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The Bishop's Certificate and Diploma in  
Theology for Ministry

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# Situation Analysis

*for Ministry and Mission*

## Handbook Two

*Community Audit*

Name:



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*Document History:*

<i>Version 1.1</i>	<i>March 2007</i>
<i>Version 1.2</i>	<i>March 2008</i>
<i>Version 2</i>	<i>August 2009</i>
<i>Version 3</i>	<i>September 2009</i>
<i>Version 4</i>	<i>June 2010</i>
<i>Version 5</i>	<i>May 2011</i>

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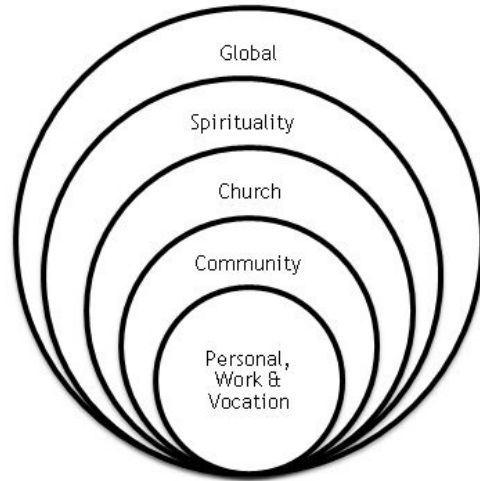
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# Introduction to this Handbook

As you embark on your research in this second handbook of guided situation analysis, we recommend that you carefully re-read the *General Introduction* provided in the first handbook (the *Personal, Work and Vocational Audit*). You can also read the *General Introduction* on the NSTM website.



In the first handbook, the *Personal, Work and Vocational Audit*, of this situation analysis process, you addressed some issues relating to your own life, your work and your vocation. You undertook these exercises as a way of understanding the person you are, what makes you ‘tick’, and the ways that your family background, education and work have contributed to the development of your ‘point of view’.

In the second handbook, the *Community Audit*, we turn to look at the community in which we live and minister in order to gather data that will aid our understanding of the dynamics which shape it and the issues which confront it.

It is only when we understand the nature of the forces at work in our community, and the ways in which individuals and families cope with the issues that confront them, that we are able to engage in forms of mission which are relevant.

First let us acknowledge that speaking about our community is not such a straightforward matter these days as it was in the past. A characteristic of contemporary life is that people often inhabit more than one community.

So we may live in Newcastle or Maitland or Wyong, we may commute to work in Sydney or Cessnock or Terrigal, and we may be active participants in a Christian community in another suburb or town.

Then, in addition to our primary community, there are the sub-communities or “communities of interest” in which we are involved and which also contribute to our identity. These vary from such activities as participating in a particular sport or service club, to membership of women’s organisations or farming groups. While all these communities and sub-communities have a role in shaping our lives, in this *Community Audit* we are asking you to focus on the community in which you are already ministering or are preparing to minister, or where your church is located.

By making the community in which our church is located the focus of this audit we hope to develop an understanding of what is going on in the community which is the mission field of our local church, in order to identify some of the key characteristics and issues of that community.

In approaching this exercise you will note that you are asked to supply information about a range of activities and concerns represented in your community. This is not designed as an academic exercise in which you download pages of statistics about your community from the internet, although sometimes that form of information may have an important role to play. It is a much more hands-on kind of activity.

### ***Two approaches to undertaking community research***

The two main branches of research are generally referred to as quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research, as its name implies, is primarily to do with numbers or statistics and can be a very complex field of activity. There may be occasions on which you want to establish some “*hard facts*” and this may involve looking at the statistics provided by federal, state or local government via their publications, the internet or your public library. But as with all aspects of the Bishops Certificate and Diploma programmes you are being encouraged to develop a critical disposition. That means that you will need to look critically at any quantitative data that you wish to call upon in

terms of its accuracy and reliability. Some research may not be impartial but embrace subtle hidden agendas.

The second approach, qualitative research, is the main basis of our community audit. Instead of collating numbers, we seek to elicit people's views through questions which are more open-ended and which prompt them to reflect upon their own situation. This approach is much more concerned with the researcher's ability to listen to people and to encourage them respond in ways they feel comfortable with.

### ***What should I be listening for?***

You may recall hearing at learning weekends that the structure and process of this Certificate programme owes a great deal to the pioneering educator Paulo Freire who worked for a number of years with the World Council of Churches. Freire's early work was with oppressed peasant communities in his native Brazil, and from that experience emerged the concept of people who want to transform their world by undertaking a range of situation analysis exercises. Some of the insights gained from his motivational work with communities around the world including Africa and the South Pacific (New Zealand) can be helpful to us as we set out to understand what is happening in our community.

First there is Freire's insight that all of us in the community are both teachers and learners. This means that instead of pursuing the old strategy that the missionary is the fount of all knowledge committed to sharing a liberating message with the benighted heathen, we approach the situation very much as learners, listening to what the community has to say to us. Of course there may well be moments in which our own knowledge can make a contribution to others' understanding. So the situation analysis process is one of mutual learning.

Secondly, Freire insisted that the process of documenting what is happening in a community works better if, rather than talking to people individually, one works with a group of people. One encounters a broader range of views through people reflecting upon shared experience.

Thirdly, Freire found it very useful for the researcher to identify what he called “generative words” or “generative themes”. These are most often emotive words (such as “soldier” or “gun” in his Latin American peasant situations, or maybe words such as “graffiti”, “litter” or “violence” in ours) or generative themes (like “the Council isn’t interested in us”, or “I blame the schools”) which arouse strong feelings and lead to energy for change. So it’s worthwhile keeping an ear to the ground for the words and themes which spark emotional responses in your community, and making a note of these in your journal.

### ***How do I go about it?***

Look upon the audit as a “listening exercise” which you don’t have to undertake on your own but can be done in collaboration with others in your Parish Ministry Team, local group, congregation or neighbourhood focus group. You do not need to work on it on your own and learning how to collaborate with others in a range of activities is a vital practical skill for ministry.

What you are being encouraged to do is to seek out ways of listening to what people in your community have to say to you about their lives. So you need to be out and about identifying the people who can provide the information that the questions in the audit seek to establish.

Sometimes your best source of information may be an individual and your choice of person will seem obvious. If you want information about health provision and the most common ailments in your community, the best person to ask would be your doctor or community nurse. If you need information about educational provision consult a local teacher. If you want to identify your community’s problems why not ask a social worker, or a community worker or perhaps a policeman?

Another useful approach which is comparatively easy to organise is that used by various organisations with interests which vary from marketing products to identifying political issues, that of establishing a small Focus Group of perhaps six to eight people.

A neighbourhood focus group offers a number of advantages. It avoids for instance, asking your close friends or members of your congregation what they think is happening in the community. The “danger” with close friends and members of the congregation is that they are likely to be of a similar age, share similar interests and hold similar views to you, so the exercise might end up documenting churchgoers’ views rather than the community’s views.

So we suggest you consider setting up a focus group of six or more, made up of people in your neighbourhood. You will need to make sure that there is a good spread of ages (including the voice of the young) and you could make use of the group for Sessions 3 to 12 of the exercise. This is not to suggest that the group would have to meet ten times. Perhaps it could meet on three occasions in which some of the key questions in three sessions are considered each time.

### ***Listen for stories***

When people begin to talk about their community, they quite often recall stories from the past about rugged pioneer leaders, amusing community characters or perhaps sites of aboriginal significance. These stories from the past can be powerful *generative themes* in the history of a locality and also on occasions include geographical features. The writer once lived in a UK village where there was a large rock which looked like a hunched figure. Legend had it that this was a poor widow lost in a snowstorm who had been frozen into stone, a folk tale that every person in the village knew by heart from childhood. Such tales are important pieces of social history. There is an opportunity in Sessions 11 and 12 to note such stories in your journal.

Before we start this audit it would be a good idea if you could refresh your memory about the expectations relating to your situation analysis journal, together with the notes on the use of the internet and confidentiality. You will find these after the *General Introduction* in the first handbook.

# Session One

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## MAPPING MY COMMUNITY

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When it comes to embarking upon an audit of one's community many people have found that drawing a map of the local community indicating its main features to be a stimulating and helpful exercise. This is a project we invite you now to embark upon. Your map doesn't have to be a great work of art and where there is a group of students from the same locality, it is an exercise which really benefits from sharing and collaboration.

There is no "right" way of producing your map. It can be drawn freehand, or you can use an already printed map to which you should add your community's major features: for example where schools, churches and shops are located. Some students have overlaid a street map of their locality with tracing paper on which they have superimposed the various foci and points of interest in their community. If you have a better idea, or some artistic flair please feel free to use it!

When you come to determine the area you are proposing to map, your project will be more meaningful in terms of mission and ministry if your it relates primarily to the community to which your local church ministers. Of course there may well be important social provisions (such as shopping centres and amenities) which lie beyond your parish boundaries and you could indicate those with arrows in the borders of your map.

So, if you live in a city or large suburban area, your primary focus should be upon the locality to which your church ministers and in which it engages in mission.

If you live in a country town you might map the entire town.

If your Church is located in a small town or village which serves a large rural area you may wish the map to focus upon the town/village but also indicate features of the rural area: for example, types of farming, rural industries or mining activities.

If it is practical for you to do so, you might like to consider taking a walk around your local community. Often these days we lose touch with the “feel” of our neighbourhood because we only view it from a car or a bus. Some previous participants on this programme have found exploring their neighbourhood on foot a very revealing exercise as they discover community groups, churches, and meeting places they didn't know existed. Even if you live in the countryside, taking a walk can uncover some interesting things.

Some of the important things to indicate on your map (where relevant) are:

- The street pattern;
- Churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious buildings;
- Schools, tertiary institutions, and other places of learning;
- Statutory Health, medical and welfare facilities;
- Voluntary agencies working with the community;
- Social, sporting and youth facilities;
- Places where people gather, for example cafes and pubs;
- Major industries and employers;
- Leisure and entertainment sites;
- Shops or shopping centres.

You may find it helpful to share your proposals for your map with family, friends, members of your congregation, as well as members of your Local Group. You are asked to spend a proportion of the time you devote to Situation Analysis each session working on your map, adding new features or details prompted by the session's questions.

**1. Begin your map by drawing your village/town/suburb street plan.**

Now please respond to the following questions, noting your reflections in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 2. What are the things that you most like about your community?**
- 3. What things do you most dislike about your community?**
- 4. What to you are the most important features of this community?**
- 5. No community is perfect. What things would you like to change?**
- 6. What characteristics do you think people in your community share in common?**

## Session Two

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### MY IMPRESSIONS OF MY COMMUNITY

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Each one of us possesses a considerable amount of knowledge about our local community. This is sometimes referred to by sociologists and others who make a study of society as a person's "social knowledge". If we are immersed in our community we absorb all manner of information about the way it is structured, how it functions and the ways in which people relate to one another. In inviting you to note your impressions of various facets of your community, we are asking you to share what you know by way of personal experience about your community.

Our social knowledge may not be as precise as scientific data about our community - the statistics provided by national and local government, as well as research organisations and departments about the structure and dynamics of an area - but because it is based upon our experience, it helps us paint a picture of what "real life" is like.

Of course scientific knowledge is also an important tool for us to work with as you will discover as your situation analysis develops.

So let's garner some of your impressions about your community. If you want to involve other people in helping you think through these areas, by all means initiate conversations about these matters with your friends or with members of your local congregation.

Please respond to the following questions, noting your reflections in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 7. What things do people get most enjoyment from in the community?**
- 8. What activities contribute most to the building of community?**
- 9. What factors do you consider to be most destructive of community?**
- 10. Where are the gathering points of the community where people meet, pursue interests or relax?**
- 11. What would you identify as the main needs that people in your community have?**
- 12. What hopes or aspirations do you detect in your community?**
- 13. What are the main social problems you identify in the community?**
- 14. What are the most important networks (formal or informal) that you can identify within the community?**
- 15. How is your local congregation already involved in addressing social problems in your community?**
- 16. How are members of your congregation connected with the networks that you have identified?**
- 17. Can you identify any possible opportunities for local Church action and mission?**
- 18. Now take another look at your developing map. Some of the above questions may have helped you recall some more features which need to be added to your map, if so add them.**

# Sessions Three & Four

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## WORK AND INCOME

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Our social knowledge may have suggested to us that at a time of global recession there are an increasing number of people out of work in our community and that as a consequence more families are facing economic hardship. Here the interaction between our social knowledge and scientific knowledge becomes important.

By referring to the up-to-date statistics about employment and unemployment provided by government agencies or research projects on the internet, we can check whether the “hunches” we have about unemployment in our community are correct or not.

This interaction between our social knowledge and scientific knowledge is said to produce a third kind of knowledge - transformative knowledge - which as its name suggests - alerts us to the possibility of us as Ministering Communities in Mission working with others to bring about significant change in the community.

However, there is a caution we need to be aware of when we make reference to scientific data. For example, when confronted by official statistics about unemployment, it is important that we develop a critical approach to this form of information. Some sources may “massage” the statistics about employment and unemployment to put the most optimistic gloss on the situation.

In some places the official figures on unemployment may exclude groups like women in part-time work, or young people out of work and living with their parents, from the statistics. Again in some situations local community groups have been formed to address issues of unemployment and may have undertaken their own research about the situation. This could prove to be a valuable alternative source of information for us.

Please respond to the following questions, noting your reflections in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 19. What are the primary jobs that people in your community work at?**
- 20. What proportion of the local population is employed and unemployed?**
- 21. What does your area produce by way of goods and services?**
- 22. Where are the main markets for these goods and services?**
- 23. To what extent are households managing or struggling to cope economically?**
- 24. If there are really poor families in your locality, how do they manage to survive?**
- 25. Are there any signs of an alternative economy of community-led or home-based initiatives? How effective is it?**
- 26. Which agencies are actively working to alleviate poverty?**
- 27. How is your local congregation involved with people in their work places?**
- 28. How does your local congregation celebrate what is produced and achieved by people in employment in your local area?**

- 29. How is your local congregation engaged in meeting the needs of those who are struggling in your local community?**
  
- 30. Can you identify any possible opportunities for local Church action and mission?**
  
- 31. Now take another look at your developing map. The above questions may have prompted you to recall more features to be added to your map, if so add them.**

# Sessions Five & Six

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## PRIMARY SERVICES

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In this exercise you are invited to investigate what are often referred to as the primary services in your community. These are the basic services generally provided by agencies or government to ensure the population's wellbeing. They include matters such as the supply of water, electricity, and gas, the disposal of sewage and household rubbish, and items such as the vitally important provision of healthcare, education and transport links.

Remember as you approach these issues that it is important to note primary services which missing from your community, as well as those for which provision is obvious and appears to be functioning well.

Another issue to bear in mind is the identification of types of families or groups which may for a number of reasons feel excluded from any of these forms of primary provision.

In reflecting on education for example, your map may indicate the presence of a number of schools in your area. But there are some underlying questions which you may be able to address like the degree of choice that parents have in sending children to school, or the reasons some parents may have opted for home schooling, or whether there may be children who have been excluded from school for antisocial behaviour.

As you begin to see beyond the prompting questions to some of the underlying issues, just keep posing the question "why?" to presenting problems. By continually asking "why" one is often led to uncover some of the root causes

of problems and behaviours in community. And in many instances the three simple questions associated with critical social analysis, *who decides? who benefits? who is disadvantaged?* can help us discern some of the fundamental dynamics of a community.

Please see what you can unearth concerning the following issues, making notes in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 32. Is your locality served by a good public transport system? What forms of transport are available? Where public transport is not readily available, how do people travel?**
- 33. What leisure facilities (playgrounds, sports fields, swimming pools, etc) are provided in your locality?**
- 34. How convenient and accessible are shops and banks for people wishing to use them?**
- 35. What health services are available in the community?**
- 36. What are the most common ailments that people suffer from?**
- 37. What is available by way of educational facilities (nursery, primary, secondary, tertiary, other structured learning opportunities)?**
- 38. Do you consider the provision of basic services adequate for your community? What additional provision does the community need?**
- 39. Are there any people in your community who feel excluded from these services? What are the reasons for this?**
- 40. Does your local congregation have particular connections with any of the facilities that you have identified?**

- 41. Are there basic services that are missing in your local community that could be provided by your local congregation?**
- 42. Can you identify any possible opportunities for local Church action and mission?**
- 43. Have any of these questions prompted you to make any additions or modifications to your map? If so add them.**

# Sessions Seven & Eight

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## FAMILIES AND HOUSING

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A former Prime Minister of the UK, Margaret Thatcher, once famously claimed in a speech that there is no such thing as society, only men and women, individuals and families who voluntarily comprise communities. This statement reflected her particular political ideology which revolves about the importance of the individual's freedom of choice and the least possible state intervention into people's lives. Ranged against this view are other ideologies which advocate various degrees of state provision and management of welfare "from the womb to the tomb".

Some of the questions you addressed in your Personal Audit may have helped you consider the important principles which you think should govern community, national and international life, and how it is that you have come to hold these beliefs which in turn inform your attitude towards issues that arise in your community.

Family life and housing provision are areas of living in community that frequently arouse strong feelings in us. Our ideologically informed views, which may be either explicit (recognised) or implicit (not recognised) very often determine our reactions to situations we observe. The important thing is that we recognise that the answers to some questions will be deeply influenced by our point of view.

These days many different models of "family" abound in the community. Some people choose to marry, others to cohabit, others to form civil

partnerships. In some communities there may be significant numbers of one-parent families, or examples of two people of the same gender parenting children.

Some cultures have a strong sense of the extended family in which a range of relatives take responsibility for the care and nurture of the young. Some national surveys (including one in New Zealand more than a decade ago) have suggested that there were more people living in alternative rather than within traditional family structures. So identifying family patterns today often proves a more complex task than it was for our forebears.

And of course this may have profound implications for our mission and ministry if our Church community appears to affirm only one kind of family structure.

Please see what you can discover in response to the following questions, noting your reflections in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 44. What is the average size of the family in your locality?**
- 45. Most communities contain a range of expressions of family (the nuclear family, the extended family, the single parent family, etc). What styles of family life are noticeable in your locality?**
- 46. What major problems are you aware of that confront families in your locality?**
- 47. In terms of housing, what are the proportions of private ownership and public provision?**
- 48. What is the predominant style of housing – farmhouses, bungalows, terraced, flats/apartments, high rise, etc?**
- 49. Are there any major housing developments proposed for your area? Who is promoting these?**

- 50. Are there any homeless people? What action is being taken in relation to them?**
- 51. What provision is made for housing the aged or the disabled?**
- 52. How does the make-up of families in your local congregation compare to what you have discovered about families in your local community?**
- 53. Is your local congregation drawn from people who live in particular kinds of housing, or areas, in your local community? If so, which areas or types of housing are not represented?**
- 54. If there are to be new housing developments in your area how might your local congregation help to build community amongst them?**
- 55. Can you identify any possible opportunities for local Church action and mission?**
- 56. If this set of questions has produced information which should be added to your map, do that now.**

## Sessions Nine & Ten

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### POLITICS AND ECOLOGY

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The themes of politics and ecology may at first sight appear to be strange bedfellows. A very basic understanding of politics is that it is primarily concerned with decision-making, and an important element in this is the issue of power. This raises questions of who wields power (individuals, corporations, financiers, governments, etc) and how power is being used or abused. Politics also raises concerns about communities which feel themselves to be powerless, who lose hope and exhibit apathy or violence, or in some instances both.

When we consider ecology, we are similarly confronted by issues of power and decision-making, with battles frequently enjoyed by corporations who are wanting to exploit the earth's natural resources, and environmentalists who are anxious to protect them. In our time the destruction of the rain forests in order to satisfy the developed world's food markets, with the consequent eradication of the mode of life of many indigenous communities, has become a controversial issue. Nor are these matters, as you will know, confined to far away places. The mining enterprises in our own region raise important issues for many people as does the controversy surrounding climate change and proposals for a carbon tax.

Power and powerlessness have become prominent foci for theological reflection these days as churches wrestle with questions of social justice. On the international scene the World Council of Churches' programme called *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, stimulates both theological study

and practical action about a range of interventions. Nationally, Church mission societies like the Australian Board of Mission supports initiatives to help marginalised communities overseas which feel themselves to be powerless. On the local level Church agencies like the Samaritans Foundation function in partnership with local communities to help them to confront their apparent powerlessness and work for change.

You may want to keep some of these theological and practical connections in mind as you embark upon this part of the Community Audit.

Please respond to the following questions, noting your reflections in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 57. Who do you regard as the five most powerful people in your community? In what ways are they powerful?**
- 58. What are the main political issues which concern your community?**
- 59. Are there any local groups which are raising awareness or lobbying on political issues?**
- 60. To what extent do local people – men, women, young people – participate in local politics?**
- 61. What natural resources are located in or around your community?**
- 62. What are the main environmental issues facing the community?**
- 63. What groups concerned with environmental/ecological issues are you aware of?**
- 64. How is your local congregation involved with the political concerns of local people?**

- 65. How does your local congregation engage with environmental issues in your local area?**
- 66. Can you identify any possible opportunities for local Church action and mission?**
- 67. If the questions for these two sessions have produced information which should be included on you map, make those revisions now.**

# Sessions Eleven & Twelve

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## CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

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In this last exercise we are looking at aspects of culture and lifestyle within the community. The root of the word “culture” is the same as that within “agriculture” and describes something which is not static but which is growing and developing. This sometimes makes it difficult for us to detect major shifts of culture as they are taking place, but it is nevertheless important that we try to identify some of these as well as those aspects of culture which appear to remain stable or static.

Contemporary Australia is a multicultural country in which a range of cultures contribute to our national identity. In addition to the Aboriginal first settlers, and the initial wave of European settlers arriving from Great Britain, we have seen many different nationalities, each with their own cultures, traditions and religious practices making Australia their home.

Some of our communities may therefore embrace a range of cultures, while others might feature a single dominant culture with little representation of other cultures. As with other elements of the community we have been examining, the cultural “mix” of our community is going to call for sensitivity in the planning of our ministry and mission.

While issues of lifestyle have a fundamental relationship with culture - take the iconic Australian barbecue which to many people overseas encapsulates both our culture and our lifestyle - they are also very much connected with the values which we espouse.

People may be born into a culture, but many aspects of lifestyle are choices that people make in the light of their needs, their values and their aspirations. So some of the following questions are designed to help you to explore these areas.

Please respond to the following questions, noting your reflections in your situation analysis learning journal:

- 68. Which cultures are present in your community and how do they relate to one another?**
- 69. If there is a dominant culture, describe its main characteristics?**
- 70. Is there any discrimination (eg on the basis of race or gender) detectable in the locality?**
- 71. What are the changes of which the community is most aware at this time? Are these changes welcomed or resisted?**
- 72. What are the main features of your community's lifestyle?**
- 73. What are the major values implicit in these lifestyles?**
- 74. How do people outside the community (the media for example) portray your local community?**
- 75. Many communities recount stories which constitute a "shared memory" of the community history and moments of crises. Are you aware of any such stories? Can you cite one or two examples in your Journal?**
- 76. How are the various cultures in your local community reflected in the make-up and activities of your local congregation?**

- 77. How does your local congregation help or hinder the acceptance of the changes going on in your local community?**
  
- 78. Can you identify any possible opportunities for local Church action and mission? For example, do opportunities arise from the changes your community is facing?**
  
- 79. If your Situation Analysis work has suggested any useful additions to your map, add these now.**

Your map should now be more-or-less complete.

You need to bring your map and your situation analysis journal to the session at the next learning weekend so that you can discuss it with your fellow participants.

Please therefore do not submit your situation analysis journal to your local group leader until after the learning weekend.