

Devon Churches Rural Forum – Newsletter No 1 – Spring 2017

Introducing the Devon Churches Rural Forum (DCRF)

The Devon Churches Rural Forum was formed in 2015 in order to support the work of the rural church in Devon.

It is an ecumenical body, chaired by the Archdeacon of Barnstaple, and meets three times a year. It brings together people from our churches and wider community, including farmers, ministers, academics and farming and community support groups and some public sector agencies. It is at an early stage of development, but we hope that groups working on a range of rural issues can meet together to share their ideas and concerns.

Some individuals/groups involved in the Forum have been engaged with market chaplaincy, pastoral support for the farming community, and environmental concerns for a number of years. Others have come together more recently to provide training or reflect theologically on rural ministry. In 2017 we hope that new groups will emerge to work on social and economic issues and community engagement and new models of rural ministry.

If you would like to know more, or to get involved in any way, please contact the secretary, Revd Penny Dobbin, via email on info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk

Devon Churches Rural Forum Website

With this newsletter we are also launching our new website which you can find at <http://devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk/>. Find out more about what the Devon Churches Rural Forum is, and what it may be able to offer you, by exploring the site.

Some content is available already, and over time the website will build to offer:

- resources for churches including news of training, conference and networking opportunities
- liturgy and prayers for rural communities
- shared stories of worship, care and service
- information on examples of rural ministry and links to other projects
- a directory of church based community projects and activities
- information and links on a wide variety of organisations who support our rural communities
- information and resources related to a variety of rural socio-economic, farming and environmental issues.

Please help to make our website a shared endeavour to provide resources for all our churches and communities. Send us

- your good news stories to inspire, encourage and celebrate the life of our rural churches and communities
- your photos of churches, countryside and events to brighten up the website – and help make the site a resource to support rural and church tourism
- links to your own websites – we'll add them to the DCRF – and please add the DCRF website as a link on yours if you can
- details of your flower festivals, cream teas, concerts, prayer walks, special services etc. – we can add them to the website and “tweet” them around

- and please send any ideas or suggestions for improvement to info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk

Keep looking at the website to see what's new – you can also follow us on Twitter @Devoncrf - it would be great to hear your news and events so we have something to tweet!

Spring Farming Report

Rogation Sunday is coming up (21st May) – here you can find a link to the Forum's [Spring Farming Notes](#) for Devon which we hope you might find useful for services and general information. These have been compiled from information given by Andy Jerrard (Rural Support Worker and Market Chaplaincy coordinator), Joanne Jones (Farming Community Network Devon coordinator and dairy farmer) and David Moore (dairy farmer) – sincere thanks to all three.

Livestock Market Chaplaincy

Andy Jerrard, Livestock Market Chaplaincy Coordinator, writes “Chaplaincy is about walking alongside people in the everyday ups and downs of life”. Read more from Andy about the interesting and varied role of a market chaplain and find out how you could get involved [here](#)

Forthcoming Events

Managing God's Acre in Devon – 6th May - Conference at St Cuthbert's Centre, Buckfast Abbey, TQ11 0EE, organised by Devon Churches Green Action together with Devon Wildlife Trust, supported by the Diocese of Exeter. For more information see [Living Churchyards](#). Booking via Joanie Harris, joanie.harris@exeter.anglican.org or 01392-294940.

Re-imagining Rural Ministry - a Bright Field Community Day - at The Ockment Centre, Okehampton, 15th May from 9.45 am to 2.30 pm. Further information about the Bright Field Community and the day itself can be found [here](#). If you are interested in attending please email info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk by 4th May – sorry for the short notice.

Dying to Live - Making and Growing Disciples in the Countryside [Fresh Expressions Conference](#) 22nd to 24th May at the Hayes Centre Swanick

A Heart to Sing: music for small churches workshop: Saturday 10 June, 10am-12.30pm St Mary's Bideford (please email the Archdeacon of Barnstaple's PA, Jacque Ward, on archdeacon.of.barnstaple@exeter.anglican.org to book)

Open Farm Sunday on Sunday 11th June. You can find out which farms are taking part [here](#)

May and June – Naturally Healthy Month and 30 Days Wild

- May is Naturally Healthy month in Devon. You can find more information about this here [Naturally Healthy Month](#). Being outside is well known to have many physical, mental and spiritual health benefits. If you have any outside or nature events planned for the month of May – perhaps a prayer or awareness walk – or a farm service - it would be great to advertise these and promote the “spiritual” side of our health. We have an offer from North Devon Biosphere Reserve to include any of our events in an overall calendar for north Devon, and for the rest of the county we can share events via various websites – so email info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk and let us know – we'll do our best to promote them.

- Similarly, “30 Days Wild” is organised by the Devon Wildlife Trust and encourages people to get out and experience nature first hand every day in June. More information available here [30 Days Wild](#). Again let us know what you are doing – or if you are on social media you can let people know what you are doing using the hashtag [#30DaysWild](#)

Loneliness Conference – The Diocese of Exeter are working with Healthwatch Devon and there will be a conference for churches on **28th June** at the Coaver Centre in Exeter. For details and bookings please contact joanie.harris@exeter.anglican.org

Rural Mission Sunday – 16th July - This year’s theme is “hospitality” and some fantastic free resources are available from the [Germinate](#) (Arthur Rank Centre) website

If you have details of any local events or training opportunities please let us know so we can share via the website and newsletter – as always via info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk

Rural Loneliness, Social Isolation and Pastoral Care in the Community

There are several projects and organisations in Devon working to tackle this issue and it will be a substantive item on the agenda for the next Devon Churches Rural Forum meeting on 8th May. For information on some of these please see the [Loneliness and Social Isolation](#) page on our website

With a great emphasis on Care in the Community, Devon Adult Social Care are also working with voluntary and community groups to explore how people can be supported through befriending and pastoral care and a pilot partnership involving the churches and community sector in Barnstaple is in the early stages of development. If you have a Pastoral Care Team or a befriending project, and you would be interested in exploring the possibility of receiving “referrals” of people in need of friendship in your communities, please contact Penny Dobbin – on penelopedobbin@outlook.com.

Though churches are in contact with many people in our rural communities, it is sometimes the case that someone is suffering and unknown to us. Working with other agencies on a referral basis may help bridge this gap where it occurs and help us to reach out to some of the hardest to reach in our communities. We also have an offer from Devon County Council for people from their re-ablement team to meet with church and community befrienders/pastoral care teams to talk to them about early support measures or sign posts that can be accessed that may help keep people better and more able for longer without over burdening informal volunteers. Let me know if your church might be interested.

Our churches and communities are already doing a huge amount to support people in our rural communities both through formal projects and activities and informal loving care. **You can help by letting us know about the work you are already doing** – tell us via the website or email if you hold a lunch club, craft afternoon, coffee morning or tea party - for example - so we can build a more complete picture of the support and help available, and enable the various agencies involved to access this to find a particular activity in a particular community, to which they could refer someone, without needing to begin a new project.

Our Community Sector Support Organisations

We are very blessed in Devon with our various Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Devon Communities Together (DCT). They offer a wide range of services relevant to churches including training and advice with fund raising and grant applications, help in setting up new projects, finding volunteers and much more. The [Community Organisations page](#) on our website gives more information and contact details / web links to help you find your local support organisation.

Barnstaple Archdeaconry Church and Community Research Project

This research project covered various social and economic aspects of life and the Church's response, and though focused on North Devon and Torridge has applicability to rural areas across the whole of Devon. The report includes sections on the nature of our communities, rural sustainability, health, social care and wellbeing, business and the economy, education, poverty and aspiration, farming and the environment, housing and community safety. It concludes with reflections on the common aims the church has with so many organisations working for the common good, partnership working and some of the particular gifts the church can bring to the whole. You can read the report [here](#)