

The Churches Rural Group (CRG) is a co-ordinating Group of Churches Together in England, bringing together representatives of Christian denominations and other organisations concerned with rural life and ministry to discuss issues of common interest.



At the meeting in May 2019, we welcomed Mark Betson, the new National Rural Officer for the Church of England. We also said farewell to Jim Currin, who has been a good friend of CRG over many years: we wish him well as he moves from CTE and look forward to meeting Ben Aldous who will be the new link between CRG and CTE. Elizabeth Clark has finished her term of office as Chair of the CRG, and Richard Kirlew was elected to this role, with Elizabeth now acting as Vice Chair. We are grateful to both Elizabeth and Richard for serving in these capacities.

Brexit and rural churches. Dates come and go, and we seem to be little further forward. Farming communities continue to be affected by the current uncertainty as well as problems with delivery of the single farm payments. They are problem solvers at heart, but without a clearly defined problem! A report from the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council helpfully emphasised the importance of churches providing safe spaces for lamentation, articulating grief and distress and offering a welcome and hospitality as well as their responsibilities for working together to bring peace and reconciliation. Do look at the report from the House of Lords for some thinking about rural areas beyond Brexit.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldrurecon/330/33002.htm>

'Germinate' news.



- Applications for the next Germinate leadership course are now open. The course is designed to help lay and ordained leaders from all denominations to develop creative entrepreneurial skills to serve their churches. If you know anyone who would benefit from this course, do put them in touch <https://germinate.net/training/germinate-leadership/>
- Look out for our new publication later this year. 'Open Worship' is a guide to encourage those who lead worship when clergy or licensed lay leaders are not present, and follows on from the successful 'Open Church' publication.

'Seeds of prayer.' Do have a look at this helpful monthly resource for individuals, groups and church services, which includes seasonal and current topics for prayer for rural life.

<https://www.worldprayer.org.uk/call-to-action/hope-for-the-countryside>

Book the date:

- 14 July: Rural Mission Sunday. Theme – 'Living the life.' For more details, resources and to register, see <https://germinate.net/mission/rural-mission-sunday/>
- 23-27 September. Conference at Lee Abbey on 'Faith and the future of the countryside.' <https://leeabbeydevon.org.uk/programme/faith-and-the-future-of-the-countryside/>
- 8-10 June 2020: IRCA-Europe conference at Sibiu, Romania on how churches can contribute to a flourishing village community. More details to follow, but book the date now!

And finally: During the meeting, we heard stories of hope from rural churches – about village churches re-opening, new resources being prepared, opportunities to share experience with colleagues working in different contexts and prayerful listening leading to the re / building of relationships with local communities. The rural church is alive and growing in many parts of the UK!

Present: Representatives from Germinate: ARC, National Rural Officers for the Methodist, URC and Anglican Churches, Churches Together in England, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic Church, Scottish Rural Church Networks, Agricultural Chaplains Association, International Rural Churches Association.