

Life and faith in rural Britain...

COUNTRYWAY



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Growing Together

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It's better together...

Welcome to the Rural Mission Sunday edition of Country Way. Rural Mission Sunday is now in its fourth year and last year over 300 churches registered to take part. We know a lot more than that celebrated on the day or on another Sunday in the year. We want many more churches to get involved this year, so take a look at the special section of resources inside and register on germinate.net. Our theme is Growing Together, a reminder that rural churches can grow and a challenge to do all that we can to help such growth.

Last year we focused on hospitality and welcome, encouraging churches to open their doors to everyone. Challenging us to find space for those who may not feel welcome anywhere else. This year's theme encourages us to look outwards and consider growth in many ways including growing in numbers and growing together across communities. As spring develops and summer beckons we are surrounded by signs of growth in the natural world. As you prepare to celebrate, gardens will be in full bloom and arable crops ripening ready for harvest – a great time to nurture and develop new life.

Natural growth appears in many of the parables of Jesus: the seed growing secretly in the soil; the mustard seed that grows into a tree; or the seed grown in the good soil that produces a hundred times more. They are all reminders that faith begins in small ways and through God grows to change the world.

We see this in the beginnings of the church, the first group of disciples, transformed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost grow rapidly as God adds to their numbers. Through their lives and witness the message of the gospel spreads across

the world. It is easy to look back wistfully at a golden age, or to feel despondent because it doesn't feel as if we could grow like that today, but we shouldn't do this, as everything is possible with God.

The same God who inspired and empowered the early disciples is there to do the same for us. The process may look different today in our rural communities, but growth can and does happen. What might you need to do to nourish your own faith and that of your church? How can you work in your community to encourage others and share faith along the way through loving service and word? Rural Mission Sunday has lots of practical ideas and suggestions. Take the opportunity this year to do something new and see how you grow together.

And don't forget to tell us what you do and what happens as a result!



Elizabeth Clark

National Rural Officer,
Methodist and United Reformed Churches
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Germinate News

Introducing Germinate's new Chief Executive

Claire Maxim became CEO immediately after Easter this year. She joins us from rural parish ministry in Wiltshire with extensive previous experience in the electricity industry.

No-one was more surprised than me when I was appointed as the new CEO of Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre! But many strands of my life are drawing together in a very exciting new way.

I was brought up in rural Warwickshire by my mum and grandparents and learned my Christian faith in a worshipping community of around 15 people where the person closest in age to me was my mum. Over a 20-year career with E.ON I moved from hands-on engineering in power stations, through leading teams, to more strategic technical work and to the more complex commercial deals with generators and National Grid. By contrast to engineering it was always good to be able to get out into fields and woods easily.

In the early 2000s I followed a call to ordination, juggling studying at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham with being a mum and working full time. It's an excellent way of learning to prioritise, although I didn't always get my priorities right. One of the defining times in training was during a 'rural' weekend at my urban theological college. I didn't learn a single new thing... apart from the fact that my vocation was to rural ministry.

The eight years spent as a parish priest in the south have been wonderful. It was a privilege to meet and learn about people, and help them explore what God was doing in their lives whilst living alongside them. Rectors of parishes on Salisbury Plain get involved in civic events, local organisations, care homes, schools, and the army too. My children grew into adults of whom I am very proud, and they are off living their own lives. I thought I was settled...until



several people pointed out this job, and three sent me the role description. God calls us all, but some of us need a very firm series of nudges before we sit up and take notice!

This change of role brings together a rural upbringing, faith, my strategic and managerial experience, a love of learning and research, ministry among rural people, and my dream of living in Warwickshire again. It will allow me to think and act nationally, and become part of a close-knit team again. It feels like a role which will allow me to use all of my skills and be myself, in a very integrated and enjoyable way.

So what do I want to achieve with Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre? My predecessor, Jerry Marshall, has transformed the organisation and I am looking forward to building on the previous work he has done, while encouraging more research into rural church life in 21st century Britain in a time of rapid change. The more we understand the many rural contexts within which people live, work and worship, the better placed we are to support them. We all share in God's mission, we are all here to help plant the seeds of the Gospel, to nurture new disciples and to help mature disciples bear the fruit by which we are known.

This is a wonderful opportunity to live out my faith, to share it with others, and to help people be the best human beings they can possibly be. I look forward to working with you all. What could be more exciting?

Revd Claire Maxim

CEO, Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre
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GERMINATE CONFERENCE 2018

SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER 2018, COVENTRY

MORE THAN BELONGING

With key note speakers, case studies and workshops, the 2018 Germinate Conference will explore what it means for rural Christians to do more than belong to their churches and communities. Both inspiring and practical, the day will bring together individuals, churches, agencies and networks involved in rural mission and ministry.

Our keynote speakers are David Walker, Bishop of Manchester, and Claire Maxim, Germinate CEO. There is an exciting range of workshops to choose from and a market place to pick up lots of relevant information from partner organisations.

But hurry, the early bird rate is closing soon! To book your ticket for £50 per person get in quickly by 30 June. After that the price increases to £60 then £70.

See germinate.net/training/germinateconference for more information, including how to book.



GERMINATE LEADERSHIP

We are now recruiting for the next Germinate Leadership course starting in the autumn of 2018. Germinate Leadership helps lay and ordained leaders from all denominations to develop creative, entrepreneurial skills for rural church leadership. You can read about two people who have participated in the course on pages 25 and 26. For more information see: germinate.net/germinate-leadership

Stay up to date with these and other rural events, resources and funding by receiving Germinate News, our free monthly e-news. Sign up at germinate.net/newsletter-sign-up.

GERMINATE RURAL MINISTRY

Germinate: Rural Ministry

We are trialing a new way of providing training for clergy and lay leaders new to rural ministry. Two **FREE** pilot courses are taking place. If you are interested in participating contact debs@germinate.net

Thursday, 14 June:

Westmoreland County Show Resource Centre, Lanes Farm, Kendal

Tuesday, 10 July:

Sarum College, Salisbury

Rural Round-up



Plough Sunday at St Peter's, Sulby

In January a heart-warming service was held in St Stephen's Church, Sulby, on the Isle of Man.

Sulby, with its population of 400 people plus a few wallabies living wild in local grasslands, nestles at the end of a winding glen where the Manx mountains descend towards the agricultural Northern Plain. The church is one of three chapels commissioned two centuries ago by Bishop Ward to serve remoter rural parts of the Isle of Man.

Today the Sulby Straight, famous as part of the TT course where bikes whiz through at over 200mph during the races, runs

through the heart of the village. The rest of the year, visible activity is mostly bird life and grazing cattle.

This Plough Sunday, members of St Stephen's used an adapted Germinate service to celebrate and seek God's blessing on their farming communities. Sue Cooke, a skilled maker of miniatures, created a model farming scene featuring green grass, trees, a plough, ploughed earth and roaming chickens. Sue apologised that the chickens were not to scale, niftily explaining that this new breed of Manx hens lays larger eggs so you need fewer for your baking!

As we turned the page for the final blessing, following the stirring, faith-based Manx National Anthem, Sue was moved to see that the service originated from St. Peter's Church, Inkberrow, in Worcester Diocese, the resting place of her late father Jim Wilcox.

The Germinate service that morning made us all feel poignantly connected to our neighbours near and far, and to our God-given heritage.

Gill Poole

Reader in the Parish of the Northern Plain

Harborough Resourcing Church launches first new congregation



Revd Barry Hill
Team Rector Market Harborough

Back in January, St Dionysius, one of five churches in the Harborough Anglican Team, launched its first new congregation. The 9:15am worshipping community is a new weekly, all-age led congregation aimed at helping people know more of God's love, calling and purposes from Monday to Saturday, as well as on Sundays. Over 80 people of all ages gathered for the first service, around a quarter of which were new to church. This is the first of what we expect to be a new congregation, with the expectation of forming other new congregations somewhere in the Team roughly every year for the next six years.

All-age led, it is expected that everyone, whether attending for the first time or the hundredth, takes a role. Some roles are more practical, some more prayerful; some involve leadership, some hospitality. Each week there are seven ways of engaging with the same Bible passage, reflecting the different ways that people learn. After people have engaged with the Bible in as many ways as they want, the community gathers to share what we noticed, what God might be saying to us and what difference it will make in the week ahead.

Market Harborough is a market town with a population of 22,000 and the Harborough Anglican Team is the first rural resource church in the country, developed in response the Church of England's Renewal and Reform programme. This programme is aimed at helping the Church of England become a growing Church for all people and for all places. Resource churches are part of this national approach, which will help support mission and growth in the wider local area.

We expect to see significant growth in the next few years as we seek to better connect with and serve the 93% of the town who are not currently part of any Christian community.

Lambing Service in a barn helps people feel closer to God

Brooksby Melton College's Hall Farm was the venue for the 10th annual Lambing Service for the Upper Wreake Parish. The congregation arrived by tractor and trailer and after the service enjoyed seeing the new born lambs, piglets and calves.

In his talk Canon Glyn Evans, Deputy Director of the Farming Community Network, drew together themes of mothering, new life, Lent and Easter, and posies were distributed, courtesy of some of the churches of the Upper Wreake Parish and the local Methodist Church.

'When we first decided to hold a lambing service ten years ago it seemed sensible to take the service to the sheep rather than bring one of two lambs to the parish church,' said Malcolm Britton, who is a Reader in the Upper Wreake Parish.

'With the co-operation of Brooksby Melton College, particularly the estate manager Nick Marriott and his colleagues, we are able to have a brief act of worship in a barn and then see the new-born lambs as well as calves and piglets,' he said.

'John Norburn brought and played his organ and the nearby cattle joined in with some of the singing. One visitor remarked that she feels closer to God when worshipping out-of-doors and the themes of mothering, both the joys and challenges, and of new life as Easter approaches were well represented in the farm situation,' said Mr Britton.



Borderlands Butty Van

Borderlands Rural Chaplaincy is an ecumenical initiative of Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury Methodist District and the Diocese of Hereford.

To get local conversations going in Shropshire, a small group started a Butty Van which travels within a fifteen mile radius of the village of Kenley, near Much Wenlock.

A team of four chaplains and six helpers travel to a local farm and serve bacon and sausage baps with tea or coffee in one of the farm's buildings. Around thirty farmers, their spouses and retired farmers have

attended each event. It's a time to talk, make new friends and chat confidentially with one of our chaplains. Farmers have been known to pop in even at really busy times like lambing season!

The response to the Butty Van has surprised the chaplaincy and pleased the farming community, demonstrating that the church cares about farming.

Ironically, there is no actual van, just tables, chairs, catering equipment and a gas BBQ! Volunteers gain a food hygiene certificate through the local council and gatherings are covered by special

third-party insurance. Local churches, individuals and even a choir raised £2000 to buy equipment and fund the first twelve meetings. Some local parishes have used this event as a mission action activity and it is proving to be exciting and rewarding in a number of ways.

Currently running as a six-month experiment, the project has become an effective way to talk to local farming communities and to show the church does care.

Paul Trenberth
Volunteer



Growing together

What do you think of when you hear the word 'growth'? Perhaps you think of the children in your family and their development from dependent babies to capable, creative teenagers. Maybe you're a gardener, lovingly tending seeds from germination through potting on to planting out. Or you might be a rural entrepreneur watching a business you dreamed of become a reality.

But nothing grows in isolation. A rural entrepreneur needs customers, suppliers and a network of supportive family and friends. Plants need nutrients, water and sunlight. And it takes a village to raise a child.

The idea of growing together appears throughout the Bible but one of the most powerful images is that of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). When a baby emerges from her mother we have no expectation that she is the finished article, that she knows how to 'be' in this new world. We know she will grow, change and develop; we also know this process will take time.

Is the same true of the Body of Christ? Those who are 'hands' discover over time what that means, what the role requires, what their 'hand' is uniquely able to achieve when it is working effectively with the 'brain' and the 'arm'. In a human body a hand might, with the help and cooperation of the arm and the brain, develop extraordinary artistic skills, producing astonishing works of art; with a different arm and brain, and in partnership with strong and athletic legs, it can control and manipulate a tennis racket, producing sublime stroke play and match-winning drop shots.

And that's the key to the image of the body: not only does each individual part need others in order to fulfil its potential; it simply can't exist without them. As 1 Corinthians 12:21 reminds us, one part cannot say to another, 'I don't need you'. The reality is that no one has all the gifts that the church requires and, conversely, everyone has a gift to share. Gifts are given to individuals for the benefit of the whole body. The idea of unity and variety is fundamental to the body of Christ. For Paul, Christian identity is corporate; individual faith is important but has to be expressed as part of the wider church.

For Rural Mission Sunday, 15 July 2018 we're encouraging rural churches across the denominations to explore what it means to grow together. The materials we've produced will help churches explore what growth might look like and who might help them to grow. You'll find eight pages of Rural Mission Sunday resources in the centre of this issue of Country Way. Why not take some time with a small group and explore the Bible passages we've included:

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

One body with many parts: growing together as a local church

Mark 10:13-16

Jesus blesses little children: growing together with children and young people

Acts 2:42-47

The fellowship of the believers: growing in number

Mark 6:6-13

Jesus sends out the Twelve: growing together as a team

John 17:20-26

Jesus prays for all believers: growing together across denominations

Jeremiah 29:7

Growing together with others in our communities.

How then do we develop our gifts and grow as disciples? We need to encourage each other about the gifts we have and give people opportunities to do something new. A lady in her 80s spoke in church for the first time when she was invited to help lead the prayers of intercession one Sunday. As we become confident of our gifts and our own faith journeys we can begin to





share our story with others, as through us God grows the church.

Disciples aren't just for Sunday of course. Many Christians are involved in all kinds of community activity which can make a real difference to those around them. We are not always good at celebrating and supporting these people and often struggle to make the connection between what we do and what we believe. As St John Chrysostom pointed out, 'nothing can so make a person an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbours.'

How can we better make those links? When gathering for worship why not ask members of the congregation what they will be doing this time tomorrow and pray for them? We also need to find ways of praying meaningfully for the communities of which we are a part. How can you reflect the hopes and concerns of your neighbours as you gather for worship?

Working together across the denominations is key to effective Christian 'togetherness'. This is not about filling gaps in our resources but living out a commitment to Christian unity so that, as John 17:21 reminds us, the world might believe. How can the churches of different denominations in your community work

more closely together? If there is only one denomination with a worshipping presence in your community how can you welcome individual Christians of other denominations?

In a small market town, the midweek knitting group at the Methodist Church is actively supported by someone who worships at a large town church on a Sunday. The group is a real support to those who feel lonely and its mission is enhanced by those of different denominations working together.

It is vital that we learn to work across the generations; there is much adults can learn from children and young people! We have developed a specific children's resource for Rural Mission Sunday which offers some simple and practical ways of engaging with the children in your community.

But the Church cannot do everything, and neither should it try. Just as Jeremiah challenged the exiles to pray for the city in which they found themselves, we need to both pray for and work with other groups for the benefit of the whole community. In Broadchalke, a partnership between the United Reformed Church and the local Anglican church evolved into a community project as the URC building was refurbished to create a new home

for the village store, which was otherwise threatened with closure. The community continues to work together to maintain the shop, worship still takes place and the congregation is beginning to grow.

So for Rural Mission Sunday 2018 we're extending some challenges. There's a challenge to grow deeper with God through discipleship and with each other as we spend time together exploring how we might better become the Body of Christ in our own communities. There's a challenge to grow in our relationships with our local community, with other churches, community groups and schools. There's a challenge to grow in our relationships with those of other faiths, exploring both our differences and those things we hold in common.

But above all there's a challenge to grow in number through evangelism as we step out and share the good news of Jesus with a world that desperately needs a transformational encounter with the Messiah whose Body we are called to be in the world.

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Where's the growth?



At the beginning of the year I was asked a lot about *A Vicar's Life*, the BBC TV series which followed a number of clergy in the Diocese of Hereford. People outside the church asked, 'Is that really what the Church does for people?' People inside the Church asked, 'Yes, but where's the growth?'

At the moment the Church of England is spending a lot of time wrestling with the thorny issue of numerical growth. It's a central concern of the denomination's Renewal and Reform agenda and focuses on reversing the decline in numbers and attendance at services that we know has been happening for a long time.

We can see the reasons for a push for more numerical growth, both in terms of finance and sustainability, and we're told that when that growth comes we will be filled with hope, optimism and excitement. In some rural places there is encouraging numerical growth going on, but in many other rural areas that sort of growth seems like an impossible dream. In one episode of *A Vicar's Life*, Fr Matthew's son is the only child in attendance for the children's bit of Harvest Festival.

The trouble is that we can get so focussed on the end point – fruitful change via numerical growth – that we forget about the process and what

that means. Maybe, then, as we think about the particular value and meaning of rural mission and what it signals to the whole Church, we might re-imagine 'growth' by considering what that might mean to God.

For example, a new person comes to church for the first time and is never seen again in that place. From a God's-eye view that is still growth. The church has grown in experience, hospitality and grace because it has encountered and engaged with a new person who is precious and loved by God. A shoot of spiritual experience and change has occurred in the life of that person. So it's really important that that experience is a good experience.

As a moment, frozen in time, numerical and spiritual growth, however fragile, is real in God's economy. You only have to look at church visitors' books to see how many of those moments there are: tourists, walkers, the family members and friends attending baptisms, weddings and funerals, the person who drops in to say a prayer or visit a grave, the children who come by on a school trip. There were so many of those moments in *A Vicar's Life*. And that was just the bit that was filmed.

From the God's-eye view, all these encounters with God's house and God's people are moments of growth,

moments of meeting between God's beloveds and the One who is looking and longing for them. So this is where God's own mission touches those people and our task is to wonder how we can enhance and deepen that moment of encounter with the *missio dei*, the mission of God, so that there may be other moments later on.

Similarly, anything done in rural ministry, mission and relationships can be real growth because all of that is adding to the total knowledge and love of God in our land. It may not feel like that because much of it is uncountable, unquantifiable, like the offer of practical help and pastoral comfort at a supermarket checkout or on a lonely farm. That's a problem for us but not for God. The work of the rural church is growing the kingdom in everything it touches.

Simple, ordinary events in the life of the rural church can, if we have the time and patience to see where they all lead, have echoes and ripples that stretch and extend the kingdom. The task for us is to have keener eyes and ears for the start of those echoes and ripples and to have a good idea of who can help us amplify them; we need partners and fellow travellers to make that happen.

And the everyday has real growth value. All worship, irrespective of the



relative number of worshippers, has tremendous potential to add to depth of discipleship. After all, that is what worship is for. Engaging meaningfully and creatively in the sacraments, gathering for Bible study and prayer, and celebrating the rhythms and seasons of the year adds to spiritual growth in the 'knowledge and love' of God. Faithfulness and commitment in devotion to God matter, whether it's a half dozen for a family service or a full house for carol singing.

A number of people wrote to me about the death of a churchwarden in *A Vicar's Life*. Yes, so many of our parishioners are elderly, but why treat their lives of services and indeed their deaths as simply 'numerical decline'? I always liked that unfashionable hymn 'I vow to thee my country' for its reminder that 'soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase'; the growth of God's domain as faithful souls find their 'long home', as Ecclesiastes puts it.

Yes, all those funerals go on the debit side of the ledger from our human point of view, but every funeral of a faithful Christian grows God's heavenly family.

We believe, after all, in the communion of saints and the life everlasting. So why should not that hope, joy and optimism for growth be part of that bit of God's desire for us all?

I know that none of this cuts much ice with the cold, hard numbers which are needed for reversing the decline in attendance that we want. I know that this way of thinking about growth won't mend the hole in the church roof or magically swell congregations. But I do find that trying to see through God's eyes helps inject a sense of hopefulness and rightness about mission and ministry when strategies and plans seem to frustrate us and things don't happen as fast as we would like. We are all labourers in the vineyard and as *A Vicar's Life* showed, the fruit in rural places can be very good indeed.

Dr Anne Richards

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You can read about Revd Matthew Stafford's experience of participating in *A Vicar's Life* on page 25. More information about the series, including profiles of the clergy who featured, can be found on our website – go to germinate.net and search 'A Vicar's Life'.





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RURAL MISSION SUNDAY 2018

Growing Together
Sunday 15 July



Germinate
Arthur Rank Centre



RURAL MISSION SUNDAY 2018 GROWING TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

Rural Mission Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate the life of the rural church. We know that rural Christians can and do make a real difference to their communities. However, that is not always how it feels; we can often feel overshadowed by larger urban and suburban churches. So it's important to stop, reflect on what we do and give thanks.

Growth can mean different things to different people, particularly in the context of our lives as Christians. We grow in our relationships with each other as we spend time together week by week. We grow in our relationships with God as we engage in discipleship. And we grow in number as we share with our friends and neighbours the good news of Jesus.

As you celebrate Rural Mission Sunday 2018 our prayer is that you will experience growth in all of these ways!

TELL US YOUR STORIES!

We'd love to hear about what you did to mark Rural Mission Sunday! The diversity of rural churches and their communities means that there's a huge amount of creativity around and we like nothing more than sharing stories of the amazing and creative ways in which the rural church is being celebrated.

The easiest way to share your feedback is to go to germinate.net/rms-2018-feedback and follow the links to our feedback form and tell us what you got up to. Alternatively, you can email rms@germinate.net or even send us a letter!

This booklet includes:

- **What does it mean to grow together?**
An overview of some key Bible passages which have shaped the Church's understanding of growth and community; you may choose to draw on these for the teaching element of your service on Rural Mission Sunday
- **Practical opportunities to grow together**
Some ideas of ways in which your church might grow together through Rural Mission Sunday
- **Shaping your church service**
A service outline plus songs and prayers suggestions – build a Rural Mission Sunday service that works for your community

While Rural Mission Sunday itself takes place on 15 July, you can use this material at any time and in the way that's most appropriate to your church and community. The material in this booklet is supplemented by the Rural Mission Sunday section of our website (germinate.net/rural-mission-sunday) and you should feel completely free to use as much or as little of it as you'd like!

Suggestions for further reading

HOPE: The Heartbeat of Mission
(HOPE Together)

Calling People of Goodwill: The Bible and the Common Good
(The Bible Society, 2017)

COULD YOU HELP US ENABLE OTHERS TO GROW TOGETHER?

We'd be really grateful if you would consider using Rural Mission Sunday as an opportunity to financially support the work of Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre by taking up an offering during your service on Sunday 15 July. We're entirely funded by our supporters so it's the generosity of local churches and others that enables us to continue to find imaginative and creative ways of supporting local churches and their communities.

You can send your contribution electronically via our website (germinate.net/donate) or by cheque, made payable to The Arthur Rank Centre. For more information, please contact Susie Carr (susiec@germinate.net, 024 7685 3060).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GROW TOGETHER?

GROWING TOGETHER AS A LOCAL CHURCH

1 Corinthians 12:12-27: One body with many parts

The image of the body is a familiar picture of the church which emphasises the need for unity; people from different backgrounds with differing gifts come together as the body of Christ.

Everyone has a gift, but no one has all the gifts. No one can say they are not needed and nobody's gift can be rejected. This idea of unity and variety is fundamental. It is also a reminder that our faith can only truly be worked out in community with others. By coming together to support and learn from each other we can model aspects of grace and show something of God to the wider community.

What gifts do those in your church have?

How can you use the gifts you have for God's mission in your community?

GROWING TOGETHER WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Mark 10:13-16: Jesus blesses little children

This passage is often used in services of infant baptism or dedication and celebrates the counter-cultural welcome Jesus extended to children, to the dismay of even his closest friends. But it also speaks of discipleship, a timely reminder to adults that the kingdom of heaven is not about status or power but is to be received as a gift, not earned or grasped as a right.

What can we learn from children in our community?

How might our congregations be transformed if we considered children and young people to be the church of today, not the church of tomorrow?

GROWING IN NUMBER

Acts 2:42-47: The Fellowship of the believers

The story of the early church reminds us that radical 'togetherness' leads to numerical growth. Those at the core of this new community had been transformed by their experience of sharing in Jesus' earthly ministry, by witnessing his resurrection and by the empowering of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Now they are leading a new community whose shared way of life is so inspiring that 'the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved'. This community is telling a new story to those with whom they live and work, and this story is changing lives and drawing new people into that community.

How might you share your faith with others by telling the life-changing story of Jesus in new ways in your community?

What changes might you need to make to your life together to help encourage people to explore faith?

GROWING TOGETHER AS A TEAM

Mark 6:6-13: Jesus sends out the Twelve

(This is the Gospel reading for Sunday 15 July from the Roman Catholic lectionary.)

This passage is a powerful reminder of the kind of leadership Jesus modelled during his ministry. He calls his disciples as individuals, invites the whole group to join him in his mission and then sends them out in teams. It is not enough for us to watch Jesus and be amazed at what he does; we are called to join in!

We are to go 'from village to village' in the name of Jesus, knowing that the Spirit will have been there before us and will continue to work after we have played our part. But we also go with others; this is a task for teams!

How can we proclaim the good news together for the sake of the kingdom?

GROWING TOGETHER ACROSS DENOMINATIONS

John 17:20-26: Jesus prays for all believers

Having shared his last supper with his disciples, Jesus begins to pray. The prayer climaxes as he prays for his future followers: us! He prays that we 'might be one so that the world might believe'.

This is a huge challenge; working together isn't something we do to make our resources go further but because it is fundamental to communicating the good news of who Jesus is. We are called to unity with Christians from other churches, communities and denominations because that's how we change the world.

How might you celebrate Rural Mission Sunday with those from other denominations?

What one thing could your church do this year with a church from another denomination?

GROWING TOGETHER WITH OTHERS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Jeremiah 29:7

God's people are in exile in Babylon, a strange land. They are there under duress, not out of choice. They miss the temple and all it represents about their relationship with God. Jeremiah sends a letter in which he not only encourages them to pray for the people who hold them captive but to work for the good of the place and the community in which they find themselves.

Are there people in your community who feel like they are in a 'strange land'? How might you help them?

How might you work with local partners for the physical and social good of your community?



PRACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW TOGETHER

Last year Rural Mission Sunday challenged you to consider ways in which you might welcome your community into your church. This year we are turning that challenge on its head and encouraging you to consider where you might go to join in with others!

... THROUGH PRAYER AND WORSHIP

If your community has more than one church, why not join together for worship on Rural Mission Sunday? Use this opportunity to explore the ways in which different churches – and different denominations – celebrate their identity as rural churches.

... THROUGH SAYING THANK YOU

Say thank you to those in your community by giving a small gift or card to all those who make a difference to community life. These might include parish councillors, the lollipop lady (or gentleman!), refuse collectors, police community support officers, teachers – the list is endless!

... THROUGH GIVING GIFTS

If you live in a particularly small community – or you have a particularly large congregation! – you could bake a small gift for each household in the village and leave it on the doorstep with a note of blessing from your church.

... THROUGH CELEBRATING YOUR COMMUNITY

If your village has a community fete or fun day, consider how you might contribute something to that event rather than organising your own. Why not host a prayer space or offer to run the refreshment tent?

... THROUGH EXTENDING HOSPITALITY

If your church building hosts activities run by those outside of the congregation – a adult's exercise class or community nursery, for example – why not offer to provide refreshments or even host an afternoon tea for them?

Our website contains lots more ideas for practical ways in which you can grow together, alongside some suggestions of other resources you may like to use and stories of churches who have pushed the boat out and tried new things! Go to germinate.net/rms-2018-materials

We'd love to hear about the creative stuff you get up to for Rural Mission Sunday! Send us your stories via our feedback form germinate.net/rms-2018-feedback

SHAPING YOUR CHURCH SERVICE

Here you'll find a service outline and some suggestions of songs and prayers on the theme of growing together that you might like to include.

In response to feedback from churches that participated in Rural Mission Sunday 2017 we have included a collect, short preface and post-Communion prayer to make it easy for you to hold a growing together-themed Eucharistic service on Rural Mission Sunday.

When you're planning your service don't forget to think carefully about how to introduce each item; things we so often take for granted – like when to stand up and sit down, when to refer to a service book or sheet – can be completely alien to visitors. Clear explanations are a really important part of our welcome!

Sometimes our church buildings and our regular routine of services - which are very familiar to us - can actually be a barrier to those we'd like to invite to church. Why not start your service planning by thinking about those from the community that you'd like to invite - school children, farmers, second-home families, etc. - and consider how you might make your service more attractive to them? Last year, Rural Mission Sunday services took place in a whole variety of brilliant places including local farms and a vicarage garden! Other churches changed the time of their service to make it easier for people like farmers to get to.

What easy changes would make your service more appealing to those who don't usually come along?



SERVICE OUTLINE

Introduction and Welcome

Song

Opening prayers

Reading

(1 Corinthians 12:12-27 or another of the passages explored earlier in this material)

Children's talk or activity (where appropriate)

Song

A talk about the reading you have chosen

(Do you have any stories from your own church or community that you can use to illustrate your talk? Don't forget to ask the permission of those involved if appropriate!)

Song

Prayers for your community

(If you felt able to pray for Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre at this point, we'd be really grateful! You can find out about current projects and events by visiting our website, germinate.net.)

Song

(Could you take up an offering for the work of Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre?)

Prayer of Blessing



SUGGESTED CONTENT FOR YOUR SERVICE

This section contains prayers and songs that you may wish to use as part of your Rural Mission Sunday service and our website contains even more material – go to germinate.net/rms-2018-materials.

On our website you can also find extensive children's resources, prepared for Germinate by Nicola Grieves, Children's and Youth Development Officer for the Eastern Synod of the United Reformed Church.

PRAYERS

If your service is an Anglican service of communion, you may wish to include the following prayers written especially for Rural Mission Sunday 2018 by Revd Canon Dr Jean Coates, Germinate Trustee and Rural Officer for Dorset.

Collect for Rural Mission Sunday 2018

Generous God
you have called us to grow together in your service
Forgive all that tears us apart and
give us courage to work together
to discover that unity which is your will
that we may enable our rural communities to flourish

Short preface (which may be inserted into the Eucharistic Prayer)

And now we give you thanks
that you invite us to share with one another the task
of bringing your love to others
in our communities, in our families
and amongst all our partners

Post-Communion prayer

Lord Jesus Christ
Teach us to walk in your ways in trust
To walk together in love
And strengthen us in service and in sharing the gospel
with all your people and especially in our rural
communities

You may wish to use the following prayer during your service:

Prayer of adoration
Creator God,
the natural world sings your praises.
We see you reflected in every living thing.
Give us eyes to see you in those around us
and ears to hear your call.
May we grow into the people you formed us to be,
ready to share your love with those we meet.
In Jesus' name,
Amen

SONGS AND HYMNS

Growing in the church

God is here as we his people meet to offer praise and prayer
(Fred Pratt Green)
Jesus calls us here to meet him (John L Bell and Graham Maule)

Growing with other denominations

The church's one foundation (Samuel John Stone)
Come all who look to Christ today (Richard Jones)

Growing with your community

Longing for light, we wait in darkness (Bernadette Farrell)
It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand (Fred Pratt Green)

Children's songs

Isn't it good to be together? (Alan Price)

You can find more prayers and a longer list of suggested hymns and songs at germinate.net/rms-2018-materials



For more information about the work of Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre and access to our wide range of resources for rural mission and ministry please visit germinate.net or email info@germinate.net.



This material has been prepared by Elizabeth Clark, National Rural Officer for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, and Louise Davis, Germinate's Projects and Communications Officer.

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Find us on Facebook  /RuralMissionSunday • Follow us on Twitter  /RuralMissSunday

Subscribe to **Country Way** magazine for more rural church resources
germinate.net/country-way

Missional Listening



We live in a changing world in which it can seem like inherited models of church and mission are no longer bearing the fruit they once did. As we struggle to find ways to attract people to our services, is it possible that we have become so accustomed to speaking the gospel to the world, that we have lost the importance of listening to our world?

As I read through the Gospels, I cannot help but conclude that Jesus made time for people and listened; he was the guest far more than the host. What might it look like if we embodied this as a principle for mission? The gospel is Good News but in order to communicate it we need to recognise what the good news is for our individual rural communities. We cannot do this from a programme of frenetic activity and busyness; we need to make time to listen.

Since 2012 Rural Ministries has been using a process called Missional Listening, an ongoing rhythm of listening and reflection designed to help discern the shape of mission and church needed by different rural communities. It considers how people might be brought together and further resourced to achieve these aims, drawing on lessons from both scripture and the secular business world.

The starting point is not, 'Let's plant a church!' but rather exploring how we might embody a posture of listening, bringing God's blessing to our communities and pointing out where the kingdom already is. It often means doing

less rather than bolting on yet another activity. It intentionally weaves a strand of prayer and attentiveness, looking for signs of hope, signs of God's character and attributes in our communities, and drawing attention to them.

So how might individuals and churches engage in missional listening?

PREPARE

Identify and gather together others who share your passion and sense of mission. Begin praying intentionally for your community. Write down any passages you feel the Holy Spirit gives you; these will become your 'go-to' places in scripture when the going gets tough.

PROBE

Ask 'who are we not reaching by doing what we are currently doing as a church?' Research the demographics of your community, note any proposed housing or major shifts in employment. Where does the community gather and what are the flows of people during the day/week? Engage in 'spiritual archaeology', asking what has happened here years before which is still shaping this community. What are the natural and seasonal rhythms of this place?

PRAY

Walking your community as you pray can be helpful. Notice the sounds, the smells

and ask for the Holy Spirit to reveal what is already going on.

PARTNER

Discern with your core group opportunities to partner with others and go and join them. Do not necessarily look for this to be opportunities for evangelism (unless invited to share your faith) but simply help others do what they do and learn their perspective of this community.

PROVIDENTIAL

Ask God to reveal the practical needs that you could begin to address. Throughout the gospels it seems that Jesus often deals with people's physical needs before addressing their spiritual needs.

PRESENCE

Finally, when you have addressed all the above, which ideally would take at least 12 months, see if you can discern what a tangible Christian presence might look like in this community.

If this approach is of interest to you, come and talk to us at Rural Ministries and let's see how together we might listen better for mission.

Simon Mattholie

CEO, Rural Ministries

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Growing Together

CROSSING BORDERS

As the whole of Europe, and these islands in particular, seek to manage the implications of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, lots and lots of heat is being generated, but often not a lot of light. Some continue to strike forward, others seek to rewind the clock. And some just try to ignore it and get on with everyday life.



In the face of great world-making and world-shaking events it can seem that the lives of individuals hardly matter. It is a challenge to retain a personal, even intimate, dimension to the Brexit debate which appears so technocratic and impersonal. Things are further complicated because the landscape beyond the break is incredibly difficult to imagine with any degree of certainty.

Now the Book of Ruth wouldn't ordinarily be a Bible book that we

would flock to for wisdom and advice on a contemporary issue like Brexit. The stereotype we often carry is that this is a romantic book set in a rural idyll, featuring a young, beautiful woman fallen on hard times who meets a good farmer. They fall in love, get married and have a child. Of course there is some questionable activity as the heroine seduces her soon-to-be husband, but by and large this can be glossed over, and at least it is tasteful, though only barely.

Perhaps the most well known part of the story is the transcendent declaration of loyalty on the part of Ruth who commits herself to her mother-in-law, vowing to go where she goes, live where she lives, to worship Naomi's God in such a way that only death would part them.

However, as we engage more deeply with the characters and their lives there are other profound themes which reveal themselves: the mystery of relationships between women, the trauma of surviving one's children, of childlessness, marriage and patriarchy.

Then, in an echo of the current debates around Brexit, we are faced with border issues. Elimelech, Naomi and their boys leave Bethlehem due to famine and move to Moab, the place of the traditional enemy. Here they fall on hard times. When Naomi returns home accompanied by Ruth, Ruth becomes a woman in a man's world, a foreigner in a country that doesn't like her sort, childless in a society that required sons, a widow in a family-based rural culture, and poor in a community that lacks a safety net.

The Book of Ruth can be read as a form of counter-narrative to Ezra and Nehemiah, a story in which ethnic and religious purity is perhaps not as critical as those two prophets might have claimed. In Jewish tradition Ruth is read at Pentecost alongside the reading of the giving of the Law to Moses at Sinai.





"We recognise that today Brexit is another place of fracture: between the UK and Europe, between Britain and Ireland and even within the island of Ireland itself"

It thus preserves the importance of the ordinary lives of individuals alongside great foundational events and dares us to find ways of making personal what could otherwise be overwhelming.

The Book of Ruth challenges us to engage with several issues: welcoming the stranger, redrawing our stereotypes through encounter with those who are 'other', finding the gaps where compassion can thrive in the midst of technical debates about law and tradition and carrying losses that cannot really be grieved.

Corrymeela is Northern Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation organization, founded in 1965 before the beginning of 'The Troubles' in Ireland. The founder and first leader of the community was Revd Ray Davey, a Presbyterian minister who was profoundly impacted by what he saw during the Second World War, particularly at the bombing of Dresden. He returned home from the war determined to find ways of building community in the face of conflict.

From its first days, Corrymeela has been a place of gathering, work, faith and discussion, bringing together people of different backgrounds, different political and religious beliefs and different identities. We believe that there is strength in gathering and that when we are committed to each other no difference is great enough to break us. In the early days of Corrymeela, hundreds of volunteers gave up their holidays, weekends and summer breaks to host events, seminars, camps and conferences, as well as to literally build the Ballycastle site.

We were active throughout The Troubles and continue today in post-conflict Northern Ireland. We have grown from the original Community members to a staff team of 30 plus dozens of volunteers from all over the world. Every year around 11,000 people spend time at our residential centre in Ballycastle on the north coast.

The Community of Corrymeela has grown over the years also, with 150 members, 50 associate members and

thousands of friends around the globe. Together we make commitments to be engaged with the world at its points of fracture, faith and potential.

We recognise that today Brexit is another place of fracture: between the UK and Europe, between Britain and Ireland and even within the island of Ireland itself. Things will be very different on the other side of this separation and we are keen to see how Christians can contribute effectively to the shaping of how we will be together after we exit the EU. In particular we want to explore how our ancient text can speak meaningfully to the nation as we, like Ruth and Naomi, seek to build new lives on the far side of profound disruption.

We have produced bible study and conversation materials called Crossing Borders: Exploring Brexit through the lens of Ruth, available to download for free from corrymeela.org.

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GROWING TOGETHER *in mission and ministry*

Churches in rural areas feel so different in many ways today from how they were 50 years ago. Parishioners in some areas of Worcestershire still remember when their vicar rode around the village on his horse, visiting every household, knowing each person by name. Now a typical vicar often has responsibility for ten churches and races around the country lanes in her car, desperately trying to squeeze in another service, seemingly never having time to stop and really listen.

Though life in the country has stayed the same in many ways – lambing time and harvest come round as regularly and relentlessly as they always have – much of life for many people as well as patterns of ministry have changed. Being church, being the people of God, has had to evolve in a changing context in which the role of the clergy is very different.

To face this challenge creatively, clergy and motivated lay leaders from a group of neighbouring rural benefices in the Diocese of Worcester accepted our invitation to take part in Germinate Groups. The programme is built around learning communities which meet together for two years to grow together in a better understanding of mission and ministry in deeply rural settings.

Benefice groups of around six to eight people were formed. They came together for two days every six months and were led through teaching, strategic exercises and activities by a team from CPAS and Germinate. At the end of each gathering the groups agreed an action plan, reporting back on progress the next time. In between these gathered times a colleague and I met with each group individually to encourage and help with developing thinking.

The aim of this process was to help people prayerfully think ‘out of the box’, to re-evaluate what they were doing and explore ways of being more missionally-focussed. Sometimes this

was through streamlining activities, sharing resources and working together more effectively; at other times it was by recognising the unique calling of each church in their patch, celebrating diversity and enabling flourishing appropriate to the context, the DNA of the church, and the needs of the community.

A newly appointed Team Vicar reflected that ‘the process came at the right time for our team and gave the opportunity for both clergy and laity to come together to focus on how we could best serve our communities.’

An experienced Church Warden said, ‘As a church we have benefited through seeing new people taking responsibilities within church life. The expectation that the vicar is able to do everything is slowly changing.’

Church member Marianne’s experience was that ‘the Germinate Groups sessions always fired me up. The speakers were inspirational and the whole process really strengthened my faith. It made me realise that I could spread God’s word in a way that’s individual to me.’

Although the facilitated phase of Germinate Groups has now finished, individual groups are continuing to meet to develop what they have learned and bring their ideas and plans to reality. A participant recently reflected that there has been real progress in growing together: ‘There are already some practical changes – the churchwardens across the team all meet together now and communications, mission and evangelism are all being promoted at a team level.’

We are currently evaluating the project so learning can be shared more widely across the diocese, with the expectation that rural mission and ministry will continue to evolve.

Venerable Nikki Groarke,
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Rural Mission



A VICAR'S LIFE



Somebody asked me the other day, 'What's it like being a media star?' I replied, 'I must confess I've never even thought about it.' I prefer to say that I have been in the privileged position of featuring in a TV documentary that has helped dispel some of the myths and preconceived ideas around what a vicar is and what they do.

In May of last year, the BBC approached the clergy of the Wenlock Team in the Diocese of Hereford to explore whether we would be interested in participating in a documentary entitled A Vicar's Life. I was able to meet with James Routh, the BBC producer responsible for the project, give him a tour of Much Wenlock and explore possible 'storylines', after which the decision was made to use the town as a location.

As excited as the town was about the prospect of the BBC coming along, I soon realised that TV work is far from glamorous, both for the crew and the person in front of the camera! My wife and I lost count of how many times it took to shoot activities as straightforward as shutting the Rectory door or walking

down the High Street. However, the crew were amazingly patient, courteous and professional; assistant producers Emma Oliver and Alexis Smith were a joy to work with and we were sorry to say goodbye at the end of filming in mid-December.

Taking part in the series was a great opportunity to highlight the evangelistic potential of baptisms, weddings and funerals and I hope viewers enjoyed the wedding and baptism featured in the series, along with the blessing of the nave roof by Richard Frith, Bishop of Hereford.

On a personal note it was a privilege to be able to use my participation in the series to raise awareness of the challenges of caring for a relative with dementia. My father-in-law, Charlie, who featured in the fifth episode of the series, sadly passed away three days after the final episode aired. Some viewers may remember Nicolas Bishop and his wife Jane who I was filmed visiting during the same episode; Nicolas sadly also died recently. A Vicar's Life has unexpectedly become a powerful, moving and timely memorial to these two men.

I can't say my son Oran was particularly

pleased to be on TV, but as parents we were immensely proud that he agreed to share his story with the viewing public, enabling greater awareness of autism and the need to work towards greater inclusion.

During the period over which the series was filmed, I began my participation in Germinate Leadership, having been aware of and admired the work of Germinate since my Church Army training days. Having been involved in A Vicar's Life I sincerely hope that I can now continue to maximise my leadership potential. It is vitally important that rural church leaders, both clergy and lay, have access to resource like Germinate Leadership that will enable them to develop their competence, self-awareness, gifts and talents for their own benefit, for the wider church and for the kingdom of God.

Revd Matthew Stafford

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For more information and details of the 2018 programme go to germinate.net/germinate-leadership

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 to 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.

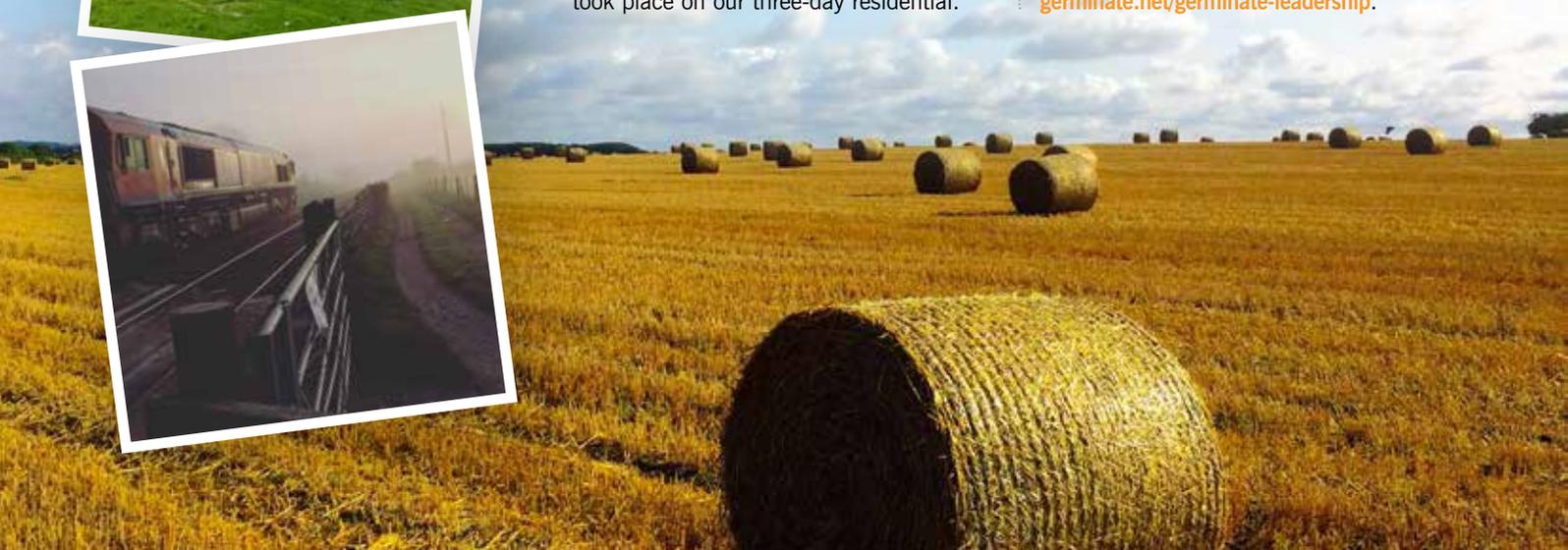
The real test was assembling a portfolio of learning, designed to form the basis of a two-hour Professional Dialogue. Yes, I was incredibly nervous sitting down in front of a Bishop and a CEO. But I was so excited, too, because the demands of the Germinate Leadership Programme forced me to put on paper 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!

Revd David Harknett

Rector Designate, Parish of the Upper Wreake
[@heaven_ordinary](https://twitter.com/heaven_ordinary)

The 2018 Germinate Leadership programme begins in October and runs for 18 months. We welcome applications from lay and ordained rural church leaders from across the denominations. Bursaries are available. For more information go to germinate.net/germinate-leadership.



GERMINATE LEADERSHIP

Helping lay and ordained leaders from all denominations to develop creative, entrepreneurial skills for rural church leadership.



Applications are **NOW OPEN** for the
2018 Germinate Leadership programme

Go to
germinate.net/germinate-leadership
or email
leadership@germinate.net
for more information.



Germinate
Arthur Rank Centre



The Talking Jesus research found that one in six young people want to know more when a Christian friend talks to them about Jesus. In response, young people are being encouraged to pray for six friends, asking God for opportunities to talk about Jesus with them.

One girl from St Peter's Church, in the Cambridgeshire village of Yaxley near Peterborough, is one of these young people. She is part of a HOPE Revolution Mission Academy Live group and has been praying for six of her friends. She's invited them to a Neon Glo Party, staged as part of the Mission Academy initiative.

Mission Academy Live is a series of ten innovative, video-based sessions. Each session provides teaching followed by time for discussion and testimony in small groups. The focus is on peer-to-peer evangelism, all leading to a practical response that's relevant to young people. As well as meeting as small groups in villages, towns and cities, the Mission Academy Live groups are encouraged to join a Regional Hub.

These Hubs will bring individual groups together for large-scale evangelistic events in 2018. These events are celebrations of all that God has been doing through the small groups which also provide a large-scale evangelistic event to which young people can invite their six friends.

The Peterborough Hub held a Neon Glo Party in March with music, dancing, and crazy activities, a guest DJ, glow bar, inflatables, football cage, performances, games, an inspirational message and more.

The girl from St Peter's is part of a group led by Suzanne Delegate. Suzanne says, 'In October we went to the Soul Survivor evening at Kingsgate Church in Peterborough, where I heard about Mission Academy Live.'

She signed up and downloaded the ten Mission Academy Live films. 'I wanted to share them with our older group but most of them were doing exams. So I prayed really hard, approached our vicar and suggested that I do a stand-alone, 10 week session, once a fortnight for our year 7-9s (aged 11-14).'

Suzanne led the group with two other leaders and was thrilled at the response: 'The first session I had six young people around a kitchen table sharing hot chocolate and homemade cookies. The feedback from the parents the following Sunday was amazing.'

One parent said: 'I don't know what Suzanne did but whatever it was, she has

captured the attention of my daughter. She couldn't stop talking about the evening.'

Pete Skivington, the youth and children's pastor at Lighthouse Community Church in Sheringham, Norfolk, has also been using the videos. Small groups watch a video each week, discuss it and pray for their friends, asking God for opportunities to share faith with them.

'The majority of them need confidence to talk about their faith,' Pete says. 'We have found it really beneficial. You can run it with just a handful of young people. They encourage each other and they are encouraged to know they are part of something bigger up and down the country.'

Roy Crowne, HOPE's executive director, says, 'Mission Academy Live is ideal for village churches. Three or four young people can watch the videos together and can pray for their friends. The Regional Hubs can organise larger events, which serve the local church by staging an event that individual congregations couldn't manage.'

The HOPE Revolution Partnership includes the Church of England, Elim Pentecostal Churches, and eight Christian youth organisations.

Catherine Butcher
HOPE Together

Further resources:

Talking Jesus research:
talkingjesus.org.uk

Mission Academy Live:
hopetogether.org.uk/HOPErev



Resources

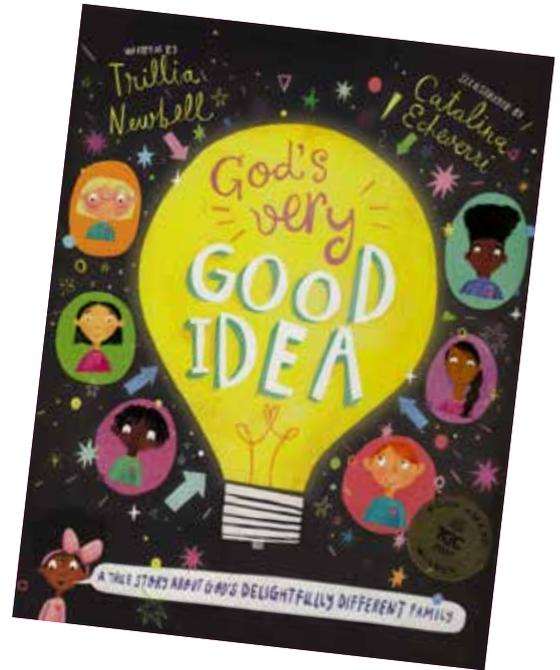
GOD'S VERY GOOD IDEA

Trillia Newbell with illustrations by Catalina Echeverri
 The Good Book Company, 2017 • ISBN 978 1 78498 2218

This children's book tells the story of salvation in an accessible way. One of the main themes is the diversity of people and their importance to God. We are reminded that people enjoy different things and look different to each other but we are all important to God. In a world that can seem more divided than ever it is good to be reminded that, 'We are all different, but we are also all the same.'

In talking about our inability to always get along with those who are different, this book could provide a very useful way of dealing with issues such as bullying and racism with children. The book also provides a challenge to all ages when it speaks of the church as the place where we can enjoy loving God and each other no matter who we are.

God's Very Good Idea is referenced in the children's material for Rural Mission Sunday 2018.



Bring HOPE to your community

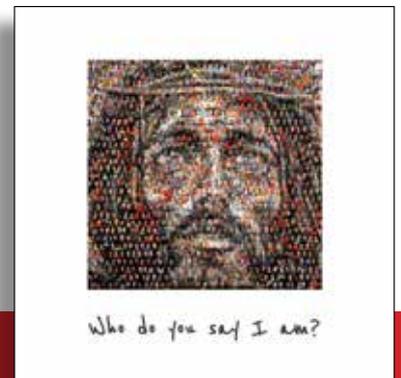


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Join with millions marking Remembrance Day

Young people are taking a lead in HOPE's plans for this year's commemoration of the end of the First World War.

Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day 2018 are both on 11 November this year. Perhaps more than in any other year, people from around the Commonwealth will gather to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War. Churches have a unique opportunity to bring communities together at this significant time in world history, and HOPE is offering resources to help.

On Sunday 4 August 1918, the fourth anniversary of the declaration of war, King George V and Queen Mary joined members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords for a special

service at the Church of Saint Margaret, Westminster, in London. The King had asked that 4 August 1918 should be observed as a National Day of Prayer. One hundred days later on 11 November 1918 the war ended.

On 4 August 2018 churches across the country, in villages, towns and cities across the spectrum of denominations, will start 100 days of prayer, peace and reconciliation. This season, called Remembrance 100, is being promoted by HOPE, together with the Church of England, the Methodist Church and other denominations and ministries. Youth ministries are helping to provide practical peace-making ideas as part of the 100 days of prayer, peace and reconciliation.



HOW WILL YOU REMEMBER?

The theme of the next issue of Country Way, published in October, will be remembrance. We want to share as much information as we can about the plans rural churches across the UK of all denominations have to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. We would also love to hear stories of the ways in which the war impacted and shaped your churches and communities.

Please email countryway@germinate.net by 1 August with your contributions and we will publish as many as we can, either in Country Way itself or on our website, germinate.net.



There are many ways in which communities, churches and school can get involved:

4 AUGUST 2018

One hundred years on from the national day of prayer called by George V, this will be the first day of 100 days of prayer across the country, running until Armistice Day in November. Every day there will be prayers and peace-making ideas available through remembrance100.co.uk. Individuals can sign up to take part and spend just a few minutes of each day praying for peace.

21 SEPTEMBER 2018

Churches, schools and communities are invited to stage Peace Awards to mark the United Nations International Day of Peace, with a local awards ceremony around this time. There are also plans for a national awards ceremony and an event in London's Trafalgar Square.

MONDAY 5 NOVEMBER TO SATURDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2018

A week of action for peace, led by young people. School assembly ideas and lesson plans will be available from youth ministries.

SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2018

There will be Remembrance Services around the country. Many will be followed by Peace Parties.

Find out more at remembrance100.co.uk.





RURAL MISSION SUNDAY 2018



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cpo.org.uk/ruralmissionsunday

HOLY HABITS: MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

Andrew Roberts, Neil Johnson, Tom Milton

BRF, 2018

ISBN HOLYHABITSPK17 (for the full pack of 9 books)

In 2016 Andrew Roberts published his book Holy Habits which explored the picture of the early church which we find in Acts 2:42-47 and drew out 10 Holy Habits for disciples. This new course consists of eleven books (an introduction and a book for each habit). The new material has been produced jointly by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches.

This is a whole church programme for transforming and growing disciples. The idea is that a new habit is introduced every two months, and there is a wealth of material for church congregations and small groups to engage with each habit.

The materials are produced to a very high standard and there is something for everyone including films, books, pictures and prayers. The authors suggest that small churches might benefit from coming together as a larger group and at first glance the breadth and detail could be a little daunting for small congregations.

However, the authors make it clear they don't wish to appear prescriptive: as ever, local context is important. Working with other churches could be an opportunity to grow our discipleship and build new relationships, so that together we may make new disciples.





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