

Rural Church Network of the U.S.A. and Canada

Semi-annual Meeting

April 11, 2013, Phone Conference, 9:00 a.m. CDT

On the line were: Alvin Luedke, Christine Iverson, Dave Ruesink, Jerry Marshall, John Young, Judy Hill, Kenny Sherin, Lon Oliver, and Mark Yackel-Juleen

1. Opening devotion – Mark

2. Executive Secretary's Report – Dave

Since last fall's meeting, efforts have concentrated on: - Making phone contacts with primary funders with email follow up as recommended afterwards. - When contributions are received, they are recorded and mailed to the Treasurer. - The email list was wiped out so it was re-done from scratch. Those on the current list were and are still requested to go to the website at ruralchurchnetwork.org to see if all who are on that list are correct or if additions, deletions, or corrections are needed. - Minimal supervision has been provided for the webmaster. - Emails and other sites are monitored for information that might be useful to forward to the RCN listserv.

3. Treasurers Report – Lon

We have on hand at this time \$4,844.03. Outstanding bills include \$70 to Jake Ruesink and \$600 to Dave Ruesink for three months in 2013.

Lon recommended that money received by Dave be deposited electronically to the bank and send the information to Lon after that happens.

Signature cards at bank are now taking care of

4. RCN Bylaws Amendment - Alvin

By motion of John and Mark, the bylaws were amended for Article VI, Section 6.2 and passed unanimously will now read:

6.2 Officers shall be elected at the Fall meeting of the RCN and shall serve for a period of two years or until their successors are elected. The Chairperson and Vice-chairperson may be re-elected for a second two-year period; the Executive Secretary and Treasurer may be re-elected for an unlimited number of two year terms. Alvin will incorporate this wording in the current bylaws so it can be posted on the website.

5. Rural Sociological Society – session update

Gary Goreham is looking into having a session on training of leaders at places like AMERC, and Shalom Hill Farms. Alvin will continue to be in contact with Gary. The meeting will be Aug 6-9 in New York City.

6. Rural Church Archives – Dave

The library at Texas A&M University has agreed to archive material related to the Rural Church Network because of the relationship to church leadership programs since I started working with TAMU in 1967. Some of the Texas material dates back to much earlier than my starting date. There is room for any material from others who have rural church work like Soil Stewardship, or Rural Life Sunday. All contributions should be sent to me.

7. Rural Social Science Education – Lon and Kenny

Kenny has not done anything with RSSE for some time. He is now working as Field Specialists for SD University. He thinks he can connect with the United Methodist field office in Mitchell for reflections. He has all of the RSSE files from NDSU now in PDF format and will share with Lon and Christine. They will then connect with Skype or Face Time for ways to start making revisions.

Lon has been in the parish for 9 months and has completed this work so is now able to begin to work on RSSE concerns again. Material now may be usable, but for on-line course the format needs updating and some of the material needs updated with new examples. New materials are available. Some of the language needs editing with such aspects as gender and dates. It all needs to be converted to a proper platform to be used. Much of this will be completed by the fall meeting.

Ed said that he has been doing revitalization work and is connected with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries working on networking between Urban and Rural ministries. He is finding many things in common between rural and urban ministries. There is little in the internal, institutional realm to distinguish between urban and rural churches. The differences show up more in the community context, and even then there are themes that unite rural and urban communities, e.g. poverty. RSSE's focus on understanding the communities where rural churches reside and need revitalizing could be really helpful. Defining, assessing, and interpreting revitalization is also needed. It will be useful to have updated information on changes taking place in rural areas, sometimes at an accelerating pace.

8. Website Development and Resources – Dave

Jake Ruesink joined the conversation for this topic. He has been working as the RCN webmaster for about two years. He emphasized that he could easily make any changes to the website as desired.

Mark and Lon are to look at new categories and pictures to be considered for refreshed website.

Question is: "who is the RCN audience and what do we want to communicate?"

Alvin responded that denominations are not doing resource development like they used to do so RCN is attempting to help churches and pastors in rural context. RCN should be able to point to a range of resources.

Jerry advised the group to think carefully about what is included and how to find new resources. Could link to some useful resources, need good linking system to find information easily and quickly (and search). Remember that 3rd parties often run links and the link becomes removed or no longer active, then becomes lost.

How to know how many people are connecting with RCN website. One approach is to have website and hope folks look for it can find it. Much marketing is done off-line to let ministers know of availability of information. Experience of the Arthur Ranke Centre is to have a person collecting resources as they become available and provide linkage - this does take lots of time. How to fund is something to be considered. Go to website at www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk for a sample. They are on the RCN link page.

Christine—would like a space to comment/rate on resource used about whether useful. Jake said need revision to make this happen.

Lon—maybe fewer tabs and have useful information for new or seasoned pastors.

Alvin—think about usefulness for momentum to get focus with resources.

Jerry—Can find on Facebook also Google analytic as an electronic count to help

Jake—can add an analytics and more if needed.

9. International Rural Church Association (IRCA) Dave

The next Conference will be in Lilongwe, Malawi on July 16-22, 2014.

IRCA has been asked to have a workshop at the World Council of Churches General Conference in Busan, South Korea on 30 October to 8 November 2013 which will focus on giving voice to rural people in response to outside influences, and impositions, on rural areas with damaging effects on environment and community. The proposed title is "Community Soundings: Giving Voice to Environmental Lament".

10. Elections in Fall

Executive committee will provide a slate for these

Chairperson

Treasurer

11. Next Meeting in Fall 2013

Scheduled for September 19-20 at Shalom Hill Farm at Windom, Minnesota in conjunction with a rural ministry course from Luther Seminary. Students will be at SHF through Sunday, 9/22 and the RCN is invited to participate with the students.

12. Meeting in spring 2014

Conference call: Date, Time, Call arrangements to be determined at fall meeting.

12. Meeting in fall 2014

Date, Place to be determined at Fall meeting

13. Reports

Christine—North Red River Valley, still a nice winter this spring. Expecting Red River to flood this spring. Lots of sand bags being filled now. Were in draught from last year. Now in 5th year of parish and trying to do revitalization with some push back.

Judy—Eastern Colo. Snow and weather set in. Thought estate was settled, but still lingering.

Ed—Course of study for bi-vocational pastors in Midwest. Course this weekend. Movement of pastors this time of year. Rural churches having difficulty financing pastors with availability, and ability.

Mark—SHF received a three-year grant for summer fellowship on care of pastors. Teach about creation and learn about developing resources and bring learning to Luther Seminary. New to rural clergy 101 intro to small town and rural ministry context. STAR 201 on limited small town and rural ministry. Church groups meeting at SHF.

Kenny—finished dissertation in July. Field Agent in CD for small rural communities in SD. Horizons was developed by SW Area Foundation. Extension only now with USDA grants. Set as strike force in areas of persistent poverty. Upper Midwest political leaders are church going member who appreciate fact that are an ordained clergy understanding challenges. Baptist Organization “Together for Hope” focusing on 20 poorest counties in the USA with 4 in SD on Indian Reservation. Were scheduled to assist with planting an orchard this weekend. Won’t work because of weather. New businesses causing housing shortage.

Jerry— as a new Arthur Rank Centre CEO, serial entrepreneur and rural church leader, drew attention to a wide range of free resources for rural churches on their web site, eg rural evangelism course, discipleship material, community audit, etc., see <http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/are-you-involved-in-a-rural-church> for main resources. ARC is to focus on responding to challenges of multi church ministry in rural area and releasing lay leaders; and helping develop rural enterprise and employment to support thriving and sustainable communities.

Lon—After 10 months as interim now back today.

Alvin—been quite unstable at Seminary. President resigned and aftermath of financial stress. In holding pattern, working thru major curriculum revision. Will reduce faculty from 44 to 28. 30 staff cut with 18 leaving and 12 not refilled. Retirements and other calls 2/3 to be taken out. Interim Pres and Acad Dean. Dept. heads on sabbatical or just returning. Life will be different as July 1, will be only one of two full professors. Likely division to be 2/3 size and senior faculty.

FYI: Church of the Resurrection will house St Paul's Seminary in KC.

14. Closing prayer – Mark

Thanks for colleagues different places. Continued blessings and hand over prayer for your will be done and walk into ventures unseen go with courage and hand and love support us.

Dave Ruesink, recorder 4/10/13