

The Trellis and the Vine: Cairn and the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock

Brendan Research

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"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15: 1-5)

The Church of Scotland faces a challenge and opportunity not seen since the Reformation. On the one hand, the numerical decline of the Church has been sharp and deep. Between 1986 and 2016, Church attendance in Scotland declined by 50%, while Church of Scotland attendance declined by 40% in only 14 years from 2002 to 2016.¹ Further, a range of qualitative studies have shown that rates of Christian belief and life-events are also in decline, leading not only to decreased levels of faith and participation, but income, personnel and morale.² At the same time, studies in Scotland and England have shown that a significant minority of the population are still open to hearing the Gospel and participating in some form of Christian community.³ These individuals may be dissatisfied with traditional forms *of Church*, but may not have shut their hearts and lives to Christ. The hope, therefore, is that if the Church can be reformed, then some Scots might, once again, come to the worship of the Living God.

There are many biblical lenses that could be used to interrogate these developments. One of the richest, however, is that of *the branch, the vine, and the trellis*. Like the example of a gardener engaged in horticulture, God does not only display his care for the Church by feeding it, but by *cutting it back*: by discarding those parts that have ceased to bear fruit, and creating space for new branches to shoot forth and grow. Yet while branches and vines can grow naturally without tending, to maximise their fruit, the gardener will use support – a trellis – to raise the vine up, protecting it from frost, pest, and the trampling of feet. In the same way, while the Church grows only when it is united with Christ in love, obedience, prayer and worship, it needs supporting structures to maximise that growth.

¹ Peter Brierley, *Scottish Church Census 2016* <https://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/scottish-church-census>.

² See Liam Jerrold Fraser, *Mission in Contemporary Scotland* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2021), 96-99.

³ See Talking Jesus <https://talkingjesus.org/research-from-the-course/> and Steve Aisthorpe, *The Invisible Church* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2016).

This, then, is part of the biblical context the Church of Scotland finds itself in. Yet in addition to this biblical context is an ecclesiological one. For the Church has not been idle in the face of secularisation, but *busy*. Since the Church Without Walls report of 2001,⁴ a number of attempts have been made to reimagine the ministry of the Church of Scotland: the parish development fund, emerging ministries fund, “Go For It!” fund, Future Focus, Path of Renewal, and a Pioneer Ministry Pilot to name a few. While a number of approaches have been taken, they can generally be characterised as either *renewal* programmes or *fresh expressions* programmes. The former are attempts to renew *existing* church communities, while the latter are attempts to found *new* church communities.

While much has been done, there has – until recently – been little by way publicly-accessible research into the efficacy of these schemes and initiatives.⁵ In particular, there has been no research into the attempts of institutional churches in Scotland such as the Church of Scotland to reform their parish systems into a *mixed economy*, one that does not prioritise existing church communities *or* new communities, but seeks to support the life of *both*.

That is what this report is concerned with: what happens when the Church of Scotland re-imagines its regional ministry to support not only long-standing congregations but to resource new communities, missional experimentation and even ‘re-wilding’?⁶ The answer to that question forms the majority of this report. Of equal importance to assessing the consequences of this mixed economy, however, are the *conditions* for creating it. How does an institutional church move from a centuries-old pattern of ministry centred on University-trained ministers, preaching and celebrating the sacraments in church buildings, to one where non-ordained and ordained Christians create new communities in a range of cultures, networks, institutions and locations? And what role, if any, is played by support agencies such as Cairn in this process?⁷

⁴ Church of Scotland, *Church Without Walls* (Edinburgh: Parish Education Publications, 2001).

⁵ One recent exception has been *Pioneer Pieces: An Evaluation of the Church of Scotland’s Pioneer Pilot Project*, Church Army, <https://churcharmy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/pioneering-pieces-full-report.pdf>

⁶ The theme of re-wilding to a more complex ecclesiological eco-system has recently been explored by Church of Scotland commentator Steve Aisthorpe in *Rewilding the Church* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2020).

⁷ For information about Cairn, see www.cairnmovement.com

Introduction to the Case Study

"It was the time when the church hit rock bottom, but Cairn and the Pioneers helped turn things around [-] we're talking about hope and encouraged about God's Kingdom building again."

This section of the report describes the work of the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock - their process, and the impact of working with Cairn. We listened to the experiences of people who were involved at different parts of the process, and use their words throughout. Quotations from those interviewed are indicated in the style above.

Irvine and Kilmarnock is not a large presbytery; it comprises 22 charges to the south west of Glasgow, filling a triangular-shaped area between the presbyteries of Ardrossan to the north, Ayr to the south and Hamilton and Glasgow to the east and north east. The main towns are Kilmarnock (population 46,500) and Irvine (33,700), with Stewarton (7,500) to the north. The north and east of the presbytery area is rural in character.

Methodology

Brendan Research was commissioned to carry out this impact study by Cairn. The study proceeded through a variety of qualitative methods:

- Analysis of an online survey open to all members of the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock
- Structured interviews with people involved in the presbytery process
- Structured interviews with pioneer project team members and members of support teams
- Examination of records provided by Cairn

The research work was carried out by Dr Emma Teale, Rev Dr Fiona Tweedie, Rev Dr Rita Welsh with commentary and discussion by Rev Dr Liam Jerrold Fraser.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

Rev Dr Fiona Tweedie (2008-2009) and Rev Dr Liam Jerrold Fraser (2018-2019) are graduates of the *Forge* training in pioneer ministry. Dr Emma Teale's PhD thesis (2021) concerned the work of Cairn, and Rev Dr Rita Welsh has been part of a Cairn-facilitated Learning Community through the Priority Areas Team of the Church of Scotland.

Liam Jerrold Fraser, Emma Teale, Fiona J Tweedie, Rita M Welsh

Brendan Research
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Solo Deo Gloria

Before Cairn - the Presbytery's preparation

The Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock's preparation for this new phrase of ministry has been both long and deep. Long-serving, respected parish ministers with a heart for mission as well as wide-ranging vision across the Kirk, such as Rev David S Cameron and Rev Neil Urquhart, have on one hand cast the future vision, and on the other sounded alarm bells. More particularly, they have gone on doing so, faithfully, year after year.

Aware of both the falling numbers of members within the Church of Scotland, the presbytery replaced fully half of its business meetings with "Mission Nights" in 2013. Non-contentious presbytery business is quickly dealt with and the time given to learning about good practices of mission. Speakers have shared their experiences from within the presbytery, the wider Church of Scotland, and beyond. For years, then, the presbytery has subsumed even its own business under the missional imperative, prioritising reaching out to others in different ways.

While the wider Church of Scotland finds itself facing a "retirement cliff" where 40% of its full-time Ministers of Word and Sacrament are over 60,⁸ the age profile of serving ministers had been noted by David Cameron many years before, and a "Retirement Committee" convened. When the time came to develop a Presbytery Plan David was appointed as Presbytery Reappraisal Convenor, and congregational work across the Presbytery began.

A congregational facilitator, Steve Owens, was appointed to join in this work and worked with David in contrasting and complementary ways. Between them, they cast a vision while also adding "*hard-nosed realism*" in discussions with congregations about their future. This was patient, comprehensive and time-consuming work with all of the congregations, balancing listening and informing, to keep everyone aware of the local, presbytery, and national issues.

All this work culminated in a Presbytery Plan in which four Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) posts were reserved for pioneer ministries. Making space for these (around 20% of posts) has come at great cost to congregations and to the presbytery as a whole - and resulted in a major redistribution of resources within the area.

The ground is prepared, the soil is ready, but what to plant, and how to tend it?

⁸ *Reports of The Church of Scotland General Assembly 2021*, Report of the Assembly Trustees, section 8, p4.

The Invitation to Cairn

In September 2019, Cairn, with Alan McWilliam, was asked to support the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock in its implementation of pioneer ministry. The presbytery set up a “Presbytery Pioneer Ministry Implementation Group”, soon shortened to “Pioneer Group”, convened by Rev Neil Urquhart. and a process was agreed which included these shared outcomes:

- An initial mapping exercise to identify opportunities
- Four new church plants/projects would be set up by 2021
- Up to four congregations engaged with missional thinking and action training through the Forge Pioneer course
- Up to 20 congregations engaged with Learning Communities to help them become more missional and create a discipleship community within their church
- All members of presbytery to be offered a series of missional thinking and action training events.

These over-arching outcomes offer participation at different levels:

- those who want to be heavily involved through setting up and supporting new projects,
- those looking to develop discipleship within congregations,
- more general missional training and thinking.

All people connected with the Church of Scotland in the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock could be involved at one level or another.

Resources

This work is not without cost. The presbytery had intended to approach the newly-announced Church of Scotland “Growth Fund” for funding, and had agreed to underwrite the costs itself. However, the Growth Fund was closed when it became apparent that central funding would not be available, and the presbytery met costs from its Mission Allocation. The cost to the presbytery was £45,000 over two years, around the annual cost of a serving parish minister. This was described as *“certainly value for money”* by those involved in the presbytery. By working with a specialist group, Irvine and Kilmarnock Presbytery have chosen a bespoke solution, drawing in the relevant expertise and accessing the required training.

Cairn as “Trellis”

While the presbytery had prepared its people for mission - preparing the soil, making space among the ministerial “garden” - Cairn introduced the practical structure and processes, the trellis, to allow the new projects to grow and flourish.

“[Cairn brought the] structure central to [the] change programme”

As with a trellis, the processes were visible and independent of the groundwork.

However, it is not the trellis that does the growing - it can only support. Within the presbytery, the Pioneer Group and its convenor, Neil Urquhart, were essential in continuing to facilitate and to advocate for the work.

The process timeline was agreed as follows:

February 2020

Presbytery Mission Night – introducing Church Planting and Pioneering

April 2020

Mission mapping sessions

Criteria for assessing Pioneer Project Proposals presented

May 2020

Presbytery Mission Night celebrated receiving twenty proposals

Learning Community and Forge training opportunities were outlined

Project proposals were assessed and recommendations given

Assessment meeting

Meeting was recorded for transparency

Proposals were graded according to the criteria

Seven projects were recommended for continuation (one then withdrawn)

Other projects to go forward as part of Learning Communities

August - November 2020

Job descriptions created and agreed by presbytery

Changed from four full-time posts to:

- six part-time (60%) project leaders,
- one part-time (40%) team leader.

September 2020

20 participants from the 6 projects start the Forge Pioneer Course

January 2021

Interview process

March 2021

Posts begin

June 2021

Forge Pioneer Course graduation event

August 2021

Presbytery launches the 6 Pilot projects

The six chosen projects were:

- *Crossing Together* - a church plant with Irvine Mure Relief and Dreghorn Springside.
- *Digital parish* - a presbytery-wide online community.
- *Growing Together with God* - a three-way congregational union, forming Kilmarnock: St Marnock's.
- *Reach out Together* - a presbytery-wide network of disability groups
- *Sports Irvine* - mission through sporting activities, based at Irvine: Fullarton

- *Thrive* - based at Stewarton: John Knox

Each project formed a team including:

1. Project team (3-6 people - congregation or staff members)
2. Mission Pioneer

The team ensures that the Mission Pioneer is not the only one responsible for the project; mission has not been “outsourced to the professional”.

The impact of COVID-19

During the period outlined above, restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19 were introduced. Congregations across Scotland were forced to pivot to new ways of worshipping, offering pastoral care and serving their communities.⁹ Such an unprecedented upturning of church life had the potential to end this process before it got started. However, being able to hold meetings online, and the reduction of some other areas of work, “*everything else shut down*”, meant that progress could continue, and perhaps even accelerate.

Cairn training options

Cairn offered different training possibilities: the *Forge* pioneer mission course, and Learning Communities. *Forge* is a year-long part-time course which expects 3 hours of personal study per week, and attendance at five residential weekends. Assignments, written or presented orally, and personal discipleship work are part of the overall process.¹⁰ The Learning Community programme of 4 sessions over 2 years provides a structure for the development of mission project teams, including staff, ministers and other interested individuals. The process includes developing shared aims and objectives, identifying SWOT factors, planning priorities and timescales.

Twenty people enrolled on *Forge* in September 2020, with others joining the September 2021 intake. A number of congregations were part of the first tranche of Learning Communities, with a new tranche beginning in January 2021.

A number of people who were involved in each option discussed their experiences with the research team.

Forge Pioneer course

All the respondents who have completed the *Forge* course made a positive response to the relevance and content of the course for their pioneer mission work. Particular highlights included opportunities:

- to ‘*research what is wanted from the church - and what the non-churched wanted*’,
- to create ‘*safe spaces to be creative*’,
- for personal spiritual growth - to develop the required good discipline,

⁹ <https://www.brendanresearch.com/projects/scif-acts-covid19>

¹⁰ <https://forgescotland.com/pioneer-course/>

- to process and understand principles of pioneer mission,
- to acknowledge that *'church isn't going to get it all right - it's not a perfect place'*,
- to *'sell new ideas to the congregation and community'*,
- to learn from good leaders and alongside *'all nice people'*, with an excellent diversity of trainers and resources
- to use existing courses to support what was happening locally - *'gave a green light [to] backing from Presbytery'*.

The tools taught in the course have proved useful in the early stages of the pioneering activities - in particular the 'order' to follow to form teams, and develop visions, aims and objectives.

The fortnightly small group mentoring or "huddle" approach was initially difficult for some respondents until the underlying principles and expectations were explored more fully.

'the huddle was a great help in working out work / life / study balance, and a good support mechanism with reading, academic approaches and, most particularly, [in a difficult pastoral situation]'

Alongside the positive reflections, there were some concerns about the academic level and content of the *Forge* course - the time commitment required, and the number and frequency of assessments. In addition, restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 led to the 2020-2021 course being held entirely online, which participants felt severely limited social interaction with fellow students.

While participants found the material immediately relevant to their pioneer mission work, the fixed timing of the *Forge* course and the timing of presbytery appointments did lead to some clashes, with one participant noting:

'the things I needed in the first few weeks were not covered until after that.'

Concerns were also raised about the cost to individuals should Presbytery funding not be available for future team members to complete the training.¹¹

Learning communities

There were a very limited number of respondents who had experienced the Learning Community programme. However, for one congregation this was perceived as an excellent way to build the pioneer mission team - bringing together the minister, parish staff and members of the congregation.

As with *Forge*, the small group or huddle approach was seen as being beneficial to assist reflective practice, develop good relationships, and a safe place to raise concerns and anxieties about the tasks facing the new missional initiatives.

¹¹ The *Forge* course costs £1,500 (2021-2022; <https://forgescotland.com/pioneer-course/>)

Why Cairn? What did they bring?

“Cairn has enabled us to understand mission through a 21st C lens and not an 18th C one”

Cairn were described as bringing a number of elements:

Unique

No one else in Scotland has the experience of “walking the walk”
“no one else could deliver what was needed”

Experience

Cairn have decades of experience in pioneer mission and church planting in Scotland and beyond. Their experience enabled them to be **flexible**, to offer a variety of options for progress, rather than just one single process. In setting up and accompanying many pioneer mission projects, they understand **realistic timescales and processes**, a *“helpful framework”* or *“scaffolding”* that are required to ensure good foundations are laid for successful projects.

Training

Cairn could offer a variety of training at different levels, from *Forge*, the year-long pioneer mission course, through facilitation of Learning Communities, to smaller events. They work with the **whole people of God**, all those interested in mission, clergy and non-clergy alike.

External independence

As an external group, Cairn act **independently** of local interests, providing an *“outsider’s eye and insider’s knowledge”* with clear processes and criteria established in advance. With their focus on pioneer mission, Cairn could *“focus on this timetable”* at a time when ministers and others juggle different responsibilities, offering accountability and continuity.

Specialist Knowledge

In depth understanding of the structures of the Church of Scotland means that Cairn can offer ways forward within the systems of the Kirk.

“a link with the CoS is necessary, whether it’s Cairn or some other agency.”
Additionally, Cairn has contacts and experience of working outwith Scotland, enabling them point to best practice in other locations, offering *“lightbulb moments outside the typical Church of Scotland context.”*

Communication

Cairn are able to **communicate** the vision, to **inspire** people to try things, or at least be *“willing to let it happen”*. They offer *“enthusiasm”* and *“assist congregations in moving change forward”*

If not Cairn, then what?

"We'd have got there eventually"

While Cairn may be unique in Scotland at providing this type of service, there are also resources from within denominations, in this case the Church of Scotland. The Faith Nurture Forum offers various models such as "Going for Growth" or the "Path of Renewal".¹² The Priority Areas team, now working with parishes that include areas within the most deprived 5% in Scotland, also offer advice and support.¹³

Learning points for Cairn

A few points have arisen in the course of this research that may assist Cairn in the future:

Succession

A number of people spoke in particular of the skill and knowledge of Alan McWilliam. How much does Cairn revolve around this one person? If something should happen (God forbid) to Alan, what next?

Communication

Despite best efforts, there is a sense that the pioneer projects *are*

"side by side, but not in partnership"

with presbytery. While people from the presbytery in general, but not immediately involved, were invited to be part of this study, only one or two made a contribution. Does this indicate dis-interest, or permission-giving - letting the people get on with it?

While Cairn's communication and vision-selling were praised, some people felt that not enough communication had happened at a congregational level:

"Not left to individual churches to do all the work and explanation."

"The Presbytery has to take more ownership of the pioneer ministries and advertise them, producing leaflets etc about the overall idea that churches can distribute to their members."

"concerned that the information was limited to the people who attended the presbytery mission meetings"

Could a congregation-level information sheet be prepared? Had it been, and it just wasn't circulated well-enough?

¹² <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect/going-for-growth>

¹³ <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect/priority-areas>

Theology

It was said that Cairn's theology was "*not yet for everyone*", but clarified that their theology is "*discussed, but not imposed*", indicating that it's not perceived as a barrier to participating in any of the material.

Sufficient flexibility?

With the Forge course starting in September each year, did this allow enough flexibility in the timings?

- project team needing to use material before being taught it in Forge
"the things I needed in the first few weeks were not covered until after that."
- team leader came into post at the same time as mission pioneers which did not allow for any setting in to the post.

Urban based?

Is Cairn able to help people in all parts of Scotland?

"I feel that some people concerned with Cairn are very city based and out of touch with the views of people sitting in the pews of more rural churches."

Advice for other presbyteries

As part of our investigation, we asked people from the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock what they might say to someone from another presbytery about working with Cairn through such a process. Comments fell into the following categories:

- **Perseverance**
"Press on regardless"; "Do it. Throw yourselves into it"; "Persevere"; "Do it get it done"; "It's excellent. Give it a go!"
- **Look to the future**
"Paint a picture of what it looks like"; "Go ahead. Invest in the future and not the past."; "New era of evangelism"; "Pioneering is new - up front"
- **Role of presbytery in the process**
"Be prepared to back it up / be behind it"; "Measure/review in 3 years time - independent team"; "The Presbytery has to take more ownership of the pioneer ministries and advertise them"; "Go for it, perhaps more substantially than we did".
- **Let it happen**
"Go ahead, at the very least it will be a positive experience and hopefully much more"; "[be] Willing to let it happen".

Discussion

This, then, is the experience of Irvine and Kilmarnock Presbytery as it attempted to transition from a parish-only approach to ministry and mission to one founded on a mixed economy or - better yet - a 'mixed ecology'¹⁴. We will now analyse the salient themes revealed by our interviews, and what lessons the experience of Irvine and Kilmarnock may hold for other parts of the Scottish Church.

The Role of Key Instigators

It is clear from our findings that, were it not for certain key individuals in the Presbytery, the reforms outlined in our report are unlikely to have taken place. These individuals prepared their colleagues for reform by initiating mission-orientated Presbytery meetings, and keeping the necessity of adaptations and change before the Presbytery for a number of years before any major reforms took place. To return to our analogy from John 15, these individuals acted as *catalysts for growth*, bringing fertile soil into the Presbytery and ensuring that the seeds of change were able to take root and grow. While there are a number of other factors that distinguish Irvine and Kilmarnock from other Presbyteries, the fact that no other Presbytery has accomplished a similar move to a mixed ecology of Church shows the power and importance of having not only 'well-equipped space in the right places,'¹⁵ but the *right people in the right places*.

This conclusion parallels those from South of the border. It was the leadership of Rowan Williams and diocesan bishops that propelled the fledgling fresh expressions movement into one that forms a core part of the operations and strategic planning of the Church of England.¹⁶ The difference between this and a Presbyterian context, of course, is that there is no national figure such as the Archbishop of Canterbury to legitimise new patterns of ministry and mission. Nevertheless, Irvine and Kilmarnock Presbytery demonstrate that as long as *regional* leaders are engaged with the new missional paradigm then change can take place. In particular, there is some evidence from Irvine and Kilmarnock to suggest that the length of service and size of the Presbytery or other regional unity may also play an issue, a longer length of service and smaller scale creating more opportunities to build relationships and respect.

Knowledge and Vision

It is not only individuals that are decisive in initiating change, however, but the knowledge and vision that those individuals hold. A passionate individual, by themselves, is not sufficient to initiate change. What is needed is individuals with knowledge and vision: knowledge of decline and the perilous position of the

¹⁴ Aisthorpe has argued persuasively that ecological imagery is better suited to Paul's teaching in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 than imagery founded on the market. See Aisthorpe, *Rewilding*.

¹⁵ The allusion is to General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, 'Well-equipped Spaces in the Right Places', General Assembly Reports (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2019).

¹⁶ See Rowan Williams, 'Foreword' in *Mission-Shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004) and Church of England, *A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s* <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/emerging-church-england/vision-church-england-2020s>

Church, and the knowledge and vision to imagine an alternative world. Knowledge is crucial for creating a shared picture of reality, enabling others to be enlisted as allies in the process of reform, and mobilised to achieve common ends. In Irvine and Kilmarnock, this knowledge not only enabled key instigators to enthuse and recruit their colleagues, but also led to the enlistment of Cairn as facilitators in the process of reform.

We may also note the *opposite* of this conclusion, however. Rather like gardeners tending a garden with little knowledge of plants or soil, if church leaders *do not* understand their declining context, and *do not* know of alternatives to their existing ministry and mission, then change and growth will be less likely to occur. More likely will be resignation to their predicament, and decreasing passion and energy for the life of the Church. As such, it would be beneficial if there was more knowledge exchange in the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Church more generally, sharing case studies and specialist knowledge in ways analogous to George Lings' long-running *Encounters on the Edge* series in England.¹⁷ This would provide more church leaders with the knowledge to shape and evidence their attempts at reform.

Education and Support

While knowledge and vision are crucial, without specialised, sustained, and pre-existing forms of support, the speed and success of the Irvine and Kilmarnock reforms would not have been so extensive. While one respondent said that the Presbytery would have reformed itself without Cairn, most other respondents identified unique resources that Cairn brought to the process of Presbytery reform, among which were experience, educational structures, enthusiasm and – important for a regional unit in which everyone is known to each other – independence. Of particular note is its educational structures. Through *Forge*, Cairn has a long-standing programme for training pioneers. While not everyone will go on to create a flourishing fresh expression having undertaken the course, a number of case studies show that it is instrumental to the future success of at least some participants.¹⁸ While responses to elements of the *Forge* course and Cairn huddles was mixed, this appears to relate to specific modules and approaches rather than the need the course as a whole. For an organisation committed to contextual forms of mission, the lesson for Cairn and *Forge* may be the need to be more flexible in adapting teaching, mentoring, and other forms of support to unique local and regional characteristics.

This conclusion regarding the importance of education and support also parallels those from the Church of England. While the Church's *Mission-Shaped Church* report outlined many of the ecclesiological principles contained in the Church of Scotland's *Church Without Walls* report, the difference between the two is that the former resulted in new training schemes for pioneers being established, while

¹⁷ Available at <https://churcharmy.org/our-work/research/publications/encounters-on-the-edge/>

¹⁸ See *Pioneering in Scotland: the Forge Scotland Story* (Glasgow: Forge Scotland 2018).

the latter did not.¹⁹ This is one of the primary reasons why the Church of Scotland has lagged behind the Church of England in pioneering and fresh expressions, and the use of such training in Irvine and Kilmarnock seems to underline the importance of such structures.

Conclusion

The importance of key individuals possessing knowledge and vision, and willing to engage outside agencies for education and mentoring would appear, then, to be the key ingredients in the reform of the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock. They provided the tending, the pruning, and the support needed to revitalise the vine, and it is these elements that will be of most importance to other Presbyteries and parts of the Scottish Church.

None of these factors guarantee, of course, that the reforms in Irvine and Kilmarnock will be *successful*. In order to assess this, further follow-up research will be required. What our report does provide, however, is the process and key principles a Presbytery, diocese, or other regional unit of the Church should adopt to realise a mixed ecology of ministry and mission.

As the experience of Irvine and Kilmarnock Presbytery and that of the British Church shows, it is no longer a question of *if* or *whether* institutional churches such as the Church of Scotland should invest in alternative forms of ministry and mission, but only *how*. This report reveals some of that how, but it is up to *you*, in your own context, to realise it.

For more information about Cairn visit www.cairnmovement.com

Or the team can be contacted via info@cairmovement.com

¹⁹ See Liam Jerrold Fraser, 'The Scottish Ideal: Lay Education and Training the Church of Scotland', *Theology in Scotland* 26.2 (2019), 57-70.

About Brendan Research

Founded in 2020, Brendan Research specialises in statistical and geographical analysis for Christian denominations, so that they can take confident steps in a changing world.

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