

Meeting with Jill Hopkinson (Church of England National Rural Officer) and members of Devon Churches Rural Forum held 2nd October, Moretonhamstead Rectory

Present: Jill Hopkinson, Simon Franklin (Priest in charge Bovey Valley Mission Community, Bright Field Community, Rural Dean Moreton Deanery), Elaine Cook (CEO Devon Communities Together and Church Warden Chulmleigh Parish), Jane Frost (Assistant Curate Totnes Mission Community), Penny Dobbin (Secretary DCRF and Rural Dean Hartland Deanery)

Germinate

- Germinate programme resources are focused on working with rural churches to achieve flourishing churches and communities.
- They offer free on line resources with material for small congregations, supporting discipleship, worship and buildings.
- There are tool kits for rural mission, including material to run locally based training days focusing on listening to communities and helping people to share their faith and stories.
- There is training for those new to rural ministry based at The Arthur Rank Centre. Material is also being prepared to enable this type of training to be delivered locally. Alison Ball of the Methodist Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, may be able to pilot this in the South West. This training is aimed at formal ministries of clergy and Readers but could be used more broadly as well.
- Germinate Leadership is an eighteen month programme. It is for lay and ordained to explore church leadership together, forming ongoing learning communities.
- Germinate Groups are aimed at multi-church groups of people joining together to consider mission, discipleship, church growth, what is, what could be, what will be. Groups meet every six months with a mentor to work with groups in between times.
- Germinate Enterprise aims to help rural business start ups
- Germinate also supports and promotes Rural Mission Sunday. And publishes the monthly magazine "Country Way".
- [Crossing the Threshold](#) is a tool kit developed by the Diocese of Hereford for churches embarking on projects involving the extended use of their buildings
- Please explore the resources available from Germinate [here](#) – there are so many, and so easy and appropriate for use in our churches.

Rural Strategy

- With 41 dioceses in the Church of England there is no one rural strategy, but the current priorities are:
 - Developing the ministry of the whole body of Christ
 - Supporting the ministry of lay people – as expressed through the report ["Setting God's People free"](#)

- Discipleship – deepening connections between faith and life in community
- Outworking of the work of the report [“Shaping Strategies for Mission and Growth in multi church rural groups”](#)

- We discussed various aspects of rural ministry and mission, reflected well by the list of “the characteristics of being the Body of Christ as developed for the rural church” from the Shaping Strategies report. These are namely – incarnational, relational, contextual, participatory and spiritual. This report is succinctly written and is highly recommended for reading!

- Elaine spoke about the work of Devon Communities Together and the help they are able to offer to churches involved in building projects, managing church buildings and engaging with the wider community. DCT is currently partnering with the Diocese of Exeter in the Growing the Rural Church Project.