

Environics/Analytics Ministry Report

User Guide

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Thanks go to St. Stephen United Church, Burlington, Ontario, and Islington United, Etobicoke, Ontario, for use of maps pertaining to their service areas.

I. Introduction

What is this report?

The Environics Ministry Report provides statistically significant data about the members that make up your community of faith and about your broader community. There are four types of information included: A Map of the Physical Location of Your Households, A Demographic Profile of the Broader Community, A Psychographic Profile of Your Faith Community, and Social Value Trends.

Objective

The objective of the report is to provide information to help the congregation understand more about itself and its local community in order to develop programs and mission strategies that are faithful and effective.

Why have this report?

"Who do people say that I am? ... Who do you say that I am?" [Mark 8:27b 29b]

The Environics Ministry Report is for clarifying (or developing) and helping to implement your faith community's mission strategy. It does this by helping your community explore the questions below:

1. Who are we as a community of faith?
2. Who are our neighbours?
3. What about evangelism and discipleship?
4. How have congregations used the report?
5. What are people who have used the report saying?
6. What kind of information is provided?
7. What questions are being raised?

1. Who are we as a community of faith?

Congregations and community ministries are groups of people with many gifts and challenges. These are very often people who invest hours upon hours of time, who give from their heart, and who love this United Church of ours. This resource is useful for exploring congregational gifts, motivations, potential tensions, identity, and purpose, and to clarify congregational mission. It is also a practical tool to implement helpful programs and strategies for communication, outreach, mission, faith development, and worship.

2. Who are our neighbours?

In a study with 100 congregations the report was used to further explore facets of the communities in which the faith communities live and serve. They discovered new ministry opportunities. Some confirmed certain programs and began to question the relevance of others. Some became more aware of the needs, questions, and the spiritual dilemmas of their neighbours. Many explored the appropriateness of partnerships with other congregations, with non-faith community agencies, and with groups in the community involved in social justice advocacy and work.

3. What about evangelism and discipleship?

One of the painful legacies of our church is our history of evangelism with Aboriginal communities. Historically this began with the assumption that there was nothing of value in the culture and spirituality of Aboriginal peoples before the church arrived. In contrast, the early Christian community enthusiastically pointed to ways in which the living word of the gospel was already apparent in other cultures. Paul did this at the Areopagus when he spoke to the Epicureans and the Stoics. This became the basis for Paul to offer his own unique experience of the Christ.

Discipleship involves both word and deed. Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" The answer today depends mostly on what congregations and community ministries say and do. Our faith communities are Christ's body in the world and for faith communities this goes beyond mere marketing. The question is whether or not people within and around our ministries will know that the God of love has drawn near. Will the poor know of God's generosity? Will the needy know the "shelter of [God's] wings"? Will "empire" be challenged? Will those seeking deep spiritual connection meet God in communities of moral and spiritual formation? More effective discipleship is the outcome toward which this resource points.

4. How have congregations used the report?

In the study congregations used (or were preparing to use) the report for the following purposes:

- for a JNAC or staff search process
- to follow up on the Emerging Spirit program
- to explore the appropriateness of amalgamation or partnership with other congregations
- to develop programs relevant to the congregation
- to develop programs relevant to the broader community
- for worship planning
- as input to a strategic planning process or mission plan development process
- to develop or improve their communications plan with the community including focused mailings
- to sharpen social justice ministries, community development, and advocacy
- for stewardship development and programs in the congregation
- for fundraising beyond the congregation

5. What are the people who have used the report saying?

- "It's helpful... HELP!" (Regionally based groups of trained support people are being developed to accompany congregations using the report.)
- "Finally, the kind of practical tool we really need! Hallelujah!"
- "We saw marketing professionals and city planners in the congregation offering their skills for the first time."
- "We identified 50 new families attending our Christmas services following a focused flyer drop of *Living the Welcome* brochures"

- “We discovered that we are not a ‘community church’ as we suspected. We are a ‘regional/destination church’ that people attend because of specific programs we offer. This changes how we communicate ourselves to the community!”
- “The report led to a turning point in our long-term visioning process, bringing together congregational values of ‘quality worship’ and ‘the need for change’ through the strong social value trend of ‘legacy’—the desire to pass something on to succeeding generations. It helped us see tensions between ‘quality worship’ and ‘the need for change’ in a new light. They are not mutually exclusive or necessarily opposed to each other, but both part of the value of ‘legacy.’ We want to pass on our experience of ‘quality worship’ to new generations through new forms.”
- “The different social values between congregation and community helped us see that our mission is not to be a ‘community church,’ but to be an ‘alternative community.’”
- “We used the report at our fall board retreat to identify the felt but unnamed need for a seniors’ ministry strategy.”

6. What kind of information is provided?

There are four types of information included:

(i) A map of the physical location of your households¹

This is a map showing the location of households in your faith community with a line showing the geographical border of the area being reported on. The area this border encompasses is called the “service area.”

(ii) A demographic profile of the broader community

This profile is a summary of demographic characteristics of the general population within your service area. Demographics are the average or typical characteristics of a group of people. Such characteristics include age, income, education, ethnicity, language, type of occupation, region of country, and household size. Demographics can also include the age of children, the status of home ownership, one’s home value, and whether one’s home is located in an urban, suburban, or a rural location.

(iii) A psychographic profile of your faith community²

The profile of the congregation/faith community includes both demographic and psychographic descriptors of your congregation or ministry participants. Psychographics take the idea of demographics a step further. This information includes data about lifestyles and behaviours—the kinds of interests people have, the values they hold, and how they behave. It turns out that each congregation/faith community seems to have a very particular personality. This enables connection between people who share particular values, views, preferences, and behaviours.

¹ This will not be true for reports that are not based on the postal code list of an existing faith community. An example of this exception would be a presbytery examining a pre-determined area to consider a new ministry project.

² If a postal codes list is not used as in 6. (i), the psychographic profile of the whole service area will be provided.

(iv) Social value trends

Environics tracks the changing social values in Canadian society. The report lists and describes the top social value trends for the service area. In many cases these social value trends will also reflect the social value trends of people in the congregation/faith community. The report also indicates how strongly people in the Service Area hold social values that are related to United Church characteristics. For example, it will indicate how widely a concern for those in need is present in the community.

These four kinds of data can be used effectively for mission planning by allowing them to ask questions of each other. For example, if “global ecological consciousness” is a strong social value trend in the congregation, how widely is it held in the broader community? What is the location of neighbourhoods that hold that value widely? What partnerships, programs, or mission initiatives might be suggested?

Figure 1 on the following page shows the four kinds of information in the report. The letters on the connecting lines indicate the kinds of questions the circles might ask of each other.

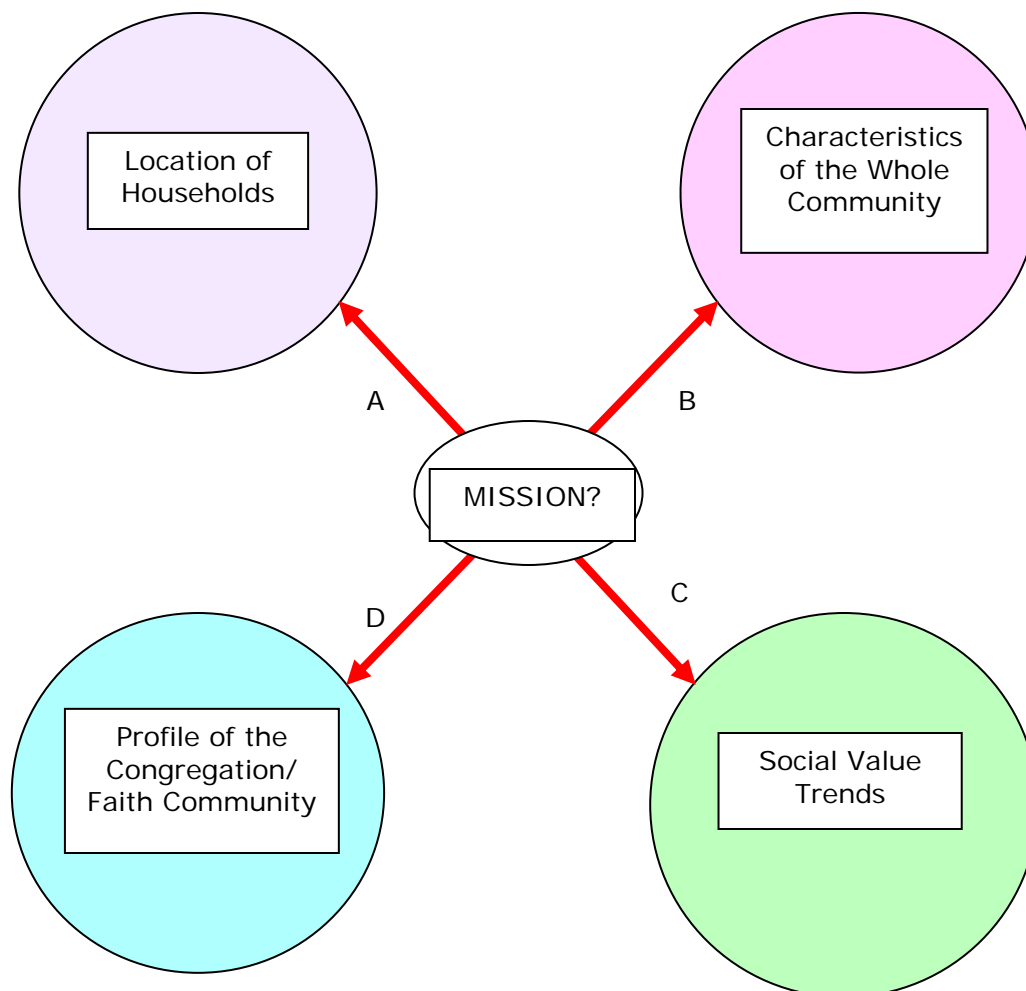


Figure 1 – Types of data in the report with arrows representing questions arising from the relationships between the kinds of information.

- A. What neighbourhoods does the congregation/faith community live in? Where do United Church affiliates live? Where do people who have similar values, views, and behaviours as those in the congregation/faith community live? What neighbourhoods in the service area might we want to communicate with around programs relating to shared values or addressing lifestyle behaviours, views, and ethical or spiritual dilemmas?
- B. What similarities and differences are there between the broader community and the congregation/faith community? Is the congregation typical of the community (a “community church”) or quite distinct (an “alternative community”)?
- C. How strongly and widely does the broader community hold United Church type values? What values are widely shared between the congregation/faith community and the broader community? What social values, such as “the need for escape,” would the congregation/faith community want to address or perhaps challenge?
- D. Who are we really? Who are our neighbours? What is God seeking for this community? What is God calling us to do and be and say to and with our community? What partnerships might help us participate more fully in God’s mission within this community?

The discernment of mission takes place at the intersection of these kinds of data and questions.

7. What questions are being raised?

- (i) What about people who don't have an address?
- (ii) Aren't we just turning into a marketing endeavour?
- (iii) Why don't we see ourselves in the report (or section therein)?
- (iv) Will this help us get more people?
- (v) Does this work in rural communities?
(*We already know the congregation and our neighbours.*)
- (vi) Can congregations really interpret this stuff?
(*Shouldn't someone tell us what it means?*)

(i) What about people who don't have an address?

Any lens brings focus to some things while obscuring or masking others. Let the occasion of looking through the lens of the report be an opportunity to ask the question, "What other lenses would enhance our understanding of ourselves and our community?" Those who are less visible in our society are often of most importance to connect with and learn about. This is partly because their stories have usually not been taken into account and therefore have something new and precious to offer. It is also because marginalized groups are often most vulnerable: they may be in need of help and can also help us understand our own vulnerability. Youth and children who are living with their parents will be included in information based on "household" in the cluster types. What other ways might you explore the values, worldviews, and spiritual dilemmas of youth and children in your congregation and community? Can you try teaching a Sunday school class or seek the help of your Sunday school or the public/high school(s) in your community? Aboriginal communities might report very different kinds of information about their communities than the report has included. How can you engage in conversation with Aboriginal people in your congregation and community? Can you hold a talking circle? (See *A Liberating Lament: Spiritual Practice for Vital Ministry* [Toronto: United Church of Canada, 2009].)

(ii) Aren't we just turning into a marketing endeavour?

Like any tool the report can be misused. Some people worry that the report will tell them their service area needs them to be something they are not, or that they will give up their United Church identity and commitments in order to respond to "potential markets." This is an option, but not one that is recommended. The report is not intended to tell you who you are or who you should be or what your ministry ought to be. It is a lens to explore your experience in a way that both strengthens congregational identity and explores potential connections in the community. The data (aggregate data) does not describe particular instances. For example, no family in Canada has 1.73 children. The data points to trends, general characteristics, and tendencies in ways that can help reframe or nuance your own experience. In this sense the real value of the report is in the questions it asks rather than the ones it answers.

(iii) Why don't we see ourselves in the report (or section therein)?

This is a disturbing question for most. Learn to get excited about the disturbing questions and don't dismiss the data off-hand. The parts of the report that make you ask, "What's going on here?" are most likely to lead to key insights if pursued. If community cluster types are listed for your congregation that do not reflect who you see at church, then it may be for any or all of the following reasons (all of which would be helpful to know).

- a) Some segment(s) of those on our congregational list (on which the report is based) do not really come on Sunday morning and so we don't think of them when we think about "the congregation." You might want to explore why they don't come.

b) You may be misunderstanding the nature of the data. Remember the data paints a general picture. For example, people tend to be very sensitive to cultural or racial cues. If a main cluster type in your congregation is, “Younger, upper-middle class, South Asian, families” and you don’t think you have any South Asian families in the congregation, then ask yourself the following questions:

- Is that true? Sometimes we generalize and miss important exceptions. Is there even one household on your list that is a South Asian family?
- Are we focusing too much on race alone? Does “Younger, upper-middle class, families” seem more descriptive? Remember only a few will bear all the characteristics of the group. Are there some helpful characteristics being lifted up?
- If you decide your congregational list really is significantly different from the cluster descriptions listed for your congregation, then ask the question why?
 1. One congregation asked that question and looked at the historical development of the neighbourhood. The church people tended to stay (in part because of the church), while the rest of the neighbourhood changed. They realized they were different from their immediate neighbours.
 2. A second congregation realized that they held different values from their neighbours precisely because they were engaged in the church. They realized that they were not a “community church” (as they thought), but an “alternative community”! And a transformational one as well
 3. Finally, all statistical claims anticipate anomalies. It may simply be that your report contains an example of where the rule does not apply for reasons you cannot explain. It is the job of Environics to make sure that that experience is rare.

(iv) Will this help us get more people?

In some ways one of the dangers of the report is that it could be used (and potentially very effectively) in order to get more people. Keep in mind that generally, people don’t really want to be “got.” Many faith communities are struggling with the question of survival. Survival is a good thing, yet focusing on our fear for survival can have a negative impact on our viability and faithfulness. Two scenarios:

a) Someone new comes to your congregation (or town) and the thing topmost on your mind is, “We don’t have enough people! We don’t have enough money! We don’t have enough leaders!” Then you are bound to engage in what some call “vampire ministry.” Many people who feel they are being “got” in their new exposure to the church will have their worst fears confirmed. Don’t expect to see them again until they need a funeral.

b) You create a communications strategy that describes your faith community in a way that will be clear and compelling to many in your community. Twenty new families show up. The only problem is that it’s not who you really are. You have now ensured that a whole segment of your community will not likely engage with you. Jesus said, “Anyone who seeks to save their life will lose it...anyone who risks their life for my sake and the sake of the gospel will save it.” This is practical advice for faith communities. The passage speaks of

spiritual surrender to Christ's way of justice, compassion, and love. It offers a promise of life for those who do.

(v) Does this work in rural communities?

The report is used differently in rural communities, but the study confirms the initial insights from consultations with stakeholders in the rural community. It is used to challenge popular myths held by the congregation, community, and the matriarchs and/or patriarchs. It makes visible issues that can be held in an unconscious conspiracy of silence. While the postal code located information is not as nuanced and varied as in places with higher population densities, there are seven cluster types that relate to rural settings and seven that relate to town settings. In addition, the data is more fine-grained than the six-digit postal code in rural settings where there might even be a small town or village. In these kinds of situations, several community cluster types can be identified within one postal code.

(vi) Can congregations really interpret this stuff?

The congregation is best placed to interpret the report. The real work of using the report is using the data to reflect again on the experience of the congregation internally and in relation to the broader community. Remember the report asks questions more often and powerfully than it answers them. A number of congregations in the study experienced the emergence of marketing and planning professionals to offer their gifts in relation to the report. Regional consultation groups are being established to offer accompaniment and advice to congregations. Learning communities are also being put in place to support congregations as they use the report to help with engagement, interpretation, strategy, and implementation in relation to the report.

II. Data Sources

The reports are drawn largely from the following sources:

1. The Prizm_{CE} data of Environics/Analytics, which maps Canadian society into 66 community types across Canada
2. The annual large sample survey by Environics called the 3SC survey, which gathers social value trend data
3. The Statistics Canada Charitable Contributions Survey
4. The 2006 Canada Census containing demographic data
5. The 2001 Canada Census containing demographic data

Note

People who work with marginalized communities know that gathering data for people who are homeless is difficult. This report is no exception. Let the report raise the question about how to get to know about the group which is not represented in the data. We suggest contacting groups in your community who work with homeless people. The local United Way is one source.

III. A Walk through the Report

The report is comprised of seven sections with an additional Appendix containing more detailed data:

1. Objective of the report
2. Defining the service area of the congregation
3. Demographic summary of households in the service area
4. Gifts of money and contributions of households in the service area
5. Description of the congregation by predominant community types represented
6. Developing programs to strengthen United Church characteristics by keying in to social value trends that correspond to United Church characteristics
7. How to use this information for congregational mission planning

1. Objective of the report (see page 1)

2. Defining the service area

Reports are generated based on a list of the six-digit postal codes of participating households in the congregation. The list contains one postal code (not necessarily unique) for each household in the congregational list. If more than one household has the same postal code, then the postal code will be repeated on the list. This list is submitted in a single column Excel spreadsheet.

After submitting all the postal codes, the congregation then receives a map describing several service area options, including different percentages of the congregation's households (see Figure 2 on next page).

The congregation makes a choice in conversation with Environics/Analytics staff about which boundary to use for the report. It can be customized. Users have the option of including (or excluding) particular neighbourhoods or regions that may be of high interest or of little interest for their study. There is a trade-off involved in this choice. The larger the service area chosen, the less specific and nuanced the information gained. The smaller the service area, the lower the percentage of congregational households included in the study.

This is an important choice in the process; consult with Environics/Analytics staff or a regional consultant if you are not sure.

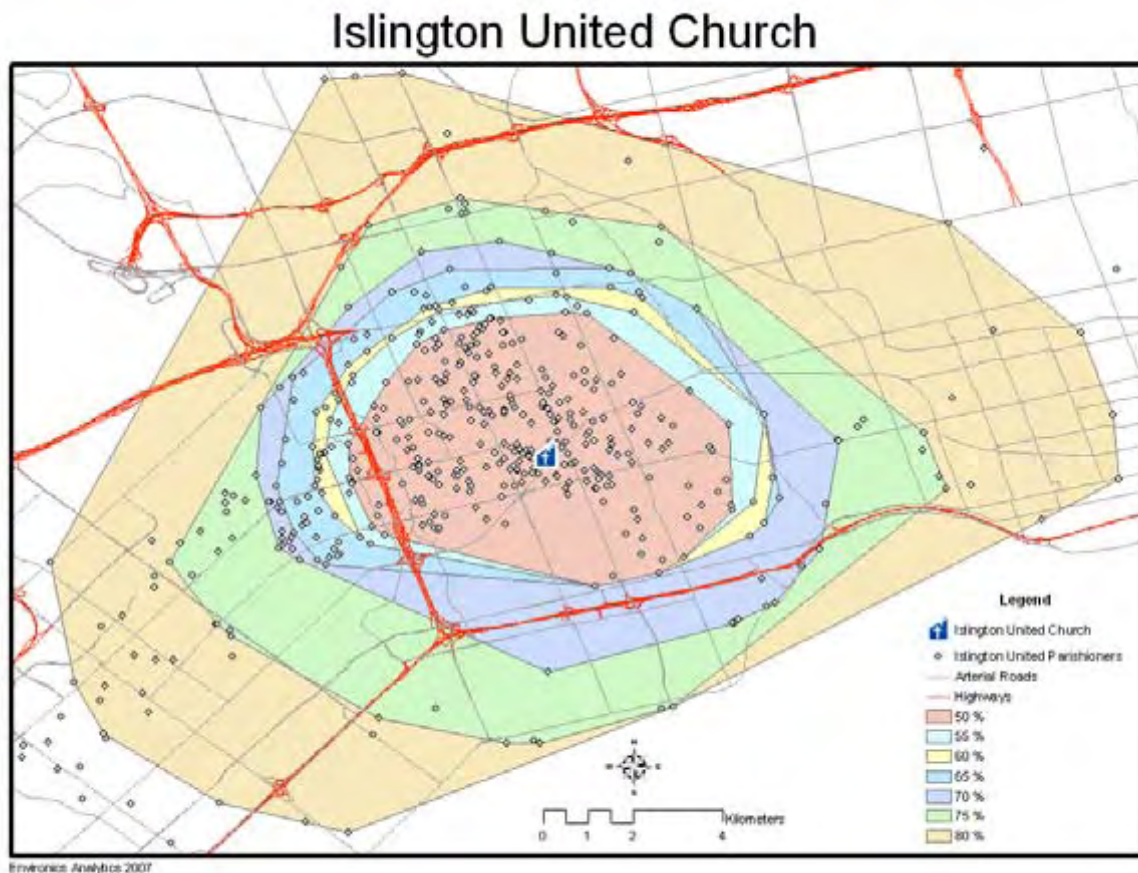


Figure 2 – Service Area Selection Report: Each rough circle describes a potential service area to base the congregational report on. Congregations choose which service area they would like to use.

Some Questions:

- (i) Are there parts of our surrounding area that are of particular interest? Should these be included in the report by manually adjusting the boundary?
- (ii) Are there clusters of households on the edges of the report that might need to be included?

The final service area is used as the basis of the report and is described in a map marking the location of each postal code which includes a participant household. Presbyteries or Conferences (and sometimes congregations) may want to define an area of study in their community without reference to a congregation. This is typical with questions of regional planning and discovering new ministry opportunities. This describes the distribution of the congregation within the larger community (Figure 3).

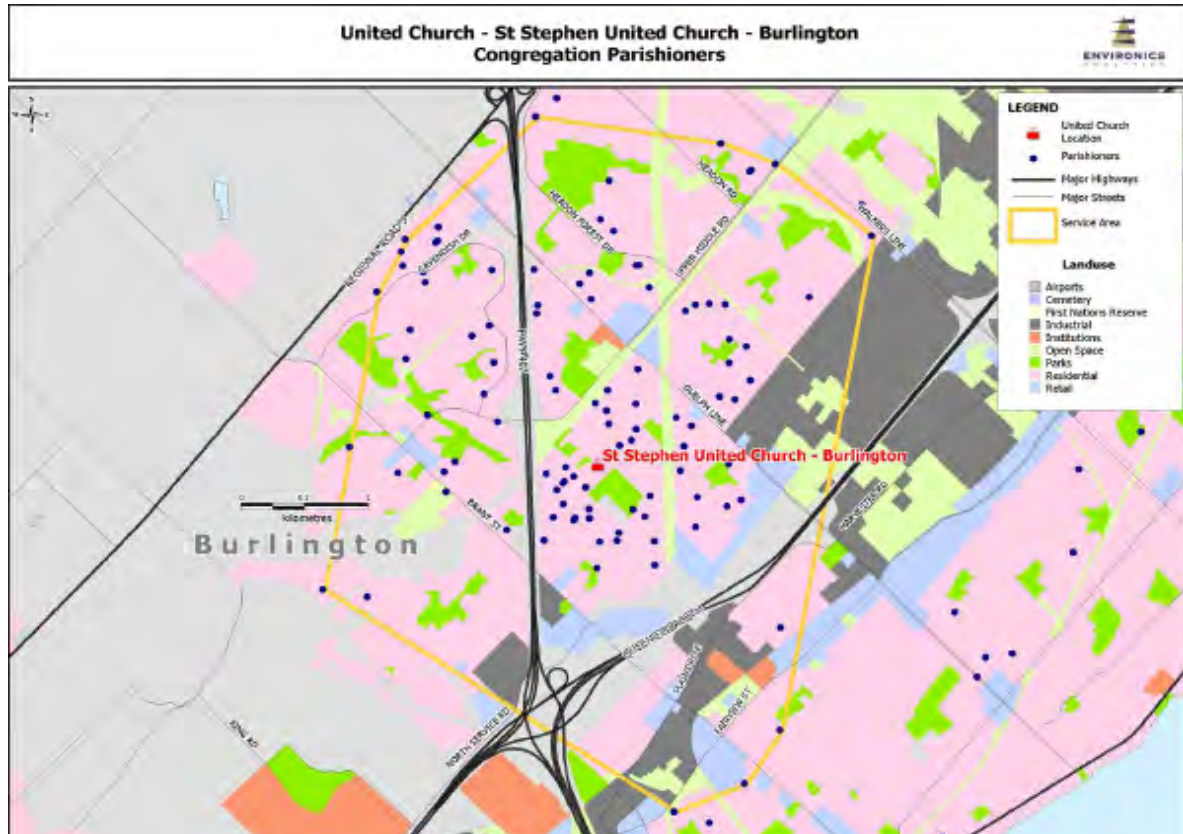


Figure 3 – Service Area Map: Each dot represents a postal code neighbourhood with at least one congregational household in it.

The service area report can be a very important interpretive tool. One congregational leader from a very progressive, growing, and active church took one look at their service area report and exclaimed, “We’re not a ‘community church.’ We’re a ‘destination church.’ This changes the whole way we communicate with the community!” When looking at the service area report, the basic process is to watch for patterns.

Some Questions:

- (i) Where is there clustering of dots? Why? (refer to your major community cluster types; this may explain some of the household clustering and gaps)
- (ii) Where are the gaps? Why?
- (iii) Are we a “community church” (most households within about five blocks of the church) or are we a “destination church”? If destination, then what is the attraction?
- (iv) What are the geographical influences and barriers that may relate to gaps or clusters of dots?

3. Demographic summary of households in the service area

Canada's census data is used to describe six markers of the population in the service area. These include: religion, ethnicity, family formation and age of maintainer, education and occupations, income and marital status.

This data is taken from the 2006 Canada census and in cases where markers were not tracked in this census, the 2001 census is used. This section also includes density maps of three relevant subgroups:

- (i) those who described themselves as United Church in the last Canada census (see Figure 4). These we refer to as United Church affiliates
- (ii) those in the Emerging Spirit age cohort
- (iii) those with no current religious affiliation



Figure 4 – United Church affiliation map: areas of the darkest shading represent neighbourhoods with > 20% United Church affiliation.

The density maps can be used to direct mailings to certain groups in your service area. For example, you may want to advertise certain programs that are designed to reconnect with United Church affiliates. In order to do this you will need to get the postal walks (the route that a postal delivery person takes) that intersect with the postal areas you are focusing on in your map. People of no declared religion may be an appropriate focus for programs that explore the United Church as an option for spiritual formation and exploration designed for non-initiates and non-Christians. The Emerging Spirit cohort map is included specifically for congregations pursuing initiatives in relation to the Emerging Spirit program.

Some Questions:

- (i) What do you find surprising?
- (ii) What confirms your picture of the community?
- (iii) What primary groups in the community are or are not present in your congregation?
- (iv) If there are immigrants from the Caribbean and other places around the world, they may self-identify as Methodist or Presbyterian and not know the United Church is an option. Would they know if they came to your service?

4. Gifts of money and contributions of households in the service area

This section draws on the separate Gifts and Contributions Survey taken by Statistics Canada. It details average charitable gifts for households in the service area and specifies gifts to religious organizations.

Some Questions:

- (i) How does our congregational giving pattern compare to the community at large?
- (ii) Many United Churches are involved in social ministries and service that is considered worthy by a larger constituency in the community. Do you help the community know and understand the good work that you do so that they can participate through financial support or as a volunteer?

5. Description of the congregation by predominant community types represented

This section describes the major community types or clusters related to neighbourhoods where congregational households are located. Figure 5 includes from left to right:

- (i) a general description and icon representing the cluster
- (ii) the number and percentage of congregational households located in neighbourhoods of this type
- (iii) the total number and percentage of households in the service area that are located in neighbourhoods of this type
- (iv) the number and percentage of households in the service area not currently part of the congregation. This is labelled "Untapped Households"
- (v) a general description of the cluster profile




Cluster	Members		Hhlds in Area		Untapped Hhlds		Description
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
<p>Upscale, educated professionals and their families</p> 	25	00.1%	2,622	3.6%	2,597	99.0%	The residents of <i>Upscale, Educated Professionals and Their Families</i> seem to have it all: high incomes, advanced degrees and intellectual tastes to match their credentials. Many of these Canadians are married couples with few children who live in older, fashionable homes on small, manicured lots in urban and suburban areas. With 37 percent holding university degrees, as consumers, <i>Upscale, Educated Professionals and Their Families</i> exhibit cultured sensibilities in the marketplace. They tend to support the arts, buy lots of books, listen to classical music radio stations, travel abroad and subscribe to business, news and travel magazines. A politically active cluster, residents here rank high for working on community projects, serving as volunteers and writing letters to public officials.
<p>Middle-class mix of young and old in cities and suburbs</p> 	16	19.3%	5,320	7.3%	5,304	99.7%	<i>Middle-Class Mix of Young and Old in Cities and Suburbs</i> is a prime example of two lifestyles thriving side by side: a mix of very young and old households, singles and widowers, newly married couples and empty-nesting retirees. Widely scattered throughout the country's older city and suburban neighbourhoods, this bi-modal population makes for a split marketplace personality. <i>Middle-Class Mix of Young and Old in Cities and Suburbs</i> has high rates for windsurfing, bar-hopping and attending bridal shows as well as gardening, reading retirement magazines and doing craft projects. But residents share relatively high educational levels: 55 percent have gone to college or a university—and a mix of white collar and service sector jobs that results in a love of the arts and moderate, common-sense values. They oppose pornography, distrust large corporations and support equal rights for women.
<p>Midscale suburban apartment-dwelling seniors</p> 	12	14.5%	5,763	7.9%	5,751	99.8%	The top-ranked cluster for retirees, <i>Midscale Suburban Apartment-Dwelling Seniors</i> represent a middle-class mix of over-60 singles, couples, widows and widowers living in urban- and suburban-fringe apartments. Getting by on comfortable fixed incomes, cluster residents maintain a relaxed lifestyle, sewing and gardening at home, and socializing with friends at the theatre and art gallery. But the chief form of entertainment is television, and residents are big fans of cultural programs on Bravo, sports championships and American sitcoms like "Ed" and "Becker." Concerned about aging—one in four residents is over 75—this cluster's residents score high for buying prescription drugs, using cosmetics to help them feel younger and having a will.

Figure 5 – Predominant community cluster descriptions in the congregation.

Figure 6 (on the next page) includes a map showing the location of the major congregational clusters. This information might be used to focus communication to people in the service area who share cluster characteristics. It may also be used as a means to be in conversation with neighbourhoods of people who are markedly different as a way of coming to know the community better.

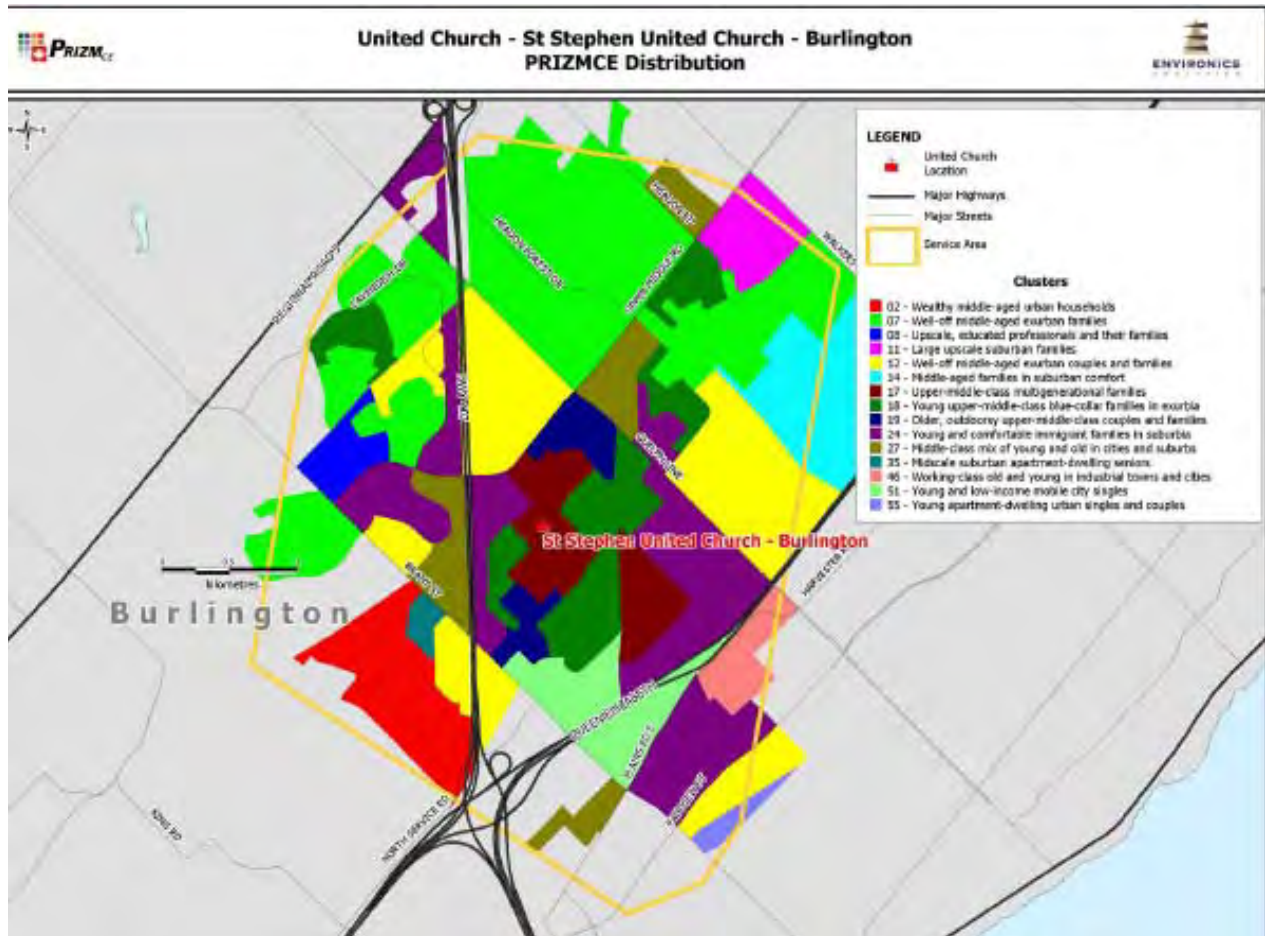


Figure 6 – Location of congregational clusters within the service area.

Some Questions:

- (i) Do you see yourselves in these clusters?
- (ii) Are there groups listed that are not readily apparent to you in the congregation? If so, why? (See Introduction 7 (iii).)
- (iii) Do the cluster types relate to typical tensions in congregational life?
- (iv) What worship or programming questions are raised?
- (v) What ministry needs or opportunities are suggested?

6. Developing programs to strengthen United Church characteristics by keying in to social value trends that correspond to United Church characteristics

This section of the report is specifically designed to help congregations get a sense of the social value set of their service area compared to United Church core values.

The set of United Church characteristics are the list of 18 United Church characteristics identified by United Church leaders for use with the Emerging Spirit research. The social value trends tracked by Environics that relate to each of those United Church characteristics are reported for the congregation’s service area. In the chart below (Figure 7) you will see that the United Church characteristic “open to change” is related to the social value trend “adaptability to complexity in life.” A description of the social value trend is included together with an index describing how strongly that social value is held in the congregation’s service area. If the index number is above 100, then the value is held more strongly in the service area than is average in Canada. If the index is below 100, then the value is held less strongly than is average in Canada. Index numbers above 110 point to strongly held United Church values in the community. Index numbers below 90 point to United Church values that are weakly held in the community. Strongly held values may indicate ministry opportunities or potential partners of good will. Weakly held values may indicate ministry or advocacy needs in the community or in the congregation. It is true that the social value indexes may point to social value trends in the congregation. For example, if Social Darwinism is a strongly held value, it may raise a question about the need for educational programs in the congregation about the social justice claims of the gospel.

Characteristic	Related Social Values Trends	Definition	Index
1 Open To Change	Adaptability to Complexity in Life	Tendency to adapt easily to the uncertainties of modern life, and to feel unthreatened by the changes and complexities of society today. A desire to explore this complexity as a learning experience and a source of opportunities. (Inverse to Aversion to Complexity)	86
	Current United Church Resources		Resource Description
	<i>More Voices</i>		New contemporary and world music selections for worship and devotion.
	<i>Alive & Well</i>		A congregational development tool to help congregations in a process of transformation and
	<i>Dare To Change</i>		A Spirit Connection show on the changing church in changing Canadian society.
<i>Seismic Shifts</i>		This book, with a bound-in DVD, looks at the skills church leaders need to lead effectively in the	
Characteristic	Related Social Values Trends	Definition	Index
2 Celebrates Lifestyles	Flexible Definition of Family	Willingness to accept non-traditional definitions of “family”, such as common law marriages. The belief that “family” should be defined by emotional links rather than by legal formalities or institutions. Also, the belief that society should be open to new definitions of what constitutes a “family”.	93
	Current United Church Resources		Resource Description
	<i>Of Love and Justice</i>		A resource to move toward the Civil Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage
	<i>All Means All</i>		This video presents a brief history of gay and lesbian oppression in society and the church;

Figure 7 – Social value trends related to United Church characteristics.

Other strong social value trends for the service area (not necessarily related to United Church ethos) are also summarized in a table as in Figure 8.

Social Value Trend	Index
Need for Escape	127
Attraction to Crowds	124
Racing Against the Clock	119
Religiosity	119
Canadian Identity	116
Ethnic Intolerance	115

Figure 8 – The top social value trends in the congregation's service area; a description of each trend is located in a glossary in the Appendix of the report.

A full and more detailed graph of the social value trend information is included in the appendixes. You will see in the appendix that the “total number” of people who hold a social value is not the same as the index. A social value that is held by many in the community may have a low index. The index is reported in the main section of the program because the index shows how the value is held differently than generally in Canadian society. This is thought to be more helpful to identify values that rise to the level of an “issue” for the constituents. In other words, people who think the United Church is of high value in a group of like-minded people are not likely to need or engage with a program about the value of the United Church. If they held that value in a very secular community, the same people may be very interested. It may be helpful however to have a look at the absolute numbers in the appendix.

Some Questions:

- (i) What was surprising, confusing, personally?
- (ii) What social values disturb you?
- (iii) What social values challenge you?
- (iv) What are you learning about yourself?
- (v) What opportunities for congregational transformation are emerging?
- (vi) What ministry opportunities are suggested?

IV. Engaging the Report in the Congregation

In most situations it will be valuable for someone or a group to have ownership of the process of intentionally engaging the report in the congregation. This person will need to be familiar and somewhat comfortable with the discussion above, especially in terms of responding to questions raised by others.

Engaging questions of identity raises issues of change which taps into a whole range of potential emotional responses to change and the loss that is inherent in it. People may panic, become angry, get excited, feel depressed, resist engaging the information, want to run with it before the community even engages it, be skeptical, or be dismissive. These are natural and expected responses. Engaging the report needs to leave space and time for processing these feelings, learning from them, and moving beyond them. The study showed that reactions change once people are given time to process, have their questions affirmed and addressed, and are able to more fully understand the nature, uses, and limitations of the data. Questions of identity and mission and how to share those with others are big questions. Allow for time and a healthy social space to hear reactions and respond in helpful ways.

For those who are most concerned about getting going to improve the vitality of the church's ministry, there are usually some "low-hanging fruit" that can be acted on right away. A need for ongoing reflection at a deeper level need not hold up all action. One congregation already had plans to launch a *Taizé* style service. When they discovered that "the need for escape" was one of the top social value trends in the community they designed advertising that used words like, "Sanctuary (from the storm)" and "Retreat."

Here are some different ways congregations engaged the report:

1. A lay leader and marketing professional took the report to each committee meeting with a summary of pertinent data and helped them think about implications for their work.
2. A minister began using it to help frame questions in the sermon and worship preparation.
3. A congregation doing a strategic planning process had a consultant come and make a presentation on their report to the planning committee that was open to the congregation. They posted the report on their website.
4. A minister used the report together with the *Alive and Well: Renewed Purpose for Healthier Congregations* resource for a congregational study through Lent. One lens from *Alive and Well* was used each week with the study as input.
5. One congregation had a group work with the report to surface key questions and data that formed the basis of a weekend congregational retreat about congregational identity and mission.
6. Some congregations took out a list of interesting pieces of the report and held a "curiosity session" after service for a number of weeks in conjunction with a larger renewal process.