



Thursday, 15 October 2009

National Survey of Church Training Expected to Uncover Gaps

The first national survey of training and resources for the rural church, which is expected to reveal significant gaps in provision and accessibility, began this week.

The work is being done by Christian charity the Arthur Rank Centre. It will provide a clear picture of what training and resources are available in England for a range of users, from church leaders to active lay people. The survey will also reveal patterns of use, assess usefulness and relevance, and identify any gaps in provision or problems of accessibility.

The survey is the first stage of a £180,000, 3-year training project to strengthen churches in the countryside, which was commissioned in response to urgent calls from church leaders earlier this year. It is expected to reveal significant shortcomings in training provision (particularly for lay people) which could hamper the life and work of the rural church.

The ARC is targeting 19,000 rural churches in England with a questionnaire designed for 3 types of user: institutions and individuals responsible for producing and delivering training and resources; lay and ordained leaders of local rural churches; and active members of rural churches. Denominational networks are hard at work sending out these surveys, which are also available on the ARC website (www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/rfcsurvey).

Simon Martin the project officer, said: 'We are interested in real life people in the pews and real leaders: what training and resources they are using and how useful and relevant it is to their mission and ministry. The questionnaires will allow us to build a detailed picture of resources and learning across all denominations in England, and find out where the gaps are.'

'There is some excellent, creative work going on out there and now we have the funding to find out what people at grassroots level find useful and relevant; and to work together with the churches to build a comprehensive programme of training and resources for everyone.'

'It is crucial that we are as global as possible and I would urge everyone to support this piece of work and come on board. Everybody's experience is significant. We hope to work with all the training providers to achieve 'joined up resourcing' for users: two institutions in particular have already indicated their willingness to be involved.'

Preliminary results from the survey will be ready in spring 2010, and will be published as a database of results and a report with detailed analysis of the findings. The next stage of the Rural Life and Faith project will be to work with those who have become involved through the mapping exercise to design, test and promote resources appropriate for the needs revealed by the survey.

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 Rural Life and Faith, which will be completed in summer 2012.

Ends

For more information please contact:



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Notes

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