Community Connections Map

"Who and What Is Already Around Us?"

What This Tool Helps You Do

This tool helps your leadership team see your church as part of a larger community ecosystem. By mapping schools, nonprofits, businesses, civic leaders, faith communities, gathering places, neighborhoods, healthcare providers, community groups, and local events, your team can begin to see relationships and opportunities that may have been easy to overlook.

When to Use It

Use this tool when your team:

- Wants more community connections.
- Explores a new outreach.
- Seeks relationships outside the congregation.
- Seeks revitalization.
- Wants to avoid duplicating work.
- Identifies potential community partners.
- Wants to strengthen relationships with outside organizations.
- Discerns where to focus limited time, energy, and resources.

What You'll Need

- 45–50 minutes
- Copy of Inventory for each participant
- A pen, markers
- Whiteboard, chart paper, or digital workspace

Community Connections Map

Discover Who and What Is Already Around You

Before You Begin

This tool helps your team identify people, organizations, places, and networks in your community and how you are (or could be) connected to them. It expands your view beyond the walls of your church so you can see the broader ecosystem and uncover new opportunities for partnership and ministry.

How to Use This Map

Ground Rules:

1. Place your church in the center.
2. Identify key people, organizations, places, and networks in each category.
3. Write them in the appropriate ring.
4. Use the symbols to show the type of relationship you have (or want to have).
5. Look for patterns, gaps, and opportunities.

Relationship Key (Use these symbols on your map)

●	★	?	X
EXISTING RELATIONSHIP	**STRONG RELATIONSHIP**	**POTENTIAL CONNECTION**	**NO CURRENT RELATIONSHIP**
We have a current relationship or regular contact.	*We work together or have significant trust and engagement.*	*No relationship yet, but there may be an opportunity.*	*We are aware of this but do not have a relationship yet.*

Map Your Community Connections

On a piece of chart paper or white board, draw the following shape. Work together with a team to fill in each section with the names of Community Connections. Use the symbols in the relationship key on the page above to indicate the current state of each relationship.



List What You Notice

Where do we already have strong connections?	Where are new opportunities for connection?

Who is already doing work we care about?	Where do we see gaps or missing relationships?

See the Bigger Picture

Take time to reflect on what you see. Use these questions to help you move from information to insight.

1. **What stands out?** What surprised us? Where is our map most crowded? What did we discover that we hadn't noticed before?
2. **Where is there trust?** Where do people already know and trust us? Who welcomes us in the community? Where do we have influence or credibility?
3. **Who is already doing good work?** Which organizations or groups are already addressing needs we care about? Where might partnership be wiser than starting something new?
4. **Where are the opportunities?** Where do we see emerging needs or changes in the community? Which relationships could open new doors? Where might our presence make a difference?

Identify Key Connections

Choose 4 connections from your map that feel the most significant.

Organization/Group	What They Do	Our Current Relationship	Potential for Partnership/Ministry

Choose One Place to Get Curious

Based on your map, identify one relationship or opportunity you want to explore further.

Question	Your Notes
Who is it?	
What do we want to learn?	
Who could we talk with?	
What question do we need to ask?	
What is a small next step we could take in the next 30 days?	

Try This Next

After completing your map, choose one connection that deserves greater curiosity. Do not begin by asking what ministry you should start. Instead, ask what relationship you could strengthen or explore.

Choose one person, organization, group, or place and take one small relational step within the next 30 days.

That might mean:

- Invite a school principal or teacher for coffee.
- Visit a nonprofit and learn about its work.
- Attend a neighborhood association meeting.
- Meet with another church leader.
- Ask a community organization what challenges it is currently facing.
- Volunteer with an organization before proposing a partnership.
- Visit a place where community members naturally gather.
- Invite a community leader to tell your team what they are seeing.

Approach the conversation as a learner rather than arriving with a solution. Ask questions like:

- What are you seeing in our community right now?
- What is going well?
- Where are people struggling?
- Who is already responding?
- What do you wish churches understood about our community?
- Where might partnership be helpful?

Then return to your leadership team and ask:

- What did we learn?
- What surprised us?
- What changed in the way we see our community?
- Is there another relationship we should explore?

Adaptations

For a Church Council or Leadership Team

Create one large map together. Invite each participant to add the people, organizations, and places they know. Use the relationship symbols to identify where connections are already strong and where they are weak or nonexistent. Pay attention to how much community knowledge already exists within the room.

For a Larger Congregation

Invite different groups to create maps independently. You can group people like staff, young adults, long-time members, parents, outreach teams, etc. Compare the maps afterward. Different groups will often reveal very different networks. The combined picture may show that your church is more connected than you realized.

For a Small Church

Focus on relationships rather than organizational size. A small congregation may have significant influence because its members are deeply embedded in schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, civic groups, and community organizations. Focus on places where your people already have trust and access.

For a Church in Revitalization

Use the map to shift attention beyond the walls of the church. Look for existing relationships that could be strengthened, places where community life is already happening, organizations doing work that aligns with your mission, and areas where your church has become disconnected over time. Rather than immediately creating new programs, begin by rebuilding relationships.

For a New Church or Emerging New Faith Community

Begin with the community rather than the institution. Map where people gather, who holds trust, which organizations are already serving well, what informal networks exist, and which relationships are opening naturally. Let the community map shape how ministry develops.

For a Community-Focused Exercise

Invite several community members to participate in the mapping process. They may identify people, organizations, gathering places, or relationships church leaders would never think to include. Compare what insiders and community members see differently.