

Letter #9- January 2011

# CRCN – CiRCLe M NEWSLETTER

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*A Joint Publication of*

**CANADIAN RURAL CHURCH NETWORK  
and  
CENTRE FOR RURAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY**

Editor: Joyce Sasse

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*Let this season be our quiet time.  
Let us listen to the voices that are within us.  
Let us walk in the stillness of the snow  
and attune ourselves to the world around us.  
Let us rest with nature ... that we may be ready,  
as the days stretch forth, to move with new  
energy, new life, new knowledge of God at work within.*

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## FAITH MATTERS

### Insightful Surprises

*We have come a long way in thinking about the value of rural communities...*

Sometimes one needs to look back to see how far one has come. When invited to speak on our work with rural communities and the rural church, I invited those present to join with me in a lament. We recalled the heady days of working together on our church-building, the outreach work, the celebrations – but then pleaded to God not to let our little church close.

Diminishing numbers and dollars and fewer pastors hung like a black cloud, as it does over any vision for the future of our communities.

Only slowly did I recognize just how far we'd come in thinking about rural communities.

At one time the people were called hay seeds, and the image was of raunchy youth and adults who needed to be cultured by our urban cultures.

Through the positive work done by our rural church movements and the progressive work of our community leaders, the image has changed.

We now see ourselves as unique in our culture, having much to contribute to the rest of society. Our spiritual values anchor us, and our sense of adventure is encouraged as we (and our children) spread our wings.

Furthermore, many professionals see their calling being to smaller communities. In some centres special programs are helping ministers, doctors, educators, etc. make the transition between university and small-town Canada.

In the process we recognize new ways to approach the issues that might once have defeated us. Furthermore, thanks to modern communication links, we are able to exchange questions and ideas with colleagues around the world.

The Lord delights in the surprises that await us.

*(by Joyce Sasse, 2010)*

## Facing Cancer

### *Seeking support ...*

In many cities cancer patients and their families and care givers have access to support groups and resources through such programs as “Wellspring”. But for people in rural and isolated areas, few such groups exist.

Many are fortunate to have the spontaneous support of others who have already worked through various stages in the cancer journey. Others are supported by local medical and health-care personnel who help them monitor their situation.

But in-between are the patients who are out of range from this help. With the modern availability of technological resources at our disposal, I’ve started a search to find out what kind of on-line resources an isolated individual or family might discover.

One group to respond to my queries immediately were the Parish Nurses organization in Canada ([www.ichm.ca](http://www.ichm.ca)). These nurses are usually part of a congregation within a local church. Their role is to look out for the health and well-being of members, and to help make people aware to how spiritual nurture can enhance an individual’s sense of health and wholeness. The focus is on finding ways to appreciate positive relationships with God and with others.

In responding to my query about resources, Chantell Brown (of the Parish Nurses organization) wrote, “We would like to help you reach out to families affected by cancer. We especially recognize the need for assistance for people in isolated areas.”

Our attention is drawn to how trust in God facilitates healing in various ways and in various dimensions of our life. “Health is not the purpose of life, but it enables us to fulfill our life’s purposes.”

I might add, having traveled some of this journey, that healing may or may not be about “getting better”, but it is about helping us discover new spiritual depths as we travel.

*(written by Joyce Sasse)*

## RURAL LIFE ISSUES

### Down-sizing

#### *Taking care of “stuff”...*

A friend in her mid-nineties has been thinking about moving from her home into a senior’s facility, but she feels she can’t do that till she has dealt with all her “stuff”. I’m sure the very

thought exhausts her, so she pushes herself in presiding over an over-large house and yard as if she were twenty years younger.

Before we got to the age when our shopping is primarily for pills and orthotics, it was fun picking up a bargain here, putting things away for a rainy day when ..., and making sure you had the necessities near at hand.

Besides, there are the variety of gifts from family and friends that sit un-used from one Christmas to the next.

It is time we declare a moratorium on our need to buy “stuff” just because the advertisers tell us their items are a “must-have”. It is time, too, as we pass the sixty-plus threshold, that we start to downsize what we already have. Whether it be out of the closet or the toolbox, we need to find creative ways to pass our stuff on to those who could really use and would really appreciate what we no longer need.

Probably we will never be as freed from our stuff as the disciples who moved along with a cloak and a staff, but we don’t have to equip ourselves as if we might be called on to host a gathering for the whole world.

Maybe we would like to follow a more green life-style, but we ask “What difference can one person make?” Have you noticed how quietly and quickly the green movement is spreading?

Dealing with all that stuff becomes a statement of faith in a Creator who shows us how to lift the yoke from our shoulders so we can walk more freely.

*(written by Joyce Sasse)*

## **DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS**

### **Prayer for Youth in Agriculture**

*Offered by a veteran rancher at a Cowboy Christmas Service...*

We pray today especially for our youth in agriculture...

To be raised and nurtured in our country life in this beautiful part of our world with animals, plants, trees, wind, weather, joys and adversities intertwined. You become in tune with our natural world at the same time as developing a solid work ethic. Treasure the land.

The aging of our farming and ranching community plus the downturn in agricultural returns are real challenges to you, our youth. There is a need to seek ways to slow the consumption of our earth’s precious resources to ensure the planet’s wealth and beauty remain

for future generations. But you can add fresh perspectives and offer fresh ideas and a greater willingness to adopt and adapt new ideas, new concepts, new technology.

We pray for the parents of our youth – the parent who needed his child to drive the tractor to make a trail in the snow so feed could be taken to the animals, the parent who teaches her child family and civic responsibility, the parents who spend countless hours volunteering whether for 4-H, sports, rodeos, or community affairs, all in the nurturing of agricultural citizens.

We pray that we may see our youth not only as followers, but as leaders. Allow our young people to reach their dreams, help them to find the courage to believe in themselves and to believe they can make a difference. Support our youth whether they are in school, in college, in university, on the farm, on the ranch, in businesses connected to growing and nurturing or in making music to enrich our spirits. See that their minds and hearts are open to all possibilities.

Help all of us to live our lives in ways that fill others around us with hope and joy. Open our hearts, our minds, our lives and keep us spiritually grounded. We so pray. Amen

## **When We Grieve**

*Feeling spiritually grounded in times of pain ...*

It is as natural for a child as for an adult to ask for a prayer “to please cure” someone they love.

How do we reply when we believe God does not reward nor punish nor intervene to set aside the workings of nature?

First, we need to hear that request as a cry of pain, an expression of helplessness. We can show them we hear and care. Rabbi Kushner tells us “God ‘answers’ such a cry not by sending a miraculous recovery, but by giving the one who cries out enough strength to bear this burden however heavy it may become.”

The reply to the grieving one can be to find the means by which you and your family can feel strong enough to face whatever comes. That’s when we counsel moving ahead slowly – one tiny step at a time. Find comfort in thinking of what you are grateful for, what gifts of life you have learned to appreciate and for the wisdom of those care givers who surround you.

If you can find comfort in doing everything that you can do, and in witnessing the way others are reaching out, these things will give you strength enough to accept even the worst, and be grateful for the smallest of blessings. “Then, indeed, your prayers will have been answered.”

The story is told of Ella’s family who realized her lung cancer was terminal. Her daughters collected scraps of fabric from the sewing room where their mother had made wonderful creations. In the hospital room they arranged the scraps in an album and invited Ella to reminisce

about each piece. By doing this they found a way to strengthen themselves for what would lie ahead. They made memories that will bring tears of grief and joy in the days to come.

There will be times when each of us need the space to grieve alone, to have opportunity to focus on the pain within and to give expression to our pain. But we cannot stay in retreat or in denial for long. Our incompleteness needs to be fulfilled as we reach out to others, and as we discover the many ways the depth of God's compassion is made known to us.

*(written by Joyce Sasse)*

## **Benediction**

With the taste of salt lingering on your tongues, go and be the salve of the earth that brings out the God-flavours in our world.

With the light you have found in each other's eyes, go and shine brightly so the God-colours of the world can be seen by all.

With the sound of the waters of baptism in your ears, go, citizens of Paradise, and create justice, for Peace is coming even now. Amen, and amen.

*(from the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America)*

## **CIRCLE-M NEWS**

CiRCLe M is a non-profit charity created by the schools of the Saskatoon Theological Union (STU) to support training for ministry in small congregations and rural settings. A special focus is on helping congregations to build vital connections with their communities.

### **Rural STM Students in High Demand**

One of our dreams for the Rural STM program (Master of Sacred Theology degree in Rural Ministry and Community Development) has been to see students/grads become resource people in their denominations. We are delighted to see this happening. Here are just a few examples (there are many more):

- Greg Kiel (Lutheran, Swift Current, SK) is leading a synod-sponsored study of small churches.
- Catherine Holland (Anglican, Oyen, AB) did an appreciative inquiry with Oyen youth at the request of AB Health Services and she also serves as a consultant for them on the development of mental health capacity in the region.

- Tim Wray (Lutheran, Pipestone, AB) was asked to keynote at the MNO (Manitoba, Northern Ontario) convention, and at the Alberta synod youth gathering on how small communities, congregations and youth groups can make a big impact.
- Leigh Sinclair (United Church, Slave Lake AB) spoke to the Athabasca diocese (Anglican) on women in rural communities, held a workshop on the Church's response to stress in rural communities in Lloydminster, Alberta and is scheduled to speak on rural ministry and community development to an Anglican Women's Conference in Collington, Alberta in May.

This is just a sample of the ways in which the training being given by seminaries in the Saskatoon Theological Union, in cooperation with CiRCLe M, is being passed on. We celebrate and congratulate our students!

## **New Development: Doctor of Ministry Degree**

*Application made to offer a new Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree...*

At its 10-year accreditation of the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) last year, the accrediting team suggested that instead of offering an Master of Sacred Theology degree in Rural Ministry and Community Development, the seminary might want to apply to offer a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree in that area.

During the past year CiRCLe M has conducted conversations with clergy and church leaders from about a dozen denominations in western Canada. Their response to such a proposal was very strong. So CiRCLe has helped the Saskatoon Theological Union (STU) draft a proposal to ATS—the international accrediting agency—requesting that they be able to offer the DMin degree in Rural Ministry and Community Development. That decision will be made by ATS in early February.

Already, there are 26 people who have indicated an interest in pursuing such a degree. If approval is given the first course of the three-year DMin program will be offered in June 2011. All courses will be in a 5-day intensive format (3 per year) so that clergy don't have to leave their parishes for lengthy periods of time.

## **Upcoming Rural Ministry Courses:**

### **1. Capstone Colloquium in Rural Leadership and Ministry**

January 17-21, 2011

St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon SK

This course, which normally comes at the end of the Rural STM program (Master of Sacred Theology), is intended to help participants summarize and reflect on their learning in the program. It is an opportunity for the peer cohort to assist one another in the shaping and completion of the final work of the degree, especially the thesis project. The course will consist of some discussion of scholarly interpretive theories and practices that might relate to the study of rural communities and congregations, and the presentation of thesis work of the members of the STM cohort.

## **2. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in Rural Settings**

Winter 2011

*Excellent educational program available in rural setting ...*

The Swan Valley CPE program is located in the Swan River Valley District of west central Manitoba. It is a satellite of the long-established CPE programs at the Saskatoon Institute for Pastoral Education ([www.cpe-saskatoon.com](http://www.cpe-saskatoon.com) )

The Swan Valley CPE program is available to anyone. It consists of 200 hours of experience in a rural community ministry site as well as the opportunity for small group seminars and theological reflection with a trained CPE supervisor and ones' peers.

Seminars in the program focus on guided experiences in community-based care-giving together with group, individual and mentored reflection. Students learn skills related to crisis intervention, suicide prevention, mental health issues as well as working with intergenerational families and issues of loss and grief. The program includes contextual immersion and reflection opportunities including a guided wilderness walk, a tour of a farming operation, an opportunity to reflect on the interaction of aboriginal and non-aboriginal culture, attendance at a farm auction, and the opportunity to lead worship in a small village church.

Opportunities for placement include the 55 bed Swan Valley Health Centre, three long term care facilities, community health services such as Mental Health, Palliative Care and other community agencies such as the Crisis Centre (domestic abuse), the Justice System and the Food Bank.

Free billeting is available for out of town students.

*For further information contact Supervisor Rev. Margaret McCallum at: [swanvalleycpe@gmail.com](mailto:swanvalleycpe@gmail.com).*

## **3. Peer Mentoring for Clergy New to Rural Settings**

Date: TBA

CiRCLe M is offering a *Peer Mentoring* program to help clergy make a gracious and informed entry into their new rural site by connecting them with a local guide to their community's history and cultural dynamics.

Starting ministry in a rural parish can be daunting for someone who has never served a rural parish before. Even those who have previously done so, quickly recognize that rural communities and congregations are highly unique with complex social networks that must be navigated with care. It takes considerable time to know a community and for them to get to know and trust you.

In this program, Clergy will be paired with a local mentor who can help them come to understand the history, key players and important customs of the community. Clergy will be assisted to identify an insightful, long-time member of the community with whom they can form a mentoring

team. This person may be a professional—a teacher or doctor, for example—but will not be a member of the clergy person's congregation. This allows for some freedom and confidentiality in their conversations.

Once a mentor has been identified, clergy-mentor teams will come together for a two-day training event that will help them get to know each other in a structured way and provide some tools for intentionally exploring the life and culture of their community. It will also help to set expectations for the mentoring relationship. During the two years of the formal mentoring relationship, teams will be brought into contact with each other once a year face-to-face, and at other times by email, conference call, or other means. They will celebrate their rural ministry experiences and share mentoring strategies.

Participants will be responsible for their transportation. Accommodation can be arranged very inexpensively. The training itself will cost each team \$450 per year. In some cases subsidy for training and other costs is available from grants that support this program.

If you are new or about to move to a new ministry, give us a call and we will include you in a group.

*Contact Cam Harder, Executive Director of CiRCLe M: 306-966-7867 (Saskatoon); email: crharder@sasktel.net.*

#### **4. Foundations of Rural Ministry and Community Development**

Date: TBA

Rev. Dr. Cameron Harder

This graduate course is the first in our STM (Master in Sacred Theology Degree) in Rural Ministry and Community Development. It introduces students to the cohort model of study, builds relationships and establishes protocols for the overall program.

The course examines Canadian rural realities and looks at theological and theoretical models of rural ministry, particularly as it engages the surrounding community. Students will examine some of the challenges and possibilities inherent to interdisciplinary work. They will also engage in a collaborative project in their own context to map its demographic, social, economic and spiritual character. Finally, students will explore possibilities for their own research trajectory in the program.

As a result of this course students will be able to:

1. Identify the theological and sociological model(s) for relating rural churches to their communities that are most appropriate for their own context.
2. Map some of the social demographics of their church and communities.
3. Be able to choose appropriate tools for interdisciplinary work and research in their field setting.

4. Identify the core questions from their own context that will guide their study and research.

*Contact One of the STU Registrars:  
College of Emmanuel & St. Chad Registrar: 975-1588; email: colleen.walker@usask.ca, or  
Lutheran Theological Seminary Registrar: 966-7856; email: susan.avant@usask.ca*

## **CiRCLe M Resource Centre**

### **Visit our on-line Resource Centre:**

It is a place where you can:

- Download materials for rural ministry.
- Borrow books, videos, CD's which will be sent out to you at just the cost of shipping.
- Trade rural ministry resources.
- Sort through tools for reaching out to your community.

Some New Resources:

- Book: Pastoring the Pastors - Resources for Training and Supporting Pastoral Facilitators for Small Faith Communities. By: Arthur R. Baranowski
- Book: Nature, Human Nature and God. By: Ian G Barbour.
- DVD: Two Rivers. The true story of a Native reconciliation group. By: Rodney Mitchell, Diana Rico, Christine Glawe, Christopher Hoag, Mark Vicente.
- Book: Mission-Shaped and Rural – Growing Churches in the Countryside. By: Sally Gaze.

**Visit:** [www.circle-m.ca/resource-centre/](http://www.circle-m.ca/resource-centre/)

### **Volunteer Opportunities:**

#### **We are Looking for Book Reviewers:**

We will send out the books at our cost (they need to be returned).

Our aim is to have the reader write a 500 word review of the book so that we can share it in our newsletter.

Please contact us if you are interested at [circle.m.ministries@gmail.com](mailto:circle.m.ministries@gmail.com) or 306-966-7864.

### **We are Looking for Newspaper Articles:**

It would be helpful to have rural people watch and scan for newspaper articles that we may be interested in sharing on our website. Please contact us if you would like to volunteer (circle.m.ministries@gmail.com).

## **RURAL MINISTRY STORIES**

### **When Disaster Strikes**

*Wherever rural Communities exist neighbours reach out to neighbours in incredible ways when disaster threatens ...*

After the New Zealand earth quake in Sept. 2010 the *Rural Network News* reported (in part) the following ---

“The most immediate challenges were those faced by farmers with dairy herds. Power was cut for most and some rotary milking sheds were damaged beyond repair. Generators were shared, more generators were flown in, and useable milking sheds were made available to neighbours. One farmer, for example, who normally milks 400 cows, was able to provide milking space for 1,600 extra cows, twice a day.

“Within 36 hours, every dairy herd in Canterbury was being milked and all the milk was being delivered to the factories. One factory suffered serious damage and was assisted by its production rival.

“Up to 50 grain silos suffered structural damage, putting the contents at risk as heavy rains and wind threatened. Farmers with available capacity quickly made their silos available, and rural transport companies assisted by moving grain and seeds from damaged silos to safe silos.

“Our skilled urban counterparts, Orion line staff and electrical contractors, worked long hours in difficult weather conditions, to restore power to many and importantly, disconnect power for those with damaged homes, sheds, and silos. Power was restored to all but 3,400 farms by Sunday evening and to 2,500 of the remainder by Monday evening ...”

### **Update From Korea**

*From Catherine Christie, former Chair of CRCN, reporting from Korea ...*

Yesterday a young minister came to the office. He is head of the Rural Minister's Association and was in town for the day involved in a Rural Ministry course at Hanshin seminary. He is one of a

team of three rural pastors who come in once a week for this course. He invited me to attend with him. This was the final course of the term. I was thrilled, and want to share some things with you.

There were about 36 students in the course (only 8 women). As it was the closing session, they were taking questions from the class, and then went around for each person's evaluation. One of the questions from one of the women students was why was there was no women's perspective. Very interesting. The response was that there are no women pastors really involved in the Rural Ministry Association. Quite different from Canada.

The Presbyterian Church has just passed a regulation that students ordained have to spend a two-year pastorate in a rural. The questioner asked for their comments. One for, one against. But it was in the going around the group for comments that I found most exciting. One student said he had lived as a pastor's kid for a number of years in a rural area, but he did not know what rural ministry was until this course. One said he is a city kid, but now he is looking forward to rural ministry after ordination. (A convert!) A number of people mentioned the personalities of the three who had been instructors during the course, and later, in my invited comments, I said that this was true of my experience in Canada too, that rural presbyteries are mostly 'communities of people' while urban presbyteries are much more competitive.

One of the students said he would like to see the class have the opportunity to go out to a rural area as part of the course, and the professor in charge said they are planning that for the future.

## **DELEGATE'S REPORT**

### **Rural Symposium**

*Eric Skillings, chair of CRCN, reports on the Ontario Rural Symposium ...*

The R. Alex Sim Rural Ministry Symposium was held at Crieff Hills Community in Puslinch Ontario (near Guelph Ontario) on October 25 to 27, 2010. The 75 delegates represented Ontario, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, New York State, North Dakota, South Dakota and Pennsylvania. The three day Symposium is a time of learning and networking, and "a time apart". The accommodations and food at Crieff Hills were first class; much of the food is sourced within "100 miles", with several vegetables, spices and herbs fresh from Crieff's own garden.

The theme for this Symposium was "Therefore Choose Life". We have choices regarding our rural churches. "Our communities need our rural churches, as much as our rural churches need our communities". Choose to live ... abundantly.

Dr. Rene Van Acker from the University of Guelph, reminded us that even with the present market crop prices (quite good), increasing input costs, land costs, equipment and fuel costs, the risk margin has increased by 600% over the last 30 years. Gross income is higher, input costs have kept up, farm income has fallen as other costs rise – creating a vast risk factor for farmers.

Rene shared the statement, "Nature abhors a vacuum - where something does not grow - a weed will. In today's world, nature will take over where we are not doing a good job; such as continuous mono-agriculture and specialized livestock production. There are places for small, medium and large farms and farmers in Canada. We need each other to create 'Sustainable Agriculture'."

In fact, Rene suggests, according to recent news report, companies such as Wal Mart will require their suppliers to adhere to their new "Global Sustainable Agricultural Goals" (October 19, 2010 on PR Newswire). All farmers may be forced into sustainable agricultural production by their customers, such as Wal Mart.

Dr. Gil Waldkoenig, a director of the Town and Country Church Institute in Gettysburg Pennsylvania, suggests that rural churches can be leaders in working together with other rural churches and faith groups to build community, sustainable living and to declare collectively our faith with a new and clear voice.

Dr. Gil took us back to the first question God asked in the Bible. God asked Adam and Eve, on that first evening after eating the forbidden fruit, "Where are you"? Dr. Gil suggests that is the question churches should be asking ourselves versus that question we usually ask, "Who are we"? "Where are you" immediately sets the response to include the church the community and everything in between. We as rural churches are part of the bigger community. To be sustainable we need to work together.

Kitchen table groups allowed for the participants to dig deeper into both presentation with practical and personal situations and interests. Add the four workshops that each participated in (out of a total of 16) and the Symposium was a fantastic learning and networking event. Oh yes, and maybe even "a time away", although a busy time.

The annual meeting of the Canadian Rural Church Network met on Tuesday afternoon. We elected two new board members; Andrea Ahlers, Anglican (London Area) and Donna Mann, United (from the Mount Forest area). For more detailed information be sure to check out the Symposium website: [www.RuralSymposium.ca](http://www.RuralSymposium.ca). Click on "Resources", then "2010 - Therefore Choose Life". Hope to see many of you at the CiRCLe M Conference in the fall of 2011 in Alberta.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Rural Women of New Zealand Web-Site - [www.ruralwomen.org.nz](http://www.ruralwomen.org.nz)**

The *Women in Farming* project was established in New Zealand in 2002 by a group of professional and farming women who successfully applied to the *Sustainable Farming Fund* for seeding monies. Check their web-site for interesting work in progress.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Jan 2011**    ***Faith in the Oil Patch – The Synergies and Symbioses of the Petrochemical Industry on Rural Families.***

January 28, 29, 2011; Lethbridge Alberta

For more detail, visit: [http://www.circle-m.ca/pdfs/Events/faith\\_in\\_oil\\_patch.pdf](http://www.circle-m.ca/pdfs/Events/faith_in_oil_patch.pdf)

Contact:

Kathy Budgell, Synod of Alberta and the Territories

1-866-430-2636

email: [kbudgell@elcic.ca](mailto:kbudgell@elcic.ca)

**Feb 2011**    ***Alive and Kicking Workshop Tour – Revitalizing Rural Ministries for small membership churches in Alberta and Northwest Conference***

February 26 to March 6, 2011

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Marvin L. Anderson

Workshop Locations: Picture Butte, Three Hills, Viking, Barrhead, Beaumont, Fairview

Contact:

Paul DuVal    [pduval@anwconf.com](mailto:pduval@anwconf.com); 403-309-3946

**Feb 2011**    ***Rural Leadership Conference: Advocating for Our Communities***

Cypress Hills Resort, Saskatchewan

February 28 to March 2, 2011

Contacts:

Hans Martens    306-662-3812 or 662-2720; [h.martens@sasktel.net](mailto:h.martens@sasktel.net)

Capt. Ed Dean    306-662 2247 or 662-3871

David Manley    306-299-2139; [manley.country.cottage@sasktel.net](mailto:manley.country.cottage@sasktel.net)

Ross Pollock    306-662-3431

## LINKS

An extensive listing of links to rural community and rural ministry sites can be found at <http://www.circle-m.ca/links>.