



In our churches and in our communities, we find ourselves drawn to the idea of “problem-solving.” Something is wrong and we need to figure it out and do things differently. That type of thought comes from a sense of abundance. We seem to think that we have limitless possibilities. Just give us a problem and we believe if we try hard enough, we can make it better. We can change the building, the service, or how we market our congregation.

Some of those changes are appropriate if they come from assets within your congregation, but be aware that successful approaches for other churches may not be as effective if they do not take advantage of your congregation’s strengths. If that approach is not in keeping with the gifts that your church has to offer, it could squander limited resources. Problem-solving based on gimmicks or an inauthentic reflection of who your church is will make it easy for someone to see that it is not really who you are. They will not invest energy into connecting and strengthening the congregation.

If you are willing to take the time to evaluate the assets you have in your community, it will guide what will be genuinely life-giving to your congregation. For instance, if you look beyond your church walls and acknowledge that your neighborhood has changed ethnically or economically, try viewing this as an opportunity instead of as a problem. While the Bible only references the poor 30+ times in the New Testament, most of the 70+ references to the rich challenge the listener to be careful how they use their power and money. Realistically assessing your community may open you up to ministry opportunities that are beyond your previously defined mission field.

Another way of inventorying your assets is to see if your neighborhood is transitioning generationally. Think of ways you can be a good neighbor to all generations. Because my role with CBFNC is in collegiate engagement, my focus leans toward the young adult

population, so I will use them in this example. Some ideas attractive to young adults could include providing a plot of land for a neighborhood garden or space for people who need a place to park for work. I have often thought it would be a great ministry to purposefully give them permission to park rather than threaten them with removal. If you post a list of welcoming church activities in the parking area, those same people might join in.

By developing relationships with people in the neighborhood, we are better able to discern where ministries will be most impactful. We can find the intersection of our world’s great needs and our congregational giftedness. Talk to neighbors. Ask what the church can offer that would be helpful to them and which would align with the strength of the church members. Be creative with your strengths but also be comfortable with the knowledge that we cannot be all things to all people.

For us to reach our communities, we must be honest about who we are, what we have to offer, and match our strengths with people’s needs. Offering someone a handout is different from offering someone a hand-up through our relationship with Jesus. Gimmicks may work in the short term, but authentic ministry forges long-term connections.

living into strengths

by Wanda Kidd, CBFNC Collegiate Engagement Coordinator



Ideas for living into congregational strength:

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| Bible Study | Marriage Mentoring |
| Parenting Classes | Cooking Classes |
| House Repairs/Workshop | Sewing/Crafts |
| Exercise/Yoga | Basic Car Maintenance |