



# RURAL MISSION SUNDAY 2021

Pilgrimage



Arthur Rank  
Centre

CONFIDENT RURAL CHRISTIANS

SUNDAY 18 JULY



# Pilgrimage

## RURAL MISSION SUNDAY 2021

### Introduction

What goes through your mind when you hear the word ‘pilgrimage’? Perhaps you’ve been on pilgrimage to a ‘holy place’ like Lindesfarne, Canterbury or even the Camino de Santiago. Maybe you’ve watched others go on such a journey through the BBC’s recent *Pilgrimage* series.

Or perhaps you’ve simply found yourself encountering God in new ways as you’ve walked more during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whatever your previous experience of pilgrimage, this Rural Mission Sunday we’re inviting you to walk with God and with your church community, exploring how this ancient practice might bring offer a new depth of life and faith.

As we prepare for Rural Mission Sunday 2021, we find ourselves continuing to live with the ongoing impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, the simple premise at the heart of Rural Mission Sunday remains as relevant this year as it always has: to encourage you and your church congregation to celebrate another year of faithfully sustaining an effective Christian presence in your community.

As we compile this material it is difficult to predict the extent to which COVID-19 might impact our ability to gather together for worship on 18 July. If social distancing or other restrictions are still in place you will need to ensure you comply with these as you celebrate Rural Mission Sunday. However, if restrictions have been entirely lifted, Rural Mission Sunday may be the perfect opportunity to bring the young people in your community together to celebrate!

You can find more suggestions on how to make your Rural Mission Sunday celebrations COVID-compliant in our main materials!

This year we are delighted to be able to offer you an increased range of Rural Mission Sunday resources! Alongside this material we have our ‘main’ materials – which include biblical reflections on the theme of pilgrimage and gathered worship suggestions – and our well-established material for children and families. All three resources explore the same Bible passages and follow a similar structure, so we’d encourage you to get hold of all three and then mix and match them in a way which works best for your context.

This Rural Mission Sunday resource for young people is designed to help church leaders – including vicars, wardens, young people team leaders and volunteers – involve young people in their church’s Rural Mission Sunday celebrations.

Whether your young people group is well established, or Rural Mission Sunday is a springboard for new plans for your community’s young people, it is a day to celebrate their contribution. Everyone taking part in Rural Mission Sunday is held in prayer, that it strengthens them on their journey together. For more ideas and content, visit [arthurrankcentre.org.uk/rural-mission-Sunday-2021](http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/rural-mission-Sunday-2021) where you’ll find all the Rural Mission Sunday 2021 materials.

**PLEASE REMEMBER that you will need to ensure that any activity you undertake with a group of young people – whether on church premises or elsewhere – adheres to your church’s safeguarding policy. Please talk to your church leader or the church’s safeguarding officer before you start planning.**

**You can find additional help and support in the ‘Keeping our young people safe’ section at the end of this material.**



# CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Here are a few questions you could use to strike up conversations about your church with young people in your community, who may be coming to church for the first time. Can you use Rural Mission Sunday to reach new groups of young people, including schools and colleges, voluntary and uniformed organisations?

Starting conversations will create the space for you and the young people in your community to learn about each other and hear new perceptions of church. But remember, conversations are not one-way streets; invite young people to ask you questions too (and be willing to answer them!).

- **What do you think of when you hear the word 'church'?**

Young people who come to church with family every week are likely to have different perceptions of the church to those who have never set foot through the doors. How can your church community meet them on the road where they are, and be a space young people want to be in?

- **Who is the most supportive person in your life? Why?**

Some would say a best friend, some a parent or grandparent, some have a mentor they trust. Asking young people to open up about a person who builds them up can help them to be a support to others.

- **What do you think it means to be part of a community? Why might it be hard? Is it worth it?**

The book of Hebrews offers us some insights into the value of Christian community: 'Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up on meeting each other, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching' (10:24-25).

## More questions for young people...

- How do you go about connecting with people? (Their answers might include social media, sports, volunteering or paid employment.)
- Have you ever felt like you truly belong somewhere? Where was it?
- What is the difference between church 'the building' and church as a community of people?





# WORSHIPPING TOGETHER ON RURAL MISSION SUNDAY

Worshipping together has always been a significant part of Rural Mission Sunday and we'd encourage you to think about how you might enable young people to celebrate by worshipping together, either as part of your wider church gathering or as a group of peers.

We're suggesting three main possible approaches this year:

- Go on a pilgrimage as a church community or youth group, exploring and engaging with the unique rural area in

which you live, work and worship.

- Make a big deal of your return to your building, celebrating the special role this sacred space has in the life of your community and its young people.
- Combine the two and go on pilgrimage to your church building!

All of the resources in our main Rural Mission Sunday 2021 material could be used with the young people in your community, but here are some additional ideas you might want to consider.

## Going on pilgrimage together

### Hit the trail

Our countryside is blessed with wonderful walking routes. On Rural Mission Sunday – or at a different time, if this works better – get the young people in your community together, lace up your boots and walk a few miles together. Why not arrange for someone to meet you at your destination with a barbecue or picnic as an extra incentive?

Walking together allows people to speak deeply together, support one another and enjoy nature.

If you'd like to turn your walk into a pilgrimage, why not use some of the Bible reflections and prayers from our main material? You could pause at points on your route to read a passage together and think together about what it might mean for those in your group, then pray together.

You may need to print out the readings and prayers in advance. However, depending on the quality of the signal in your local area, the young people in the group may well be able to access the Arthur Rank Centre website and materials on their smart phones as you walk!





## WORSHIPPING TOGETHER IN YOUR BUILDING

Including young people in your Rural Mission Sunday service

The main Rural Mission Sunday 2021 material includes a service outline with readings, hymns and a talk, ideal for use in a service taking place in your church building. Young people have lots to contribute to the service, from something as simple as a reading or a pre-written prayer, or they could write and act out a dramatic skit about the Road to Emmaus.

Alternatively, here's a simple script they could use, drafting in some adult participants or older children if needed.

### The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32)

- Narrator:** On Easter Sunday, right after some women discovered that Jesus was no longer in his tomb, Cleopas and his friend, followers of Jesus, were walking to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.
- Cleopas:** [sighing] I feel awful mate.
- Friend:** Yeah, it's horrible how Jesus died.
- Narrator:** Then Jesus appeared near them, but they did not recognise him.
- Jesus:** Hi guys, how are you? What are you talking about?
- Cleopas:** Are you the only man in Jerusalem who doesn't know what's going on?
- Jesus:** Err, why, what's going on?
- Friend:** There was a fella called Jesus, he was a prophet.
- Cleopas:** The chief priests and our rulers had him put to death in the most painful way.
- Friend:** They crucified him.
- Cleopas:** We needed this man, we hoped that he was the one to save Israel.
- Friend:** But this morning, we heard from some women that Jesus was no longer in his tomb!
- Jesus:** Wow, you guys are slow to believe in what the prophets have said! Didn't you realise that the Saviour would have to suffer and then enter into his glory?
- Narrator:** Then Jesus explained to them everything in the scriptures about himself, starting with Moses and the other prophets.
- Cleopas:** You know the scriptures really well! So, Jesus MUST have been our Saviour.
- Friend:** It's almost evening. Hey, do you want to stay with us for dinner at this village?
- Jesus:** Sure – let's eat!
- Narrator:** When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.
- Friend:** Wait a minute, aren't you...?
- Cleopas:** Are you...JESUS?
- Narrator:** Once they recognised Jesus, he disappeared from their sight.
- Friend:** Cleopas, I can't believe we didn't recognise him earlier.
- Cleopas:** I guess we weren't sure if he was alive or dead.
- Narrator:** Then the two followers of Jesus went and told the eleven apostles what had happened.

*Adapted from Trinity Church Milford Mass. Sunday School drama resources*



## Praying together

If your young people are having time together on Rural Mission Sunday, encourage them to put prayer at the centre.

Chat together about...

- ...things that are going on in the community
- ...people who are important to the community, for example shopkeepers, farmers, bus drivers and health workers
- ...challenges they're facing that they'd like to pray for

If the group is new to praying, explain that this conversation itself is a form of prayer, that Jesus is with us when a few of us get together and he hears and is interested in the things that are important to us.

You could pray a short prayer of blessing to conclude the conversation and commit to God all those people that you've mentioned.

If the group is comfortable praying out loud together, invite them to do that, or create space for them to write and then read their prayers. You could provide pens and paper or encourage them to use their phones to create a prayer image or a video prayer.

Creator God,  
 the whole world is yours.  
 Creation sings your praises.  
 As the sun rises on a new day,  
 help us to see the way ahead.  
 May we know your presence  
 leading and guiding us.  
 Give us the strength to keep  
 following you,  
 and as the day ends may we  
 know your rest and peace.  
 In Jesus' name, **Amen.**



## Feasting together

**Food is a key part of Rural Mission Sunday!**

There are loads of ways you can involve young people in providing food for themselves or for others, from cooking and baking to laying the table, decorating a room or clearing up!

If young people are given the opportunity to cook dishes for a community meal, they can offer a practical contribution, while enjoying time together.

Culinary creations are great to share on social media and it all contributes to extending a warm welcome to the whole community on Rural Mission Sunday!

# WALKING WITH JESUS: BEYOND RURAL MISSION SUNDAY

## Celebrating spaces

Ask young people if there is a place in the community they would like to see improved; it could be the corner of a park, a bus stop, or the churchyard. Dedicate some time to a clean-up, with some prizes for the biggest bag of rubbish, or the fastest scrubbing, to keep things fun.

## Sticky community

Living with others can be pretty hard work at times, but it is worth it. There are so many benefits to not going it alone, whether it's having a helping hand in difficult times, knowing you're loved or being there to brighten up someone else's day.

Give each young person a pen and a Post-It note and ask them to write

down a word that sums up the most important things about their community: acceptance, belonging, happiness etc.

On the other side of the sticky note get them to write down a way they can help build up that idea in their community. For example, if their word is 'belonging', they might think about how they can be inclusive of everyone they meet.

Give young people time to think about that idea.

Remind the group that everything they wrote on their Post-Its is important and it's all part of the reason why God created the Church and invites you to be part of it. He didn't design us to live alone but in community with each other. Church isn't just a building or a bunch of rules, but a body of people who love God and love each other.



## KEEPING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

If you are just starting out in your work with children and young people, you'll need to bear in mind your safeguarding responsibilities.

Safeguarding falls outside of the expertise of the Arthur Rank Centre so it is not our place to offer specific or detailed guidance on how to go about developing appropriate policies and procedures in your local church. However, expert advice is available both from specialist organisations and from denominational safeguarding teams who can help and support in you in the process of developing your own policies.

It is important to remember that in legal terms a young person remains a child until their eighteenth birthday. Therefore, in the context of safeguarding you need to ensure that your policies and procedures cover those up to and including the age of seventeen.

For a wide variety of help and advice, we suggest you make contact with the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS). CCPAS is the only independent Christian charity providing professional advice, training, support and resources in all areas of safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm. Contact them by phoning **0303 003 1111** or visit their website, **ccpas.co.uk**.

For links to safeguarding information from UK denominations, please visit our website **[arthurrankcentre.org.uk/safeguarding](http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/safeguarding)**.

Visit our website for more ideas:  
**[arthurrankcentre.org.uk/rural-mission-sunday-2021](http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/rural-mission-sunday-2021)**



For more information about the work of the Arthur Rank Centre and access to our wide range of resources for rural mission and ministry please visit [arthurrankcentre.org.uk](http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk) or email [info@arthurrankcentre.org.uk](mailto:info@arthurrankcentre.org.uk).



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