

## How Well Do You Know the Community Around Your Church?

How well do you know the community/neighborhood around your church? My hunch is that folks in most churches would say they have a good idea about who lives there and what their life situations are like. But we are just as likely to make assumptions without really checking things out. That is one of the values of a tool that pastors and the lay leadership of congregations in the West Ohio Conference have available to them through an organization known as Percept and through a website:

<http://www.link2lead.com>. It is one way that you can gain a better understanding of the folks who live in the community around your church.

### Link to Lead

In last month's edition, I included an article about new features in "Link 2 Lead" If you are reading online, just click on the link or type this address into your browser: <http://www.link2lead.com>. The districts and the annual conference partner to make Percept and Link 2 Lead



available to congregations across the annual conference. When you have registered and logged into the site then you can take advantage of discounted prices on the products that Percept offers. The three basic products offered by Percept/Link 2 Lead include:

**First View Reports** – These reports offer a six page overview of the area around your church. The standard First View report gives demographic information on a 1.5 mile radius around the location of your congregation. You can download to your computer and/or print the pdf report. Recently Percept added a new feature to the First View Reports. Registered users can now create their own custom First View Reports. These reports are available in three formats:



1. **Zip code** – choose a zip code to create a report for given area of the user's choosing.
2. **Radius** – Select a radius around a given address location (your church or an area that the user might be targeting for ministry). The user can adjust the size of the radius (1 mile, 3 miles, etc) and the radius area can be moved around on a Google map.
3. **Polygon** – Create a custom boundary report in which the user can define the area for "polygon" study with many sides and boundaries.

Registered users submit their First View report request. Usually within ten minutes or less, the user receives an e-mail with a link that will download the custom report. It is

great for doing "what ifs" and getting an overview of the demographic composition of a community or neighborhood. The best thing is that all the **First View reports are free** to registered users from a participating judicatory (in our case the West Ohio Conference).

**The Ministry Area Profile (MAP)** -- This product is a much more detailed demographic report that comes in a small three ring notebook. It also includes a set of overhead transparencies with information plotted on maps of the designated study area.



These studies are available for zip code, or in radius study area, or the polygon/custom study area. It takes about two or three weeks to get this study from Percept once it has been ordered. Registered users from participating judicatories receive a discount on this report. The basic cost is \$175.00 (versus \$340.00) for those who do not have a contract with Percept.

**Context/ReVision** -- I have not seen one of the Context ReVision studies first hand. Basically it has two parts. The Context Study compares the demographic makeup of the



user's congregation to the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood or community. Members and friends of the congregation complete detailed (anonymous) surveys. Percept then compares that information to the information available about the community. It helps a congregation to see where they are alike or different from the community around their church.

The ReVision part of this study is a guide for a process for a congregation to use in an effort to "revision" ministry. It is another tool that is intended to help a congregation in transforming its ministry to reach its community for Jesus Christ. The Context and ReVision study is available for a cost of \$395.00 plus \$.95 per survey.

Feel free to visit and use this site (we are paying for it). It is useful in learning more about your community and neighborhood. For example the First View report (and the MAP Study in more detail) will name the kinds of church programs that folks in your community would prefer if offered by your church. *The information from Percept does not take the place of talking to people in your community about their needs and what they are looking for in a church.* However, the Percept information could help your congregation begin to focus on the needs of persons in your community. Those folks then might try out your church as a place where they can connect to God and other seekers after Christ in your congregation.

If finances are an issue in ordering the Ministry Area Profile or the Context/ReVision Study, please contact me at the district office ([jwaugh@wocumc.org](mailto:jwaugh@wocumc.org)). I would be glad to talk with you about the district partnering with your church in obtaining one of these studies if you are ready to use them in furthering your congregation's outreach in the community/neighborhood around the church.