

Dear Friends,

I have been recommending the reading of “Weird Church” by Beth Ann Estock and Paul Nixon, with the hope that their reporting of the movement of the Spirit in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America might jolt a church or two to trade a preoccupation with institutional survival for life giving spiritual practices, which might reach the ever-growing masses of unchurched individuals in our communities.

The authors conclude their inspiring book with the following quote: *“We believe that an unequivocal shift back toward the **incarnational presence** of the leader will do wonders in slowly healing the very bad reputation that Christianity currently has for billions of people.”*

What is that reputation you may ask? In worldwide studies, young adults in particular, have indicated that people view the church as being: judgmental, preoccupied with money, irrelevant to their lives, more talk than in action spent helping people.

Estock and Nixon state, *“Even if we radically renew church, the fact is that millions of people have seen something called church, and they have rejected it. It will take very careful work to communicate that we are not that which they rejected.”*

So, what is meant by **incarnational presence**? Gallup’s survey on leadership shows that there are four basic needs of followers. These are trust, compassion, stability, and hope. When leaders (pastors and lay leaders) meet these basic needs, people naturally follow.

How well does the church, does your church, meet these basic needs for those who attend? The more important question is - how well does your church meet these basic needs for those who live in the community around your church? The answers to the latter question will determine the future viability of the ministry of your church.

Let’s talk,

Alan Newton