

*Historical Perspectives  
on Pioneering*

# Reflections on 'pioneering' movements

# Monastic Movements:

- 1) The Celtic movement
- 2) The Benedictine movement
- 3) The Franciscan movement
- 4) New Monasticism

# **The Celtic movement**

# **The Celtic movement Context**

- The spread of Christianity to Britannia through the expansion of the Empire
- The failure of Rome to dominate the north (Scotland) and Hibernia (Ireland)
- The establishment of Christian influence in England among the Engles, Saxons and Jules
- The increasing 'paganism' of Ireland ('barbarians') and Scotland (Picts) and the 'impossibility' of conversion
- Conversion and call of Saint Patrick



- Born c. 389 in an English Christian family
- Kidnapped as a teen and taken to Ireland
- Slave for 6 years
- Escaped and returned to England to be a priest
- In 432 had a vision and call to return to Ireland as a missionary where he remained to his death c.461



- Saw many 1000's of people converted
- Raised up indigenous priests and appointed them leaders of the 100's of churches that he founded.
- Established 'monasteries' (centres of pioneer mission, learning and civilisation)
- A man of deep spirituality prayer and apostolic ministry





- In 563 Columba, an abbot of noble standing, influenced by Patrick's legacy headed to Scotland with a team of 12 pioneers to begin the evangelisation of Scotland, Southern England and further abroad to 'barbarian' tribes in other areas.
- He established Iona as his missionary base and from there teams of missionary pioneers were trained and sent out into genuinely pioneering situations to establish 100's of churches and new centres of mission in Scotland and England.



- His efforts were more successful than the initiative from Rome (HQ) which had despatched Augustine to Canterbury to reach the Anglo-Saxons. Indeed, Augustine found that it was Celtic missionaries in Southern England that were already making some progress.
- It is also from Iona that Aiden, in 653, went to the Angles of the kingdom of Northumbria at the invitation of its king, Oswald, to establish a monastery on Lindisfarne.



- Beginning in 590 Columbanus (trained in Ireland and influenced by Patrick) travelled with a small team of pioneers to establish missionary work, churches and centres of mission and learning across Europe.
- He evangelised 'barbarian' tribes in Burgundy and brought renewal to the Frankish church.
- He further established other centres in Switzerland and Italy.



- In less than 100 years after Patrick's death, the Celtic missionary movement had all but pushed out paganism in Ireland, Scotland, large parts of England and Europe with 10,000's of people converted to Christian faith, 1000's of churches established and multiple teams of pioneers trained and sent.
- Although the Viking invasions destroyed many of the Celtic institutions and much of the movement in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is interesting that pioneers from England from Celtic roots were used to bring the Vikings into the Christian faith in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

# **The Celtic movement**

## **Missional Theology**

## **Trinity and Community**

(relationship and hospitality)

## **Immanence of God in all creation**

(heaven touches earth)

## **Incarnation and Inculturation**

(rooted in culture)

## **Following the apostolic Spirit**

(the Holy Spirit is not a tame dove but an unpredictable wild goose”)

## **The Excluded Middle**

(the supernatural and spiritual warfare)

## **The Saving power of Christ**

(through the cross and the proclamation of the gospel)

# **The Celtic movement Characteristics**

- Spontaneous
- Activist
- Passionate
- Suspicious of authority
- Risk Takers
- Educated
- Deeply spiritual
- Trained
- Had a lack of traditionalism
- Networkers
- Worked in apostolic teams
- Self-supporting



# **The Celtic movement Key Pioneer Strategies**

The Celtic Way of Evangelism  
George Hunter

- 1) Credibility (authenticity)
- 2) Clearance (sought blessing from local leaders)
- 3) Contact (befriending)
- 4) Community (welcoming and belonging)
- 5) Communication (shared gospel creatively)

- 6) Conversation (dialogue vital)
- 7) Contextualisation (indigenous forms)
- 8) Continuity (build on existing worldview)
- 9) Consistency (released apostolic leaders)
- 10) Conviction (no nation or people group unreachable)

**What can we learn from  
the Celtic Movement for  
pioneering today?**

# **The Benedictine and Franciscan Monastic movements**

**Context**  
**Development of classical**  
**Monasticism**

# **Monastic Theology**

## **The Contemplation of God**

(meditation and reflection)

## **Worship and Devotion**

(doxology and praise)

## **Practising the presence of God in all things**

(lived experiential practical faith)

## **Spirituality and Theology**

(aspiration and quest for the Divine)

## **Colonies of heaven**

(communities that touch and reflect heaven)

## **Spiritual Warfare**

(Externally and Internally)



# **Monastic Characteristics**

- Reflective
- Prayerful
- Structured rhythm of life (worship, study, work)
- Rule or Order of Life
- Retreat and seclusion
- Confession
- Soul friend (spiritual 'father'/mother')
- Devotional scholarship (lectio divina)
- Simplicity
- Celibacy
- Poverty
- Obedience
- Charity
- Disciplined

# The Benedictines



Founded by Benedict (c. 480- c. 453)

Primarily followed the hermit life (eremitical)

Alongside but withdrawn from surrounding community

Predominant and most influential monastic order

Rule of Saint Benedict

Organising, stabilizing and sustaining of mission

# The Franciscans



Founded by Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

Order of Friars Minor (not monks but monastic) and  
Poor Clares (nuns order)

Renewal movement within monasticism that aimed  
to recapture the apostolic ministry and reconnect  
with surrounding culture and respond to the spiritual  
decline and corruption of medieval monastic life

Life predominantly lived outside of the monastery  
among the people (with times for retreat)

Strategic evangelisation of the new urban centres of  
Medieval Europe including urban schools of mission

Dialogue with developing Muslim faith

Poverty, Humility and Simplicity

Itinerary preaching

Love of creation and creatures

Simple 'Rule of Life' (values based)

Suspicion of formal organization and unresolved differences concerning property ownership resulted in Francis leaving his own order, and the fragmentation of the Friar's order into splinter groups

**What can we learn from  
the Monastics  
for pioneering today?**



# **New Monasticism: A recovery of monasticism for 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What has it to say to today's Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008).

Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby and Aaron Kennedy, eds. *New Monasticism as Fresh Expressions of Church* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010).

<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/who-we-are/introducing-the-community/a-new-monasticism/>

The Northumbria Community is not to any form of institutionalism but to embrace, explore and express the heart of monastic spirituality in the everyday ordinariness of our lives, as a different way of living in and relating to, today's world.”

Monastic spirituality implies a single-hearted (solitary) seeking of God. This may or may not be carried out in the company of others, (the monastic tradition has embraced both alone and together), but the focus is clearly on returning to God, and making use of a daily rhythm of prayer (Office) and a Way for living (Rule), that enable us to 'marry' the inner journey, the landscape of the heart – a call to repentance, to self denial, and a call to recognise and to resist evil – with the outer journey, the landscape of the land, which has given us a platform to 'find a different way' of being Church.

This is our spirituality, how we live; 'A combination of praying and living.' It is, for us, the embracing and expressing of the gospel through the lens of our Rule of life, Availability and Vulnerability... enabling us to be participants in 'enacting a fearful hope for society.'



It's a bit like traditional monasticism in some ways but very different in others.

**A Community that lives by a rule and rhythm of life.**

But new monastic orders like us are different too:

**New monastic orders accept both men and women**

**Accept single and married people, and children too**

**Wear normal clothes rather than robes**

**Traditional monastic vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience are not normally taken**

**Community members remain for differing periods of time (a few months or several years)**







# Graham Cray

## Why is New Monasticism Important to Fresh Expressions?

- It takes radical discipleship seriously
- It stands as an engaged counter cultural community
- It maintains the link between discipleship and mission
- It contributes to a deeper ecclesiology

*Shane Claiborne*



# Shane Claiborne

## Marks of New Monasticism

- 1) Locating our lives in the abandoned place of the empire
- 2) Shared Economics
- 3) Reconciliation
- 4) Celebrating and supporting singleness and marriage
- 5) Submission to Christ's body, the church
- 6) Hospitality
- 7) Care for creation
- 8) Geographical Proximity
- 9) Peace-making
- 10) Contemplative Prayer
- 11) Formation in the way of Christ
- 12) Nurturing a common life

**What can we learn from  
the new Monastics  
for pioneering today?**