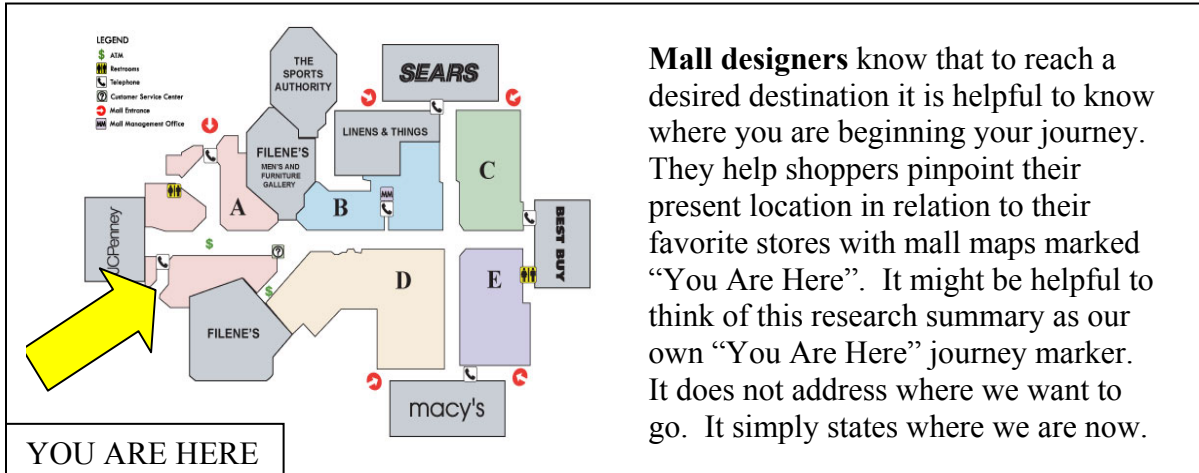


# SOUNDLIFE'S JOURNEY:

“Where We Are Now”



**Mall designers** know that to reach a desired destination it is helpful to know where you are beginning your journey. They help shoppers pinpoint their present location in relation to their favorite stores with mall maps marked “You Are Here”. It might be helpful to think of this research summary as our own “You Are Here” journey marker. It does not address where we want to go. It simply states where we are now.

*“I and a few with me...went out inspecting the walls of Jerusalem” – Nehemiah 2:12-13.*

This summary is a compilation of our joint research efforts to date.

## Our Ministry Context:

The ‘deep south’ of the Puget Sound region is a growing suburban area with an extremely high percentage of young military families. This is due to the close proximity of Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. Most of the heads of these families range in age from mid-twenties to mid-thirties. Many of them are originally from other areas of the country.



Overall, the number of households with married couples (as a percentage of total households) in our area had decreased to 53% as of the 2000 census. The frequency of divorce relative to the number of marriages reached 69 divorces per 100 marriages in 2002.

Economically, the south sound is an area in transition. Many improvements have been made to the local infrastructure and numerous businesses and new middle class housing developments are regularly appearing among the forests and older lower income neighborhoods. Property values are escalating very rapidly and many families appear to be overextending themselves financially, measuring how much they can afford by how much lenders are willing to let them borrow.

The local population is also transitioning racially and ethnically. The overwhelming majority of Thurston County was Caucasian in 1970 (98%). Today the North Thurston County schools report the student population as 67% Caucasian, 13% Asian, 9 % African American, 8% Hispanic, and 3% Native American. The population is also aging, despite the large number of young military families, with the 2000 census median age at 36.5 years up from 33.6 years in 1990. One factor contributing to this is an immigration of retirees moving into '55 and Older' communities, such as *Jubilee at Hawks Prairie*.

Politically, Washington is very closely divided between liberals and conservatives as evidenced in the last controversial election. The Puget Sound region is not. It is overwhelmingly liberal. The 'indigenous' people and government employees in the capitol city of Olympia are also strongly weighted to the left end of the political spectrum, which has the potential to affect church property issues. However, most of the 'transplanted' military population is conservative giving our immediate area something of a political balance between highly mobile conservatives and more imbedded liberals.

Recreationally, people in our area flock to outdoor activities such as hiking and camping. While the rainy season (October to June) can put a damper on many outdoor activities, our population still tends to be more physically active and conscious of fitness issues than those in many areas of the country. The combination of love for recreation and disregard for church shows itself in full little league baseball parks on summer Sunday mornings.

By all accounts, Washington is one of the least churched states in America. It is not one of the least spiritual. It is a haven for a remarkably wide array of religious cults and faith expressions, such as channeling cults (J.Z. Knight's Ramtha), Wiccan groups and 'New Age' variations of eastern religions. Pseudo-Christian groups such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses also thrive in our area. The prevailing religious atmosphere here is a mix of utter indifference toward and extreme tolerance for all religions with the notable exception of intolerance for the claims of Christ as *the way, the truth and the life*.

### **Our Ministry:**

SoundLife Church began conducting weekly worship services in the Spring of 2003. Our congregation consists mainly of young families, many of whom have connections to the military. Most of the adults in the church range in age from mid-twenties to late-thirties with children ranging from birth to 15 years old. Our average attendance runs between 80 and 90 people, with our highest attendance reaching 167 people for an Easter service.

We currently state our mission, objectives, and values as follows:

**Mission:** "SoundLife loves God and all people through growing Christ-centered communities."

At the heart of this mission are Jesus' "Great Commandment" (Matthew 22:37-40) and His "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:18-20). Love for God and all people motivates all that we do. The primary way that we show this love is by working to grow (in number and spiritual maturity) groups of people whose lives increasingly revolve around Christ.

We have four intermediate mission objectives to help us fulfill our overall mission. Each has a key value, action step, and evaluation question that help us meet that objective.

Objective: Open Invitation

Key Value: Love (Love Leads)

Call to Action: "Show the Love"

Evaluation Question: Are we tangibly demonstrating God's love and putting other's needs first by acting intentionally to welcome the widest possible variety of people?

Objective: Nature Transformation

Key Value: Truth (Truth Frees)

Call to Action: "Share the Truth"

Evaluation Question: Are we corporately sharing God's gospel with everyone who visits and boldly seizing individual opportunities to share the gospel with our neighbors?

Objective: Total Integration

Key Value: Community (Hope Heals)

Call to Action: "Build the Body"

Evaluation Question: Are we teaching the whole counsel of Scripture, building mutually edifying relationships with each other, and employing our God-given skills in ministry?

Objective: Global Mobilization

Key Value: Mission (Faith Works)

Call to Action: "Send the Servants"

Evaluation Question: Are we generously supporting missions and sending out trained gospel servants (individuals and teams) to reach our neighbors and the nations?

As a congregation we believe our strengths are a core commitment to God and His word, dedicated members who have proven themselves to be faithful and resourceful servants, a number of young families participating, significant inroads into the military community, a complimentary mix of God-gifted team members, solid teaching and music ministries, and support from other churches and our association. Many visitors express feeling warmly welcomed and a sense of 'something special' during their time with us.

We believe our present weaknesses include insufficient corporate prayer, children's workers, and set-up personnel. Our worship facilities, while a great physical structure, are less than ideal due to the theater's ministry limiting schedule requirements. Our small group ministry is still less effective than it could and should be. We do not yet have a solid ministry to our families with teenage children. We have too few older Christians.

In spite of these weaknesses, God continues to supply us with eager servants who show great leadership potential and the material resources we need to minister effectively. Financially, we are debt free and current on all bills. While we are facing increased financial challenges with the scheduled end of support from the North American Mission Board and the increased costs of meeting in the movie theater, we trust God to continue to demonstrate His faithfulness by abundantly providing for all of our true needs.

We believe our challenges are great, but we know that God is greater. We praise our Heavenly Father and pray to walk humbly with Him into the future He has for us.

*"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or imagine, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" – Ephesians 3:20-21.*

## **SoundLife Church Our Vision**

We envision God using Christ-centered groups to lead a growing number of people from all backgrounds and stages of life to experience the revolution of God-centered living.

We see cell groups being the primary context for pastoral care, spiritual growth, leadership development and ministry mobilization. We see communities composed of multiple cell and care groups cooperating to accomplish larger church goals.

We see integrated family ministries that effectively reach people at all stages of life without compromising family unity. We envision accomplishing this by maximizing whole family involvement and parental mentoring.

We see all these communities regularly gathering as one to worship God and celebrate His ongoing work in their lives. We envision all guests at these gatherings being warmly welcomed and struck by the genuine love for God and all people. We imagine a day when growth fuels the emergence of multiple satellite worship gatherings.

We also see a day when SoundLife mobilizes support teams and missionaries to help others around the world grow multiplying Christ-centered communities in their contexts.

We see God using all this to help broken people find wholeness in Christ. We see marriages improved, addictions overcome, relationships restored and God glorified.