

RURAL MINISTRY GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2009

MEMBERSHIP

Catherine Blake	Cath Lacey sm
Judy Breen rsm	Bernadette Madden mss
Madeline Breen rsm	Virginia Mahony rsc
Pat Bundock op	Anne Mayberry rsc
Kay Cole rsm	Frances McAleer rsj
Adele Cottrell-Dormer rsc	Marie McAlister rsj
Margaret Anne Crowe rsm	Colleen McDonald rsc
Maria Cunningham rsc	Joan McKenna rsc
Joy Mary Edwards rsm	Ann McRae pbvm Animator
Joan Farrell rsj	Marie Murphy rsm
Margaret Fitzgerald rsc	Bernadette Pattison pbvm
Marjorie Fitzgerald rsm	Carol Pedersen rsc
Kate Fitzpatrick rsc	Carmel Piffero
Anne Forbes rsm	Carmel Sheridan rsj
Clare Gaynor pbvm	Fran & John Spora
Margaret Anne Hart rsm	Ann Steenbergen rsj
Joanna Healy osu	Patricia Vagg rsm
Christine Henry rsc	Maria Wheeler rsc
Margaret Kelly rsm	Pat Whitby csb
Marguerita Kosseris csb	

FOCUS

The Rural Ministry Group is a support network for religious and their colleagues in often isolated ministry in rural New South Wales, northern Victoria and southern Queensland. The animator of the group, Ann McRae pbvm, lives in Wagga. The group communicates mostly by email and meets only infrequently, often at gatherings instituted by other organizations.

RURAL MINISTRY GATHERINGS

Fran and John Spora chose Yanco in 1998 as the location of the very first gathering of sisters and co-workers engaged in rural ministry. In 2002, the Year of the Outback, the Rural Ministry Group inaugurated their biennial weekend gatherings. In 2002 and 2004 the group met in Carcoar and in 2006 at Galong. March 28-30, 2008 was the date of the most recent gathering, again at Galong. Virginia Mahoney rsc, Maria Cunningham rsc and Margaret Anne Crowe rsm coordinated the 2008 Gathering with the theme of **Creation at Work**. Some of the resolutions we made in evaluating the weekend were:

- CLRI(NSW) would supply organizational support for future weekends, lightening the burden for the organizing group;
- The Animator would attend a CLRI(NSW) Executive Committee meeting each year to keep members in the loop about conditions faced by religious ministering in rural areas

- The Rural Ministry Group page on the CLRI(NSW) website www.clrinsw.org will display material from the gatherings as well as resource material for group members;
- A photo gallery will be included on the Rural Ministry Group page;
- A Google Group will be established to enable members of the Rural Ministry Group to communicate with one another easily and share resources and ideas. This has not been successful because of the slowness of rural dial-up internet connection;
- Our next gathering will be at Galong on the weekend of April 16-18, 2010.

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The report of the Animator to the Executive Committee resulted in the 2009 Christmas Rural Ministry Appeal.

CLRI(NSW) conducted a very successful appeal for funds for the support of rural families over the Christmas period. In December 2008 money was collected by CLRI(NSW) via donations from congregations in NSW in order that a little relief could be offered to the rural families of NSW, struggling not only with the worldwide economic crisis but also the effects of drought, insect plagues, the aftermath of equine ‘flu and other disadvantages. **Congregations, as well as individual religious, generously donated an overwhelming \$22,600.** The \$22,600 donated was distributed to families in rural NSW by members of the CLRI(NSW) Rural Ministry Group. The majority of the funds were received well in time for Christmas 2008. In March a further \$34,200 was received from a congregation of women who decided to donate the financial gift given by the Federal Government to pensioners, to “assist families and individuals struggling in situations of hardship in Australia’s rural areas”.

On September 30, 2009 the CLRI(NSW) 2009 Christmas Rural Ministry Appeal was launched by Barbara Bolster rsm, President of CLRI(NSW), who noted

In Australia where the greater percentage of the population lives in cities, or in large towns along the coast we are often sheltered from the suffering and hardship the drought and the global financial crisis are causing in rural areas. While farmers, particularly those with smaller properties and less financial resources, have been hard hit this situation is extended to the communities around them. The lives of farmers and the existence of rural towns and cities that act as agricultural service centres are inextricably linked. In many instances these small agricultural towns and villages are dying because the farmers can no longer stay on their land resulting in contractors and farm labourers facing a drop in income or loss of jobs. Schools are forced to close and a lifestyle is disappearing.

CLRI(NSW) looks forward to a continuance of the generosity of congregations in the support of rural ministry and rural families.

The Executive Committee in response to this report resolved in 2008 that the following actions could be taken by congregations and CLRI(NSW) to assist religious in rural ministry. During 2009 some of these actions have occurred and work will continue in 2010.

1. Provision of professional training/education opportunities for sisters and their co-workers in rural areas

2. Provision of supervision for sisters and their co-workers in rural areas, or by telephone
3. Providing retreat weekends for rural dwellers in country areas
4. Provision of grief and loss seminars for rural dwellers in country towns
5. Identification of religious who might move to a country town for a set period
6. Identification of committed lay professionals who might give 2-5 years service as leader of a rural community
7. Advertisement of towns with the greatest need for information of congregational leaders
8. Encouragement of inter-congregational supply of personnel to a town
9. Provision of pamper packs for women on the land via donations
10. Provision of money via donations so that sisters and their co-workers in rural areas have some leeway to give financial assistance to families in dire need
11. Ways could be sought to promote the concerns of rural dwellers with government eg making a submission to the National Review of Drought
12. Promoting, through the Social Justice Committee of CLRI(NSW), the environmental concerns of rural dwellers to government eg coal mining on the Liverpool Plains
13. Seeking support from congregational schools with ex-students in the country – rebuilding networks and giving support
14. Seeking support from congregational members with ex-students in the country – rebuilding connections and giving support
15. Provision of information about rural areas to metropolitan religious
16. Promote the stories/needs of rural dwellers: CRA phone interviews with sisters in rural ministry.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Would you like to be a sponsor of the 2010 Gathering for Sisters in Rural Ministry in Galong in April? Donations gratefully received at CLRI(NSW) Office!

Do you have a congregational member in rural ministry who would like to join the group? Do you have any congregational members who might be suitable for a year or two of rural ministry? Do you have a congregational member who might be suitable to join an inter-congregational ministry to a rural area? Do you have a congregational member who would give a weekend retreat in a rural area? Do you have a congregational member who would be able to offer phone or face-to-face supervision for rural ministers? Do you have a congregational member who would be able to offer a weekend grief and loss seminar in a rural area? Do you have a congregational member who would be able to offer a professional training/education seminar for rural ministers? If there is something you can do to help, please contact Sharon Price at CLRI(NSW).

**Ann McRae pbvm
Animator, Rural Ministry Group
December 1, 2009**