Group 1. On the outside looking in.

» When others are watching this congregation, what do you think they see?

» How does the neighborhood view our church?

» Are the doors open and the people hospitable to strangers?

» Are there assumptions about who can be part of our church?

» What gets in the way for them to know us better?

» What do you think they desire or need from us?

» Invite some newcomers to share what attracted them to our church.

Group 2. On the inside looking out.

» In what specific ways is our church a witness in our neighborhood?

» How have our actions improved life for people living around us?

» What prevents our collective light from shining brightly?

» What are our good deeds that bring glory to God?

» Do our mission goals and activities align with the needs of the community?

Brainstorm ideas that would help you become a more visible presence in your community and participate more fully in God’s future.
Interacting with God’s Story and Vision

A. Transforming our lives: a personal reflection

Distribute paper and pencils. The metaphors of salt and light remind us of our role as followers of Christ. What are we doing to preserve what is good, right, and true in the world? What actions proclaim to the world that we live in God’s light?

On one side of the paper, jot down things that you do or have done that demonstrate that you are the salt of the earth. Concentrate on actions that are community-related (not church-related), such as your workplace or volunteer activities. On the other side of the paper, note actions that are visible for all to see.

How are you being a bright light on God’s behalf? This is not an exercise in humility or pride, but an attempt to take an honest look at how you are living out God’s vision in your circle of contacts. Ask yourself: are you content with your engagement with the world? What prevents you from being salt and/or light? How can you move beyond your comfort zone in order to glorify God? What effect does “doing nothing” have on the needs of the world? What else can I do to make a difference in the world around me?

Pray for the courage to act boldly.

B. Spotlight on the congregation

Examine how your congregation measures up on the salt and light scales. Would you say that we are meeting the needs of the outside community: are we “scratching where it itches,” just doing what you think is needed, or are we an invisible or irrelevant presence? Form two groups to discuss the two dimensions of Christian witness and give them a list of the discussion questions. Allow ten minutes for the groups to respond to the questions. Then report findings to the entire group.

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C. Contemporary metaphors

A metaphor is a figure of speech that helps us understand a concept. Matthew 5:13-20 uses two metaphors.

» Do these metaphors still work for us?
» What other comparisons might help us figure out our role as a Christian community?

Consider these suggestions, then create your own words to describe the church metaphorically: the church as a coffee shop, a local bar/pub, a school for continuing education, a garden, or a community club.

» What are some similarities?
» Are these metaphors consistent with the images used in the New Testament?

D. Doing good deeds well

Discuss Darling’s questions in ABS, page 37.

» How does our “Mennonite ethic” inform our attitudes and actions?
» How is the broader church a guiding light in a dark world?
» What difference are Mennonites making in the world? Give specific examples from the past and present.