ROUGH GUIDE TO
CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY SURVEY FOR MISSION

FURTHER MINISTRIES TEAM PRESBYTERY OF ANNANDALE AND ESKDALE
Welcome to this Rough Guide. The aim of this Guide is to take you and your group through some simple steps to set up, conduct and follow up a Community Survey.

Conducting a Community Survey within the context of a Parish or Church setting is no simple task. Many practical questions will assert themselves from the beginning: Why do we want to conduct a survey? Who do we want to survey? What is the main purpose of our survey? Do we want to conduct this survey alone, or in conjunction with a neighbouring parish, or a neighbouring church of another denomination? Who will collate the findings? And (possibly the most important question of all...) what will we do with the findings once we have received them?

The church at its best is of and for the people of God, the people of our communities. How can the church best serve, and love our neighbours, and ourselves, if we don’t find creative and welcoming ways to ask some simple, but important questions? Of course, we can try to ‘guess’ what folks in our pews, and in our communities want and need. But these guesses will never be as accurate - will not meet the needs of the people so fully - as will the process of asking honest questions, and listening to and acting out of the replies.

So although what follows could seem like a lot of hard work, in fact, this work represents in part the core of the Kingdom values: asking, probing, listening, offering, responding to the enquiring knock on the door.

The Gospel of Matthew reminds us not only that God is ahead of us, already engaging in God’s mission in the community around us, but that we don’t need much by way of resources to join in with God’s mission: we should ‘travel light.’

‘Jesus sent out his twelve harvest hands with this charge: tell the people around you that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously. Don’t think you have to put on a fund raising campaign before you start. You don’t need a lot of equipment. You are the equipment, and all you need to keep that going is three meals a day. Travel light.’

(Matthew 10:5-10, adapted from The Message translation)

INTRODUCTION

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SECTION 1
FIVE KEY STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY SURVEY

1 APPOINT A SURVEY CO-ORDINATING TEAM
Who should be in the survey co-ordinating team?

Could include...
- All or some of the Kirk Session
- Members of a ‘Mission or Outreach’ team (if you have one)
- Team called together for this purpose alone
- Key personnel (e.g. Minister, Session Clerk)

Needs to...
- Have the permission and/or be appointed by the Kirk Session, perhaps via a report with a proposal taken to the Session
- Be a team of not more than 6 or 8 in total
- Be able to delegate tasks to others

2 DECIDE AGENDA AND CALL FIRST MEETING OF SURVEY CO-ORDINATING TEAM

Prayer
- For each other, our neighbours, our community
- For clear sight to notice where God is already engaged in mission locally, and wisdom to know how best to join in

Personnel
- Appoint a chairperson and a note-taker for the Team
- Agree a timeline for the whole process, and agree to keep to it

Purpose/Aims of Survey
- Why do we want to conduct a survey?
- Do we want to gain data about specific issues (e.g. mission, worship, faith)?
- Do we want to learn more about our community in general (e.g. demographic, work/leisure choices…)?
- Do we want to work in partnership with another church, and/or denomination in our area, or alone?

Who is to be surveyed
- The whole community?
- Only those in your parish/congregation?
- Groups in your parish/charge? Individuals? Kirk Session?
- Some or all of above?
- See ‘a sample of some groups to be surveyed’ on page 6.

Content
- Use/adapt existing Survey (see page 7) or
- Create your own Survey (see ‘Top Tip 2’ on page 5)

Distribution
- Who will distribute the survey, and how? Survey Coordinating Team? Kirk Session? Another group within congregation/charge?
- Share ‘Ten Top Tips’ with this Distribution Team (see page 5)
- Will it be printed? By whom? Who will pay? Can it be accessed on a web-site? Will it be sent out by e-mail? Do you need both paper and electronic copies?

Collating data
- Who will collate the data received?
- Helpful if this is done electronically - easier to share data afterwards.
- All surveys to be returned to this person (via minister/church?)

Follow up
- It’s important to bear in mind from the beginning that a Survey is frustrating if there is no follow-up. Agree at the outset what you intend to do with the information received, e.g. newsletter, intimations/notices, public meeting, action; you may want to plan a meeting of the whole team once the findings have been collated to plan further actions.
3 CALL MEETING OF THE WIDER SURVEY TEAM

If you are distributing paper copies of your survey, you may want to ask volunteers to take up this task. This could be your Wider Survey Team. Page 6 shows you how one church divided up paper copies of their Survey, giving a bundle of between 10 and 20 to each member of the Wider Survey Team, who was then allocated a specific group. It was useful to note how many copies each Survey Team member took, in order to monitor the percentage of Surveys that were returned. At a meeting of this group, you would need to include:

Final Survey
- Copies of the Survey for them to take away

Distribution Plans
- Agree the list of groups you would like to survey (see page 6 for examples)
- Agree which member of the Team is going to survey which group/s
- Take time to talk through ‘Ten Top Tips’ on page 5, and to explore any questions your Team may have

Timings
- Outline the timeline already agreed by Survey Co-ordinating Team
- Clarify by when you would like all the Surveys to be returned
- Do you want to call a meeting of the Wider Survey Team once all the material has been collated? If so, set a date for this meeting now.

4 CONDUCT SURVEY AND BEGIN COLLATING DATA

- Make sure that the survey reaches all groups/individuals intended
- make sure those who are collating have enough resources to do this (time, access to computer)

5 CALL SECOND MEETING OF SURVEY CO-ORDINATING TEAM POST COLLATION

- Review results
- Agree Action Plan on basis of results
- Communicate results, or summary of results with the Kirk Session, congregation, community (through distribution, newsletter, community newsletter, public meeting)
- Support on-going Action Plan
- Monitor results of Action Plan and continue to communicate progress with Kirk Session, congregation and community.

SUMMARY OF FIVE KEY STEPS

1. Appoint a Survey Co-ordinating Team
2. Decide agenda of and call first meeting of Survey Co-ordinating Team
3. Call meeting of the Wider Survey Team
4. Conduct survey and begin collating data
5. Call second meeting of Survey Co-ordinating Team post collation
SECTION 2
‘TEN TOP TIPS’ FOR CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY SURVEY

1. Appoint a small SURVEY CO-ORDINATING TEAM to plan the timescale, content and scope of your survey. They may want to meet once or twice before distributing the survey, to make sure that the questions you are asking are the ones that will be helpful to you. This small Team (maybe 6 - 8 people) doesn’t need to do all the work. Make sure the Team delegates some tasks to the wider Kirk Session and Congregation.

2. Make the most of EXISTING RESOURCES. Faithworks (www.faithworks.info) gives advice on conducting a Community Audit and a Church Audit. And the Future Focus material devised for use within the Church of Scotland (available through the Further Ministries Team – see back cover for contact details) also has some invaluable material about conducting a survey.

3. Don’t underestimate THE VALUE OF THIS SURVEY! The results may surprise us, in good and unexpected ways, and could help us focus on what God is already doing in our communities.

4. BE AND LOOK POSITIVE! Don’t apologise for distributing the surveys! Make sure that your body language shows that you are interested in those you are talking to and what they have to say to us!

5. There are NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. We’re not here to judge people, but to listen, to find out what they think, and to join in with what God is already doing in this place (so don’t be tempted to prompt people with what YOU think the right answer could be.)

6. It’s by far the best if you can COLLECT THE COMPLETED SURVEY YOURSELF. Ideally, folk would complete it while you’re there. But if there’s not time, offer to come back in an hour or two. Asking for them to return it themselves, by post is a last resort!

7. COMPLETE A SURVEY YOURSELF - your voice and your thoughts are as crucial to this whole process as are those of others - we need to know what you think too!

8. KEEP TO THE AGREED DEADLINE There’s nothing to be gained in rushing this process. At the same time, be aware of the deadline that has been set or that you have set for yourselves as a Survey Team, and make sure you keep to it.

9. DON’T BE DISCOURAGED if you get a negative response from some people. Remember that we don’t expect all the surveys to be returned. If we receive 20% back we will be doing exceptionally well!

10. Give each participant a CHURCH NEWSLETTER or CALLING CARD which will give them information about what is already happening, and contact details if they would like to get in touch.
### YOUTH/CHILDREN’S GROUPS
1. Church Youth Group: children/parents
2. Local Pre-School Nursery/Toddler Group
3. Recently Baptised families
4. Parent Teachers Association: Primary School
5. Parent Teachers Association: Secondary School

### COMMUNITY GROUPS
7. Day Centre: staff and/or residents
8. Community Council
9. Health Centre
10. Local hospital
11. Women’s Rural Institute
12. Young Farmers
13. Post Offices
14. Village Singers
15. Local dramatic society
16. Local History Group
17. Local Pub Quiz Group
18. Bowling Club

### CHURCH-RELATED GROUPS
19. Kirk Session
20. Guild
21. Bible Study Group
22. Church Teams
23. Choir
24. Bible Study Group

Other...

This is a suggested list, and is not comprehensive! Make this list your own depending on your particular context.

1. Make sure each group to be surveyed is allocated a particular person in the Wider Survey Team.
2. It might be helpful to indicate how many copies went to each group. It’s not necessary for all members of each group to complete a survey – a sample will be useful. Aim for 6 – 10 from each group.
Some Background Notes

- A Word version of this Survey can be found at www.furtherministriesteam.com/resources.html. Feel free to use and adapt this to your purposes.
- The following survey was compiled with one specific charge, and their needs in mind.
- They were keen, in particular, to hear about the needs of families with young children in their community.
- The questions here can be adapted, or can be used exactly as they are.
- This survey was designed to be distributed among the wider community, including and specifically focussed on people in the community who do not come to church on a regular basis. Members of the congregation were, however, also included in the survey.
- There are 18 questions in total, specifically designed to be easy to answer. Many of the questions simply require the participant to tick a box. All questions offer more space for further comment. The idea here is that if the participant feels they have answered by simply ticking a box, they may be inclined to offer more of a response. If, however, they are always required to answer with a long sentence, they may simply skip the whole question.
- Questions 12 and 13 are the only two that are very specific to the needs of children and young people. The rest of the questions are generic about the wider work of the church, and the sense of belonging or engagement that individuals feel.
- If you do simply copy this survey as it stands, you may want to include a return address or contact phone number at the bottom (although our experience was that this survey was best completed ‘on the spot’ and handed back immediately).
- If you do use this survey, or adapt it, or create/compile a completely new survey, the Further Ministries Team would be very grateful if you could let us have a blank copy - so that we can begin to compile a ‘bank’ of surveys that could be useful to others in the future. Please use our e-mail address below.

Many thanks,

Ruth Harvey

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WE’RE HERE TO LISTEN...

Thank You for taking time to complete this survey!

• We are a small group working on behalf of the Church of Scotland in your area.
• We’re keen to listen to and learn from you about what you think about our churches, and about faith, God and spirituality; What do we do that’s OK? What could we do better?
• It’s very important to us that what we offer is relevant and inspiring for your lives.
• In order to get this right, we need first to listen and learn from you.
• This survey is anonymous, unless you would like to stay in touch with us (see questions)

1. Your age:  Under 21 □  21 - 44 □  45 - 65 □  over 65 □

2. Are you Male? □  Female? □

3. How long have you lived in your town/village?

I have lived in (town/village) __________________ for ______ years

4. Do you belong to any groups/clubs in your village? (e.g. Rotary, WI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. If you look after children/young people (parent/carer) can you tell us a bit about them?

Gender: ______  Age: __________  Gender: ______  Age: __________  Gender: ______  Age: __________  Gender: ______  Age: __________

6. What, if any play groups or children’s clubs (e.g. Brownies, Mother and Toddler) do your children/young people already attend?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
7. If you already attend church please let us know which one, and roughly how often:

church ____________________________ weekly □ monthly □ infrequently □

8. If you do go to church, what do you like about it? (tick as many as apply)
   - Lively friendly worship □
   - Safe space for young children to play during worship □
   - Good Sunday School □
   - Warm sense of community and belonging □
   - Your faith is nurtured and strengthened □

   Other things you like about going to church…

9. If you don’t go to church, is it because (tick as many as apply)
   - Other activities demand your time □
   - You don’t believe in God □
   - You find the worship doesn’t connect with your life □
   - You’ve never gone □
   - Your friends don’t go □

   Other reasons why you don’t go to church…

10. If your village church was to be threatened with closure, how would you feel?
    - indifferent □ concerned □ upset □ devastated □

    Please tell us why…
11. **To whom do you look for help in a time of crisis?**

- Cope on your own
- Neighbour
- Friend
- Minister
- Family member
- Church Member
- Doctor
- Other

12. **It's important to me that my children/the children I care for....** (please tick any that apply)

- ....have an understanding of the Christian faith
- ....have an understanding of all world faiths
- ....feel they are part of a religious community
- ....are baptised in the church
- ....feel close to God

Please add your own.....

13. **What do you think the church could offer your children/young people? Please tick:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>I already make use of this provision</th>
<th>I would be interested in finding out more - please contact me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After-school club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baptism for babies/children</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baptism preparation/follow up from church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion group/faith sharing group</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship for children in church</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekday/evening worship for children (not necessarily in church building)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday School (ages 4+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creche (ages 0 – 3)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Suggestions</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. **What do you think the church could offer you? Please tick:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Study</th>
<th>I already make use of this provision</th>
<th>I would be interested in finding out more - please contact me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Events</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekday/evening worship</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Retreat/ Quiet Days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet space to pray by myself</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Suggestions</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. **If there was one thing that needed to change to make exploring faith and spirituality more attractive what would it be?**

16. **Please use this space to share with us a highlight in your own spiritual journey (it may or may not have anything to do with going to church.)**

**Follow Up**

17. "I would be willing to talk to a representative from the church about the issues raised here" **YES/NO (please delete)**

18. **If you answered ‘yes’ to question 17, or ticked the ‘please contact me’ column at questions 13 or 14, please write your contact details here, along with a note of the best time to contact you:**

   Name:  
   Address:  
   e-mail:  
   Telephone:  a good time to contact me is:  

Many thanks for completing this survey. We really value your help. Please return this form to your visiting Elder from the church, or to your minister.