



Pioneering Parishes

Update from the Edges 1 | November 2025



Location: Britain



What we do: Help churches go into all the parish and engage with unconnected people in their community in a context-appropriate way



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus with people

Dear friends,

We're thrilled to bring the latest updates from the Pioneering Parishes team to you, and to share stories of other CMS work too. We hope that you'll be as encouraged as we were to read about CMS's 1,000th pioneer student. CMS's Pioneer Mission Training is equipping people to respond creatively to the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of traditional church. The stories of people dreaming up new ways to help others connect with God is so inspiring. We're excited to share how CMS people in mission around the world are making a real difference.

Pioneering Parishes is not about short term, cosmetic changes but the long, steady work of culture change and discerning the Holy Spirit. Each church embarking on this work will have their own path to travel.

New, traditional prayer service increases service attendance

"It's been incredibly helpful. The Pioneering Parishes training day did a lot of the heavy lifting in the culture shift to think missionally." Says Rev Tim Solosy, Priest in Charge of St George's Church, Georgeham with St Mary's Church, Croyde. Tim's church hosted a Pioneering Parishes training day which he attended with a handful of others from the church.

Tim shares, "It was very eye-opening for the congregation on what can be achieved, that you can do a bit of thinking outside the box, and you can respond to God in a way that's not prescriptive to the way we've always responded. We're starting to see people take responsibility for changes and not being fearful or defensive." The result has been the beginnings of a change in culture and the launch of a new monthly service at St Mary's which has seen attendance swell to three times the usual number.

Since the training, instead of rushing off to another church, Tim has made sure he can stay for coffee time at St Mary's where the seven to eight members of the congregation sit around a single table together to enjoy a hot drink. During this time, Tim has initiated deliberate conversations about what's important to you? What do you love about church? How do you encounter God? What stood out to you in the service? From those conversations, Tim has been able to understand the values of the congregation which include tradition and sung worship. The congregation also shared their desire to increase the number of services in the chapel, after they were reduced during COVID-19.

This has led to the introduction of a new service, once a month, called Exploring Prayer. These services



Circular mosaic commissioned by the Parish Council to recognise the smuggling history in the village

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have introduced a variety of traditional styles of prayer including Celtic prayer, Augustine prayer and Franciscan prayer. Exploring prayer has been attracting 20-30 people to each service, up from the usual 7-8 people. The next step is for another member of the congregation to lead a service on Ionian prayer. This is an important step in changing the culture so that ministry is not only done by the priest – especially important when the priest is part-time, as Tim is.

Commissioning of lay pioneer minister

Recently, Tina from the Pioneering Parishes team, had the great pleasure of being at the commissioning service of Ali Mascarenhas. Ali first did a Pioneering Parishes course in autumn 2021 and now, four years later, has been commissioned as a lay pioneer minister to work in the West Wight benefice on the Isle of Wight.

Ali's calling into lay pioneer ministry first began with churchyard clearance and has grown into a multifaceted community project which includes churchyard work parties, nature talks, Celtic style outdoor worship and creativity by way of a community mosaic group. Since starting the churchyard clearing, over 100 people – of whom 70% previously had no contact with the church – are now connected with the church congregation.

Reflecting, Ali said: "It has been a huge learning experience in all ways! I feel in awe of what God has done and how the many volunteers have come together to work on different aspects of the project. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to do this and to develop things as the Spirit has led me and a greater dependence on God."

Ali continues, "At the start of this, Jackie Maw [Ali's vicar] suggested that I might be a pioneer. I didn't know what this was, but she encouraged me to attend a webinar on pioneering parishes. It was inspirational and reassuring to meet others who seemed to think similarly."

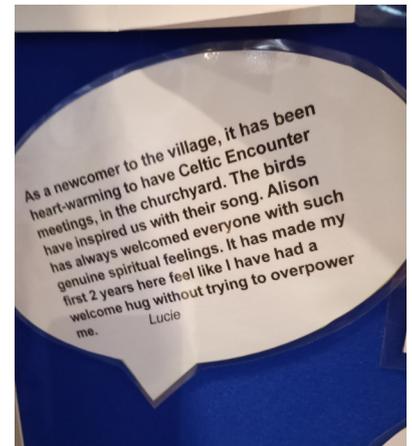
Ali concludes, "Some people ask me what is the future of the project? I don't know. I have a few ideas, but I will keep stepping out and see where it leads with God's help and direction."

These are just two examples of how Pioneering Parishes is helping local churches to connect with those who are unconnected to Jesus through faith. Ali and Tim have both taken the time to build relationships with people inside and outside the church. Pioneering Parishes did not tell Ali or Tim what to do but gave them tools which they used in their own context to ask the right questions then make decisions which are based on the shared values of their congregations.

Please pray with us:

- ▶ Have Ali and Tim's stories made you think about where the Holy Spirit could lead your church? Ask God to prompt more people to sign up to the Pioneering Parishes courses.
- ▶ Pray for the continued work of Ali and Tim. Ask God to work through them in their local churches, encouraging them in their ideas and giving them the energy they need to keep going.

Tina and Greg
Pioneering Parishes



Photos from top to bottom: 8ft Celtic Cross mosaic in the side chapel of St Mary's church depicting Jesus' light radiating from the dove; Participants in church activities were invited to share what Ali's ministry meant to them in preparation for the commissioning service ; L-R: Ali Mascarenhas, Revd Tina Hodgett and Revd Jackie Maw, Rector of the West Wight Benefice



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

It's so encouraging to hear news from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to churches. In the UK, CMS's Pioneer Mission Training programme is equipping people to respond creatively to the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of traditional church. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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