FINGERS CROSSED

developments, lessons learnt and challenges after eight years of pioneering

January 2017
The pioneering that comes from the Protestant Church is formed with many partner organisations. They support the pioneering either in its vision, organisationally or financially.

MORE INFORMATION IN DUTCH VIA WWW.LERENPIONIEREN.NL/OPHOOPVANZEGEN
Keeping our fingers crossed

Many things that have happened within a stretch of eight years! Since Rev Pieter Versloot coached the first pioneering places with patience, the movement of missionary pioneering has accelerated - to our own surprise. We experience this blessing as the Spirit of God at work in the church.

These developments are encouraging. Since 2013 84 pioneering places have been set up or are in development. Previously seven pioneering locations made a start. Now more than ten thousand people are involved in a pioneering place, of which a quarter was a regular participant. Approximately half of these people didn’t have any recent church involvement.

Pioneering creates mixed feelings of both joy and worry. Perhaps the same feelings that the Wright Brothers felt with their first attempts at flying. Joy because we see that people who had no connection with the church or had lost their connection are being touched by God’s love. We see, against the trend, that new churches are coming into being. There is worry too, because how long will these ‘airplanes’ stay in the air? Are they sustainable? Many pioneering initiatives are still fragile.

Quite a few pioneering places have started by now. Whilst this movement will not turn the tide of church decline, pioneering has become more than just a hobby or pastime for a few enthusiasts. We believe that it is realistic to expect that ten percent of the faith communities within the Protestant Church will be pioneering places in the near future. Will these “networklike” initiatives find a space and an enabling environment within our institutional church? And how? Much work is still to be done.

Will you rub shoulders in prayer with the pioneering teams? Also in seeking wisdom for the road that lies ahead? Keeping our fingers crossed!

On behalf of the national pioneering team, Martijn Vellekoop, coordinator
Several denominations began with pioneering before the Protestant Church began planning for it. For the past eight years the Protestant Church has supported pioneering, in the hope that more people will discover the value of the gospel. And in the hope that pioneering will be a fresh source of inspiration for existing local parishes.

FIRST GENERATION OF PIONEERING PLACES
The first generation of pioneering places started in areas where no church existed, such as in large new housing developments. We think of CrossPoint in Nieuw-Vennep, De Binnenwaaei in Amsterdam (IJburg), and Boei90 in The Hague (Wateringseveld). Not very long after that Kerk op de Kop in Rotterdam, Nijkleaster in Jorwerd and the internet church MijnKerk.nl started. In 2014, a qualitative research was undertaken into four first generation pioneering places, in order to learn future lessons.

The research identified two important conclusions:
1. Sunday celebrations take an essential position in these pioneering places. However, these Sunday celebrations turn out to have less ‘missionary potential’ than weekday activities, but to (Christian) volunteers and peripheral church attenders, these celebrations certainly matter.
2. Financially and organisationally it is not feasible to have a church grow towards independence within three years. More time and lighter concepts of church are needed.

SECOND GENERATION OF PIONEERING PLACES
At the end of 2012, the synod of the Protestant Church decided to establish another one hundred pioneering places. Thus, creating room for a second generation of pioneering places. The first step was nationwide, in thirty places from Goes to Scheemda, to hold special days to identify support and potential for pioneering.

New expressions of being church often result in embracing dozens of people rather than hundreds. This is why a paid minister for every pioneering place is unaffordable. Enthusiastic volunteers are increasingly playing a larger role in the pioneering. And so, over the years, we grow in our learning.

As we look at these developments, we see a development from classic church planting towards contextual and ‘lighter’ working methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST GENERATION (BEFORE 2013)</th>
<th>SECOND GENERATION (2013 ONWARDS)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No church present (geographically)</td>
<td>For non-churchgoers (sociologically)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Largely initiated by national church</td>
<td>National church supporting local initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>With paid theologians</td>
<td>Focus on teams with volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited support of pioneers</td>
<td>Training and support for teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick start of Sunday celebrations</td>
<td>Starting point is listening, loving and serving</td>
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<td>Subsidies up to €100,000 per annum</td>
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“In a secular culture, the church is challenged to a new candour and frankness when it comes to beliefs and talking about God. Longing back to previous ‘more Christian times’ doesn’t help.”

Church 2025: Where there is Word, there is a way
In practice

De Haven: for everyone in the neighbourhood

“A place where everyone in the neighbourhood can meet” is what De Haven wants to be as a pioneering place in the Utrecht neighbourhood of Kanaleneiland, where three out of four people are from non-Western backgrounds.

Rev. Marius van Duijn is part of the team of pioneers. “We started with more traditional gatherings, but soon started up a course to see what really matches with the neighbourhood and what typifies De Haven. Each member of the pioneering team was given opportunities to have his or her say in the course. The outcome was that we knew what we stood for at De Haven. This is not to get the neighbourhood into church, but to be church in the neighbourhood. With our mission statement, ‘More of Jesus in Kanaleneiland’, we search for new expressions to be Christians in our own environment. Out of prayer, the longing grew to be open and to be focussed on the neighbourhood. Some of us help our neighbours with their shopping, or offer language courses.”

Slowly, but steadily the team, first consisting of well-educated white Christians, gained more colour, literally and figuratively.

“Everyone is welcome: Christian or Muslim, believer or not, young and old,” explains Wilma Wolswinkel, member of the pioneering team. “We’re open every Sunday afternoon from half past three. The first hour is meant for ‘coffee house’. From half past four, on the first Sunday of the month, there’s a meal; the other Sundays there’s a Bible reading or Share Your Bible Story and a follow-up discussion. We have become a community of all sorts of people that don’t fit together at all at first sight. But we enjoy it, and notice that it has an appeal to others.”

Harmen van der Kolk, member of the General Church Council of the Protestant Church Utrecht, sees the impact De Haven has on other local parishes. “They’re eager to know what De Haven does and are considering renewal themselves.”

www.dehaven-kanaleneiland.nl

A video of De Haven and other pioneering places can be viewed on www.protestantskerk.nl/pionieren.
The Pioneering Places

The aim of the Protestant Church was to have started up some one hundred new pioneering places by the end of 2016. Starting in 2013, 84 initiatives have been established, or are well on their way in their preparations. We have discovered that the lead up to a pioneering location takes more time than was planned for.

- Started before 2013: 7
- Started from 2013: 63
- In preparation: 21

84 initiatives

Most pioneering initiatives have started in the last two years, this is why it is too early to draw big conclusions now. Besides these initiatives, there are some two hundred local parishes and enthusiastic individuals who put themselves in touch with the national church to start talks about pioneering.

An online questionnaire was sent to all pioneering places in October 2016. Sixty-six pioneering places responded to the questions. The results on page 6, 7 and 8 are largely based on these.

Type of Activities

What activities take place on the pioneering places? For each location many answers were possible. Some 68% hold celebrations. Almost the same number hold community meals. Half of them have diaconal or helping activities. Of these, 45% hold artistic or creative activities. And one-third have monastic activities, for example moments of silence or walks.

Monastics

The interest in monastic traditions has grown over the last few years, including among pioneers. Rev. Rosaliene Israël carried out research into this rich tradition. Not every monastically coloured activity is a pioneering place, especially because pioneering focusses on peripheral churchgoers and outsiders – which is not the case with all monastic initiatives.

Interchurch Pioneering

We didn’t foresee requests for support coming from pioneering places that do not fall within the responsibility of the Protestant Church. Rubbing shoulders with other church denominations there are six pioneering places which have an interchurch character.

A pioneering place is a new expression of being church for people who don’t attend church. Pioneering places vary greatly. Being attentive to the context, working from a shared faith within the team of pioneers and lasting community building are essential.
The pioneering teams

EDUCATION AND GENDER
The pioneering team takes the initiative and responsibility for the growth of a pioneering place. An average pioneering team consists of six people, 54% of whom are female. In most pioneering teams the majority are well-educated people (higher professional education or college).

SUPPORT
A pioneering coach from the national church is involved in every pioneering location. He or she visits both the pioneering team and the involved church councils on a regular basis. For the pioneering teams, there is training twice a year covering several days, so far there have been a total of fifteen training events already. At www.lerenpionieren.nl pioneering teams can find a lot of useful information and resources. Consequently, a learning community around pioneering is being shaped.

PAID FORCES?
In 53% of the pioneering places there is someone employed for over two days a week. In some 29% of pioneering places there is someone employed less than two days per week. And in 18% of the teams, no-one is employed, although some do receive a volunteers’ allowance.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
In 17% of the pioneering teams there is no-one with a theological qualification, this percentage is increasing. In an ample 50%, there is a team member with a theological (university) qualification, and in 30% someone with a theological qualification to the level of higher professional education (hpe).

"How do we learn to be witnesses of the faith that God really matters and gives meaning, depth, benefit and shine? This shall be highly listed on the agenda of the church."

Church 2025 – Where there is Word, there is a way
Who are involved?

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED
In an average pioneering place, 44 people are strongly involved (monthly or more often). Of these, 40% had not been actively involved in a church before. Besides, an average of 112 people are involved incidentally, it is estimated that 50% of these had not previously been involved in a pioneering place. All in all, over ten thousand people are involved in a pioneering place.

MEN AND WOMAN
When we look into the people involved in a pioneering place it is clear that woman are in the majority (63%).

AGE
Many people between 20-40 years are involved in over half of the all the pioneering places. This is a significant feature and important to existing local congregations because this generation is often not present in existing local congregations.

“Or, better said: God is on a mission. This began with the choosing of Israel and is aimed at the dawn of the Kingdom of God in this world. The church is called into this mission. As church, we are called to be ‘God’s co-workers’.”

Church 2025. Where there is Word, there is a way
In practice

Kloosterwelle: silence as relief

Inspired by the pioneering location of Nijkleaster in the Frisian village of Jorwerd, Rev Piter Goodijk began a weekly Liturgy of the Hours every Wednesday in the Summer of 2014, the liturgy taking place in the parish church of Cornelius in the Zeeland village of Noordwelle. In December 2015, Kloosterwelle became an official pioneering location of the Protestant Church. The Liturgy of the Hours is still one of the main activities, with seven minutes of silence at the heart of the liturgy. A ‘hard core’ of fifteen people attend the vespers every week, surrounded by a retinue of occasional visitors.

After the Liturgy of the Hours, there is a meal, prepared by a couple who live close to the church. During the meal afterwards, there is room for conversation, which allows for a genuine connectedness between people. Many say they wouldn’t like to miss the meal and conversation.

Days of retreat
Apart from this weekly offer, there are four Wednesdays on which retreats are organised each year that everyone can sign up for. It also attracts people from beyond Zeeland. Piter Goodijk: “These days focus on celebrating, sharing meals, and walking. By way of an organised structure, they’re meant for experiencing rest and to stimulate contemplation. A day of retreat is determined by the rhythm of the tides: the celebrations are fixed on the tides and the chiming of the bells of the ancient St Salvator’s Church. Furthermore, these days are filled by that day’s current affairs, during the conversations among one another: what do they evoke? We don’t cling to a theme for the day, instead we walk in the polders. Such a day is a salutary experience in the busy-ness of everyday and an opportunity to recharge yourself before honestly re-entering the world in frankness.”

Currently, tailor-made days of retreat days for target groups, for example care-givers or educators are thought of.

Broadening
People from a wide range of backgrounds participate - regular churchgoers alongside occasional peripheral churchgoers and outsiders. Looking back at the past year, Piter Goodijk concludes the project is stable, the retreat days turn out well, receive good evaluations and steadily more new people attend the vespers. In his view, participation will increase.

www.kloosterwelle.nl
Church connections

Pioneering places come into being next to existing local congregations. But how do they relate to each other? And how are they connected? A pioneering place cannot be set up without the agreement of the existing local congregation. We see an increasing number of local congregations offering plenty of room to pioneers. In England, the expression “hold them lightly” is insightful, existing congregations don’t sit on them, but don’t abandon them either (“let them sort things out for themselves”). Pioneers fulfill an important role as scouts and entrepreneurs in a changing process in which the whole church is involved.

CONSULTATION
Pioneering places can - and certainly at the start - not do without church support. There is consultation between the pioneering place and the existing congregation, more in some places than others. Conversations happen there that determine the future and the nature of the relationship. The general church council hears the pioneering teams plans. “What you do, looks nice. But how does your future look like? How do you think to build on, and how will the situation be in three years from now? How many people will be involved?” The pioneers attempted to find and give answers as best as they could. Suddenly, one of the pioneers turns the question around: “How will this be with you? What are your future plans? Where will you be in three years from now? Will you manage to reach those outside the church?”

What return do pioneering places give to existing churches? Increasingly, we discover that it is not about copying the most fashionable expressions, though this does occur. More importantly, pioneering identifies and raises essential issues about the church’s identity, functioning and future. Existing local congregations and pioneering places sharpen one another.

THE PREACHER’S ROLE
Not every pioneering place is led by a minister, where there is no minister volunteers shape the pioneering place. The minister’s role is more in coaching and enabling others rather than in carrying the load, including matters of performing baptism and Holy Communion. The minister contributes to an atmosphere in which the pioneering can thrive well. Also in established churches, we see the preacher’s role develop into that direction.

“So, the church is not an institute for services where professionals attend a public. The church, that is the community of believers, the followers of Jesus who, called by Jesus Himself, may be part of His body.”

Church 2025: Where there is Word, there is a way
Lessons learnt

In the last eight years, the Protestant Church has given room to pioneering. What have we learnt so far?

### Pioneering team is crucial

What are the right conditions for a pioneering initiative to grow into a mature faith community? There are many factors, but the pioneering team turns out to be crucial. If within that team, warm relationships do not grow, how can a warm community come into being? If within that team, faith cannot be discussed, how can faith play a role in the pioneering place? A pioneering team is more than just a committee for planning activities; they are the seed from which the faith community grows. This is why we give more attention to the culture of beginning teams nowadays.

### Listening leads to relationships

We can frequently be too quick in organising activities. In the preparation of a pioneering place, we stimulate teams to take plenty of time to listen to their context. This sounds passive, but in practice it is active. This way, new relations happen – the beginning of a network. Listening is shaped by interviewing, conversations, and observations. More often than expected, an openness appears to talk with people about the Christian faith, although the pioneers don’t expect so.

### Making room for entrepreneurs

Whilst a team is indispensable in the first phase of pioneering things can come down to someone taking the initiative. It is someone who has a vision, sense of calling and an entrepreneurial spirit. Quickness, the willingness to take risks, enthusiasm, and flexibility all help to set the tone. As church our culture and structures don’t give much room for entrepreneurial people. This can mean that local congregations don’t always initiate a plan themselves, but ‘adopt’ someone else’s plan. Pioneering has become more about starting something ‘from the bottom up’, without too much control from the top.

### More time needed than expected

Establishing a pioneering place takes more time than expected. It is evident that more time is needed even in the first stages of preparation. Initially, it was thought that the preparing and signing off for pioneering would be within six months, but often one to two years are needed (for team building, support, and listening). After that, it takes quite a few years to let a faith community grow. Experience teaches us that pioneering places usually need five to ten years before they can be self-reliant.

*Each of these lessons learnt has been expounded and worked out. This work-out can be downloaded from www.lerenpionieren.nl/ophoopvanzegen.*
In practice

Yours!: investing time in one another

To be available and to take care for each other, to learn from one another, pray and read the Bible together, laugh together; this is what the pioneering place “Yours!”, in Drachten aims for. Started three years ago, and linked to the neighbourhood parish of Oase, it has become a pioneering place of the Protestant Church since July 2016. It longs to be a place for teenagers and parents, because if you aim at teenagers, you should aim at their parents, is Jan-Willem ten Hove’s conviction. He is one of the five volunteers at the pioneering place. “It is essential that faith is nurtured and supported at home.” As in many churches, the “Yours!” target age group of twelve to fifteen year olds drop out. “We started with special church services but that didn’t work, so now we try a different tack. If you want to approach teenagers, you should take them seriously and build relationships with them.”

Connecting to what is there

There are regular meetings with the teenagers and, for example, together they visit the EO-Jongerendag. They also started a project with the parents to read the Bible in one year and via a WhatsApp-group they share together. Jan-Willem: “We look around us to see what is already there and where we can join. So, this year, we will visit The Passion in Leeuwarden all together. We don’t want to spent too much time in organising activities; we’d rather invest time in each other. If we get into the flow of the things that happen in daily life, the things you do anyway, it doesn’t take extra time or much planning. And so, as families, we want to share our mealtimes, because you have to eat anyway. After the meal, there is opportunity to join in conversations, with groups of teenagers separated from the parents.”

Jan-Willem thinks it is important that people get to know the story of Jesus. “I would like to set an example myself, and inspire others to be an example too. There is a lot of pain and emptiness in the world. The gospel can be its answer.”

Jan-Willem initiated “Yours!” together with Janneke Plantinga. They take on this pioneering work as volunteers. The conversations with the church council were initially dynamic but then went through a tough time. All this changed in November 2015 when there was a group visit of the pioneer team and church council to other pioneering places. Now there is constructive, and on a regular basis, formal and informal consultation.

www.lovelearnlivealagh.wordpress.com

Yours! is also supported by Evangelisch Werkverband
Researchers on pioneering

There’s quite a bit of research going on exploring pioneering. Some researchers share their (tentative) conclusions here.

“I made a round of many pioneering places and now I’m focusing only on a few. So far, I’ve developed some crucial insights. The first one: it is not natural that community develops within pioneering places. People do see community come into being within a pioneering place, but their ideas on their own involvement in that community vary widely and, sometimes, they explicitly don’t want to be connected (long-term) to that community. Besides, I noticed that pioneers sometimes are reserved to talk about God, whereas church outsiders appreciate it when God is explicitly mentioned.”

Marinka Verburg-Janssen is doing her dissertation on pioneering and is associated with the PThU.

“I focus on the relationship between existing and new expressions of church. This relationship is also defined as mixed economy, meaning that various expressions of being church co-exist, help and strengthen each other, in order to realise the church’s mission – to share the good news – together. I find it remarkable that this idea is broadly supported, but it is considered hard to give shape to this on the job. I think the way in which existing and new expressions of church view each other (framing) has influence here. There may be an essential role here for intermediaries, people who know both the language and reality of pioneers as well as hard-core churchgoers. They can help to build bridges and break through the image. This will bring close the richness of the unity in diversity within the church of Christ.”

Nadine van Hierden is doing her dissertation on pioneering and is associated with the PThU.

“I visited nine representatives of church councils, to explore what factors play a role in their decision making whether or not to start pioneering. In practically all cases, there was fear that a pioneering place would cost people that were needed in their own local congregation. But the listening attitude of the coach sent by the national church turns out to be a conducive factor. In all cases, it’s complex on the job and filled with several convictions and interpretations. Tailor-made coaching is crucial.”

Rachel van der Veen is doing a final research for her training Cultural Social Education on hpe level.
Pioneering in the coming years

As a church we’ve gained eight years of pioneering experience. How will this move on from here? The intension is clear: pioneering remains an important part of the church missionary work. The national church provides support for at least 25 new pioneering places each year. The initiative for setting up a pioneering place remains at a local level for the coming years. In most cases, the support from an existing local congregation or classis remains conditional to securing the support of the national church. The Protestant Church will continue to support interchurch initiatives.

SUPPORT
For local churches, classes and enthusiasts, support is available in three ways:

1. Support during the preparation phase
At the start of a pioneering place, the national church supports the development of a plan, encourages a listening attitude and assists in developing a good team culture. The church also promotes the connection between existing local parishes and new initiatives.

2. Content support after the start up
After the pioneering team has been set up, it becomes part of the pioneering learning community. Exchanges take place among pioneering teams, including two day training events. Every pioneering place is also supported by a pioneering coach, who stimulates and encourages contact with the existing parish(es). Information and practical advice can be found here: www.lerenpionieren.nl.

3. Financial support when a pioneering place is about to start
In cooperation with the Maatschappij van Welstand, subsidies are made available for pioneering places, on the condition that the local church also financially contributes. The amounts are usually € 12,000 per year for the first four years and after go down to an annual € 4,000.

From the national church, we facilitate exchanges between pioneering places within the pioneering learning community, the results of these conversations are shared with the broader church.

Would you like to discover whether pioneering is something for you or your local church? Please contact Erik Verwoerd by email: e.verwoerd@protestantsekerk.nl

“Especially concerning pioneering places, we must be on our guards in saddling them with rules that are unfit in a new situation. Life is more important than rules, even though these rules help to shape that life further and to give meaning to it.”

Church 2025: Where there is a Word, there is a way
In practice

MarcusConnect: being church around a garden

In the middle of the Moerwijk neighbourhood of The Hague, Bettelies Westerbeek works at the Marcus Connect pioneering place. Marcus Connect wants to be a place for and run by Moerwijk folks. The project includes a house and garden in which the local residents enjoy the sun, have a chat, help with the maintenance, and where children can safely play.

The question “What does it mean to be church in a neighbourhood such as Moerwijk?” was in Bettelies’ mind when she started as a missionary pioneer with MarcusConnect three years ago. “We decided we’d just start looking around us, getting to know the neighbourhood and its residents.” Bettelies believes that being church means that you fully take part in your environment and you are serving that environment. “I think this is what church is meant to be. Not as an island with people of the same mind, but as part of the neighbourhood and for every single resident.”

Starting from scratch
Moerwijk is a very poor neighbourhood with seventy percent of residents living on or below the poverty line. Many nationalities are represented in the locality and there but there is hardly any connectedness between people. MarcusConnect fills the gap and seeks to foster those connections. “The church is a place where people meet God. And this is what happens here.” In and around the Marcus House activities take place regularly. “Sports, Bible study, walks, and every month a neighbourhood meal which attracts some sixty people. People share life here. “There are no church services. “We want to listen, to network, to serve. There are many broken families and people with debts. We want to be present for them, creating safe and cosy corners.”

It is quite a big task, such a pioneering place, Bettelies admits. “We’d like to carry it with more locals. We actively look for cooperation with active residents and other bodies. The challenge is to form a core group which others can join. More and more people are getting involved and the network is increasing. How this should become a community is still a question. Pioneering means starting from scratch. It thrills me and it teaches me to depend on God.

It is beautiful to see what God can do in people’s lives.”

www.marcuskerk-denhaag.nl
Future challenges

The national church foresees at least three major challenges concerning pioneering for the coming years.

Perpetuating the pioneering places

A question for both the pioneering places AND the church is how to invest in the durability of pioneering. How do we take care that pioneering places last longer than the six years in which support is available? Sustainability is needed in several areas: in finances, organisation and leadership, in dealing with faith issues, etc. Each pioneering place faces different challenges. How do we strengthen leadership when volunteers take the initiative? How does a place become financially sustainable? What minimum organisation is needed? Now so many pioneering places have been set up, questions of sustainability demand greater attention.

Fitting organisational culture

At their start, most pioneering places are under the responsibility of a local church board. But what to do when after some years a mature faith community is established? An autonomous place in the context of the church can be fitting. But what demands should be made upon that new church/faith community? And in what manner will there be connection with other churches? How will the pioneers’ voices be heard in the structures of classis and synod in the national church? Most pioneering places know a low level of organisation and function as a network. Will this fit in? In this way we hit a question that also matters to trade unions, political parties and broadcasting societies: how do we connect institutional structures to this new network society? We need fresh ecclesiological reflection, if we don’t reflect, we run the risk - in biblical terms - of pouring young wine into old skins.

Research and theological reflection

Pioneering is a new discipline for the Protestant Church and we’ve got lots to learn. On the job, theological questions arise that bring us back to the basics of being church. How do we interpret the office in pioneering? What is the salvation that people experience when they discover the Christian faith? Can a church function without paid workers? To what extent can the sacraments, such as baptism and communion, be given a contextual interpretation? Is membership the best way to express connectedness? Around these questions, and others, research and theological reflection is badly needed.

Each of these challenges has been worked out. You can download these workouts on www.lerenpionieren.nl/ophoopvanzegen.
Expressions of church that are fitting to our time

Pioneering has become a familiar term within the Protestant Church. Likely, there is not a (neighbourhood) parish that has never heard of pioneering. This statement is remarkable. It is in the second vision memorandum of the Protestant Church, De hartslag van het leven (2012) where the word ‘pioneering places’ is mentioned for the first time. In the policy plan 2013-2016 of the service organisation, Met hart en ziel, pioneering is one of the policy spearheads. The ambition is huge and aims at a hundred pioneering places in 2016.

Now, at the end of this policy period, pioneering must not be forgotten or erased from the mind of the Protestant Church, especially as the number is reaching one hundred! This development is even more remarkable as it takes place against a background of a shrinking church. So, the conclusion is crystal clear: the church is on the move. She is getting smaller and focusses on the heart (Kerk 2025) and new shapes of being church come into being.

Of course, this development doesn’t stand on its own. Society itself is changing dynamically. Experts classify our present time and culture as a ‘transfer phase’. Old institutions don’t satisfy anymore, but new ones haven’t yet been fixed. We see the same development within the church. Old and well-tested expressions of being church are insufficient in some situations. Many crumble down, whereas new ones, less formal and more fluid, pioneering expressions reluctantly come into being.

Almost a century ago, the striking theologian Dr O. Noordmans remarked that the Spirit forms church shapes that are fitting with the time. Aren’t these mushrooming pioneering posts an illustration of this statement? A church, born from the feast of the Spirit, is a dynamic institution. Re-imagining and re-creating is in the church’s DNA because the Holy Spirit involves it in God’s mission and focusses it on people of our time.

Dr René de Reuver, secretary of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Colophon

This is a publication of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. This publication was worked on by: Janet van Dijk, Peter den Hoedt and Martijn Vellekoop (content and text), Laura van der Linden (research), Bram Dijkstra-Geuze (infographics), Irene Plas (translation), Dio van Maaren and Ruben van Herpen (photographs).

NATIONAL PIONEERING TEAM
The national pioneering team supports pioneering places nationwide in the Netherlands and develops policies and training. Unless differently mentioned, these people work for the Service Organisation of the Protestant Church. As of January 1, 2017, this team is part of the department Church Support and, until the end of 2016, it consisted of Rev. Peter Bakker (Den Haag in Beweging voor Jezus Christus), Jonna van den Berge (JOP), Henk Boerman (IZB), Rev. Wim den Braber, Jan Willem van Dijk (HGJB), Rev. Nynke Dijkstra, Rev. Bas van der Graaf (Protestant Church in Amsterdam), Peter den Hoedt (secretary), Berthe van Soest (Op Goed Gerucht), Ronald van der Molen (Evangelisch Werkverband), Martijn Vellekoop (coordinator), Erik Verwoerd and Ronnie Zuidam (JOP).

STEERING COMMITTEE
The steering committee for pioneering functions within the Service Organisation and decides over the strategic policies concerning pioneering. The steering committee consists of: Rev. Hans van Ark (chairman), Peter den Hoedt (secretary), Rev. Sjaak van ’t Kruis, Marja Meerburg, Vincenza La Porta, Rev. Fred Tjeerdema, Martijn Vellekoop and Carla van der Vlist (Kerk in Actie).

MISSIONARY CONSULTATION GROUP
The missionary consultation is formed out of the width of the Protestant Church and advises in missionary work and pioneering. The missionary consultation group consists of Rev. Arjan Berensen (Confessioneel Gereformeerd Beraad), Rev. Hans van Dalen (Confessionele Vereniging), Rev. Marien Kollenstaart (Evangelisch Werkverband), Rev. Stephan de Jong (Op Goed Gerucht), Rev. Marco Batenburg (IZB), Rev. Hester Smits (Op Goed Gerucht) and Rev. Barend Weegink (Confessionele Vereniging).

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