

**Practicing Incarnational Ministry:  
Leading Congregations In Stewardship  
By Meeting People Where They Are.**

*The Word became flesh and blood  
and moved into the neighborhood.*

John 1: 14 The Message

# **Meet Gail and Laurie**

Rev. Gail E. Monsma and Rev. Laurie Hartzell

Good stewardship practices cannot be lived into  
without relational ministry and trust—without  
incarnational ministry

## **What is incarnational ministry?**

The word "incarnation" comes from the Latin "incarnare," which is a combination of "in" (meaning "in") and "carnis" (meaning "flesh").

## What is incarnational ministry?

Incarnational ministry means we, as Christ's body, embody God's love by *showing up* in all aspects of life. Our ministry is forged in our life together — the joys and the messiness and all the ordinary in between.

***“When I left the staff of a big progressive church for my first call in a smaller more conservative church, it felt like I was going backwards. Then I realized God calls you to love the people in front of you. So much is about building trust and that comes through relationships.”***

**~Rev. Sarah Juist (paraphased)**

# **Opening Exercise:**

**Who is Jesus to you?**

**Who is Jesus to your church?**

# 1. Know Yourself and Your Theology!

- Staying true to your theology within the church you serve or attend...
- Live into your theology in other places?
- Live into love, yet know your boundaries.....
- Teaching and leading critical thinking
- Other ways.....

# **Book of Order/Book of Confessions**

## **F-1.0202 Christ Calls and Equips the Church**

Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills.

# Stewardship Implications



## 2. Ministry is Relational



# Showing up for Each Others Lives

- It's important to show up for what for what is important to people....
- Doing so with integrity...
- Know what and how various people think. Use the language of the people when you can.
- Again, showing up in the joys, messes, and ordinariness of life.

# Contextualizing the Message

- Understanding cultural nuances
- Adapting the message
- Finding Common Ground
- Social Media

# Stewardship Implications



# 3. Mutual Transformation

- Incarnation ministry changes *us* too.
- Expect to encounter God in unexpected people and places and to be reshaped by our encounters
- Trust a Dialectic Process

# Stewardship Implications



# **4. Justice & Compassion are Embodied**

## **Biblical Justice vs Civil Justice**

**Standing with the marginalized is not  
just a cause...it's where we meet Christ.**

## **Confession of 1967**

**9.32** The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His human life involves the church in the common life of all people. His service to men and women commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all human suffering so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on the inhumanity that marks human relations, and the awful consequences of the church's own complicity in injustice. In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human life in society and of God's victory over all wrong.

# Embodying our Theology:

- Service and action
- Living out the Message
- Being a Witness

# Stewardship Implications



## **5. Moving Beyond Rigid or Formulated Models**

Not a formula—what works for one church, may not work for yours.

# Stewardship Implications

Preaching...

Teaching...

Leading Session...

Pastoral Care...

Mission/Outreach. . .



A photograph of a dirt path winding through a lush green forest. The sun is shining brightly from the upper left, creating a warm, golden glow and lens flare. The path is covered in brown leaves and leads into the distance. On the right side, a tree trunk has a small red and white marker attached to it. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

**Discerning God's Direction Together...**

***I do not understand the mystery  
of grace—only that it meets us  
where we are and does not leave  
us where it found us.***

~ Anne Lamott