

Overview

Current Post: Pioneer Minister, Deanery of Poole and North Bournemouth & Leader of Poole Missional Communities (2008 – Present)

Previous Post: Assistant Curate, Parish of Bitterne Park, Southampton

Family: Married to Emily. Two adult children.



Other involvements and responsibilities:

- Member of General Synod June 2021 -
- Member of the Dorset Mission Oversight Group
- Member of the Mission and Ministry Council
- Associate Tutor in pioneer ministry & missional ecclesiology with Church Mission Society, Sarum College and Ripon College, Cuddesdon.
- IME2 tutor with pioneer curates across the south of England.
- DTh student with the University of Roehampton, researching the relationships between emerging missional movements and the inherited church.
- Author of two books on pioneer ministry and the reimagination of church; *Stepping into Grace* (BRF 2016), *Home by Another Route* (BRF 2019).

Commentary

I am an ordained Pioneer Minister and have been in the Diocese of Salisbury for nearly 13 years in the Deanery of Poole & North Bournemouth. I have a background in biochemistry following a degree in Natural Sciences at Cambridge. I have an MA in Urban Policy and led my local church's participation in an urban regeneration programme in Ealing Borough, London. I trained at Trinity College, Bristol and served a curacy at a busy sacramental parish in Southampton. There I was given the opportunity to experiment with mission in the community and through that began to discern a call to pioneer ministry.

As a pioneer I have always sought to enable innovation and creativity at the edges of the church to inform the centre. At the same time, I have sought to draw on the rich tradition of the church in its engagement with the world. Personally, I have benefitted from a broad spirituality within Church of England, from a background with the HTB family of churches, to the New Wine network, Greenbelt and the contemplative tradition expressed in new monastic networks such as the Community of Aidan and Hilda.

The Church of England recently set out a vision for a simple, humbler, bolder church. In particular, its vision is for a church in the 2020s 'where *mixed ecology* is the norm'. Furthermore, its vision is for a church that 'is younger and more diverse', and for 'a church of missionary disciples'. Our work at Poole Missional Communities has sought to embrace and realise those same ideals and we have learnt a huge amount in our efforts to do that. Therefore, in reflecting and praying about these aims I decided to stand for election earlier this year and attended the last meeting of the previous Synod in July. Having had that induction into the processes of General Synod, I would really like to continue to represent Salisbury Diocese in the next quinquennium.

What follows is a summary of the convictions I bring which will inform my engagement in the work of General Synod.

- **Mission and the mixed ecology:** the vision of the national church is inspiring but challenging. The disconnection between the church and society is in many places growing fast. The parish system and its clergy remain a critically important foundation for the church's life and witness. Yet, to be a Christian presence in every community will require a work of reimagination that supports and encourages courageous innovation and experimentation. We need to renew our witness and nurture new forms of church alongside and in relationship to the parish worship and witness in existing churches.
- **Church and society post-Covid:** this last 18 months has shown us that i) we have creativity in abundance to adapt when needed ii) we need not be as dependent on our buildings as we thought. This period has also demonstrated that i) many people want local community where they can engage meaningfully and ii) many people are open to the spiritual and transcendent though are nervous of organised 'religion'. The church has a huge amount to offer in these areas and should be encouraged to move resources and leadership into them. We must build for the long-term.
- **Sexual ethics, race and diversity:** we live in an age where individual identity and authenticity is hugely important to people. The process that led to Living in Love and Faith has been refreshing as it has prioritised people's lived experience. These are missional issues for a church that is seen to be hypocritical by many, particular younger generations. My own understanding has deepened and my view broadened through engaging with people with a lived experience of, for example, same-sex attraction and racial discrimination. We need to be a humble, listening, learning church that we might better speak and demonstrate what it means to be faithful to Christ.
- **Leadership and ministry:** the financial impact of Covid is already bringing about an acceleration in the loss of clergy posts in some Dioceses. We face difficult decisions in the coming years. I do not think that clergy are a 'limiting factor', on the contrary we need more ordained leaders to create the kind of environment in which ministry can flourish. This must however include lay-leadership. We have been writing reports on the need for a liberation of the laity for over 50 years – may this be the era of the church in which that vision is fully realised!

Your vote:

This is a critical moment for the church. Voices with the hard-won experience of forging new ways of being church in our secular society are needed at the heart of our structures of decision-making in this season. I feel therefore that I have something distinctive to offer the church in this moment in our common life and would value your support in enabling that voice to be heard.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

In Christ,



Proposed by: *Rev'd Canon Andy Perry*

Seconded by: *Rev'd Canon Lucy Holt*