



Pioneering Parishes

Update from the Edges 2 | April 2026



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 write to you with our latest update, and to share stories of other CMS work too. We hope that you find time to read about Johanni's journey in Honduras – from street life to full life. Johanni's life changed direction when she met CMS mission partners who helped her connect with a Christian mentor and attend school. She describes how most girls her age in her community aren't in school, and that she's so happy she is! You can find Johanni's story linked at the bottom of our update.

It's been a full start to the year for Pioneering Parishes as we seek to put tools into the hands of church leaders and congregation members to help them shift their energy outwards into all the parish, to engage with people who are unlikely to come to them.

Letting go with biblical lament

Tina and Greg facilitated two successful residential training courses for curates (trainee vicars) from two different dioceses in Staffordshire and Leicestershire. "I feel this training should be done in all churches and theological colleges. So useful!" said one curate. Curates were invited to bring a colleague from the congregation with them. One colleague wrote in her feedback form: "Thank you so much for such a great input, teaching, insight at this weekend."

One of the topics that always catches church leaders by surprise concerns the presence of grief and lament in churches and congregations. We help curates become aware of the sadness some congregation members feel at the loss of long-standing familiar ways of gathering together and worshipping, and highlight how important it is for us to practice lament just as biblical characters do in such times. We see this in the Psalms, for example: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion." Psalm 137:1

Recently Tina bumped into a licensed lay reader who had done grief and loss training three years ago with Pioneering Parishes. He told Tina how useful the conversation about lament had been in his ministry, helping congregation members to let go of the past. After all, say commentators on the losses of Old Testament Israel, "Without grief there can be no newness." Mourning and lament enables people to let go of the past and begin to embrace the new thing God is doing.



Pioneering Parishes courses provide tools that can be used for each different context and community

Support CMS partners discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus:
churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



Pioneering learning communities

February saw Greg deliver the last of three training sessions with a cluster of Church of England churches in the Diocese of Lichfield. The Deanery of Rugeley (a deanery is a regional group of churches of different traditions and characters who gather a few times a year for mutual encouragement and learning) held a taster day in July 2025 attended by 60 or so people, including some church leaders. Over the course of the year the deanery has become a

learning community, growing in understanding of how to join in with God's work in their church locality and to partner with God in enabling new initiatives to spring up and unexpected green shoots to sprout.

A member of the diocesan staff team who has advocated for the Pioneering Parishes team since its early days met with the deanery leadership and was blown away by the enthusiasm they shared about Greg and Tina's work over the past year and the impact it's having on the ground:

"The deanery is extraordinarily positive about the support they've had from Pioneering Parishes in the last eight months. The ministers are busy putting their learning into practice and there's a terrific amount of outreach developing. The clergy there evidently feel the accompaniment is making a huge difference. Deanery clergy especially value the lived parish experience, inspiring stories from other churches and the 'can-do, positive' attitude. They also like that it is flexibly delivered in partnership with the deanery. They think it is really helpful that parishioners are not just hearing it from them. One incumbent first encountered Pioneering Parishes a couple of years ago, and as a new incumbent, has found Pioneering Parishes is really helping her parish to develop new ideas. Pioneering Parishes is at the centre of all of the parishes' development and outreach and is strengthening bonds across the deanery." Simon Foster, Mission and Strengthening Communities team leader.

What's a Pioneering Parishes course like?

If you've ever wondered what a Pioneering Parishes course is like and what you would get from it, [watch this video](#). And if you think it is something that would benefit your church, why not share the video with your vicar, PCC and/or church leadership?

We ask for your prayers in three areas please:

First, please pray for our colleagues in diocesan structures who are advocating for Pioneering Parishes' tools, postures, practices and skills to be shared more widely with church leaders to enable them to engage with unconnected people in the community.

Secondly, please pray for those who are training or have trained with us. Please ask God to keep working in them and inspiring them as they embed what they have learnt. Ask that God would keep them energised and excited for the work of bringing God's kingdom.

Finally, we ask for your prayers for us as an organisation, as we are nearing the end of our current funding stream. Please ask God to make our paths straight and provide what is needed to keep Pioneering Parishes going, if that is his will.

Tina and Greg
Pioneering Parishes



Photos from top to bottom: The First Steps course gives a framework to help share and use people's ideas; "It's about taking church into the people, not the people into the church" – Lynne, lay pioneer and community worker



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 Honduras, mission partners are providing mentoring for children who are likely to drop out of school, or not receive any education. They are introducing them to education and to the love of Jesus. 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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