

## **Pioneer Ministry Governing Council Report**

**Seconder: Ms Stella Obe**

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As Charles Dickens put it, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

I will just take the first two lines. “It was the worst of times.” Now, the statistics show that we have thousands of registered Church of Ireland members, but less than 50,000 are in church on any given Sunday across our dioceses. Why is this so? This is something that we all must ask ourselves. This question is even more relevant during this Eastertide season where we and the apostles are commissioned to go out and make disciples of all nations.

Now it is not all doom and gloom, because it is also the best of times where new things are happening. What excites me about Pioneer Ministry and the fact that we are bringing about new and varied expressions of worshipping. A lot of the millennials and other lapsed church members have become somewhat disillusioned and cynical about the Churches. Who can blame them given the scandals that have rocked the Churches in recent times.

Pioneer Ministry aims to explore new and fresh ways of reaching out across the divide to people of little or no interest in the formal congregational church with all the norms and expectations that go along with that. That does not mean that we throw out the baby with the bath water but have an added addition that will be best tailored to meet people where they are at.

The vision is for Pioneer Ministry to be a movement which will offer a renewed focus for the Church to connect in a fresh way with those whom it has lost connection with as well as bringing Jesus’s message in exciting ways to those who need to know him, like we do.

We all need something to ground us in our daily lives especially times when we are looking for answers and the tasks in front of us are daunting. We believe strongly in Pioneer Ministry that having and knowing Jesus in this new way will bring about a solid transformation in their lives.

There's an old cliché about how Christians should ask themselves: ‘What would Jesus do?’ I would like to think that Jesus would use the tools available in the 21st Century to find a way to bring his message in the same way he did in the 1st Century. In Matthew chapter 9, Jesus said to his disciples: ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few therefore prayed to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’ This is my sincere and heartfelt

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prayer: that Pioneer Ministry will find abundant labourers to spread the gospel and thereby have a truly fruitful harvest for the Lord's Kingdom.

It is also my honour, as a member of the Pioneer Ministry Council, to second this report of the presentation made by my honourable colleague Alan Williamson.