

## **Pioneer Ministry Governing Council Report**

**Proposer: Captain Alan Williamson**

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Members of Synod,

It is my privilege, as a member of the Pioneer Ministry Council, to present this report to you today.

Pioneer Ministry was launched just over two years ago by the House of Bishops with the generous support of the Representative Body. Since then, it has grown from a vision into something real and tangible, taking shape in dioceses across the island – north and south, urban and rural, large and small.

At its heart, Pioneer Ministry is about reaching those people in our communities who, for whatever reason, are not currently being reached by existing expressions of church. It's about listening well, responding creatively, and stepping into unfamiliar places with faith and courage.

This is not about replacing parish ministry. It's about complementing it – what we've come to call a 'mixed ecology', where inherited and emerging forms of church exist side by side, learning from and supporting one another. And it's about recognising that the Spirit is already at work in our communities – we are simply joining in.

Over the past year, we've seen encouraging developments:

Firstly, the Pioneer Ministry Council – of which I'm honoured to be a part – has been working closely with the Leadership Team to shape governance, support selection processes, and respond to the needs we're hearing from across the Church. There's a growing sense of shared responsibility and collaboration, and that's something we're committed to deepening.

Secondly, 14 diocesan Pioneer Hubs are now active, with Diocesan Advocates leading the important role of the hubs, building community, sharing good practice, and offering local support to clergy and lay people who feel called to pioneer something new. The first all-island gathering of these networks took place in November, bringing together over 70 people. It was an inspiring and joyful occasion – and, I believe, a sign of God's Spirit moving among us.

Third, we now have nine pioneers in training, with four full-time funded pioneer ministries launched and others emerging in different forms. Each one is unique – shaped by its local context – but all are united by the desire to see new people encounter the love of Christ in fresh

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and life-giving ways. Some are rooted in parish renewal, others in community hubs, spiritual journeying, or welcome to newcomers and refugees. The range is wide, and the vision is deep.

As a Council, we are continually reminded that this is not simply a new programme – it's a new posture. One that invites us to be curious. To try. To learn. And above all, to trust that God is already ahead of us, calling us to follow.

We're deeply grateful to the House of Bishops, to the Representative Body, and to every diocese that has engaged with this work. I also want to acknowledge the extraordinary dedication of our Pioneer Ministry Team – the Revd Rob Jones, Archdeacon Barry Forde, and Mrs Ingrid Brennan – who have led with wisdom, creativity, and deep faith.

This is still the beginning. There is much to do, and much more to discover. But already, there are signs of new life, new connections, and new hope.

So I commend this report to Synod – and I would invite every member of this body to consider how we might support and encourage this culture of pioneering in our own dioceses, parishes, and communities. Whether you're a rector, a lay reader, a vestry member, or simply someone wondering where the Church is going – there's a place for you in this journey.

Thank you.