



Presbytery of the Inland Northwest

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Experiment Ideas

Learning objective: to discover what God is up to in your neighborhood.

1. Lawn chair experiment - put lawn chairs in your front yard instead of your backyard and pay attention to what you notice.
 - Do you get to know neighbors better?
 - How is God at work in your neighborhood?
 - How does changing location make a difference in engaging your neighborhood?
2. Host a neighborhood BBQ or potluck this summer (in the front yard, on a street or in a community area is best)
 - Make it as simple and accessible as possible
 - Did you get to know any new neighbors?
 - How is God at work in the lives of your neighbors?
 - Are neighbors interesting in doing something like this more often?
3. Go to work 15 minutes early or during lunch walk around your neighborhood and notice the context.
 - What has changed?
 - Where do you see God present among the people or organizations that are around your workplace?
4. Hang out in a new place - is there a place in your neighborhood that you are not as familiar with? Plan to spend 30 minutes there once a week and see what you notice.
 - Who is there and what are they doing?
 - How do you sense God's presence?
5. Lunchtime Experiment Worksheet - 2 Names and a Story
Because God is out ahead of us, we can uncover the clues about how we might join with what God is already doing through listening to the stories of others.

- Form pairs or triads with others who are part of your group. Go to lunch and intentionally learn the names of two people and listen to their story (listening for clues about what God might be up to in their life).
- Come together to reflect with other groups and share your group's two names and a story. What did you learn about how God works through this experiment?

Learning objective: To learn how to be less self-sufficient and to be more open to receiving the hospitality of others.

1. Identify one way you could make yourself dependent on a neighbor (not be totally self-sufficient)
 - Could you borrow a yard tool? Ingredients for a recipe? Ask their expertise in an area you need help with?
 - What is it like to be in a position of receiving from another rather than being in the position of host?
 - What might God have to teach you through this?
2. Put yourself in a position to learn something new - a music lesson? A new language? A skill?
 - What is it like to learn something new - notice your frustration and joy.
 - What might God have to teach you through this experience?
3. Is there a program or service project your church leads or participates in that could be shifted in a way to allow for a mutual/equal relationship? A way to build authentic relationships with those you come in contact with?
 - How can you tweak an existing program or project so that it does not solely focus on transactional ministry, but instead builds relationships and mutuality?
 - What can you learn from those you are used to serving?

Learning objective: discover how God might be calling us to adapt to a changing culture.

1. Find out about what activities are happening in your neighborhood (that you have not participated in before) and participate: music concert, sporting events, clubs, ethnic gatherings, political forums, etc. It might be most helpful to participate in an activity that is out of your comfort zone and not something you would normally do.
 - What does this activity teach you about the wider culture? What are the priorities and values?
 - Notice how uncomfortable you feel and how difficult it is for you to do this (or not).
 - How might God be at work in the people gathered?

2. Interview someone who moved into the neighborhood from somewhere very different (either a different part of the country or the globe). Ask:
 - What are the differences they have noticed in our culture from where they came from?
 - What does our culture value or prioritize that is different?
 - What changes have they made since moving to Spokane?

3. The mall: a metaphor for the North American church. Go to a nearby mall and walk through the mall and consider the changes that have happened over the last decade to America's shopping habits and how it has affected malls.
 - What are examples of how the mall fights against changes in the culture? How do stores try to entice people inside?
 - What are examples of how the mall has adapted to changes in culture and uses its space differently?
 - How might this be a metaphor for churches? How has the church mirrored the consumer-culture in trying to attract people into our buildings? What are ways we have adapted to the changing culture in positive ways? What are the ways we may be called to adapt? How do we discern when we are called to adapt to our changing culture and when we are called to be counter-cultural?
 - Look at the spectrum below after this experiment - where do you think God might be calling your congregation to be (if it is different from where you currently are)? What are steps you can take?



4. Name your culture: take time to identify your own culture (it's more difficult than you think!). Think through these questions:
 - What are the values and priorities of those who live in your neighborhood? How money and time is spent is often a good indicator.
 - What are the "traditions/rituals" that are practiced - the things that everyone does without thinking?

5. What is one thing in your routine that you could do differently? Drive to work a different way? Shop at a different grocery store? Eat something different for breakfast or lunch?
 - What does it take to make this change? How does it make you feel?
 - Have you experienced these steps and feelings in the church when trying to make changes?
 - What are the implications for how we lead others through change?

Learning objective: to learn what is ordinary and "normal" for others and discover what God is up to in the ordinary.

1. Finish a day by writing down everything you thought was ordinary in the day.

- Where do you see God at work in the ordinary?
 - Where was God present or active in these ordinary things?
 - Is there a time in the day when you sensed the absence of God? What might that mean? (An Examen)
2. Shadowing people's everyday as pastors/leaders - pick someone who has a very different life than your own (different life stage) and ask if you can shadow them for part of a day. For example - what is it like getting to church on Sunday morning? What is a weekday morning or evening like?
 - How do they (and you) sense God's presence with them in the ordinary tasks of life?
 3. Ask people to shoot a one to two-minute video of an ordinary part of their day and share it with you (they can do it on their phone and text it to you) - this might be particularly interesting for any youth in the church.
 - How is their ordinary life different from your own?
 - Do you notice any difference in how God might be at work in their life?
 4. Set up interviews with one or two lay-people in your congregation (pick people that you don't know very well or that you have a difficult time connecting with); meet at their workplace or home if possible.
 - Spend time asking questions about her/his ordinary life, getting to know her/him better
 - Look for ways that God is at work in or through his/her life or the lives of those around him/her
 - How is God at work in their workplace context?
 5. Host an adult education time or small group time where the focus is on listening to one another's stories from everyday life. Ask people to explain in depth what they do on a day to day basis - each person fills 15 whole minutes (lots of ordinary details).
 - What is stressful in your daily life?
 - What sort of pressures do you face daily? In your work? Family life? Health? Finances?
 - What brings you joy?
 - How do they (and you) sense God's presence in the ordinary?