

Devon Churches Rural Forum

Meeting 9th May 2018 – 10 am to 12 noon – Devon YFC Centre, Cheriton Bishop

Meeting Notes

1. Archdeacon Mark opened the meeting in prayer
2. Present were Mark Butchers, Jane Lucas, David Ursell, Ruth Frampton, Alison Ball, Sally Farrant, Adrian Brooks, Heather Sayle, Elaine Cook, Penny Dobbin.

A special welcome to Ruth Frampton for her first meeting. Ruth is Assistant Curate at Holy Trinity Church, Salcombe, and is interested in rural ministry. Also to Sally Farrant, Exeter Diocesan Social Responsibility Officer, attending to speak to us about dementia in rural areas.

Other new members of the Forum, but unable to be with us today are Dave Watson (Methodist-Anglican Covenant Champion for the South West and lay minister in the Torridge Circuit), Stephen Derges (Germinate Southwest Ambassador) and Marisa Cockfield (Team Vicar in Bideford and the four villages, Police Chaplain and involved in mental health).

3. Apologies received from Stephen Derges, Dave Watson, Susanna Metz, Andy Jerrard, Jane Frost, Marisa Cockfield, Marian Carson, John Wibberley, Nickie Johnson, Richard Yarwood, Stuart Wilson, Douglas Dettmer, Jon Oliverio, Annie Jefferies, Maurie Webber.
4. The notes from the last meeting were accepted as a true record.
5. Matters and actions arising (not covered below) – there were none.
6. DCRF Conference – Re-imagining Rural Ministry: Moving Towards New Structures – an update from the planning team

Mark updated the meeting: As the title suggests our forthcoming conference (July 28th) will focus on our structures and how they release us or inhibit us for mission. The conference will ask people to think about current structures creatively, look at some new models, and encourage people to experiment. 40 people are signed up already. Bishop Robert and Rev'd Graham Thompson will give opening addresses and the models we shall hear about will include The West Devon Methodist circuit, The Wellington and District Lay Learning Community, the Northern Michigan and New Zealand models and the West Dartmoor Mission Community. There will also be time for discussion, conversation and networking, and attention has been paid to making the conference properly ecumenical.

Please would all members publicise around the different denominations.

If anyone would like to set up an information stall, please let Mark know. Sally Farrant for social responsibility and Elaine Cook for Devon Communities Together expressed an interest.

7. Follow up from “Focus on Farming” – to discuss how the DCRF can respond

Heather Sayle spoke about the need to support farming wives who often suffer from isolation, pressures of working on the farm and caring for the children, and/or with an outside job, and find time for self-care and company difficult. The MU is active in agricultural markets, parishes and at the grass roots. It is also more likely today that farming wives may not be from farming backgrounds. Elaine Cook mentioned the work of DCT and the Prince’s Trust on farm diversification where many women are involved in developing additional incomes for the farm. She also mentioned the issue of fuel poverty and the need for support for farming families and farm workers to assist with oil costs.

Following the full discussion on Focus on Farming at the January Forum, the following actions may be helpful:

- a. To promote the use of the Germinate Resource [“Rural Isolation and Loneliness: A practical resource for rural churches”](#). This can be added to our website and promoted through our newsletter. **Action: Penny**
- b. To discuss with Joanne Jones (FCN), Andy Jerrard (Rural Support Worker), Nickie Johnson (MU) what is already done to support farming wives and whether any more focused work is needed, via the agricultural markets. **Action: Heather to be asked to co-ordinate**
- c. Farm Visits – to encourage farm visits for clergy and congregations to learn more about the farming life. **David Ursell** offered to organise one in his area.
- d. To encourage churches to invite FCN to come and speak with them both to gain more volunteers and to help churches care for their farming communities locally
- e. To collect stories of “good practice” relating to churches contacts with their farming communities – what is helpful? What do people enjoy? How are relationships formed? **Action: all – Penny to collate**
- f. To consider how the churches could contribute to the work of sustaining “Natural Capital” through bringing churches, environmental organisations such as the North Devon Biosphere Reserve and farmers together (**via Martyn Goss**).

8. Dementia in Rural Areas – an introduction from Sally Farrant

You can read Sally's notes from this meeting entitled "Dementia – the Rural Challenge" [here](#) and link to the Exeter Diocese page on Dementia Friendly Rural Communities and Churches, which contains a wealth of resources, [here](#).

Sally spoke about the [Dementia Friendly Rural Communities Guide](#) which is to be launched at the Devon County Show.

Dementia issues in rural areas are different from towns. There is less awareness of what dementia is in rural areas, and less people may come forward for diagnosis, perhaps because they feel there is no point, or because they fear they may face a stigma. There can also be a lack of rural awareness in our health services. So often people have a diagnosis which is made with care and consideration and are then sent away with a pack to help them come to terms with what this means. But the pack is generic and often not applicable in a rural setting, where access to services may be limited and the nearest memory café may be 20 miles away. The professionals involved may not be aware of the particular situation in any given rural community. GPs and a personal support network are crucial in rural areas. A family GP may have been seeing a person for several years, and this can be really helpful. A network is also better than a single carer for support, when neighbours, friends and the community can all come to the person's aid – which may be just continuing to be friends and calling round for coffee.

Sally encouraged us to think in terms of dementia friendliness in all our activities, not making only specific dementia friendly activities. In this way people can continue to join in with activities they are used to and maintain their regular contacts in the communities. She says that Dementia Friends sessions are changing communities all across Devon. These sessions give hope, and help people to live with dementia, and how others can support them. They can be done on-line, in a church or maybe as a whole village. Sally can support.

Care homes are a very helpful resource. Carers here have a great understanding of the range of dementia needs that could be passed on to families and others in caring roles.

There are many kinds of dementia and many different experiences of it. For example, with memory loss it may be thought that someone will forget either a happy or a sad time, but though they may forget the actual event, the emotions remain, and may be felt again with particular cues. This gives a great tool in helping to identify what are the things that will enable a person to find peace and happiness and to help move towards this if they are unhappy. A person with dementia may not necessarily understand words, but will hear the emotion.

Sally mentioned the book "[Contented Dementia by Oliver James](#)" which speaks more on this and other topics in caring for people with dementia.

Sally asked – “what actions can we take as churches”. How can a church be a place that challenges, inspires, equips and supports neighbourhoods helping people with dementia to continue to be part of the community for longer?

Elaine spoke about the ageing demographic in many of our communities. [Devon Senior Voice](#) which “provides opportunities to harness the skills, enthusiasm and experience of older people by offering volunteering opportunities and enabling them to have a say in the services that affect them” and has much experience of setting up and running memory cafes, is shortly to merge with Devon Communities Together. She felt there was a real opportunity to look at “pop-up” services in our market towns and villages – perhaps the churches could provide venues and help with volunteers to run these? **Action: Sally and Elaine will follow up this idea.**

Adrian commented that one of the strengths of rural communities and the rural church is that age groups tend to be less separated at events, which is helpful in everyone looking after each other.

We are asked to encourage people to take part in dementia friendly training which is very simple and can be done on-line or in person – the [Dementia Friends website](#) has the details or contact Sally for further information. Alison added that one church found that focussing on becoming dementia friendly “accidentally” brought wider church growth because the church became more “friendly” in being more open to others’ needs more generally.

9. Care for the Dying in Rural Areas – led by Jane Lucas

Jane said that since the closure of Holsworthy hospital beds there was not now a single hospital bed available in the Torridge area and this had highlighted the particular needs of the dying and their families. Two weeks ago the CCG announced that they were looking at re-opening the hospital, but there is still some way to go with recruiting staff etc.

Since May 2017, out of 24 funerals in Jane’s parishes, 10 people had died in hospitals far from home in Exeter, Plymouth, Barnstaple and South Molton. This can cause real difficulty and sadness both for the person at the end of their life and their families. For example, one lady in Halwill had a 14 week old baby and couldn’t get to South Molton to see her mother. There are equal problems organising care packages at home. One family tried to manage 24/7 care for their relative at home because the NHS complex care team couldn’t manage it. Eventually the person had to move back to hospital because there weren’t enough resources to care for her at home. To be able to have been an in-patient in Holsworthy would have been much better for the whole family. Many people who die in hospital have no family to look after them - often one spouse has already died and the immediate family (if any) live away. Neighbours from home may also be elderly, and if friends are in hospital a long way from home, may find it difficult to visit. In the snow this spring, the hospital

asked people with 4x4s to take care workers out to people, but when it was deemed too dangerous, people were left at home without care.

Jane believes the current situation is not honouring to the families and the dying if they are not able to be cared for either at home or in a local in-patient facility. She asks how we, as churches, can help raise the voice about care for the dying in rural areas.

Whilst there are many political issues, ideas that may improve the situation include more crossover between medical centres and hospitals, more flexible working for nurses, much more local focus, imaginative thinking and possibly the hospice movement becoming involved.

Adrian said that Okehampton hospital had also recently closed. Most people would rather be at home than in hospital, but care in the home wasn't working. He also said that GPs are being approached more and more to deal with spiritual issues – questions relating to end of life concerns, identity and mental health. Perhaps there may be a role for churches in medical centres as listening posts or chaplains? As local clergy may also find it difficult to visit far away hospitals regularly, closer working between parish clergy and hospital chaplain colleagues would help in caring for our parishioners.

Elaine said that we were presently caught in the change from hospital care to “care in the community” which is not working well enough in all areas yet. Many community hospitals have been used as nursing homes but their purpose is changing. Highly specialised large hospitals are also needed and this is where funding is focused.

Heather said that because of the lack of available care in rural areas particularly, some people are having to move away from where they have always lived. Bereavement care for the remaining community can be fragmented if the funeral is then not held locally, and people whose friends have moved away miss it, leading to a feeling of brokenness in the sense of belonging in the community.

Adrian also commented that the trend is rural people needing to go further for many things as more services are centralised, which raises questions about rural sustainability and disadvantage more generally. As a church we need models of ministry and mission that are appropriate for the rural context, not urban models made to fit. In the same way, our services need to be looked at from a rural point of view, as urban models are not suitable for rural communities.

No specific actions were identified, but we might all consider how, as churches, we can help in these situations.

10. Directory of Social Activities – update on progress and going forward

For those not aware of this project, please see [here](#) for an explanation.

Progress to collate information about community activities being organised by churches for their communities is slow. Huge thanks to Annie Jefferies and Maurie Webber who as Lay Chairs of their respective deaneries (Tavistock and Okehampton) have collected a significant amount of data from their deaneries but calls for information via our newsletter and other media have not been effective. We will raise the subject at the lay chairs and rural deans diocesan meeting in June.

Once the information is collated, the other side of the equation is to ensure that it is widely distributed and known about by our secular partners. We have commitment to load the information onto the DCC Pinpoint website of community activities, and it will be available via our own site, but general knowledge of its existence will be needed in doctors' surgeries and health and social care agencies.

Elaine spoke about the DCC "Community Connectors" project which will assist with "social prescribing" for community activities, amongst other things. Community Connectors will build relationships with health and social care providers and communities, and so be able to link the two. Perhaps in rural areas churches could be "community connectors". **Action:** Penny will follow up with DCC to see how our work can link in.

11. Notices and Events

Open Farm Sunday 10th June

Rural Ministries Annual Conference 8th to 9th June

New Wine Rural Ministry Conference 18th to 22nd June

15th July Rural Mission Sunday

Details of all above, and future events, available on What's On page of our website.

Jane Lucas will be speaking at the Devon County Show on the YFC panel on the subject "Do tractors need MOTs?" at 10.30 am on the Friday.

12. AOB – there was none

13. Date of next meeting: 29th October. All meetings will take place at the Young Farmers Centre at Cheriton Bishop from 10 am to 12 noon. Dates for 2019 will be circulated when available.

14. Closing prayer