

# Rural Evangelism Network

Summer 2011

[www.ruralevangelism.net](http://www.ruralevangelism.net)

The National Forum for Churches and Mission Agencies  
concerned for the evangelisation of rural Britain.

Encouraging good practise through sharing knowledge and experience.

## Secretary's Viewpoint

As we move through the summer months some of us will probably be involved in outreach activities. I would value hearing your news and will certainly encourage prayer on your behalf.

Trying to ensure the effectiveness of this Network on top of my own ministry in *Rural Mission Solutions* and a part time pastorate is challenging and I am looking forward to the local consultations planned later this year in different parts of the country. These will almost certainly help to set a useful agenda for the future.

I am encouraged that some Church representatives within the Network have ensured that the people responsible for evangelism are linked with us. Most Rural Officers have a wide portfolio so finding time to encourage appropriate evangelism is difficult. We need to remember that this Network is specifically about evangelism in rural areas.

As part of my research into the practise of rural evangelism across the denominations I hope that you will take a few moments to complete the enclosed simple questionnaire. This can be done anonymously and a pre-paid envelope is enclosed for your reply.

Finally, what one thing could you do that might help others in rural areas discover the wonder of God's good news? Thanks for your partnership.

Barry Osborne

## What inhibits the re-evangelisation of Rural Britain?

Those of us who have been around since this Network was established will remember that our vision was to assist in the extension of God's kingdom through promoting good practice in rural evangelism. One way in which we would seek to do this was through sharing our experiences and insights.

Almost 30 years on there is little evidence of advance. The number of specialist rural evangelistic societies have declined slightly and some evangelistic organisations that included work in rural areas now seem to do less or none at all. Yet the population of the rural areas of Britain steadily grows.

Valuable as the specialist societies are it is obvious that if rural communities in this country are to be effectively evangelised then it is ultimately the responsibility of the local churches and the Christians that form their congregations. We hear of churches that have found appropriate ways of sharing the gospel message within their immediate area, but these tend to be few and far between. Or is there more going on than we are aware?

Church representatives within this Network are important conduits of information so please feed in your news. Nothing is too small to be irrelevant. But if there is not as much happening as there should what might the reasons be?

### Social Inhibitors

In smaller close-knit villages evangelism is often seen as awkward or even inappropriate. This may have more to say about perceptions of evangelism, but there is no escaping the fact that the nature of village life and its lack of anonymity inhibits intentional overt evangelism.

### Ecclesial Inhibitors

The process of clustering parishes and churches served by an over-burdened priest or minister must be another factor. With so many responsibilities, committees, and building issues to cope with and a small number of volunteers it is little wonder that evangelism slips down the list.

### Theological Inhibitors

Is there a lack of engaged understanding of the nature of the gospel, of mission and evangelism? Does this also lead to a lack of confidence?

Your views on what inhibits and the way forward are valued.

*Sharing in God's Mission*

## REN Representatives Honoured

We offer our warm congratulations to two key people within the Rural Evangelism Network who have recently received recognition for their valuable service.

**Christopher Jones** has received an MBE. Christopher represents the *Agricultural Christian Fellowship* and played a significant part in setting up the *Rural Crisis Network* which has its offices in his farm buildings in Northamptonshire.

**Jill Hopkinson** has been made an Honorary Canon of Worcester Cathedral. Jill is the National Rural Officer for the Church of England and part of the team based in the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh.

Both Christopher and Jill have worked tirelessly for the benefit of others and the honours they have received are well deserved.

## Outreach Calendars

Always on the look out for useful resources that enable rural churches to share the gospel message, I was very pleased to discover *Outreach Calendars* at the National Christian Resources Exhibition this year.

The calendars are very attractively produced, carry scripture verses, and can be personalised with local church or organisation details. There are also web links where further information on the scriptures quoted and other help is available.

Here is a gentle way to share the good news. We are enclosing a leaflet about this scheme but please note that if anyone wants to take advantage of it you must act very soon. Don't leave it towards Christmas as it will be far too late!

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## Country Way—it's YOUR Magazine

As usual we are enclosing the latest issue of *Country Way* with this mailing. We hope you find it both interesting and helpful. Hundreds of churches now use this as a source of inspiration, ideas and information to enrich their life and witness.

The Rural Evangelism Network is a partner in its production and you could help by feeding in your stories. If you can add photos this would be even more appreciated, but not just buildings or groups of people posing please!

Here are the kind of topics on which we welcome stories:

The use of Alpha or similar in rural settings (including Youth Alpha); outreach stories including children, youth, men's activities etc; stories of effective partnerships; messy church, emerging church, fresh expressions, church planting; special event ideas that have worked well in a village setting that link to Christmas, Rogation, Easter, Harvest; stories about churches that engage well with their local community; the use of art in worship or evangelism....

Please get writing!

## Rural Proofing National Initiatives

Our website includes ideas that enable national initiatives to work in smaller villages. These include the Year of the Bible, More than Gold, and Hope. We always welcome additional comment on these topics.

### Please pass this sheet on

You can download further copies from the website. If you represent a Church nationally or regionally please ensure that a copy reaches your Rural Officer or equivalent and whoever is responsible for evangelism. If you represent a Mission Agency please ensure that a copy reaches your Chief Executive and any others concerned for strategy development and implementation. Thank you.

In addition to the comprehensive Church representation within the Network here is a list of evangelistic agencies that are also in membership. Contact details are on our website.

**Agricultural Christian Fellowship**  
open to all Christians in all branches of agriculture, horticulture and related activities offering fellowship & encouraging evangelism within this context.

#### Church Army

While essentially an Anglican organisation they partner with other traditions. Originally established for rural evangelism this remains part of their ministry

#### Faith Mission

A specialist rural evangelistic ministry with a long history. Mainly active in Scotland and Ireland but also working in parts of England

#### Farming Christian Link

A postal outreach seeking to bring a Christian witness and help to those in farming and rural areas

#### Fellowship for Evangelising Britain's Villages

A specialist rural ministry primarily operating in and from a number of centres

#### Fellowship of Evangelists

A network of independent evangelists some of whom work in rural areas

#### Mission for Christ

A specialist rural ministry offering support to rural churches seeking to evangelise.

#### Outreach UK

A network of evangelists, some itinerant and others embedded with churches. Operating partly in rural areas.

#### Rural Ministries

A specialist rural ministry active in church planting and helping rural churches to grow

#### Rural Mission Solutions

A specialist rural ministry primarily concerned to help rural churches develop sustainable tailored mission strategies.

#### Scripture Union

Evangelists who work primarily with children and their families partly in rural areas