

A Country Parson for the 21st Century: Sarum to Offer Rural Ministry Training

Responding to the national call for specialised training for ministers working across the country's 10,000-plus Anglican rural churches, Sarum College in Salisbury has proposed a new training pathway now under review by the Ministry Council.

The new pathway aims to train rural ministers for work in multi-parish benefices so that these faith communities realise their potential for mission and growth. It will be offered from September 2016, subject to approval by the Ministry Division.

"These are exciting and innovative times for all of us involved in ministerial formation and education as we attempt together to respond imaginatively to the context and culture within which ministry is exercised," says The Revd Canon James Woodward, Principal of Sarum College. "This rural pathway will give Sarum College a unique opportunity to prepare and equip ordination candidates for work in different rural contexts.

"We are mindful of the rural nature of ministry to be found in many places in our diocese and region and from which a significant number of our existing ordination candidates are drawn. Sarum College wishes to support mission and renewal in imaginative ministry in these contexts. We hope to be able to work with others in providing resource for all those who would seek to strengthen the witness of the Church."

The proposed pathway has been welcomed by the Church of England's National Rural Officer, Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson, who says:

"Mission and ministry in rural communities is both challenging and rewarding, requiring skills and expertise in managing complexity, leadership and encouraging and developing the ministry of others. It is an urgent priority and a potentially fertile field but there is an absence of relevant contextual training and many Ordinands receive little, if any, training that equips and resources them for work in rural areas. This initiative from Sarum College will provide Ordinands with the experience, understanding and skills that are needed to focus on mission and growth, spirituality and discipleship and the training and education of others in rural multi-church groups."

Calling attention to the important role this specialised training will have on the flourishing of faith throughout the country, Canon Woodward welcomes the contribution of knowledge and expertise in this area.

“I look forward to working with colleagues on the creation of this new pathway and welcome any feedback or questions for us to consider as we continue to work together to equip and enable a new generation of ministers through our ministry training programmes.”

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Editors' Notes

1. Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church

This report issued by the Church of England in January 2015 detailed the context and need for specialised training for ministers who work in countryside parishes.

The provision of locally accessible training and development for lay people and clergy working in multi-church groups was among the recommendations which followed. Full details available at: www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/01/released-for-mission,-growing-the-rural-church.aspx

2. Sarum Ministry and Mission Programme

Sarum College offers flexible training for ministry (ordained or lay) through blended learning using online modules, residential weekends, smaller groups and the home context to create an integrated approach to training.

Prior to the merger with Sarum College in February 2015, these courses were delivered through the Southern Education Training and Education Scheme (STETS).

3. Sarum College

Founded in 1995, Sarum College is an ecumenical study, conference and research centre situated in historic grade 1-listed buildings in Salisbury's Cathedral Close.

Ministry training is one of a broad range of Sarum's educational programmes which includes courses within our specialist areas of Christian Spirituality; Leadership, Consultancy; Liturgy and Worship; Theology, Imagination and Culture; Training for Christian Ministry and Mission; and, The Arts.

There are four postgraduate programmes validated by the University of Winchester. Ministry courses are validated by Durham University and students can choose full-time, part-time or practice-based study and training. These courses create opportunities for all to learn, to think, to speak and to act with greater theological confidence and can lead to a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma or an MA degree.

Other events and courses held throughout the year including public lectures, Biblical Study breaks, conferences, art exhibitions and lunchtime concerts. Guest bedroom and meeting rooms also can be hired by the general public when not in use for courses and college events.

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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