

PIONEERING PIECES:

An evaluation of the Church of Scotland's Pioneer Pilot Project

Church Army's Research Unit, October 2020

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the pioneers, presbytery representatives, internal and external consultants and those involved in the local ministries who took time to offer their reflections. I hope this evaluation will encourage and benefit this pioneering project and those who support them.

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Background and Introduction

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the Pioneer Pilot Project in the Church of Scotland. The evaluation was commissioned in September 2019 by the Ministries Council of the Church of Scotland. In January 2020, Ministries Council and Mission and Discipleship Council merged to become the Faith Nurture Forum now responsible for the project.

The purpose of this review is:

- To conduct an evaluation of the Church of Scotland’s Pioneer Pilot Project with a particular focus on assessing:
 - The impact of the pilot project
 - The learning for the Church of Scotland and the church as a whole
- To produce a report for the Church of Scotland’s Ministry Council (now Faith Nurture Forum) and General Assembly on the efficacy of the project and the learning gleaned

About the pioneer pilot project

The Church of Scotland’s General Assembly of 2014 called for the ‘*development of a scheme to recruit, train and deploy pioneer ministers*’ to respond to declining church membership and an increase in the number of people in the 2011 Scottish Census declaring no religious affiliation.¹ This pilot was conceived on behalf of Ministries Council as a response to that call, albeit as ‘*an intermediate step*’ in a denomination that is relatively new to pioneering.

‘In a post Christendom Scotland, there is a recognition that God is calling folk to work in vastly different ways from the roles that ministers traditionally inhabited in the past. The Pioneer Pilot was set up to experiment with pioneering and learn what we could in a variety of contexts that might help shape and inform pioneer ministry in our particular culture.’²

The Pioneer Pilot Project was launched in 2016 with full-time funding for five ministry posts until 2021. Presbyteries were encouraged to submit applications to take part in the pilot with the implication that, beyond 2021, these posts would only continue if they were part of their presbytery plan and locally funded.

The current staffing is summarised below (listed in start date order):

Presbytery	Mission focus	Pioneer start date
Glasgow	Artists, galleries, workshops and studios of Glasgow	October 2016
Lothian	New build housing estate in Bonnyrigg, Midlothian	December 2016
Stirling	Students at the University of Stirling	December 2016
Greenock and Paisley (now part of Clyde)	Those who live, work and travel through Ferguslie Park and the north end of Paisley	August 2017
Ayr	Farming communities in Ayrshire	September 2017

¹ Ministries Council *Pioneer Ministry – Definitions* Paper March 2015, p. 1.

² <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2019/pioneering-kirk-ministers-talk-about-church-without-walls>

About this evaluation

The fieldwork for this evaluation was carried out between October 2019 and March 2020. The methodological approach to evaluating this pilot project included:

- A desk-based review of literature and project documentation including pioneer reports
- Qualitative interviews with each of the five pioneers
- Qualitative focus group interviews with a small group of representatives from each of the five presbyteries
- Qualitative interviews with national Church of Scotland contacts
- Telephone or face-to-face interviews with external consultants - local people involved in the work of the pioneer and presbytery representatives involved at 'bidding stage' only
- Two 'members' check' informal exercises asking pioneers to reflect and discuss together tentative themes identified by the interim report written in February 2020

The qualitative data gathered has been analysed using a data-driven intuitive approach. Within the wider analysis, this includes some light-touch coding of data identifying common themes discussed within the broad areas of:

- concepts that participants/stakeholders use to understand the pilot
- relationships and interactions
- conditions and constraints
- impact
- wider learning

Church Army trains and deploys evangelists to pioneer new ministry, including fresh expressions of Church within Anglican denominations across the British Isles. I acknowledge this appreciation for pioneering as a potential research bias alongside being female, white, middle class, lay and involved in a Church of England liberal catholic parish on the east side of inner-city Sheffield.

About this report

This report has three parts. The first part presents the perspectives and perceptions of the pilot's stakeholders in their own words, with minimal external commentary.

The second part of the report offers my reflections - as an external observer - assessing impact and drawing out key points of learning.

The third and final part of the report offers recommendations for the future. Pioneer reflections on COVID-19 and learning for pioneering in these five types of context can be found in the Appendices.

The title of this report refers to the five separate projects within the pilot. However, the title is intended to convey the sense that this pilot is working in isolation from other pioneering endeavours within the Church of Scotland. (Part three advocates for a more joined-up approach.)

This report has tried as much as possible to keep to the brief which specified this should be an evaluation for the pilot project and *not* of the performance of individual pioneers. This has been a challenge given the distinctiveness of the five mission contexts and the deployment of only one pioneer into each context. As one presbytery representative commented:

'I think it's difficult perhaps to isolate it ... from the individual who fills it because he has magnified that office in a way that maybe someone else might not have done so.'

This report has been prepared for the Church of Scotland's Faith Nurture Council and General Assembly.

Part 1: Reflections from the stakeholders

Reflections on intentions and terminology

Initial intentions

Those on the (then) Ministries Council shaping this pilot saw it as a way to create ‘a flavour of pioneering’ within the Church of Scotland and felt these five full-time posts were the only way to introduce pioneering at the time. Presbyteries were said to be too stretched and lacking the skills needed to initiate pioneering ministry by themselves.

The five successful bids reflect a variety of cultural contexts deliberately sought to see what can happen when you put a pioneer into these areas. While council members recognise that pioneering will take far longer than five years, it is hoped their stories and experiences will act as something of an inspirational catalyst to introduce pioneering into the ‘psyche’ of the denomination.

In interviews, the presbytery representatives described their intentions for the posts. All recognised that traditional church isn’t working as well as it could be and an alternative approach is needed. It is not possible to comprehensively sum up the detailed expectations of each presbytery, but the following excerpts help to give a flavour of what was and is hoped that the pioneer posts will develop:

Ayr

‘...to reach out and to assist with the farming community ... there were common issues that needed addressing ... pastorally...’

‘And the idea was to create the ecclesial communities where the people were rather than expect the people to come into currently existing church congregations necessarily.’

Lothian

‘The hope was that it would give us more information and ways of working to tackle new housing because of just the volume of new housing that has taken place...’

‘It would give a good yardstick to see there are many opportunities like that, therefore how would it work, what needs to be done...’

Glasgow

‘The impetus and initiative for the project came from ... [a] passion for the arts and vision for what ministry to the arts community might look like.’

‘We felt that ... as a big presbytery in Scotland [we] should be pioneering, there was a drive and a feeling that we should be taking this opportunity that was arising.’

Greenock and Paisley

‘We were encouraged to apply because our area was one of the hardest, more deprived parts of Scotland.’

‘This would be a good opportunity to try something really different and have someone come in with a clean sheet of paper ... do something different and see, see how it would work.’

Stirling

‘This was an opportunity to do something different, an alternative exploration of faith and spirituality within the university community to build relationship with them, that was an alternative to the Christian Union and an alternative to the traditional church model available through congregations within the town...’

‘...to appoint someone who’d do something creative, something new, to try to develop this new ecclesial community, a different form of being church, of being people of faith together.’

Interpreting the term ‘pioneering’

While it is acknowledged that core gifts or competencies in pioneers overlap with other types of ministry, Ministries Council initially identified the following as emphases of pioneer ministry³:

- missiology, particularly looking at cross-cultural mission
- an exploration of what it would mean to be a missionary entrepreneur i.e. imagining new possibilities and bringing them into existence
- establishing new ecclesial communities - what used to be known as church planting
- bringing an ecclesial community to a point of maturity, which would look different in different contexts

In the bidding process, the successful presbytery pitches were those that envisioned something that was not just an extension of what was happening in church and were able to articulate the clearest vision for how they hoped the pioneer could achieve this. In recruiting pioneers for the posts, interviewers looked for people whose experience had been ‘*a wee bit out of the ordinary*’, showing evidence of a spark of creativity to think outside the box.

Three years into post, the pioneers acknowledge it is difficult to settle on a precise definition of pioneer ministry. The following bullet points were some of the comments offered by the post-holders in interviews. They said that pioneering is...

- an opportunity to minister without the responsibilities of traditional parish ministry roles
- about being Jesus to those they meet, being fully present to them and conveying the freedom of the Spirit
- a chance to try something new and see where it goes
- a chance to fulfil a lifelong vocation as a minister (a sense that they were pioneering already in previous posts)
- ‘church without nonsense’
- being out among people who don’t have a faith, walking alongside them

Some interviewees looking on from outside expressed concern that these pilot posts currently look more like chaplaincy than pioneering posts. While more emphasis appears to be placed on cross-cultural mission and less emphasis on establishing new ecclesial communities, these interviewees argued that it is more difficult to see the distinctiveness of pioneering ministry.

Within this evaluation, the pioneers explored some of the differences they currently understand between chaplaincy and pioneering. Most have worked as chaplains in their previous ministry posts. Inevitably, there are touching points, but here is a summary of a few of the differences they articulated in interviews and in a creative group exercise:

Chaplaincy ministry	Pioneer ministry
Reactive	Proactive, intentional
Expected in certain places/contexts for pastoral care and facilitation of traditional church services	Ministry that has never been done before
People coming to you	Being out ‘among the people’
A ministry that is known and understood	A ministry that is relatively unknown and easily misunderstood
Pastoral, ‘client’-focused	Creative, Spirit-led
Starts with a problem	Starts with an opportunity
On the whole, doesn’t seek to gather people as a group	Does seek to gather people as a group

³ Ministries Council *Pioneer Ministry – Definitions* paper March 2015, p. 3.

<i>Serving a community behind closed doors⁴</i>	<i>'I work in other people's spaces. I am part of that community. My community has no boundaries.'</i>
<i>Working with expectations from the employer that I legally have to meet</i>	<i>We have job descriptions, but they 'are of no earthly use to me; I work with other people's aspirations'.</i>
<i>Sometimes you can end up working for someone who doesn't really know what it is like to be a Christian</i>	<i>Nobody knows what it is like to be a pioneer minister. 'I am content not to be understood just now - don't want to be put in a box.'</i>

New ecclesial community/fresh expression of Church terminology

The original Ministries Council paper cited the Church of England's *Mission-shaped Church* report definition of a fresh expression of Church as a guide for what it was hoped pioneering ministry would lead to. It is

'a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the Gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.'

However, as the GoFort fund uses the language of New Ecclesial Communities, this is the term used in the job descriptions for the project, on the assumption that these terms are interchangeable. During this evaluation, further related terms were used in reports and in interviews - new worshipping communities, missional communities, emerging church and church planting - without any obvious clarity on whether or how these were different. As one consultant commented: *'the language seems to change once a year'*.

All stakeholders agree that what is intended is not the kind of traditional church planting that happened previously in New Charge Developments. *'It's not going to build you a church that looks anything like church'* was a comment made by a presbytery representative. One staff member in the National Offices offered their understanding of what the project is looking for: *'a group of people meeting together, having spiritual conversations, growing in faith together and exploring sacramental ministry.'*

In listening to the pioneers in interviews, there is still confusion around what this term new ecclesial community means. One said they sense the unspoken expectation to plant a new ecclesial community within five years but *'no one seems to know what one is'*. Another pioneer said *'we weren't told what it was at first'*.

The pioneers expressed gratitude for teaching input in 2018 from Simon Sutcliffe (then Pioneer Minister and Tutor at Queens College Birmingham) that helped demystify the term. Simon assured them that a new ecclesial community is not born overnight, and two or three years into the project the pioneers are at the stage they need to be; what they have achieved so far are the important initial stages in the longer process.⁵ See part 2 of this report for further exploration of these stages in the pioneering process.

In interviews, presbytery representatives acknowledged it is hard to define what new ecclesial communities look like, having accepted they will not look like traditional church. It doesn't help that,

⁴ The words in italics were statements offered by the pioneers in a research exercise reflecting on how their current pioneer roles contrasted with what they experience or knew of chaplaincy roles.

⁵ S. Hollinghurst (2013) *Starting, Assessing and Sustaining Pioneer Mission* Ev. 101 Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, p. 4.

broadly-speaking, new ecclesial communities is not a term that presbyteries know and have used before now. Their reflections included the following ways of understanding the term:

'[It is] a house fellowship that was coming together to worship regularly, but you know just I suppose very much like the early church perhaps, just a fellowship together.'

'Take a straw-poll of those at presbytery and you'd be met with probably a lot of blank stares and slack-jawed responses.'

'There haven't been so many examples of fresh expressions within the Church of Scotland and the presbytery ... that have given people a working picture of what it might look like...'

'It could be lots of things, it could be in a parish or congregation actually deciding to have a service in a school or a scout hall or something on a Wednesday or a, or you know midweek or whatever it is. I suppose it's trying to do something that's a bit different, innovative...'

'A group of people who are disciples called to make disciples who meet together, pray together, worship together, do life together, to use that phrase, you know ... we should be discipling folk and seen as becoming more like Jesus, but it doesn't happen in a one-hour slot.'

'...new ecclesial community, a different form of being church, of being people of faith together ... if you like a dedicated sort of defined community...'

'I'd actually said that we felt it would be more like the Liverpool model where it was cell ch- cell groups, you know, so that it ... might actually be a family or it might actually be a group of families or it might be an area where people can come together.'⁶

'We've actually gone to different farms and we've had services on different farms where people have come.'

Given a relative degree of confusion in understanding what a new ecclesial community is, it is perhaps unsurprising that some stakeholders shared concerns that - within the project - the emphasis is shifting too much to *'new ways of doing ministry'* rather than planting new ecclesial communities. One presbytery representative expressed surprise that - within the project - there is not more talk about what the process of planting looks like or why it is needed.

Defining sustainability?

Angus Mathieson, now interim head of the Faith Nurture Forum, confirmed that central funding will cease on 31 December 2021. This will enable a tidy ending to the project to draw out clear conclusions for the future of these posts. It is acknowledged that some of the pioneers have been deliberately placed into demanding mission contexts to see what is possible; phrases like *'permission to fail'* are used to convey the sense of creative experimentation hoped for within the pilot.

Concerns were raised that too much stress on experimentation runs the risk that hopes will be raised but *'left potentially hanging at the end of the pilot'*. If the posts ceased after five years, some would feel *'the church was letting them down'* and the church would be seen in *'a bad light'*.

A few commented that this project felt like *'the latest good idea'* actioned without research and consultation with those who have more knowledge of pioneering ministry. One of the pioneers wondered if too much excitement and energy went into the *'dragons' den'*-type bidding process at

⁶ Ayr presbytery included information on Cariboo house churches from the Presbyterian Church in Canada in their bid material.

the beginning of the pilot, with expense of energy and care needed to set the posts up well for the long-term without *'any deep thought given to the long-term outcomes'*.

Some expressed concern that the pilot has been too short-term in its thinking. No one expects a new ecclesial community to be able to generate funds to support a full-time minister, but no one is clear what was meant by sustainability if the *'expensive'* model of a full-time stipendiary minister and housing allowance is always part of what is intended. In light of the significant financial constraints within the denomination, it is a shame this pilot did not explore alternative approaches such as seed-funding or a pioneer developing a local team to lead when the pioneer's funding ceases.

The language of pilot is somewhat confusing in that it seems it was always intended that presbyteries would take over the funding of the pioneering ministry in 2022 if they chose to. In that sense, this particular phase of the project will never be repeated again. However, the terms of what *kind* of pilot this would be were set out clearly before commencement; sustainability was and is understood to be about the presbyteries continuing the posts. (See section *Acknowledged constraints of the pilot.*)

Stakeholder reflections and learning around impact

Initially, this pilot project was designed with a comprehensive evaluation framework developed by Research Scotland. This was primarily a quantitative measurement tool designed before all the pioneers were in post. Once in post, pioneers felt decisions about what and how to measure effectiveness had been made prematurely. They felt the framework focused too much on numbers using management jargon and would be limited in capturing more qualitative data appropriate for this kind of ministry.

The pioneers rejected the previous suggested framework, but - partly due to a large number of Ministries Council roles changing - no alternative was formally discussed and agreed upon. The pioneers are expected to submit annual reports to presbytery, copied to the Central Offices. These are short summaries of activities in newsletter form with some light-touch theological reflection. In January 2018, the pioneers notionally agreed to report under headings of: contexts/world, discoveries, liberation and kingdom, although only one did so in practice.

It is intended that this current one-off evaluation piece will provide a more formal evaluation, drawing together qualitative and quantitative data to provide a mix of 'top down' and 'bottom up' perspectives. As there is no existing consistent framework for measuring and assessing impact, this evaluation has had to work with **somewhat uneven data from:**

- one report to presbytery from each of the pioneers all submitted in January 2019
- further piecemeal data supplied in pioneer interviews
- further piecemeal data offered in presbytery representative interviews
- a few additional conversations and phone calls with local 'beneficiaries' of the ministries recommended by the pioneers

Across these sources, the following elements currently contribute to measuring and assessing impact:

Glasgow

In 2018, Peter Gardner recorded at least 6 different site-specific installations, and for...

- ...Against the Grain, 100s of visitors were estimated to have participated over 10 days

- ...Nest A While, 100s of visitors were estimated to have participated over two weeks

Over the first 3 years of the project:

- Over 12,000 people are estimated to have seen the Peacemaker's Loom since 2014 (the Peacemaker Project has continued but predates the pioneer ministry)
- 86 churches within Glasgow Presbytery submitted a photo of their front step for a collective art project
- Daily conversations take place with some of the 80 artists based in The Briggait
- Monthly Morphe Arts group meet in their studio, with around 10 attending regularly

Further ways that Peter intuitively assesses the impact of his post include:

- The quality of listening engagement they do with participants
- Returning participants to installations - occasionally, participants return multiple times
- Personal stories and opportunities to pastor/pray for individuals (which are difficult to report on)
- Noting the further creative projects (video, podcast) by others that occur because of their installations
- Group support and nurture of local artists
- Ways in which their art installations can raise the profile of their work and Pioneer ministry
- Church press coverage

Presbytery representatives commented on the following ways the post has had an impact:

- local ministers in pastoral charges not only being aware but challenged
'...people are aware of what Peter is doing and how that might chime with them or challenge them in their pioneering, in their practice.'
- More installations than expected
'We thought he would do 5 over the 5 years, but now he is doing 3 a year.'
- Good networking
'They already had excellent connections and relationships in the arts community that they were able to build on. I think their own personality style and so on and their ability to understand the institution... [gave them] ... a head start.'
- Pastoral opportunities
'...an absolute slew of pastoral conversations with complete strangers who do this thing with their eyes down would pour their hearts out and tell their stories and find themselves talking about themselves to complete strangers in a way that they never intended to do when they set foot in the church.'
- Nurturing a group of artists meeting monthly
'I think they see the ... group as ... one ecclesial expression, but I think you would be extremely wary or cautious about any sense of their claiming that or owning that...'

When a local friend and contact in the Glasgow arts scene was asked to give feedback about the post, comments included:

'[The ministry is] growing in depth and numbers'

'If either side of our informal partnership had to stop, the other would be able to pick ... up [the group of artists that meet].'

'Peter and Heidi make thoughtful, considered work. It's safe to make work in the context of church, but their work can stand up beyond the walls of church.'

Lothian

In 2018, Elisabeth Spence recorded:

- 35-50 people attending Hopefield Connections events in autumn 2017 (including Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas events)
- A further 6 community events organised: car boot sale, pop-up picnic, Easter egg hunt, spring clean-up in the community garden, advent windows, carol singing
- An example of one of her Facebook posts being liked 891 times and shared 29 times, reaching 2,298 people in total

In 2019, the first coffee stop was for one week in June and in the new school session one day fortnightly.

Further ways that Elisabeth intuitively assesses the impact of her post include:

- The number of meaningful conversations, especially people feeling they can open up about difficulties in their lives
- Developing small group work with women meeting in her home
- Being able to pray with people who aren't normally churchgoers
- Many people taking on leadership roles or taking initiative in organising something themselves
- Being recognised in the community
- Requests for her involvement to mark rites of passage e.g. leading a child's naming ceremony

Presbytery representatives commented on the following ways the post has had an impact:

- A few new faces coming to existing church events
'...it was nice to see three of the Hopefield families come which they've never come before but because of this connection...'
- Organising local people to contribute to a project
'...it's just amazing she put out Sunday's coming, it's only 48 hours away but I need some ... purple knitted poppies ... how many poppies [were made]? ... 40 I think.'
- Empowering others
'There was a kiddie that was raising money for one of the Christmas charities so [Elisabeth offered] her support ... they all had a bake stall ... about 30/40 people on the little pick, then they all came back for coffee and tea ... and the youngster raised about £800...'
- Building friendships
'...a lady there a couple of weeks ago [at the pop-up café] ... she's just separated from her husband after 20 years and you know so she was able to share that when she came and you know she was just saying how big a thing that is for her just now.'

- Parts of the ministry that will hopefully come together as more of a new ecclesial community over time
'...you're making all these wonderful connections, but actually perhaps having that coming together of a, you know, fresh expression of Church is still a bit way down the line, but it's, you know, it's potential, it's coming together...'

When a local volunteer was asked to join the presbytery representatives focus group interview, she gave feedback about the post which included:

'It's great when Elisabeth comes along and gives you something, because then you feel this togetherness...'

'I just think it's extremely important for ... we have a very ageing congregation and it's so good to have had so many people there come with the young, and the young and the old sort of mixing together.'

Stirling

In 2018 and the first quarter of 2019, Janet Foggie recorded:

- A student community garden with 63 gardening weekly over three years. Usual size 3-5. 23 students attended a Permaculture Training Weekend, learning about the ethical underpinnings of community gardening.
- Twice weekly sewing group Patches4Peace with 59 student group members with repeat attendance over three years and wider 'one-off' attendance. Usual group size 5-7. 81 Facebook followers. (Follows the model of Dorcas in Acts 9.)
- Hosted two successful 'Table Talks' where 20-25 students on each occasion fed into a consultation on the Good Food Nation Bill (in partnership with food charity Nourish Scotland for whom Janet is now an elected trustee).
- Free student lunches, with discussion topics ranging from Brexit's impact on student life to the view of the 17 UN Goals for Climate Change. Approximately 250-300 students engaged.
- 8 students involved in a celebratory lunch for Black History Month, engaging with Kenyan Christian students and their experiences of studying at Stirling.
- 16 in-depth pastoral care contacts, including bereavement issues, money troubles and mental health.
- Collaboration with Peter and Heidi Gardner - facilitating a Peace Loom exhibition on campus, and Patches4Peace creating 4 bags of craft items for Stuart Davidson's drop-in.

Further ways that Janet intuitively assesses the impact of her post include:

- Networking opportunities
- Gathering participant feedback after gardening sessions
- Relationships growing between overseas students and Scottish students
- Producing bags, hats and quilts for Start Up Stirling
- Fundraising for Start Up Stirling and other charities and organisations
- Interfaith work, including several Muslim students joining in with sewing and feeling accepted and included
- Where students' stress levels are being reduced
- Growing working relationships with the Union and Student Support Services

Presbytery representatives commented on the following ways the post has had an impact:

- Students learning about the kingdom of God
'...some of these young people, when they've left the university, you know, and gone on, what they have got from that is not necessarily ever going to be measurable, because we may never know, but the seeds are sown and I think that's really important.'
- The university recognising and acknowledging her role
'They've responded positively, they really, they first of all gave Janet the prized parking permit (laughing) which is, you know, I initially recognised she has a position with the university.'
- Reports at presbytery are well received
'When she reports to presbytery it's incredibly well received, you know, there is spontaneous applause after her report.'
- The presbytery has a live connection to the university community
'We're starting from scratch. It had to be someone to go in and create the space for other things to come and to build on the foundations.'
- The post-holder brings mental health experience
'She had a previous experience in ... mental health, a huge issue in student life just now, so in terms of student engagement that's been something she's been able to offer as a way of support, in addition to what the university already does.'
- Modelling a different way of engaging with matters of faith
'...do things differently, offer them a different way of engaging with matters of faith and that's what we're trying to do. And I think Janet has, was given this remit and I think she's doing a pretty good job of actually working towards it.'

When a previous PhD student at Stirling was asked to give feedback about the post, comments included:

'Janet is now - as pioneer minister - the modern face of the church within the university.'

'Words like 'grace', 'hope' and 'blessing' don't mean anything to young people, so part of the value of Janet's role is to give space to work out what they mean.'

Greenock and Paisley (now part of Clyde)

In 2018:

- Stuart delivered 'Father's Love Letter', a gospel tract, to 1,700 households within Ferguslie Park
- A weekly drop-in has attracted around 14 men and women, most struggling with life-controlling issues
- An annual holiday club hosted with the help of 19 team volunteers from surrounding churches was attended by 38 children and 4 teenagers
- A 2018 Christmas community gathering attracted 15 children and 7 adults, with discussions about developing this monthly

Further ways that Stuart intuitively assesses the impact of his post include:

- Seeing the views of local people change positively towards Jesus and the church

- The fruits of the Spirit evident in people's lives
- Those who come along to weekly house group
- Accessing GoForIt funding for the Voice Project in the local primary school
- Negotiating a reduction in energy bills for Ferguslie Park residents
- Memorial service and food bank collection
- Follow-ons from the holiday club, including youth group run by St Ninians' outreach worker

Presbytery representatives commented on the following ways the post has had an impact:

- It's been a positive experience so far
'It's broken down barriers of cynicism.'
- A tentative group has emerged
'We thought five years was too short, but he has got a group.'
- The presbytery has been won over
'Unanimous agreement that we want to see the post continued.'
- This has modelled commitment
'...he does deliver, and even when ... discouraging things happen he still keeps on going ... and that proves to the people that in a sense he's in it for the long haul, you know this is not just in a sense a project and then once we've finished with the project we'll bail out...'
- Relationships and listening
'For me the building of relationships and the listening stuff. I mean if you look through the set piece things of what Stuart would do in an average week ... he's a got a bit of that space to react to things and respond for people.'

When a close colleague working with Stuart was asked to give feedback about the post, comments included:

'I feel we've been very fortunate in the God thing and a planning thing that the right person has come into this role and has been right for this [context].'

'...for those that are aware of what he's doing and around that circle even the local folk we connect with that are nothing to do with church, but as they see the kinds of things that he's doing and the way he does it, it provokes questions and thoughts and interest around, aye like he's a minister that does that kind of stuff, you know.'

Ayr

In 2017, Chris Blackshaw noted 200 attendees at the annual carol service in the Farmers' Market. In 2018, he records in his report:

- 3 farm-based acts of worship: farm walk and praise (200 people attending), harvest thanksgiving (40) and carol service (250)
- 5 hampers donated from some of the offertory money collected at these events (as well as donations to relevant farming charities)
- 4 drop-in clinics organised
- 18 meetings with partnering agencies
- 76 pastoral home visits
- 15 agricultural shows attended

- 57 visits to Ayr Market
- 22 occasions of leading worship in existing churches
- 2 occasions of leading farmers' funerals
- 9 presentations about ministry to church groups
- A short media clip made by BBC digital programmes viewed 163,000 times (as of January 2019)

In 2019, the farm walk and praise attracted 400 attendees. Overall, Chris has visited 10 other presbyteries to talk about his farming ministry.

Further ways that Chris intuitively assesses the impact of his post include:

- Positive comments from local people made directly or indirectly to presbytery reps
- Invitation to conduct a farmer's wedding, including positive feedback on how effectively he communicated to a farming 'audience'
- Press coverage, including newspaper articles and television
- Contributing to changes in agricultural policy
- One-to-one discipleship work with individuals
- Whether the presbytery want to role to continue

Presbytery representatives commented on the following ways the post has had an impact:

- Praise from partnering agencies
'They were very impressed actually that the Church of Scotland were considering this and doing this because they'd never come across this before and they've really thought that the church taking this initiative was something very special because it hadn't happened anywhere else...'
- Interest from other presbyteries
'...many other presbyteries have asked the pioneer minister to go and explain there what it is we're doing here and there are some now considering how they may be able to fit it into their system.'
- The pioneer is accepted in the context
'...the folks gravitate towards him, they're going to him rather than him to them...'
- The pioneer is accepted by presbyters
'...the concept has now taken root among presbyters and it's working well and those who had reservations have perhaps withdrawn them and the incumbent has created an atmosphere of trust and become accepted...'
- Fundraising
'...we had events that we've collected money from to go to specific charities or for the money to be held in the presbytery ... to be used as our pioneer minister saw relevant. Last year food parcels went to numerous folks...'

When local farmers were asked to give feedback about the post, comments included:

'He is the most personable minister I've met. The ministry is very worthwhile'.

'Farmers don't have a lot of time to go to church... Chris is just there. He makes quite a difference. Visiting is important. He just laughs and cheers you up.'

'I wouldn't want to lose Chris.'

Relationships within the project

The peer group of pioneers and The National Offices

Initial intentions for the project included peer group learning among the five pioneers. In interviews, the pioneers agreed this aspect of the project has worked particularly well. Even though the mission contexts in which the pioneers are ministering are different, having one another for support has been 'essential'. Through the facilitation of Liz Crumlish (Path of Renewal Coordinator), the pioneers meet every other month and are appreciative of the funds to go away on retreat once a year.

The pioneers together spoke of their sense that friends and colleagues based in parish ministry now treat them differently. This might be due to envy over freedom or strangeness of non-parish posts, but the pioneers sense a degree of antagonism from others. This means the fellowship among the pioneers is even more appreciated.

While the relationship the pioneers have with Liz Crumlish is a very positive one, the pioneers at time expressed certain frustrations:

- A feeling that people based in the National Offices have made decisions about the project but do not explain why these decisions have been made.
- Who is leading this project - the National Offices or presbyteries? Not knowing means you don't know who to go to with issues and problems.
- A lot of energy was spent in early months/years on questions of governance and new ecclesial communities.
- This project is so expensive - how serious were staff at the National Offices about the future?
- Job descriptions feel somewhat irrelevant and/or unrealistic.

Pioneers and presbyteries

As a presbytery is a fairly large number of people, discerning the collective mind of one is an impossibility. It is unlikely that one pioneer can relate to each individual within a presbytery. Therefore, in describing the relationship between pioneers and presbyteries, one has to generalise somewhat. Furthermore, as one presbytery representative commented, the kinds of people who end up sitting on committees of the church...

'...often tend to be institutionally-minded, less pioneering, much more conservative in the sense of preserving the heritage and the inheritance of it all and therefore they're not necessarily people who are natural risk-takers or necessarily people who have been helped to envision church beyond its traditional institutional expression.'

Here are some indicative comments to summarise the varying dynamics described in interviews when asked how presbyteries are engaging with their pioneers:

'...it has moved from [presbytery] not knowing what this was to arguably in the last year people beginning to relate to it, engage with it ... chalking the step [has] actually very cleverly created a way where the whole presbytery can engage with what Peter's doing.'

'It's been a positive one; [our pioneer] is very easy to get on with and always very enthusiastic and works away patiently. And I think, I mean it has been a kind of road of discovery for us all.'

'...in a climate of decline and crisis and anxiety about falling numbers and money and buildings closing and so on, I think for some it's possibly been perceived as an unnecessary indulgence. But, having said that, you know it has moved from not knowing what this was to arguably in the last year people beginning to relate to it, engage with it.'

'...it's very, very difficult to find the funding and to justify the post.'

'The presbytery could see the merit of trying something new. They are pretty supportive, although people haven't been falling over themselves to help but they are sympathetic.'

'...the presbytery are very supportive. I'm not sure that they all understand exactly the thinking or the principles behind what a pioneer ministry is ... if we are being candid it's anyone who has been involved with the pioneer ministry gets it. Some of the congregations are supportive, some less so.'

As well as a degree of oversight and support nationally through Liz Crumlish, the line management was set up to be delivered through presbytery. It was expected that each pioneer would have a steering group, but as one stakeholder commented, *'no one is sure what a presbytery steering group or support group means.'*

The pioneers have found this aspect of the project frustrating. One commented that *'the steering group was too passive'* so by mutual agreement *'it was knocked on the head'*. Only one steering group has consistently functioned well, although all pioneers have support through line managers.

Broadly speaking, presbyteries are aware that they *'didn't have as much oversight as I think we should have had ... unfortunately the chair of that group took ill; the group didn't really meet for periods of time...'*

Presbyteries and the National Offices

One of the main intentions of this project was that it would model something of a mixed ecology of inherited churches working alongside new ecclesial communities within presbyteries. In hindsight, one member of staff commented that they would have spent more time preparing presbyteries beforehand to clarify their role in the project and to explore what a new ecclesial community would look like. Another said, *'there hasn't been great ownership at presbytery level'*.

Other stakeholders expressed their feeling that only those who put bids together really knew what the pilot was about. If they moved on...

'...one of the challenges is that ... nothing was written down ... that I'm aware of at the start of the project by the people who set it up and so it was handed over with that vagueness which certainly by the time I came in ... things are already going down that track and you kind of think well you can't then impose, change the goals or you know.'

As one pioneer summarised it, *'are these presbytery posts or ministries posts? Each one thinks it's the other'*. One presbytery representative commented that there were *'...management issues ... [for] someone who is centrally funded but then locally managed, and so we had to work those things out.'* Another described it led to *'a stuttering start'* for the pilot *'both in terms of [central structures] and [presbytery] structures.'*

Liz Crumlish chairs two meetings a year with representatives from presbyteries (for one meeting a year, the pioneers also attend). These meetings are valued, but one comment was made that these types of meetings work well for celebrating positive developments but *'people don't want to sit and go through the difficulties and the issues when there are other people sitting there'*.

Despite the difficulties in communication and working in partnership, one stakeholder was encouraged that pioneering is now beginning to appear in presbytery plans. One representative remarked that their presbytery is *'very grateful to have been given the opportunity and I think at the end of five years it will have been seen to be a good use of the Church of Scotland's funds to do this.'*

This is all in a context of presbytery reform. *'It's very difficult talking funding for you know a couple of years out you know there's so much change potentially happening ... presbytery is all changing.'*

Acknowledged constraints of the pilot

One ordained minister

*'In developing these posts, the intention is not to propose a different category or class of ordained ministry, but to develop a particular focus within the one ordained ministry of the church.'*⁷

When asked about the decision to pioneer with ordained ministers, one stakeholder commented that the Church of Scotland would not have gone down the route of lay. Another reflected that it was a helpful corrective to any misguided assumptions that ordained ministers lead inherited forms of church and lay people pioneer new ecclesial communities. The level of payment was set because it was the only mechanism available. Some of the pioneers said they thought it was wise for the project to focus on ordained ministers; it says a lot to local people that the resource of a paid minister would be sent to their contexts.

Alternative views offered were that it was *'misguided'* to spend so much money on such a tightly-bounded project. Even though all the pioneers are skilful people, one asked *'Why would you put all your eggs in one basket?'* Furthermore, in making these posts available to only ordained ministers, it was more difficult to insist they undergo further training for planting new ecclesial communities.

The decision to create one post in each context was an inevitable conclusion from wanting to develop a variety of pioneer ministries with the available budget; to be able to pioneer in five contexts was felt to be a good enough number to be able to capture useful learning. The creation of teams was not pushed by those at the centre because of not wanting to presuppose what was needed before the processes of contextual listening and a mission audit had taken place. Pioneers were free to develop teams if they wished - this was left to their discretion.

The pioneers spoke of some confusion around this: teambuilding was not included in the job descriptions and the idea that they were free to develop teams was not clearly communicated.

One presbytery representative indicated that having one person in post works well for pastoral sensitivity, but *'there would have to be a network of volunteers to support that individual, so we would have to look at how to develop the ministry across the presbyteries so that we don't have burnout'*. Some of those interviewed commented that it was unrealistic for one pioneer to plant a new ecclesial community on their own, especially if they are new to planting and new to the area. *'It's very hard if not impossible'*, so *'where is the teambuilding?'*

Five years

The pilot was designed to be five years in duration. This was felt to be enough time to give presbyteries a reasonable chance to get a feel for whether this would be a project they would like to continue. It was recognised that seven years would be a more realistic time period but, with the funding available, five years would be *'good enough'* and certainly preferable to three years.

Presbytery representatives acknowledged the limitations of five years...

'Five years is far too short, because you're only just finding out what you're meant to be doing, only just beginning the relationships, only just seeing the fruit and getting something on the ground at the five-year mark, so you need at least another five years to see whether it's going to... You know, I think most fresh expressions they reckon it's a ten-year cycle'.

⁷ Pioneer Ministry Pilot Scheme: Invitation to Presbyteries to take part, p. 1.

Two pioneers were appointed in the first year of the project but the remaining pioneers were appointed in the second year. As all the pioneer posts will cease on 31 December 2021, regardless of their start date, three will have been in post for only four years. Furthermore, in 2020, only two of the pioneers continued to work during the COVID-19 lockdown; the other three were furloughed. **Therefore, only one of the pioneers will have been in active ministry for the full five years.** See Appendix 1 for the pioneers' reflections on pioneering ministry during COVID-19.

An unprecedented level of change with Ministries Council

This project has been operating against a backdrop of considerable change at council level. One consultant described the rate of turnover in the staffing of Ministries Council as '*catastrophic*', with ongoing '*troubleshooting*'. This has been followed by a foundational reorganisation at the National Offices which has required significant attention as existing councils have merged to create new councils.

A full-time role was originally envisaged to oversee the project; however, Liz Crumlish was asked to take this on in addition to her Path of Renewal role. While all speak highly of how she has supported the pioneers, she herself commented that the project has lacked a full-time lead to coordinate, champion and support pioneering. She has no power to make project decisions and funding was not made available for a more substantive role.

For some, this connects to an inconsistency around support and evaluation. One of the presbytery representatives commented, '*it surprises me that they actually buy in an evaluator of the process that they're supposed to be supervising, because if they actually knew what was going on over a three or four year period they should be able to evaluate that process*'.

Founding documents show supervision and accompaniment were intended at the start, but a number of external consultants commented on the lack of support of this kind as well as basic training: '*none of the pioneers have had any training for planting new ecclesial communities*'. Although the original intention was to '*recruit and train*' as well as '*deploy pioneers*', the project was left without anyone to push the training, coaching or evaluation elements.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses

It is not possible to include every single detail of what was shared in interviews regarding the project's strengths and weaknesses. Here is a summary of the main issues mentioned most often by stakeholders with illustrative quotes.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Despite seismic denominational challenges, pioneering is on the agenda</p> <p><i>'It's ... very difficult ... to start a pioneering initiative when institutionally you're in crisis mode.'</i></p> <p>As more of a background observation, many stakeholders are grateful that despite such a difficult time in the life of the denomination, there is courage and commitment of financial resources to try something new.</p>	<p>Presbytery support has been too passive</p> <p><i>'Presbyteries have had no skin in the game.'</i></p> <p>Because these posts have been centrally-funded, presbyteries have been happy to let this project happen, seeing it as a project being driven by the 'centre'. Aside from those involved in the bidding process, there has been little interest in the project more widely. Advocates moved on/away in three of the five presbyteries.</p>
<p>This pilot has enabled presbyteries to imagine what is possible</p> <p><i>'...it would be a very brave person I think who would stand up in presbytery now and say we don't want pioneer ministry, whereas previously it was a brave person that had to stand up and say we want pioneer ministry...'</i></p> <p>All are committed to <i>debating</i> the incorporation of their pioneer post into their presbytery plan beyond December 2021. This is despite considerable organisational upheaval as presbyteries regroup and must make hard decisions about allocation of resources.</p>	<p>For most, support/steering groups have not worked in practice</p> <p><i>'...we just didn't really know anything about pioneering, so it was a bit of an odd situation; we're here to kind of steer but we're not steering and I think it got quite frustrating in the end...'</i></p> <p>While the pioneers have found support with one another and line management has more or less worked sufficiently, the sense of connection with a local group of people sharing in, understanding and supporting the pioneering ministry has not happened.</p>
<p>It has allowed ordained national ministers to concentrate on mission</p> <p><i>'...we have all become so constrained by our procedures that it might be constraining the creativity that people have but don't feel that they can use, or ... have time to use... And ... pioneer ministers can go and do all this sort of stuff.'</i></p> <p>Recognising the busyness and churchiness of existing church life, this pilot has allowed the chance to explore new possibilities and new people that they would never have had a chance to explore when deployed in a parish.</p>	<p>No central staff with experience or time to communicate and coordinate</p> <p><i>'...the webs of mystery that may have been spun at the beginning.'</i> <i>'We haven't done a good job of explaining [the pilot].'</i> <i>'The very, very obvious support structure from the centre was lacking'</i></p> <p>Although Liz Crumlish has been instrumental in supporting the pioneers, she has done this alongside other job responsibilities. The turnover of staff in what was Ministries Council and the subsequent merging of councils has meant there is no one to ensure the project remains faithful to its original intentions.</p>

<p>Evaluation is an expectation of the pilot</p> <p><i>‘I’m so pleased the review work is being done so there is a sense of us being a learning church.’</i></p> <p>Although there have been significant difficulties in discerning the best way to evaluate pioneering ministry and it has ended up feeling quite a messy process, at least there has been commitment throughout to ensure some sort of review component is being adhered to.</p>	<p>Formal training has not been a compulsory aspect of this project</p> <p><i>‘...do the pioneers understand what they need for this project?’</i></p> <p>Recruiting ordained ministers for the project meant finding the right time to offer CMD. The pioneers are all highly competent people, but without formal training in planting new ecclesial communities, it is perhaps not surprising progress in this area has been tentative. A culture of resistance to CMD for ordained ministry in general might play a part in this.</p>
<p>The project has not been overly prescriptive but had flexible outcomes</p> <p><i>‘You can’t visualise the conclusion or the end because it had to be pioneering ... and be open to what is required rather than actually having an idea of the endpoint.’</i></p> <p>While some argue there is not enough guidance on outcomes, many stakeholders see the wisdom in a project like this not being too prescriptive in imposing a specific and inflexible model of mission. A generous approach expecting creativity, fragility and even failure has, by and large, been communicated.</p>	<p>Not enough intermediate goals or stages have been set</p> <p><i>‘If this is a centrally-appointed post, have someone from the centre check out with the presbytery and the churches here, how is it going and this is what we’re looking for, some clarity about what pioneering and the goals of this are and some shared expectation...’</i></p> <p>While holding a degree of flexibility about outcomes is valued, some are concerned that too much freedom has been given to the pioneers. It is recognised that accountability and appraisal systems are not part of existing ministerial culture, which makes it very hard to introduce them into this project.</p>
<p>Openness to learn important lessons in these five different contexts</p> <p><i>‘...we want to learn as a church what it is that works, see what lessons we can learn as a church from what they’re doing in their different areas...’</i></p> <p>This project has been brave in deploying pioneers to such varied and challenging contexts, where historic church presence and attendance has been weak or non-existent. Valuable advocacy work is taking place.</p>	<p>There are pieces of pioneering, but no ‘joined-up’ thinking across projects</p> <p><i>‘This is how people are understanding pioneering now.’</i></p> <p>This one project offers a relatively narrow interpretation of all that pioneering could be. It is not easy to see the connections this project has with Sandy Forsyth’s training piece, Fresh Expressions and the recent vision for 100 congregations in the next 10 years. How can laity be involved in this too?</p>
	<p>Not enough background research went into designing this project</p> <p><i>‘There is a strange bubble of things at the centre.’</i></p> <p>This is reflected in the confusion over whether the pioneers are expected to develop team and nurture indigenous leadership. It relates to how expensive it is without researching how resources could be used fruitfully to impact more widely.</p>

Encouraging discoveries and unforeseen challenges

Encouraging discoveries

The pioneers noted:

- Surprise and warmth from those they are ministering to that the Church of Scotland should invest in this kind of ministry
- The sense of powerlessness involved in pioneering has been enjoyable
- The general feeling that those in Ayrshire are more receptive to church than in Cumbria
- The sense that they are finally able to do what they feel called and gifted to do: *'I find what I'm doing utterly invigorating...'*
- Local people are now asking *'When is the next...?'*, which is taken as a sign that they value what is happening and are looking for more
- How open artists are about their motivations, inspirations and practices
- Contemporary art has its own language for searching for meaning and understanding the world: *'I have discovered God is clearly present'*
- How word of mouth can be effective in bringing new people to groups

Presbytery representatives noted:

The pioneer has been *'...building relationships and having then avenues to share faith. It's just been really fascinating to see the kind diverse ways that she's kind of found to make that work.'*

'...just seeing [the pioneer] sitting on that bench and the folk going to him.'

'Folks have been quite ... touched by the idea that the Church of Scotland would think this was relevant or interesting or that this was necessary.'

'...there are doors have been opened or ... slightly ... and I suppose what's surprised us, I think that's reasonable to say, is just the breadth of his influence, the breadth of his contact base.'

The versatility of the Peacemakers Project; there are *'all these different contexts where it could work differently but really significantly. It's a surprising piece.'*

Unforeseen challenges

The pioneers noted:

- that not all local ministers are always supportive of pioneering ministry, with one example of a minister feeling *'their toes had been stepped on'*
- that ministerial colleagues have distanced themselves from the pioneers

Presbytery representatives noted:

The gap between church and contemporary culture: *'something that he'd given himself to utterly was just a complete irrelevance to another community that he now needed to engage with'*.

How risky it has felt: *'You're risking the reputation of the church ... you're risking being accused of using finance in the wrong direction ... you know, all those things'*.

Not much energy from local Christians to get to know new people: *'We didn't imagine quite so much disinterest from local churches'*.

The need to outsource evaluation: *'..the people who are employed to monitor pioneer ministry ... they're supposed to be supervising, because if they actually knew what was going on over a three or four year period they should be able to evaluate that process'*.

Part 2: Reflections from an external observer

This section of the report provides some assessment of impact as an external reviewer. While it is appreciated that the Research Scotland framework was not appropriate, without any subsequently agreed framework it has been difficult to settle on *how* to do this. It is unfair to impose a new strict measurement tool at this point in the pilot, yet neither can progress be assessed with only ‘*let’s see how it goes*’ attitudes. Part 3 discusses this further.

Evidence noted

The following tables attempt to summarise evidence noted so far based on available data. This is not a definitive or nuanced assessment but merely a headline summary. Most of the categories are taken from the developmental stages that Steve Hollinghurst outlines in his 2013 Grove Book *Starting, Assessing and Sustaining Pioneering Mission* - a resource the pioneers are aware of - and are organised under three headlines offered by the 2015 Ministries Council Paper as to what pioneering ministry should emphasise. Comments in **blue** indicate evidence of progress. Comments in **brown** indicate opportunities for potential development.

Cross-cultural mission

	Glasgow	Lothian	Stirling	Greenock and Paisley	Ayr
‘Being there’ with people in their territory Hollinghurst p. 13	Studio based in the Briggait so regular interaction with fellow artists. Good networking.	School and school gate presence, local events, local Facebook groups, Rainbow Unit.	Desk based at the university in term time; joining in uni events as well as running own groups.	Walking area, networking with agencies, consulting with/visiting other drop-in centres.	Home visits, phone calls, weekly market visits, agricultural shows
Listening to culture and ‘learning their language’ Hollinghurst p. 17	Good appointment made - post-holder already familiar with culture and quick to learn more. Had prior experience of being mentored by a pioneering practitioner.	Possibly less ‘cross-cultural’ than other posts to begin with? Active listening to residents through above activities. Liaising with others such as Community Education Officer.	Multiple languages and cultures. Pioneer trusted by university staff. Picking up on issues students feel strongly about - gender equality, transgender awareness, environment, mental health issues.	Harder for any pioneer to make quick progress when ‘parachuted in from outside’. Organising drop-in/listening activities. Befriending those who attend on a regular basis.	Good appointment made - post-holder already familiar with farming culture (where outsiders can find it hard to feel they are welcome).
Advocating on behalf of mission context; feeding back to wider church Hollinghurst p. 19 NB advocacy a higher priority in some job descriptions than others	Creative work with churches in presbytery to help them understand post. Good speaker. Seen as a ‘safe pair of hands’ in a culture the church can find alien.	Influence with local councillors. Limited reporting at presbytery, although learning from post has been shared with a few in similar contexts.	Supports the students to speak out about issues for themselves. Reports to presbytery always well-received, but only intermittent relationship with presbytery beyond that.	Some reporting at presbytery and ‘ <i>in an endearing way</i> ’.	Mediation work, press coverage, political lobbying, church press coverage, reporting at presbytery meetings, CofS rural working group.

Missionary entrepreneurship

	Glasgow	Lothian	Stirling	Greenock and Paisley	Ayr
<p>Imagining new possibilities, bringing them into existence</p> <p>Ministries Council Paper March 2015 p. 3</p>	<p>Designing studio space and website, creating site-specific installations.</p>	<p>Hopefield Connection events and other community events and activities.</p>	<p>Started various initiatives, including weekly gardening club, Patches4Peace, as well as other consultations, events and fundraising and campaigning projects.</p>	<p>Started various initiatives, including weekly drop-in, home group, kids' work, as well as annual holiday club.</p>	<p>Launched 'help-line' ministry, farm-based acts of worship, fundraising, health-check clinics.</p>
<p>Working collaboratively/partnering with other agencies</p> <p>Hollinghurst p. 19</p>	<p>Informal partnering/conference speaking with Morphe network. Some collaborative working inevitable due to reliance on invitations to exhibit. Steering group small but sufficient.</p>	<p>Involvement with local council, informal partnership with school. Steering group not operated, though liaising with line manager.</p>	<p>Working well with other chaplains, Students' Union and student support services. Trustee work with Nourish Scotland. Potential for more two-way connections between campus and local churches suggested by presbytery reps. No steering group in early years.</p>	<p>As well as some consultation with local agencies, works in close collaboration with St Ninian's outreach worker. Steering group encouraging, but met only a few times.</p>	<p>Working well with local 'gatekeepers' and agencies who refer people to pioneer (and vice versa). Steering group small but effective.</p>
<p>Not made explicit in overall project design and communication</p> <p>Beginning to identify key local people as team and future co-leaders</p> <p>Hollinghurst p. 25 Looking ahead to what will be needed at five-year point <i>if</i> new ecclesial communities is the goal</p>	<p>Key informal relationship with David McCulloch, but he works for his own organisation/denomination. Peter and Heidi work well as a pair. Not easy to identify further team, although potential for Peter to mentor artists who feel call to speak into the relationship between church and arts.</p>	<p>A small group of local Christians meet together to plan events, but they attend existing churches. Potential for Elisabeth to develop a few volunteers who would see Hopefield Connections as their only church involvement.</p>	<p>A few key helpers. More difficult to do in a transient community.</p>	<p>A few local Christians identified as being able to lead groups more in the future. More difficult to do in a deprived community.</p>	<p>Existing steering group works well as a little team. Potential for Chris to develop volunteers who could help with increasing pastoral work. Potential for Chris to develop team to facilitate community and worship events.</p>

Establishing new ecclesial communities (very early stages)

	Glasgow	Lothian	Stirling	Greenock and Paisley	Ayr
<p>Bringing people together on 'shared territory' to deepen relationships</p> <p>Hollinghurst p. 21</p>	<p>Small monthly gatherings at the Briggait.</p>	<p>Hopefield Connection seasonal events and other activities. Hard to know to what extent they deepen relationships.</p> <p>A ladies' home group is an encouraging step.</p>	<p>All groups and activities help to deepen relationships.</p> <p>Groups are a costly long-term investment where transformative relationships grow.</p>	<p>Regulars at drop-in celebrate birthdays and go on trips.</p> <p>Holiday club helps relational work for ongoing youth and children's groups.</p>	<p>Three farm-based worship events bring people together, but more difficult to encourage 'deeper' community building on a more regular basis</p>
<p>Spiritual (worship) gatherings for particular purposes and seasons</p> <p>Hollinghurst p. 20</p> <p>Sometimes these are appropriate as long as public worship is not rushed into too quickly (to avoid too many existing churchgoers dominating)</p>	<p>Spiritual discussions instinctive as well as art installations inviting spiritual engagement. More difficult to develop public worship gatherings with artists who may not feel comfortable in such settings yet.</p>	<p>Hopefield Connection events (Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas)</p> <p>A ladies' home group gently exploring faith holds potential for further development.</p>	<p>COSY group in Stirling beginning to meet.</p> <p>Prayer in one-to-one pastoral contexts.</p> <p>More public worship gatherings may not be appropriate in this context (see p. 28).</p>	<p>Some Bible reading and testimony at the drop-in.</p> <p>Potential to develop further.</p> <p>Christmas community gathering and memorial service in Glencoats Park are encouraging examples. Could these 'one-offs' turn into more?</p>	<p>Three farm-based acts of worship a year highly appropriate.</p> <p>More difficult to identify opportunities for group worship and discipleship on a more regular basis.</p>
<p>Enabling 'Christian discipleship for life' as the very beginnings of a new ecclesial community emerging at the five-year point</p> <p>Hollinghurst p. 22</p> <p>People who now see themselves as followers of Christ</p>	<p>Some one-to-one work, but it feels too soon to talk of monthly gatherings as a new ecclesial community. 'Christian discipling for life' may look different in an arts context.</p>	<p>Ladies' home group holds potential.</p> <p>Planning team for events are currently made up of Christians who attend church elsewhere.</p> <p>Hopefield Connections events could happen more often.</p> <p>All above are 'jigsaw pieces' that could come together over next few years possibly.</p>	<p>Too early to know what COSY group might lead to.</p> <p>Hard to know what could grow if university and chaplaincy aren't convinced about long-term-goal of new ecclesial community emerging.</p>	<p>The regulars from the drop-in seem to have formed a relatively strong community dynamic. Hard to gauge deepening interest in faith from a distance. Working with those recovering from life-controlling issues can be demanding but also very fruitful.</p>	<p>Prayer and Bible study in one-to-one pastoral contexts, but hard to know how this can develop into a more regular discipling community. An evening gathering once a month could be a possible next stage.</p>

Overall assessment

Strengths

At this point in the pilot project, this evaluation from an outside observer wishes to celebrate a number of important achievements. Highlights include:

1. These posts show encouraging signs of impact. These posts have been strong on modelling a ministry of presence. The pioneers have been effective in listening to - and finding ways of speaking the language of - their cross-cultural context. They have been able to identify and advocate for relevant needs. None have fallen into the trap of serving existing churchgoing Christians with only a flavour of pioneering. They have all embarked on the more challenging cross-cultural journey in which they are guests, not hosts in their contexts.⁸ All the posts confirm that the 'gap' between church and culture is widening; exploring what is possible to bridge that gap is needed more than ever. The five pioneers in this pilot are a potential resource to coach others in cross-cultural mission.
2. As such, these posts show what can be achieved when ordained ministers are released from the routines and responsibilities of their pastoral charges. While in theory, parish ministers should be able to pioneer alongside their existing responsibilities, the reflections of these post-holders suggest it is more difficult to juggle existing ministry and pioneering mission in practice. Much energy goes into explaining this new kind of ministry to different audiences, as well as translating back to churches the value of what is being undertaken.
3. This project has been wise to deploy pioneers at presbytery level rather than employing them to work for or with a local parish. In his book *Refounding the Church*, anthropologist and theologian Gerald Arbuckle advocates for the principle that '*the new belongs elsewhere*'. He argues that pioneering ministry should not normally be placed in the midst of existing ministry '*where prophetic people would be under constant critical assessment by members of the community and required to waste invaluable energy "apologising" for what they are doing*'.⁹ Additional research by Beth Keith in an English context showed pioneers working outside (or alongside) parishes were far more effective than those working within an existing parish only.¹⁰
4. In gathering stakeholder perspectives, I met no first-hand assumptions that the purpose of this project was new people attending existing churches. Perhaps this is not surprising given that presbytery representatives were those who bid for the posts and so misunderstandings of this kind would have been 'ironed out' in these early stages. In my experience, assumptions of this kind can surface among those who are thought to fully understand pioneering, so it is reassuring that this does not seem to be the case here. (I realise there is still some work to do with wider presbytery members and local church members.)
5. To say that - at the start of this process - presbyteries were thought to lack the vision to implement pioneering themselves, this pioneer project has helped presbyteries catch a vision for pioneering. Whether all five presbyteries will be able to *secure funds* for the posts to continue beyond 2021, it is important to recognise that presbytery representatives are submitting proposals to advocate for a continuation of pioneering in some form.

⁸ S. Hollinghurst (2013) *Starting, Assessing and Sustaining Pioneering Mission* Ev. 101 Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, p. 10.

⁹ G. Arbuckle (1993) *Refounding the Church* London: Geoffrey Chapman, p. 151.

¹⁰ B. Keith (2010) *To pluck up and pull down, to build and to plant: A qualitative study on the suitability of Jeremiah's call for pioneers working within established ecclesiastical traditions*. MA dissertation. York St John University.

Things that are curious

As an outsider, there are some dynamics of the project that strike me as curious. These include:

1. If presbyteries were deemed to be lacking in vision and skills at the beginning of the process - which is why this pilot was needed in the first place - it is a shame that no attempts to 'skill' presbytery members have been woven into pilot. Obviously, being a part of this pilot has enabled a degree of experiential learning. However, because most of the steering groups have not worked as hoped (and reporting to committees has been uneven), some presbytery representatives bravely acknowledge their ongoing ignorance of how to best support their pioneer and appropriately evaluate a pioneering project.
2. I note with some concern that several key advocates for these posts moved on to other jobs or to other parts of the country in the first year or so of the pioneers being appointed. While in life and ministry there is always the unexpected, advocates who move on swiftly are not able to lend support when ministry is at its most new and fragile. It also lends weight to the impression voiced by some that a disproportionate amount of energy went into setting up the posts at the expense of longer-term considerations.
3. There is a curious order to what has been prioritised in this project. Energy has been given to the question of how new ecclesial communities will connect into existing church structures. The instinct to give new initiatives a voice on decision-making councils of the church is to be commended. However, there is something of a 'cart before horse' dynamic. Questions of governance need to be asked but at the right time; there is so much to learn about how new ecclesial communities are grown from scratch in the first place.
4. Several interviewees commented that '*no one has pioneering expertise within the Church of Scotland*'. However, as a research unit we have long been aware of Forge and the training for planting new ecclesial communities headed up by Alan McWilliam in Glasgow. I noted that there was a Forge training day offered to the pioneers and that either the pioneers decided not to avail themselves of that opportunity or they attended and found it wasn't a good training 'fit'. Some *bespoke* training or coaching from an experienced planter like Alan would still be helpful.
5. *From Anecdote to Evidence* in 2013 was cited as one source of inspiration for the design of this pilot. However, only 2.4% of all new ecclesial communities in 11 English dioceses were led by Ordained Pioneer Ministers - a smaller number than expected.¹¹ *The Day of Small Things* reported a similarly small percentage and observed from anecdotal evidence that pioneer ministers often feel called to engage in all sorts of mission ministry,¹² thus challenging the automatic assumption that creating pioneer ordained minister posts equals planting of new ecclesial communities. Outcomes need to be specified. Ironically, this survey discovered far more lay volunteers leading new ecclesial communities than expected.
6. This project appears to be one piece of pioneering undertaken in isolation to other pioneering work in the Church of Scotland. Several stakeholders referred to the vision to see 100 new congregations planted in the next 10 years. I hope that what is being learned in this pilot will help shape the implementation of this vision as well as connecting into Sandy Forsyth's vision for pioneering pathways. I was also surprised that none of the pioneers or presbytery representatives mentioned any awareness of, or collaboration with, the national Fresh Expressions development worker.

¹¹ Additional research of a further 10 dioceses in *The Day of Small Things* confirmed 2.7% overall.

¹² G. Lings (2016) *The Day of Small Things: An Analysis of fresh expressions of Church in 21 dioceses in the Church of England* Sheffield: Church Army, p. 178.

Issues that merit further attention

The previous section noted things that seemed curious as someone with a fresh pair of eyes. I feel the following points in this section do warrant more urgent consideration:

1. Assuming that the planting of new ecclesial communities is a key priority of this project, it is important to note that some contexts are more difficult to plant in than others. Broadly speaking, the more stable and cohesive a community, the easier it is to plant. Or rather, if too diffuse and lacking in community gathering points, with a high degree of turnover (people moving on), it may be too difficult to justify the resource. Planting is even more difficult if local people do not understand and support new ecclesial communities. Something of this appears to be borne out in this pilot: for example, the pioneer in Ayr benefits from a more stable mission context and long-stay advocates who understand and support the post. Conversely, Stirling is a largely transient community in a context where the pioneer's hands are tied somewhat in being able to fully acknowledge the goal of the project is a new ecclesial community (see p. 39).
2. In interviews, I heard some stakeholders speak passionately about pioneering mission and the kingdom of God, yet they remained diffident about how church fits into this equation. I am reminded of Lesslie Newbigin's famous quote: '*An unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary Church*'. While this is a controversial area of theological debate, George Lings cautions against dropping the '*...of Church*' too eagerly from the phrase '*fresh expressions...*'; church cannot be omitted altogether. While language of kingdom feels more radical and carries less 'baggage', pioneering mission must involve people, and who are these people (the pioneers and those they draw to themselves) if not church?¹³ Further theological reflection is recommended here.
3. Hollinghurst warns that having no fixed goals in a project like this can be just as problematic as too strict a set of goals. Without any goals, no one is sure if the ministry is bearing fruit and a process of review and adjustment becomes impossible.¹⁴ Numbers alone do have limitations, but they do give a feel for the size and scope of what is developing. Collecting qualitative data can be creative; a participative research action approach would allow pioneers to gather data from 'beneficiaries' regularly, so effectiveness is not based on the opinion of the leader alone. Furthermore, some equivalent of 10 definition indicators of fresh expressions of Church would help the Church of Scotland monitor progress with planting new ecclesial communities.
4. The five pioneers are gifted, experienced ministers, but there are two issues where further coaching might be useful for some. Firstly, when pioneers communicate more widely about pioneering, this is hard to do while they are simultaneously trying to make sense of the uniqueness of the role; the pioneers have spent time and energy questioning themselves and where they are in the process. It is possible to work with unknowns *and* work with stages of development simultaneously,¹⁵ and coaching from those who know how to do this would help (as they themselves discovered from their short time with Simon Sutcliffe). Secondly, if the goal of the pilot is to plant new ecclesial communities, one-to-one discipleship must transition to a *group* dynamic that enables communal discipleship. Facilitating occasional events is a beginning point, not an end point. In most cases in this pilot, I suspect new churches will be either small unit churches or household churches. If this is so, growth will occur through multiplication which necessitates an emphasis on training volunteer leaders as a priority.

¹³ G. Lings (2017) *Reproducing Churches* Abingdon: BRF, chapter 3.

¹⁴ S. Hollinghurst (2013) *Starting, Assessing and Sustaining Pioneer Mission* Ev. 101 Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, p. 4.

¹⁵ A. Milne (2016) *The DNA of Pioneer Ministry* London: SCM Press, chapter 4.

Part 3 - Looking to the future

Drawing together stakeholder observations (part 1) and reflections from an outside observer (part 2), this last and final section provides suggestions and advice for the Church of Scotland moving forward.

Priorities for final year of project

- Pioneers should be encouraged to be consistent in reporting (p. 9). Continue to collect numbers on a regular basis. Be creative about qualitative reporting using non-verbal methods as well as interview-type approaches. Draw on the comments and stories of local people ‘benefitting’ from the ministry so effectiveness is not always offered from the perspective of pioneer alone. (One of the pioneers is already doing this.) Participatory action research methods could be trialled to help other pioneers starting out; develop interactive evaluation and reporting from the start. Gathering reflections from local people on life with COVID-19 - and how pioneering ministry has helped - will be useful.
- There is a strategic conversation to be had about whether these contexts have shown evidence that they have enough favourable conditions to sustain the planting of a new ecclesial community. As discussed on p.28, are there too many factors or hurdles that prevent such an outcome, even with a *team* of experienced pioneers familiar with planting processes?
- The pioneers who look as though they will continue in post and feel they are called to develop new ecclesial communities should be asked to engage in bespoke training (p.28) that takes seriously their existing skills and previous training, but gives them additional support as these new ecclesial communities take shape and grow.
- For those continuing in post, training should be encouraged for those members of presbytery who will hold the brief for supporting and encouraging and ultimately managing the pioneers. As discussed on p.27, how can presbytery representatives new to pioneering themselves learn how to ask ‘critical friend’-type questions in support groups that help the ministry to flourish? Where needed, what do they need to give them confidence to appropriately assess the effectiveness of a pioneering project?
- For those posts that will cease in December 2021 and will not be adopted into presbytery plans, it is vital that these end well and are celebrated at both national level and presbytery level. So much has been invested, sacrificed and risked for this pilot project. Managerial or horticultural paradigms of understanding church and planting often gloss over the human and relational dynamics involved.¹⁶ While this pilot is seen by many as an experiment in pioneering, interpersonal analogies gently remind us that projects and churches do not passively exist; they are made up of people who may feel confused, upset or disappointed when a post ceases, even though the pilot was known to be a five-year project. These dynamics need to be acknowledged rather than ignored.

¹⁶ G. Lings (2017) *Reproducing Churches* Abingdon: BRF, chapter 3.

Wisdom for this project in its next phase and future projects

Following on from the previous section, here are some suggestions for the next phase of the project beyond 2021 as well as other pioneering projects that may be developed.

For presbyteries:

- With your pioneers, decide together on the longer-term hopes for sustaining ministry and what steps are needed to see this achieve. For example, should teamwork be prioritised? Should indigenous leaders be identified and mentored? Should a local church get more involved? Can local or national grants be accessed? What other income streams are there?
- If a new ecclesial community is forming, what additional training can the presbyteries and pioneers access about what type of church is emerging? Are there visits a group of local stakeholders could make together to experience something similar but further on in its development, then exchange wisdom with leaders? Are there resources such as videos, websites or books to access?
- Where possible, hold out for as much continuity as possible for key advocates involved in the setting up and monitoring of pioneering posts. Make sure the main protagonists (one might argue even treasurers) don't move on prematurely. If it cannot be avoided, ensure there is a thorough handover.

For the National Offices:

- While the 'ownership' and management of these posts will revert to presbyteries in 2021, there is still the question of who, at a senior denominational level, holds the overall responsibility for this and other pioneering endeavours within the Church of Scotland. In interviews with stakeholders, it seemed there were plans to create some sort of national pioneer facilitator to take this forward. Without such a post, it will be difficult to continue to shape pioneering and implement learning moving forward. Such a post would surely help avoid mixed messaging, as well as nurturing an institutional culture of affirmation and building a legacy.
- If line management, support and reporting is expected to come through presbytery without direct support from the National Offices, some presbyteries need to be able to access help in knowing how to help the pioneer flourish. As mentioned above, they need a trajectory of what to expect and some training on how to offer a support group or steering group that functions effectively and helps the pioneer flourish.
- Develop a framework to research and assess pioneer initiatives. If developing new ecclesial communities is an ongoing priority for these kinds of pioneer posts, agree a definition that is sufficiently flexible for different contexts but aids communication so all involved know what they are aiming for e.g. an equivalent to *The Day of Small Things* 10 indicators of a new ecclesial community.¹⁷ If developing new ecclesial communities is not the goal, then articulate what the aims of the project are. Find a gentle way to get to grips with reporting numbers. Gather participant feedback in reporting. Explore creative ways of doing this that do not feel like a burden but an aid to ongoing reflective practice.¹⁸

¹⁷ G. Lings (2016) *The Day of Small Things: An Analysis of fresh expressions of Church in 21 dioceses in the Church of England* Sheffield: Church Army, p. 18. <https://churcharmy.org/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=204265>

¹⁸ M. Moynagh (2014) *Being Church, Doing Life* Monarch Books contains a very helpful appendix entitled 'How to Evaluate Progress'.

Conclusion and wider strategic questions for pioneering

In conclusion, I pray that the reflections captured here will contribute to a wider process of prayerful discernment by those tasked with reading and acting upon any guidance.

From my perspective, I sense that the pilot - despite its various constraints - has indeed fired the imagination of those directly involved and - to a certain degree - those watching on. I sense the conversations around pioneering have shifted from the 'why' of pioneering to 'how'.

Like any effective pilot, I believe there is much to be continued and built upon at the same time as noting and taking action in response to the challenges identified. These challenges of course include the COVID-19 outbreak which nobody could have foreseen, and the pioneers share their reflections of - and responses to - lockdown in Appendix 1.

The 'pieces' used in the title of this evaluation refer to the points in this evaluation where a sense of disconnectedness or a degree of isolation has been discernible. I hope that the learning from this pilot will help initiate a wider conversation across the other pioneering endeavours within the Church of Scotland and begin to connect the 'pieces' together in a more coherent way.

For all those working to develop pioneering in different projects and pathways within the Church of Scotland, here are some strategic questions arising from the key themes in this evaluation:

- How can there be greater collaboration between all those working for pioneering in the Church of Scotland across the different projects and approaches? How can the different pieces of work - that often seem to be 'pulling in different directions' - be helped to work together in a more cohesive way?
- Do you want this kind of ordained pioneer ministry to be strongly linked into the planting of new ecclesial communities? Do you want ordained pioneer ministers to prioritise this to help implement the vision to see 100 new congregations planted in 10 years? Or do you want ordained pioneer ministry to remain a separate piece of work with much broader aims e.g. a ministry of presence or 'new ways of doing ministry' that probably will not lead to the planting new congregations?
- If you *do* want this kind of pioneering to prioritise the planting of new ecclesial communities, are you serious enough about this to invest in training for ministers and insist that training be provided for those in pioneering roles to enhance calling and gifting? Are you serious enough about this to invest in training for lay leadership also? I note that since compiling this report, two presbyteries have already decided to pioneer with lay leaders rather than ordained.
- If you are determined to devolve responsibility and oversight of pioneering mission to presbyteries, how can presbyteries be equipped to do this, or how can they be helped to equip themselves?

Appendices

Appendix 1: Pioneer reflections on COVID-19

Glasgow

Pioneer Ministry to the Arts Communities of Glasgow
Reflections on ministry in COVID-19/lockdown

Context: an industry closed down and a community decimated

The devastating effects that COVID-19 and lockdown have had on the arts community cannot be overstated. In March, lockdown shut down the arts industry completely. All galleries, museums, studios, venues and theatres were immediately closed; every festival, exhibition, installation residency or event in 2020, for which any artist was making work, participating in or being a presence at, was cancelled. Loss of workplace, performance and exhibition opportunities, the impossibility of collaboration, loss of suppliers, unfinished work abandoned and loss of income were just some of the issues. Many also lost the part-time work that had enabled their vocational work as artists. For some, the government's and charities' support schemes helped, but too many were not able to access such funding.

As I write, the government's support schemes are coming to an end and the arts industry is facing more and more redundancies, while the prospect is that many venues will close permanently and others will not be opening until spring/summer of 2021, at the earliest. Some have likened the effect of COVID-19 on the arts community to the devastation of many mining communities after the closure of the UK coal industry in the 1980s.

Pastoral care: finding ways to be present during a time of crisis

I was grateful that the Church accepted my request not to be furloughed, because I felt that this was not the time to abandon the community to which I was 'bound by ties of love and calling'. Unsurprisingly, the demand for pastoral support increased dramatically in March. The Briggait Studio complex was closed from March to June, reopening with only limited contact permitted between studio holders; I have been offering pastoral care by phone, text, email and online. This high level of pastoral involvement continues as many artists continue to struggle to sustain their art practice and lifestyle. I keep the door of Studio 118 open whenever possible, as a vital sign of presence and to enable face-to-face, socially-distanced contact across the threshold of the studio door.

Worshipping community: moving online enables wider participation

The community that I host, in partnership with Morphe Arts, has moved its gatherings online and I am grateful that the community has people who can make this happen. The number of participants at the monthly gatherings have been similar to those physically present at gatherings in the studio. Between March and June, we increased the frequency of meetings to fortnightly and, looking ahead, the group are planning to return to a pattern of monthly gatherings.

It has been wonderful to part of an inspiring, supportive prayer gathering for artists, which meet online early each weekday morning. I share in the leadership of the group. Meeting since March, this has been, and continues to be, hugely successful, with numbers ranging from 9 to 26 committed participants, who are drawn from all over Europe.

Art practice: lost work leads to adapting and changing tack

The core of my pioneer ministry has been Gardner & Gardner's practice making of site-specific installations that enable viewers, individually and together, to encounter the intangible through the tangible, and through participative actions. This part of my work had been gaining momentum after three years' consistent working, and I had planned an exciting programme of exhibitions for 2020. Sadly, all of that work has been lost due to the closure of venues and cancelling of festivals. Six major installations have now been cancelled and others have been postponed until 2021.

However, pioneer ministry, like an art practice, involves constantly looking for new ways to work, wondering how better to adapt to the conditions, searching for paths ahead when there are no paths and, of course, looking for the signs of God's grace, of Christ's lead and the Spirit's presence.

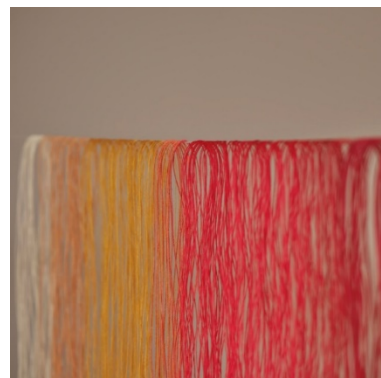
In response to enforced home working, we made two domestic installations reflecting on COVID-19 - 'Stilled life' and 'It's a new dawn' - which we made from media that we had at home (see images below). We are now experimenting with ways to engage with audiences through strategies for non-attending participation. We have been exploring methods for creating temporary, outdoor, multi-site installations that employ a range of tactics to engage viewers and invite response.

Searching for narratives: caught on a storm or catching the wind

At the moment, the analogous narratives I reach are contradictory. In a storm, the old trees of the Church retract and draw strength from the depths of their internal relations and traditions, while the saplings of pioneering are being bent by the storm into new shapes and are now putting their energy into sinking new roots in order to hold and continue to grow.

The alternative version is much more positive and challenging - in a rising wind, do we batten down the hatches and nail down everything they want to hold onto, or do we hoist the sails to catch the new direction of the wind and see where it takes us? With less baggage on board and a light institutional structure, pioneers find it easier than most to let the wind take them where it will... Perhaps I should combine the images of these two narratives, in that I am aware that the roots of this community are still young and fragile and maybe, just maybe, the Spirit is blowing the whole Church, not just the little pioneer communities, in new, exciting directions.

Rev Peter Gardner
Friday 2nd October 2020
Studio 118, The Briggait



Lothian

Furlough (1st April - 31st July)

At the beginning of this period I was in agreement that it would not be possible to do my job in any significant way. I would have been able to keep social media going, but there was no opportunity for face-to-face interaction, and therefore furlough was the right step.

Once lockdown was loosened I saw some possibilities for types of activities, but because of taking annual leave at the end of July I was not permitted to resume work until the very beginning of August. I was frustrated at this as I had ideas I wanted to pursue, and I also wanted to make plans and preparations for the beginning of the school year which was to start on 11th August.

Return to work

The first 10 days of August were all about getting organised for the Coffee Stop and getting all the COVID-19 prevention rules and regulations in place.

We ran the Coffee Stop for the first three days of the new school year. It was a very successful venture, with many of the regulars back and also new faces appearing. There was a reconnection with people and also the beginnings of relationships with others. The new head teacher at the school visited and I was very encouraged in talking about ways we could work together. I am now going to be involved with assembly once a month.

I am very much having to develop events out of doors at the moment and listed below are a few that I have already achieved.

Postcard Box - In a new area of green space with the only benches in the area, I put out two boxes with postcards in. A notice on the bench invited people to stop and have a rest, and pick a postcard to take away. There were some words to ponder if people would like to. Keeping a close eye on the boxes, the cards are certainly disappearing.

Stone Drop - I hide around the estate small stones with words on i.e. hope, laughter, joy - and similarly to the Postcard Box, people took the stones, perhaps giving some thought to the word.

Car Treasure Hunt - This was an opportunity for people to come together from the safety of their cars. Ten families joined on the day. There were also refreshments if people wanted to linger on their return - which they all did.

One challenge for moving forward is that for the foreseeable future the school will not be available to us. We did do a number of *Hopefield Connections Does...* outside last year and while they were enjoyed by those who attended, the numbers were much lower than when we were in the school.

I have a plan for December with something every week either out of doors or virtually: Advent windows, Star Bombing, Hot Chocolate Sunday and a Zoom Christingle.

I am also skilling myself up more with use of social media and virtual platforms. I am currently planning a pet blessing via Zoom and A Minute Thought on YouTube for each day of November.

I am enjoying the creativity of where we find ourselves, but it also has its challenges in that many of the people who have actively supported and worked alongside me do not feel able to be out and about at the moment. I have some younger people who are stepping up, but this will still impact the work.

Rev Elisabeth GB Spence
Hopefield Connections

Stirling

COVID-19 in the university sector

The impact of the lockdown in March 2020 on the student campus was immediate as all classes were cancelled. The students themselves were not necessarily able to travel home, many being stuck in halls of residences and student flats for the duration of the lockdown. The decision of the Church of Scotland to furlough its pioneer ministers was controversial and caused some friction within the group. Although I accepted furlough, in retrospect if I had known others were to refuse I might have questioned that decision.

However, my furlough did release me to become part of the NHS Louisa Jordan chaplaincy team and the church was very supportive of this vital role. After the training took place, the NHS LJ facility was not required and so my volunteer hours were transferred to NHS Fife where I worked in several community hospitals visiting patients who were unable to have family visits due to COVID-19. I remain on the 'bank' list for NHS LJ should that facility be required.

On my return to work in July, I immediately received an email from the Chief Executive of the Union; 'It's really so good to have you back!' she wrote. That feeling of being missed and valued continued as I reconnected with the students and staff. I supported overseas students still stranded in the UK, in particular a student I had worked with all year from India, two from Italy and one from Germany. These students were either trying to find a way home, or struggling to deal with the economic hardships caused by lockdown; three out of four of these students lost their jobs.

Another nursing student was 'graduated' without ceremony early and then found himself in empty wards, as all the regular surgery patients were not being booked in. We have all found the disruptive force of COVID-19 difficult in many ways. Supporting the students through this has been the major part of my role since 1st July.

The highly successful Patches4Peace Christian sewing group has been moved online and the first session is to take place this week. Chaplaincy is also being offered as an online service and getting prepared for that has been a huge piece of work. Unfortunately, the distribution of our sewing to the drop-in group in Paisley has had to be postponed until that group and our group can meet in person again. On my YouTube channel I am putting up videos of prayers and meditations. For example: <https://youtu.be/sy2-xa2PFtU>

The student community itself is fractured - some students returning to flats and halls, others staying at home. A bigger divide than usual is opening up between mature students and those in the 18-25 age range as the impact of COVID-19 falls differently in their population groups. In halls of residence, students are now restricted to their own flats, and no visiting is allowed; they are also not allowed at time of writing to return home.

A new initiative that I am involved in with the archives is the #StirDiary project where students can chronicle their semester in art, writing, or any form of creativity, and then hand in their journal to the archives to be part of the permanent record of COVID-19 and its impact on our times. This is an imaginative, practical and inspiring project that combines good mental health with respectful human understanding.

The work that I routinely do around food and fair distribution of food resources is more needed than ever; at the CPG Food Secretariat it was disclosed that an additional 70,000 people are expected to be made redundant in Scotland, 'new to benefits' and to be destitute by Christmas. On top of the increased food distribution and financial impact we have already seen, it is clear that the student population will not remain unaffected by the economic realities of lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions.

In terms of student mental health and wellbeing, this was already an issue of concern, and one which is under further strain as students who are away from home had to cope with the restrictions, whereas

those at home have feelings of loss of progress in life and the natural rite of passage which is leaving home. For mature students, financial worries and carers' responsibilities take centre stage. The importance of community, such as the student community garden, is clearer than ever with over 50 students in the first three sessions, an unprecedented uptake, with more students emailing and getting in touch asking if they can join the garden team. COVID-19 restrictions mean we need to garden at 2m distant. Mask wearing, though not compulsory, is recommended outdoors. All tools are being sanitised and gloves provided and washed.

Two of the gardening students have made promotional videos, with me talking about how positive the gardening is for their spirits. <https://youtu.be/pfqjz6Npl58> https://youtu.be/6e_ymogmeU4

In conclusion, COVID-19 has consolidated my role, outlined the importance of pioneer ministry communities to students in a time of crisis, and demonstrated that the students who are completely new to church are more than willing to turn to this community in a time of need. This is the fruit of regular, dedicated group building during the first three years of my pioneer ministry here.

Rev Dr Janet Foggie

Church of Scotland Chaplain and Pioneer Minister for the University of Stirling

Greenock and Paisley (now Clyde)

Reflecting upon my ministry from April to the end of September 2020, and particularly as it relates to the effects of the COVID-19 virus upon my post during these 6 months, I'd like to begin by saying that following a request from the central church offices it was mutually agreed that I go on full-time furlough from the 1st April to the 30th June. The end point was also mutually agreed.

During these three months I've found myself aiming to be as flexible as possible, touching upon things I'd been meaning to do, things that needed finishing as well as times of study and reflection. I finished a period of study leave that began in September 2019 following a course entitled Growth in Prayer and Reflective Living (GPRL) offered by the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow. From Easter through to May we met online because of lockdown.

I also used the opportunities that came my way to attend various online training events, one being with the members of Clay Community Church, a church working in a similar area in Glasgow to where I am in Ferguslie Park and the charity Street Connect who work alongside people suffering life-changing issues.

Regarding my own personal growth, I began studying the topic of christian leadership, working through the Old Testament book of Joshua with accompanying commentaries, whilst also reading Billy Graham's book entitled *Leadership Secrets*. I carried on studying the gospel of Matthew with accompanying commentaries, which were also written by J.C. Ryle.

During the furlough period I found myself unable/unwilling to (maybe both) separate myself from three individuals and a four-person family whom I've been supporting pre-lockdown. I found myself offering practical and emotional support, making contact with various agencies on their behalf, offering Christian support/discipleship online, food supplies using my post's financial resources, referring to the local food bank, support through the Scottish Power voucher scheme, and meeting face-to-face, physically distanced of course. I took part in four weeks of Scotland's Biggest Holiday Club run by Scripture Union Scotland, with the club and team prep taking place online four part-days a week.

The effect of the virus and furlough affected my sleep patterns, mental health and confidence about future employment within the Church. It also gave me a sense of having lost some of the well won momentum gained over these last three years. Yet I felt I'd slowed down, invited to 'come to Jesus', offered a time to listen to him, to reflect upon myself and my wellbeing. I found myself wanting to have a closer walk with God, one focused upon relationship, one that was less self-sufficient and

more God-reliant. All along I reflected and asked myself if what I was feeling and reflecting upon could also be the direction we as Church body were being invited to walk towards, where we can see our communities and culture differently, not so focused upon buildings but upon individuals. Not so inward-looking but outward-facing and asking what am I/we being asked or invited into during this time?



Rev Stuart Davidson, Pioneer Minister

29th September 2020

Ayr

What a time we are having with COVID-19. It has stopped all the pioneers in their tracks. I took stock of my situation and considered how I could continue to carry out my role. The only people allowed into the market are those who are buying, so I have not been in the mart for six months; also I have not been able to visit.

So I began contacting as many farmers as I could on the phone. I have made around 1,000 phone calls which have been well received. I spoke to people who shared with me issues they had - samples of which are domestic violence, fatal farm accident, mental health and depression, to name a few. I have also started to publish a fortnightly online act of worship for farmers, which seems to have gone down well.

I also keep in touch with those individuals I was supporting before.

Rev Chris Blackshaw

Ayr Farming Support

Appendix 2: Wisdom for pioneering in similar contexts

Within a project of this scale, all we can do is signpost some key insights and resources in one place for handy reference; this is not intended to be a comprehensive, exhaustive list. No doubt much of this will be already known to pioneers and consultants.

Arts

Wisdom from this pilot:

1. Most traditional church communities find connecting into the artistic world fairly alien and sometimes even alarming. A pioneer who anticipates this and is able to communicate sensitively and reassuringly about this kind of ministry really helps.
2. There is a potential paradox that an embryonic Christian community developing may embrace a greater depth of personal sharing and exploration of spirituality, yet at the same time there may be an organisational fragility arising from the unknowns and irregularities that often characterise an artist's lifestyle. For example, meeting weekly on the same day of the week may not suit those who do not work 9 to 5.
3. There is great potential for creativity in sharing more widely about this kind of ministry - giving other churches a glimpse of what it entails. There is also great potential for impact measurement to be done creatively using non-verbal qualitative research methods.
4. Artists always need workshop space and gallery space. With careful management, this may be a mutually beneficial opportunity if there is redundant church space in good locations for artists.

Additional wisdom:

G. Lings (2005) *A Short Intermission: How Church can be expressed within the Arts?* [Encounters on the Edge no. 23](#) Sheffield: Church Army

<https://pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org/2020/01/for-arts-sake/>

Numerous resources have been generated through what used to be called 'alternative worship', as well as arts festivals such as Greenbelt e.g. <http://freshworship.org>, <https://proost.co.uk/artists>. No doubt these resources (across a variety of artistic disciplines) will be well-known to those who have been pioneering in an arts context for some time. However, make sure any pioneers *new* to an arts context are aware of this wider, historical 'backdrop'.

New housing estates

Wisdom from this pilot:

1. Don't look to do anything too novel or 'never been done before'; keep it simple - many locals respond well to the kinds of approaches that work well in a parish setting.
2. The relationship with the local school/s is key as usually one of the only local 'hubs' for people to see/speak to each other on a daily basis; it is a good 'networking' place as well as a potential space to rent in evenings/on weekends. Therefore, it is important for a pioneer to be at ease around/to be suited for networking with this age/stage of schooling.
3. You can't assume that you will have any kind of community facilities to use. This means there is a greater need to use homes as the places for communities to gather. Any pioneer

working in this context has to be comfortable with modelling this hospitality in their own home and must be committed to learning how to develop small unit church in homes.

4. Developing small unit church in homes needs a pioneer who can recruit and develop further leaders more swiftly than in a congregational setting because of the need to multiply groups as they grow in number.

Additional wisdom:

- An example of a fresh expression of Church on a new housing estate: Curve, Gloucestershire <https://www.curveweb.org/>
- Grove book - <https://grovebooks.co.uk/products/ev-113-pioneer-ministry-in-new-housing-areas-personal-reflections-and-a-practical-guide>
- Themed issue of Anvil - Pioneering on estates and new housing developments | ANVIL vol 33 issue 3 - <https://churchmissionsociety.org/resources/pioneering-estates-and-new-housing-developments-anvil-vol-33-issue-3/>
- Funding for Mission in New Housing and Other Development Areas: Key Learning Points (by the staff of the Church of England Resource Strategy & Development Unit) - http://www.churchgrowthrd.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Resourcing_Mission_Bulletin/Mar_2016/Mission_in_New_Housing_Areas_FINAL.pdf
- Potential food for thought: <https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/mission-to-new-housing-developments>, <https://www.elydiocese.org/church-in-action/new-housing/>

Universities/students

Wisdom from this pilot:

1. To point out the obvious: much of community life on a university campus is transient. Ministry must anticipate the high turnover and maximise what can be creatively achieved in a short window of time. Pioneering mission and ministry in places that see people engage deeply on a short-term basis might be worth exploring.
2. A new ecclesial community is challenging enough to grow from scratch. It is even harder to plant a church 'under the radar' working in a secular institution that is highly sensitive to proselytising and/or to existing ecumenical chaplains who might begrudge your presence if you try to do so. Realistic expectations are needed.
3. There are inevitable overlaps with pioneering in this context and chaplaincy. To help protect against ministry that ends up appearing as if it is chaplaincy *only*, plan in ways that this kind of ministry can have more of a two-way impact. How can the church give to university staff and students, but then how can university staff and students enrich churches?
4. While being mindful that developing a team around this ministry has its advantages, a one-to-one pastoral dynamic is needed to inspire trust and encourage sensitive conversations around mental health (hence the overlap with chaplaincy). Prior experience in working with mental health has proved very helpful.

Additional wisdom from other sources:

- An example of a fresh expression of Church linked to a university chaplaincy: Café Church, Leeds <https://cafechurchleeds.wordpress.com/>
- An example of a large church doing student missional community: Holy Trinity Leicester students' cluster www.htlstudents.uk/
- Chaplaincy is not the only way. This booklet tells the story of a student mission house. G. Lings (2011) [Encounters on the Edge](#) no. 49, Sheffield: Church Army

- Fresh expressions of Church and young adults research
https://churcharmy.org/Groups/295770/Church_Army/web/What_we_do/Research_Unit/Young_Adults_research/Young_Adults_research.aspx
- Website and book exploring faith with today's young adults
 - *Losing My Religion: Millennials and Faith Loss* -
<https://discipleshipresearch.com/2018/02/losing-my-religion-millennials-and-faith-loss/>
 - *Changing Shape: The Faith Lives of Millennials* -
<https://scmpress.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9780334058311/changing-shape>

Deprived urban estates

Wisdom from this pilot:

1. Daily or weekly blogging or journalling can be helpful to document how the ministry is unfolding, especially in the early years when it feels as though there isn't much that is visible.
2. Facilitating regular different sizes and styles of gathering enables different kinds of relationships to grow; don't expect a weekly drop-in alone to facilitate deeper relationships that come from smaller group work.
3. Chances are the ministry needs in such areas will be unending. Find a way to prioritise what the pioneer should be doing, either in terms of geographical area or focus of ministry, so they are not overwhelmed or spread too thinly to be effective.
4. If this pilot is typical, expect a fairly high proportion of the traditional churchgoers in the area to commute in from outside and fall into older age brackets.
5. If ever there was a need to develop team in a pioneering context, this is it. However, don't assume you can easily draw a team from local churchgoers. Wisdom is needed in identifying and mentoring indigenous leaders who would not be 'the obvious choice' in traditional ministry, yet are leaders in their local communities in their own ways.

Additional wisdom from other sources:

- Examples of fresh expressions of Church
 - Shine Pinehurst, Swindon <http://shinepinehurst.co.uk/>
 - Celebrate!, Prior's Park, Tewkesbury <https://www.celebratechurch.uk/>
 - The Upper Room, Cirencester <http://hope-cirencester.co.uk/>
 - Saturday Gatherings, Halifax <http://ctcthegatheringplace.org/saturdaygathering>
- Case study of planting a church with (mostly male) recovering from life-controlling issues: C. Dalpra (2003) *Addicted to Planting? Encounters on the Edge no. 17* Sheffield: Church Army
- *Developing Church Growth in (English) Deprived Areas: Evaluation Report* -
http://www.churchgrowthrd.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Development_Funding/Developing_Church_Growth_in_Deprived_Areas_Evaluation_Report_August_2016.pdf

Farming

Wisdom from this pilot:

1. Use the farmers' market as the key gathering point wherever possible. Interviews should be held there, as well as the induction of the pioneer minister and seasonal worship gatherings. Planning ahead to ensure others from presbyteries are free to be present at the latter will be worthwhile so others can see what goes on.
2. While being mindful that developing a team can stop anyone being spread too thinly over too large an area (elevating the risk of ministerial burn out), a one-to-one pastoral dynamic is sometimes needed to inspire trust to make home visits and encourage sensitive conversations around mental health and financial problems. A pioneer in this ministry needs to be strong on both. Giving out a pastoral 'business' card works well.
3. Farmers are generally busy in the daytime - even at weekends. However, they make time for the pub in the evenings.
4. 'Pioneering' may not be the most helpful language to use around a relatively traditional farming community. 'Farming minister' is a term that seems to resonate with farmers, at the same time as allowing for just the sort of pioneering opportunities envisaged.
5. The more experience of farming a pioneer can bring the better. The more those involved in the ministry can liaise with the diverse farming agencies, the better. These include: vets, farm workers, estate workers, foresters, suppliers. For ministry of this kind to be effective, the wider farming community themselves have to *want* to receive it so any dynamics that help build trust are important.

Additional wisdom from other sources:

- G. Lings (2005) *The Village and Fresh Expressions: Is Rural Different?* [Encounters on the Edge no. 27](#) Sheffield: Church Army
- An example of a fresh expression of Church in a farming community: Bewcastle House of Prayer Cumbria <http://www.bewcastlehouseofprayer.org.uk/>
- A selection of English reports on creative mission in a rural context with case study examples: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/rural-mission/reports-rural-mission-and-growth>

Appendix 3: List of stakeholders consulted (and typical questions asked)

Stakeholders	Typical questions include(d):
<p>Pioneer ministers:</p> <p>Chris Blackshaw Stuart Davidson Janet Foggie Peter Gardner Elisabeth Spence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is pioneer ministry and chaplaincy similar and different? • How do we measure effectiveness in projects likes these? • Any evidence e.g. numbers we can include to reflect impact? • Tell me about your relationship with your presbytery? • Does the job description match unspoken expectations of what others expect of you? • Has line management and steering group worked okay so far? • How has reporting worked? • What are the training needs for this kind of role? • What did you bring to the role that was helpful/not helpful? • What brings you life? • Where do you sense God most powerfully at work?
<p>Current presbytery contacts:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the intentions of your presbytery when bidding for inclusion in pilot? • Did job description mirror these? • How has the presbytery received the pioneer? • How did the initial setting up of the project go i.e. were the right structures and process put in place in the right way at the beginning? • What has the relationship been like with your pioneer? • What's working well? • What has surprised you? • What's not working well? • What impact has the pioneering post had? • Would you like the pioneer to continue and would you be willing to fund? • What learning should be fed back to the CofS?
<p>Original contacts who bid for funding but have since moved on:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you make original pitch? • While you were in context, what was it like to have a pioneer? • While you were in context, how did the presbyteries receive the pioneers? • What were the surprises? • What sort of relationship/support to the National Church was envisaged? • Would you do the same again if you were in the same position?
<p>CofS national contacts: Angus Mathieson, Secretary of M&D Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was original intention of project from a national perspective? (Who came up with it?) • Talk me through how these posts were set up - the practicalities

Norman Smith, Convener of M&D Council
Lesley Hamilton-Messer, Convener of M&D Council and Team Leader for the CWW Team within M&D
Liz Crumlish, Path of Renewal Coordinator including Pioneer Pilot Project

Consultants:
Sandy Forsyth
Doug Gay
Peter Neilson
Alan McWilliam

Local people impacted by ministry:
Various - some met on field visits, some interviewed by telephone, a few participating in focus group interviews

- What research did the project do around setting realistic expectations?
- How far did the project ask what skills were needed/provided for Pioneers?
- What is your understanding/definition of words such as pioneer, fresh expression of church, new ecclesial community, sustainability?

- What is pioneering as distinct from chaplaincy in CofS?
- What are realistic expectations around planting/sustaining fresh expressions of Church?
- What are your perceptions of how pilot is going?

- How has this pioneer post impacted you?
- Would you like the post to continue beyond the initial five years? If so, why and how?