



Tuesday, 28 April 2009

£180,000 programme to strengthen rural churches

The Arthur Rank Centre will launch a £180,000 training project to strengthen churches in the countryside in response to an urgent call from church leaders, in early May.

'Rural Life and Faith' could benefit 13,000 rural churches of all denominations, and will equip them for a modern role in villages and the countryside. ARC will spend £180,000 over 3 years to fill major gaps in training provision which threaten the life and work of the rural church.

The ARC, a charity which supports the rural community and its churches through a programme of community and social projects, resourcing and training, is responding to an urgent call from church leaders to strengthen churches in the countryside. These churches are still a vital component in many country communities, but often suffer with few resources and have large benefices or team ministries, with thinly spread and shared trained leadership.

Dr Jill Hopkinson, National Rural Officer for the Church of England, who will be heading the project, said: 'The church is a vital force in vibrant village communities. But ARC has identified big problems in training provision through research, our teaching and training activities, the experience of the National Rural Officers and their networks, and calls from church leaders. The message is that rural training and development (particularly for lay people) is insufficient and inadequate.'

'Rural Life and Faith responds to that need, and will build new skills, confidence and competence specific to rural situations. The idea is that rural churches will respond more readily to opportunities, and maintain a flourishing Christian presence in their communities.'

'This exciting project will make up a large part of our ongoing work as the churches' rural resource unit in the coming 3 years, we are very excited and thankful that the idea has received such unprecedented enthusiasm and support from funders.'

Four grant making trusts (Allchurches Trust, the Maurice and Hilda Laing Charitable Trust, the Henry Smith Charity and St Peters Saltley Trust) are providing £180,000 of funding for the project.

The first part of the work (research to map the existing provision of training for mission and ministry across England) will begin immediately, and the first training modules will become available to churches in 2010.

Ends

For more information please contact:

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Notes



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The **Arthur Rank Centre** is a charity supported by the National Churches, the Royal Agricultural Society of England and the Rank Foundation, which supports the rural community and its churches through a programme of community and social projects, resourcing and training; website: arthurrankcentre.org.uk