

Germinate Leadership: a participant's perspective



'The church is less easy to manage than, say, a factory for making garden furniture. Churches are not just human groups organised round a straightforward task. They are primarily places of divine encounter, places where we wrestle with the meaning of God and the meaning of our own lives. They are bound to be untidy.'

Richard Holloway, *Churches and How to Survive Them*

I like Holloway's description of the church; certainly we're untidy in the countryside. But marry his quote to Ralph Waller's personal portrait of the great John Wesley, and you have a heady cocktail; 'Wesley was someone whose life was often in a muddle'. Where do I, a church leader, find help for the task when I am part of this godly mess?!

Enter, stage left, Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre.

I began Germinate Leadership in October 2016 at a time when I was struggling in multi-parish rural ministry. Almost 10 years into my incumbency, and recovering from an extended period of ill health, the programme became an absolute lifeline. Alongside others of different ages and at different stages, from across the denominations and the UK, I saw afresh God's call to ministry in rural areas. I was captivated by the vision cast by Janet Bryer and Howard Petch as they outlined a culture of continuing personal and professional development. I hung on the every word of a dozen contributors, who spoke on topics as diverse as entrepreneurial leadership, rural statistics, uses and abuses of power, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and tensions in church life. I delighted in the variety of learning resources – input days, a 360° appraisal, mentoring and work shadowing – and the deepening of relationships that took place on our three-day residential.

The real test was assembling a portfolio of learning, designed to form the basis of a two-hour Professional Dialogue. Yes, I was incredibly nervous sitting down in front of a Bishop and a CEO. But I was so excited, too, because the demands of the Germinate Leadership Programme forced me to put on paper what I believe and how I see myself: someone full of creative ideas, willing to challenge the status quo and do things differently, someone beloved in Christ, wanting to tell the story of God's love in our communities.

Germinate Leadership has seen me through a transition into a new post, and one year in, I am putting my learning – which I regularly share via social media – into practice. Follow me for a glimpse of the muddle, the mess and the majesty of ministry in a rural setting. Oh, and if you want to see leadership (and yourself) in a different light, sign up to [Germinate Leadership](https://germinate.net/country-way)!

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