

PIONEERING

Is This The Greatest Show



A series of posters
and reflections on
pioneering



PIONEERING



THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

The Greatest Show On Earth?

Pioneering has always been about working on the fringes, the outskirts of church and society. Perhaps the circus is an appropriate metaphor in the sense that pioneers 'perform' in a different way, creating new community and finding innovative mission opportunities...

However, there's a dark side to pioneering as there is perhaps in the life of the circus; the constant change, the social stigma, financial concerns...

In what ways does the institutionalisation of pioneering mean that we are no longer 'the greatest show'?

In what ways might 'the greatest show' metaphor be positive?

In what ways are pioneers 'put on show'? Is this helpful or a hindrance to our ministry?

How are you expected to 'perform' in terms of measuring success?

PIONEERING

DREAMING

WITH YOUR

EYES WIDE

OPEN

Life is
circus.

100

1875

circus

Eyes Wide Open

Often we begin the pioneer journey full of great ideas and energy and zeal for our local community or growing the church in new ways or whatever your motivations are...

It doesn't take long for the energy to be exhausted, the expectations to mount and the issues of the community to bring us to the brink.

How can you keep the original dream alive?

Are you engaging with your community in a way that means your eyes are open to what God is doing?

How can you set aside some time to daydream about what ministry and mission looks like in your context?

How can you encourage your volunteers, your colleagues, those you work with to also dream with their eyes wide open to opportunities?

PIONEER VOCATION



Unique Persons

We all want to feel special. Perhaps the title of pioneer has the feel of uniqueness? There is perhaps a sense that we are the gifted ones, the chosen for our time, the ones who will really make a difference...

This is a dangerous road on which to travel and pioneering may be a longer term sustainable model if we become aware that God calls everyone to something and we as pioneers need to encourage the gifts of everyone around us—to question the traditional control and power structures within the church...

Are you aware of how God might be calling everyone around you?

How do you not only recognise the gifts of others but give them opportunities to use them?

In what ways can you positively question the power structures you work in?

Can you model a different way of leadership?

FREAK SHOW



WONDERS
OF THE
WORLD

ARE YOU
CONTEXTUALLY
MISSIONAL?

PIONEER PERCEPTION?

Freaks

The perception of pioneers has not always be a positive one. This may be changing but there is still much work to be done in helping people to understand what a pioneer is and what we do.

For some pioneers, being part of the freakshow is a totally contextual way to be missional. But not everyone is working in this context and we need to be increasingly aware of the broadening spectrum of pioneering (as the institution understands it and beyond).

Do you feel the 'freakshow' is a negative or positive way to look at pioneering?

Who are the 'freaks' in your context who you might / should be engaging with?

What are your biblical / theological reflections on being art of the 'freakshow'?

In what way can we model Godly hospitality to those the church does not engage well with?

Pioneering
might bring
out

THE
CIRCUS
GIRL

in you...



The Circus Girl

Pioneering is not only a journey in ministry but also in self-reflection, in reflexive practice, in soul searching within our own spiritual journey.

As we journey down the winding path of pioneering , we need to be aware of our own understanding and skills etc. This is perhaps a journey in which God has the opportunity to draw new and exciting things out of our very being, who God made us to be that are yet to surface...

What new knowledge, experiences or skills have you gained through pioneering?

How do you incorporate self-reflection as part of your pioneer journey?

Can you prayerfully identify anything new God is drawing out of you?

What might the 'circus girl' look like in your life if it was truly allowed to emerge?

THE
WALLS

can't
STOP US

STOP
NOW

pioneering



The walls Can't Stop Us Now

There are many barriers we might meet in our pioneering ministry. Some may be institutional such as finance, data collection, expectations etc. Others though feel more personal; lack of understanding from a supervisor, diminishing support from volunteers, the disgruntled vicar... Then of course there are the emotionally taxing issues that arise within the actual pioneering work itself.

Yet, this can also be seen as a hugely positive quote that speaks of our work outside of the traditional church setting or speaks of the innovative or entrepreneurial way we work.

Does this phrase feel positive or negative to you?

What are some of the barriers you are currently facing?

What are some of the walls you don't miss?

What are some of the walls you have the opportunity to remove for people?

PHONOGRAPH

YOU MAKE IT LOOK EASY!



W. B. M.

You Make It Look Easy

To pioneers, working on the fringes often comes quite naturally. As we invite others to be involved it can be daunting—like walking through the looking glass into a new world of mission.

This new world can be confusing as it is so different from what they may have known before and it can bring up questions that are much broader than the pioneering work you do.

How can you equip volunteers to take up the mantle of pioneering, to engage with a new ethos?

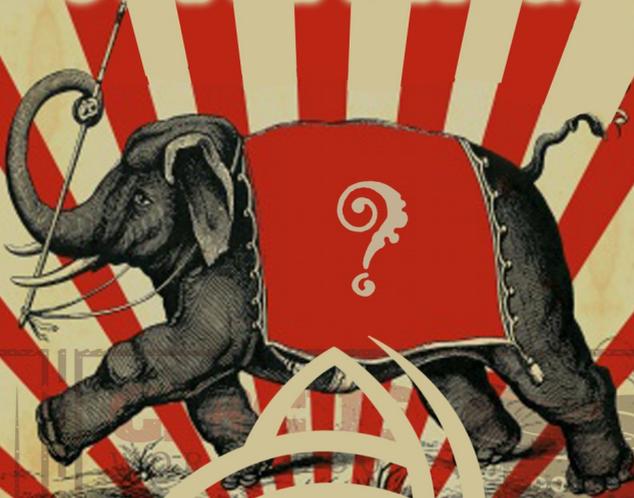
How can you provide opportunities to explore the questions this new ethos might bring up?

How can you make the journey through the looking glass feel less daunting for people?

What is your retort when someone says ‘you make it look easy!’?

PIONEERING

THE GIFT OF
NOT FITTING IN



ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



The Gift Of Not Fitting In

In its advertising for their pioneer mission training, Church Mission Society uses the tagline ‘the gift of not fitting in’. This has been a battle cry for many pioneers and a really helpful way to frame their call, vocation or ministry.

Yet—we do need to fit in, we need to belong, we need to be part of the larger whole. We need to recognise that what we do usually falls into a wider picture of ‘church’ or ministry or mission.

It what way is this phrase helpful to you?

How can you justify this sense with the universal need to belong?

What biblical / theological reflections might you have on this phrase?

How does this ‘gift’ fit with the others God has given you to use in ministry / mission?

BODY SOUL SPIRIT

FORTUNE TELLER



Contextual Pioneering

Fortune Teller

As we seek to engage in contextually relevant ways, pioneers sometimes cross lines that others within the church feel are difficult, confusing or just downright inappropriate.

However, if we believe God works in everything, is already present in every context (as pioneer experience has shown) then it seems that we should continue to develop resources and ways to engage with the fringes of culture.

How do we combat the lack of understanding around working on the fringes of culture?

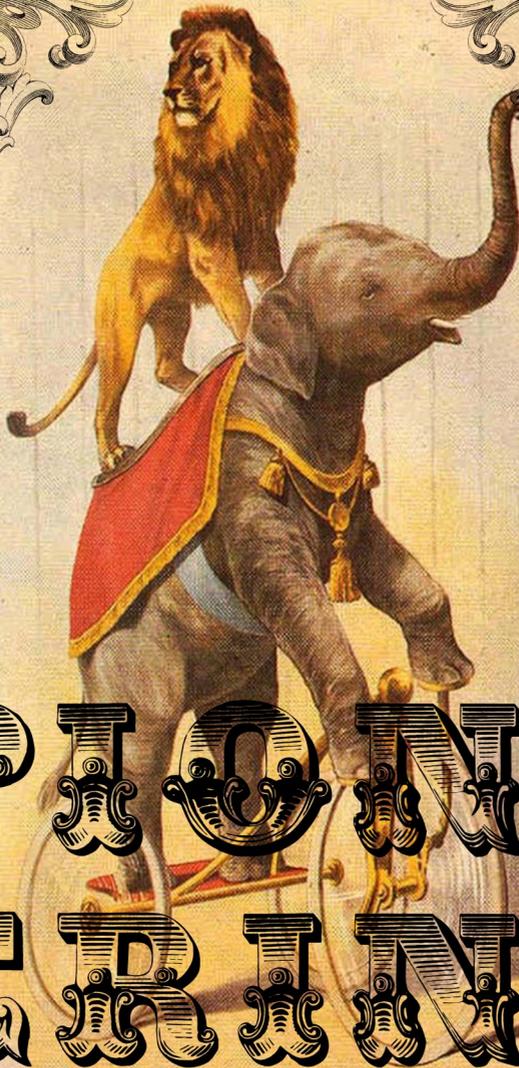
Is there helpful language emerging that we might use to define what we do?

Are you taking enough risks in the people you choose to be pioneering with?

How willing are you to take up the call to be misunderstood by the church and to engage in grass roots, contextual mission?



What Does
This Image
Speak Into
Your
Pioneering?



**P I O N E
E R I N G**

THE GREAT BALANCING ACT

The Great Balancing Act

Life is a balancing act. And you would have thought that might put us in a good position to understand the rigors of pioneer ministry, yet it still seems to come as a shock...

We have to balance all sorts of external and internal expectations, practicalities, problems and opportunities too. It can be hugely uplifting but also take us to the depths of despair...

What are the different elements you are trying to balance?

What help could you be asking for to support you with the great balancing act?

Can you prayerfully identify anything 'internal' that is not currently balanced?

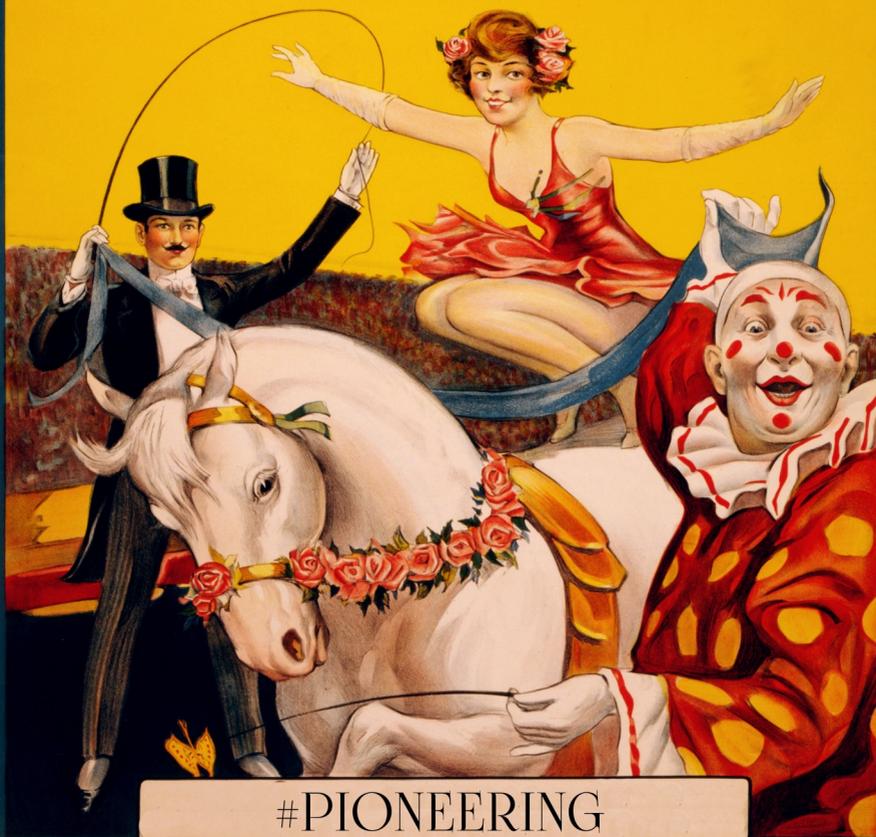
What are the opportunities you are having to balance?

what if we

REWRITE

THE

STARS



#PIONEERING

Rewrite The Stars

In 'The Greatest Showman' there is a relationship that develops across class and racial boundaries. They don't feel like its written in the stars for them to be together and a song emerges around rewriting the stars.

In pioneering we too find these sorts of boundaries that need crossing - class, gender, sexuality, socio-economic, race etc.

What are the stars that you may need to rewrite in your context?

Are there any boundaries that you need to address in your own life, to seek healing or reconciliation?

What are the ways that we can help the institution of the church to rewrite the stars?

What are the societal issues that we might have a hand in rewriting the stars of?

PIONEERING

im not
SCARED
to be seen
I MAKE NO
APOLOGIES
this is me...

I'm Not Scared

It can be nerve wracking to embark on a pioneering journey. Especially if what you do (which can often equate to who you are) is so readily misunderstood or undermined.

As a pioneer you need to be pretty thick skinned, ready to make few apologies for who you are and what you do. You have to be ready to share the mantra 'this is me'...

What might this phrase mean to you in a practical way?

Are there ways in which the pioneering community could be better at supporting each other to share this message?

How can you avoid being apologetic for what you do and turn those conversations into positive encounters?

How do we have/grow the conviction in ourselves that what God has called us to is ok, that we're not frauds?



PIONEERING
PRESENTS

church
as you've never
seen it before

CIRCUS

**ALL
NEW
ACTS**

**50
PIECE BAND**



**IT'LL TAKE YOU TO
THE OTHER SIDE**

The Other Side

Being involved in pioneering takes you to a different place, you might say 'the other side'. For some the other side might be a new way of being missional or a new form of church or a new type of spirituality.

'the other side' comes with its share of challenges but often a new found freedom in expression and ability to communicate in a relevant and authentic way...

What does 'the other side' look like for you personally?

What is 'the other side' you are trying to engage the wider church in?

In what way are you metaphorically inviting people to 'the other side'?

In what ways is it helpful or unhelpful to define pioneering as 'the other side'?

A
MILLION
DREAMS

for the

WORLD

WE'RE GONNA

MAKE

#pioneering

A Million Dreams

In 'The Greatest Showman' there is a theme that runs throughout the film around having a million dreams. It speaks into the need for; resilience, for new or innovative ideas, for taking risks, for always forging ahead...

If you are someone who thrives on 'the new', what Belbin's personality type calls a 'Plant' then pioneering can afford you the opportunity for creativity. However, many projects require a longer term approach and require a change of skills during the project.

How would you define the world you are trying to make?

How does this phrase speak into your process of not giving up, of being resilient and committed?

How do we articulate and share the dreams we have?

How do we engage with the need for different skills during the lifetime of a pioneer project when so many pioneers are deployed as individuals?

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