

Church Planting Conference November 2019

This information is intended for those who were unable to attend the November 2019 Presbytery Conference on Church Planting to give you a flavour of the contents but we also hope it will be an aide memoire to those who did come along and encourage you all to consider if some form of Church Planting could happen in YOUR Parish.

The evening consisted of three elements:

- A keynote address along with concluding remarks from the Rev Alan McWilliam who has extensive knowledge of Church Planting.
- 5 “stories” from speakers who have been involved in forms of Church Planting:
 - Robroyston
 - St George’s Tron
 - Pioneer Ministry
 - Moodiesburn
 - Ruchazie
- 6 discussion groups covering various elements of Church Planting including a chance to speak to some of the “story-tellers” in greater depth about their experiences:
 - Ruchazie
 - Resourcing Church Plants – Strategic Planning Committee
 - Robroyston and Moodiesburn
 - Pioneer Ministry
 - How can Church Planting invigorate the whole Church? – Mission Support Team
 - How to go about Church Planting

This document contains the Powerpoint slides from Alan’s address and notes taken at the discussion groups, reprinted verbatim from the appointed note-takers.

Perhaps one of the key messages to emerge from the Conference is that Church Planting need not be done on a “grand scale”. Much vital work can be done through local initiatives with a few dedicated people. Examples of this can be gleaned from the brochure “Pioneering in Scotland” which Alan made available at the end of the evening; copies can be got from Alan by contacting him direct or via the Presbytery Office.

Ruchazie

Backstory

- Rough landscape: 'murder capital of Glasgow', poverty, houses demolished/derelict land, deep sense of abandonment 'God has left Ruchazie', libraries/schools closed, hopeless. When landed: built trusted relationships.
- Enter Alan McWilliams- 'How would you form a worshipping community in Ruchazie?' Offshoot from White Inch. Did Community Audit. Core team became eldership. Over 1 year before worship: fun days/community meals/kids club/food share. Worship service was seeker sensitive: due to food poverty anchored around evening meal, stories of hope, alpha discussions, prayer, worship. Averages at 65 people today.
- Number of mess-ups along the way. Manage expectations, can't fix everything. Maybe landed too triumphantly. Destabilised White Inch church because it wasn't communicated/heard what we were doing. Seeker sensitive vs. going deeper: kept it too shallow for too long- Thurs service went deeper but Sunday stayed shallow.

Discussion:

- ***Did physically relocate into Ruchazie?*** Not all of core team. Had manse and two team members moved into manse, but not worked as well as thought. Would it have been more impactful if 3-4 had moved there? Yes. Fear that if you did that, the need is so great; they would suck you dry. To have longevity, maybe need to get away from time to time.
- ***With 93 first time professions of faith in the last 3 years- was there a positive impact from Ruchazie in Whiteinch?*** Most of those 93 professions came from the addiction recovery community/groups. Those involved in recovery groups makes up 70% of the population of Ruchazie. Ignited positive news in White Inch. Negative was in early days, felt too many left from White Inch, set up as a mother/child relationship- now partnership relationship.
- ***Balance in worshipping community if filled with 'outsiders' from Ruchazie?*** On whole has been received positively. Ruchazie is a divided scheme. Outsiders coming in has helped resist us/them within the scheme itself, but to invite both. Got some pushback, but period of tension was short.
- ***Funding?*** Inherited a building that was invested in with small meeting rooms. Inherited resources focused around youth. Mixture of church and lottery funding. Had to present investment cases around development plan- project-ized that. Funding sustainability- pipeline for all sources of funding, what is an ethical funding strategy, do we take money from the lottery. Now looking to grants/philanthropic funding.
- ***What is the conversation around local funding? Sustainability?*** None of them tithed/ have a giving box. The community gives what they can, but it is never expected that it will sustain the full cost of the work. Recently did an away weekend that was not subsidized- did payment plan for people over 12 weeks.
- ***Is the best way forward to have a full time minister word and sacrament?*** Currently have interim moderator in Alan and pastoral care in Markos. Both are CofS. Core team teaches/leads worship. Baptisms/marriages carried out by Alan.

Leadership team vs. one minister different ways of working. Leadership team currently preaching/taking the service.

- There are currently five different paid roles equivalent of three full time jobs. One funded internally church/the rest externally. Funded externally by dividing up into roles for specific projects and then seeking funding for the project. All are people of faith. Whole core team now 25.

- ***In Cofs did you feel restricted within church structure or free to actually do what you want to do?*** Felt flexibility/freedom with Alan. Working well now, but maybe when more mature maybe need more structure. Feeling of 'just let them get on with it.'

Group 2

- We need to think outside the box, variety is exciting
- We need to put people at the heart not buildings, pews and organs
- We need to engage people in community first
- People have preconceived ideas of what church is like from the past
- Some people are from multi-cultural backgrounds, and may have different views of Jesus
- People don't distinguish between denominations, this is bigger than denominations
- Do we need to resource this ecumenically?
- It is hard for older people to change attitudes
- Buildings are a resource too
- We need to take the existing church with us
- Parish boundaries don't matter
- Communities are not only geographic
- How effective are our Parish Groupings?
- How do we support people to reach their communities??
- We need attractive buildings
- If we don't show it by who we are, forget the buildings
- People are our best resource
- How do we keep our own congregations going and resourced?
- There was a degree of frustration expressed by some that they were looking for answers and they didn't know what resources there were or what that might mean.

Robroyston Church

Rev Johathan O'Keefe told the story of the growth of Robroyston church from its inception in 1999 as a New Charge Development, to a church achieving full status in 2017.

The are consisted of new build houses and there was a building in the area for worship and where community organisations could meet. Jonathan spoke of every church beginning as a church plant and of Acts 18, how God has people in His city so we are never starting from scratch. He asked the question "If you imagine your parish with no church and you were starting from the beginning, what would you do?".

Answers included:

- Talking to people where they are at – eg in a library
- Creating a worshipping community
- Sharing the Gospel
- Good publicity
- Prayer
- Talking to God about what He is doing
- Looking for people who feel they don't fit in – eg in Ferguslie Park speaking to people in the queue for methadone and making connections
- Jonathan spoke of how God can work in unexpected ways – when they were trying to connect with young people in the area they tried many different things and in the end it was the formation of a Girls' and Boys' Brigade that worked. The idea in New Zealand was mentioned of "listening and mission" was spoken of and how listening to God and then outreach was core.

Peter Gardner

There's a large visual arts community in Glasgow where there are over 400 art studios. Peter's studio is in the Briggait, (GARDNER & GARDNER) the art work stems from faith. The door is always open.

Most artists earn around £5000 pa for their art work and work in other jobs to fund their art work.

The areas for input were raised by the group.

Call to pioneer ministry

Stemmed from GA agreeing to 5 pioneer posts. As minister at Renfield St Stephen Peter was interested in making application for a pioneer post to the arts community to which he was called. Art installations in Renfield St Stephens had been undertaken, art was used in worship.

Starting out

Peter spent 6 months visiting artists, talking and listening. Connections were made with cultural organisers; links made with others doing similar work in other places.

A base was required – Renfield St Stephens was tried; then 3 months in Pollokshields until workshop space was made available through a connection with WASPS

(www.waspsstudios.org.uk) who were interested in the pastoral care side of Peter's ministry.

Pioneer ministry requires passion in the field of the ministry – Peter's passion is art!

Parallels with Industrial Chaplaincy

There's a worker/priest role. It's a ministry of presence – being available and grasping the moments that God gives.

There's no faith community as such at the beginning, pioneers tend to be solo and need to be able to gather with those who are spiritually open.

God is already at work – tuning in to that work is key.

The pioneer nurtures the fruit God is already growing – sensitivity is needed.

Opportunities for discussion can lead to spiritual moments or encounters – tend to be spontaneous rather than planned.

Pioneer ministry requires living with the wheat and tares.

The difference between chaplaincy and pioneer ministry is that chaplaincy doesn't form and grow community which is at the heart of pioneer ministry.

Peter hasn't experienced resistance to this pioneer ministry from within the arts community – there has been interest and curiosity.

Glasgow School of Art hasn't been welcoming as yet-reasons for this aren't known.

A Christian arts group now meets in the Gardner studio – open to those of faith and none.

Authenticity is key. Faith has to be seen to be real.

Issue of working across parish boundaries.

Local churches have become preaching stations with the vast majority of the parish not interested in attending.

Peter has been invited to preach on occasion.

There's no problem working across parishes – individuals choose where they want to participate.

Artists are sometimes looking for spaces in which to work or display their work. The issues of faith/lack of faith is one which inhibits some from asking. Peter encourages negotiation about what's possible in the space.

Peter has been involved with congregations in creating art installations (St Rollox, Maryhill, Pollokshields)

Artists involved in working in churches might be encouraged to make contact with Peter – networking and support are valuable.

Peter's concluding thoughts.

Pioneer ministry feels like the extreme model of ministry just now.

It's about individuals aiming to gather a team with no set format or structure; the shape will evolve.

Peter's assumption of church have had to change to go forward in pioneer ministry.

In a geographical area where pioneer ministry is attempted, (rather than an interest based ministry) his reckoning is it would be better to begin with a team.

Authenticity is key to pioneer ministry – half truths aren't acceptable.

The aim is to allow God to encounter someone in a space. The pioneer minister does much listening and less telling – this is exhausting. The outcome of the encounter cannot be predicted.

It is a huge expectation to ask an individual to build a community in 5 years. There is much breaking down of barriers required which necessitates sharing spirituality on an equal footing. Many people seem unaware of Christian spirituality.

Summary of Discussion Group #5 - How can Church planting invigorate the whole Church?

The group began by reading brief summaries of activities that were going on at Maryhill Parish Church, at Burnside Blairbeth and at Langside (Finn's Place).

One person talked about how it could be interesting to see the old alongside the new. He commented on how there was a significant 'project' that ran at their church and that most people found coming in to the project to be a much more welcoming experience than coming to church on Sunday (which could feel like a bit of an alien experience).

Many people found the information about Maryhill / Burnside Blairbeth / Finn's Place very encouraging. The need to 'take people with you' was highlighted and it was mentioned that resistance from older people could be expected to some of these new approaches to church. It was also mentioned that the older generation are more likely to have a more fixed idea of what 'church' should be - e.g. a 'hymn sandwich'. *(Interestingly, I'd have said that most of the folk in the room were aged 60+ so some older folk clearly were enthusiastic about these alternative new approaches!)*

It was noted that the approach at Maryhill was to plant lots of different seeds and see what germinated rather than having a fixed approach to things. The need to understand one's context was also emphasised because it was clear that different sorts of approaches were working in different locations – one size clearly doesn't fit all. Diversity and flexibility were key watchwords. One person noted that these projects had been making gradual change, and questioned whether gradual changes fitted with the radical action plan.

Another person described how a Nigerian family had started coming to their church, and this had led to several other Nigerian families coming along, significantly lowering the average age of the congregation as a result.

The need to move away from having worship only on a Sunday was highlighted a couple of times, taking account of different people's working patterns / lifestyles.

One person expressed concern that the name of Jesus was not mentioned in the information that was distributed. He felt that it was important to emphasise that the church was, first and foremost, a worshipping community – 'social work activities' were good but should not be the church's primary focus. However, it was also highlighted that the activity at Maryhill was actually a different style of church service rather than a 'social work activity' and that, although the work at Blairbeth was not directly integrated into Sunday worship, the team there sought to encourage young people / families to come along to Messy Church and Scripture Union Camps as well as the weekly 'Jump Club'. (Both the Jump Club and the Toddler Group include Bible stories as part of their programme each week).

The question was asked: 'Is it fair to ask older people who have served the church for years to start these new types of church projects. The groups' emphatic answer was 'Yes!' but it was also noted that having younger people involved in running such projects would help

them feel ownership of them. However, the onus was on the older generation to be welcoming and facilitate this.

Group 6 (Alan McWilliam)

Alan McWilliam gave 7 points on how a congregation/group can go about church planting:

1. No one particular model

It can be all different kinds of things, whether church planting (CP) or a missional project (MP). It has to be appropriate to the context.

2. CP/MP can be new alongside old

E.g. existing congregational life and something else. So we can all be involved. Most of Church of England's (C. of E.) Fresh Expressions (FE) are of this kind.

3. Show London Option (This was not discussed further in the group)

4. Mapping Option – Mapping exercise to identify opportunities.

5. Mission Audit – What works best

It is important to do things from the grassroots up (cf. Mapping exercise). This is to encourage grassroots “We could do this” – Not trying to overburden ministers etc.

6. Training – Pioneer or Learning Community (LC)

It is important to train people to avoid problems untrained people do. (I.e. top 10 reasons why things don't work)

7. Implementation support from Presbytery

Presbytery needs to help.

Questions and Answers

- *I'm excited about the possibilities and need for training, but how do we avoid the pitfalls?*
 - Training to start the new thing (pioneer course) there are already 120 people trained who plan to start 70 churches or projects.
 - Learning Communities can be rolled out from just Priority areas to all of Presbytery.
- *Finance? We don't yet know how the Growth Fund will work.*
 - We need to be flexible and adaptive in deploying resources. Most people who start new things are good at finding resources and funding and will use it well. E.g. C. of E. lay and non-stipendiary people (aside; the fastest growing areas of growth in the C. of E. are led by non-stipendiary, lay women)
 - The Growth Fund can be accessed by Presbytery as well as by congregations.
- *We heard that people like to say yes for Jesus and spirituality (but not so keen on church) How about setting up learning groups about Christ's spirituality? E.g. book 'Beyond Belief'. What we do further (after belief) is what is important.*
 - We need to learn to share faith that makes sense to people – How to do this with non-church people.

- *How do you take an ageing church to take the step out – When you feel you are managing decline and maybe people are not up for FEs?*
 - Positively: Everybody has something to offer the community (E.g. ASSET Based Survey identifies the strengths of the church and community “What’s in your hand?”)
 - Negatively: Some churches are not going to do this. For example, in Ruchazie, there were five ladies left who were just waiting for someone else to take up the baton. There need to be endings and beginnings. A number of congregations are very fragile. But make sure you pass on the baton to someone. We will see pruning to see growth. (aside: We need to be better at good endings. Sometimes we need patience to take people along. E.g. Path of Renewal takes 3 years.)
 - New and old – Asking others how they want to express their faith. E.g. Messy Church- Ask kids what they want to do with the Playdough.
 - We can welcome others to do something different. E.g. A younger congregation to worship in different ways at different times – Cross-pollinating.
- *But, one size doesn’t fit all!*
 - Nobody needs to do anything. But those of us who want to do something should be encouraged to do so. E.g. Training, survey reveals opportunities – play to your strengths. E.g. Work in local Nursing homes. E.g. Doing work with young and old. E.g. Messy Church and Remembrance.
- *Regarding the Mapping Exercise – What came out of it? Where are the opportunities E.g. areas that are under-churched?*
 - 5 possibilities were identified, but they have not been made public yet without more discussion. We need to do the exercise with more people involved.

An example of starting something new was given. When does the new thing become church and how do you stop the conflict between the existing and the new?

- The old has power and budget etc.
- The new has growth but none of the above.
- There needs to be a negotiation of the relationship.
- We need to learn from previous experiences.
- We also need other mechanisms for recognising a new C. of S. project/ church/ F.E. E.g. Bishop’s Mission Order in the C. of E. E.g. Nightclub outreach in someone else’s Parish.
- We need to not let intrusion get in the way.
- We can use Presbytery Mission Initiatives.
- We need an open conversation.
- Twenty new churches will be across Parish boundaries.
- We need graciousness about it.
 - It is important people hear the stories while protecting fledgling projects.