

Strategy for rural mission: Webinar Q&A

1. Can the PowerPoint be shared with us afterwards? Are the reports available to read?
 - a. You can find the slides, along with the webinar recording, here: [Learning review on strategy for rural mission - Church Support Hub](#)
 - b. The report is available here: [What's in our hands? Rural mission learning review - Church Support Hub](#)
2. Has there been broader reflection on the national Church's commitment to rural mission and ministry? e.g. the loss of the 'National Rural Officer' post. Does anyone in the NCIs hold an ongoing portfolio in relation to rural contexts? Is one-off project funding the only way that the national Church is supporting rural mission and ministry?
 - a. The Vision and Strategy is the national focus, with dioceses adapting this to support mission and ministry in their local parish context. Investment from the national Church has been three-fold: Through Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment, funding with dioceses' strategies rather than single projects to support rural mission; investing in building a network of leaders across the Church who can support this work; and lastly investing in learning, including research that we see presented at this webinar.
3. That was incredibly helpful. I am in Norwich Diocese. The elephant in the room is historic buildings. Have any of the reports addressed the heavy legacy of buildings, and is anyone thinking creatively about it on a scale big enough to make a difference?
 - a. A real 'natty' challenge. Exeter programme, and information is available on the Church Support Hub for this programme: [Unearthing the treasure: Exeter - Church Support Hub](#) (NB you will need an account and a relevant role in your diocese to access this content).
4. You state the importance and worth of peer learning, networks, and relationships for leaders. Is there evidence that these activities directly lead to numerical growth?
 - a. No direct evidence. But those things were repeatedly stated as being of value by church leaders to enable the Church to become more missional.
5. A great presentation - Thank you. A couple of wonderings: 1. Rural vs urban. Is there a difference to be explored around the importance of the land and place to rural ministry? 2. Alongside the new is there a missional imperative to help those things that are ending to 'die well'. I'm researching rural church closure....are resources needed to support those facing this too?

- a. Agreed. The parallel was drawn between the common challenges for mission in both low-income communities in urban and rural contexts, mission will look different.
6. Thanks that's helpful. But I think it would be good to acknowledge that for many in rural contexts, the lack of a national rural officer has sent a very strong message about how the national institutions value the rural.
 - a. I think that change was perceived negatively. There are actually no national officers in area any more, as the approach now is to build networks of leaders across the Church, working in the same mission field.
7. Maybe more a SEC question but did the report shed any light on how ecumenical working can help reach out to people?
 - a. Carlisle diocese whole focus is working ecumenically, but would be best to connect to that team to understand more.
8. Thank you Sally, Richard and David. Could I ask whether there was any difference from the reports in the outworking of a mixed ecology, with respect to adjusting for clergy training with a specialism in rural during their formation and/or training? It would seem clergy are ideally placed to teach and lead their congregations to recognise the variety and organic nature of God's work, with the intention of 'folding in' these agitators who may cause friction, but also be engines of growth.
 - a. Info on Salisbury's Renewing Hope through Rural Ministry work, is available on the Church Support Hub: [Renewing Hope through Rural Ministry: Salisbury - Church Support Hub, Rural parish support key to Salisbury's growth - Church Support Hub](#) (NB you will need an account and a relevant role in your diocese to access this content).
 - b. Work with Sarum College developed some really useful materials and training.
9. How do we define Rural? How do we define Deeply Rural in terms of connectivity to larger populations - is this defined by distance in which case what is that distance?
 - a. DEFRA has definitions. Fiona Tweedie at Brendan Research is highly informed on this subject.
10. You mention the similarity between rural and urban estates. We see that, and what often happens is that you have in both cases educated retired people coming in and effectively taking over, 'infantilising' the initial congregation. One issue is that training for lay leaders is becoming so academic that a lot of people living with poor initial education and low paid jobs are not willing to tackle thus exacerbating the divide.
 - a. Important point. Nothing in the reports about this. But it's worth addressing.

11. Have you any comments on 'focal ministry' in relation to the relationship between existing parishes and new communities?

- a. Nothing came through strongly in this research

12. *From the Arthur Rank Centre:* Arthur Rank Centre noted their response on supporting rural leadership - Germinate Leadership — a unique 18-month programme for those in rural ministry who are ready to grow, reflect, and lead with greater confidence and companionship. Rooted in ecumenical partnership, the course combines:

- a. 3 residential gatherings
- b. Mentoring from experienced leaders
- c. Peer learning in a supportive cohort
- d. Realistic, hope-filled space to explore rural calling

Whether you're lay or ordained, if you're navigating the challenges of rural church life and looking to grow in your leadership, this could be for you.

Find out more and apply: <https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/training/germinate-leadership>

13. *From ReSource:* At ReSource we are piloting a new two-year Learning Community aimed specifically at growing lay leadership and discipleship in multi-parish benefices. In particular, we have just received grant funding to support churches in the West Midlands through the programme, so anyone from Birmingham, Coventry, Hereford, Lichfield or Worcester could access up to full funding.

See <https://www.resourcingrenewal.org/learningcommunity> for more information.