

# Presbytery Community Reflections

December 2009

Devotion for Sessions, Commissions, and Committees

Presbytery of the Western Reserve

Presented by *Future Directions Task Force*

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**Incarnational Ministry**

**John 1: 14**

*<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish. (The Message)*

In the middle of the Sunday announcements, Dean the pastor of this urban church said to the congregation: “We have tutoring, free meals, clothing closet, job training, counseling and a social worker on hand to help our neighbors around the church with the challenges they face. What we really need are people to move into the neighborhood and share their lives on a day to day basis with their neighbors. We need friendship and modeling like family not more human services.” This neighborhood faced the same dilemma as so many others, as soon as the residents developed the skills and accumulated the means they moved out of the neighborhood so the ones left living there were more and more the dependent and struggling. Too often guilt and generosity of things become ingredients in the recipe for hand-outs and arms-length caring that lack relationship. Dean knew the visceral truth in the opening message of John’s Gospel via Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase: “The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.” This is what Newbigin declared when he wrote the best hermeneutic of the Gospel is a community of women and men that believes it and lives it with one another and their neighbors (in any neighborhood).<sup>1</sup>

- ❖ Where has God planted your church and sent your congregation?
- ❖ How have you and your people become part of the life of the “neighborhood”?
- ❖ How are you displaying the generosity of God who offers self in the genuine everyday relationships?

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<sup>1</sup> Newbigin, L. (1989). *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. Wm B. Eerdmanns:Grand Rapids, MI. pp 224-233