

Mission Team

Spring 2009

Issue 3

Hello and welcome to the 3rd Mission Team newsletter!

We hope through these updates you will learn more about the wide-ranging work undertaken by the Mission Team, and feel motivated to further act and engage in your own context.

If you'd like to receive future copies of this newsletter by email just contact frances.hawley@urc.org.uk

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Interview with Graham Jones, National Rural Officer

We asked Graham Jones, National Rural Officer for the Methodist Church and United Reformed Church, to tell us more about Rural Mission and his work.

What plans / research / projects are in the pipeline for URC Rural Mission this year?

There are a number of exciting new initiatives that we are hoping will gain momentum during the coming year. In partnership with the Churches' Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber we are keen to develop entrepreneurial skills within the lay and ordained leadership of the rural church. These are the skills required for getting church-based community projects and social enterprises off the ground, working in partnership with others and exploring creative new approaches to mission. We are also aiming to promote the idea of Local Collaborative Ministry – 'the ministry of the baptised' – which empowers lay people to be the church without being dependent on a local ordained professional. Our work with migrant workers will continue and we hope to commission a project which will map the churches' work with migrant workers in rural communities, with the aim of encouraging good practice.

Tell us about the Arthur Rank Centre and how rural considerations are met through its work?

The ARC is a partnership between the national churches, the Royal Agricultural Society of England and the Rank Foundation, serving the rural community and its churches. We provide an ecumenical hub for the churches' work in the countryside, offering training, resources, consultancy and support across England, Scotland and Wales. The ARC is very well integrated into the

rural and agricultural world and has an excellent reputation for delivering practical and creative contributions to the wellbeing of rural communities. Over its 37 year history the ARC has spawned many new initiatives, some of which have gone on to become independent organizations in their own right.

Explain your role within the Arthur Rank Centre – how are you involved?

The ARC is a partnership and the churches' contribution is in the form of personnel rather than funds. As National Rural Officer for the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church I work very closely with the National Rural Officer for the Church of England. Together we form part of the ARC team, along with the Direc-



Rural Mission - continued

or, Deputy Director, Training and Resources Officer and support staff. So whilst I have particular responsibility for the URC and the Methodist Church I share in the wider work of the ARC which seeks to address the whole rural agenda. The ARC benefits from the contribution of church employed personnel – and the churches benefit from the considerable added value of being part of such a well respected and well connected organization.

What kind issues have been on the rural radar in particular over the last year?

Food is always on the rural radar but has enjoyed particular prominence over the past year or two. The ‘global food crisis’ has been superseded by the ‘credit crunch’ but the latter has considerable impact on the former. How we feed a growing global population in an ethical, sustainable and affordable manner is a huge challenge to us all. Related to that is how we treat our food producers and suppliers and the churches are playing their part in highlighting the need for trade justice for British farmers as well as for growers and farmers in the developing world. British farmers have continued to contend with unfair trade practices, along with the challenges of animal disease and flooding. The issue of affordable housing is key to the well being of rural communities and a report is due to be published soon which will encourage the release of church land for affordable housing. The closure of 2500 post offices has come as a blow to many villages and the ARC has sought to encourage churches to offer themselves as hosts of outreach postal facilities – thus becoming part of the solution to a very difficult problem.

Which patterns and trends are you coming across that the wider church should know about?

The church could helpfully give greater consideration to issues around food. For decades now the overriding criterion governing food purchasing has been cheapness – and in this country we enjoy relatively the cheapest food in the whole of the EU. There is, however, ‘no such thing as a free lunch’ and this cheapness has come at a cost; to the environment, to

farmers, to quality, health and diversity. Every time we buy food we are making ethical choices. In terms of the church, there needs to be a greater respect and appreciation of small churches. Many rural churches are small but their contribution to the well being of their communities can be considerable; it is often the case that they ‘punch above their weight’ and are embedded in their communities in ways that larger churches would covet.

What did you do before and how did you get into the role of National Rural Officer?

This role was something of a departure for me. Having worked for several years in social work, I trained for the ministry in Cambridge and then took up my first appointment in Hull. From there I moved to York to be University Chaplain and minister of an Anglican/Methodist LEP. I applied for this post because of a long term interest in the rural agenda and because the scope and range of the post appealed to me; I have always enjoyed working at the interface between the church and wider society.

What does an average day look like for you?

Bit of a cliché but there really is no such thing. I have an office at the ARC and that is certainly the base from which I operate. However, I do get out and about a fair amount – to meetings around the country and in London. Much of this is church focused but I also often find myself in gatherings where I am the only representative of the churches present. Supporting the ecumenical network of rural officers around the synods, districts and dioceses is an important part of my work, as is the training and consultancy we offer. Addressing the rural social justice agenda also features in most of my days.

Which aspects of the work do you find most fulfilling?

Representing the church in ‘non-church’ settings I find very fulfilling. You can at times feel a little exposed but knowing that if you weren’t present the churches’ contribution wouldn’t be made makes it feel very worthwhile. I also really enjoy helping lay and ordained people within the rural church to think creatively about what it means for them to be church. There are enormous challenges facing rural churches but some

“Many rural churches are small but their contribution to the wellbeing of their communities can be considerable”



wonderfully imaginative responses as well.

If you could live the dream and do any job in the world (apart from the one you're doing, of course) what would you do?

I would want to be British High Commissioner in India – or a member of Radio 4's Test Match Special commentary team, swanning around the globe watching cricket in wonderful locations and meeting lots of interesting people!

Our thanks go to Graham for this interview. Graham can be contacted via: grahamj@rase.org.uk

Elizabeth Caswell, Rural Mission link

How have you been involved in the URC, and broadly speaking what has been its biggest change?

I've been a URC minister for 36 years, including time in local ministry and as a Synod Moderator. I also convened the Assembly Discipleship and Witness Committee for several years, which included rural issues. The recent restructuring under 'Catch the Vision' has brought several major areas of work together under the umbrella of the Mission Committee and is helping us to see the connections and be more focused.



What do you see as your role, being a Mission Committee link person to Graham Jones?

As Graham Jones' link person I am a member of the Rural Strategy Group which connects the URC and Methodist aspects of Graham's work. I hope to provide a broad understanding of the URC and its structures for our Methodist colleagues, and encouragement to Graham in keeping rural issues high on the URC agenda.

Which features of Rural Mission work do you find most interesting?

Rural Mission work is fascinating: it connects the encouragement of rural churches to adapt and be creative in a rapidly changing world, with major political issues to do with farming, food and the countryside which affect everyone.

Are there any prayer needs you want to highlight to our readers?

The time will soon be upon us for the five-yearly review of the Rural Officer post. Please pray for God's wisdom and will as the two denominations reflect on our responsibilities to the rural churches, and how best to serve them.



“There are enormous challenges facing rural churches but some wonderfully imaginative responses as well.”

URC Website now live!

Readers will be pleased to know the new URC website is live and was launched earlier in February this year. The pages are still under construction, but when fully functional we hope it will provide a helpful space to find resources and information, as well as linking people and ideas through the forum sections of the website.

You can find the Mission Team under the 'What We Do' section. Links to the Vision 4 Life website and the Arthur Rank Centre, plus many others, are included. Visit us at:

www.urb.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/homepage



Mission Team diary dates

March 2009

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1 Tearfund Sunday	2	3	4
5	6 Women's World Day of Prayer	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Coventry Climate Change event	20	21	22	23	24	25 ARC Annual Meeting
26	27	28	29	30	31	

April 2009

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Deir Yassin Day	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 Racial Justice Advocates Consultation	25 Racial Justice Advocates Consultation
26	27	28 Rural Ministry Course	29	30	31	

May 2009

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Christian Aid Week
11 Christian Aid Week	12 Christian Aid Week	13 Christian Aid Week	14 Christian Aid Week	15 Christian Aid Week	16 Christian Aid Week	17 Not for Sale Sunday
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Other events:

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URC Multicultural Event (5 December, starting 10.30am)

This gathering held at Carrs Lane URC is open to URC members of all ages to come together to celebrate in worship, music, presentations, workshops and eating, our growing together of a diverse and inclusive church. Attendance is usually around 200 - 300 people! Contact michael.jagessar@urc.org.uk for further details.

Coventry Climate Change Event (19 March, 12 - 4.30pm)

Christian Aid's Countdown to Copenhagen movement continues to build momentum as December's vital talks grow ever closer. Join friends from CAFOD, the World Development Movement and the Stop Climate Chaos coalition to send a powerful message to electricity giant, E.On. The day will start with a joint service with CAFOD, featuring music and performances. James Hansen, the renowned NASA scientist, will provide a call to arms with his keynote speech, while the Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, will explain the theological response to climate change. This will be followed by a Carnival Parade and E.On Rally. For more details emailcampaigns@christian-aid.org or call 020 7523 2264.

Rural Ministry Training/ Annual Arthur Rank Meeting

If you'd like further details on the Rural Ministry course or the Annual Arthur Rank Centre meeting (see page opposite) please contact Graham Jones on grahamj@rase.org.uk.

Partnership for development

Working together with agencies, business, campaigning groups, governments and producers

**High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts.
18-20 March 2009**

The theme will be explored through presentations, workshops and worship
speakers will include:

The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Bruce, MP, Chair of the House of Commons International Development Select Committee

Paul Chandler, CEO of Traidcraft

David Golding, Make Poverty History North East

Jenny Humphreys, World Mission Officer, Diocese of Bath and Wells

Cathy Ross, Director, Crowther Centre for Mission Studies at CMS

Benedict Southworth, Director, World Development Movement

and many more engaged in partnership working



The conference is designed for all who seek to involve their churches in poverty and justice issues. To book your place please ask for a booking form from imeadcforl@gmail.com Linda Mead 01702 315981



Vision2020: Mission Strategy Consultation

The following is taken from the forthcoming national Mission Strategy Consultation leaflet which has been sent to all synods....



The United Reformed Church

Mission Team
Church House
86 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9RT
Phone: 020 7916 2020
Fax: 020 7916 8655
E-mail: www.urc.org.uk

What is Vision2020?

A new programme of mission planning that will begin after General Assembly 2010 and will be designed to integrate with the Vision4Life 'evangelism' year and develop beyond that. It will challenge the church to think about mission priorities at national, Synod and local levels. It will build a shared commitment to mission across the URC.

Vision2020: Your Views

During Pentecost 2009 we are seeking the views of local churches on Vision2020. In early May, every church will receive a discussion booklet giving more details of the plans. Churches are encouraged to discuss the ideas for Vision2020 in small groups, church meetings or church services as part of Pentecost activities. There is a menu of possible activities – some lasting 90 minutes, others just 10. There will be opportunities to find out more and to respond on the URC website. There will also be opportunities for further discussion at Synod meetings later in the year.

The URC is a multicultural church

Vision2020: timetable

Early May:	Local churches receive discussion booklets
Late May:	Local churches discuss Vision2020 ideas
30 June:	Deadline for local church feedback
Oct/Nov 2009:	Further discussions at Synods
July 2010:	Further discussion at General Assembly 2010
September 2010:	Vision2020 begins



Downing Street discussion over faith in action

On March 5th, Frank Kantor, Secretary for Church and Society, and Simon Loveitt, representative of the JPIT management group, were welcomed to 10 Downing Street as part of the RADAR network. The group met with three policy advisers at the Prime Minister's Office to consider how the government is engaging with faith groups and how the channels of communication between churches and government can be improved over public policy issues and the current economic crisis. The discussion also focused on how the churches could engage in the debate about a sustainable and equitable global economic recovery. The meeting was very positive and discussions are set to continue. RADAR will focus now on communicating key messages from conferences on the economic crisis held by church groupings over the past few months to the G20 Summit, as well as continue to highlight Christian approaches and responses to the UK economic crisis.