

How is leadership worked out in Ordained Pioneer Ministry and the Permanent Diaconate in comparison with each other and their lay equivalents with reference to their theology basis, effectiveness and their impact for the margins of society?

Overview

Regardless of model or nomenclature the New Testament must be the main point of authentication for church leadership. Steven Croft's seminal work, *Ministry in three dimensions*¹, sets out in an added chapter in the 2008 edition (reprinted in 2016), a chapter on pioneering entitled sustaining and connecting patterns of ministry in a mission-shaped church.

The changes in British society he cites in the 1990s where new ways of being church were explored continues apace in the 2010s with new monasticism and FX and the unstoppable HTB movement compete for spiritual head room with new age spirituality and the search for individual identity. No more evidenced than by the fragmentation of social media and it's polarisation into good (witness the Grenfell Tower outpourings) and bad (Islamic terrorist cells and underage grooming of CSE victims).

OPM found its origins in the church planting report, *Breaking New Ground* in 1993² cited in ³. The follow-on report, *Mission Shaped Church*⁴, saw the fresh expressions of church language and their 12 forms find voice. As Croft says: "it discerns that at the heart of each one is a desire to connect with those who are right outside the current orbit of the churches"⁵ The 2006 House of Bishops report looked at consequences of Mission Shaped Church findings and Ordained Pioneer Ministry was formed as recognising not the ministry but the particular skills and gifts possessed by those seeking Pioneer ordained ministry. Criteria H Mission and Evangelism was added and has been part of all would be ordinands 'required vocation:

Candidates should demonstrate a personal commitment to mission that is reflected in thought, prayer and action. They should show a wide and inclusive understanding of mission and the strategic issues and opportunities within contemporary culture. Candidates should be able to articulate the good news of the Kingdom appropriately in differing contexts and

¹ Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2008).

² Church of England and others, *Breaking New Ground: Church Planting in the Church of England ; a Report Commissioned by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (London: Church House, 1994).

³ Croft, p. 194.

⁴ *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, Mission and Public Affairs (London: Church House Publ, 2004).

⁵ Croft, p. 194.

speak of Jesus Christ in a way that is exciting, accessible, and attractive. They should enable others to develop their vocations as witnesses of the good news. They should show potential as leaders of mission.

The focus on different contexts leads to the expectation that new curates will spend at least 18 months typically engaged in creating and sustaining fresh expressions of church in local settings. The Fresh Expressions movement⁶ is now well developed and hosts national conferences and has extensive resources at its disposal.

OPM leaders take as many forms as their contexts vary. They will however have oversight of a Bishop within the diocese and will have relationships with ministers (lay and ordained) in more traditional settings. One of my fellow students lives in a council estate in Swindon and leads worship in community centres and on the streets

As Croft says⁷: "As I have engaged with the development of Pioneer ministry there seems to be a natural connection between pioneer ministry and the tradition of ministry as *diakonia*" He says that the fresh expressions movement is context rather than template based often with few resources as with Jesus' disciples. How realistic is that with episcopal oversight, legal and safeguarding requirements and a consumer culture that opposes community spirit? Of course the answer is always that God is already at work and we simply seek to join in.

On the subject of Jesus' teaching on leadership:

"And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:1-12 NASB)

As explained in a piece on leadership with a focus on loving others⁸ "The Greek word for leader(s) in Matthew 23:10 is the noun *kathegetes*. It means leader or guide. This word appears nowhere else in the New Testament. Why? Because His disciples obeyed what Jesus told them. Jesus said do not be called Rabbi or leader, do not allow someone to address you with such a title. This scripture warns against using titles associated with teaching (Rabbi, Father, Leader). Jesus clearly said that God is the only one deserving of these distinctions"

⁶ 'Growing Church | Fresh Expressions' <<https://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/home>> [accessed 11 August 2017].

⁷ Croft, p. 201.

⁸ 'Loved by God, Loving Others: The Word Leaders in the New Testament' <<http://love-god-love-others.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/word-leaders-in-new-testament.html>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

The *diakonia* as being sent on a mission (from the sending church) as expounded by John Collins⁹¹⁰ having reinterpreted the New Testament Greek profoundly influenced the Church of England's 2001 "For such a Time as this" report¹¹ describing a renewed and distinctive diaconate. It calls out the difficulties of lack of focus on the diaconal element of a priest and bishops ministry and the exhortation to deacons is very Pioneer orientated: "Deacons can help to bridge the gap between the Church and the needs and questions, the hopes and fears, of people who are not regular churchgoers. Deacons (though not only deacons, of course) are 'go-between' people, linking the Church's worship and teaching with pastoral needs out in the community."

This was supplemented by a report in 2003 by the Bishop of Salisbury (The Distinctive Diaconate¹²). This report calls out the three elements of diaconal ministry: in the church, in the world and on the margins. (see appendix 1).

In many ways Pioneer ministry mirrors many of these attributes but also comes into conflict with the in church expectations especially in an incumbency sense of having to do those things expected by traditional church goers.

Where the distinctive diaconate and OPM diverge is when there is only one minister and no support. You can only be in one place at a time and so being welcoming at the church door (and perhaps upsetting the sidespeople) and preparing for presiding at the Eucharist can be a tough act to achieve. Ideally a team approach means roles and postures are worked out for each of the three areas of church, world and margins. As a recent editorial in the Church Times (see graphic below) stated¹³ "Deacons are not able to preside at the Eucharist, and so cannot be diverted into becoming incumbents or housekeepers of the Church itself. Their focus is outward. Alongside St Stephen, famous deacons include: Phoebe; St Francis of Assisi; Nicholas Ferrar, of the Little Gidding Community; and, arguably, Elizabeth Ferard, the first deaconess in the Church of England.

Unlike Readers, licensed evangelists, and lay pioneer ministers, deacons wear the clerical collar and receive the authority of ordination to help them in their ministry. In their being, as

⁹ John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

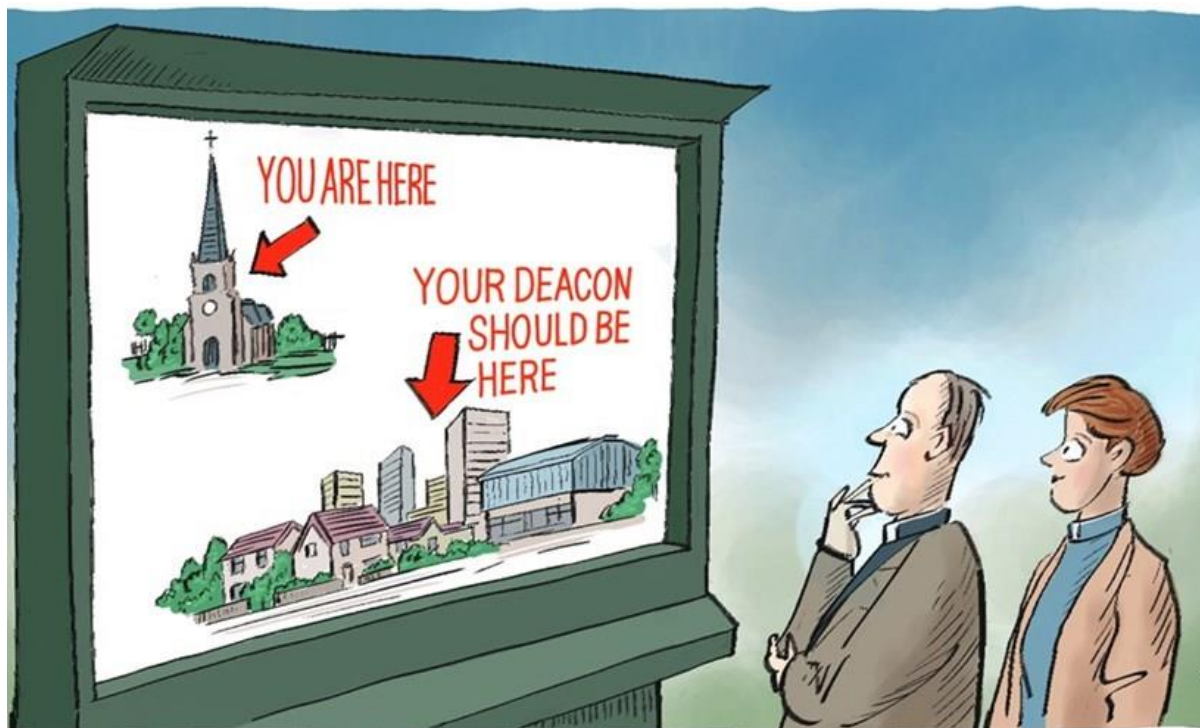
¹⁰ John N. Collins, *Deacons and the Church: Making Connections between Old and New* (Leominster, Herefordshire : Harrisburg, Pa: Gracewing ; Morehouse Pub, 2002).

¹¹ 'For Such a Time as This: A Renewed Diaconate in the Church of England' <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2001/10/news_item2004-10-199719611208.aspx> [accessed 30 August 2017].

¹² Church of England Diocese of Salisbury Board of Ministry, *The Distinctive Diaconate: A Report to the Board of Ministry, the Diocese of Salisbury* (Salisbury: Sarum College Press, 2003).

¹³ 'Parishes Need Deacons beside Their Priests' <<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/13-may/comment/opinion/parishes-need-deacons-beside-their-priests>> [accessed 11 August 2017].

well as their doing, they are widely recognised as conveying Christ to the world, not least to its forgotten places”



I have throughout my formation and calling taken a view that I need to be as accessible as possible to 100% of those God calls to have me minister to. Becoming an ordained permanent deacon means I can wear the collar if that anonymity and authorisation helps or not wear it if it creates a “church door type of barrier”. However not being a priest is limiting even though in times of absolute urgency there are scriptural ways of being disobedient to the ordained ministry”

The lack of resources is another issue for Pioneer ministers and a church able to afford priests and deacons may be thought to be less resource strapped than a fresh expression funded for a time-limited project¹⁴.

Some OPM ministers may have a misplaced sense of a superhero type figure, a danger called out by Paul Bradbury¹⁵: “Pioneers can be just as prone to [superhero tendencies] as anyone else” and “I would joke that the title ‘pioneer minister’ had a superhero ring to it, that I would need a Lycra suit with a big P on the front”. Are permanent deacons prone to this also? It is a calling not very widely known about (based on conversations with fellow

¹⁴ Paul Bradbury, *Stepping into Grace*. (Place of publication not identified: Brf (The Bible Reading Fe, 2016), p. 42.

¹⁵ Bradbury, p. 87.

ordinands) and not widely followed. At the Bishops Advisory Panel I attended in 2015 the advisors had never before to scrutinize a would-be permanent deacon.

The distinctive diaconate is small in the Church of England with only some 150 to 200 permanent deacons, with several dioceses having none. The Diaconal Association of the Church of England (DACE) founded in 1988, DACE was a small charitable organisation which exists to provide support to the estimated 150 distinctive deacons in the Church of England but folded in early 2017. For would-be priests, having just one year as deacon is not enough when there is so much to grapple with in a new curacy not least local politics and technology. The exhortation that the diaconate is “A Full and Equal Order¹⁶” seems to be lost to many priests and theological colleges. The training for ordinands pays little attention to the diaconal element of their future ministry and none to the distinctive diaconate. There is still an ingrained belief that deacons are somehow passive (seeking out the marginalised and helping people to connect with church is tough, painstaking work though!).

However all the three elements of ministry will be needed to be exercised depending on the context and skills of the minister, ordained or not. As Croft says¹⁷: “the balance and movement between these three poles or dimensions of ministry will change and evolve over a lifetime...some will be more gifted and called to work primarily in establishing new communities and pioneering fresh expressions of church” We must as Rosalind Brown says¹⁸ “be able to hold an intelligible conversation with cultures with whom we cannot otherwise identify”

The diaconate is well established in other countries including Lutheran outreach based churches in Scandinavia¹⁹ where it has often been associated with the ministry of women. Permanent deacons are common in the Catholic Church since being restored by the second Vatican Council²⁰ and more so with Orthodox churches though with a more liturgical interpretation..

¹⁶ James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate--a Full and Equal Order: A Comprehensive and Critical Study of the Origin, Development, and Decline of the Diaconate in the Context of the Church's Total Ministry and a Proposal for Renewal* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), p. 145.

¹⁷ Croft, p. 208.

¹⁸ Rosalind Brown, *Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Pub, 2005), p. 27.

¹⁹ Church of England Diocese of Salisbury Board of Ministry, p. 50.

²⁰ Catholic Church and others, *The Permanent Diaconate: Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons : Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons : Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1998).

Servant leadership may seem very Christ-like (Mathew 20:26-28 NRSV) : “but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” This model has been the subject of many works expounded judicious use of leader power²¹ but not all believe in this approach [add ref].

The various types of leadership models²² (military style, CEO, coach and poet-gardener) of top down etc., are useful. However the question of obedience to the episcopate are challenging: how can a context sensitive pioneer or deacon both react to the context and be obedient? How does obedience fit into episcopal models? The undefended leader series²³ gives strategies for dealing with different situations and cites world leaders including Christ as examples.

It would seem that in 2017 as if Pioneer ministry is still in ascendancy while the permanent diaconate is in decline partly because the training for the latter is the same as for priests and ego and fulfilment as well as the higher chance of stipendiary priesthoods is a real factor in making decisions. The ordination service for deacons is a helpful reminder but all too soon most become priests with *cursus honorum* being an issue again now despite the brief renaissance of the permanent diaconate in the 1990s and 2000s.

Lay equivalents of diaconate in Readers who have the same church duties and restrictions as permanent ordained deacons may seem to cause conflict. However a calling and the authorisation mean individuals need to decide where God wants them to be.

How effective are Pioneers and permanent deacons? It is hard to be categorical about deacons as being so few in number and now lacking their DACE charity there is little central data collection. And of course effectiveness cannot be measured purely financially or numerically. In terms of Pioneer effectiveness [add data xxx]

In terms on the relative impact on those on the margins of society, there is little published research in this area. While all churches and other charities have a huge impact as government's support recedes in cost-cutting programmes²⁴ and effectively subsidise the

²¹ Robert K. Greenleaf and Larry C. Spears, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 25th anniversary ed (New York: Paulist Press, 2002).

²² 'When Parents Disagree on How to Raise Their Child - Growing Leaders' <<https://growingleaders.com/blog/parents-disagree-raise-child/>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

²³ Simon P Walker, *Leading out of Who You Are: Discovering the Secret of Undefended Leadership 1* (Carlisle: Piquant, 2007).

²⁴ 'Two-Thirds of Charities Subsidising Public Sector Contracts to Survive | Society | The Guardian' <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/may/19/two-thirds-charities-subsidising-public-sector-contracts-survive>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

public sector, getting impact data of Pioneer projects on those in the margins tends to be anecdotal and based on individual case studies such as Male's book on how to Pioneer²⁵.

Church of England statistics lump together fresh expressions and regular forms of worship. Also there is no reliable source for the number of Fresh Expression or Pioneer ministers.

The data on various Fresh Expressions' projects²⁶ includes a 2010 study showing 1000 fresh expressions in 40 dioceses and 30,000 people attended a fresh expression church who would not have attended otherwise. The Methodist fresh expression movement showed around 5% of the 220,000 church attendances in 2015 were fresh expressions²⁷. There are currently (2016) in excess of 3000 Fresh Expressions in the United Kingdom, which are attended by 20 000 people²⁸. Data on sustainability of fresh expressions makes grim reading also. A survey of 57 stories of new churches since 1999 showed that every three churches where the founder left and things continued well, two went to the wall²⁹.

In conclusion the rarity of permanent deacons, despite the scriptural and ordained imperatives in both surprising and disappointing. It is to be hoped that building on the work of John Collins and Steven Croft that the synergy and overlap between pioneering fresh expressions and the diaconate, distinctive or otherwise with complementary lay leadership roles can inspire generations to come to take up sent and loving service to those for whom church has no meaning today.

²⁵ David Male, *How to Pioneer: Even If You Haven't a Clue*, 2016.

²⁶ 'Tried and Tested Resources – Fresh Expressions' <<http://freshexpressions.org.uk/resources-3/tried-and-tested-resources/>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

²⁷ 'The Methodist Church in Britain | Overview' <<http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/statistics-for-mission/overview>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

²⁸ 'The Filling Station as a Fresh Expression of Church for Consideration in the Local Congregational Context: A Practical-Theological Investigation' <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222017000400009> [accessed 30 August 2017].

²⁹ Andy Milne and Michael Moynagh, *The DNA of Pioneer Ministry*, 2016.