

resource sheet 19

ordained pioneer ministry

The background

What a time to be alive! Worldwide social and political rearrangement, and technological development are affecting just about every person, and every institution on the planet. The times we live in bridge an era between modernism and another which, for want of a better term, we call 'post-modernism'.

Meanwhile, over many years, the Church has become increasingly out of touch with the vast majority of the population. Through the 20th century, while there was no shortage of evangelistic initiatives, church life became an increasingly alien environment to many people. Churches were gatherings of like-minded people, with their own cultures and practices, and 'church' became more and more irrelevant to those outside it.

At the same time, some Christians were increasingly concerned about this gap. The role of minister often looked as if it was mainly concerned

with 'keeping the show on the road'. Parish ministry was holding less attraction for those who wanted the Church to be more radical and to reach out to unchurched people.

This is why the Church in the West and certainly in the UK finds itself thrust into debate and experimentation on the nature of church, mission and ministry. Never before has a report sold so many copies as the General Synod *Mission-shaped Church*, published in 2004. A group chaired by Bishop Graham Cray used the report to pose the possibility that churches may be developed with mission guiding their shaping. A new phrase 'fresh expressions of church' was coined, and is now used widely. In 2005 the Archbishops along with the Methodist Conference established an initiative known as 'Fresh Expressions'. Many hundreds of fresh expressions now exist and some which predated all of this have been recognised as pioneering and innovative. The 2005 parish returns estimate that 51% of all Anglican

parishes are supporting or planning a fresh expression. All of this is part of a wider, international movement of God to bring about church appropriate for our times. A new church is shaping up – the 'emerging church'. Exciting, or what?

Ordained ministry

Mission-shaped Church argued that if the Church was to develop new forms of church, it would also need new kinds of leaders. The possibility of a call to such work would need to be identified as part of the vocational process. This has already resulted in the training and deployment of ordained pioneer ministers.

One OPM wrote: 'At first I didn't think ordination was for me. I couldn't see myself in the role of a parish priest, and I wasn't harbouring a lifelong ambition to be a vicar. I heard a talk about pioneer ministers, and realised that was where I probably needed to be. It's refreshing that you can serve God, be radical, and ordained.'

ordained pioneer ministry

A woman in training writes 'I'm a mother of three, and principal child carer, so a mixed-mode course (one day a week in London, and two separate weeks a term at Ridley Hall, Cambridge) is just right for me.

A pioneer will be someone who is called specifically to bring about a new community or initiative, probably without precedent.

Pioneering can be all sorts of things. I work part-time for my local church and I'm very interested in opening up church, leading worship in a prophetic way, and learning to be "out there" as church.'

People who are ordained have a particular calling to lead others in Christian community. A pioneer will be someone who is called specifically to bring about a new community or initiative, probably without precedent. He or she will have a deep sense of calling from God and a vision which draws them forward. It will be a ministry marked by creativity, risk, listening, patient endurance and commitment to good relationships with the wider Church.

There is something here about personality and personal shaping for Christian ministry – 'how has God shaped us, created us and what kinds of ministry would we therefore be most suited to?' It's an obvious question really. Pioneer leadership is best expressed by people who like to imagine new things, to dream, initiate, explore.

In January 2006 the House of Bishops agreed a new set of guidelines for ordained pioneer ministry as a

recognised focus of ordained ministry. This is not a separate class of ordained ministers but a way of recognising and affirming a particular gift and call for beginning new communities.

People explore this possibility in just the same way as other forms of ordained ministry. All the normal selection criteria apply, plus some additional ones. If you are recommended for training, it is likely that your training will be configured with a pioneer missional emphasis. Often you may continue in your existing ministry as you train. You can expect to be deployed to your curacy with a primary focus on beginning or developing a fresh expression of church – but the formation pathway should ensure that after your curacy you would be qualified to take up a new pioneer ministry post or one in a parish or chaplaincy setting.

Your diocesan director of ordinands will guide you on the selection process, and suitable training schemes or colleges. However, different dioceses are at different stages on OPM, so you may need to be ready with questions. And as the Church develops new patterns for ministry, there is inevitably an element of pioneering for those first to go through new modes of training.

It is also possible to explore pioneer ministry as a lay person, with national recognition as a Church Army evangelist, or locally within your parish or diocese. Fresh Expressions, in partnership with a range of other agencies and dioceses, is developing one-year part-time training, *Mission-shaped Ministry*, which is coming on stream in every part of the country (see www.freshexpressions.org.uk for details).

What will ordained pioneer ministry be like?

Pioneers and settlers

As we find ourselves in a missionary context, all ministers need training in cross-cultural evangelism, church planting and fresh expressions of church. But one can still draw a useful distinction between pioneers and settlers. A settler will most probably be inclined – and indeed gifted – to consolidate and manage what already exists, whether an 11th century church or a church just a couple of years old. A pioneer will be the kind of person who imagines new forms and patterns of Christian community and ministry, and who is able to bring this new church into being. A pioneer may in fact be quite unsuited to the long-term slog of maintaining ministry after the initial creative stages, although exceptional people do exist who manage both. Both pioneers and settlers should be able to find their niche in Christian ministry.

The blank sheet and uncharted territory

There is a growing body of experience in the UK and beyond which is shared between pioneering churches and their leaders. This should benefit others who follow, but it would be a mistake to think that creativity is just for a season after which we will all settle down to one form of church or another. 'Constant change is here to stay'. We should not think that creative, entrepreneurial leadership is only an interim measure – it is more likely to be the mark of future ministry. Surely this is how it should be! Christians worship a creator God and it should not surprise us if he calls people to be creative within his world.

Thankfully, for those who do progress to pioneering ministry, there is help at hand. The Fresh Expressions initiative – www.freshexpressions.org.uk – leads the way in focused promotion of emerging church within Anglicanism

and Methodism but many other organisations are involved. There is a plethora of websites and blogs which tell the emerging church story and rapidly increasing quantities of literature to be read on the subject.

Tradition and future

The Church has been very good at reflecting and celebrating divine and human creativity from its history, but very poor at imagining a new future for itself. Archbishop Rowan Williams uses the phrase 'mixed economy' to embrace both inherited church forms and new pioneering churches, and others talk and write about the need for mutual respect in this. Brian McLaren, an American theologian and minister, urges us to rediscover Christian traditions as part of this new future that we are imagining.

Pioneer ventures often need support from larger, stable established churches, but they must be granted freedom to experiment. It is equally true that fresh expressions of church can find themselves to be challenging to established church culture.

An effective ordained pioneer minister will be happy to work at this relationship and not retreat into smug isolation. A pioneer will most likely spend a year or more in preparation and research before beginning such a ministry and community. The value of this is that in doing so he or she will be sharing ideas with a great many church members and other leaders, and this will help with relationships in the future.

Loneliness

'Is it me that's mad or everybody else?' (Albert Einstein). Along with the exciting aspects of pioneering comes the sheer hard graft, and challenges which all ministers face. Pioneering can be lonely in the sense that your ideas may not be shared by many others, and you may begin to feel insecure in your own vision. It will be

important to be aware of your identity in Christ, and then you can enjoy confidence in your calling and stand by your ideas.

Hard work

Christian ministry seems infinitely expandable – there's always more that can be done – so most ministers work very hard indeed. This truth is one of the most dangerous things facing Christian leaders and can lead to burn-out. Pioneering ministry is often set in the context of small group, a 'seed cell'. Because establishing church typically draws on a range of skills, it is likely that in the earliest stages the pioneer will be expected to exercise all kinds of ministry to the limit of (or even beyond) his or her competence. This will bring stress. But some of the burden of ministry can and should be shared – which brings us to the subject of team.

Team leadership

One of the first jobs a pioneer will be expected to do is form a team. While pioneer ministers may be rugged individualists, they will also need skill in leading and working with teams.

Ideally the team should bring a good range of gifts and personalities as well as people who have the time and resources to get the job done. St Paul writes of five ministries which are essential ingredients for a pioneering team:
'It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...' (Ephesians 4:11-12).

One can argue about whether the evangelist, the prophet or the apostle most closely mirrors the pioneer, but all will soon be important as the new community develops, and other gifts on the team, such as administration, would be handy too!

Pioneering from disaffection?

People may be drawn to pioneer ministry out of an experience of hurt or frustration – experiences from their existing church. Is this wrong? It can be, and people who are embittered by their experience of rejection or isolation within church will not make good leaders until this is faced and dealt with. However, part of the reason we need to develop churches afresh is that current church is not appropriate for everyone. This may be to do with age, culture, style or personality. Potential leaders may be frustrated and disaffected for very good reasons. If you find yourself in this situation, it would be good to talk through a sense of calling with some people outside the situation: friends, advisers from your diocese, CPAS, ministers, and even people who are unchurched.

What's in a name?

There is a variety of language used around emerging patterns of leadership, but the Church has settled on the name 'pioneer ministry'. Some

But the word 'pioneer' reminds us that the focus of the ministry is outwards and onwards, on mission.

people who are attracted to this kind of ministry would not call themselves 'pioneers' (it sounds like quite a grand claim). Some prefer to talk of 'being creative' or just 'thinking outside the box'.

But the word 'pioneer' reminds us that the focus of the ministry is outwards. Mission has too often been lost in thinking about church, or it has been seen as a specialist ministry. God

ordained pioneer ministry

himself is a 'missioning' God'; seeing him as the 'missioning God' is just as central and significant a claim to make for the identity of God as 'God is love' or 'God is the creator'.

Church that is 'fresh' or 'novel' will never be enough; all Christians are called to mission, all churches are mission churches and all Christian leaders are called to missional leadership of one kind or another. Some are called to establish new Christian communities without blueprints and in ways that will naturally connect with people who 'don't do church'. That has to be exciting!

Where do I go from here?

As well as talking to the leader of your church and at some stage to your DDO, and following up some of the resources below, it would be good to test your calling to pioneer ministry with some further practical experience and training. The course *Mission-shaped Ministry* would be a way of nurturing your vocation and finding out more, or if that is not yet available in your area, dioceses are

being encouraged to put on training days, vision days and short courses on pioneer ministry. Fresh Expressions, in partnership with other agencies, is developing an online knowledge bank of fresh expressions of church.

If you are not already part of a fresh expression, you will need to demonstrate your experience of fresh expressions, either by starting one, being part of a team, or at least finding some kind of 'placement' experience.

Further reading and resources

Mission-shaped Church, Graham Cray (editor), (CHP, 2004).

The Future of the Parish System, Steven Croft (editor), (CHP, 2006).

Mission-shaped Questions, Steven Croft (editor), (CHP, 2008).

Christianity Rediscovered, Vincent Donovan, (SCM, 2001).

Mixed-up Blessing, Barbara Glasson, (Inspire, 2006).

These two papers can be downloaded from the Church of England Ministry Division website.

- *Guidelines for the Identification, Training and Deployment of Ordained Pioneer Ministers*
- *Encouraging Lay Pioneer Ministry*

Encounters on the Edge is a series of stories of fresh expressions of church. It is available by subscription from www.encountersontheedge.org.uk

Watch the three DVDs produced by Fresh Expressions which you can order at www.freshexpressions.org.uk.

- *On the Edge: Exploring Ordained Pioneer Ministry in the Church of England*
- *Expressions: The DVD-1. Stories of Church for a Changing Culture*
- *Expressions: The DVD-2. Changing Church in Every Place*

Websites

www.freshexpressions.org.uk
www.encountersontheedge.org.uk
www.cofe-ministry.org.uk
www.sharetheguide.org

resource sheets

Download sheets free of charge from www.cpas.org.uk/vocationresources or buy a complete set of printed sheets at www.cpas.org.uk/shop. For bulk copies of individual sheets, phone 01926 458461 or email mnorris@cpas.org.uk.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1 Guidance | 7 On being not recommended for training | 13 Infant baptism |
| 2 What kind of people? | 8 Non-stipendiary ministry/OLM | 14 Theological training |
| 3 Women and ministry | 9 Ministers in secular employment | 15 Pre-training reading |
| 4 Calling for all? | 10 Church Army: pioneering evangelists | 16 Grants for training |
| 5 Able and willing | 11 Readers in the Church of England | 17 Fostering vocation |
| 6 What do Bishops' Advisers look for? | 12 Church of England: obstacle or opportunity? | 18 Situations vacant |
| | | 19 Ordained pioneer ministry |

CPAS resource sheets ©CPAS. Not to be reproduced by any means (including photocopying) without written permission from CPAS. You may not post electronic versions of this document on any website, but instead may post a link to www.cpas.org.uk/vocationresources.