

# Church Research Project

*Please familiarize yourself with this entire document before doing anything!*

*Updated due to MissionInsite changes 4/19/2020*

*Updated with links to the option Mosaic Data Grid Sheet(s) 4/2022*

## Section 1 - Overview

### Our Goal:

To utilize current tools to think about local ministry context. Ideally, students should engage with real data, examine real communities, and provide helpful insights for a real church. Since all United Methodist Annual Conferences utilize MissionInsite as the data source, we are focusing on that tool for this project.

You have (hopefully) put yourself into a project group. Please understand that this is not a group project, but those groups allow you to offer some reflection (and even support) to each other as you work. *You are being graded on your participation in the project groups.*

*Note: If you are doing this work on your own church (one that you attend or lead), be discreet in the ways that you approach the project. Avoid stepping on any toes!*

### Project Activities:

This is a three-week project (during Weeks 4, 5, and 6 of the term), although your final analysis document is due at the end of Week 7 (allowing you a little more time to ponder and package the results before submitting your report to Tom). Keeping in mind that Week 5 is Gathering Days, the overall goal is to perform the following tasks each week:

#### Week 4 – Data Gathering

Complete **Section 2** of this document.

- If you actually participate in the life of the church (i.e. you attend, or serve in leadership), you may be able to do this without significant conversations with anyone else, although some interaction may be helpful.
- If you are doing a research project on one of our partner churches that have offered to participate, you will need to **schedule a conversation** with the pastor this week. That conversation shouldn't take more than an hour or so.

After you've obtained initial information, **run initial MissionInsite reports**, based on a **five-mile radius** of the church (if you've already been playing around with the system, feel free to run a different radius size if you want). Tom has provided online video instructions for obtaining reports.

***These are 2020 changes:***

**Obtain (but don't necessarily print) these reports:**

- ***QuickInsite***
- ***FullInsite***
- ***ExecutiveInsite***
- ***ReligiousInsite***
- ***ReligiousInsite Priorities***
- ***MinistryInsite***
- ***MinistryInsite Priorities***

- You will primarily use the *FullInsite*, *MinistryInsite*, and *ReligiousInsite* reports for your work; please obtain the others so that you can see what they contain. You *might* want to print these reports, but you may also be able to work without actually printing anything at all. Note that these two specific reports are lengthy.
- **You may share all of these reports with the church you are working on as long as it is a United Methodist church. If you are not working on a UM church, chat with Tom before sharing any reports.**
- **You may not share them with anyone else** (the information is copyrighted, and the MissionInsite user license prohibits sharing of the information) – if someone else wants to see the kind of information available from MissionInsite, there are [sample reports available](#).

**Gather information** on the lifestyle segments that appear to be present in the community.

- In the FullInsite report, look at the *Mosaic Lifestyle Segmentation Types*, which are usually listed on page 24 (the same groups should be listed on page 14 of the *ExecutiveInsite* report).
- Download these two worksheets from the Project Resources page in Canvas:
  - *Mosaic Lifestyle Segment Worksheet*
  - *Worship Lifestyle Segment Worksheet*
- Identify the top five lifestyle segments in the community, and list them in the appropriate boxes of the *Mosaic Lifestyle Segment Worksheet* and the *Worship Lifestyle Segment Worksheet*. You don't need to get terribly detailed yet; you'll work more on these in Week 5.
- Log-in to MissionInsite, and go to the [Mission Impact Guide](#) page. There you will find a downloadable sheet for each of the five lifestyle segments; download the five relevant sheets. Also download the Group overview for each segment that you have. For example, if one of your groups is *C14 – Boomers and Boomerangs*, you would download that sheet, as well as the *Group C00 – Booming with Confidence* sheet. You might have more than one lifestyle segment within a given group.

**Spend some time** looking at who seems to be present in the congregation, and who seems to be absent (or underrepresented). You're just starting to mull this over, so don't get too carried away!

Be sure to **check in with others** in your project group – see how they are doing, let them know how you are doing, and do a little reflection with them (there are prompts in the online discussion for this).

**What is due for Week 4:** submit the pdf of the FullInsite report, along with a scan of (or document containing) the Mosaic Lifestyle Segment Worksheet with the top five lifestyle segments listed (you don't need to provide any other information yet).

## **Week 5 – Initial Analysis (and Gathering Days – yes, we do meet)**

Your focus this week is on **processing** what you have found so far, and starting to synthesize some ideas and responses. So, you're focusing on the two downloaded worksheets.

- Using the Mission Impact Guide documents that you downloaded in Week 4, **fill out the rest of the information** in both *Mosaic Lifestyle Segment Worksheet* and the *Worship Lifestyle Segment Worksheet*. This may take a couple of hours. **Look for insights in both Bandy books as you do so!**
- Look at **similarities and differences** between the information in Section 2 and the data you are identifying in those two worksheets. What are the commonalities between the groups that are represented in the church? What are the differences between those that are represented and those that are not? What is worship for this congregation? And what might it be? How do you describe the worship experience using Bandy's framework?
- When you are thinking about **worship**, remember that Bandy doesn't follow the old classification pattern of traditional/contemporary – that isn't his point at all. He is interested in the message and its form, and that way(s) that it does (or does not) resonate with different groups.

- Keep in mind that **no single church will be able to address everyone's needs**; but there may be groups that are absent which share some commonalities with those that are present – and that could indicate an opening for connections that don't exist.
- **OPTIONAL** – You can also use the new Google Sheet (the **Mosaic Data Grid**) to create a quick visual overview of the data. See the LUMC 2.5-mile radius matrix file for an example of what that can look like. If this is helpful, feel free to do it; if not, no need!

Remember to **check in with others** in your project group – see how they are doing, let them know how you are doing, and do a little reflection with them (there are prompts in the online discussion for this).

## Week 6 (and Maybe Week 7) – Local Ministry Needs

Read through the rest of the **FullInsite** report.

- Do you see ministry **opportunities** in the local area that might be helpful – i.e. opportunities for the congregation to bless others? This is often related to issues of poverty, the presence of single-parent households, and the like.

Read through the **MinistryInsite** reports. Note that this report provides three different kinds of overviews of the same data. There are some brief explanations about interpretation of data on the last page of the report (including the “Comparative Index” measure).

- Based on **religious preferences and affiliations**, do you see possibilities for ministry? [These are in the **ReligiousInsite** report.]
- Are there potential insights to be gained from the “Reasons for **Non-Participation**” section? [You will find relevant information in the **ReligiousInsite Priorities**, **MinistryInsite**, and **MinistryInsite Priorities** reports, but don't get too bogged-down here.]

Depending on the local area, this might be a time to run **additional reports**.

- These could be **radius** reports which are either larger or smaller than the initial five-mile study you did in Week 4, or
- A **polygon** search (or more than one) which looks at particular areas around the congregation. This is particularly helpful if you see substantial dissimilarities in the lifestyle segments, or other demographic data in the FullInsite report. Tom has provided an online video demonstrating this.

**Complete Section 3** (this can continue into Week 7 if needed). This summarizes your findings. Be sure to submit this document (and the separate *Mosaic Lifestyle Segment Worksheet*, if you decided to use that) for grading. If you were doing a student project for one of our partner churches, please schedule your followup conversation with the leader of that church either this week or next week.

As always, remember to **check in with others** in your project group – see how they are doing, let them know how you are doing, and do a little reflection with them (there are prompts in the online discussion for this).

**Note:** *In this course, we aren't able to do the more advanced reporting that is available if you actually upload congregant data. If you want to try that for your own needs, please note that you need to have a different access level in MissionInsite (a change made by whomever administers your MissionInsite account), and access to congregant data. This allows you to do an “Opportunity Scan” which provides very helpful data about the potential impact that your congregants might have on the community, as well as funding potential and other information. Tom has provided an online video demonstrating this, just for your information.*

## Week 7 – Complete the Demographics Project

Complete the two worksheets below (Sections 2 and 3 of this document), and submit them.

- Section two can just be fill-in-the-blank-space in the worksheet.
- Section 3 should be 7-10 pages long, in narrative form, thinking through your discoveries and responding to the prompts.
- You are also welcome to submit completed versions of the Mosaic Lifestyle Segment Worksheet and Worship Lifestyle Segment Worksheet if those are helpful as well.

## Section 2 – Initial Information

Your overall impressions, or the overall impressions of the leader with whom you speak, of significant elements within that particular church (sort of the personality of the group). Once you start working through the next few steps, you'll discover some additional language to describe some of this (also in the Bandy books); don't worry about that now – you're just gathering basic impressions.

Area of Focus	Your Impressions
Attitudes & Mood: i.e. progressive or traditional; focused on success/affluence or not; desire for personal growth or not; that sort of thing.	
Leadership: what kind of leader does the congregation seem to prefer?	
Hospitality: what does fellowship time look like? What does a first-time attender experience?	
Worship: what kind of worship services do they offer? What kind of sermons are preached?	
Education: is the church appreciative of studies and learning? Do they prefer free-form, or curriculum-based, or...???	
Small Group: does the church have a small group ministry? If so, what is the general model?	
Outreach: what kind of outreach is done? This comes in two different kinds: (1) outreach people desire, and (2) outreach they like to provide.	
Communication: how do people like to find out about church stuff? Newsletters? Emails? Announcements? Website?	

### Section 3 – Analysis & Summary

Based on what you know now – including the resource information you’ve looked at in the Mission Impact Guide downloads (which you obtained in Week 4), and both Bandy books (*See, Know & Serve*; *Worship Ways*), as well as the two downloaded worksheets, answer the following questions. This will become the basis for your conversation with others about your findings (and don’t forget to turn in this document with answers for your project grade).

1. How do you classify (in MissionInsite/Bandy terms) these areas from Section 2 (your initial impressions)?
  - a. Attitudes & Mood
  - b. Leadership
  - c. Hospitality
  - d. Worship
  - e. Education
  - f. Small Group
  - g. Outreach
  - h. Communication
2. Thinking about the two worksheets you downloaded and completed, how well do those impressions (which you obtained either from personal observation or from an interview) match what you see in the lifestyle segments which you believe to be represented in the church?
3. Still in the worksheets: of the lifestyle segments which are not present in the church, are there reasons for that absence, based on the preferences they have (as opposed to what is present in the church)?
4. This one is a little tricky, but feel free to think “out of the box” – are there sufficient resonances/similarities between the core groups that are present, and one or more groups that are not, which could provide space for a new kind of ministry connection? You’ll need to think about Section 2, the worksheets, and your answers so far in this section to derive an answer to this one. Remember – as we’ve already said – no church can be everything to everyone, so there may be segments that are just too “alien” in terms of this church’s personality...
5. In the information you saw in terms of local demographic (poverty, family units, projected growth or lack thereof, etc.) do you see opportunities for this church to reach out and bless the community in new ways? Are there projected downturns that the church leaders need to be aware of? Is there significant growth?