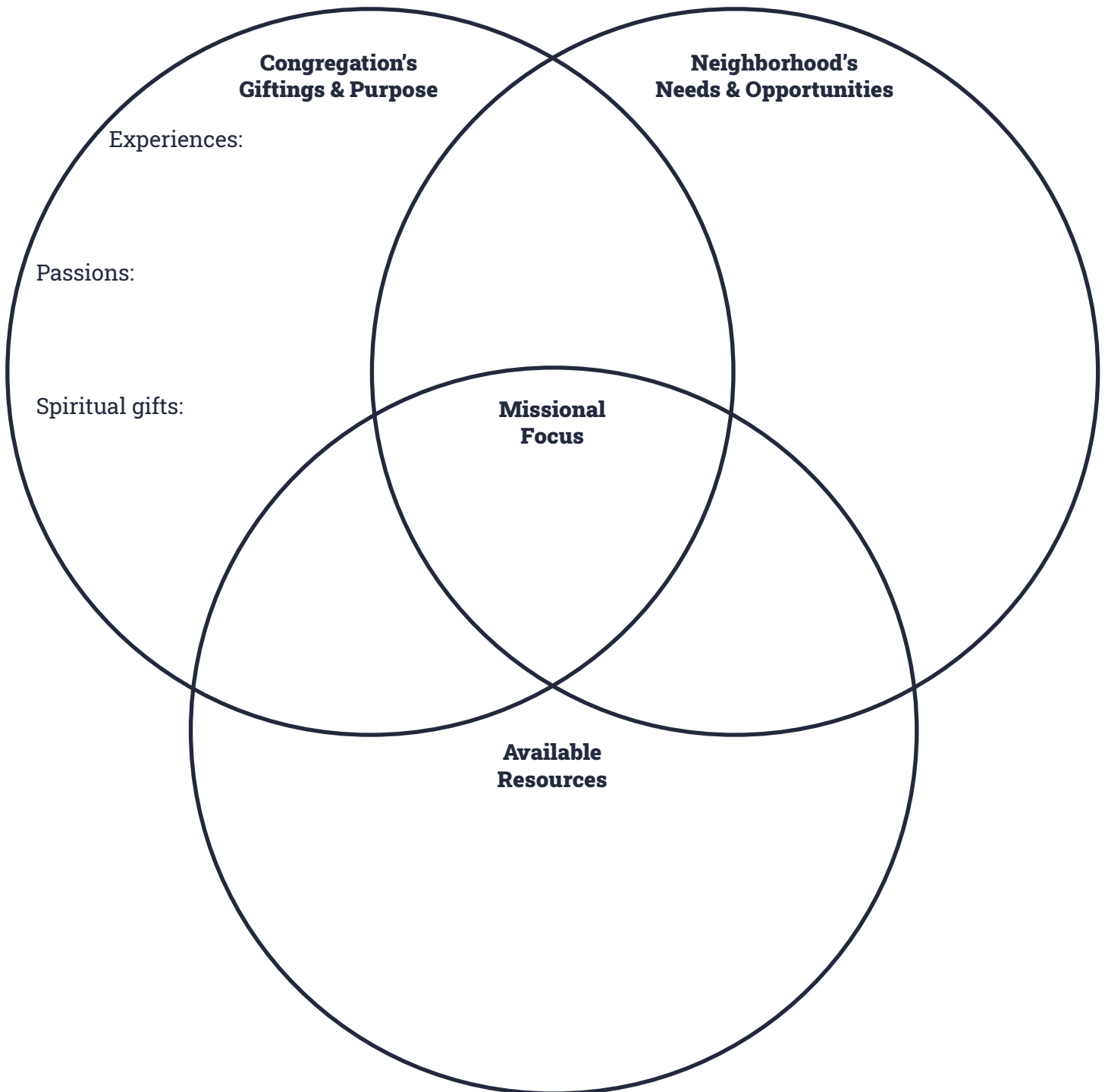
Discover Your Gifts Student Book: And Learn How to Use Them, Third Edition
by Alvin J. Vander Griend



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MISSIONAL FOCUS DIAGRAM





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SESSION 3

WHAT ARE SOME BEST
PRACTICES FOR MAPPING
OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



Now that we know the why behind our participation in the Love Avenue, over the next few sessions we will discuss some of the ways that we can build a Love Avenue. One of the most important parts of a missional life is understanding the focus neighborhood God is calling you to minister in. Whether you have a focus neighborhood or are in the process of discerning your area of focus, it is helpful to analyze the communities you are considering engaging in.

Exegesis of scriptures is the analysis and interpretation of the text. When we exegete a scripture, we consider the text in terms of original language, the culture and historical context of the people addressed by the text, and the immediate context of the verses that surround it. When we map our neighborhoods, we exegete or read the “audience” of our neighbors in order to draw meaning from them.

Mapping your neighborhood involves considering the ethnic, religious, life stage, and worldview of the people in your focus neighborhood. When we map our neighborhoods, we apply and live out what we learn in Scripture in ways that will engage our focus neighborhood.

In **Neighborhood Mapping**, John Fuder outlines four crucial aspects of analyzing our neighborhoods: Community is often about less quantifiable data: relationships, spiritual life, and unique personalities.

When we exegete a community we draw meaning from it. We understand the underlying history, context, and culture of a people and place.
- John Fuder

- 1. Supplication** – seeking God’s wisdom and next direction. Asking God to draw our attention to where he is moving and how we can join him.
 - Practicing prayer walks allows you to experience who lives in your neighborhood and allows God to draw your attention to the needs of the area.
- 2. Stakeholders** – people within the community with whom we can partner.
 - Examples of stakeholders: non-profits, housing associations, schools, businesses, etc.
- 3. Surveys** – questionnaires and focus groups that reveal our neighbors’ felt needs, worldviews, and attitudes toward church and faith.
- 4. Stories** – case studies that share the unique experiences of our neighbors.



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Below are practices for exegeting a community adapted from **Neighborhood Mapping**, by John Fuder (pgs. 21-23). We have included checkboxes and ask that you prayerfully choose a few practices to implement this year to get to know your neighborhood better.

- Go as a Learner.**
Have a curious posture, as one who desires to understand and not to judge the neighborhood. This involves humility, persistence, and courage. Missionary and linguist Betty Sue Brewster outlines the following as steps of cultural learning: Come as a learner, find ways to serve, seek to form friendships, weave God's story into their story, and bathe the evening in prayer.
- Seek Out and Befriend a "Person of Peace"**
Who is integrated into the neighborhood? Find someone who is an insider and a person of peace (Luke 10:6). This person embodies the lifestyle or subculture of the community. This person is an expert who can teach you about the lived experience of the neighborhood. Let them know you would like them to be your guide in getting to know the community. Build a relationship as a participant and observer in this person's life and activities. This is not a transactional relationship but one built on trust.
- Develop an Interview Guide**
This is not a script you have to follow, but an intentional way to get to know your neighbors and hear their stories. Some categories you may want to include are: family experiences, residence and special local spots, life cycle, community and friends, beliefs, and goals. This will help give you insight into the worldview and lifestyle of many in the neighborhood.
- Foster a Digital Presence**
Sign up for neighborhood newsletters that feature neighborhood news and events and join social media groups for the neighborhood. This will give you insight into interests, values, and occurrences in the community. It will also help you become more deeply connected with your neighbors.
- Collect and Analyze Data**
Make notes and send out a survey to get to know your focus neighborhood. Look for patterns or gaps in the information you have. What interests, themes, or values can you draw out? How can this information help you enter and bless your neighbor's lives?
- Expand your Network**
As you learn more about your neighbors, build more relationships. You will begin to learn nuances and subcultures in the general themes you have already noticed. Think about the gifting of your congregation and how their gifts and interests might align with the needs and interests of the neighborhood. Have pairs or groups of members attend local events that match their interests. Develop patterns of visiting the same coffee shop, gym, or farmer's market and build from exposure to deeper familiarity to friendship.
- Determine What God Is Calling You to Do**
Based on what you know about your focus neighborhood, what is your next step? Refocus your programming? Network to meet a need in the neighborhood? Plan an event? How are you poised for relevant, kingdom-work in your neighborhood?



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



TOOL: NEIGHBORHOOD'S NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

Bring out your Missional Focus Diagram. Today you will begin to fill in “The Neighborhood’s Needs and Opportunities.”

By becoming familiar with the unique needs of your community, your church can position itself to serve according to the predominant gifts, passions and experiences of the members. Addressing community needs with loving concern and practical service provides opportunities to understand the spiritual climate of your community, the general attitude people have toward Christianity and what spiritual questions they have.

Keep in mind as you proceed that no church can reach or serve everyone. It is impossible to reach all people simultaneously. You will be most effective as good stewards of the resources Jesus has given you, if you focus your gifts and limited resources on a specific people group or community and in a few specific ways. As you gain experience and grow in resources and numbers, you can diversify your missional work to include a wider range of people.

Fill in “The Neighborhood’s Needs and Opportunities.” Keep this as a working document and add it to the sheet as you gather more information about your neighborhood.

To complete the activity as a team:

- Supplies needed: large poster, post-its, pens.
- Set up: Write “The Congregation’s Gifting and Purpose” at the top of the posterboard.

Instructions:

1. Hand out pens and a pack of post-its to each participant.
2. Begin with prayer asking the Spirit to guide your conversation and reveal how he has equipped and prepared your conversation for good work.
3. Ask the questions below one category at a time. (Add any additional questions or categories you think would be relevant.)
4. Give the participants time to write their answers on a post-it.
5. After you have done through the questions, re-read the first question.
 - a. Have all participants stick their responses to the question on the posterboard.
 - b. After all the responses are on the board, review the answers looking for themes and similarities.
 - c. Repeat this process with all the questions.
6. Document the giftings and purposes that you’ve drawn out in the graphic organizer below. Keep a working list as you continue in the discernment process.
7. End the meeting in prayer.



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



Reflection Questions:

Demographics

What is the general makeup of your focus neighborhood? What age groups/life stages, ethnicities, and faith groups are represented? What is the average level of education and household income? Is there a lot of transition in the neighborhood, or are most people established in the neighborhood?

Neighborhood Characteristics

People have personalities, and so do neighborhoods. A neighborhood's character describes its personality and the feeling one gets when experiencing the neighborhood as a resident. Is there a lot of hustle and bustle with lots of local gathering places? Is it walkable? Is it spread out with residences and one pocket of commercial activity? Based on the demographics, how would you describe the lifestyle and character of your focus neighborhood?

Community Felt Needs

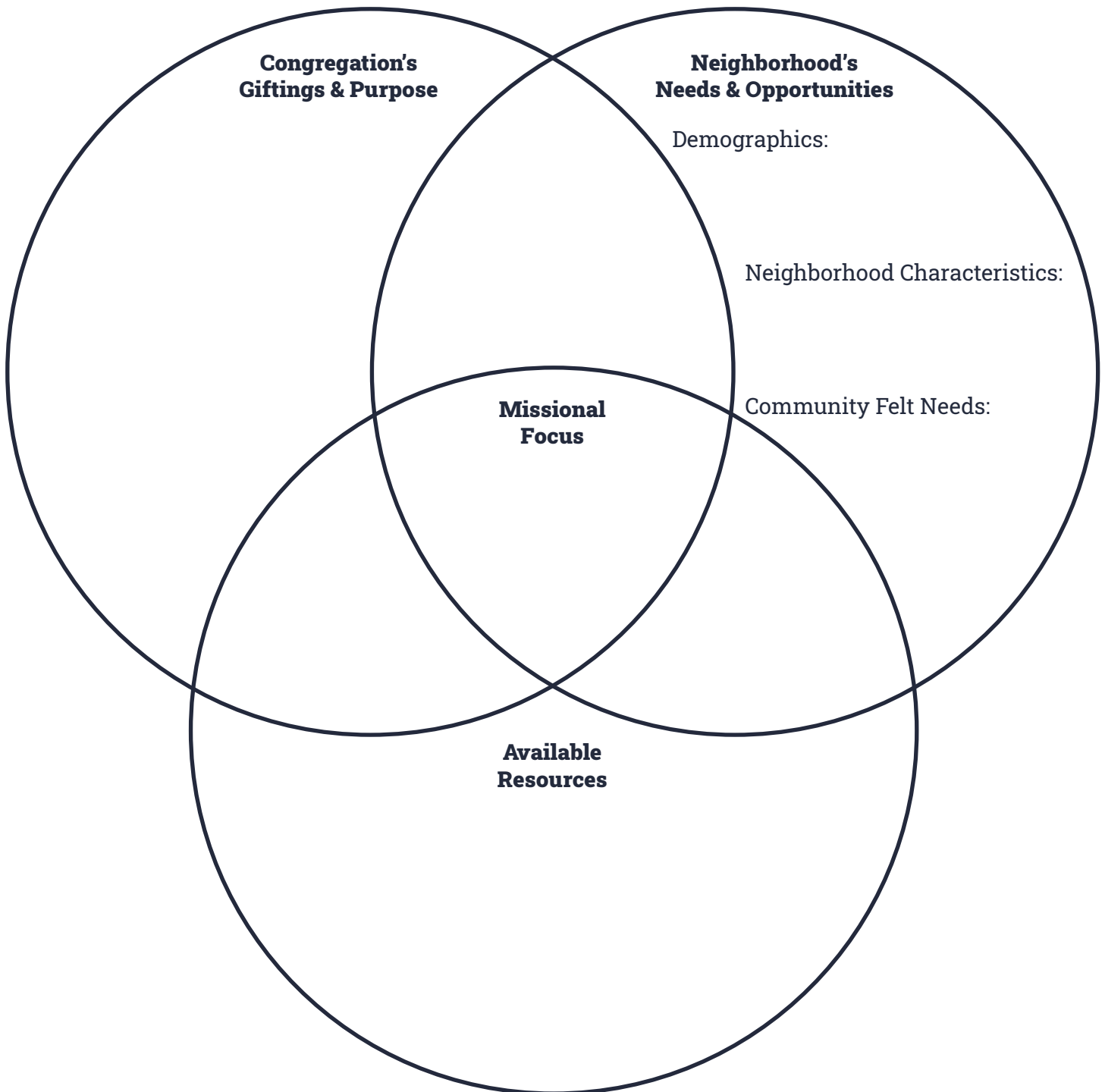
What are the gaps experienced by your neighbors? What do you hear neighbors hoping for? What are their concerns?



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MISSIONAL FOCUS DIAGRAM





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Session 3 Follow up:

Set a time to follow up to reflect on and refine your neighborhood's needs and opportunities after you have implemented a few of the practices to exegete your neighborhood. Knowing the demographics from experience is valuable, as is seeing it in black and white. Send out some surveys or bring some demographic data from a third party to include some data in your discussion.

After a time of engaging with your neighborhood and exegeting your community, use the questions below to shape your discussion and refine your **"Neighborhood's Needs & Opportunities"** section of your missional focus diagram:

- What did we see? Who did we see?
- What does the data tell us?
- What did we find? What do we sense the Spirit telling us?
- How do our findings align with our congregation's gifting?
- Do our congregation's stated values reflect the needs of the neighborhood?
- What shifts do we need to make as a congregation to better love and serve this neighborhood?



GROWING A HEALTHY
LOVE AVENUE



SESSION 4

WHAT ARE SOME BEST
PRACTICES FOR MAKING FRIENDS
IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?



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Making friends may sound simple, but in our fast-paced world, investing in relationships and taking time to meet new people is often not prioritized. If connecting with others is not a common practice, there can sometimes be awkward moments. Making friends involves the process: **Listen > Care > Engage.**

In **Tradecraft: The Church on Mission**, Rodney Calfee offers some relationship-building tools that we have adapted below:

1. People are not targets; they are God's image bearers.

God is already present in our neighborhoods and in the lives of our neighbors. We are not bringing him to them. We are all made in God's image. Since he is relational, we all have a desire for relationship as well. In conversations be curious about the other person and open to learning about who God is through the ways they reflect him. The goal is relationship, full stop. If there is a hidden motive, people will know it and will not be interested.

2. The gospel should be shared in the context of relationship.

The good news of Jesus is rooted in his care for us, and he revealed himself to people through meeting them in their context. The good news to the Samaritan woman at the well was different than the good news to the official whose son Jesus healed (John 4). In these interactions Jesus reveals himself based on his understanding of who they are, their needs, and what good news is to them. To the woman he talks about living water; to the officer he reveals his love and power by not going to the home himself but still healing the child. The same principle is true for our evangelism; relationship is the best context for sharing the gospel.

3. Don't assume you already know. Ask questions.

It can be easy to draw a distinction between fellow believers and those who are seekers. When we create an "us and them" mentality, we often generalize and label others. This prevents us from deepening relationships. Be aware of the other person's responses, level of interest, and be interested in what makes them uniquely them. Relationships are a two-way, long-term investment. We cannot force relationships and we must give them time.

4. Avoid bait and switch.

Relationships are built on care for one another. The purpose of a relationship cannot be to lead to a conversation about Christ. Rather, if Christ is a part of our lives, we will naturally share the ways he is moving in our lives and revealing himself to us. We must be careful not to simply develop friendships as a way to preach, nor just to share the gospel, but to share our whole selves. We demonstrate the gospel through the way we invest in others and by the way Jesus informs our day-to-day lives.

5. Be a blessing.

From Abraham's covenant with the Father to the Spirit's empowering us to be Christ's ambassadors, God blesses us and invites us to join in blessing others. The fragrance of Christ should be evident with us by the way we treat strangers, tip our servers, and in all of our interactions.

6. Live among the people.

Jesus entered our world, and the Holy Spirit sent the church into the world. Just as Jesus entered our culture, we can enter the culture around us. Shared interests are often easy connection points to build. Simple things like remembering people's names and the conversations you've had with them go a long way.



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



TOOL: LISTEN > CARE > ENGAGE

As we mentioned in the session, making friends can be like a muscle we need to work out. Before approaching people in the neighborhood, break into pairs and practice the art of conversation. Imagine that you have never met your partner before. Read through the suggested tools for making conversation (adapted from Tradecraft) and use the sample starter questions if you need to. One of you be the member, the other be the neighbor. Then switch roles midway through the time. Remember the process: **Listen > Care > Engage**.

Suggested Conversation Tools:

1. Listen

Instead of formulating a response, or waiting for your turn to talk, listen and engage with the person. Think of a follow-up question you can ask about what they are sharing.

2. Pay Attention

Your expressions, posture, and responses show your level of engagement in the conversation. Develop a culturally appropriate posture that demonstrates you are actively listening.

3. Read the person you are talking to

If he or she is no longer listening or paying attention, then wrap up the conversation. Look for open body language, and if their body language is closed off or shifts, don't force the conversation to continue.

4. Talk about more than religion

Not every conversation has to be about Jesus. Find common interests, and ask about their day-to-day lives. As you both begin to share, let your faith come up in natural ways.

5. Be real

Remember that sharing the gospel is sharing yourself, as well. In appropriate ways, share your thoughts, concerns, struggles, and doubts. This is not about unloading on a person, but about authentically sharing your life.

6. On purpose

Living on mission doesn't happen accidentally. Look for opportunities to make connection in your day-to-day life. Visit the same coffee shop or restaurant when you go out. Notice if there are familiar faces when you're at the gym. Practice making connections and building relationships in your day-to-day life.

Sample Questions:

- What are you celebrating in life right now?
- Is there something coming up that you are looking forward to?
- What are some of your favorite local spots?
- What is the best/worst thing that happened to you this week?
- Did you grow up in a family that talked about Jesus?



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



After role-playing making friends, have a conversation to discuss “How do we live out ‘**Listen > Care > Engage**’ as a congregation?” Use the pointers and questions below:

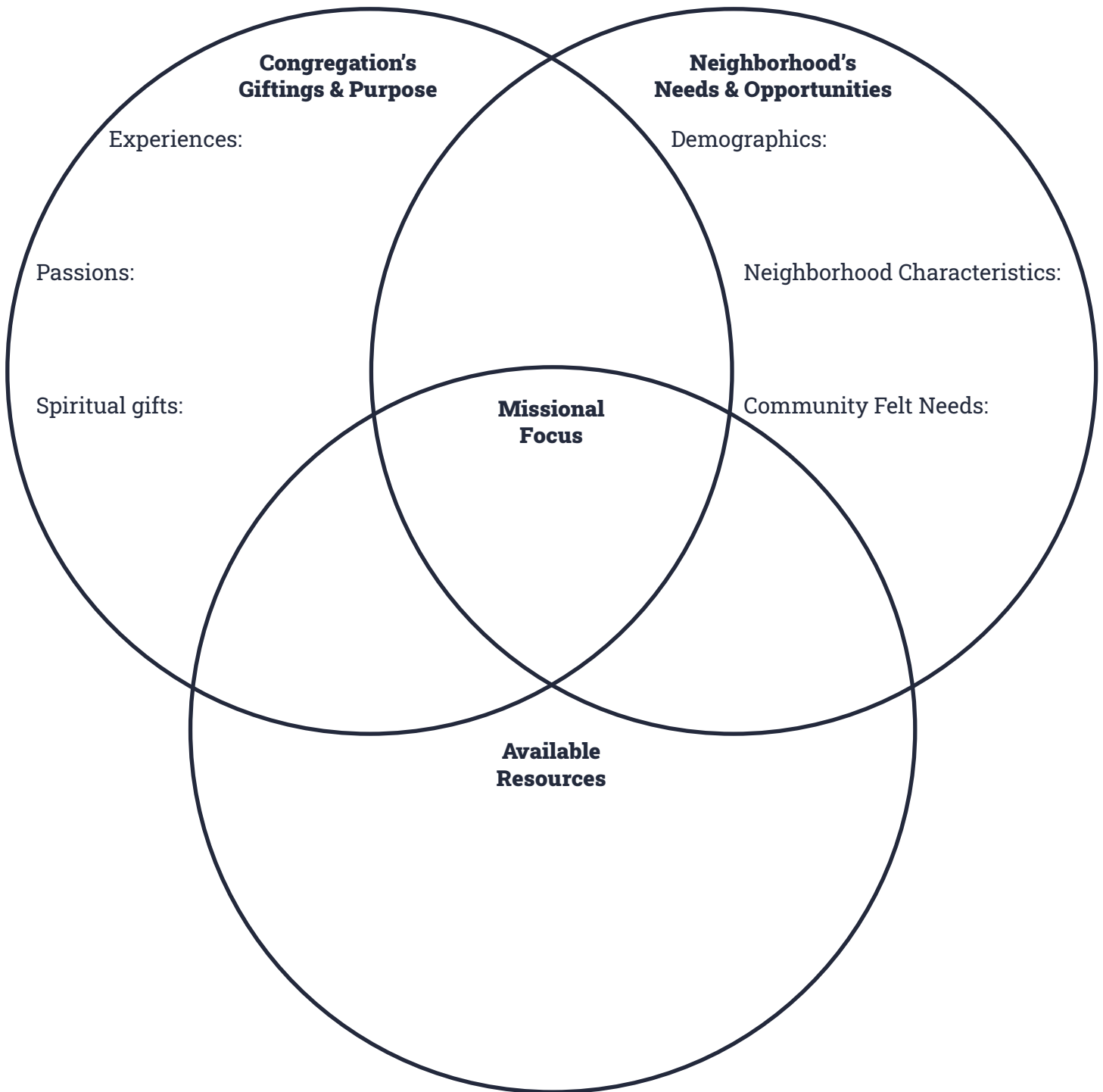
- Take out your **Missional Focus Diagram**, look at what you have completed in the **Congregation’s Gifting & Purpose** and **Neighborhood’s Needs & Opportunities**. What overlaps and themes do you see?
 - » What stands out? What predominates?
 - » Given the experiences, passions and gifts we’ve been given, and considering the needs of your community, what can we do?
 - » Begin to pray about what your missional focus could be.
- What opportunities could you provide for neighbors to connect with your congregation with low stakes?
 - » For example, A Back to School Fair with school-supply give-away, Family and Friends services, where many people in attendance are new. If you own a facility, sign up to be a voting location.
- How do we have a missional approach in all the avenues?
 - » What parts of your Hope Avenue are focused on the care and experience of first-time guests? Are there Connect Groups in the Faith Avenue geared toward new believers, or those who do not attend your congregation? (For example, divorce care groups, life skill groups, etc.)
- How can sub-teams from the other Avenues support the Love Avenue?
 - » For example: Hope Avenue Integration Team, Church Life Event Team, etc.



GROWING A HEALTHY **LOVE AVENUE**



MISSIONAL FOCUS DIAGRAM





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SESSION 5

HOW TO BUILD A
LOVE AVENUE TEAM



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A healthy Love Avenue team starts with...

- Developing a culture in the congregation that will welcome new people.
- Teaching on Jesus' engagement and heart for others.
- Confronting the blocks in our heart to love others.
- Continuing to discern gifting of the congregation and developing an inward and outward flow.
- Going out in pairs and groups to be present in your focus neighborhood.
- Partnering with local events and go on field trips and visit other events.
- Discerning from those who participated who would be able to plan your own event with a comeback event to the life of local church.

How to Start a Healthy Love Avenue Team

- Consider the people in your congregation who have a heart for and connect well with others. Invite them to be a member of a Love Avenue team or to form a mission-focused connect group. The purpose of the group is to:
 - » Support missional rhythms in the life of the church (participate in Love Avenue events, be active in the neighborhood, etc.).
 - » Intentionally pray for the neighborhood and the congregation's ability to connect with neighbors.
 - » Follow-up visitation of those connecting with the congregation through all avenues.
 - » Discernment and development of missional rhythms and the missional focus of the congregation.
- Additionally, there needs to be opportunities for getting the whole congregation involved in mission. For seekers to take a next step beyond missional events, a congregation needs to have an open and welcoming culture with opportunities for members and neighbors to engage with one another. Keep this in mind for the next session. Here are some examples:
 - » Missional events and activities at the church might include:
 - Mother's Day tea on the Saturday before Mother's Day. Ask all members to invite friends who are mothers.
 - Easter egg hunt. Host an egg hunt on the Saturday of Easter weekend for your neighbors.
 - Church Friendsgiving. Invite neighbors to a meal one evening the week before Thanksgiving and practice gratitude.
 - » Plan for a digital Love Avenue. There are relational factors that happen in person that can never be replaced. However, digital platforms create opportunities to develop relationships that could never happen in person. Many people feel safer and more confident making first-time contact digitally. We need to engage our neighborhoods both in person and digitally. Here are ideas to consider when building out the digital engagement of our Love Avenue:
 - » Have a designated photographer for events. Share stories and images of the congregation's mission being lived out.
 - » Engage through your own digital platforms (social platforms, website, live streamed services, etc.), and also join neighborhood groups to engage in the greater life of the community as well.
 - » Promote your events on both your church and neighborhood platforms.

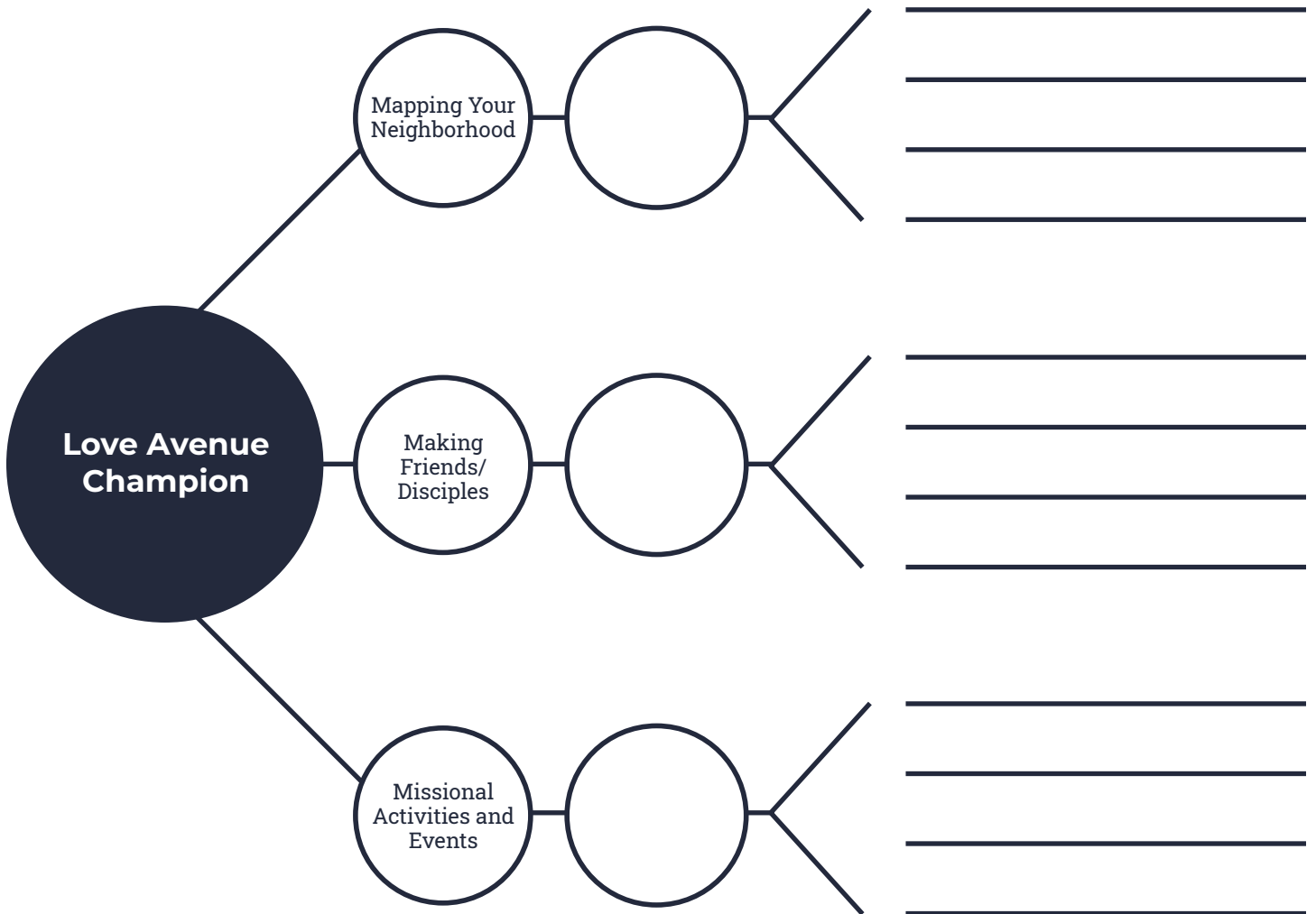


GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



TOOL : CHARACTERISTICS OF A LOVE AVENUE

Consider the best practices above. Who on your leadership team or in your congregation would be a good fit for the Love Avenue? **Use the sheet below to prayerfully consider and brainstorm the sub-teams, roles, and individuals who would be a best fit for your Love Avenue.**





GROWING A HEALTHY
LOVE AVENUE



SESSION 6

WHAT IS YOUR
MISSIONAL FOCUS?



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



We worship a God who is constantly drawing humanity close, and we are invited to join him in his ministry. The mission of the church doesn't change, but our creative God innovates his method to connect with a particular people, in a particular time and place. Now that you have taken time discern your congregation's gifting and purpose, as well as your neighborhood's needs, it is time to consider your congregation's resources.

Based on what you know, what resources do you have available both internally and externally (financial, personnel, partnerships)? **Complete the available resources section.**

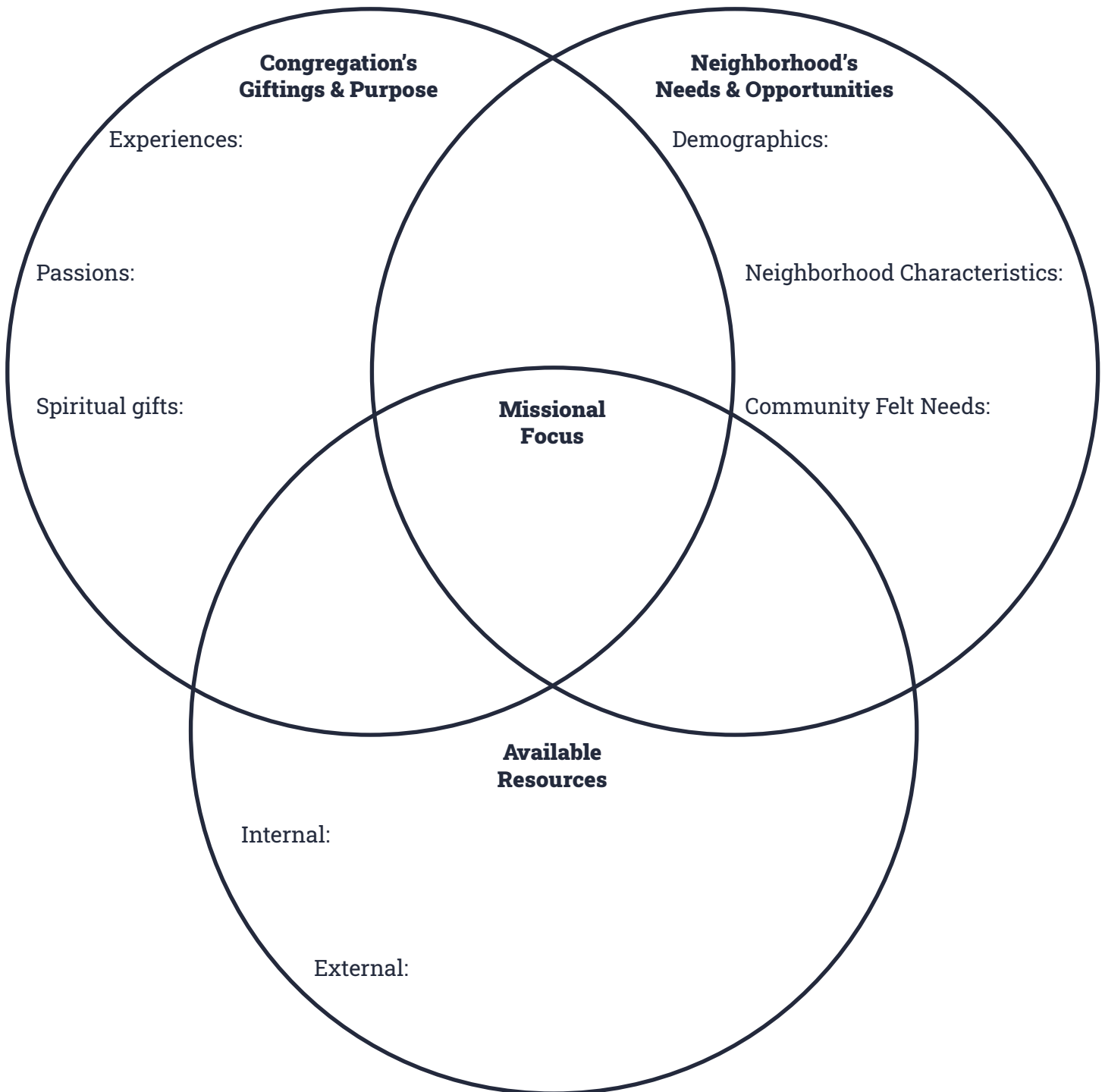
Looking at the three completed sections, discern as a team your congregation's missional focus. What stands out? Where is there consistent overlap?



GROWING A HEALTHY **LOVE AVENUE**



MISSIONAL FOCUS DIAGRAM





GROWING A HEALTHY
LOVE AVENUE



SESSION 7

WHAT IS THE ANNUAL FLOW
OF THE LOVE AVENUE?



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE

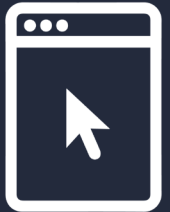


Now that you have a team and missional focus, you can plan out the rhythms of your Love Avenue. **It is okay to start off simple.** We have included a template below that considers budget and capacity. As your team grows and focus develops, you can add more each year.

For each section we have included dates within the cultural calendar and the church calendar that could be opportunities for Love Avenue Events.

Does your team need help
planning the details of your
proposed events?

Share this church hack with
them: resources.gci.org/CHevents





GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



TOOL : LOVE AVENUE CALENDAR

Quarter 1
January - March

Quarter 2
April - June

Quarter 3
July - September

Quarter 4
October - December

Questions to consider:

- What other church events in the other Avenues are occurring in this quarter? Are there events we can connect with? Are there dates we should avoid to care for our teams and honor their time?
- Who is the audience for this event?
- What next step can we provide for neighbors who attend this event to connect with our congregation?
- What resources do we have that can support this event?
- How does this event align with our missional focus?

Dates/Events to consider:	Dates/Events to consider:	Dates/Events to consider:	Dates/Events to consider:
New Years Super Bowl Valentine's Day	Easter Summer kickoff Outdoor events	Back to School Events	Thanksgiving Christmas

Event Description:	Event Description:	Event Description:	Event Description:
Theme:	Theme:	Theme:	Theme:
Purpose:	Purpose:	Purpose:	Purpose:
Target Audience:	Target Audience:	Target Audience:	Target Audience:
Follow-Up Event:	Follow-Up Event:	Follow-Up Event:	Follow-Up Event:
Estimated Budget: \$	Estimated Budget: \$	Estimated Budget: \$	Estimated Budget: \$

Annual Budget:





GROWING A HEALTHY
LOVE AVENUE



SESSION 8

REFLECTING ON YOUR
LOVE AVENUE EVENTS



GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE

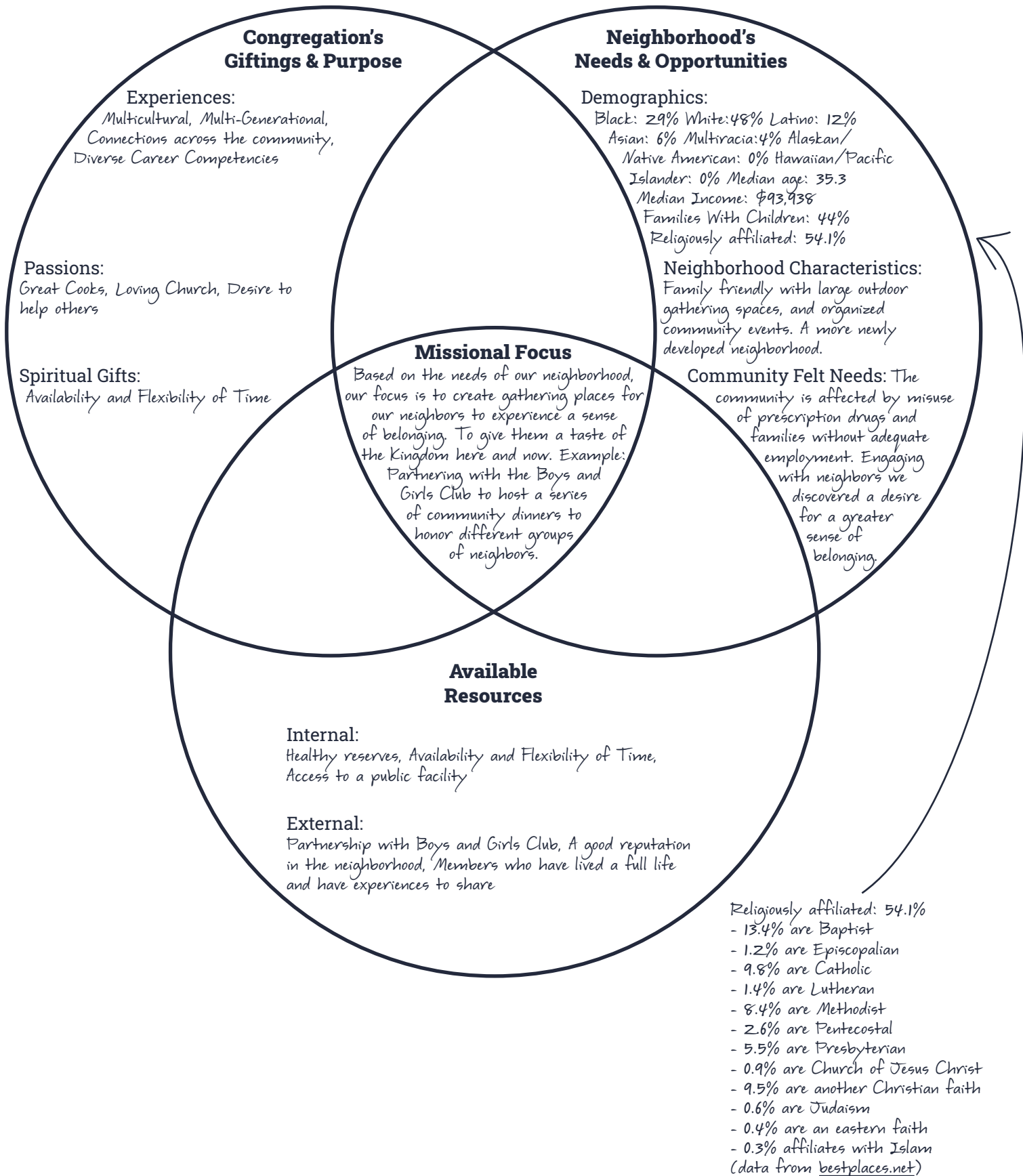


Follow-Up Session: Reflecting on your last quarter of Love Avenue events, take time as a team to discuss the first cycle:

- What wins are you celebrating?
- How can you make shifts to refine the process and improve the experience?
 - » Is there something you need to stop doing?
 - » Is there a new practice that can be implemented?
- Review your Missional Focus Diagram. Based on your experiences, is there any new information you need to add? Are there any shifts you need to make?
- Connect with the other Avenue Champions: Are there opportunities to collaborate or support each other that are being missed?

APPENDIX

SAMPLE MISSIONAL FOCUS DIAGRAM





GROWING A HEALTHY LOVE AVENUE



TOOL : LOVE AVENUE CALENDAR

Questions to consider:

- What other church events in the other Avenues are occurring in this quarter? Are there events we can connect with? Are there dates we should avoid to care for our teams and honor their time?
 - Who is the audience for this event?
 - What next step can we provide for neighbors who attend this event to connect with our congregation?
 - What resources do we have that can support this event?
 - How does this event align with our missional focus?
-

Event Description:

Theme:

Purpose:

Target Audience:

Follow-Up Event:

Estimated Budget:

\$



WORKS CITED

Howard Snyder For further development of this definition see [Snyder's paper on Missional Church and Missional life](#)

Session 2: *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community* Paperback – Illustrated, April 4, 2014
by Paul Sparks (Author), Tim Soerens (Author), Dwight J. Friesen

Session 3: [*Neighborhood Mapping: How to Make Your Church Invaluable to the Community, by John Fuder, Ray Bakke, and Bob Lupton*](#)

Session 4: *Tradecraft: For the Church on Mission*,
by Larry E. McCrary, Caleb Crider, Wade Stephens, and Rodney Calfee