

## **The CMS Certificate in Pioneer Mission: Yr 1 May 2019 – March 2020**

### **Introduction**

Launching the CMS Certificate marked a significant moment in the life of the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The Certificate added an outward-facing course in contextual, cross-cultural mission to the existing suite of courses which are focused more on building up the body of Christ than on connecting with those beyond its boundaries. The distinctive ethos of the course is reflected in its structure of the course and methodology, and also in the experimental nature of some of the module leadership. With the launch of the course we all set out on an adventure together; we have learned much, sadly lost a few of our fellow travellers en route, shared some life-transforming moments, and I expect we will finish the journey as changed people with an enlarged vision and expanded capacity for enabling mission in our localities.

The support Andrea offered in advance of the course putting stepping stones down made the whole process much smoother than it might have been and helped us avoid any major early mistakes. I want to thank her for her unstinting practical and moral support through the year. I am also amazed at God's provision in sending the Evangelism and Pioneer Team an administrator in Emma Bartlett with extensive experience in supporting students at Bath University, who took on the practical and administrative aspects of the role with expertise and added value at every stage.

### **Recruitment**

In true entrepreneurial style we started without having all the plans in place – that's why we're convening the Rumpus Meet (also known as the Implementation Group) half-way through the initial course.

We did very little intentional recruitment work. I had some contacts already and got in touch with those people; we devised a flyer (see attached for details of the course structure and content) and took it with us to various events – Deanery Synod, Messy Church Hubs etc. The Celebration of Lay Ministries was another opportunity to make people aware of what was happening.

We had concrete interest from some 24 candidates who all turned up for the Taster on a snow day (when everything else in Wells and the surrounding areas was cancelled). I thought it was a good sign when all the applicants made it – true signs of resourcefulness, courage and an adven-



Taster Day Jan 2019 The Old Deanery Wells

turous spirit. Some had come a long way (including Andrea who had a pretty scary ride down back lanes of Somerset). Andrea and I led the Taster Day which included an outline of the course in the morning, and playing the Mission Possible game in the afternoon.

Of the 24 people on the Taster Day 20 people completed application forms of whom 2 were not accepted on the course having no connection to a home church. 2 people joined in the week before the course started, having heard about it from friends at the last minute.

2 of the attendees provisionally registered for the 2020-2019 course judging they did not have capacity at the time. In total 20 people were accepted onto the course which was almost double our target figure.

It was exciting to have so many people starting the course which gave it a real buzz in the beginning. We focused at the Taster Day on the module weekends, and didn't flag up sufficiently the requirement to meet in small groups in the intervening months. We didn't organize these groups either until after the first module. I hadn't recruited small group facilitators, so that had to be done on the hoof. Two people dropped out after the first module; one said she had decided she wasn't a pioneer; the other was a pioneer ordinand and over-committed.

### **Small groups**

When we did organize the small groups we appointed four excellent facilitators in Mark Fuller, Dylan Barker, Diana Greenfield and Tracey Hallett placed at geographically convenient locations around the Diocese. Unfortunately Dylan's group in Weston-super-Mare never really took off as the three students from Weston-super-Mare struggled to make it a priority and a fourth member suffered from a period of ill-health. The other groups have developed strong supportive cultures as time has gone on with Tracey's group aligning itself with the Taunton Pioneer Hotspot.

### **Reflections from the recruitment process:**

- ◆ We need a stronger emphasis on the time commitment required to complete the course including the need to attend small group meetings and to examine whether they have the time and/or study and organizational skills to juggle all the requirements
- ◆ Do we need more basic criteria for those joining? Do they have to be in the Diocese? In a home church? Is this restrictive for the more innovative 'fresh start' pioneers?
- ◆ Do we need to recruit small group leaders in advance despite the travelling implications? How do we support the small group leaders and to what extent should they follow the rubrics for the meetings and to what extent be free to follow their instincts?
- ◆ Do we need a more intentional comms strategy for recruitment? How do we engage more people in making the course more widely known and available?

### **Module 1: Pioneer Mission**

Andrea and Jonny Baker co-led the Pioneer Mission module. It was based in Wells and contrasted the formal traditional ways of being church with emerging ones and investigated the kind of spirituality practised by visitors to Cathedrals and to holy wells and ancient pagan sites. It introduced the concept of culture and the need for missionaries to cross cultures. Highlights of the weekend were the three very different experiences of worship, including a visit to the Palace Gardens, and a shared meal in the evening around a single table.





Andrea led worship St Andrews Well in the Bishop's Palace Gardens with the cathedral bells ringing madly alongside. Students found the worship invigorating, exciting and in some cases theologically challenging. One student couldn't pay attention to anything else all day as God spoke so profoundly as she sat by the well in the sunshine.

A couple of students struggled to engage with the presentational style of the module which raised interesting questions about our teaching approaches and learning profiles of students. Subsequent conversations led to the discovery of a training company called 'Genius Within' who help trainers understand the learning needs of the differently abled—those whose brains are wired in a different, often more creative—way than those in the mainstream. Some time later one of these students told me that learning programmes make small adaptations 'to accommodate people like me' but it is not enough to allow full access. The programmes need to be designed from a different start-point if they are to be accessible to the kind of people who can pioneer into environments where people live who are not 'successful learners' in the existing educational system. We asked the next module leader to facilitate her module in a way that might help kinaesthetic and active learners, and people with ADHD and dyslexia engage more easily.



At the end of the Saturday, most people were exhausted. We shared stories after dinner, but for some this was a bridge too far! Some stayed over in Sue Rose's house, and shared impressions and stories. There were a few wobbles on this module, people asking 'Am I really a pioneer?' There was also lots of really positive feedback. This is just one example: *Fantastic first weekend of our Pioneer Certificate course.*

## **Reflections on Module 1:**

- ◆ How does the Bath and Wells CMS Certificate course create equality in learning for those with non-book backgrounds, neurodiverse learning profiles, and active and kinaesthetic learning styles?
- ◆ How do we support people in developing study skills, particularly those who have not had a lot of experience in managing study alongside work, or haven't done Level 3 work before?
- ◆ How do we reap all the benefits of intensive time together for our students (shared learning, mutual support, gaining from diversity) without exhausting them and making the demands unmanageable? Should Saturday evenings be optional? Free but strongly encouraged?
- ◆ Emma and I have pencilled in a day in advance of the course for those who have been accepted—partly to train them in the use of Moodle (an online learning environment) if they don't know how to use it. We will also try to share our learning and the learning of other students on how to surf the waves of the course.
- ◆ In the process of preparing for this Module we realised some of the candidates would need to borrow copies of the main text, not buy them. We have bought four copies for each module since but are working towards using chapters of books (if at all) rather than whole books where possible.

## **Module 2: Bible in Context**

This took place in St Barnabas' Church, Southdown, in Bath, where the newly appointed project pioneer, Rachel Spence, joined us for much of the time. It was led superbly by Diana Greenfield who had taken seriously the need for variety of activity in a content-heavy module. Some of us stayed over on the Saturday night at the Bath YMCA and enjoyed playing 'Pionopoly', a game one of the students had designed on a familiar theme to map her context (a learning outcome from Module 1). The Sunday morning was memorable for all who were privileged to be present as groups of students shared their faith stories with extraordinary creativity and vulnerability.

Three students weren't able to attend this module because of other commitments. Two didn't come back on the Sunday having become ill on Saturday evening.

### **Ways to demonstrate learning**

We had wanted to allow students to show what they had learnt from each module in a way that came naturally to them and allowed them to do their best. After Modules 1 and 2 we received some thoughtful and thorough written reflections. We also received some innovative pieces in the style of a series of tweets, a series of postcards, YouTube videos, hand-drawn collages, maps and designs, and a game. For Module 2 students were asked to present a known Bible story in a culturally appropriate way. I have attached an example of one of these from James Kendall so you can see an example of the kind of work we received, and here is a link to a video from Lindsay Smith on her Module 1 book review: [https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCp\\_IM0D2nZh9fC1bacuIKpQ](https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCp_IM0D2nZh9fC1bacuIKpQ)

We asked students to complete the work which demonstrated their learning by the start date of the next module. This gave them the opportunity to talk through ideas in their small groups with time to complete the work afterwards. Predictably, some submitted their work early, some on time, some late and some not at all... Chasing the work has been a role Emma has undertaken patiently but it is time-consuming.



Andrea gave written feedback on all the Module 1 pieces regardless of when they arrived. It was helpful and aimed at encouraging students and directing them to ways they could improve their practice further.

We have not yet received feedback from Diana. The bulky nature of some of the more creative pieces can make it tricky to deliver them to the person who is giving feedback on the assignments!

At this point in the course we began to realise we were dealing with normal human beings who are not always consistent and all different.

### **Reflections from Module 2:**

- ♦ What do we do if a person cannot attend a module? Particularly this early on?
- ♦ How do we record sickness?
- ♦ How much of the course— modules, parts of module weekends, small group meetings, work submitted demonstrating learning—does a student need to participate in to be considered to have completed the course?
- ♦ How do we show grace, and build the course around the needs of those who find formal learning a challenge, while continuing to honour those who fulfil all the requirements of the course, and enabling those who will lead Christian communities demonstrate the values of reliability and commitment needed in such leaders?

### **Module 3**

Module 3 was held in Weston-super-Mare led by John Wheatley of the Bournville Streetspace team and CMS Youth Pioneer course. The course was on reflective practice, called 'Doing Theology'. It made full use of various venues in Bournville so participants got a good feel for life in a new context. We began in the bandstand of the local park looking at the different lenses we see through in our lives. This built on material from the previous module but meant those who had missed it were already somewhat behind.



We moved from there to the local allotments—it was a glorious morning—to jump on a trampoline and consider gardening metaphors for Steven Bevens Models of Contextual Theology.

The teaching showed imagination and variety but on the second day it appeared that the challenge of thinking in a culturally contextual way, using metaphor, and imagining new ways of being church was proving a challenge to some of the students. It was enlivening for those already on the fringes, but threatening for those brought up in environments with strong cultures of right and wrong ways to think, do and be. On the second morning there was a challenge too to understand in a deeper way what pioneer mission was, which I tried to develop sitting with a few people in the bandstand when the others had gone home. It was combined with a protest that parish-based learners—Readers, for example—could not attend Sunday mornings on key festivals eg Remembrance Sunday and Mothering Sunday if modules fell on those dates.

Six students did not attend Module 4. Four of them did not let us know in advance or explain why later, despite my visiting one or two of the vulnerable students in situ to understand their context and concerns better and find out how to support them. In the meantime Emma and I devised a structure of messages to send out weekly to all participants by email advising students what to be putting in place to enable them to complete one module and be prepared for the next. This was aimed at those who were missing deadlines and coming to modules unprepared.

### **Reflections on Module 3:**

- ♦ I think perhaps learners at this stage and level—particularly if they have a narrow church experience may find Bevans too complex. Would a brief explanation of two or three of the main models do the same job just as well?
- ♦ Would we allow people from a similar background to those who appear to have dropped out to join the next cohort?
- ♦ How do we enable people to communicate with us in the way that is most fitting for their way of life? Eg. Whatsapp, Facebook, text, phone? We prioritise email which suits our needs and skills...
- ♦ Would better study skills, communication methods, introduction to the demands of the course, learning styles have enabled those who have dropped out to stay in? Or did they benefit as much as they were able?
- ♦ Should we generally aim to admit the fresh start style pioneers? Or keep the gate wide and see who benefits? One of those who 'wobbled' in Module 1 wrote a passionate piece for Module 3 on Emile Sande's 'Read all about it' and included a testimony on all she had learnt from the course which was having a hugely positive impact on how she was going about engaging with her community (I have included this too as an attachment for your information if you have time to read it!)

### **Module 4**

There were twelve students at the Missional Spirituality course plus Emma, myself, Tracey Hallett who was hosting in West Monckton C of E School and is the Hub Animator, Sarah Sanderson a pioneer ordinand who was visiting for the module, James Fox Robinson who we hope will be able to be module facilitator for the next cohort, and Fran Smettem the chaplain. On the Sunday morning a few left to take Remembrance Day services. The feel of the module was quiet and intimate, led by Ian Adams in contemplative style. The tone was similar throughout but Ian's mode is easy and conversational, left lots of space for others to contribute, and was backed up with acts of worship and beautiful photographs and poetry (all Ian's!). It was hosted with personal hospitality by the team of the South Quantock benefice where the Rector is a veteran pioneer and accommodator/advocate, Paul Elliston is a Project pioneer

and Tracey is pioneer curate. Tina continued the tradition of holding an experimental, simple act of Holy Communion at the end of each Saturday either as part of the shared evening meal or at the end of the last learning session. James led a very lateral 'Dr Seuss' themed worship to set us off on Saturday and



Lindsay Smith led creative worship on Sunday 'bringing the outdoors in'.

The module had a different feel with fewer of the original cohort present, but an enriching group of fellow travellers. Fran was in demand with people wanting to share stuff relating to the course and issues in their personal lives. This confirmed the need for a chaplain to the course.. Students were invited to show what they'd learnt by sharing with the module leader spiritual practices in body, mind and spirit.

#### Reflections on Module 4:

- ◆ This seems to be the point at which the survivors 'fused' into a cohesive group that has the potential to stay in contact and provide support and share learning beyond the lifetime of the course
- ◆ The three thriving small groups reported their most fruitful meeting yet
- ◆ The space in this module allowed for some deep God-encounters
- ◆ We have shared some of our learning with the other Hubs— engaging with neurodiversity, weekly emails, a possible study skills day...
- ◆ How might this module have been slightly more active?



#### The story continues...

...on January 18th and 19th when I will have my work cut out to provide the kind of high-quality accessible module facilitation offered by the others.

Despite some setbacks, mistakes, errors and sadly some students opting out of the course on the way, I feel the course is enabling more missional thinking to be disseminated across parts of the Diocese wherever someone has participated in this course. It is obvious how much some people have grown: in confidence, in being themselves, in growing more deeply into God, in breaking out of old mission paradigms, in embracing their innate creativity. Consequently I am eager to learn from our experience this far and recruit another group as soon as possible—also to communicate what has happened here and celebrate it as widely as possible so the culture of pioneering can be sustained and embedded in the Diocese.

Tina Hodgett January 2020