



Adventures in Renewal

Listen. Learn. Be Transformed.



Key Questions:
What might God be up to?
How can we join in?

Action-Learning Experiment Options

We encourage your renewal team to think about possible action-learning experiments you want to try in two major categories: **investing presence** and **investing relationship**.

We hope these categories will help you imagine how you can “learn by doing” in some of the areas of focus surfaced by your listening work. Below you will find a description of what these categories mean and how you might choose to experiment with each of them.

Action Learning Experiment Category #1: Investing Presence

Many of you may have found in your listening work that there are places in your communities that you feel God might be inviting you to invest more of your time and a presence in an effort to better understand what God might be doing there.

Is there a place you came across in your “neighborhood” that you could spend more time in just to see what God might be doing there?

Examples:

Barbershop/Hair Salon

Coffeeshop

Farm Supply Store

Library

Food Pantry

Neighborhood fair/street fair

Skate park where kids hang out

Laundromat

Grocery store

Movie Theater

Craft Brewery

Farmers’ Markets

Once you identify a place, consider spending an extended period of time there on more than one occasion over the next few months (30-60 minutes each visit for 3 visits).

While you are there, ask yourself some questions:

How would I describe the people here?

Why are people gathering here?

What makes me comfortable or uncomfortable in this space?

What do I think God is doing in the lives of the people here?

What might God be up to in this space?



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Another category we suggest you consider when thinking about action-learning experiments is **investing relationship**. Through your listening work, you may have come across people who you think God might want you to be better connected to as a congregation.

Action Learning Experiment Category #2: Investing Relationship

Are there people that God introduced you to through your listening work over the last few months who God might want you to develop more relationship with?

- Someone you interviewed
- Someone you didn't know in your congregation until recently
- Someone you came across while walking the neighborhood and taking pictures
- A leader in your neighborhood/town
- An actual physical neighbor
- A co-worker
- Someone you just happened to meet

If you can identify someone or a group of people you think God might want you to get to know better, **consider some ways you might engage with them over the next 3 months.**

Examples include:

- Inviting a neighbor over for dinner (and maybe even asking them to share some of their spiritual journey with you).
- Getting to know the name and something about a person who works somewhere you regularly go (i.e. coffeeshop, store, library, etc.).
- Getting invited over to a neighbor's house for dinner and sharing some of your spiritual journey with them.
- Going to a sporting/music/art event of a child of someone you know.
- Identify some kind of community event that draws a lot of people from your community and attend that, bringing along the "2 Names and a Story" exercise (found in the supplemental materials for this process). Then, at the event, re-gather with your group to share names, stories, & learnings, using the 3 "dwelling" questions (What do you notice? What do you wonder? What might God be nudging you to consider?)



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Examples of experiments you could try

A. Prayer Experiment (INVESTING PRESENCE) – Go to a summer neighborhood event, like a county fair or farmers’ market gathering, and set up a table with your church’s name displayed and bunch of strips of cloth on the table. Invite people to write down prayers they have on the strips of cloth and hang them on a display.

B. Sit on the Front Lawn (INVESTING PRESENCE) – Set up some lawn chairs in the front of wherever you live and commit to sitting in those chairs on a regular basis. Pay attention to what is going on around you, who is outside, what is the neighborhood like, what do you think God might be doing in the neighborhood?

C. Listen to Spiritual Stories (INVESTING RELATIONSHIP)- After a congregation spent time developing their capacity to listen to each other’s spiritual stories, they decided to bring that practice into a ministry they are already involved in with women experiencing homelessness. Identify a ministry your church is already involved in where you could make deeper connections with neighbors and practice listening to their spiritual stories.

D. Go See a Baseball Game (INVESTING RELATIONSHIP) – Are there children in your congregation or in your neighborhood who are engaged in a sport, music or art activity over the summer? Consider going to one of their games/recitals/shows to show an interest in what they are doing. When you go, ask what God might be doing in the lives of all the people gathered there.

E. Eat with Your Neighbor (INVESTING RELATIONSHIP) – Consider developing enough relationship with a neighbor that you can share a meal with that person. See if you can ask that person to tell you one significant story about their spiritual journey during the meal and be willing to share your own.

F. Borrow a Tool (INVESTING RELATIONSHIP) – Practice engaging your neighbors by borrowing something from them. Could be a lawn tool, a cup of milk, or something else. This will put you in a place where you are vulnerable with your neighbors, allowing them to serve you.

G. Hang out in a New Place (INVESTING PRESENCE) – Maybe there was a place that you noticed when listening to your neighborhood that you’re not as familiar with. Consider planning to spend 30 minutes there several different times over the course of the summer. Who is there? What are they doing? How do you sense God’s presence?

H. Pray at the Laundromat (INVESTING RELATIONSHIP) – Go to a local laundromat several times over the summer. Get permission to set up a table, offer to pay for people’s laundry and also pray for them.



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I. Two Names and a Story (INVESTING PRESENCE) – If there are any times when members from your church are going to do something in a public setting (a local festival, a bowling alley, a farmer's market, a fair, etc.), invite those who are going to come back with two names and a story. Then, gather the group and see who they met (share the names they learned), and what the story was that they heard from someone. This is an easy way to encourage folks to be warm and friendly in public settings, and listen enough to come back with a story. Wonder to yourself what God might be doing in the life of the person who shared something with you.

J. Hold a Church Meeting in a Public Space (INVESTING PRESENCE) – Work with the team(s) and council or leadership board of your church to consider holding the occasional meeting in a public space rather than in the church building. Invite people to notice and share: What did they notice in themselves? How did the meeting feel different? What did they notice in the people who were gathered around them? How did people react to this church group meeting in public? What might God be teaching us through this experience? What might God be up to in that public space and in the lives of the people gathered there?

K. Support a Local Business (INVESTING RELATIONSHIP) - Is there a local restaurant or pub near your congregation where the owner or manager(s) are well known by folks at your church? Consider asking them when a slow day is for business, and plan a simple gathering (or church meeting, as in "J" above) as a way to bring some business in during a slow time. Make sure to budget some time to connect with the owner or manager(s) before or after your visit. Ask yourself; "What is God doing in their life, and how does this business connect to what they are passionate about?" What might be some other opportunities to partner with that business to be a blessing to others?

L. Offer Drive-Through Prayers (INVESTING PRESENCE) – If your congregation is on a main road that gets a fair amount of traffic, consider offering a "drive through prayer station" during a time of heavier traffic. (If you are not located on a busy road, find a parking lot in a busier spot where you would be allowed to try this). Put a table out with a big sign that says "Drive Thru Prayers". Pray with folks at their car window. Notice what the responses are. Notice who stops and who doesn't. What might God be teaching you through that experience?

M. Pray Even on Halloween (INVESTING PRESENCE) – If your congregation does a "trunk or treat" event, add a table for prayers and candles to remember anyone who has died. All Saints Sunday is very near Halloween, and you could frame it as a way to honor and celebrate the people we have lost. Allow community members to light a candle. Engage them and listen to who they are remembering and why those people were important to them. What do you notice about who stops to talk and who doesn't? What might God be teaching you?