

## **One Diocese – Rural and Urban Growing Together**

*To be one diocese in mission involves mutual understanding about the contexts in which different churches exercise their ministry and mission. Links between urban, suburban and rural congregations are potentially useful ways in which mutual understanding and support can grow.*

Rural Strategy for the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds – Adopted by Diocesan Synod March 2007

### **Urban – Rural Interchange**

- How can we get to know better what its like to live in the countryside, or in the suburbs, or in the inner city?
- How can we celebrate the distinctive life of our different church situations and learn how to pray for each other in an informed and particular way?
- The diocese is offering a way forward by providing advice and support with a Rural – Urban Interchange Programme

### **Urban and Rural – not two but one**

*Rural dwellers and urban dwellers do not live in isolation from one another.*

We know that the countryside and the towns depend upon each other economically and socially. The countryside is valued by those in towns and cities as a source, not only of food, but also as a place of leisure, recreation and spiritual renewal.

In many ways the future shape of the countryside is shaped more by those from the cities than those who actually live in the countryside. Consumer's demands on supermarkets have a direct impact on how the land is managed and made productive, and on the economic and social prosperity of rural communities.

Many who live in the countryside are dependent upon the larger conurbations for employment and for the income they derive from it, others derive their income from being able to sell their goods and services to those who live in populated centres.

The services provided by the larger towns and cities, such as hospitals, shops, theatres, sports facilities and transport services, are also vital to rural dwellers.

### **Examples of Interchange**

There are a variety of ways in which individuals, parishes and deaneries can develop mutual understanding and share common concerns from different perspectives.

- Links already exist between some rural and urban parishes, some longstanding. Whixley Church has a link with St Aidan's in Leeds, Aysgarth have exchanged visits with St Luke's Holbeck and young people from Dale learnt about life in the city for homeless people.
- The diocesan Mother's Union has established some links between different branches which bring together urban and rural branches.

- Richmond Deanery recently arranged a deanery day visit to a deanery in Leeds to learn about the mission of the churches in the inner city.

### **Building on Existing Relationships**

Links can build on already existing relationships.

- Diocesan Synod brings the whole diocese together and people from urban and rural parishes sit together. An opportunity presents itself to develop these contacts. Personal visits might be made to reach others churches to learn more about the context in which the church is living and working and the issues to which it seeks to respond.
- Links already exist for those who live in the countryside but work in an urban area in the diocese – what does it mean to be church in the parishes through which one travels to work or where one works? For those who visit the rural parts of the diocese for work or leisure there is an opportunity to arrange to meet the church there, to find out what it is like to live and work there.
- Links can grow out of already existing networks and common interests such as youth networks and school links. Greater mutual awareness and understanding could be achieved through a short term focused interchange programme.
- Parish links of all kinds, including world church partnerships, have enabled congregations to look beyond themselves, to learn how God's mission is unfolding in differing places and to develop a sense of fellowship with the wider church.

### **Setting Off - Guidelines for Establishing an Interchange**

Building on the experience of others: carefully planning, establishing aims and clear boundaries help to make an interchange an effective partnership.

- Decide what you hope to gain from it.
- Have a clear purpose and aim for the interchange
- Ask what sort of time commitment is realistic.
- Plan a short term programme of events, prayers, celebrations, visits
- Involve the PCC and the parish as a whole
- Make it a key part of the parish's agenda for a set time.
- Preparing carefully – **use the resources of the MRT to identify aims, to set up the link and to reflect on what has been learnt**
- Think about using the internet to exchange information, experiences and ideas.

**MRT members are available to help the PCC think through what they want to achieve and provide practical support. Contact:**

**Kathryn Fitzsimons (Urban Officer) 0113 248 5011 [kathrynfitzsimons@hotmail.com](mailto:kathrynfitzsimons@hotmail.com)**  
**Andy Ryland (Rural Officer) 07771 79 70 73 [andy.ryland@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk](mailto:andy.ryland@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk)**