



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Community Assessment Team spent time listening to and researching the San Jose community. How should the Church engage with community development? The short answer is with humility before God and before our communities. Humility before God starts by understanding that we are not bringing Christ to a poor and vulnerable community but that God has always been active in and sustaining this community (Colossians 1:16-17) and that the role of people who know and recognize Christ's redemptive work is to discover, appreciate and celebrate what God has been doing in the community and join Him in that work.

Who are our neighbors?

The San Jose Church of Christ is located in Jacksonville's 32217 ZIP code. At over 800 square miles, Jacksonville is the largest city in the continental United States. Much of the San Jose congregation commutes from other parts of town, but what are the outreach opportunities we have just outside our church doors?

- Median age: 39
- Median household income: \$43,421
- 50% are married
- 84.4% have a high school diploma
- 33.2% have a bachelor's degree
- 18.2% were born outside the U.S., more than double the rate of Jacksonville as a whole
- 23.9% live in a household with a language other than English is spoken at home
- Our area has Jacksonville's highest population of seniors "aging in place." The barriers this population faces include getting around, self-dependency for safety and a lack of opportunities for socialization.
- Our area has Jacksonville's highest population of refugees. There is only one church in this area that provides worship services to these groups. Our area's city councilwoman calls this "an untapped need."

How can we engage with our community?

Community engagement is about working in partnership with God and with others for the common good. We can do this by:

- Recognizing that church buildings belong to the whole community, not just to church members. Being open and welcoming with our physical spaces is a wonderful way to make connections.
- Identifying assets: Where is the energy and the joy in your neighborhood? What activities are already going on that you can support (including those run by other churches)? We don't need to invent a 'Christian' version of things. Simply join God in the places where God is already at work.
- Building relationships with local influencers — they may be long-term residents, business leaders, politicians, artists. Buy them a coffee and discuss your common vision for your community, and let them know what the church has to offer.
- Looking for hidden hurt: we need to look below the surface of our communities. What are the things people don't talk about; the aspects of life they won't show? It may be domestic abuse, family conflict, depression, isolation and loneliness. It may be the challenges of poverty or the challenges of wealth.
- Focusing on justice: getting to know the needs of our communities will expose injustices that we may be unaware of. Actions taken in one place can have a profound impact — for good or ill — where we are and in places far away. We are called not just to feed the hungry, but also to ask why the hungry have no food.
- Engage our future/our youth: Partner with schools to provide children with practical and basic needs: School supply drives, feeding children during the summertime. Mentorship opportunities for the older children (middle school and high school).