



*An extract from the profile for the
new Pioneer Team Vicar post
in the parish of Portishead
in the diocese of Bath & Wells.*

A New Beginning

In many ways Portishead Church of England is a strong church with an electoral roll of over 400, an average weekly attendance of nearly 300 and 8000 different people passing through services (festivals, occasional offices etc) during each year. We remain committed to being an attractive, vibrant and out-going church and we hope this will bring further growth.

However over the last twenty years whilst the town's population has more than doubled in size, this has not been reflected in the growth of our congregations. It has to be recognised that traditional church has only a limited reach and the majority of the town's population will remain untouched by our presence no matter how attractive we make our Church's life. We therefore wish to develop a new approach to ministry focused not on drawing people in to our existing activities but on meeting people where they are. We need to discern new ways of being and living the gospel within our town's communities and meeting people at their point of need. This requires a Kingdom-focused rather than Church-focused ministry.

We wish to take the opportunity of the present team vicar vacancy to re-configure our clergy team, to increase our focus on the wider community and to renew our service to the community through a more incarnational ministry.

The appointed person will need to be freed from what can become the all embracing demands of traditional church to forge new ways of revealing and sharing the gospel. Whilst being fully integrated into the church life of the parish they will need to have sufficient protected space and support to focus on the new.

This appointment lies within the emerging sphere of pioneer ministry. However we are wanting to resist an "off the shelf" solution and instead seek a new and distinctive response to our particular situation. Our vision for this new role comes from an affirmation of people's innate spirituality, however expressed, and seeks ways to awaken this. It affirms God's presence in the world and celebrates people's existing experiences of God (linked or unlinked to anything we may perceive as Christian), seeking to add to that experience. It places the emphasis on growing God's Kingdom rather than growing the

Church. Our working title for this new role is "Team Pilgrim".

As a fellow pilgrim, it involves meeting people on their way/journey as part of following the Way. There is similarly a sense of the nomad, valuing encounters without needing to forge institutions, pitching a tent and moving on, journeying with people and, where appropriate, signposting them on. Evoked too is the spirit of the adventurer, the one who is willing to take risks for the gospel. As a true pioneer it seeks to explore new territories and prepare a new road for ministry away from the familiar territory of inherited Church.

It is in the journeying that the path becomes clear so this ministry seeks to avoid pre-determined responses or solutions. We want to avoid rushing too quickly into structures. This appointment is not primarily about church planting or the latest favoured fresh expression. Nor is this appointment focused on youth, young families or new housing developments, although all of those are part of the mix within the town. Its beginnings are in genuine listening and loving, in glimpses of community, and in the spiritual encounters that flow.

Job Description

As this is a new role and designed to be responsive to those encounters that happen along the way the job description is deliberately open but it is imagined that the following elements will be part of the mix:

- ◆ Focusing on those with no or very little church connection
- ◆ Understanding the importance of listening, getting to know people and getting known by people; meeting them where and how they are. It is expected this will be the predominate role in the first year
- ◆ Discerning the points of need within the community and finding partners in the community to help respond to those needs
- ◆ Exploring creative and innovative ways in which to ensure a "church" presence at existing community events e.g. Carnival, Raft Race, Flower Show, Victorian Evening
- ◆ Finding new ways of marking the major Christian festivals within the community such as was explored in Lent 2010 with contemporary stations of the cross in High Street shop windows
- ◆ Enabling new events to happen; accepting that many struggle with taking on additional commitments but welcome the occasional and the one-off.
- ◆ As a grounding point for this ministry, the appointed person will have the option of being a foundation governor at Trinity School, building on the school's vision of school, community and church

working together for the good of the Town but it is recognised alternative engagement with this and other schools may prove more appropriate.

- ♦ Fostering, with colleagues, the spirit of the pioneer within the existing congregations and encouraging others to share in this ministry.
- ♦ Working ecumenically where possible.

This ministry will be the focus of 70% of this appointment

Affirming the link with the wider work of Portishead Church of England the appointed person will also give 30% of their time to support the more traditional areas of ministry. This will include joining colleagues for the Daily Offices and sharing in weekly staff meetings; affirming the shared nature of our team ministry as described above. Whether it is traditional or pioneer ministry, it is all part of the one mission of the parish for which the clergy team together share joint responsibility.

There needs to be an understanding and flexibility that at times the traditional may need more focus than the pioneering and at others the opposite will be the case. The 70:30 split is to be the overall balance of this appointment but inevitably the balance in particular weeks will vary. However in making this appointment the PCC and Clergy Team commit themselves to ensuring that the needs of existing church life do not end up eroding the time committed to this new ministry. Where necessary additional resources will be discerned to support the demands of traditional church (e.g. training new readers to conduct funerals) rather than distract from the work of the Team Pilgrim. **It is a core pledge in making this appointment that the 70:30 split will not be compromised.**

In agreeing to this re-figuring of the clergy team, the PCC understands it is not enough to appoint a person to an innovative position but that the Church as a whole has to be willing to be innovative and pioneering, open to new ways of being Church for the...

For more information about this innovative post, along with a profile of the parish of Portishead and an application form, please contact the Archdeacon of Bath's PA

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Closing date for applications 6th February 2011