

General Synod 2022

Motion No.8 – Pioneer Ministry

Proposer: Bishop Ferran Glenfield

Check Against Delivery · Embargo Until Delivery

The parish church is the backbone of the Church of Ireland. It represents our enduring presence in communities across Ireland. As a church we continue to invest heavily in maintaining and sustaining our network of parishes.

As in most Western countries, church membership and attendance has declined in the Church of Ireland. The majority of Anglicans in Ireland are nominal, they self- identify as being Church of Ireland, without a committed application of faith, including attending church. Commentators locate choice as the key element in understanding the present religious landscape in Ireland. Clearly, most Irish Anglicans choose not to attend their local parish church on a regular basis.

Since 2012, the Church of Ireland has been exploring Pioneer Ministry as one means of addressing the state of the church landscape. The House of Bishops commissioned a series of initiatives and discussions around the area of Pioneer Ministry. We have consulted, listened and talked through the idea and outworking of Pioneer Ministry in the context of the Church of Ireland. Now the Pioneer Ministry Working Group established by the House of Bishops presents its proposals to launch Pioneer Ministry formally in the Church of Ireland as outlined in the report.

In summary the key proposals are:

- Establishing a National Leadership structure for Pioneer Ministry;
- Engaging with dioceses to promote and prepare pioneer posts;
- Partnership with Church Army to deliver training for pioneer ministers; and
- Dedicating financial resources from the RCB and dioceses to train and deploy paid pioneer ministers.

Pioneer ministry is not a replacement for pastoral ministry in its current forms: stipendiary, non-stipendiary and ordained local ministers. Traditional church and new models of church should complement each other offering choice. The report recommendations build on a range of church plants and outreach initiatives already in place in the Church of Ireland. The proposals draw heavily on the experience of Pioneer Ministry in other Anglican churches in these islands and beyond.

The report before you has been endorsed by the House of Bishops, the Standing Committee and the Executive Committee of the RCB. It is planned to establish the National Leadership Structure, largely

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through secondment, by this autumn. Any legislation required for Pioneer Ministry in relation to the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, will come before Standing Committee and General Synod in 2023. Details of the financial resources required for the training and deployment of paid pioneer ministers are being worked through and will be in place when needed. The first pioneer ministers will start training and deployment in 2024.

Over the next decade up to thirty paid pioneer ministers and projects will be in operation. Pioneer Ministry is an idea whose time has come to renew the life and witness of the Church of Ireland. I commend the report for your consideration.