

## Selection Criteria for Pioneer Mission Leaders

The careful selection of individuals who may potentially become pioneer mission leaders is of the utmost importance. The criteria which we will be using are outlined here.

### Introduction

As well as some important characteristics which will be looked for in prospective Pioneer Mission Leaders, there are some practical matters which need to be covered:

- You need to be at least 18 years of age.
- You will usually need to have been a member of the Methodist Church for at least two years.
- You need to be a legal resident of the UK or Republic of Ireland.
- You will need to satisfy the requirements of the Methodist Church's Safeguarding policy.
- You will need to have the understanding and support of those closest to you.

Pioneering ministry is very demanding and the characteristics set out below indicate the areas in which we will be especially interested. In doing so we will be looking for evidence of past experience and behaviours as a guide to whether this is the form of ministry to which you may be suited in the future. Pioneering ministry is not for the faint-hearted, and it is important that we and you look realistically at its appropriateness for you. However, it is important also to remember the promise that God's grace is sufficient for us, and that it is often in our weakness and sense of unworthiness that God's power is able to work most effectively.

### 1. Visionary

Pioneer Mission Leaders will be people who are able to see possibilities which others often may not recognise. They will seek to discern what God is doing and shape their work and aims accordingly so that they can pursue a God-given vision. They will be willing to adopt an approach which involves 'holy risk,' and will naturally begin with people and community rather than taking church as their starting point. We will be looking for people who are able to think 'outside the box,' who can share vision effectively and who can inspire and encourage others to be visionary.

### 2. Initiator

Pioneers are people who are self-starters, intrinsically motivated, and able to initiate a project or community of people, often building from nothing. They are highly motivated, have qualities of persistence and commitment and are able to see a project come to birth despite obstacles and setbacks. We will be looking for people who are creative, innovative and imaginative and who also have the ability to be reflective about their work. We would normally expect that prospective Pioneer Mission Leaders have already demonstrated their ability to initiate a fresh expression of church by having done so, or by having initiated a comparable innovative project. They will have the ability to plan strategically and manage the process of beginning a project from scratch.

### **3. Collaborator**

It is important that Pioneer Mission Leaders are able to share their vision and their dreams with others and to collaborate as a natural way of working. They will help others to feel a sense of ownership of the project and to feel valued as their contribution and skills are drawn in to its development. They will routinely consult with and involve those in the local church community and the wider community, and will work ecumenically wherever possible. They will share experience with others involved with fresh expressions work locally and beyond.

### **4. Understanding of mission context**

Pioneer Mission Leaders will have a developed perception of the issues involved in understanding and relating to the cultural context of the community where they minister. They will be good at listening, observing, coming alongside, and loving people in different cultures. Especially they will have an understanding of the situation, outlook and values of young adults, aged 18 – 35 years. They will have knowledge of the world-view of those living in a postmodern and post-Christendom society, and will have the skills to engage effectively in sharing Christian faith with them. They will have an awareness of the challenge of reaching people who have little understanding of the Christian story or the life of the church.

### **5. Relationship builder**

We will be looking for people who have excellent relationship skills and who are able to form open and healthy relationships with others, and encourage others to form good relationships also. They will naturally seek to get to know others personally and to build relationships of integrity and trust, acknowledging and respecting appropriate boundaries. They will have a Godly love and compassion towards others and will seek to respond to their expressed needs and concerns.

### **6. Evangelist**

Pioneer Mission Leaders will seek through appropriate and sensitive evangelism to share the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ in order that others may become disciples of Christ and grow into a mature and authentic Christian lifestyle. They will have the ability to share Christian faith in a way which makes sense to non-churched people and which is relevant to their everyday experience. Pioneers will recognise that the good news has both personal and social implications and that God has a special concern for justice and for disadvantaged and marginalised people, and they will seek to share a whole Gospel. They will be able to offer evidence that they are already engaged in evangelism and service to those outside the church.

### **7. Team builder and leader**

We will be looking, not only for those who can take a lead in starting up new Christian communities and activities, but who are also able to inspire and encourage others to share in that task with them. They will be able to lead a team as well as being able to function as part of a team and be an asset to the teams they belong to. Pioneers will be able to help others to discern their gifts and offer them suitable encouragement and training so that those gifts can be appropriately used as part of a team.

## **8. Flexibility and adaptability**

Pioneer Mission Leaders will be able to determine and pursue aims and priorities, but will be able to refine and amend these in the light of experience and circumstances. They will be able to cope effectively with ambiguity and with constant and sometimes abrupt change. They will be able to adapt their understanding, experience and methodology to the uniqueness of the fresh expression of church they are attempting to establish.

## **9. Building an ecclesial community**

We will be looking for people who have a developed understanding of the nature of church and who recognise that the aim of a project is to establish a form of church for those who do not normally attend any church with the hope that, in time, it will reach maturity as an ecclesial community and will bear the enduring marks of church. They will be sensitive to the need for the community they establish to be shaped in a way which is appropriate for its context, and which may be very different from a typical Methodist church, yet remains recognisably 'in connexion' with the wider Methodist community, seeking appropriate ways to partner with other churches in mission and worship.

## **10. Robustness and tenacity**

The nature of pioneer ministry is challenging and can be tough on people. We will need to be assured that candidates and their families can cope with these pressures. They will demonstrate an ability to cope with disappointments and setbacks, and sometimes a sense of loneliness, and to be persistent in the face of difficulty. They will have an awareness of the limits of their own resources and will be able to maintain a sense of balance in their lives.

## **11. Faith and Spirituality**

Pioneer Mission Leaders will believe in God's action in the world and will recognise that establishing a fresh expression of church is a venture of faith. They will sense that offering for this form of ministry is a response to a calling from God. They will have a vibrant relationship with God and a developed spirituality and devotional life which is able to sustain that relationship. Prayer, engagement with Scripture, worship and fellowship with other Christians, as well as service and outreach to others will be evident in their lives. They will be people whose lives have been transformed by God and are capable of helping to bring transformation to others. There should be evidence of maturity in Christian discipleship not necessarily marked by its length but by its depth and practical application. Pioneers should be able to affirm and promote the characteristic Methodist emphases of salvation for all, the reality of personal faith and assurance, and the call to individual and social holiness.

## **12. Commitment to diversity**

Pioneers may be women or men, ordained or lay, drawn from all social and ethnic backgrounds. They will be working with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and outlooks. They will need to be sensitive and respectful to all and be able to cope and be comfortable with a diverse range of people, contexts, churches and situations. In the development of a Christian community they will seek to be open and inclusive of all people as those who are loved and welcomed by God. They

should, however, respect the understanding of the church on matters of morality, and should be aware of the provisions of Methodist standing orders and useage regarding appropriate boundaries.

### **13. Willingness to share learning**

Pioneer Mission Leaders will have the ability to draw upon prior learning and experience and apply it appropriately. They will be willing to engage with new learning and training opportunities which build on existing knowledge and attempt to address identified gaps, as well as understandings and competencies which directly relate to the context of the specific fresh expression of church where they are working. Pioneers will be willing to learn and grow from a wide range of sources. They will be willing to be coached or mentored by others and will also be willing to offer coaching or mentoring to others as appropriate. We will need to know that prospective pioneers have the attributes and skills to benefit from and cope with suitable training. They will demonstrate a history of engagement with theological reflection and an appetite to continue that process.

### **14. Worship leader**

Pioneer Mission Leaders will have the ability to be creative about worship, holding together the tension of transcendence and cultural relevance.