

Confused?

“*So what’s PMC all about then?*” I asked at my first **Mission Innovation Team (MIT)** meeting. **PMC, MIT, The Village, People of Peace** - goodness me I seemed to be listening to a foreign language! By the end of the evening I was no wiser! Yet I was intrigued.

“*Where’s God in all this?*” I asked at the second meeting. The leaders patiently did their best to answer my barrage of questions. I went home understanding only slightly more. So - when in doubt turn to good old Google! I spent several hours looking up everything I could find about PMC. At the end of it I understood why the leaders had struggled to answer my questions - and why I’d had so many questions in the first place! Nevertheless, I was beginning to get excited.

A bit fuzzy

PMC, it appears, is meant to be ‘a bit fuzzy’ - leaving room for God to direct each church individually. But I’m a northerner - I like plain speaking - I need to keep things simple! And I felt that - even while allowing for God to direct - it could be better explained in plain, jargon-free language! In fact - I came across a video by another northerner - **Peter Barrett** from **All Saints, Wokingham** - explaining how confusing it had all been to the PMC team there. Phew - what a relief - it wasn’t just me being none too bright!

I loved what **Peter** said about God working in **All Saints** through ‘coincidences’ - and ‘God moments’ - that He was at work even before they started the process. Ah - at last - someone was talking my language! God-incidences! This has been the story of my life for almost four decades!

You see, with the help of good old Google, I’d already begun to pick up on the fact that PMC is all about looking to God to see where He is working in our lives, in our church and in our neighbourhood, and spotting how he is directing and providing for us. I had no problem whatsoever relating to that concept. After all these years, it’s second-nature to me now.

For confused people like me

Yet - for the previous 18 months I hadn’t got my head round PMC at all. I’d heard mention of PMC in church. I’d even been to a meeting where we all put sticky notes on a timeline - a long sheet of paper with years on it. But it simply hadn’t ‘registered’ as part of the PMC process.

As early as my second MIT meeting I’d suggested that we needed a blog - for confused, plain-speaking people like me to go to for a simple explanation of what PMC is all about. And a place where we could update people on what we feel God’s doing and what we’re learning as we go along.

God kept 'showing up'

You see - though I'd experienced a very dramatic conversion, my early Christian life had been a case of "*one step forward and two steps backward*" - progressing to "*two steps forward and one step backward*". Yet all the time God kept on "showing up" in these "God-incidences", bearing patiently with my failings and enabling me to learn my best lessons through my worst mistakes.

He's even used me - with all my faults and failings. And He's directed and provided for the work I've been doing for Him. He's brought incredible people into my life. He's answered my prayers. He's provided for me. He's transformed me. He's given me purpose and immense joy. I owe everything to Him.

Excited about PMC

So that's why I'm excited about PMC, in spite of my initial confusion, in spite of the jargon. I'm excited because I know from personal experience that God responds to us when we ask Him to direct and teach us. He responds in very real, tangible ways.

And that's why I've created a blog - because PMC could turn out be the best thing that's ever happened to us, individually and as a church, if we can only 'get our heads round' it all and get excited about what God wants to do.

Follow the blog

The blog will evolve and grow as we, as a church, seek God and share our experiences. There is a contact page where you can comment and share. It would be lovely, too, if you would click the orange 'Follow' button on the bottom of any page to receive a notification whenever there is a new post on the blog. And there is a printed version available for those who don't 'do' web sites.

So let's create a God-glorifying record of what He does in our church and in our neighbourhood!

Eileen Fletcher

Richard Explains

Richard Lamey preached a sermon at St Paul's Church about his vision for the parish. Though it was preached at St Paul's it is just as relevant to Woollahill Church. *"This felt quite important as a new point of focus for us as a parish,"* he writes *"and I want to make sure that everyone has chance to catch up with what I said."*

The sermon is on the PMC blog. If you would like to listen to it, perhaps you can ask someone who uses the internet to let you listen to the sermon on their computer. Give them this link:- <https://pmcwoollahill.blog/richard-explains>

A new blog

This blog has been created to explain and record how we are working towards the model of church outlined by Richard. We are participating in a project called **Partnership For Missional Church (PMC)** - which is simply a framework for becoming the church we need to be.

Richard explains *"Most input on church growth and development starts with action but the glory of PMC is that it is rooted in prayer and spirituality and the specific talents and values of each church. It does not lead to a single model of a 'good church' but allows each church to build on what it already does well and become a better and more active and prayerful version of itself."*

PMC enables congregations to understand that effective mission rests on the ability to notice 'what God is up to' among themselves and in their neighbourhood. The 'Partnership' in the title Partnership for Missional Church is, first and foremost, our partnership with God.

In tune with God's dreams and desires

The process is designed to transform the church to be an engaging, effective, inspiring and flourishing body in tune with God's dreams and desires for local communities. Congregations are encouraged to work with local community partners to make those dreams a reality. In doing so churches are enabled to discover God's promised future for them, encouraging every member to get involved, and embody God's vision of mission in that neighbourhood.

We're not trying to do this in our own strength, however. A critical aspect of this venture is the recognition that it is God who does the work through us, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is foundational.

Now you can make a difference!

Could you spare less than a minute a day to pray for and bless the families, homes, schools, churches etc. of our community?
Your prayers would be so valued - and so worthwhile!

Continue reading - for a bit more about PMC - then to see what God has been doing all over Britain and around the world in response to prayer and blessing - and finally to get some short daily prayers.

"I strongly suspect that if we saw all the difference even the tiniest of our prayers make, and all the people those little prayers were destined to affect, and all the consequences of those prayers down through the centuries, we would be so paralysed with awe at the power of prayer that we would be unable to get up off our knees for the rest of our lives." (Peter Dreeft, Professor of Philosophy)

What is Partnership for Missional Church?

Partnership for Missional Church is a three year-process of spiritual reflection, transformation and engagement, which originated in the United States, travelled to South Africa and is now being launched nationally around the UK.

Why Partnership for Missional Church?

As individual Christians - and as a church - our primary mandate is to love God and to love our neighbour. In fact, both individually and corporately, we cannot fully satisfy God, without actively working for the spiritual and physical well-being of our neighbours.

The Westminster Catechism reminds us that our chief aim in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And God is most glorified when we tell others about how wonderful He is and what great things He does. In fact, the more we glorify Him, the more we will see Him at work in our individual and corporate lives. And the more we see Him at work in our lives, the more we'll enjoy Him! PMC provides a framework for glorifying God and reaching out to our neighbours.

What is the most important aspect of Partnership For Missional Church?

The most important aspect of PMC is the spiritual journey of drawing nearer to God; of seeking to satisfy his heart and becoming channels of His love in our community. This individual and corporate spiritual journey, not only increases our faith in, and our love for, God - it also increases our love for others. It can turn an inward-looking church into a confident, outward looking church, reaching out in God's power and timing to achieve what human effort alone could never achieve.

How does Partnership For Missional Church work?

PMC is based on the understanding that God is already at work in the world and in our communities. We begin by recognising that we need to get caught up in God's work, rather than asking God to help us with our church's work. It's about discerning God's plans and His timing and cooperating with what He is asking us to do for Him. It's about church members talking to each other about how and where they're seeing God at work.

Going about our daily lives, asking ourselves, "I wonder how God might already be at work in the lives of strangers I encounter every day. How might I

engage them enough to discern how God may be at work in their lives? What if I were to simply reach out with a word of kindness, or affirmation? How might God use this situation through my simply engaging them? Even in casual conversation."

What would cause Partnership For Missional Church to fail?

PMC will fail if we only grasp the practical aspect of going out into the community and talking to people - or even seeking to help people. Why rely on our own efforts when we can go out in God's power and Providence? Why struggle to achieve our own goals, when we can experience the thrill of finding ourselves right in the centre of God's plan in a given situation? PMC will fail if we neglect to dwell in the Word and to saturate everything we do in prayer and worship. Heart-felt worship is a critical aspect of this spiritual journey because it satisfies the heart of God and it is powerful. As we worship, God is working within us to will and to do.

How might we pray?

Prayer is most powerful when its primary aim is God's glory. When our desire as we pray is that God should be seen to be at work in the answering of prayer - then we've got our priorities right and that is powerful prayer. Prayer isn't primarily about getting God to do what we want Him to do - it's about tapping into what He wants to do, possibly through us. And in response to our rightly-motivated prayers God will place the resources of heaven at our disposal.

As a church we can also pray that God will put us in touch with other people in our community that he is using as practical channels of his love - people He would have us work with. Prayer, discernment and Providential timing are critical here. There are so many needs in our community that we could end up overstretched and exhausted if we try to run ahead of God. God is just as much at work today as He's ever been - if we will only pray. He can bring the right person or people to our minds or into our lives. He can guide us to the work that He plans to empower us to do. Work that is done His strength is exhilarating not exhausting.

Our vision, when it is aligned with God's current work of creating, redeeming, and sanctifying in our neighbourhood, will restore our church to what God intended it to be; to how God intended it to function. And - most important of all - God will be seen to be glorious.

It all began on the island of Kos

It was a beautiful Sunday morning on the Greek island of Kos - as a group of us walked around the bay beside a sparkling sea. Not yet too hot, we enjoyed the sunshine as we made our way to a little church in the steep cobbled streets of the old town.

In the relative cool of the church an English preacher told the story of what had been happening at a house of prayer on an old Celtic site nestling in the wild and beautiful countryside of Pembrokeshire. Walkers on the footpaths in this area of outstanding natural beauty had been knocking on the door - explaining that as they walked by they had been arrested by a mysterious power and had felt compelled to come and find out what was happening.

My full attention

The preacher in Kos now had my full attention! You see, I'd experienced that same mysterious power thirty years earlier - though I'd managed to resist it for twelve months. The Pembrokeshire walkers, however, would very soon discover for themselves what (or rather who) was that mysterious power. As they knelt at the foot of the cross in the garden of the house of prayer, Jesus made Himself known to them in the unmistakable power of the Holy Spirit.

This would happen time and time again as people were drawn to the centre, transformed spiritually, some healed physically and all overwhelmed by the love of God. These amazing events would later be documented in *The Grace Outpouring*, a book that would inspire the setting up of houses of prayer all over Britain and around the world. As a result communities were transformed.

As soon as I returned from Kos I ordered the book and then set about organising a trip to Ffald-y-Brenin with a group of friends. We learned there how the people of that little centre had been praying for the community around them - blessing the land and the people.

Blessing Wokingham

We were so inspired by what had resulted from those blessings that, in October 2010, we began to pray those blessings for the community and churches of Wokingham.

Seven years later - and still praying those blessings - I joined the Mission Innovation Team (MIT) and set out to discover what Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) was all about. I discovered principles similar to those I'd learned at Fald-y-Brenin. However I couldn't find very much about prayer.

In his book, *We Are Here Now*, Patrick Keifert, founder of PMC, does briefly mention prayer. For example, he writes about the different gifts and callings needed in the PMC teams. "Last but not least," he explains, "one must have the gift of prayer, the ability to invite the group to prayer." Keiffer urges congregations to seek God's will for their church and their community "through prayer and praise".

As I read the book, however, I realised that it would be very easy to get caught up with the practical suggestions in the book and miss the critical importance of prayer and praise.

Recently I read another book *Neighbours, Transform Your Street*. I was delighted to discover that Ffald-y-Brenin and *The Grace Outpouring* are featured in the book.

Some quotes:-

"The fact that there are so many similar initiatives, not just in this country, but around the world, excites me, as it means God is speaking to many people about the same vision" writes author, Rebekah Brettle

"There is a growing belief that community transformation will only come about after there has been a foundation of passionate united prayer allied to real community engagement and connectivity." writes Lloyd Cooke of Saltbox

Pastor David Carr explains *"Prayer is the 'carpet-bombing' that softens the opposition before you send in the troops. Prayer and social action combined together are a powerful and unstoppable force!"*

As Cannon David Brown reflects on his church's journey, he has this advice for other churches: *"You've got to look and listen to find the needs of your neighbourhood . . . And behind that is prayer. Walking around the area asking, 'Lord, what is it you want us to do here?'"*

Trying to do PMC without "a foundation of passionate united prayer" is like sowing seeds and then neglecting to water them. It pretty much guarantees failure. We need to saturate the whole venture in sustained prayer if we want to see success. And we can bless our community in the name of Jesus like the people of Ffald-y-Brenin and many others around the world are doing.

An insight

Patrick Keifert, founder of PMC, tells us that PMC has been profoundly shaped by the passage of Scripture Luke 10:1-12 - Jesus' instructions for mission. Roy Godwin of Ffald-y-Brenin give us insight into verse 5:- "*When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.'*" Roy explains that much of the meaning of the Hebrew word for peace, 'shalom', has been lost in translation.

"Peace" is only one small part of the meaning. "*Shalom*" means much more than "*peace, hello or goodbye*". According to Strong's Concordance, "*Shalom*" means completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord.

Shalom comes from the root verb shalom meaning to be complete, perfect and full. It means something like 'completeness': health in every area of life – physical, mental, spiritual, even economic.

A mighty blessing

In other words, the word 'shalom' is a mighty blessing on several levels! And Jesus instructed the disciples to pronounce this blessing on the homes they visited! Today we still use a familiar blessing, often spoken to each other in our churches.

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make His face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you

The Lord look kindly on you and give you peace
The blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit
be upon you and remain with you now and forever. Amen

This beautiful blessing is a 'remnant' of an age-old custom that dates right back to the early church for whom the practice of proclaiming blessings was a normal aspect of their spirituality. A valuable insight that has been all-but-lost is now being restored. We can, and should, bless people, homes and communities in the name of Jesus, as did the disciples.

Could you spare less than a minute a day to pray for and bless the families, homes, schools, churches etc. of our community?

You can make a difference!

You can make a difference to Wokingham - in less than one minute a day! On the next page are seven prayers and seven blessings - one each day for a fortnight. They're each only a paragraph long!

Daily email

Or - if you have email, you can receive those same prayers and blessings - in a daily e-prayer - automatically emailed to anyone who signs up for them. To sign up, go to PMC Prayer - our Yahoo e-prayer group:-

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/pmcprayer>

then click on "Join"

**You will then see a sign-up box – click on that
Please note – you don't need to create a yahoo address –
you can use any email address!**

After you've clicked on "sign up" you will see an option (in blue font) that you can click on:

"I'd rather use my own email address"

You will then receive an email each day, rotating fortnightly, containing the prayer or blessing for that day.

Your prayers would be so valued - and so worthwhile!

"I strongly suspect that if we saw all the difference even the tiniest of our prayers make, and all the people those little prayers were destined to affect, and all the consequences of those prayers down through the centuries, we would be so paralysed with awe at the power of prayer that we would be unable to get up off our knees for the rest of our lives." (Peter Dreeft, Professor of Philosophy)

Week 1 - Prayers

Week 1 Sunday prayer

God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Week 1 Monday prayer

Dear God, we dedicate the PMC blog to you and ask you to make it your own. It is our desire that you should be seen to be at work in our church and in our neighbourhood, drawing hearts to your heart and transforming lives. And we want to record what you do – for your glory, for the building up of our faith and for the sake of precious souls in our community who desperately need you. We want this blog to prove that you are a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering Heavenly Father, who still wants to demonstrate the love that took Jesus to the cross and the power that raised Him from the dead. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Week 1 Tuesday prayer

Dear God, as we engage with PMC, we pray that your Holy Spirit will guide and teach us as we seek to build upon the gifts we already have, as individuals and as a church. Enable us to become a better and more active and prayerful version of us. Give us eyes to see what you are doing, in our individual lives, in our church and in our neighbourhood. Transform Woollahill Church, we pray, to become an engaging, effective, inspiring and flourishing body in tune with your dreams and desires for our local community. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Week 1 Wednesday prayer

Dear God, as we engage with PMC, please draw us closer to you, to seek your heart, to know you more and more, and to better understand your ways. Show us how we can glorify you by telling others about how wonderful you are and what great things you do. Please be at work in our church, dear Lord. Make us a church that puts you first in everything we do. Please inspire, guide and direct us. Show us where you are working and what you are asking of us. Bring the people you want us to work with into our lives and enable us to be channels of your love in our community. Cause us to delight in you and to get excited about what you are doing. We want to be a church that satisfies your heart and draws others to the heart of Jesus. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Week 1 Thursday prayer

Heavenly Father, as we engage with PMC, please reveal yourself to us as we dwell in your Word. Give us eyes to see where you are at work in our community so that we can talk to each other about what we think that you are doing and what we feel you are asking of us. Give us wisdom to discern how our ideas line up with Scripture, how they fit with our gifts as a church and how they meet the needs of our neighbourhood. Show us how and where we can practice hospitality, a listening ear and an ability to put others at ease. Please direct where we focus our effort and energy. In all we do, Lord, keep our eyes on you, our aim to please you, and our motive to glorify you. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Week 1 Friday prayer

Lord, as we engage with PMC, help us to make time in our busy lives to pray. And let our primary aim in prayer be to see you glorified in the answering of our prayers. Show us what and how you would have us pray. Keep us patient and persevering in prayer until you choose to answer our prayers in your own way; in your own time. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Week 1 Saturday prayer

Dear Lord, as we engage with PMC, we want to be able to tell others about how great you are and what wonderful things you do. Give us stories to tell of how you 'show up' – how you guide and provide – stories that make us excited and want to tell people about you so that they, too, may be drawn to you. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Week 2 Sunday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless your lives, your homes and your families with all the blessings of the mighty God who created you. We bless you that the presence of the Kingdom of God may fall upon you and your families. We bless you that the Lord may break into your lives - that He will reveal Himself to you and share His heart with you. **Amen**

Week 2 - Blessings

Week 2 Sunday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless your lives, your homes and your families with all the blessings of the mighty God who created you. We bless you that the presence of the Kingdom of God may fall upon you and your families. We bless you that the Lord may break into your lives - that He will reveal Himself to you and share His heart with you. **Amen**

Week 2 Monday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless your hearts - that they may be softened towards God and quickened to hear His voice. We bless you with wisdom and understanding - to know everything about God that He wants you to know. We bless you with a growing delight in God - in all that He is - in all that He does. **Amen**

Week 2 Tuesday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless you that you may prosper in every part of life as God makes Himself clear to you. We speak out blessings, health, prosperity and fruitfulness into your marriages, families, friendships and the work of your hands. We bless the spiritual environment of your homes, your churches, your schools and your workplaces. **Amen**

Week 2 Wednesday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless your relationships with each other and with your children. We bless every intergenerational relationship in your wider families that there may be peace and love and understanding flowing between each one. We bless all your relationships that they may be loving, forgiving, merciful and strong. We bless you with a network of wholesome and supportive friendships. **Amen**

Week 2 Thursday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless the circumstances of your lives that they may be wholesome, healthy and strong. We bless your health that you may be fit and well. We resist any sickness or disease which seeks to harm you or your families and say - be well, be strong, be healthy. **Amen**

Week 2 Friday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless you with God's protection, with divine wisdom, and with clear direction for your lives. We bless your education, your work and every wholesome enterprise that is conducted by you that it may prosper and be successful. **Amen**

Week 2 Saturday blessing

In the name of Jesus we bless the people of Wokingham and the surrounding area. We bless you with obedient hearts and a positive outlook on life. We bless you with strong wills and with self-control and self-discipline. We bless you with creativity, with courage, with ability, with abundance and with fulfilment. We bless your wealth that you may have enough to live and enough to give. **Amen**

Note:- *these are prayers that are emailed daily to anyone who signs up for them. This document is for those who prefer to use a printed copy of the prayers. Whichever method you choose, your prayers are so valued. This will take less than a minute each day - but so worthwhile!*

Quote:- *"I strongly suspect that if we saw all the difference even the tiniest of our prayers make, and all the people those little prayers were destined to affect, and all the consequences of those prayers down through the centuries, we would be so paralysed with awe at the power of prayer that we would be unable to get up off our knees for the rest of our lives."* (Peter Dreeft, Professor of Philosophy)

PMC - the six spiritual practices

PMC is American in origin and uses a lot of jargon. As with all jargon if you understand its meaning then it's a useful summary/shorthand. Otherwise it's just confusing and distracting. The six Spiritual Practices are simply "Good Habits" to be developed and used as part of PMC and to support the Missional Challenge.

God is not an absent God; He is not a distant God; He is not a passive God. He is actively working now in the world, in England, in Wokingham, in Woosehill. He is actively working here, right now, in our church. There's a thought! These "Spiritual Practices" or "Good Habits" are intended to raise everyone's awareness of what God is doing in the world and what He wishes us to do. They are intended to help and guide us in our outreach to our local community and to be sources for ideas for our outreach. All require practice to enable us to become proficient (and develop them into a habit). Consistent prayer is essential to confirm that we are going in the right direction.

In summary, the six Spiritual Practices are:

1: Dwelling in the Word

Actively listening to God through reading the living text of the Bible; learning to accurately report what "spoke" to us, to shape imaginations, intentions and actions. We've been practicing by reading the Luke 10 v 1-12 passage, discovering more messages and meaning every time we read the passage.

2: Dwelling in the World

Actively taking notice of the people we meet and what sort of interaction we have with them. We then ask God whether He is sending any of them to us and if He wants us to develop our relationship with any of these people.

3: Announcing the Kingdom

Actively noticing where God is being active in the world, and relating to each other what we notice so that they can recognise God at work too. It's about discerning where God is directing us to join him in carrying out his work in the world and in our local community.

4: Spiritual Discernment

Through "Dwelling in the World" and "Announcing the Kingdom", we will have (hopefully) noticed a large number of possibilities for outreach in our community. Then we need to determine, through spiritual discernment, which of these possibilities God wants us to pursue further. Discernment has to be based in prayer. We also need to take into consideration what we know from scripture. And we need to consider what gifts, interests, passions and concerns we, as a church, have. Finally we need ask ourselves what are the interests, passions and concerns of our local community.

5: Hospitality

This is about, not only giving a gracious welcome, but also of being comfortable with receiving a gracious welcome. It is not just about "tea & cake", but also interacting with and actively listening to the needs of others and making them feel comfortable, both as a giver and a receiver of hospitality.

6. Focus for Missional Action

There are so many possibilities and needs in our community and we can't meet them all. To try to do so would cause us to exhaust ourselves physically and spiritually. Or we would feel so overwhelmed that we would risk failure to do anything. So we need to focus our efforts and energy, based on the habit of "Spiritual Discernment"