

## Billy Kennedy

Billy began by talking about the Pioneer Network, begun a few years ago, and the New Community Church in Southampton raising the question whether the so-called 'new' churches were still new as the things that they do are now being done elsewhere and by others? Is there still something to pioneer?

<Powerpoint presentation>

The Pioneer Network has picked up an idea from a church-planting group in Chicago who link their work to existing churches and their heritage. In England the Pioneer Network works with Methodist Church forming partnerships with individual circuits.

<Video : the Pioneer Connexion>

Billy set out a number of lessons learned from their work:

1. It is more important to have a vision for the city rather than for the church. We have a common vision – a great place to grow up in and a great place to grow old

Billy spoke a a large city-centre-based charismatic church to which people travelled in. The city had seven estates around the city where churches might be planted, but the preference was to plan a church in the city centre. However, instead the city centre church closed for three months, the people met in their homes, an in churches local to where they lived. When the city centre reopened a less people returned, but they were part of a dispersed community having a vision for the city.

2. We [the Pioneer Network] can't do it on our own. God challenges us to work with others. We must engage with others who are like-minded to have local authenticity. In one place the Pioneer Network has formed partnerships to help run two new community schools (academies) of 600-700 pupils. In a partnership you get beyond just fellowship.
3. The needs to be space for diversity. The needs of a city are diverse, the demographic of a city is diverse. We must honour and respect diversity. Separation in the past has occurred because of disagreement over worship style. But there is only one way to feed a hungry person.

For example ... have parallel services in different styles and according to different traditions – family, fizzy-boppy, traditional Methodist – but with coffee breaks that coincide and work together during the week

God looks down and sees his people – not various churches and denominations.

4. Holistic mission – St Paul engaged in proclamation, performed good deeds, signs, powers, and wonders. He did it all. Some churches only do one so we need to work together to meet needs.
5. We have to experiment ... try new things ... take risks. CPD has been written with helpful intentions, to avoid mistakes, but it squashes creativity. [In the Pioneer Network] it is possible to start up a new church in weeks, Methodism can take years.

We must step into something new, give birth to something new. Early Methodism had a huge effect upon the nation. It is time to rise up again and speak to our nation.

In Southampton there is a circuit-wide partnership which enables things to be looked at strategically. It may mean closing a few churches. It allows risks to be taken

The model can be transferred to other places, but it is not a straightforward model, it is not a franchise [with its prescriptions for success]. Try a few things in partnership, differently worked out according to context.

Include other new churches.

Come in with honour and sensitivity to work alongside. It takes time to build up trust and acceptance.

We need to recognise our need of each other and work together to preach the gospel in all its forms.

### ***Questions and comments***

You seem to be engaging with Methodism where it is weak – what about where it is strong?

We go by invitation. We recognise that there are a thousand growing Methodist Churches. The Pioneer network is a member of Churches Together in Britain and we have people who are 'recognised and regarded' by the Methodist Church. A formal partnership does not always help.

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Scenario: A Methodist church, probably dying, a minister with a calling, what happens to those who are part of the dying congregation, what happens to the ordinand, when [you] come along to take advantage? To whom are you accountable?

[The person who raised this admitted (to me) that what they had said was not clear -KT]

We are accountable to our partners. Each Pioneer Church has a board of trustees. ... As long as we are accountable to God we're OK. ... We strive to work with congregation in a way that works on relationships ... overseeing and talking ... there is a risk because of the lack of accountability.

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Bringing in people can swamp the existing congregation.

We try to act as a catalyst .. there is a training programme for potential leaders in the partner congregation called Ignite.

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In exploring Fresh Expressions in Germany, don't write a report, [rather recognise] that we are discovering what is happening ... the Pioneer Network is evidence.

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It is good to hear what is happening in the partnerships. We use CPD to bash each other and protect ourselves ... to stop us taking risks.

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Are there men and women in pastoral leadership roles [in the Pioneer Network]? Yes!

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[I] found the Pioneer Network different from many new churches.

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When turning hearts to one another we need all generations working together.

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Traditional worship works for some people ... [but they] sometimes feel threatened and feel it is not good enough for others ... all [should be] involved in all of what goes on ... old and new ... cherish all ... diversity must not divide. Different styles of worship are a matter of preference.

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A lot of people are territorial ... people who are established ... God's doing is not among people who are hanging on to what they have.

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If something is God's work then we deny/ignore it at our peril.

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Because the Pioneer Network is relational ... not just leader to leader but community to community ... and when [we] move on ... the relationships outlive lifetimes.