

# The Community Canvass

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# *To Canvass or Not To Canvass*

I would not be exaggerating (and, I hope, not boasting) to say that I have made thousands of canvassing calls during my years of ministry, first for nine years as a pastor of a growing congregation and second as a faculty advisor since 1984 to a student evangelism group called Witness. During dozens of canvasses, I have knocked on probably 2,000 to 5,000 doors, many of them on behalf of my own congregation but many on behalf of several dozen other congregations. On numerous occasions my Witness group has been invited back to a congregation that had us help them with canvassing previously.

Those experiences have taught me much about the strengths and weaknesses of the approach. The fact that I still do canvassing will suggest my general attitude, i.e., that I am positive rather than negative about canvassing. Not everyone, however, would agree. One well known and highly respected voice on the contemporary evangelical scene speaks strongly against the practice of cold-call evangelism as follows:

## **No Cold-Call Evangelism**

Falling into the familiar patterns and routines that have worked in the past is a trademark of stagnant churches. Cold-call evangelism is one such pattern that appeals to many such churches.

During the first three-quarters of this century, it was not uncommon for churches to develop evangelistic teams that would get together one or two nights a week, and go knocking on people's doors, attempting to share the Gospel on people's front door steps, or in their living rooms.

Times have changed, however, and successful churches grow because they have generally understood the change. They may have an evangelism team, but the efforts of that team are directed either to "response evangelism"—visiting those people who request such a visit, or "event evangelism"—providing public interest events that include some type of evangelistic thrust. They know that the chances of meeting a responsive individual who gets a cold call at their front door are minimal. They know that their good-hearted attempt at service may close the person's mind to the gospel. Given the range of other, proven means of affecting change in the person's heart, they simply do not believe that the methodology warrants the high risk of failure (George Barna, 180).<sup>1</sup>

Many of us know the biblical principle that the vast majority of those who join Christian churches for the first time do so because of the influence of friends or relatives. That principle further underscores the wisdom of George Barna's words. Canvassing and other forms of "cold-call evangelism" (Kennedy style evangelism visitation, for example) would seem to contradict that principle.

My first response is to recall three families from my days as a St. Louis area pastor. We contacted each of those families through a community canvass conducted in the general vicinity of the church, and each of those families eventually became members of our church. None of those three families would have joined my church if it were not for the canvassing that we did. Does it work? Yes. Does it work to the same extent that other methods work? Probably not. Does that mean that we shouldn't do canvassing?

## **Advantages to Canvassing**

I, too, believe that many other methods of evangelism are more effective than cold-call evangelism (I'm using the term as an equivalent term to canvassing, although the term cold-call evangelism is somewhat broader). I teach and practice those forms of evangelism far more

than I canvass, but I don't advocate the abandonment of canvassing. Canvassing is useful for a church, first of all, as a starter program.

Anyone who has ever tried to initiate one of the more involved programs (Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion, Petragram's "Discover A Whole New World," some form of crusade evangelism, or Christian Business Men's Committee's Living Proof, for example) knows the amount of work it takes. You need to get board approval, find budget dollars or a special donor, order the materials, do the publicity for recruitment, recruit the trainees, arrange the training, perhaps publicize the program to the community, do the training, and then finally do the program. Follow-up will take place for any program, whether cold call evangelism or otherwise.

Canvassing usually takes no board approval, minimal expense, and a small amount of recruitment and training. It is easy to set up canvassing for a single day or a month of Sunday afternoons. Once done, it can be repeated on an annual basis with even less effort.

Consider it entry-level programming for churches, but give it serious consideration for your church.

Second, as a form of publicity, canvassing makes a statement to the community. While canvassers can undoubtedly conduct themselves in an obnoxious way at the door, most people who volunteer for such an activity have a winsome personality and do not intend to be rude or forceful at the door. In addition, the small amount of training necessary (a half-hour to an hour) can address the issue and prevent such negative experiences. Indeed, 90 percent of the negative experiences at people's front doors are the result of the uneasiness that the people being visited feel about talking about God. It's not the caller's problem at all.

What statement does canvassing make? It says that your church is concerned about the community. It puts the name of your church before the people, and it often puts a tract or church brochure or personalized Gospel of John in the hands of many members of the community. It presents a positive image of your church. Your church is a place where something is happening. It is not a stagnant place, no matter what George Barna says.

Third, canvassing discovers prospects. I already mentioned the three families we reached in St. Louis through canvassing. Other canvasses we conducted for other churches may have reached still other families; I was not there for follow-up and therefore do not know.

But one of the problems inherent in canvassing is the sometimes nebulous definition of a prospect. I firmly believe that a narrow definition of a prospect is most useful for canvassing.

Some people define a prospect as "anyone who doesn't believe in Jesus." That's a legitimate and accurate definition. It just doesn't serve the congregation very well. So your canvassing teams make 300 calls, and 75 percent of the people you talked to don't believe in Jesus. Now you have 225 follow-up calls to make, and some of them don't want you to come back. You will end up spinning your wheels and wasting a lot of time in the process.

A definition of a prospect is one of the essential ingredients in the training that takes place before the actual canvassing. The more broadly you define a prospect the more follow-up calls you will have and the more likely you will call on people who really don't want a return visit. The more narrowly you define a prospect the more likely that your follow-up calls will be fruitful.

How should one define a prospect? I would define a prospect as follows (all four points, not just two or three of the four; the fifth one is optional):

1. Someone who is not a Christian and/or is unchurched.
2. Someone who allows the canvasser to complete the canvassing form.
3. Someone who is friendly towards the canvasser.
4. Someone who says, "Yes," when asked, "Can someone from our church visit you again?"
5. Someone who claims affiliation, present or past, with your denomination.

With that definition, your 300 cold calls will result in 20 follow-up calls instead of 225. You won't waste your time; you won't spin your wheels. The 20 follow-up calls will not only be fewer, they will be much more fruitful. The literature you have behind at the other homes may some day bear fruit.

New research suggests that people are more open to visitation than ever. We have perhaps heard that visitation evangelism was a program born during the confrontive '60s, no longer appropriate for the '90s. There is some truth to that perspective. However, it is also true that loneliness is one of the most widespread problems in America today. In a country that prizes individualism, too many people have isolated themselves from meaningful relationships. Consequently, many of them have an unmet need for companionship and are therefore willing to speak to a complete stranger at the front door.

If canvassing and other forms of cold-call evangelism are so ineffective, why is it that Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses continue to do evangelism in that style? If you haven't checked the statistics lately, please be advised that both organizations are growing. Do they know something we have forgotten? Could it be that canvassing so seldom reaches people because it is so seldom practiced?

Fourth, canvassing can discover your evangelists. Some people will help you in the canvass and do evangelism for the first time. They may sign up because the time commitment is small (baby boomers like that, the experts tell us) and the training brief and simple. They may sign up because of a concern for people outside of Christ. They may agree to go along only because they will be teamed up with an experienced canvasser. Then, in the process of canvassing, they discover that canvassing is not very difficult. They may discover that they have the gift of evangelism or simply that they would like to be involved in some phase of outreach on a regular basis.

Fifth, canvassing trains your fellow Christians to talk about their faith, sometimes exposing them to viewpoints and religions they would never otherwise face. More than a few times I have trained Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ to make calls, sent them out, and then heard their excited responses to their calls. They met a Hindu for the first time, or they talked to a former member of the denomination. They found someone who enjoyed the visit, or they were blessed by a Christian who encouraged them in their canvassing. Some of those young people are pastors and teachers today in large part because of the experience they had out on the street, going door-to-door. All of those who went with me will remember forever the time that 200 of us tackled 40,000 Jehovah's Witnesses at Busch Stadium in St. Louis at the close of their convention day.

### **Writing Your Own Survey Form**

While you may choose to use one of the forms in this booklet unchanged, or you may choose to adapt one of these forms, you may also create your own form for your own purposes. See the appropriate page in this booklet for that form.

Some people will never come to a church event, whether a worship service or a need-meeting activity for the community. You have to go where they are. Jesus said, "Go," not "Wait for them to come." Canvassing is one form of going.

# *Setting Up the Canvass*

Your first decision in making the arrangements for the canvass is to determine the type of canvass you wish to make. Do you want to discover prospects for your Sunday school? Are you helping to start a new church? Do you want to discover the needs that exist in your community that would be appropriate for your church to meet? Do you want to gain an understanding of the opinion unchurched people have of your church? No doubt the most common purpose is to discover people who are prospects for joining your church. For this booklet, we'll assume that this last one is your purpose. Your purpose will determine the canvassing form you choose or write.

## **The Plan**

Which part of the community are you going to canvass? It's your call, but perhaps you would like to know a few things about your selection. First, people new to the community are more likely to come to your church than people who have lived in the area for years. Consequently, a new subdivision is always a prime spot for canvassing. Second, people who live closer to the church, especially those within a 15-minute drive, are more likely to respond to your visit than people who live farther away. Third, people who live in residential areas are more likely to respond than people who live in apartments, condominiums or trailer homes. Should you avoid the less desirable places? No. Visit them, but go to the more likely places first.

One of the most important parts of your planning is the layout of the land. How many homes can you cover? Plan on sending people out in teams of two. An experienced pastor or other canvasser can go out alone, especially if there is an odd number of people doing the canvass. Each team can knock on usually no more than 20 doors per hour in a residential community, far fewer in rural areas, of course. This will depend on the size of the yard and how much walking needs to be done between homes. Expect about 60 percent of the people to answer their door, so each team will probably speak to people at no more than one dozen homes per hour. The rest is simple mathematics. If you have 15 people to make calls and one of them is willing to go out alone, you will have eight teams. If you have set aside an hour and-a-half for calling (my personal preference for the length of time), you need 240 homes for them to visit (each team will knock on approximately 30 doors in its allotted time).

But don't assume that a certain number of homes is on each street. Drive through the subdivision you plan to canvass and count them. You may even have someone (perhaps someone who would never make the calls) count the number of homes on each block and write that number on the map (more on maps below). One pastor actually has someone write the house numbers on the canvassing map. Counting homes will enable you to have an appropriate number of homes for each team to call on, and it will also prevent teams from overlapping if they run out of calls and start on someone else's street.

I have often worked with a two-and-a-half hour schedule. That gives me time to drive to the location of an area church with my students from Concordia University (1-2 p.m.), do the training (2-2:30 p.m.), make calls (2:30-4 p.m.), report on the results (4-4:30 p.m.), and return to campus (4:30-5:30 p.m.). This makes it possible to keep the canvass simple and eliminate the need for the church to provide a meal to the canvassers.

## **Materials**

What materials do you need? The most important materials will be maps and canvassing forms. Once you have decided on the area to canvass, I would suggest that you



make maps of the area, buy maps of the area or photocopy non-copyrighted maps of the area. Make one for each team you expect and a couple of extras. Use a highlighter to indicate what streets each team will cover and assign a number to each map. That will be the team's number and can be used for summarizing the results later and ensuring that each team has a chance to report at the end of the day. Indicate on the map if the team should cover both sides of a street or stay on one side of a street. In more dangerous areas of town, it is wise to put two teams on the same street, one on each side of the street, able to keep the other team in view.

If possible, supply a clipboard for each team. This will enable the team to write on the canvassing forms while standing at the front door. Include tracts and/or church brochures. The tract would contain a biblical message, and the church brochure would tell about the ministry of your church. Each team's goal will be to leave at least one of them at every home. That means that they leave one in the door of homes where no one answers the door. The brochures won't do you any good; their job is to communicate to people outside the church.

I use the phrase "homes where no one answers the door" because some people who are home simply choose not to answer the door. They may think that you are Jehovah's Witnesses, or they may have some other reason not to answer the door (illness, fear, etc.). Leave a brochure there anyway. They may well be relieved to discover later who was really knocking on their door.

Food. Did I say food? That's not one of the materials you need, is it? Not if you plan the canvass for a morning or an afternoon and plan to keep it brief. You may need some time for fellowship after the calling is over, so some snacks or even an entire meal will meet that need. It will also give some other people, non canvassers, the chance to be a part of this evangelistic endeavor.

### **Recruiting**

Don't just put it in the bulletin. Talk to people personally. Call some and visit others. Explain to them the purpose and the time commitment and tell them who else will be involved. Consider inviting people from your neighboring denominational churches, especially if yours is a new or a small church. Larger and older churches are often willing to send a few workers your way for a day.

### **Training**

Before you go out on calls, you will want to walk through the canvassing form one line at a time. Explain the tracts and their most appropriate use. This will prevent people from handing out materials with which they are not familiar. If you have people joining you for the canvass who are not members, you should tell them about the times of worship services, ministries such as Sunday school, Christian day school, Mother's Day Out, and other programs that may attract people in your community to your church.

You also need to define a prospect for your callers. Do you want your teams to indicate all who appear to be non-Christians as prospects on their forms? If so, they will report up to 80 percent of their calls as prospects. Not helpful. You may wish to come up with your own definition of a prospect, but here's mine. A definition of a prospect appears elsewhere in this article. They might be members of a church but not Christian, or they might be Christian but not members of a church. In either case, if that combines with a friendly response, list the person as a prospect. A church member who later becomes a Christian as a result of your witness will probably remain in that church, but don't let that deter you from visiting a second time. Your goal is to share the Gospel with people so they come to know Jesus Christ as Savior. That means that a visit on a person with a church home may be advised, but it does not justify what some call sheep-stealing.

## **Reporting**

When people return from their calls, give them time to write additional information on their forms. Encourage them to overwrite rather than underwrite. Then have them place the forms in three piles—forms not used, forms with prospects, and forms with no prospects.

Above all, take time to allow each team to share its experiences with the rest of the group. Some people may feel discouraged and in need of the encouragement of another team whose calls God blessed in other ways. The most excited people are usually those who have just done this for the first time. Their excitement is contagious, and you need to spread that excitement. They also need to share that excitement, and everyone needs to feel it too. Then share the results and the excitement with the church on Sunday. You might just recruit a few more people in the process for the next canvass some months hence.



# *Making the Canvassing Call*

Some additional suggestions are in order on how to do canvassing, but not in the usual way. This section concentrates on the actual visit—preparing for it, doing it and following up on it.

## **Before You Canvass**

Too many churches think of canvassing as a one-shot program. They think that you make calls and discover a few prospects, but no really good prospects. That is a faulty view of canvassing. It's not one shot, unless you deliberately set it up that way. It probably also operates with a faulty definition of a prospect, but we dealt with that earlier.

Two weeks before your canvass, try sending a note to all people in the area where you plan to canvass. Tell them the date you will be visiting, who you represent and the purpose of your call. "On Saturday, July 16, members from St. Paul Lutheran Church, 7th and Washington St., will be visiting homes in your area of the community. Their purpose will be to understand the community better and to discover needs that exist in the community which St. Paul might be able to meet." You may include a tract or church brochure. Especially useful in such mailings are booklets or tracts on issues such as dealing with bereavement, financial difficulties, alcoholism, stress, etc.

The ones who really don't want to visit with you won't be home when you call. The others will know that you are responsible Christians from a reputable church. Include a postcard in the mailing, giving them the chance to request literature, inquire about the church, or tell you not to visit their home. It prepares them for your visit.

Remember that your church's reputation in the community will precede your mailing. What people think of your church will often determine what they do with your mailing and your visit. If, as Kennon Callahan says, your church is a legend on the community grapevine for one of its ministries, you will be well received in most cases. If they hardly know you're there, you will probably be received politely, but not cordially.

## **As You Begin**

When you go canvassing, don't go alone. Go with someone who can be your prayer support; you do the canvass while your partner prays. Your partner also has the chance to learn how to do what you are doing, to put in a helpful word if you don't know what to say, and to hold the tracts or brochures that you take with you. The partner may even write down the information while you ask the questions, thereby making it a team effort.

Elsewhere I have written about canvass observers. These are people who have no interest in conducting the survey, but they are willing to go along and watch someone else do it. They may be prayer warriors or people dedicated to their church but introverted or lacking self-confidence. You recruit them with the promise that you will never ask them to speak or to conduct the survey; they may speak if they wish, but only if and when they wish.

Canvass observers have the effect of doubling the number of teams that go door-to-door and, therefore, the number of homes you visit. If your practice is to go out in teams of two, as is mine, then 10 canvassers produce five teams. However, 10 canvassers and 10 canvass observers produce 10 teams and many more contacts in the community. That means that the canvasser must do all the talking at every home, but most canvassers will not object. After a number of calls, an occasional canvass observer may even say, "Hey, I can do that!" Then you have another canvasser.

One other thing. Pray. How many canvasses have begun with prayer, been bathed with prayer, and have ended with prayer? How many times have intercessors spent the canvass time praying for those out making calls and for the people they meet? Think of the greater involvement in the canvass and the greater likelihood that in answer to prayer God will open doors, both literally and figuratively, for these Christians to share the message of the Gospel.

### At the Door

As you walk up to a home, observe the house and lawn. Look for a name on the mailbox and a house number on the house, mailbox, or curb. You need that information to complete the canvass record. Also look for something that you like about the house with the goal of complimenting the homeowner about those flower beds, the car in the driveway, the well manicured lawn, or some feature of the house itself. Look for evidence of the presence of small children; many young parents want their children to have some religious training, and your Sunday school may be just the ticket. If you find that the home is difficult to locate, but you found no one home, be sure to record directions on your canvassing form to make the next person's visit easier.

When I knock on someone's door, my first goal is to present a friendly face with a smile and, if possible, a compliment and perhaps an appropriate expression of humor. In other words, although I have questions to ask and a witness to give, I first want to make contact with another human being and in some small way earn the right to be heard. A mailing two weeks earlier, the prayer support of other Christians, and your personality combine to make a good impression at the door.

My experience has taught me that approximately 98 out of every 100 homes receive you cordially or at least neutrally if they are approached in a friendly, positive, but not forceful manner. If you hear people talk about having had doors slammed in their faces, one of three things happened. Either the person being visited was so uptight about religion that he couldn't even talk to his mother about the subject (it's his problem!), or the evangelist has exaggerated what actually happened, or the evangelist deserved that slammed door (it's the evangelist's problem).

If the home has a doorbell, as most do, ring that doorbell before knocking on the door. Then listen for the doorbell. If you don't hear it ring (nor do you hear the barking of a dog in response to the ringing), then knock.

After you knock on the door or ring the doorbell, step back. No one wants the person knocking on their door to be leering into the house, seemingly anxious to intrude if the homeowner opens the door a crack. After all, it could be a Fuller brush salesman or a Jehovah's Witness knocking on their door!

Introduce yourself and your partner, state your purpose and request permission to ask a few questions. If permission is denied, thank them for their time, hand them

your tract or brochure, and depart. God may open the door for someone else, and you don't want to hamper that person's approach.

If permission is granted, walk through the canvass form, asking the questions on the form. Feel free to improvise if the situation warrants a change of plan. Spontaneous conversation is more natural, less rigid, and more likely to establish rapport with the people behind the door.

At the end of the visit, leave your literature in the hand of the homeowner or apartment dweller, thank them for their time, and depart.

Before you reach the next home, this is the time to assess the visit. This is the time to decide if the person is a prospect for another visit. Write the word "prospect" on your page if such is the case. This is the time when the call is fresh in your mind and you are most likely to assess the call correctly. Make a note on your record of the visit, if someone is to call here again. Your memory of the visit will not be as good if you wait until you return to the church.

### **Follow-Up**

Did I say follow-up? Really? I thought follow-up was only for those more involved evangelism programs like Evangelism Explosion III or Dialog Evangelism 2. Hardly. Lamar Davis writes, "The use made of the results of the survey is crucial. the survey can be well done with the best intentions, yet if no use or improper use of the results is made, the effort has been useless or even worse" (Lamar Davis, 8).<sup>2</sup>

For years, even decades, the Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ have written follow-up letters to prospects discovered during Saturday morning and afternoon canvasses. You can too. But don't just send one letter, send several. Send them your prospect newsletter (but don't call it that). Send them invitations to church activities. Include postage paid postcards in some of those mailings, giving people a chance to respond easily.

Try visiting them a month or two later or making a telephone call. Return to their home with a gift. Meet a need, if one surfaced during your initial visit to their home or if one surfaces during a subsequent visit.

### **References**

<sup>1</sup>Barna, George. User Friendly Churches. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991.

<sup>2</sup>Davis, Lamar. The Community Survey. Nashville: Discipleship Resources-Tidings, 1976.

# COMMUNITY SURVEY

1. Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and this is \_\_\_\_\_. We're from \_\_\_\_\_ Church here in \_\_\_\_\_, and we're participating in a religious survey. Would you help us by answering a few questions?

2. Are you a member of a local church? Yes No (*circle one*)

(*If Yes*)

(*If No*)

2a. Which church is that?

2a'. Have you ever been? Which one?

2b. How often do you attend?

2b'. What led you to drop out?

2c'. What might lead you to drop back in?

3. In your opinion, what ought the Christian church stand for?

4. May I share with you what our church stands for?

Brochure (or)

Message

- a God who loves all people.
- a message of hope for people who are struggling with guilt, broken relationships, anger, bitterness and the like.
- a God who sent His Son to die for us and take our sins upon Himself and pay for them at the cross.
- a God who offers us the opportunity to know Him in a personal way.

5. What do you think about that?

6. We'd like to conclude our visit by inviting you to visit our church and worship with us. We'd also like to leave this brochure with you so you'll know when our services are.

7. May I ask your name? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Address \_\_\_\_\_

9. Thank you for your time. We appreciate it very much.

(*Joel D. Heck*)

# CHRISTMAS/EASTER SURVEY

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and this is \_\_\_\_\_. We're from \_\_\_\_\_ Church, located at \_\_\_\_\_. We're conducting a religious survey to learn about the religious convictions of the people in our community. Would you help us by answering a few brief questions?

1. Are you a member of a local church? Yes No (*circle one*)

(*If Yes*)

(*If No*)

2. Which one?

2. Have you ever been? Yes No

3. How often do you attend?

3. (*If Yes*) Which one?

4. Why do you expect to go to heaven?

4. What led you to drop out?

Jesus

5. What would influence you to come back? (or, What would you want to find in a church in order for you to consider coming back?)

Good Works

Don't Know

Other:

5. May I share with you why I expect to go to heaven?

6. One of the things we've discovered is that during the weeks before Christmas (Easter), many people seriously consider attending church somewhere, even if they haven't been doing so. Is this true of you?

6. Tract

Yes No

at

7. (*If Yes*) May we invite you to join us

\_\_\_\_\_?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Yes No

Address \_\_\_\_\_

8. What does Christmas (Easter) mean to you

Other information:

9. May I share with you what Christmas means to me?

10. Tract

Joel D. Heck

# RELIGIOUS OPINION SURVEY

1. I've lived in this community \_\_\_\_ years. Before moving to this address, I lived . . .  
\_\_\_\_ in this area  
\_\_\_\_ elsewhere in the state  
\_\_\_\_ in the state (country) of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I . . . \_\_\_\_ have never been a church member.  
\_\_\_\_ was once a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ church.  
\_\_\_\_ occasionally attend \_\_\_\_\_ church.  
\_\_\_\_ am an active member of \_\_\_\_\_ church.
3. In my opinion God is \_\_\_\_ an impersonal force, \_\_\_\_ an angry judge, \_\_\_\_ a loving father, \_\_\_\_ an interested observer,  
(or) \_\_\_\_\_.  
*(Check as many as apply.)*
4. I would say that my relationship with God is \_\_\_\_ stronger than; \_\_\_\_ weaker than; \_\_\_\_ the same as it was three years ago.
5. I believe in life after death. \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Unsure
6. I expect to go to heaven when I die. \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Unsure
7. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 indicating ineffective and 5 indicating very effective), I would rate the effectiveness of churches in meeting people's needs today as:  
1    2    3    4    5
8. The biggest needs of people about which the church should be concerned are:
9. The number of people living at this address is \_\_\_\_, of which \_\_\_\_ are children, whose ages are \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_.
10. (If married) My spouse \_\_\_\_ shares my religious conviction and membership; \_\_\_\_ has religious views similar to mine; \_\_\_\_ holds different religious convictions; \_\_\_\_ is an active member of \_\_\_\_\_ church.
11. \_\_\_\_ I would like to receive a copy of the summary of this survey.  
\_\_\_\_ I would not like to receive the summary of this survey.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

# CANVASS

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

We are from \_\_\_\_\_ Church on \_\_\_\_\_

We are conducting A RELIGIOUS SURVEY of the neighborhood

- to find out how best to serve our community (or)
- to learn about the religious convictions of the people in our community.

Will you help us by answering a few questions?

1. Are there any children or young people living here? How old are they? What are their names?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What is their last name? \_\_\_\_\_

Do they regularly attend a Sunday school? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If so, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Does your husband/wife attend any church? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Is (s)he a regular member? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If so, which church? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you (Mr., Mrs.) attend any church? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Are you a regular member? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If so, which church? \_\_\_\_\_

4. *(If not regular in attendance)* Why don't you attend church regularly?

5. What could the church do so that you would attend regularly?

6. Do you believe in a life after death? In heaven? Hope to get there? How?

7. What is the family name? *(Write on top line)*

8. Are there any other adults living here? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

*(If so, write information on reverse side)*

Not at home \_\_\_\_\_ Information refused \_\_\_\_\_ Vacant house \_\_\_\_\_

Good Prospect \_\_\_\_\_ Fair Prospect \_\_\_\_\_ See later \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate number of individual prospects \_\_\_\_\_

Canvassed by \_\_\_\_\_



# WITNESS SURVEY

Street \_\_\_\_\_ House number \_\_\_\_\_  
Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a volunteer for \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

Would you answer a few questions for me?

1. Do you feel that alcohol and drug abuse is overwhelming our society?  
Yes                      No
2. Do you believe that the remedy to drug and alcohol abuse and other social problems is in:  
a. Science    b. Politics    c. Education    d. Religion
3. Do you believe that science can provide the final answers to man's problems?  
Yes                      No
4. Do you feel that there is an eternal purpose to your life?  
Yes                      No
5. Do you believe that there is a God?  
Yes                      No    *(If no, go to #8)*
6. Do you believe that God will answer you, if you pray to Him?              Yes    No
7. Do you attend a church?    Yes    No  
*(If yes) Which church?*  
Which denomination?
8. Have you ever read the Bible?    Yes    No
9. Have you ever heard of \_\_\_\_\_ Church?    Yes    No  
*(If no, go to the conclusion)*
10. How did you hear of \_\_\_\_\_ Church?
11. What is your impression of \_\_\_\_\_ Church?

Conclusion: This concludes our survey, but I was wondering. Could I ask you two more questions as a matter of personal interest?

12. Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that you have eternal life?
13. Suppose that you had died and were standing before God and He asked you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What would you say?  
*(Gerald R. Reinke. Used by permission.)*

# CANVASS-WITNESS SURVEY FORM

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Hello. I'm \_\_\_\_\_, and this is \_\_\_\_\_. We're conducting a religious survey for \_\_\_\_\_ Church. Would you be kind enough to help us by answering a few brief questions?

1. Of what religious group are you a member?
2. Which church do you attend?
3. How often would you say that you attend church each month?  
0      1      2      3      4      more

4. Do you believe in God?                      Yes      No (*circle one*)
5. Do you believe in life after death?                      Yes      No
6. Do you expect to go to heaven?                      Yes      No
7. Why do you expect to go to heaven?                      Yes      No

Thank you for your cooperation.

\_\_\_\_\_

A) (*Christian response to the last question*) "It's a joy to meet another Christian who knows we have eternal life in Jesus. May God give you a good day."

B) (*Response of uncertainty or self-salvation*) "May we briefly share with you what God says in the Bible about the way to heaven?"

Yes      No

1. If yes, "A lot of people are uncertain about heaven because they feel we must somehow earn it." (*Then present sin and grace.*)
2. If no, "Will you please accept this tract which explains that we cannot earn heaven. Eternal life is God's gift to us because Jesus died for us. Thank you, and may God give you a good day."

(*Following witness*) "Here I've been talking with you for several minutes, and I don't even know your name. Would you mind giving me your name?"

\_\_\_\_\_

And do you have school-aged children?                      Yes      No

# YOUR CONVERSATION SHEET

I am \_\_\_\_\_, and this is \_\_\_\_\_. We are from \_\_\_\_\_ Church.  
We're conducting a religious survey of the neighborhood . . .

- to find out how best to serve our community
- to learn about the religious convictions of the people in our community

Will you help us by answering a few questions?

1. Are there any children or young people in the home? Are they baptized? How many? What are their ages?

Do they regularly attend a Sunday school?  
(If yes) Which one?

2. Does your husband/wife attend any church?  
Is she/he a regular member?  
(If yes) Which church?

3. Do you attend church?  
(If yes) Are you a regular member? Yes No  
(If yes) Which church?

4. We are surveying how well the church is getting its message across. I'd like to ask you, "How do you hope to be saved?" (or) "What does Jesus mean to you?"

## The Bible says:

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31)

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph. 2:8-9)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

5. What is your family name?

Thank you for your time.

# PERSONAL RELIGIOUS OPINIONNAIRE

1. Do you feel that churches today are meeting the concerns of people today?
2. Why or why not?
3. In the past year do you feel that your spiritual interest has increased?
4. Do you feel the need for a more personal religious faith?
5. Do you feel that people should belong to a religious group or church?
6. How do you feel about the programs of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church?
7. How often should people attend church according to your opinion?
8. In your opinion, what is God like?
9. In your opinion, what is sin?
10. Who is Jesus Christ according to your understanding?
11. In your opinion, how does one become a Christian?
12. Have you come to the place in your life where you feel sure that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?
13. Suppose you were to die today and stand before God and He said to you: "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What do you think you would say?
14. May I share with you now how you can be sure of going to heaven?
15. Could I (or someone else) come back at another time?

*(W. Leroy Biesenthal. Used by permission.)*

## FOR FOLLOWING UP ON MAILINGS

1. Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and this is \_\_\_\_\_.  
We're from \_\_\_\_\_ Church at 53rd and Locust, the church that distributes this "Good News Voice." (*Hold up copy.*)
2. Do you remember receiving it?  

(If Yes)

(If No)
3. Have you or any of your family read portions of it? Yes No
3. Well, we hope you'll take a closer look at it the next time it arrives.
4. Do you feel it can be of benefit to you/your family? Yes No
4. One of the things we've discovered during the weeks around the Easter season, is that many people are considering attending church somewhere, even if they haven't been doing so. Is that true of you?
5. Would you like to continue to receive it? Yes No
5. (If yes) What do you think might be the reason for that?
6. Would you be interested in talking more about the "Good News Voice" and the church that sent it? Yes No
6. What does Easter mean to you?
7. What would be the best time to visit?
7. May I share with you what Easter means to me?
8. Could we talk more about this at another time? Yes No
9. What would be the best time to visit?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

(Joel D. Heck)

# FOR STARTING NEW CHURCHES

## Rick Warren's Four Canvass Questions

1. Are you active in a local congregation?

Additional questions to validate how active they really are:

What's your pastor's name?

Where is your church located?

What time are your services?

If they are active members, the interview is concluded with thanks at this point.

2. What do you feel is the greatest need for this area?

Suggested rewrite:

What do you feel is **one** of the greatest needs of this area?

3. Why do you think most people don't attend church?

4. What advice would you give a new church that really wants to help people?

Suggested Additional Question:

5. If a new church were started that did really want to help people, would you be at all interested?

NOTE: Rick Warren is the pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church (California), which he started in 1980. In six years the church grew from six to 1,300 in attendance and has sponsored six daughter churches. Dr. Warren manages a staff of four pastors who in turn oversee a leadership network of more than 300 volunteers.

The first four questions appear in slightly different form in C. Peter Wagner's book, "Leading Your Church to Growth" (Regal Books, 1984), pp. 203-204. There Wagner includes an additional question that should follow #3: "If you were looking for a church in the area, what kinds of things would you look for?"

# ON-THE-SPOT SURVEY

Hi! I'm a visitor here this morning and want to learn a little more about your church. Could I ask you a few questions?

1. Are you a member here? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How were you first attracted to this church?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Personal invitation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Saw buildings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Heard about it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Television
- \_\_\_\_\_ Radio
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

3. How long have you attended this church?

Why do you stay?

4. Were you raised in this church?    Yes    No  
Had previous membership in another church?    Yes    No  
Converted in this church?    Yes    No

5. Are you involved in any activities/small groups?    Yes    No  
\_\_\_\_\_ How many?

6. What do you think your pastor would say if you asked him, "What is this church all about?"

7. Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Approximate Age \_\_\_\_\_

This survey is provided by C. Peter Wagner for use on a Sunday morning to determine what makes a particular church attractive to both members and visitors.



# A WITNESS SURVEY

## INTRODUCTION

We are \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ Church. We are trying to determine the religious thinking of our community. Will you help by answering a few brief questions?

## SURVEY

1. Are you married? Yes No
2. Do you have any children? Yes No
  - Do they attend Sunday school? Yes No Which? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you a member of any religious church or group? Yes No
  - If no—Have you ever been? Yes No Which? \_\_\_\_\_
  - If yes—How often do you attend?

## WITNESS

(If you are prepared and have the time, discuss questions 4, 5 and 6.  
Otherwise go on to question 7.)

4. In your opinion, what is God like?
5. In your understanding, who is Jesus Christ?
6. What do you think sin is?
7. Do you believe in life after death? Yes No
  - If no—Go on to question 9.
  - If yes—Then do you believe in heaven and hell? Yes No
  - If no—Discuss their belief and then go to 9.
  - If yes—Do you hope to go to heaven some day? Yes No
  - If no—Discuss their belief and lead into 8.
  - If yes—On what do you base that hope? Or, to put it another way,
  - “If you were to stand before God and He would say, ‘Why should I let you into heaven?’ what would you say?”
8. Would you be willing to give me a few minutes to share with you why I am sure that I will go to heaven, because I have a personal faith in Jesus Christ?
  - If no—Continue with 11 and 12.
  - If yes—Present the gospel with the tract “A Personal Faith—Now and Forever,” then go to 11 and 12 as necessary.

9. On previous surveys people have often said they feel the need for a more personal faith to put more joy and meaning into life. Why do you think that is?

10. Do you feel the need for a more personal faith? Yes No

- If no—Go to 11 and 12.
- If yes—Would you be willing to give me a few minutes to share my personal faith with you?
- If no—Go to 11 and 12.
- If yes—Explain your faith with the tract “A Personal Faith—Now and Forever.”

Then go to 11 and 12 as necessary.

11. Could I or someone else from our church come back some other time?

Preferred day: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred time: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Could I have the church send you a letter describing the services of our church?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Results:

- \_\_\_\_ Prospect
- \_\_\_\_ Send literature
- \_\_\_\_ Made appointment
- \_\_\_\_ Rejected

Surveyor: \_\_\_\_\_

# ST. ANDREW, WEST BEND, CANVASS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Good morning. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and this is \_\_\_\_\_. We are visiting homes in this area this morning on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

Tomorrow we are celebrating Friendship Sunday at our 9:15 a.m. service. We would like to invite you to join us for this special service at St. Andrew's.

1. Do you and your family currently attend a church in West Bend?      Yes      No
2. May I ask which one? (*name of church*) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you familiar with where St. Andrew is located?  
(7750 N. Highway 144)      Yes      No
4. May I leave this brochure with you?

Thank you for your time. Are there any children living here? We'd like to leave them a balloon.

Look for opportunities to share your faith, the warmth and concern of St. Andrew congregation, other needs, i.e., Sunday school each Sunday at 10:30 a.m., vacation Bible school dates, etc.

The balloons are used for two purposes.

1. They distinguish the callers from Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults. Some parts of the country have very active groups that make door-to-door visitation a regular activity.
2. They give something away to the people being visited for a child or grandchild.

*(Bryan O'Connor. Used by permission.)*

## CANVASS SUGGESTIONS

1. Pray before each canvass call.
2. Write the street and house number on your canvass slip before ringing the door bell.
3. If a child comes to the door, ask to speak to a parent.
4. If neither parent is home, use your judgment as to whether to solicit information from the child or to return later.
5. Do not be apologetic. This is the Lord's work you are doing. He has given you the right—and obligation—to discover the unchurched people in the community toward whom the congregation has a responsibility.
6. Introduce yourself and state the purpose of your call, as indicated on the canvass slip.
7. If it is probable that there are children in the home, begin by asking about them. Otherwise ask about the family in general, "Do you people attend any church?"
8. If you are speaking to the wife, ask next about the man of the house. When speaking to the husband, ask about the wife. Indicate on your slip whether the information in this section concerns the husband or wife.
9. Then ask about the person to whom you are speaking. Check on your canvass slip whether you are talking to the husband or wife. (Mr. or Mrs.)
10. Question 5 is the most important. Many people who claim church membership do not know the way of salvation.
11. Speak of your faith in Jesus as your Savior. Make sure that you present the way of salvation clearly.
12. If no one is at home, leave an invitation folder. Check "Not at home" on your canvass slip.

Always ask the person at the door their questions last! People are more willing to speak of others before they are of themselves.

Normally you are asked to canvass one side of the street, all the way around the block. On your canvass sheets please fill in the street as you canvass at the top in the space provided. You will need a minimum of four sheets to go around one city block.

Answer all sections requested on the canvass sheet, if possible. Most of them can be "yes" or "no." Do not ask them if they are prospects. Make this judgment on your own and indicate such on the page.

Your assigned area is:


# MASTER RECORD

Canvassers \_\_\_\_\_ Total Homes \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Number at Home \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ Number Unchurched \_\_\_\_\_

House Number	NAME if unchurched, or NH= not home, V=vacant, R=refused	Spoke to M/F	*Church Affiliation	Ages of Children	Comments
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					

Further information on unchurched (by number) \_\_\_\_\_

*Church Affiliation		
RC = Roman Catholic	M = Methodist	UCC=United Church of Christ
J = Jewish	P = Presbyterian	ND = Non-Denominational
B = Baptist	R = Reformed	L = Lutheran

# WRITING YOUR OWN SURVEY FORM

While you may choose to use one of the forms in this booklet unchanged, or you may choose to adapt one of these forms, you may also create your own form. The following guidelines will help you in that process. Each survey form will have most of the following ingredients, although not necessarily in this order:

## **I. The Introduction**

- A. Introduction of the callers
- B. Church home of the callers
- C. An identifying church brochure (optional)
- D. Statement of the purpose of the visit

## **II. The Request for Permission:** “Would you help us by answering a few questions?”

## **III. The Questions (under one or more of the following purposes)**

- A. Regarding interest in a mission church
- B. Regarding interest in Sunday school
- C. Designed to facilitate a witness to the Gospel
- D. Designed to discover the unchurched for later follow-up
- E. Designed to discover community opinion on a particular issue
- F. Designed to discover the needs of the unchurched community
- G. Regarding the effectiveness of a particular church's ministry
- H. To invite people to a church service or activity
- I. Other

## **IV. The Witness:** One or more methods ordinarily summarized during a training session, on the survey form, or through the use of a Christian tract

## **V. Biographical Data to be Recorded**

- A. Name
- B. Address
- C. Telephone (optional)
- D. Names and ages of children (optional)
- E. Church affiliation

## **VI. The Assessment:** Evaluation of the call by indicating one or more of the following

- A. Whether prospects or not
- B. Whether follow-up call should be made or not
- C. What needs or opinions have surfaced
- D. Whether or not a mission church is a viable option
- E. Some reasons for a church's effectiveness in ministry

## **VII. Expression of Thanks and Departure**

*(Joel D. Heck)*

# OTHER SURVEY FORMS

## I. FOUND IN BOOKS

*Evangelism Explosion*, D. James Kennedy, 3d ed. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983. Appendix A, p. 158, "Assurance Questionnaire Form."

*Evangelism Resource Book*, Edited by Erwin J. Kolb. St. Louis: Department of Evangelism Ministry of Congregational Services, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1980. Book 4, "Responsibility List." By Dennis Malone, Appendix I, p. 9, "Religious Survey," "Witness Survey," and Appendix II, p. 12, "Telephone Survey Form." Call (314) 965-9917, Ext. 1713.

"Making a Witness-Survey," Paul Benjamin. In American Church Growth Minibook Series. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1975. "Witness-Survey," p. 5. "Sample Census Card," p. 14.

*Planting New Churches*, Jack Redford. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1978. Appendix A, "Community Profile." Appendix B, "Area Analysis For Church Extension." Appendix C, "Score Sheet For New Work Priority." Appendix D, "Area Religious Survey." Appendix E, "Instruction For The Telephone Canvasser." (pp. 153-161)

## II. FROM ORGANIZATIONS

CRC Publications, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560. 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8. "Neighborhood Contact Card" for organizing and preserving basic information from neighborhood canvassing. "Community Survey Card" for recording the more detailed information as you repeat visits to community homes. Call (800)333-8300 or (616)246-0728, FAX (616)246-0834.

Discipleship Resources, PO Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202.

Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ Inc., PO Box 471, Athens, IL 62613. "Sunday School Survey," "Witness Survey."

## III. OTHER RESOURCES

*The Community Survey*, Lamar Davis. From Discipleship Resources, PO Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202. Copyright 1976. 14-page booklet explaining how to go about setting up a community survey. Does not provide survey forms.