

## Devon Churches Rural Forum Meeting Notes

16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 – 10 am to 12.30 pm

### Devon YFC Centre, Cheriton Bishop

1. Archdeacon Mark opened the meeting in prayer

2. **Welcome and Introductions**

Those present introduced themselves.

**Present:**

Mark Butchers (Chair and Archdeacon of Barnstaple); Penny Dobbin (secretary), Dave Watson (Methodist lay minister and rural parish councillor), Danny Semorad (farmer, church warden, member of Devon Historic Churches Trust), David Ursell (Anglican minister, farmer and past rural officer), Chris Keppie (Exeter Diocese Church and Society Officer), Sylvia West (PCC and deanery synod secretary and representing the Devon Federation of WIs), Philip Wagstaff (rural minister and Methodist rural officer for Plymouth and Exeter Methodist District), Jane Frost (rural minister), Marisa Cockfield (Team Vicar, Police Chaplain, Mental Health Round Table), Chris Forster (Transforming Plymouth Together and Exeter Diocese Lead for Modern Slavery), Simon Franklin (Bright Field Community and Chair of Exeter Diocese Church Buildings and Strategy Committee (CBSC) which acts as the Steering Group for Growing the Rural Church Project), Richard Yarwood (Professor of Human Geography at Plymouth University with interests in rural geography, migrant workers and Brexit and rural social issues such as dementia and policing), Stephen Skinner (rural minister interested in rural issues), Jane Skinner (Rural Minister).

3. **Apologies** were received from Joanne Jones, Elaine Cook, Janet May, Graham Whalley, Jane Lucas, Stephen Derges, Ruth Frampton, Sam Upham, Andy Jerrard, Heather Sayle, Douglas Dettmer, Paul Seaton-Burn, Susanna Metz, Jane Hayes, Nickie Johnson.

4. The [notes of the last meeting](#) were agreed as a correct record.

5. Matters Arising

- a. Information sheet on Dementia and Memory Cafés – Please refer to the [Exeter Diocese Website pages on Dementia](#) which contain a wealth of information and links to resources.
- b. Follow up items from the “Police” agenda item last time have all been completed. Thanks to Martin Beck.
- c. Link Together – the WI day conference addressing rural isolation, loneliness and social isolation, at which Sylvia was going to speak about the work of the DCRF, sadly had to be cancelled. Sylvia is continuing to link local WIs and churches to work together on issues including mental health awareness, dementia and carers, isolation and loneliness. A new coffee morning is being developed in Shebbear through such a joint community effort.

Chris Keppie noted that he is looking at [Anna Chaplaincy](#) (community ministry for older people) working with other national charities. **Action:** Sylvia will give Chris most appropriate WI contacts for Devon.

## 6. DCRF Project Updates

- a. **Placements for Ordinands:** Simon noted the mismatch between enthusiasm for rural ministry on the ground and what is offered to students at the theological colleges. This project aimed to use the resources of the DCRF to help engage students and theological educators. The initial work has been “sponsored” by the DCRF in that the work has been part of the DCRF’s work strand of rural ministry training. A DCRF sub group (Simon, Philip, Heather, Stephen S) has been developing a placement plan for ordinands. Work has been largely with Jill Hopkinson of Sarum College. There has been limited input from more locally based training schemes (SWMTC and St Mellitus).

Jill is discerning which students may be appropriate for this scheme. The aim is for ordinands to capture a sense of enthusiasm for, and understand the distinct nature of, ministry in a rural context. The placements could be either long or short and may be full time or weekend based.

Two parish priests, Rev’d Paul Seaton-Burn (Chagford) and Rosie Austin (Shirwell), have agreed to take on placements. Both have been involved in radical thinking about the future of rural ministry. It is hoped two placements will run in spring 2020 and be an immersive experience.

Philip asked how the ecumenical dimension would be explored as ecumenical working in rural areas is vital. He also said it needs to be clear how these placements will be different from normal parish based placements.

Mark asked whether Simon could circulate an idea of how a placement of say 80 to 100 hours might be used. Simon said some broad outlines would be possible but each placement would be tailor made. Simon sees this initial work as a pilot project which can be widened depending on the outcomes.

One of the initial ideas was to harness the wide expertise and experiences of members of the DCRF in the placement experiences. Ideas included making a DVD of members being interviewed and explaining their passion for rural ministry, the rewards and the concerns involved and/or perhaps hosting an evening where ordinands could come and meet and chat with members of the DCRF.

In the current plans, it may be possible to invite ordinands to regular DCRF meeting – [dates are on our website](#).

- b. The DCRF **Rural Worship Workshop** was held on October 12<sup>th</sup> with 56 participants. Jane Frost reported that what emerged was more than “the sum of the parts”. The day was based on small groups with a bottom up approach. She felt it was an empowering and refreshing day with a lot of energy and thanked Penny for her work in the practical

organisation. Penny said the day was very missional in outlook with people very focused on encouraging the participation of members of their wider communities. There is significant follow up work to be done in developing the “Seasonal Calendar of Worship” which Penny and Chris will be taking forward (**Action**) but the main outputs from the day can be found on our website [here](#) and anyone visiting this section our website will also be able to find a growing library of resources for different rural worship opportunities.

- c. **Farm Visit Programme:** Jane S said that the Dartington Farm Visit had been excellent and raised many questions, including how we can help share the information coming from the research projects there. Stephen said we needed a time at the end of a visit for general discussion between the farmer and group. **Action:** Penny to ask John Wibberley (local contact for Dartington) if he can help with follow up information from some of the ideas and research projects that we may be able to share more widely through our networks.
  
- d. **Models of Rural Ministry:** Mark reported that a small group had met together twice. The aim of the group is to produce a “Tool Kit for Rural Parishes” to help people think through the theology of rural ministry, the models that may best support it and practical issues such as streamlining “back office” functions. Penny is drawing together a paper on rural theology and Mark the paper on options for different models. These papers will be shared more widely when available. The February meeting of the DCRF will be used to discuss this subject further. Following this we may work towards another open conference on the subject. **Action:** Simon to send Penny any rural theology write ups available from the Bright Field Community

## 7. Future Administration of the DCRF

Penny said that she needed to step back from some of her DCRF work for the next 12 months for health reasons. She had prepared a list of tasks that need doing to keep the DCRF running smoothly and she, Mark and Chris have been working out how these can best be managed. So far Sylvia has offered to co-ordinate welcome and refreshments for DCRF meetings (one or two more people are needed to help with this – any offers gratefully received). Danny has offered to take on the organisation of the Farm Visit programme, and Stephen S has offered to assist. Philip W offered to prepare the meeting agendas and take the meeting notes. Chris has facilitated some support from Old Deanery admin staff when we need to take event bookings etc. The Community Activities/Social Prescribing project will be transferred to the Mental Health Awareness Group, represented here by Marisa and Chris (chair) as the aim of reducing rural loneliness and social isolation is an important aim for their work. Marisa will also continue with the wider networking work to connect the DCRF with external agencies and organisations. Thanks to everyone who has offered to help.

Post meeting note: Following the meeting Mark, Penny, Danny, Marisa, Chris and Philip met to discuss the detail of who will do what. We now have the makings of an excellent DCRF support team. **Action:** Penny will circulate a simple guide as to who will be doing what in future.

## 8. Deemed items

- a. Farming Update – please see our latest update [here](#)
- b. Update on Community Activities Project – see above

## 9. Rural Crime and Modern Slavery

- a. Deputy Chief Constable Paul Netherton (Devon and Cornwall Police and also chair of the Christian Police Association), Det. Sup. Jenny Bristow (lead for Modern Slavery) and PC Martin Beck (Rural Crime Officer) were welcomed to the meeting.

Paul Netherton spoke about how the police are part of society and society part of the police – it is not about the police policing society on their own – we all need to work together with the bedrock being the “neighbourhood policing” model. Many police officers also volunteer in their own communities as school governors, lifeboat crew, scout leaders etc. This shows how much they care about their communities – policing is not just a job. He really appreciates being able to work with the churches in our communities as part of this approach and encourages his neighbourhood beat officers to get to know their local churches. Similarly he encourages us as churches to get to know our beat officers, invite them to church events and have conversations about how we can help each other. Sunday mornings are a generally quiet time for the police. **Action:** Mark and Chris will take this idea forward with clergy.

He asks people in communities the question “do you know who your neighbour is” – a very biblical question – and believes the church has a significant role in developing neighbourliness, which can both help support individuals and help protect communities against crime. The police are also working closely with other countryside organisations including the NFU and CLA.

Crime challenges in society can be exacerbated in rural areas mainly because of isolation, but also because of austerity and the withdrawal of services. When we think of rural crime we often think of farm thefts of machinery or livestock (of which more later) but the biggest offence is domestic abuse, and rural isolation often means the voices of those in need are not heard. He said 1 in 4 people will have experienced domestic abuse at some time, and 1 in 10 will currently be experiencing it.

### b. **Modern Slavery – Det. Sup. Jenny Bristow**

The term “Modern Slavery” is an umbrella for different forms of exploitation including sexual, criminal and labour based crimes. If a person is held in servitude to provide a service they are said to be held in slavery. Where someone has been moved from one place to another to do something, this constitutes trafficking. Criminal exploitation would include the “County Lines” drug trafficking networks where people, often young people, are trafficked across the country to sell drugs. Sexual and labour exploitation are the main forms of Modern Slavery we see in Devon (though there are instances of County Lines). They do not represent huge numbers of crimes, but they are really complex with people moved across force boundaries and around communities and who may not speak English.

Numbers may be low, but the harms are huge.

Churches can help by keeping alert to specific signs. For example there may start to be a lot of comings and goings at a property that weren't there before. People may be coming to churches and soup kitchens for help when they appear to be working. A list of what to look out for is available via the Clewer Initiative Toolkit for Slavery in Rural Areas which can be accessed via our website [here](#). Churches can notice these things, ask questions and help. The Roman Catholic Church has a really important part to play as many trafficked people belong to the RC Church and are allowed to attend services – one of the very few opportunities they have to mix with people.

Jenny said that in 2016 there were 200 live Modern Slavery investigations in the UK in the year. The figures for September 2019 alone are 1620 investigations. This shows how the police are finding more cases, but this is a challenge for us all. The crimes are very complex and the victims need a huge amount of support to recover and be re-integrated into normal community and are often really dependent on charities and churches to help with the support they need.

Sylvia asked how we could help people if we found anyone suffering in this way. Sometimes help can be very simple –for example, often someone's passport may be taken from them. They could request another passport but ignorance and a belief that they may get into trouble by applying may stop them, so being able to reassure people about how to get a new passport, that our police want to help, and having information available about who else can help can be very useful.

Richard asked about Brexit and how that might affect the issue. It is possible that if we have a greater labour shortage there may be more trafficking of vulnerable people.

Philip said that the church can help increase people's understanding and compassion when sometimes the attitude is simply "you shouldn't be here" even when someone has been trafficked.

**c. Modern Slavery – Chris Forster**

Chris is the lead for Modern Slavery for the Diocese of Exeter. He spoke about Modern Slavery from the church's point of view explaining what is already being done and what we can do.

He says Modern Slavery happens all across the county and the first job we have is to help people to become more aware of it. The church is in a unique position to be active in this way with at least one church in every parish in the county. As an example, he reported that a few weeks ago a van was stopped at Cullompton with 24 trafficked Vietnamese people on board who had landed at Newlyn. He said Modern Slavery will be happening in all our communities and we need to know what we can do. As individuals we may not see the whole picture, but reporting small pieces of information to the police can help them to put small pieces of a jigsaw together.

He urges us all to pray intentionally about the issue and for the victims, and to do this we need to know the facts. [UK Anti-Slavery Day](#) is always on October 18<sup>th</sup> and the Sunday closest to this is kept as Freedom Sunday – this year 20<sup>th</sup> October. There are various resources available to assist churches to learn more about Modern Slavery and to focus their services on this Sunday – the Clewer Initiative resources link is [here](#).

We need also to ask how as Christians we can act appropriately. Chris asked “what do we buy (do we know the supply chain)?” and “where do we get our cars washed?”. The Clewer initiative has a [“car wash app”](#) which asks questions and enables a report to be made if the user notices anything of concern.

The Hidden Voices training materials which help turn awareness into action can be accessed [here](#). Chris can offer both training and awareness sessions in our churches and communities across Devon and his contact details can be found [here](#). He would also like to develop a group of Modern Slavery Champions across Devon churches. He finished his talk by showing the powerful video “We See You”. This can be accessed [here](#) – please scroll down the page to find it under “Videos”.

### **Rural Crime – Martin Beck**

Whilst rural crime encompasses all the same sorts of crime as in more urban areas, the core work of the rural crime officer involves wildlife crime (poaching, badger, bat and raptor persecution, CITES monitoring, cyber enabled wildlife crime etc.), heritage and cultural property crime (particularly against churches and metal theft) and rural crime (fly-tipping, fuel and battery theft, livestock and equine crime, etc.).

In Devon last year 42% of reported rural crime involved fuel, battery and metal thefts – much of which is related to a few individual criminals. This equates to around £22,000 in scrap value from batteries alone so it is easy to see what a problem this is for our farmers. Last year 1000 animals were stolen in Devon and the police are working with farmers to explore ways of reducing farm thefts. There are also links to organised crime with thefts of tractors and plant as many end up in the Ukraine or Georgia and are stripped down very quickly.

We are asked to encourage people to report crimes using [101 email](#) as well as by phone. Devon and Cornwall Police website’s [contact page](#) also has some more specific links for reporting crimes and other issues. We are also encouraged to sign up for community crime alerts and prevention advice – this [webpage](#) gives more information about the scheme and with links to sign up.

The police are networking with other rural agencies and sharing communications via these networks. There are also schemes such as “Farm Watch” and “Hotel Watch” – Martin asked what about “Church Watch?” He is also happy to come to any meetings with churches and other organisations to discuss how we can work together and he can be a conduit into other policing areas for us.

There are several national rural crime campaigns running at present including Operation Owl to reduce owl persecution, Operations Leviathan and Half-moon both tackling poaching, the Cold Caller campaign where police are working with the NFU to put notices at the perimeter of farms to show white/tipper vans they are not welcome, and enforcement campaigns to “say no” to rogue traders. Social media has been helpful in enabling the police to make wide appeals and in one case a farmer received back his heifers after they had been stolen as a result.

Rural Crime week this year ran from October 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>. This is organised by the National Rural Crime Network (NRCN). The aim of the week is “to put the work being done to identify and tackle rural and wildlife crime in the spotlight and encourage more support for the efforts to ensure communities across rural Britain are safe and feel safe”. The [NRCN website](#) also hosts a wealth of information and background on rural crime for anyone who would like to explore the subject more deeply.

10. **Notices and Events** – please see our What’s On page [here](#). Simon also highlighted the forthcoming Bright Field community Conference on “Re-imagining Rural Ministry” to be held on 21<sup>st</sup> November at St John’s church, Wellington.

11. **AOB** - None

12. The next meeting will be on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The main theme will be a review of the work on the developing “Models of Rural Ministry” toolkit for churches.

Other 2020 dates are 8th July and November 2<sup>nd</sup>. All meetings are held at the Devon Young Farmers Centre, Cheriton Bishop, from 10 am to 12 noon.

13. The meeting closed with prayer.