

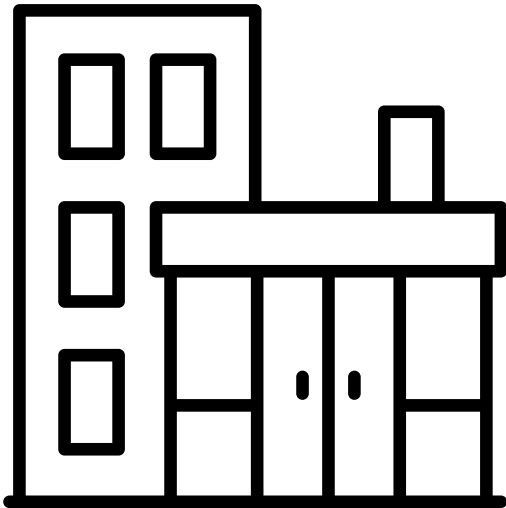


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# BUILT FOR THIS

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*A Guide to Knowing Your Building & Community*



CREATED BY FAITH IN PLACE

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## ABOUT THE GUIDE:

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For most houses of worship, the building is one of the community's largest assets. It is home to services and programs, meals and meetings, celebrations and hard conversations, purposes that have shifted over decades and will keep shifting. The building that served your community twenty years ago may or may not be the right building for what your community is called to do today.

This guide is an invitation to look carefully at your building: how it's being used, how your community would like to use it, and how it can best serve the people who gather there. It's also a practical tool for understanding the systems that keep the building running, identifying what's working and what isn't, and beginning to think about where investment and attention would make the most difference.

You don't need to be an engineer or a building professional to use this guide. You just need to be willing to look carefully and ask honest questions. The goal is to help your community see what's already here and begin a conversation about what comes next.

As you walk, you'll look at things through three lenses: Problems, Opportunities, and Things Done Well. Not every space will have all three, and that's fine. You're here to observe, not to judge.

**A note about timing:** Depending on how large or small your building is, this tour can take as little as 30 minutes, or as much as 2 hours. The reflection questions are designed to take about an hour. Many people find it useful to separate the tour from the reflection time.

## BEFORE THE TOUR

Before you begin, take a few minutes together. This tour works best when everyone feels like a participant, not just a follower. You might assign different people to pay special attention to different systems: one person to lighting, another to water, another to heating and cooling. Or you might all walk together and share observations along the way. There's no single right way.

If you can, invite someone who knows the building well to join you on the tour or to answer questions afterward. (Think, a facilities manager, or even a longtime member.) Their knowledge is invaluable, and including them honors the work they've already been doing.

### What we're looking for:

Throughout the tour, keep these three questions in mind:

**Problems** — things that aren't working, are inefficient, or need attention. These might be things your group already knows about, or things you notice for the first time today.

**Opportunities** — places where a relatively small change could make a meaningful difference: an unlit room that could have an occupancy sensor, a drafty window that could be weatherstripped, a south-facing roof that gets good sun.

**Things Done Well** — improvements that have already been made, systems that are working, choices that deserve recognition. Noticing what's working is just as important as noticing what isn't.



## **A few details and reflections**

Fill in as much as you know before the tour begins.

Name of House of Worship: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of tour: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Who is participating today?**

**What do you already know about this building's history?** What do you know about the history of buildings for this faith community? Has it been renovated? Were additions made? Are there systems you know are aging or problematic?

**What are the biggest concerns your community has about this building right now:** energy costs, comfort, needed repairs, something else?

**What are you proud of about this building?** What do you hope to find working well? Who has cared for/managed this building?

**What is the most important function that your building serves?**

## DURING THE TOUR

As you move through the building, use the prompts and tables in each section to guide your observations. You don't need to answer every question — use them to focus your attention. Record what you actually see, not what you expected to find.

A note on vocabulary: a few technical terms appear in this guide. When they do, a brief explanation follows in parentheses. Don't let unfamiliar language slow you down. If something doesn't make sense, write down what you observed and ask questions later.

### Lighting

Lighting is often one of the easiest and most cost-effective categories to improve. The type of bulb matters a lot: incandescent bulbs (the old-style round ones) use far more energy than compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs, which have a spiral shape) or LED bulbs (the current standard, as they last longest and use the least energy). Tubes can be fluorescent or LED. Do you notice bulbs that blacken at the ends and gradually get dimmer or flicker? Do you have mixed colors of lighting (yellow/white/blueish white)? What seems to fit your space best? Mixed lighting can indicate that bulb replacements have been happening piecemeal rather than as part of a planned upgrade.

As you walk through each space, record what you find:

Room/Area	Bulb Type ((Incandescent / CFL / LED / Mixed)	# Fixtures	Notes (burned out, mixed, etc.)

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Are there rooms or areas where lights are frequently left on when no one is using them, e.g. bathrooms, closets, pantries, utility rooms, hallways?

Which spaces might benefit from occupancy sensors (switches that turn lights on automatically when someone enters and off when the room is empty)?

Anything else you noticed about lighting — problems, opportunities, or things done well?

Don't just think about inside lighting! How well-lit is the outside of the building? The parking lot? Do people feel comfortable showing up after dark? Exterior lighting addresses both safety/security and welcome, so please evaluate with both of those in mind! (You may want to come by after dark to see this, and if you don't want to, that says something too!)



Do you know what who services your HVAC equipment?

### Thermostats

Thermostats matter more than people often realize. A non-programmable thermostat keeps the building at the same temperature whether anyone is there or not. Programmable thermostats can be set to automatically lower the heat overnight and raise it before services begin. Smart thermostats go further, learning patterns and adjusting on their own. The designations 5+2 and 5+1+1 refer to how many separate schedules a programmable thermostat supports: 5+2 means one schedule for weekdays, one for weekends; 5+1+1 means separate schedules for Saturday and Sunday.

Record what you find:

Room/Area	Type (Non-programmable / Programmable / 5+2 / 5+1+1 / Smart)	Controls which unit / area

Do thermostats appear to be set appropriately for when the building is and isn't in use?

What are the heating and cooling set points?

How similar or different are they from your home thermostat?

### **Water Heaters**

Record each water heater you find:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Type (Tanked / Tankless / Point of Use)</b>	<b>Fuel (Gas / Electric / Heat Pump)</b>	<b>Age (if known)</b>

Can you tell what temperature the water heaters are set at?

## Other Heating/Cooling Notes:

Are there areas of the building that are consistently too hot or too cold? Where?

Are there areas that have drafts? Areas that would benefit from shades/blinds?

Anything else you noticed about heating and cooling: problems, opportunities, or things done well?

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## THE BUILDING ENVELOPE

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The "building envelope" refers to everything that separates the inside of your building from the outside: walls, windows, floors, doors, and the roof. A leaky envelope means your heating and cooling systems have to work much harder, which costs money and uses more energy. Small fixes such as weatherstripping, caulking, and door sweeps can make a real difference.

As you walk, note any windows or doors with gaps, drafts, broken glass, poor seals, or other issues:

Location	Window or Door	Issue or observation

Are windows generally single-pane (one layer of glass) or double-pane (two layers with a gap between, which insulates much better)?

Are doorways single doors for entering and exiting, or is there a door, a space, and then a second door to enter? (airlock/vestibule style)

If your building has stained glass, is it exposed to the weather, or is it protected by a layer of clear glass on the outside?

Are there rooms that are noticeably colder in winter or hotter in summer than others? Which ones?

Anything else you noticed about the building envelope: problems, opportunities, or things done well?

## Water

Water issues in a building can be easy to overlook until they become serious. Signs of past or ongoing water problems, including stains on ceilings or walls, mold or mildew smells, areas that flood after heavy rain, often point to larger issues with drainage, foundation, or roof condition. They're also worth paying attention to from an environmental standpoint: how water moves through and around your property affects not just your building but the surrounding land.

Record any water-related issues you find, inside or outside:

Location	Type (Leak / Stain / Flooding / Standing Water / Mold / Other)	Description

Outside: do downspouts direct water away from the foundation, or does water pool against the building?

Is there a history of flooding in the building or neighborhood?

Are there areas of standing water, moss, or mold on the exterior? Any discoloration or damage to concrete near drainage paths?

Anything else you noticed about water: problems, opportunities, or things done well?

## The Kitchen

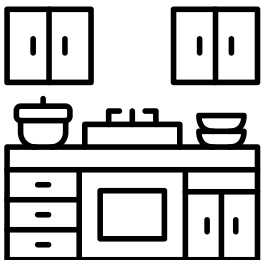
If your building has a kitchen, it deserves its own attention. Kitchens can be significant energy users; refrigerators, freezers, warming tables, dishwashers, and ovens all add up. Before you assess, it helps to understand what it's actually being used for.

**An important distinction:** a cooking kitchen is one where food is actively prepared and cooked on site: chopping, mixing, using the oven, and the range. A warming kitchen is one in which food is primarily prepared elsewhere and then kept warm or reheated on-site. The energy demands and efficiency opportunities differ in each case.

Is this a commercial-style kitchen or a residential-style kitchen?

What is the kitchen primarily used for? Describe how your community actually uses this space.

Who services the kitchen and the plumbing?



Is this a cooking kitchen, a warming kitchen, or some of both?

Has the kitchen been inspected by the health department? This matters especially if your building is used by farm partners, food pantries, or community meal programs.

Record the kitchen equipment:

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>How many?</b>	<b>Age (if known)</b>	<b>Notes (worn seals, frost buildup, runs continuously, etc.)</b>
Refrigerator(s)			
Freezer(s)			
Oven / Range / Cooking Device			
Warming table / Steam table			
Dishwasher			
Other			

**Every building has its own character:** quirks, histories, small points of pride, and nagging concerns that don't fit neatly into any category.

What else did you notice that you want to make sure gets recorded?

Is there anything about this building that your community considers a particular point of pride?

Is there anything that has been a persistent concern or frustration that hasn't come up yet?

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## AFTER THE TOUR

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Come back together as a group.

### **What Did You See?**

What surprised you? What confirmed something you already suspected? What made you feel hopeful, curious, or concerned?

Did you see any assets that you hadn't known about?

Are there any spaces that are used differently from how you (or the community) remember? (Ex. a classroom for young children that is no longer used to that purpose.)

Are there pieces of the building that have historic significance, either to the larger community, the faith community, or individual families?

## From Observation to Action

Look back over your notes from the tour. You've identified some combination of problems, opportunities, and things done well. Now it's time to step back and prioritize.

What are two or three quick wins. These are things that are affecting your community's comfort or safety right now, or costing significant money, but are within reach of being fixed. What could you do in one workday with the people and skills you have on hand?

1.

2.

3.

What is one thing that feels achievable in the next few months? This is probably something that won't require a major capital investment or a lengthy approval process.

Is there anything you saw that you want to understand better before taking action? A system whose age or condition you couldn't determine, a problem whose cause isn't clear?

If you need to spend money, who would need to be involved in that conversation and decision?

## NEXT THREE STEPS

### **Learn**

What do you need to learn more about before undertaking the work you've identified? Who might have expertise to share with you?

### **Connect**

Who in your HOW has had this kind of work done in their home recently? (Ex. Installed solar panels, upgraded an appliance, etc.)

Who in your community has had this kind of work done before? (Ex. Installed heat pumps or solar panels, rain barrels, etc.)

### **Act**

Chose your project team to work on this together.

Designate a project manager to help keep the work moving.

Ask for a chance to share your building tour results with your House of Worship membership and ask for volunteers to help with the work.

*Tip: When the work is completed, offer a tour to members to show off the work. People in the community want to see it!*

## Conclusion

The building you just toured is more than walls and floors. It is the place where people gather, where community is built. What you noticed today, what you wondered about, what unsettled or inspired you are seeds. And there are people ready to grow something with you

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## CONNECT WITH US

### ***Give us Feedback!***

*This is a new resource! Take 5 minutes to give us feedback so we can make it better!*



### **About Faith in Place**

Cultivating a powerful multi-faith movement working for environmental justice through connection, education, and advocacy.

[www.faithinplace.org](http://www.faithinplace.org)

Social Media: @faithinplace