

# Anyone Could Start a

## **RURAL MISSION SUPPORT GROUP**

### Why not you?

#### **What is a Rural Mission Support Group?**

It is basically an informal self-help group to encourage and resource rural church leaders within a limited geographical area, typically 10 miles radius. Its object is missional and extending the kingdom of God. Its nature is ecumenical.

#### **Who might take part?**

Anyone from any Christian denomination who is concerned about the life and mission of a rural church, but especially clergy and authorised lay leaders. This generates a high degree of common interest and experience.

#### **How often does the Group meet?**

Typically, four times a year, though it could meet more frequently (or less frequently) if the members prefer. There is no set rule.

#### **What happens at a Meeting?**

Meetings last between one and two hours each time. Experience suggests that a mid-week lunch time provided the best opportunity. The four times a year pattern is designed to be held early in the New Year, soon after Easter, the end of August, and after Harvest Thanksgiving. Each person in turn is encouraged to describe how they responded to the key mission opportunities (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Summer holidays, etc) since the previous meeting, and outline plans for those opportunities coming up.

They might also be invited to share any issues that have brought encouragement or are currently particularly challenging. People will only be willing to be open about concerns where it is understood that there is a high level of trust and discretion. At times, someone might ask for a matter to remain confidential.

Often, during sharing times, there will be interaction. For example, someone else might identify with a particular difficulty, or be able to suggest a helpful resource or action. Group members are encouraged to bring examples or speak about any resources they have discovered or used that are relevant to rural mission.

People keep their own notes of salient features. Ideally the meeting will end with prayer.

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## How do we get started?

The first step is for someone to take the initiative. It requires little time or effort. Could this be you?

The second step is to identify the locus for a group. Is there a market town or large village with several villages within a ten-mile radius? Once you have identified the place, you need to identify a venue. You will need a comfortable room with a kitchen and toilet handy. It needs to be warm in the winter months. Some Groups have found it helpful to keep to one central meeting place; others have preferred to arrange successive meetings hosted by various Group members.

The third step is to identify the churches in the area and the key people (clergy and lay leaders). This is not difficult, and by getting some help from one or two people from different parts of the defined area, a list will soon be drawn up.

The fourth step is to determine a date and time. Wednesdays are often good, and meeting within 12.00 to 2.00 usually means that mornings and afternoons can remain available for other activities. Initially, a shorter meeting might prove helpful and seem less time consuming for busy people. Those attending bring their own lunch (though a simple buffet could be offered). Coffee tea and cold drinks should be provided. You will need a minimum of four weeks' notice.

The final step is to invite people to come. They will want to know what it is they would be coming, so perhaps you could copy this information sheet. You will need feedback on proposed attendance. It is also useful to make provision for anyone to indicate their interest if they are not available on the date and time of the first meeting,

## Is support available?

If you find difficulty identifying all the churches in the defined area, or if you need a template for the invitation letter, Rural Mission Solutions will help you.

This will be YOUR Group, so there is no central management. Each group requires one person to arrange the venue and any hospitality. Someone needs to send out the reminders in advance of each meeting. The most helpful meetings are those that have the best attendance.

The Rural Mission Solutions office would love to hear from you if you propose to set up a Rural Mission Support Group in your location. We would also welcome news from you with a note of key issues you have discussed. In that way, one Group may have information that could help another Group. A short email with bullet points is sufficient.

If you do need help, or if you would find it beneficial, we can offer ongoing support and conversation through email, by telephone, or by online video meetings.