

User's Guide for the "Spiritual Community Survey"

How can our parish connect with people's yearnings for a spiritual community to belong to in our area? Why not conduct the "Spiritual Community Survey" below? Each person in your group or ministry can interview some people who live near you. See instructions below and on the interview sheet for how to do this.

1. You might start with members of your parish committee, ministry team, or study group, answering the four questions in writing.
2. After 5 minutes or so, compile the answers in some simple way—perhaps on newsprint or a white/chalk board. Then discuss as a group what struck you from what others said—with no judgment about rightness or wrongness of answers.
3. After that, you each might take five or six copies of the survey home with you. These are to use to talk to other people—in your home, workplace, neighborhood, supermarkets, streets, parish, etc., where ever people are gathered—
 - You use the script at the top of the next page to introduce it to each person that you interview.
 - You ask the questions one-at-a-time and just listen and ask occasional clarifying questions. It is not a time to argue or explain away people's concerns. Later when you are alone, fill out summaries of the person's answers on the sheet.
 - Another option is to call some people you know on the phone and ask these questions, but you may miss a lot of nonverbal communication about the issues underlying the questions.
4. When you come back together as a group, you might start by sharing in groups of three—
 - What was the most interesting interview? Why?
 - Which was the most difficult? Why?
 - What answers surprised you?
 - What answers challenged you?
5. Someone in the group compiles all the answers for the third and last meeting—indicating how many times each particular response came up.
6. At your next meeting, you look at the compilations. What do they suggest are "burning life questions" that people have in your area? All too often, offerings we provide on the parish level are giving answers to questions that people are not asking, thus, low or no motivation to attend or participate.
7. Have someone from outside the group or parish join you for the final meeting to help determine if you have enough material to plan special outreach programs or evangelization offerings in the future, or if you need to conduct the "Spiritual Community Survey" with more people first.

Spiritual Community Survey

“Hi, my name is _____. I am taking some adult education classes. One of our homework assignments is to take an opinion poll called a “Spiritual Community Survey.”

- I’m not trying to sell you anything or sign you up for anything.
- There is no right or wrong answer to each question.
- There are four questions in the survey. It will take about three minutes.”

“Can you help me?”

- If the answer is “NO,” thank the person and move on.
- If the answer is “YES,” begin with the first question.

1. What would you say are the two or three greatest needs in our community or neighborhood?

2. Why do you think that less and less people attend church in our area?

3. When looking for a church to attend, what kind of things do people want from that church?

4. What kind of advice would you give to a church that wants to be helpful to people in our area?