

**Canadian Rural Church Network (CRCN)**  
**&**  
**Centre for Rural Community Leadership & Ministry (CiRCLe M)**

Newsletter #1    August 2009

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Funding News

The Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry (CiRCLe M) receives \$313,313 in funding over three years from *Rural Alberta's Development Fund*. This money will help CiRCLe M establish its basic programs and support the Alberta portion of its work.

# CiRCLe M CONFERENCE

## ROOTED IN FAITH: CELEBRATING RURAL CHURCHES IN COMMUNITY 2009

In partnership with Rural Alberta Development Fund

### *Location:*

Best Western Wayside Inn

1-800-658-4404 (5411-44th St.)

Please visit: <http://www.circle-m.ca/conferences-and-events/> to download registration form and PR material.

### *Register*

- before September 15<sup>th</sup> - \$99;
- After - \$125

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

#### *REV. DR. DITTMAR MUENDEL*

Creator of the award-winning Prairies-Mexico Rural Development Exchange (U of A) and associate director of the Chester Ronning Center for the Study of Religion and Public Life. He has organized several conferences on rural community development and teaches spirituality and globalization. Dr. Muendel will explore the depth of the wounds inflicted on land and community and the crucial role churches have in strengthening and restoring relationships with the land and community.

- Lecture 1: "You have healed the wounds of my people lightly..."

This lecture will explore how clergy and lay together have to examine the depth of the wounds inflicted on land and community, so that their ministry can generate genuine hope rather than false optimism, and provide genuine healing rather than surface band-aids.

- Lecture 2: "Toward the healing of creation..."

Since "health is membership" (Wendell Berry), churches have a crucial role in strengthening and restoring membership with land and community. Before we can participate in the healing of creation, which is both nature and society, we must let creation heal us and free us from destructive "dreams of endless economic progress."

#### *Brother David Andrews, CSC*

Former Executive Director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Senior advisor to the President of the UN National General Assembly on Food, Water and sustainable development. He is also a Senior Representative for the Food and Water Watch, a Washington DC based consumer organization. Brother Andrews will help us think about the spiritual forces that sustain and damage rural life.

- Lecture 1: The Rural Church: Dynamics of Decline and Resilience

This will look at what forces have led to declining economic and community vitality in rural communities including the faith community and what forces church outreach and creativity can strengthen the forces of effective community development.

- Lecture 2: Spirituality for Sustainability: Heart and Soul for the Long Haul

This lecture will explore dimensions for deeper sustainability, beyond the push and pull of the moment with a focus on authenticity, personal depth and the conviction that is important for long term leadership and community building.

## **WORKSHOPS**

### ***#1 BRINGING OUT THE LEADERSHIP IN EVERYONE***

Judy Riou is a staff member on the Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan and an active United Church member. For many years she has trained leaders for community development focusing on the needs of rural communities. Her workshop will focus on how the rural church can equip its people for leadership in the community.

### ***#2 THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY CRISIS***

What is the church's role in times of crisis? What gifts do we have to offer? How can we partner with other community groups? Leigh Sinclair is pastor of a shared Lutheran Anglican ministry at Spiritwood, SK. She will share her experience of the shooting of two Mounties and the death of a community soldier.

### ***#3 USING STORY TELLING IN RURAL MINISTRY***

Elaine Kowpak and Beth Robertson were the founders of the popular rural drama "Pull of the Land" produced by the town of Harris SK, and broadcast on CBC TV. They will share the art of storytelling and its role as a tool for building healthy rural churches and communities.

### ***#4 REACHING BEHIND THE WALLS OF YOUR CHURCH: A RESPONSE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH TO COMMUNITY NEEDS***

Mike Hoeft is a Major Northeast Circuit Team Leader and Rural Ministry Consultant to the Salvation Army in Western Canada, stationed in Melfort, SK. His workshop is going to be on Church's work with rural social agencies — strategies, stories, struggles, successes. He will discuss how Churches can establish partnerships with community organizations and look at how the Church can be a transforming influence in responding to social needs of the community.

### ***#5 RURAL CONGREGATIONS & HEALTH: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE***

The Canadian population is aging at a rapid pace and studies are showing consistently that rural Canada is aging even at a faster pace. We will explore the ways congregations can be more effective in facilitating health ministries that make communities and people whole and respond to the

challenges of aging communities. Ali Tote is a Lutheran pastor at Fairy Glen and Ratner, SK. He is also a PhD candidate in epidemiology and community health at the University of Saskatchewan.

## **#6 THE JOYS AND STRUGGLES OF SHARED ECUMENICAL MINISTRY**

Jan Bigland-Pritchard director of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism. There are a variety of ways that local churches of different denominations can work and even worship together to strengthen their ministries. This workshop will describe some examples of shared ministry and the blessings and difficulties they encountered. It will also point participants to useful resources for supporting a shared ecumenical ministry

**ENTERTAINMENT:** TBA

### **ACCOMMODATION** (Lloydminster)

Participants are responsible for arranging their own accommodation. Blocks of rooms have been booked at the following hotels under "Western Conference":

Best Western Wayside Inn \$117.00,  
Restaurant 1-800-658-4404  
(5411-44th St.)

Holiday Inn \$124.00, Smitty's  
1-877-869-5050 (5612-44TH St.)

Ramada Inn \$139.00,  
Continental Breakfast  
1-800-272-6232 (5610-44th St.)

West Harvest Inn \$121.00, Restaurant  
1-800-661-7221 (5620-44th St.)

West Harvest Inn Express \$107.00,  
Continental Breakfast  
1-800-661-7221(1402-50th Ave.)

Note: all hotels are within walking distance of the conference EXCEPT West Harvest Inn Express.

### **REGISTRATION**

**REGISTRATION FEE:** BY SEPT. 15 \$99 AFTER SEPT. 15 \$125

Please send in with cheque by October 5 to:  
Pat Skinner Registrar  
4709 49th Avenue, Lloydminster,  
SK S9V 0T3

Please make your cheque payable to: 'Circle M Rural Church Conference'

**Fee Includes:** Thursday evening Wine & Cheese Social, Friday Lunch & Supper Banquet, Saturday Lunch

Space is limited and registrations will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis. A full refund will be given for cancellations prior to Sept. 30. After that date, refunds will be issued if the registrant can find a replacement. Childcare will be arranged only if requested. (see 'Concerns' space on registration form) Please indicate number and ages of children.

**Questions:** Telephone: 306-825-3116 Email: lloydanglicanchurch@sasktel.net

**\*Travel Notes \***

If you are flying into Saskatoon or Edmonton, contact the Registrar if you want to arrange transportation to Lloydminster through the conference organizers.

**Times:**

Registration Starts: Thurs. Oct. 15th @ 6.00 pm

Conference Starts: Thurs. Oct. 15th @ 7.30 pm

<b>Conference Schedule</b>		
6:00 PM	Registration	Thursday October 15th
7:00 PM	Meet and Greet	
8:00 PM	Theme Speaker: David Andrews	
9:30 PM	Wine and Cheese Social	
8:30 AM	Devotions	Friday October 16th
9:00 AM	Theme Speaker: Dittmar Muendel	
10:00 AM	Open Space Preparation	
10:15 AM	Refreshment Break	
10:30 AM	Workshop 1	
12:00 PM	Lunch	
12:45 PM	Canadian Rural Church Network Annual Meeting	
1:30 PM	Open Space: Small Group Discussions on Participants Key Issues	
3:30 PM	Panel Discussion: Stories of Rural Churches Engaging Their Communities	
6:00 PM	Banquet	
8:30 AM	Devotions	Saturday October 17th
9:00 AM	Theme Speaker: Dittmar Muendel	
10:00 AM	Refreshment Break	
10:20 PM	Workshop 2	
12:00 PM	Lunch	
1:30 PM	Workshop 3	
3:00 PM	Refreshment Break	
3:30 PM	Theme Speaker: David Andrews	
5:00 PM	Homeward Bound	

## RURAL MINISTRY (LIFE AND FAITH)

### **Building Blocks for Rural Ministry** by: Joyce Sasse

Over the past 15 years, rural church leaders around the world have tried to analyze the life and work of the local congregation, and help each other strengthen their outreach in the midst of changing circumstances.

At occasional gatherings, rural church folk share ideas about how they can work in the local community. They may examine the following questions:

What is unique and special about what you do in your local congregation?

- What are the ways various denominations can work together to serve your community?
- How can we cope with the continual need for parish leadership (both clergy and laity)?
- Are "rural" events helpful?

Workshops, geared to helping with specific issues, often prove invaluable. The subjects might include:

Creative worship in small communities

- Living in a local Shared Ministry parish
- Working together as teams in a church
- Agreeing or disagreeing together in a small community
- Communion - what it means and how to do it
- Being the small church of tomorrow

These gatherings invite participants to exchange ideas, learn things and make network connections. Such gatherings have been held in Australia and New Zealand for a number of years, and are now held on a regular basis in various parts of rural Canada.

## TRAINING FOR RURAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP & MINISTRY (CiRCLe M)

CiRCLe M, with offices situated in Saskatoon, was created to help members of rural communities in a variety of ways.

**Training in Rural Stress Intervention:** A workshop for clergy, lay leaders and community members that will help them be able to assess their community's resiliency (ability to deal effectively with rapid changes e.g. boom that stresses infrastructure, disaster, loss of industry / jobs), identify the key areas of strength and weakness and begin to make plans to

strengthen it. his program would be offered in 2010. The format would be a two or three-day workshop held in several places as we are able to gather participants.

**Mentoring:** This is for clergy or lay leaders new to rural areas, or those with experience willing to mentor new folks. With church leaders the mentoring would normally be cross-denominational (allows greater sense of confidentiality). To some extent it would probably be done somewhat cross-professionally as well (e.g. a pastor could mentor a doctor new to town or vice versa). Pairs will be trained and given a pattern for the mentoring, supportive check-ins, and a regional gathering once or twice a year of pairs to compare notes, share ideas and strategies for helping new folks acclimatize to their rural contexts. The intent is to ensure that rural leaders are able to stay longer and to reduce stress.

**Resource Centre:** This is a place where rural congregations and communities can access materials (downloadable or sent out by mail for postage cost only) related to: rural community development, current rural issues, worship resources, ideas for outreach to youth, seniors, etc, leadership processes for rural church and community planning, etc.

**STM in Rural Ministry and Community Development:** This is a distance-format advanced degree (Master of Sacred Theology) which involves clergy, congregations and their communities in a process of discovering that they have many undiscovered gifts/assets, no matter what their size. Students will be trained to mobilize these gifts for community health and resilience using tools such as Appreciative Inquiry, Asset-mapping and other positive, energy-building processes.

**Conference in Rural Ministry and Community Development:** Our first conference will be held October 15 - 17, 2009. It will offer keynote speakers that will help leaders to see their congregations and communities' strengths, workshops for developing skills and sharing experiences, and interdisciplinary idea-sharing and connections.

**Rural & First Nations Conversations:** We think that churches can be catalysts for opening up more conversation between rural and reserve communities. These will begin in 2011.

CiRCLe M is a registered charity and offers tax deductible receipts. For more information, contact Cam Harder, Director, 306-966-7867; crharder@sasktel.net; www.circle-m.ca.

## RURAL ISSUES

### Sharing in the Life of a Small Congregation

(Notes by Joyce Sasse, taken from an article by Bishop David Walker, England. May 2009)

Whether we are many, or whether we are few, sometimes it is helpful to stand back and take a look at the variety of persons who are involved in the congregation of small communities. The diversity of purpose and interests give important clues about how community-life might proceed.

***Established Residents:*** are people who have lived in the locality the longest and have an innate sense of being rooted here. Most are open to the active participation of others, but often balk if changes happen too fast.

***Commuters:*** may or may not be long-time residents. Circumstances take them out of the community frequently. Time and energy, spent both working and living, limits their ability to participate to any great extent.

***Privacy Seekers:*** some people move to the countryside to get away from the intrusion of urban life. They may maintain strong ties outside the community but often have a strong sense of belonging to the property where they live.

***Life-style Shifters:*** Some urban dwellers experience an attachment to the countryside and make a definite move to be part of the rural community. Many times they are people who have connections with the community and come after retirement. Becoming involved in local activities gives them a good sense of belonging.

***Absent Friends:*** Former residents and descendants of such keep in close touch with the community even though they have never lived there. It is most likely they would want things to remain as they once were and may be generous in seeing that the building is restored.

***The Vulnerable:*** Individuals and families who are forced to live in a place where they don't really feel they belong (because of housing or finances). They feel they have no people or institution to which they can turn for support.

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## **WORSHIP RESOURCES**

### **Centering Prayer: A Spiritual Tool in Challenging Times**

During difficult times spiritual grounding is all the more important. A simple practice is centering prayer. Try it once a day for 20 minutes. Agree with some friends to pray together or separately at the same time every day. Know you are not alone as you move into silence.

#### ***The Practice***

- Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within, for example, love, shalom, abba, om, peace. This is a personal choice and may be changed from one prayer time to the next, but should be kept during any given prayer session.
- Sitting comfortably, with your eyes closed and back straight, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word.
- As thoughts arise, briefly and gently acknowledge them then let them drift away as you return to the word.

- Many thoughts will come to mind during centering prayer. This is natural no matter how long you have been doing the practice. The intention is not to get rid of the thoughts but to be open to God's presence within you without being distracted by them. Don't try to force this to happen. The gentle action of returning to the word and not focusing on your thoughts will help you to become more attentive, to listen more deeply, as you become more grounded in God.
- At the end of the prayer time, offer a prayer of gratitude and move quietly back into your daily living.

### ***Tools***

A useful tool is the CD **Rooted in the Divine: Silent Intervals for Meditation**. Each track begins and ends with music. Double CD includes intervals of silence from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. A print insert explains centering prayer. Available through the United Church Resource Distribution Centre. Call toll-free 1-800-288-7365.

*(Written by Anne Martin, Spiritual Formation & Small Group Ministries, United Church)*

### **Part of the Family (the Hymn)**

You know the reason why you came, yet no reason can explain;  
 so share in the laughter and cry in the pain, for we are a part of the family.  
 God is with us in this place, like a mother's warm embrace.  
 We're all forgiven by God's grace, for we are a part of the family.

Come in, come in and sit down, you are a part of the family.  
 We are lost and we are found, and we are a part of the family.

Children and elders, middlers and teens, singles and doubles and in-betweens,  
 Strong eighty fivers and street-wise sixteens, for we are a part of the family.  
 Greeters and shoppers, long-time and new, nobody here has a claim on a per;  
 and whether we're many or whether we're few, we are a part of the family.

There's life to be shared in the bread and the wine; we are the branches, Christ is the vine.  
 This is God's temple, it's not yours or mine, but we are a part of the family.  
 There's rest for the weary and health for us all; there's a yoke that is easy, and a burden that's small.  
 So come in and worship and answer the call, for we are a part of the family.

*(Words and Music by James K. Manley)*

### **Feelings of Vulnerability**

When my chemo ended, my lessons for living had just begun. Mostly I remember that lengthy period of weakness, wondering if I was ever going to again find zest for living.

In a crowd it hurt to see those whose bodies were strong and vibrant. I wondered what down-turns life might have in store for them. How might they handle major set-backs?

How many others cope with feelings of vulnerability: the business person who faces bankruptcy, the individual whose partner is abusive, the senior fearful because of incontinence, the child who has been reprimanded by a domineering adult, the person in a wheelchair who can't get anyone to look him in the eye, the victim of racial slurs ... There are so many whose self-esteem is shattered again and again by impacts we never see. It's a lonely existence.

The mentor sitting on my shoulder during my moments of despair kept asking if it was the job of the church community to intentionally reach out to people facing these situations.

So many specifics came to mind. In the prayers, by naming some of these vulnerabilities, the silent ones no longer need feel alone. In activities, by inviting individuals to participate regardless of their handicaps, it is good to feel needed. In informative ways, by talking about the injustices people face, we search after health-building spiritual guidance.

We need to find ways to challenge the weaker ones to be sensitive to and supportive of others facing their own silent walk through the valley.

On each refrigerator there should be a reminder that says: **"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle."**

May all who are children of God know that they are loved, that their lives can be enriched, and that they can be a blessing to others. *(Written by Joyce Sasse, April / 09)*

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## Contact and Address Info:

<p><b>Canadian Rural Church Network</b> Box 92, Pincher Creek, Alberta, Canada TOK 1W0 Email: <a href="mailto:jsasse@telusplanet.net">jsasse@telusplanet.net</a> <a href="http://www.canadianruralchurchnetwork.net">www.canadianruralchurchnetwork.net</a></p>	<p>Joyce Sasse, Editor of CRCN Newsletter</p> <p>Areas of Work: Storyteller, Writer, Theologian, Community Development Worker</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.agri-ville.com/spiritual_vignettes">www.agri-ville.com/spiritual vignettes</a></p>
<p><b>Centre for Rural Community Leadership &amp; Ministry</b> 114 Seminary Cr, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada S7N 0X3 Email: <a href="mailto:circle.m.ministries@gmail.com">circle.m.ministries@gmail.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.circle-m.ca">www.circle-m.ca</a></p>	<p>Cameron Harder, Director</p> <p>Dr Harder's teaching interests include courses introducing theology, surveying 20<sup>th</sup> Century theology, and training students for rural ministry. His research interests focus around theological reflection on various aspects of rural ministry. Visit his website at <a href="http://www.cameronharder.com">www.cameronharder.com</a></p> <p>Colleen Rickard, Administrative Assistant</p>

This is CiRCLe M's first newsletter, done in partnership with CRCN. Let us say how much we both believe in rural ministry and rural communities. They can be vibrant places of strong, compassionate, hopeful and self-reliant people. We hope you will work with us to help Canada become more aware of the treasure it has in its rural communities. Please let us know if you have a story to share, a gift to give, a question to ask or a resource to refer.