

Are you living in one world while your neighborhood lives in another?

What is your level of awareness of the customs, traditions, and values of people in the neighborhood?

How regularly do members of the congregation interact with people of the neighborhood?

Through what lens do you look at your neighbors?

Is it a lens of your own cultural making – a lens that looks with judgment according to your own cultural values?

The tools of assessment in Part I helped you gather a clearer statistical question of who you are as a congregation and who the people of the neighborhood are. You have examined the complexity of culture and raised to awareness the cultural customs, practices, and norms of your congregation. The exercises in Assessment and Moving On will guide you in walking, talking, and getting to know your neighbors. Entering the world of your neighbor needs to begin with solid preparation.

In traveling to new places across the globe, we prepare by trying to learn some of the language – especially words that will help us when we get stuck. We often read guidebooks and try to learn some cultural traditions. If the congregation has become separated from the neighborhood, or if the congregation is entering into a new partnership with a congregation of another cultural background, it is important to spend the same kind of excited preparation as we would for traveling overseas.

Seek out ways to learn about the people of the neighborhood. What are the values that guide people's lives? What is/are the language(s)? Does the neighborhood include immigrant communities? What customs and practices are part of people's lives?

Note the stereotypes you have about persons in the neighborhood or the group with whom you are beginning a new partnership. Lay the stereotypes aside and begin to take a step in the diversity dance. Find ways to begin to enter the dance by walking out, rather than inviting people in. Take initial steps to immerse yourself in the neighborhood and begin to meet your neighbor again for the first time – listening with new ears, observing with new eyes. Seek to meet your neighbor without prior assumptions. Enter your neighbor's world. Listen and learn.

- **Talk with people you know who can help serve as a guide for you into the neighborhood.** How can they help you prepare? Are there persons they can introduce you to? Do you need a translator to speak more effectively with persons who are newer immigrants?
- **Become involved with those who are working to implement the Ethnic Ministry Strategies** – African descent, American Indian and Alaska Native, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino. Listen and learn from those who are willing to teach and guide ways to become engaged with people of other racial and cultural backgrounds.

- **Take a friend and walk from the church to a neighborhood store.** What kinds of stores are available? Notice the sights, and sounds. Notice the people outside on the streets and sidewalks. Pay attention to the items sold in the store. If it is a corner grocery, how do prices compare to those where you regularly shop? What do you notice about similarity and differences in items? Listen to the people as they shop and go about their daily lives. What do you notice about them?
- **Attend a meeting at a school in the neighborhood or a local neighborhood association meeting.** Listen to the concerns being raised. Introduce yourself to a few people.
- **Acquaint yourself with other nonprofit groups in the neighboring community,** including youth serving organizations. Visit their sites, introduce yourself, ask for an opportunity to talk with someone about their organization, notice who is participating in programs or services. What do you notice about the culture of the place? Are neighborhood people actively involved in the programs or simply recipient of services? As you observe and talk with people, what can you learn about the neighborhood? Who are persons identified as neighborhood leaders
- **Attend a neighborhood event** in a park or a block party happening within the neighborhood. Who do you observe as neighborhood leaders? Introduce yourself to people, participate, and have fun.
- **Read.** Find books on suggested bibliographies found in the Additional Resources. Go to the library and check out books written by authors of the racial/cultural/ethnic groups in the neighborhood. Both fiction and nonfiction works can help transport you into another culture and way of viewing and living in the world.
- **Explore websites** that provide information about the history and story of racial and ethnic groups. Use the resources and activities available on websites such as Southern Poverty Law Center’s [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org); and PBS’s [www.pbs.org/race/000\\_General/000\\_00-Home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm).
- **Use films and videos** to both educate and stimulate community-based discussions. Go to websites such as [www.viewingrace.org](http://www.viewingrace.org) or its related classroom site of [www.facinghistorycampus.org](http://www.facinghistorycampus.org) for an array of film resources, articles, essays, stories, and activities, including “After 9-11” film essays on “Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian Communities in the U.S.” and “Not in Our Town” – the story of a Montana community that banded together to fight hate crimes
- Enjoy this opportunity to meet your neighbor again for the first time. Share your observations as a leadership team. What are you learning? What are you noticing about yourself and your comfort level?

My Neighbor’s World Completed - Continue to Communication



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God’s work. Our hands.