

Devon Churches Rural Forum

Newsletter no. 5 January 2019



Continuing to Tackle Loneliness and Social Isolation in Devon

The Devon Churches Rural Forum Community Activities Project

Our DCRF database of church based community activities, which many of you have contributed to, went “live” in January. You can access it [here](#).

The database can be used by people in the caring and health professions to link up people who may be lonely or socially isolated with some of our friendly activities such as lunch clubs or coffee mornings. This is often referred to as “social prescribing” and has been much in the news recently.

One lady, who was elderly and disabled and lived in a remote and very small hamlet in north Devon was linked in this way to the local church who were able to collect her for their weekly community lunch, which she greatly enjoyed. She hadn’t been in contact with the church earlier, and though we advertise our activities well, knowledge of them doesn’t always reach those who might benefit the most.

The database has been circulated widely among our colleagues in the caring and community professions. Feedback so far has been very good and we are hoping for lots more “matches” in connecting our activities with the people who need them.

However, looking at the database you can see that only certain deaneries and geographical areas have given us the information that we need to help connect more people and we need your help to widen the coverage. Here’s how you can do that:

Three Simple Steps for Churches to Help:

1. Check our [database](#) to see if your church or activity is already listed
2. If not, please complete our simple web-based form [here](#)
3. Let people in your local health, community and caring agencies know about the database so that they can help link up people who may benefit from your activity.

Linking with other Projects and People

Lindsay Derbyshire is the Community Connector for North Devon Voluntary Services working in partnership with Care Direct Plus. Her work supports the Adult Social Care team by helping people connect with activities in their community - the lady referred to earlier was “connected” by Lindsay and we are continuing to work together to create more connecting opportunities.

Diana Crump, CEO of **Living Options Devon**, says: “Loneliness and social isolation is one of the key issues to be addressed across Devon due to the combination of an older population coupled with Devon’s rurality”.

Anne Clayton is the leader of a new project within Living Options Devon called “**Time to Talk**”. This was launched in October last year and aims to tackle loneliness and isolation amongst Devon’s disabled and Deaf community. Anne says “Those of us who are unfamiliar with the lives of people with disabilities and Deaf people may not understand the daily problems they often face. We may not realise that small things which we take for granted, such as going out to meet friends or taking part in activities, might prove to be very challenging for a wide range of reasons”.

The project provides a variety of new services – funded by the National Lottery’s Big Lottery Fund - including a confidential telephone support line (with webcam options available for Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL)), local ‘Chat & Share’ groups, disability-tailored life coaching, information and advice sessions and, uniquely, counselling for Deaf people provided in BSL. For more information, you can visit their website [here](#).

Anne is also using our database to help find locally based activities for people who may enjoy them.

You may also be interested in the report from **Healthwatch Devon** on helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation, which many churches helped with, [here](#). And **Germinate : The Arthur Rank Centre** also offer a toolkit for rural churches on rural isolation and loneliness which can be accessed [here](#) (and see over for more that Germinate can offer churches in all sorts of ways).



Germinate Resources

At our last DCRF meeting at the end of October, Stephen Derges, who is Germinate's ambassador for our region, told us about the many resources available to churches from Germinate.

The work of Germinate is in three main areas: Church Life, Mission and Training. There are around 115 downloadable resources in the church life section, including worship resources with service templates for different occasions, discipleship courses and buildings resources – these can be accessed [here](#). In the [Mission section](#) you can find a toolkit for rural mission, an evangelism course, information about Rural Mission Sunday and Germinate Enterprise – all designed to support rural churches to meet the spiritual, physical and social needs of their communities. And in the [Training section](#) you will find links to the “Germinate Groups” learning community programme, the Germinate Leadership programme for both clergy and lay leaders, the Rural Ministry short course and the Germinate conference programme.

Germinate also produces a monthly magazine “Country Way” for rural churches highlighting resources, mission and ministry.

Stephen is willing to come and speak to deanery synods and Methodist circuit meetings etc. about Germinate and the resources available. He can be contacted as follows by email at stephend@germinate.net

Rev'd Mark Betson - Church of England National Rural Officer.

Following Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson's move to Sarum College last year, Rev'd Mark Betson has been appointed as the new National Rural Officer for the Church of England. Mark began work on 7th January and said 'I am looking forward to starting work as the National Rural Officer and the opportunity it presents to be an advocate for rural Churches and communities. I am passionate about enabling them to thrive, particularly through greater working together in their individual and diverse settings, and by encouraging support for families and young people to have a future in these places, building up sustainable communities and churches.'

Mark has been Rural and Environment Officer for the Diocese of Chichester for the last eight years and South East Regional Director for the Farming Community Network. He has also been very involved in bringing the countryside into schools and supporting students at land-based colleges with the South of England Agricultural Society.

Mark sits alongside Rev'd Elizabeth Clark, our National Rural Officer for the Methodist and URC churches, and the Germinate team based at Stoneleigh Park.

Mark is hoping to have an opportunity to visit us for a Devon Churches Rural Forum meeting and share experience and ideas.



Welcome Mark! We look forward to working with you and pray for every blessing on you in your new post.

Focus on Farming



Winter Farming Updates

Andy Jerrard writes: For the church, the season of advent, the time of waiting and preparation, is passed. For most farmers we are still in that season - waiting, waiting to see how early the spring arrives for starters. An early spring will be an answer to many prayers as it will mean animals can be turned out and preparation for early silage cuts can start in earnest. These things will help alleviate the high costs of feed and straw. A kind October has helped, a dryish January has done no harm, therefore all that is needed for the three card trick is a warm early to mid-March onwards."

Joanne Jones reports that milk prices have started to drop back but will hopefully now stabilise and not return to levels seen previously - a more stable price is needed rather than peaks and troughs to help farmers budget. For many farmers, extra forage has needed to be purchased due to the dry weather last summer - often at prices double to normal years.

She also hopes for a good early spring and a favourable summer to build up feed reserves for winter 2019/20. However a hard spring will help push up prices of milk and meat if there are shortages of supply! Colin Smallacombe adds that beef prices are back around 10p a kilo on the year, and lambs are about 20p a kilo up on last year at this time.

David Ursell reports that it has been much harder to finish(fatten) lambs, and many have been sold as stores (i.e. not finished with enough weight to be viable). As well as the high price he says if you are an organic farmer, then it is almost impossible to purchase forage - the reason is simply that organic farmers want to feed their own fodder back to their own livestock to enhance the fertility of their soils.

Last year's summer heat has had lasting effects on free range chickens too. When put out from the broodery, the cockerels were slow to get the hang of using nipple drinkers, this has a long term effect on the level of fertility, hence a large drop in the number of chicks being produced.

Brexit: Joanne says that going forward, uncertainty over Brexit remains a key theme and whatever scheme replaces the current BPS is likely to result in further delays in payments during its early implementation stage causing further hardship. Andy adds "Sadly, the hoped for reduction in bureaucracy is not likely to happen. The prospects for increased exports hang on a knife-edge and the general outlook for agriculture as a whole is considerably uncertain - reflecting the whole process of exiting the EU. There is no indication that the public good of producing food is going to be recognised in the immediate future, which is another dampener on optimism", and Colin adds that with the Brexit uncertainty and recent publicity about climate change and the health effects of meat consumption, milk and sugar, morale amongst farmers is quite low.

You can read Andy's full winter farming update [here](#).

We continue to pray for all our farmers and those who work on the land.

Farm Visits 2019

We are very pleased to offer Farm Visits for anyone who would like to understand more about farming and the issues that encourage and concern our farmers. These are:

30th April - Dairyfield Farm at Down St Mary near Crediton. Meet at 1 pm for a soup lunch followed by a farm walk and a talk from Joanne Jones on current farming issues and the work of the FCN.

13th July - Dartington Hall Farm - time and details tba

We hope for a third visit in the autumn near Holsworthy. Numbers for each visit are limited to 30. If you would like to book on either visit please email me at penelopedobbin@outlook.com with your contact details and I will confirm and send directions etc. Bishop Jackie will be joining us on 30th April and Bishop Nick on 13th July.

Mental Health

At our October DCRF meeting, Rev'd Marisa Cockfield spoke about the work of the Mental Health Round Table. Its aim is to raise awareness and promote training, understanding and links across churches in Devon about mental health issues. The MH Round Table operates in different ways. There is a strategic alliance with ecumenical partners, the police and others which holds an overview and concentrates on strategic planning. There is also a group looking at local delivery of training including basic mental health awareness training, mental health first aid and dementia awareness and possibly ASIST suicide prevention training. To read more see the [notes of our October meeting](#) and the [Annual Report of the Mental Health Round Table](#) here.

10 volunteers from the FCN have now completed the ASIST suicide prevention course. The FCN is also engaged in a joint initiative with the Devon YFC which involves running sessions on mental health awareness and the support available at Young Farmers Clubs across the county. Joanne Jones (FCN) said they could deliver this session to other organisations where staff are working with farmers. She also encouraged anyone who is aware of any struggling farming families to refer them to the FCN (with permission).

We have also compiled a page on our website for mental health information and resources across the county - you can access this [here](#). If you know of any other organisations we could add, please email the details to our "info" address below.

Events

March 2nd - Praxis Day - Growing in Worship - 10 am to 4 pm at Cullompton Community Centre

15th May Salt, Light and Feet of Clay: Celebrating the ministry of lay people - 10am-2pm, King's Park Conference Centre, Northampton. Speaker: George Dunn, CEO, Tenant Farmers Association.

9th June Open Farm Sunday

14th July 2019 - Rural Mission Sunday "Live the Life" Rural Mission Sunday is an annual event celebrating the work of small rural churches.

23-27 September 2019, Lee Abbey - Faith and the Future of the Countryside - with Bishop Alan Smith. This conference will explore the rapidly changing face of the countryside in England and the role that the Church can play in shaping it.

12th October: Beacon Baptist Church, Kilmington, Devon - Rural Ministries Southwest Regional Conference 2019 RE:Generate.

More details and links for all the above on our "What's On" page [here](#)



Devon Churches Rural Forum is an ecumenical group that meets three times a year to bring together people with an interest in rural affairs and ministry to discuss and respond in practical ways to issues relating to ministry and mission, training and resourcing for rural ministry, farming matters and pastoral care of our farmers, and various rural social, economic and environmental concerns.

Website: devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk Email: info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk

Chair: The Ven Dr Mark Butchers Secretary and Editor: Rev'd Penny Dobbin

If you have details of any events, book reviews, liturgies or good news stories to share please let us know so we can share via the website and newsletter – as always via info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk

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