



Faithful Over a Few Things

How to Map What You Have and Put It to Work

A Systems Strategy Brief for Churches and Faith-Based Organizations

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The Herron Group, LLC

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Seeing What You Have

In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), a leader entrusts three people with different amounts to manage while he is away. Two of them put what they were given to work and grew it. The third buried his portion in the ground. When the leader returned, he did not praise the one who played it safe. He praised the ones who saw what they had and used it.

This parable is often taught as a lesson about spiritual gifts. But it is also one of the clearest teachings in Scripture about stewardship as a system. The people who succeeded did three things: they recognized what they had been given, they understood it could grow, and they took action. The one who failed did not lose anything. He simply never looked at what was in his hands and asked, "What can this become?"

Many churches are in a similar position today. Not because of neglect, and not because of poor leadership. The reality is that most ministry training focuses on spiritual formation, congregation care, and program delivery. Practical training in organizational management, asset identification, and strategic resource planning is rarely part of the preparation pastors and church leaders receive. This is true for churches with denominational support, and it is equally true for independent and community-founded congregations that may have significant assets without a structured way to identify or manage them.

That is what a resource map does. It is a simple, practical tool that helps you see what you have so you can make better decisions about where to go.

What Is a Resource Map?

A resource map is a structured inventory of everything your church has available to support its mission. Not just money. Everything.

Most churches, when asked what resources they have, start with the budget. That makes sense because the budget is what shows up in board meetings and business reports. But the budget only tells part of the story. A resource map tells the rest.

There are five categories of resources most churches have but do not always recognize:

Physical Resources

Your building, land, parking lot, kitchen, fellowship hall, sound equipment, vehicles, and furniture. These are things you can see and touch. Many of them sit unused for most of the week.

Human Resources

Your pastor, staff, volunteers, and congregation members. But beyond just counting people, this includes what those people know how to do. A church with a member who is a licensed electrician, a retired teacher, or a graphic designer has skills available that never show up on a balance sheet.

Relational Resources

The trust your church holds in the community. Partnerships with other congregations, local businesses, schools, and civic organizations. Relationships with denominational bodies. Your reputation and history in the neighborhood.

Financial Resources

Tithes, offerings, grants, rental income, fundraiser proceeds, savings, and in-kind donations. This is the category most churches already track, but a resource map helps you see the full range, not just the general fund.

Intellectual Resources

Your programs, curricula, training materials, ministry models, and institutional knowledge. If your church has been running a successful youth program for fifteen years, that model itself is a resource, one that could be shared, taught, or adapted for other settings.

The concept of mapping organizational and community assets has deep roots. Researchers John Kretzmann and John McKnight developed what is known as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) in the early 1990s at Northwestern University. Their core insight was simple but powerful: communities and organizations that start by identifying what they already have, rather than focusing on what they lack, make better decisions and build more sustainable solutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

A resource map applies that same principle to your church. It does not ask what is wrong. It asks what is here.

How to Start Building Yours

You do not need special software or a consultant to begin. You need a few people, a few hours, and a willingness to look at your church as a whole system rather than a collection of separate ministries.

Step 1: Gather a small team.

Pull together three to five people who know different parts of the church well. Include someone from leadership, someone from operations (the person who knows where the keys are and how the building works), and someone who is deeply connected to the congregation.

Step 2: Walk through the five categories.

Use the categories above as your guide. For each one, ask: "What do we have in this area?" Write everything down. Do not judge or filter at this stage. The goal is to get a complete picture, not a perfect one.

Step 3: Note what is being used and what is not.

Next to each resource, mark whether it is currently being used, underused, or not used at all. This is where the most valuable discoveries happen. Most churches find that their underused resources far outnumber the ones they thought they had.

Step 4: Look for connections.

Resources do not exist in isolation. Your building (physical) combined with a member who is a certified fitness instructor (human) combined with a relationship with the local community center (relational) could become a weekly wellness class that serves the neighborhood and generates facility-use income. The resource map helps you see these combinations.

Step 5: Prioritize and plan.

Once the map is complete, identify the two or three resources with the highest potential for impact. What would it look like to put these to work intentionally? This is where resource mapping connects to strategic planning, and where the companion workbook can guide you further.

From Map to Strategy

A resource map is not a strategic plan. But it is where every good strategic plan should start.

Too many organizations jump straight to goal setting without first understanding what they are working with. That is like planning a road trip without checking how much gas is in the tank, who can drive, or whether the car has been serviced. You might pick a great destination, but you will not have a realistic plan for getting there.

"For which of you, wanting to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost?" Luke 14:28

Strategic planning without a resource map is building without counting.

Once you can see what you have, you can ask better questions: Which of our assets could serve more than one purpose? Which resources could generate income to help cover our operating costs? Where are we spending money on something a member could contribute through their skills? What partnerships could multiply what we already have?

These questions move you from reacting to planning. And they ground your goals in what is real rather than what is wished for.

Three Patterns Churches Discover

When churches go through this process, the same three discoveries come up again and again. Recognizing them can save you time and help you focus your energy.

The building that works one day a week.

Most church buildings sit empty or nearly empty five to six days a week. That is a physical asset generating no return for most of its life. Churches that map this resource often find opportunities for rental income, community programming, co-working space, or partnerships with local organizations that need affordable meeting space. The building is already paid for. The question is whether it is working as hard as the people inside it.

The skills no one thought to ask about.

Congregations are full of people with professional skills that the church has never inventoried. Accountants, tradespeople, marketers, counselors, project managers. These are not just volunteers waiting to be assigned to a committee. They are human capital that, when matched to the right need, can replace paid services, launch new programs, or mentor other members. You will not know what is available until you ask.

The reputation that is not being leveraged.

Many churches, especially those with deep roots in their neighborhoods, carry significant relational capital. The community trusts them. Other organizations want to partner with them. Funders look for community anchors. But if the church has never mapped that trust as a resource, it stays in the background, something everyone feels but no one uses strategically. Naming it as an asset is the first step toward putting it to work.

What Comes Next

This brief gives you the concept and a starting point. But building a complete resource map and connecting it to a strategic plan takes guided work.

The companion workbook, *Faithful Over a Few Things: The Resource Mapping Workbook*, walks you through the full process step by step. It includes worksheets for each resource category, facilitation guides for your mapping team, and planning templates that connect your map to actionable goals. It is designed for churches and small organizations with no prior experience in strategic planning or asset inventory.

If your church is ready to see the full picture of what God has placed in your hands, the workbook is where to begin.

About The Herron Group

The Herron Group, LLC helps mission-driven organizations measure their impact, redesign their systems, and implement practical AI solutions. Our Systems Strategy services help churches, nonprofits, and public-sector organizations see how their parts connect and build plans grounded in what they actually have.

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Reference

Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. ACTA Publications.