

Being a Pioneer?

There are four equally worthwhile levels of engagement in pioneer mission:

Individual pioneer

You're already doing pioneering because you saw a need. Why not get in touch with other pioneers for support, learning and accountability?

Identified pioneer

You're connected to a local Pioneer Hotspot and the Bath & Wells Pioneer Facebook page. Why not consider the Certificate in Pioneer Mission, or starting a Mission Shaped Ministry group?

Pioneer in local training:

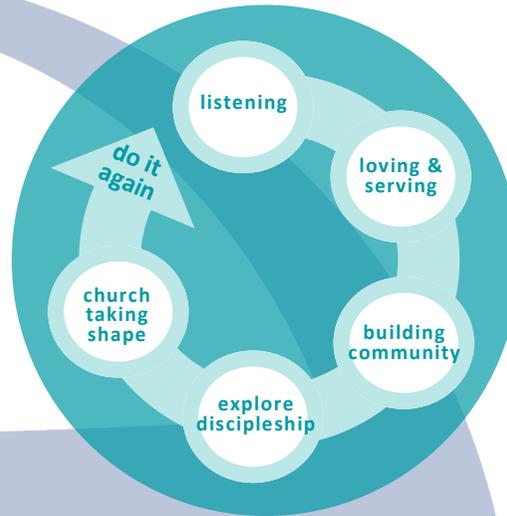
You're engaged in training and applying what you're learning in a mission context. If you feel called to full-time pioneer ministry, you can enter the Diocesan discernment process as a lay or ordained pioneer.

Locally Based Lay Pioneer

Your calling to a specific role has been affirmed by the Diocese and recognised by the National Pioneer Panel. Now you can help foster further pioneering.

Charting a path to a new Christian community

Pioneer mission today is usually focused on enabling a new Christian community to come to into being. The process can be shown like this:



However, some pioneers are social activists extending God's kingdom through new social or community enterprises and initiatives. All are welcome!

How do I find out more?

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Is God calling me
to pioneer new
pathways?



Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Hebrews 12 v2



What is a pioneer?

“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.”

David Male: How to Pioneer

There have always been pioneers who see the gap between the church and the people it aims to serve. They try fresh approaches and do something practical to bridge the gap. They are sensitive to surrounding culture and take culture seriously in their missional approach. William Tyndale, for example, saw that English people would be able to connect with God better if they could read the Bible in their own language.

Today many people have no idea what the Bible says and no experience of church. Pioneers are resourceful people who find creative, culturally appropriate ways to engage people who have little or no interest in church with the God who loves them and gave his life for them.

Who can be a pioneer?

Anyone! Most pioneers are lay people following the Holy Spirit’s leading to creatively engage with people who don’t ‘do church’. ‘Pioneer Hotspots’ around the Diocese bring people together locally to discuss their vision and activities.

Most pioneers share a few particular characteristics, gifts and inclinations and:

- have a call primarily to be with people outside the church
- have a call to mission and/or evangelism and/or social action
- have a loyal commitment to the existing church **and** see how church might be different in the future
- are self-starters with a track record in starting new initiatives
- have knowledge or experience of different cultural contexts
- are able to gather people together
- are creative and/or imaginative
- are willing to experiment and take risks
- have an instinct for reflective practice - the ability to relate the gospel to life and life to the gospel

To be a pioneer you will need a context to help you reflect through practice (e.g. you might set up a group doing Christian meditation, start a Forest Church, found a small charity etc).

Meet a pioneer

“ I think I’ve always been a bit of a pioneer!

My work as a nurse and in public health was full of starting new initiatives and taking risks, to reach people and get a message across. So as I began exploring my sense of vocation, it made sense that I might be called to start new things and find new ways of being “church”.

Discovering that the church recognised the role of a pioneer was a wonderful moment and opened up all sorts of possibilities.

Within my local church I’ve been involved in developing new ways of helping people experience their spiritual side and become aware of Jesus in their lives, especially through being outdoors in the countryside. With the help of a small team of people, who also like to think differently and are prepared to give new things a go, I’m finding pioneering both exciting and challenging.

I’m now about to start training in theology to widen my experience, deepen my understanding and develop as a Locally Based Lay Pioneer.

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*Karen from
Shepton Mallet
Deanery*