



## Churches Rural Group

The CRG brings together representatives of Christian denominations with a significant rural presence and other groups and organisations concerned with rural life and ministry to discuss issues of common interest on behalf of Churches Together in England. The meeting in April 2016 included:

**Missional Listening.** ‘I have a passion for rural ministry – it’s often the place where revival starts!’ said Simon Mattholie, CEO of Rural Ministries, during his presentation to the CRG. He noted that many rural church plants and mission initiatives have begun with the best intentions and high commitment of volunteers but failed to reach maturity. Could this be partly because there has not been enough investment in listening, hearing and seeing where God is already at work in a particular community and joining in with him? Time to ‘hang around and interact,’ prayer, discernment and engagement are needed to work out what is actually happening and what mission and church might look like in each context. Part of this process involves ‘spiritual archaeology’ to understand issues from the past that continue to have an impact on and affect the current context, as well as identifying gathering points, flows of people and seasonal patterns. Good news will be different in individual communities: there are no quick fix solutions, but a missional listening offers a process with thought-through, transferable values and principles. Simon will be leading a workshop on ‘Missional Listening’ at the Germinate Conference (details below) for those who would like to hear more about this project, or he is willing to send out background papers. He can be contacted via [www.ruralministries.org.uk](http://www.ruralministries.org.uk)

**Farming issues.** Farming Community Network has had a large increase in its caseload, due to the aftermath of the flooding earlier in the year and to the cash flow problems caused by delayed payments from the RPA as the new system is being introduced. Members of the CRG noted concerns about the current bureaucratic culture which relies on computer programs to impose sanctions, regardless of individual extenuating circumstances.

Christopher Jones would be pleased to receive any comments or reflections on the ‘disconnect’ between action on food poverty and the poverty being experienced by farmers.

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### Dates for your diary:

**Germinate Leadership Annual Lecture: 17 May 2016, Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park**

Revd Dr Michael Volland, author of *The Minister as Entrepreneur*, is delivering our 2016 Germinate Leadership lecture. Please publicise! Cost is £10 including lunch, reserve places by emailing [janetb@germinate.net](mailto:janetb@germinate.net).

**Rural Mission Sunday, “Sow and Grow”, 17 July 2016**

Celebrate rural mission! Look out for materials in the next issue of *Country Way* or download here: <http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/about-arc/support-arc/item/9407-rural-mission-sunday>.

**Germinate Conference: 15 October 2016, Coventry**

The CRG / ARC day conference for lay and ordained rural church leaders across denominations with case studies, workshops and resources. Key note speakers are Revd Dr Roger Walton, President of the Methodist Conference 2016/7, on discipleship; and Pete Atkins, Team Co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions. Full details: [www.germinate.net/go/germinate](http://www.germinate.net/go/germinate)

**And finally:** look out for more information about the National Church Census planned for October 2016, and encourage your church to take part in it!

*Present:* Jerry Marshall (Chair & ARC), Elizabeth Clark (ARC / Methodist / URC) Jim Currin (CTE), Roger Greene (IRCA /Agricultural Chaplains), Christopher Jones (FCN / ACF / ATP), Simon Mattholie (Rural Ministries), Barry Osbourne (Smaller Free Churches Group / REN), Ann Wright (C of E / IRCA Europe).