

Being licensed as a Pioneer



"...the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go..." Luke 10

God is active in our world. In recent years one of the most exciting areas of growth and entrepreneurial activity in response has been the emergence of fresh expressions of Church. In homes, schools, pubs, church buildings, village halls and on the streets, new forms of Church are emerging right across the city and county.

Here in the Diocese of Leicester we believe God has called us to realise 320 maturing, growing fresh expressions of Church by 2030, with 15,000 people a part of them. This is a calling far beyond anything we could achieve in human power and requires us to fall daily on our knees before God.

We also believe this call means that most of these new Churches will be led by teams of volunteers who aren't ordained and probably haven't led a Church before. Most will stay under the umbrella of a parish church, or group of churches, and become a new congregation meeting in a very different way; still being a full part of both the Body of Christ, and the Church of England.

To support those who are leading these fresh expressions of Church we work closely with ecumenical partners. This enables teams of leaders of new, potential and emerging churches to craft their own unique pathway of support, recognition, training and development, authority and accountability. A big part of this is the Bishop of Leicester offering his License as a Pioneer.

Why be licensed as a Pioneer?

Being licensed as a Pioneer should make both a practical and spiritual difference.

The license recognises and celebrates what God is already doing and gives a pathway to enable growth and development. It acknowledges that Pioneers have a ministry which is discerned, affirmed, recognised and supported both locally and by the wider Church. It confers authority to lead, provides a framework of accountability and reiterates that what is being done is authentic, real and significant.

Being licensed as a Pioneer helps us tailor support, training and development specific to the person and context, and releases funding and other resources to help with this (for example, Pioneers have access to the same value of annual development grant as clergy and other authorised lay ministries).

In licensing Pioneers become part of a learning community with others on a similar journey so that they might learn from, grow, reflect and be challenged by what God is doing across Leicestershire (and beyond).

Through a Working Agreement, being licensed offers a framework to discern what specifically God is calling a Pioneer to. It also gives permission and support to be a holy imaginer, dreaming of new possibilities and horizons.

And finally, being a Pioneer gives encouragement and space to be appropriately rebellious! Gerald Arbuckle wrote, 'Any organisation that kills its rebel's gains peace but loses its future.' Being licensed helps people to appropriately harness the rebellious and disruptive in a way which builds up the body of Christ and doesn't merely lead to mutual frustration!

"Becoming a Pioneer has opened the door to new opportunities to use the gifts God has given me in the place where He has called me to serve Him."

A Pioneer in the city of Leicester, working in an area predominantly of those of other faiths



Creating Pathways

Sometimes learning can feel like loading a backpack with every possible thing which might be needed over the coming years. This backpack can take a long time to load and can even weigh us down as we travel. Our ethos in supporting Pioneers is to move from this sense of 'just in case learning' to a model much closer to 'just in time learning', as seen in the ministry of Jesus, where Pioneers are accompanied as they seek to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit with opportunities to grow and develop on the journey (Luke 10:1-12 remains a key text for us).

Every pathway will be unique, reflecting the wonderful and rich uniqueness of the Kingdom of God. That said, collective experience suggests that there are common principles and routes and whilst we are breaking new ground, we need not re-invent the wheel every day.

There are a wide range of options open to Pioneers, which are right will depend on the individual, the team and the fresh expression of Church. The job of the Mission and Ministry team is to help you work out which is right for when.

Working Agreement and Personal Development Plan

Experience leads to the need for every licensed Pioneer to have a simple Working Agreement, which notes boundaries, support and practical but important areas like what expenses are paid and by whom. This is first written before licensing, normally with the local person to whom the Pioneer is responsible, often the incumbent. It should then be reviewed with that person at least once a year and updated accordingly.

Each licensed Pioneer should similarly have a Personal Development Plan, outlining areas in which they feel called to develop and what is in place to help. **Broadly that development will be in three areas:**

Reflective Practice

Each Pioneer is part of a learning and support group. Most of these will be diocesan organised (and facilitated externally by a respected and experienced supporter of Pioneers), some will be in learning and support groups organised locally (for example, the huddles and learning community at Holy Trinity, Leicester). The diocesan organised groups meet four times a year, alternating between sessions of sharing stories and praying for each other, and specifically focused topics, as decided by the group (e.g. Baptism).

In addition, there is an opportunity for each Pioneer to have a mentoring relationship with a diocesan trained coach.

Once a year all Pioneers are invited to an annual get together, an evening of celebrating how God is at work, receiving top quality input and facilitation and time of prayer together.

Active Learning

The normative training pathway to initial licensing is the Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM) course (although for some this will be replaced by other experiences or learning). MSM takes place in around six to eight sessions, over around a year, and covers topics such as the Mission of God, What is Church, Listening to God and our Communities, Evangelism, Discipleship and Worship. MSM is offered in either a centrally organised course (normally on Saturday's) or if more than five people are interested from the same context then as an evening based flexi version, with sessions selected and tailored accordingly.

There are a range of other optional opportunities for learning and development, including:

- Pioneer School, hosted in Leicester in partnership with the Centre for Pioneer Learning, meeting six times a year for top quality input, sharing and prayerful support;
- Specific modules hosted in both Leicester or Oxford in partnership with the Church Mission Society (CMS), including areas such as: faith seeking understanding, gospel and culture and their popular week long residential on missional entrepreneurship;
- Every two years the Diocese holds a three day Diocesan Conference – a highly regarded gathering for those involved in 'buck stops here' church leadership – in 2015, for the first time, all Pioneers were invited alongside Clergy;
- A series of one off modules, days, courses, conferences and events, for example, understanding loss, Baptism and Eucharist, safeguarding, developing a team and listening skills;
- For Pioneers based at Holy Trinity in Leicester, a big part of their active learning takes place in the twice yearly Learning Community.

Licensed Pioneers can apply for a grant to support in their development, and also have access to a number of paid-for places in learning opportunities which otherwise cost would be costly. Pioneers can also borrow books from an extensive lending library.

Spiritual Discernment

Every six months, Pioneers are visited in context by a member of the diocesan Mission and Ministry team, such as one of the Pioneer Development Workers. These visits alternate between offering space for individual reflection, celebration and encouragement with the Pioneer as to how God is active; and visiting with other current or potential leaders of the fresh expression of Church to help recognise and respond to what God is doing amongst us. As well as hopefully being helpful locally, the collective learning from all these visits drives a large part of how we respond as a Diocese to God's calling, and what resources and support we offer.

There are a range of other optional opportunities for spiritual discernment, including:

- Joining with other Pioneers in fasting (where once a term we all fast and pray individually, seeking to hear the voice of Jesus, and then come together to break the fast with a feast of a meal and time of sharing);
- Holy Habits – a series of six, three evening courses to help understand and embed missional habits we have found God using particularly effectively to bring about cultural change within churches;
- Pioneer Retreat – offered several times a year, the opportunity to be refreshed and renewed with other Pioneers over a few days away.

"The Kingdom of God has come near to you."

Luke 10

What Next?

If you are leading or helping to lead a fresh expression of Church, we would be delighted to help you discern if God is calling you to be licensed as a Pioneer.

If you are interested in discerning if God is calling you to start a new fresh expression of Church, we would be delighted to explore a Provisional Licensing (a one year license giving access to all the opportunities noted here, and others beside, as you explore how and where God is calling).

Where possible we have found, following the sending of the Lord Jesus, that it is best to licensed or provisionally licensed people in pairs, or teams. That doesn't preclude individuals, but we would be keen to explore with you who else you are or could be leading with.

There are more details of the practicalities of discernment on the diocesan website (under Shaped by God and fresh expressions of Church) or please do contact any of the Pioneer Development Workers to take the next step:

Mads Morgan
mads.morgan@leccofe.org
0116 261 5342

Jonathan Dowman
jonathan.dowman@leccofe.org
0116 261 5307

Matt Pitt
matt.pitt@leccofe.org
0116 261 5318

Discernment happens throughout the year, with people joining the community of Pioneers from as soon as a calling has been discerned, with licensing taking place every October in the special Called Together service at Leicester Cathedral.

