

Chapter 12 How to Begin Pioneering and Recognise Fruitfulness

Whether you are 'starting from scratch' to form an NPNP and are unsure how to begin, or starting with an existing group or community and want to be more intentional in your pioneering, this chapter is an essential read. It will guide you through your first year, teach you the core practices of pioneering, and enable you to recognise, celebrate and increase the fruitfulness of your work.

Often in the Bible, we read of 'fruitfulness'. In Genesis, God blesses humanity and says, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). We want to build fruitful NPNPs, and so we need to understand the hallmarks of a fruitful Christian community, and what core practices will lead to this fruit. The 'fruitfulness markers' and core practices presented in this chapter are the result of consultations with ministers, lay people and pioneers across the Connexion, and are rooted in tried-and-tested best practice that works in all contexts.

The review process described in this chapter is linked to these markers of fruitfulness, to ensure that we're recognising, celebrating, and building on the things that are essential to the flourishing of Christian communities. We recommend that all NPNPs follow this review process, and this is a conditional requirement for funded NPNPs.

Beginning to pioneer

In the first year of a community, it is vital to:

1. clarify your vision
2. connect with new people
3. build a team and begin gathering together.

For this reason, we recommend focusing on the first three fruitfulness markers and core practices (see below). These are the essentials that will lay strong foundations for future work on the other markers of fruitfulness.

Ways of measuring fruitfulness

In reviewing NPNPs, we want to encourage a breadth and depth of reflection, which is why our review questions encompass three different ways of measuring fruitfulness.

Firstly, we want to consider what can be measured, ie the aspects of community life which are quantifiable, such as number of people contacted, adherence to safeguarding policy, and community service offered. These quantifiable aspects are known as 'hard metrics'.

Secondly, we want to consider experience and characteristics, ie things which are qualitative, such as emerging themes and patterns, how inclusive the community is, and where we have seen signs of God. These qualitative aspects are known as 'soft metrics'.

Thirdly, we want to gather the emerging stories of community life, which offer rich and varied insights. These stories are sometimes known as 'testimony'. Remember that not all stories have to have a 'happy ending' – God is present in all of life, and we can learn much from stories of conflict and difficulty.

Fruitfulness markers, core practices and review questions

There are nine fruitfulness markers and each has associated core practices that support them. We have also included review questions that can help you recognise, celebrate, and increase your fruitfulness.

1. VISION

Fruitfulness marker: A focused vision of who the NPNP is seeking to reach and the context in which a new ecclesial community will emerge.

Core practice: Clarifying and communicating the vision of the NPNP.

Summarise the vision in one sentence and plan how you will communicate this vision with other people as the NPNP is initiated and developed. Use 'non-churchy' language that makes sense to different people, for example:

- *Coffee Shop Sunday:* Meeting God in ordinary places.
- *Starting Point:* We're a community that holds on to the essentials so that people will meet Jesus through the gospel, conversation, and prayer.
- *Inclusive Gathering Birmingham:* We're a church committed to pursuing God's radical inclusion.

Review questions:

- *Hard metrics*

What context are we focusing on? Who and how many people are we reaching? How will we communicate our vision to others?

- *Soft metrics*

Is our vision clear and focused? Are we communicating our vision effectively to others?

- *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about how they clarified, understood, shaped, or communicated the vision for our NPNP? What is that story, and where is God in it?

2. CONTEXTUALLY RELEVANT

Fruitfulness marker: Any new ecclesial community will arise out of careful listening and will always remain connected to the wider community and aware of its needs.

Core practice: Connecting with new people and building the pioneering team.

Finding the first six to eight people to join the pioneering team is one of the key priorities of the six to twelve months prior to the launch of the new community. Pioneering alongside others not only increases your capacity, but also sets a pattern for diverse leadership, creates a culture of invitation, and ensures the NPNP is firmly rooted in the local community. Building the team will flow from connecting with the wider community, one-to-one meetings, and clear planning.

Create a rhythm of regularly connecting with new people in the wider community. In connecting with new people, ensure you are intentionally listening to other people's stories and looking to invite people to one-to-one meetings.

Establish a pattern of weekly one-to-one meetings to build relationships with new people. For employed full-time pioneers, between eight and ten one-to-one conversations should be scheduled every week. For employed part-time pioneers, this should be four to five conversations. Invite the interested people from your one-to-ones to gather informally (eg at a coffee shop) to begin to create community. Encourage those attending to invite others, in order to create an invitational culture from the beginning. At the end of every week, pray over the names of the people you've had one-to-ones with during the week and consider who might be invited to join the pioneering team. No doubt, some people will decline the invitation, but don't let that discourage you from inviting people to join in.

Stronger together

The pioneering team members can each independently connect with the wider community and undertake one-to-ones, but you should also aim to practice evangelism as a group, which will build trust and friendship. Group evangelism will also raise the profile of your NPNP, drawing more people in. Regular group evangelism will forge deeper bonds with the wider community and you will learn more about the community's character and needs. Think about how you can easily be recognised as a team (eg lanyards, badges, matching T-shirts). Practising evangelism together will help build the team's confidence – soon you will be seen as a natural and integral part of the neighbourhood. Group evangelism ideas include:

- Host a listening event.
- Do a litter-pick or offer bag packing at a store.
- Take a stall at a market, fête or fair (you could do a bring-and-buy, a swap shop, a tea stand, give away balloons with messages on, offer an 'everything is free' stall, or anything else that plays to the team's strengths).
- Celebrate the festivals of the Christian year publicly (eg carol singing at Christmas, giving out pancakes or donuts on Shrove Tuesday, offering ashing on Ash Wednesday, organising an Easter egg hunt in a local park, collecting for a food bank at Harvest).
- Attend a big public event as a group (eg a Pride parade, bonfire night or carnival).

Sponsor a concert series, host an exhibition, or have an open-mic poetry or music night.

See methodist.org.uk/evangelismlibrary for more ideas.

Plan it out

Make a plan for how you will connect with new people, undertake one-to-ones, gather a community and invite people to join the pioneering team. Set clear goals related to these for each month (you may want to attend three different community events each month, or have three people in the pioneering team by month five, for example). Ensure you are systematically recording information related to your goals, such as which community events you have attended, the number of one-to-ones you have done, contact details for people who have expressed an interest, etc.

Further training and support on connecting with new people, conducting one-to-ones, and planning is offered through the Methodist Pioneering Pathways.

Review questions:

▶ *Hard metrics*

How many people have we contacted? How many one-to-one meetings have we done? Who are we listening to? What community activities have we joined in with? In what ways have we served our community? What networks and partnerships have we established?

▶ *Soft metrics*

What themes and patterns are we noticing about the wider community from our listening? How will this listening influence our NPNP?

▶ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about connecting with the wider community, a powerful one-to-one meeting, or inviting someone to join in? What is that story, and where is God in it?

3. GATHERED COMMUNITY

Fruitfulness marker: There will be moments of gathering the many individuals connected to the pioneer. From these gatherings, new patterns of worship will emerge that resonate with new people, and events will take place that build bridges to the wider community.

Core practice: Establishing regular patterns of meeting together as a pioneering team to develop the NPNP community.

In the first year the pioneering team should meet regularly (at least fortnightly) and activities should include:

- Reflecting on the vision and core values (use the NPNP theological underpinning and core values). What values will root your community?
- Building relationships by praying/reflecting on the Bible together. Sharing one another's passions and gifts.
- Identifying who has the potential to lead particular aspects of the work eg prayer, hospitality.
- Reflecting on how you develop a culture of invitation to expand beyond the pioneering team (how will you gather people and where, eg informal group coffee meetings, joining in with an activity together or planning an activity to which others can be invited?)
- Discerning how the pioneering team can continue to develop. For example, the pioneering team could meet with the pioneer's coach or a critical friend every quarter.
- Having honest, transparent conversations about financial generosity, long-term funding, and sustainability plans, as well as budgeting for the NPNP. This should involve inviting and making personal commitments to support the NPNP by giving time, money, or talents.
- Discerning what other teams are needed. Depending on the model, the pioneering team could be capped at 12-15 (or another smaller number) or could simply grow as large as possible in the first year in order to build a sense of momentum. As you grow, multiple 'working' teams may need to be set up depending on the nature of the NPNP: greeting/welcoming/follow-up/discipleship, evangelism, finance, hospitality, etc.
- Identifying what will need to be in place before you launch the new community.
- Engaging with the review process – the pioneering team should be involved with the review process (see more below).

Review questions:➤ *Hard metrics*

Have we identified people to join the pioneering team? Have we established a rhythm of meeting as a pioneering team? Have we secured our core values? What events and activities have we held? How are we exploring faith together? Are we effectively safeguarding one another? Do we have a basic budget and have we made personal commitments (giving time, money, talents) to support the mission?

➤ *Soft metrics*

Are we discovering the gifts, skills and needs of our community? Is our rhythm of meeting enabling us to become a community? Do our core values shape our life together? What has gone well? What have we learnt? When we meet are we celebrating, learning, and exploring faith effectively? How diverse and inclusive are we as a community? Are we developing healthy patterns of relating? Are we managing conflict in a healthy way?

➤ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about joining the pioneering team, helping shape patterns of worship, or an event that built bridges with the wider community? What is that story, and where is God in it?

4. NEW PEOPLE

Fruitfulness marker: There will be new people making a profession of faith through baptism, confirmation, and membership.

Core practice: Nurturing testimony and faith development. For more on nurturing testimony, visit thestoryproject.org.uk

All This for You is a short book, available from Methodist Publishing, which unpacks the meaning of baptism using vivid images and thoughtful text. It is easy to read for those not familiar with church vocabulary and it provides the opportunity to reflect deeply on the lasting significance of the sacrament.

Review questions:

➤ *Hard metrics*

How many previously unaffiliated people are attending? How many people regard the NPNP as their faith community? How are we encouraging testimony and story-sharing? How many people are exploring faith? Are we explaining the journey of faith to baptism? Do people know how to connect through membership?

➤ *Soft metrics*

Are we developing an invitational culture? Where have we seen signs of God at work? Are we encouraging people to speak about their faith journey?

➤ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about baptism or new membership? What is that story, and where is God in it?

5. DEEPENING DISCIPLESHIP

Fruitfulness marker: There will be creative ways for those new people finding faith to move beyond profession, into lives shaped by following Jesus.

Core practice: Developing discipleship pathways. For more on creating discipleship pathways, see methodist.org.uk/TravellingTogether

Review questions:

➤ *Hard metrics*

How are we introducing new people to faith? Have we established discipleship pathways? How many people are in small groups? How are we exploring the Bible together? How are we encouraging and practising prayer?

➤ *Soft metrics*

Are we open to the questions of others? Is our discipleship programme effective in enabling people to explore and deepen their faith? Are new people experiencing God? Is our faith in God impacting our lives? How are we practising our faith as a community?

➤ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about changes in their life due to their new faith, or about joining a small group, or about deepening/ exploring/living their faith? What is that story, and where is God in it?

6. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Fruitfulness marker: Communities contributing to the transformation of society by offering loving acts of justice and service, and challenging injustice.

Core practice: Challenging and responding to injustice by listening to, amplifying and being changed by people experiencing injustice and marginalisation (both locally and globally). Offering acts of loving service within the local and global community.

For more on engaging with issues of justice and peace, see methodist.org.uk/SocialJustice

Review questions:

➤ *Hard metrics*

What acts of service have we offered to our wider community? What injustices are present amongst us and the wider community? What other partners and networks are challenging injustice that we could/should join in with? What kinds of transformation are we seeking?

➤ *Soft metrics*

Are we challenging injustice effectively within our community and the wider community – what's changed? Who are we listening to and being challenged and transformed by?

➤ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about how they have served or been served by others, or how they have seen transformation in the community from loving acts, or where we have worked for justice? What is that story, and where is God in it?



7. CONNECTION TO THE WIDER CHURCH

Fruitfulness marker: There will be a clear relationship of mutual accountability with the wider Methodist Church, and the NPNP will inspire other churches and circuits to start their own NPNPs.

Core practice: Accountable to the wider church and contributing to the development of NPNPs in the district.

For more on connecting with the wider church, speak to your District NPNP Team, your District Chair or your Learning Network Methodist Pioneering Pathway lead.

Review questions:

➤ *Hard metrics*

How are we connected and accountable to the district/ circuit? How do we plan to communicate the vision and learning from our community to inspire other people?

➤ *Soft metrics*

Do we feel connected and supported by the structures in place? If not, what do we need? What could we offer to the wider Church?

➤ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about how they have worked with the wider Methodist Church, or inspired/supported other NPNPs? What is that story, and where is God in it?

8. LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Fruitfulness marker: The NPNP will seek long-term financial sustainability by nurturing a culture of financial giving and/or entrepreneurship, and long-term sustainability of leadership by growing a base of volunteers and new leaders from beyond the initial planting team.

Core practice: Growing the leadership community and encouraging a culture of giving.

Review questions:

➤ *Hard metrics*

How many people are volunteering their gifts, finances, energy? How are we developing a culture of giving? Do we recognise what resources we need for long-term sustainability?

➤ *Soft metrics*

Are we enabling people to offer their gifts and skills?

➤ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about how they have contributed their time, money or skills to the NPNP, or how they have grown as a leader? What is that story, and where is God in it?

9. REPLANT OR SECOND PLANT

Fruitfulness marker: The NPNP will seek to form an emerging idea of the next new ecclesial community that could be planted from this NPNP or inspired by it.

Core practice: Actively discerning where to locate the next NPNP and praying about it regularly.

Review questions:

➤ *Hard metrics*

Are other people interested in what we are doing? Are we capturing our learning, and communicating this to other people?

➤ *Soft metrics*

Do we welcome the questions and observations of others? Are we communicating in ways that inspire other people to start an NPNP? Is the time right to extend our community to begin another?

➤ *Story*

Who in our community or network could tell a story about how they feel called to start another NPNP, or where they see the need for another NPNP? What is that story, and where is God in it?

The review process

The review process we recommend all NPNTs follow, and which funded NPNTs are expected to follow, is two-fold:

1. A review meeting every six months to review work and set specific goals based on the fruitfulness markers above.
2. An annual submission of responses to the review questions (see above).

Review meeting

Every six months a meeting should be scheduled to review, evaluate, and set specific goals for the NPNT based on the fruitfulness markers. The fruitfulness markers and associated questions should guide your meeting. This meeting could involve people from the District NPNT Team, the pioneering team, the management/ steering group, the reference group/stakeholder forum, and/ or the NPNT itself, depending on the current context of the NPNT. Enabling an atmosphere of prayer and openness will be important to support these conversations.

For the first review meeting (six months after the start of the NPNT), we recommend the following agenda:

1. Welcome and prayers.
2. Discussion: Have we established the three core practices (clarify your vision, connect with new people, build a team and begin gathering together)?
3. Reflect on the review questions associated with the first three fruitfulness markers. Provide an opportunity to respond to these questions in a variety of ways (eg open discussion, votes, writing comments on a flipchart, giving each person 30 seconds to respond).
4. A time of prayer/worship/silence for reflection.
5. Set clear priorities for the next six months. Remember: when it comes to priorities, less is more. The fewer priorities you have, the more progress you will be able to make.
6. Closing prayers.



For the second review meeting (12 months after the start of the NPNP), we recommend the following agenda:

1. Welcome and prayers.
2. Discussion: Have we established/are we building on the three core practices?
3. Time to reflect on the review questions associated with the first three fruitfulness markers. Opportunity to respond to these questions in a variety of ways (eg open discussion, votes, writing comments on a flipchart, giving each person 30 seconds to respond).
4. Reflect on the additional core practices you need to develop the fruitfulness markers of deepening discipleship, new people, social justice, and connection to the wider church.
5. A time of prayer/worship/silence for reflection.
6. Set clear priorities for the next six months.
7. Closing prayers.

For subsequent review meetings, we recommend the following:

1. Widen your conversations to reflect on all the fruitfulness markers, using the review questions. Though the NPNP may be focusing on one area (eg social justice or discipleship), healthy NPNPs will be 'well-rounded' and bear some fruit in all areas.
2. Always set clear priorities and goals for the next six months.
3. In year three, begin to focus on long-term sustainability.
4. In year four, begin to focus on replanting or second planting.

Annual submission

Responses to the review questions above will be gathered annually. This will enable the learning from local NPNP communities to be shared, and to develop and build the movement across the Connexion, with the aim of seeing an NPNP emerge within every circuit. Responses should be sent to the Project Funding Officer, who will collate and analyse the information from across the Connexion and share trends and learning. For further details on how responses should be submitted contact the Project Funding Officer on bondj@methodistchurch.org.uk

Chapter 13 One-to-One Meetings as a Pioneer

We spend a lot of our time in 'what' conversations: we exchange pleasantries, talk about the weather, discuss our activities, seek or provide advice, etc. The one-to-one meeting may start here but quickly aims to go deeper than these normal patterns. It's not a commercial for our new initiative, an interview, or a pastoral counselling session. The one-to-one conversation is an opportunity to listen, build trust, and learn what the other person values.

What is a one-to-one meeting?

The one-to-one meeting is a short (30-45 minute), memorable, in-person conversation between two people to uncover, explore, and share the stories, core values, and motivating interests of each conversation partner. The goal of a one-to-one is to figure out the 'why' of the person you are talking to by inviting them to tell you – a significant piece of building a connection and a relationship. One-to-ones are essential in ensuring your NPNP is contextually relevant, and in connecting with new people and building the pioneering team.

Before the one-to-one

1) Make a list of everyone you know in your city, town, village, or whatever the ministry context is.

That's right: why not start with everyone? Put everyone you know on your list. These will be the people you reach out to first. If the idea of that list is simply too overwhelming, make a list of the leaders of important organisations in your community – schools, voluntary organisations, businesses, cultural groups, etc.

2) Choose ten of these people and email (or phone) them to ask for a meeting.

Invite a range of people. Explain who you are and your connection, clarify what you're inviting them to and why, and ask them to respond if they're available. Some of them will immediately respond: some of them won't. You could follow up on an email invitation a week later. Schedule the meeting and the meeting location. A public space such as a coffee shop could be an ideal place to meet.

During the one-to-one

3) At the beginning of the meeting, thank the person for their time.

Restate who you are and your context, and be clear that you will stick to the time set aside.

4) Then move into the main part of the meeting: the conversation itself.

Don't default to the previously mentioned conversational patterns that this relational meeting is not. Your goal is for the conversation to be memorable – for it to stand out from the hundreds of other conversations that happen in a week. So ask good questions, and follow up with more good questions that invite people to consider the 'why' of the answers they just gave. Share meaningfully too about your own commitments. At first, navigating the balance of deep listening, probing questioning, follow-up, and story sharing will feel clunky. But don't worry. The more relational meetings you do, the more natural they will become to your practice of ministry.

Here are some potential starter questions:

- Tell me the story of how you became a _____. Biography is the best place to start but push hard on the particulars; don't let it stay superficial.
- What does that mean for your life now?
- What's the main thing you're up to in your organisation? Who are your heroes?
- You seem angry/passionate/deeply committed to that. Where did that come from?
- What are you going to do about that anger/passion/conviction? If money were no object, what would you do?
- What's next for you?

Go for a probing question that risks troubling the easy, polite information exchange that we're used to. For example, 'What do you value about this community?' Ask big questions that have focus and spark. Don't forget, during the conversation you should find natural places to speak about your story, interests, and values. The one-to-one is not an interview.

Ending the one-to-one

5) Five minutes before the end of the meeting, move to finish meaningfully.

Resist the temptation to stay at the table for a long time. Finishing the meeting at the time agreed and on a high note increases the likelihood that you'll meet again in the future.

Ask your conversation partner if they have any last questions for you.

This is essential: ask your conversation partner if they know anyone else that you should be talking to. Ask the question and then be quiet and wait. More often than not, they'll suggest a couple of people. Then ask if they'd be willing to e-connect you with them. If you sense potential for future connection, mention how interesting the meeting has been and then ask if you could follow up in a couple of months for another conversation.

After the one-to-one

6) Record your conversation partner's basic information.

Use whatever technology works for you to keep track of contacts. Follow the guidance on good practice in recording at methodist.org.uk/Confidentiality

7) Follow up with an email the next day.

Thank your conversation partner, reiterate how helpful/enjoyable the conversation was, and ask whether anyone else has come to mind that you should reach out to. If they haven't yet e-connected you with those they mentioned at the end of the one-to-one, ask them to do so.

8) Figure out how to scan and organise the 'data' you're getting from the meetings.

This will help you to order to discern next steps for current and future NPNPs.

9) Repeat.

Keep reaching out with more invitations for more one-to-ones, you should never run out.

Chapter 14 What is a Pioneering Team?

A key element of the pioneer's work will be to gather, build and sustain a pioneering team.

Teams do not just happen: they are created and built. They take time to grow and need to be nurtured to continue developing. Several key thinkers in pioneer ministry believe it is time to think less about individual pioneers and more about pioneering teams.³

The role of the pioneering team (which includes the pioneer) is to do the core work of pioneering the NPNP. Remember that the pioneering team doesn't need to do everything – the circuit or District NPNP Team and/or management group should support you in clarifying the aims and core vision of the NPNP, and other groups at a district or circuit level may be able to help with particular functions, eg communication or finance.

Building the pioneering team is one of the first tasks for the pioneer. The pioneer should establish a regular pattern of meeting people one-to-one and then discern (using the characteristics below) who might be invited to form part of the pioneering team.

When six to eight people have been identified, the team can begin meeting regularly and engaging in activities. The continued good leadership of the pioneering team is a crucial part of the pioneer's ongoing work.

The pioneering team should include people who:

- are on a spiritual journey and want to invite others to explore
- are committed to and share a passion for the mission, vision, and values of the NPNP (competing understandings of the mission will disable the NPNP)
- have lived experience of the context (essential for Church at the Margins, to enable them to be co-designed and co-delivered at every stage)
- are from diverse backgrounds and ages enjoy working collaboratively
- value authenticity and are willing to be vulnerable are people-orientated and willing to serve others
- can engage and respond to conflict healthily and creatively
- are innovative, creative, curious, and willing to take risks are orientated to the future.

3 Mike Moynagh and Andy Freeman, *How Should We Start?* (Fresh Expressions Share Booklet, 2011).