

## APPENDIX V

### RESEARCH IN RELATION TO THE FUTURE OF PIONEER MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

This research has been commissioned jointly by the Panel on Review and Reform and Ministries Council, in partnership with Trinity College, University of Glasgow. The research is being conducted by Rev Dr Sandy Forsyth, who teaches Practical Theology at Trinity College, University of Glasgow. His work is being overseen by members of the Panel and Ministries Council, reporting to the Joint Emerging Churches Group. The research began on 1 September 2017 and is funded for one year at 1.5 days per week. A final report will be compiled by 31 August 2018 and presented to the General Assembly of 2019.

The final report will assess the nature, validity and purpose of pioneer ministry and, as appropriate, make recommendations for the future recruitment, training, practical support and oversight of pioneer ministry in the Church of Scotland. This interim report will set out a summary of the key issues that are being considered, and the parameters of the research including its purpose and scope.

#### 1. Key Issues

What is 'pioneer ministry'? These are the words of Dave Male, National Adviser for Pioneer Development in the Church of England:

Pioneers are people called by God who are the first to see and creatively respond to the Holy Spirit's initiatives with those outside the church; gathering others around them as they seek to establish new contextual Christian community. (<https://goo.gl/S1cXQL>)

As one pioneer minister in the Church of Scotland commented recently, his ministry is about 'setting the space for encounter, without setting its parameters; setting a direction in motion for people to travel, without dictating the narrow journey.'

For Male, there are two types: 'fresh start pioneers', who begin from a 'blank canvas' in a community or network, and 'parish-based pioneers', who will develop new forms of church alongside the old structures. Both require the active support of a third group, 'the sustainer enablers', who 'have the vision and the self-confidence to engineer opportunities to resource, release and protect Pioneers within their own context.'

There are people who fall into all three of these groups that are members and ministers of the Church of Scotland. They are either involved in implementing forms of pioneer ministry now, or, as is far more likely, feel the sense of calling from God to do so and are still praying, hoping and waiting for the opportunity and capability to act, and for the support of their Church in doing so. This research and its resulting report will aim to enable and resource their visions.

In that light, the primary issues which will be addressed in the research are: (a) How is 'pioneer ministry' to be defined, and is it a distinctive entity and calling? (b) Does it have intrinsic worth as a model of ministry and mission that will provide a dynamic avenue for the future of the expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Scotland? (c) If so, how should investment of human and financial resources be made by the Church of Scotland into pioneer ministry, to encourage the flourishing of new Christian expressions led by both the lay and ordained?

The secondary issues are to assess how such aspects relate to: (a) a forward-looking vision of what ministry and mission may look like nationally in ten to twenty years' time; (b) the existing parish church structure and its ministries, and their regeneration through such as the 'Path of Renewal' programme; recognising the continuing decline since the late 1950s of the Christendom model of church which is now nearing a tipping point, and its intended future management through the creation of 'hub' ministries, alongside linkages, unions and closures; (c) Presbyterian polity which emphasises oversight and accountability, considering also aspects of Church law, the role of Presbyteries and funding streams which might contribute to the development of forms of pioneer ministry, whilst lessening the need for significant legislative enactments and budgetary input; (d) the model presently implemented by the Church of Scotland through five 'pioneer ministry' posts created by the church which are centrally funded, others being funded via Presbytery Plan posts, or use of discretionary funding from Ministries and Mission budgets; and (e) similar models of innovative ministry and mission across the United Kingdom and beyond, such as in Church Planting and the Fresh Expressions movement.

Within that framework, the following avenues of research, assessment and reporting have been pursued since the research began, and will be developed further in the concluding phase:

## 2. Parameters of Research

- a) A **critical assessment** by research of the **missiological and theological purposes of pioneer ministry** in the context of Fresh Expressions of church and of church planting models; accounting for commonly held objections and resistances to the concept and practice of Pioneer Ministry and potential responses. This section analyses theory and motivations.
- b) An **in-depth survey and consideration** by interview, visits and information gathering with practitioners, office holders in denominations, key figures in training institutions and theological academics, of **present models and future potential** of recruitment, training, support and operation of pioneer ministry and church planting in Scotland, England, the Netherlands and the USA. This area focuses on methods of implementation in context.
- c) The **assessment of missional outcomes in pioneer situations** in relation to the formation of ecclesial communities, their impact in the expression of the Gospel, and their relationship to the provision of human and financial resources. This will consider the methodology to be used in assessment, whether this may be under a 'results-based' method, or within a 'transformational model'. This aspect examines results and long-term progress.
- d) The **overriding purpose** of the research will be addressed in the conclusions. It is to **make recommendations** for the direction and content in Scotland of future selection and training for pioneer ministry in both lay and ordained streams, and of the purpose, structure, support and evaluation of pioneer ministry in practice.

## 3. Conclusion

In short from the above: What is it? Is it worth it? What are we seeking to achieve? How is it done elsewhere? How might it work best here? How should it be recruited, trained, enabled, and supported? How is it to be evaluated and sustained?

The goal is to set a platform, which if approved by the General Assembly of 2019, might enrich the flourishing of a dynamic missional focus in our nation, enabling the Gospel to be heard and expressed in places and networks where it has fallen silent, and bringing transformation through faith and action by those called by God, both lay and ordained, in ministries and projects which maximise the most positive outcomes and the greatest sustainability.

Rev Dr Forsyth would be glad to engage with any minister or member of the church who would wish to discuss the research, or provide constructive input to its direction. He can be contacted at [alexander.forsyth@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:alexander.forsyth@glasgow.ac.uk).

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