

Dear Accompanier

Thank you for being willing to act as an **accompanier** for the team from your denominationally nominated rural multi church group as they engage with the **Regional Inter-Denominational Learning Community** that will commence in January 2016.

As you may be aware over the last 10 years learning communities have been proven to be an effective means of implementing change in churches and have been developed to assist strategies for growth in a variety of settings. The concept of creating specific learning communities that are neither conferences nor theoretical training programmes have been developed to draw on the learning of peer groups around a common goal. (cf Richard Du Four 'Professional Learning Communities at Work'; Wildworks; 3 DM; Lead Academy; CPAS; Arthur Rank Centre; IDLC)

Learning Communities are formed by teams from local churches made up of ministers and lay leaders gathering together every six months for 36 hours, over a two year period, to dream, create and execute ideas into action relevant for their contexts. Unlike other one off planning tools these repeated gatherings enable patterns of vision planning and reflection to become embedded and shared more widely. They also seek to establish the principle of collaborative learning within and between teams that could have a significant impact in releasing the ministry of local congregations beyond the team attending the Learning Community.

Each learning community has a discreet goal that all can share and each team comes with a desire to learn from each other by adopting **five key attributes**.

- Come with a sense of discovery embracing the role of both a teacher & learner;
- seek principles behind underlying practices;
- be fully present for the 36 hours with no distraction and a core team committed to attending all sessions;
- being open to change working for solutions believing anything can be better;
- committed to honest conversations open to disagree seeking to face reality.



Each gathering has a theme that enhances the overall goal of the Learning Community. A **common pattern** is followed guided by trained facilitators to maximise learning and cooperate discovery. This pattern helps to create accountable planning that supports a journey from knowledge to understanding to decisions for action. These stages may be

summarised as moving from “*what is*” to “*what could be*” to “*what will be*”.



ERTP are sponsoring this specific Learning Community for rural multi church groups from the partners within the partnership with the **common goal of discerning and bringing new growth to rural settings**. We are working with **The Arthur Rank Centre** who has developed their particular adaptation of a learning community by the formation of ‘Germinate Groups’ with assistance from Lead Academy and CPAS. This is ideal for our largely rural region where a commitment to working with Christians from across the denominations is vital.

Your role is to act as an accompanier to the team nominated by your denominational partner **offering facilitation & mission accompaniment** along the journey. This includes helping the team to prepare for this learning community, attending the learning communities, meeting with your team 3 months after each learning community in their context to help evaluate their action and guidance as to next steps. In addition it is hoped that you might be **a catalyst to develop the concept of learning communities more widely within your denominational context** in line with your strategic plans for growth. The intention of the Arthur Rank Centre is to make their materials available to be used more widely. E RTP is also considering the possibility of a second Regional Inter denominational learning community for mid sized/market town churches commencing in 2017.

You are invited to **a training day on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October 10.30 – 1.30pm** when the particular process of this learning community and your role within it will be explored. This will provide you with an opportunity to meet with the lead facilitators from Arthur Rank Centre and E RTP and each other as well as influence the shape of the learning community.

**Dates** for the Learning Community Gatherings are

**29-30<sup>th</sup> January and 17-18<sup>th</sup> June 2006:                      27-28<sup>th</sup> January and 16-17<sup>th</sup> June 2017.**

The gatherings will be from 10.30am on Friday to 4.30pm on Saturday and along with the training day all held at St Nicholas Centre, 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich IP1 1UQ.

I look forward to meeting with you at the training day and happy to discuss any points of clarification that you need. You may care to visit the Arthur Rank web site <http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/germinate>

Yours sincerely

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