

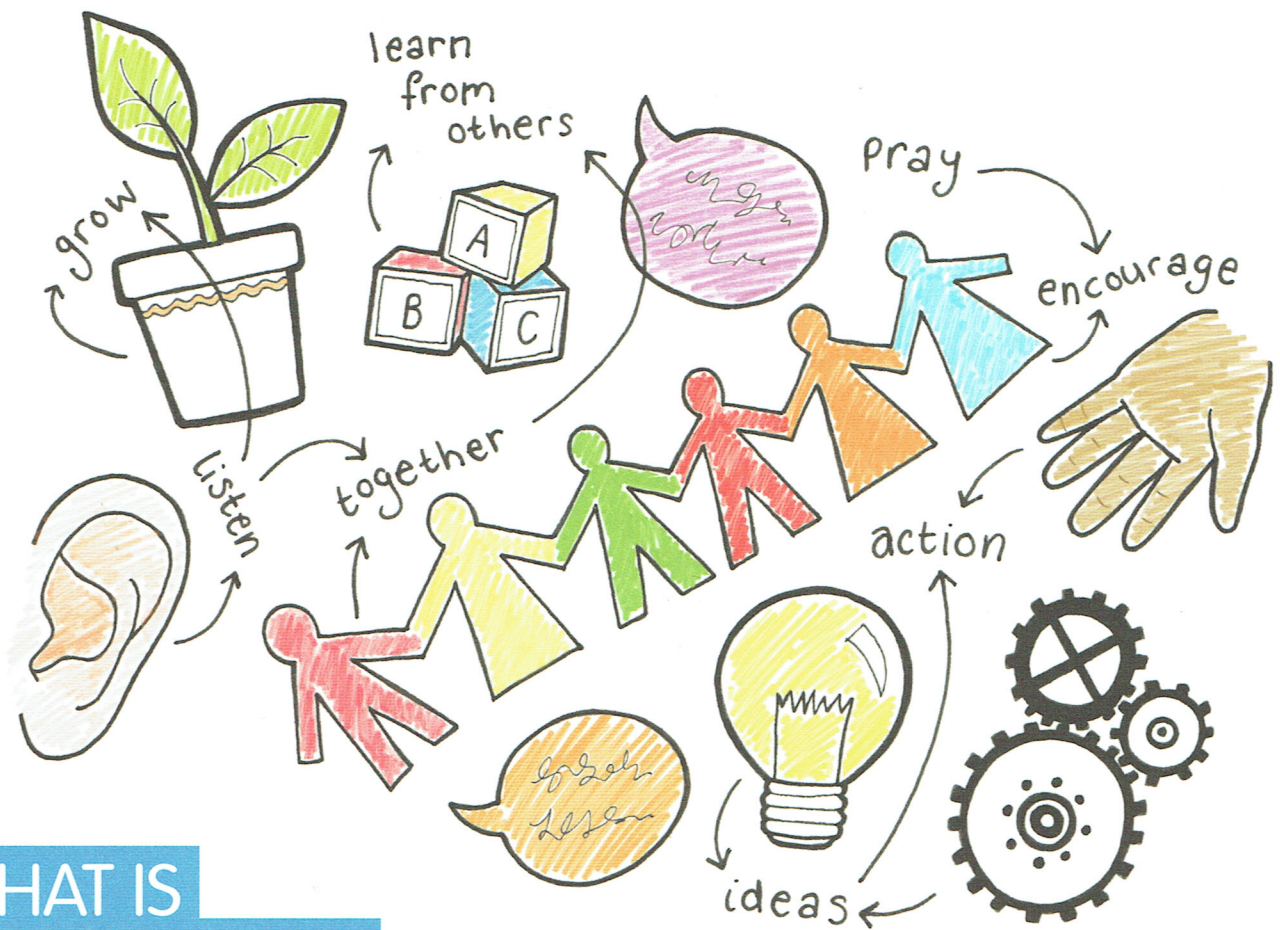
GERMINATE GROUPS

Affordable learning communities
for rural churches

Bring together a small team from your rural multi-church group to think, pray, plan and learn from others. Develop a shared vision and agree practical steps to respond to change and facilitate mission and growth.



Germinate
Arthur Rank Centre



WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Mission and growth in a rural multi-church group is challenging and complex. There are questions about how to work together, leadership, vision, developing the ministry of lay people, buildings and ultimately, how to be an effective Christian presence in the community. As we face rapid change, there will probably be people ready to respond and those who will resist it with every breath. If this is your situation, Germinate Groups may be answer. This “learning community” approach is a way for rural multi-church groups to come together to think, pray, plan and learn from others. This new resource makes learning communities relevant and accessible to rural churches.

At its heart, participation in Germinate Groups is an opportunity to consider together:

- **What IS** – stepping back to reflect on what God is doing in the group’s community
- **What COULD BE** - prayerfully reflecting on what God is calling the group to focus on
- **What WILL BE** - planning the key things the group needs to do (or maybe stop doing) over the next six months.

The resource was created with CPAS and Lead Academy and further developed by us to be appropriate for rural multi-church groups.

WHO SHOULD TAKE PART?

Germinate Groups is for rural multi-church groups such as a benefice, circuit or section of a circuit, or a joint pastorate or equivalent. Each group identifies four to six people from across the group who could be lay and ordained but not necessarily in official positions. This group then joins with others for creative and interactive training, and time and space to work together to develop their church strategy and mission.

The material is written for an ecumenical learning community as there is much value from different church traditions learning from each other and strengthening local working relationships. A learning community could be a single denomination but we would strongly encourage those initiating a programme to invite other denominations in the area to participate.

WHAT'S THE PROGRAMME?

Participants commit to four two-day gatherings, and a final day for review and commissioning, over the course of the two year programme. There is a high ratio of group work to input, so the sharing of good practice and experience is given priority. This enables new ideas and plans to be considered.

Each of the four gatherings has a broad theme: journey, leadership, discipleship and mission. Within each of these, the material considers:

- **Our story and vision:** what is our story so far? What are the joys and challenges? Where are we going? What new chapters are we writing?
- **Our context:** how has the world and our community changed? What are the implications for us?
- **Our people:** who has God given us today, and how do we nurture them?
- **Our structures:** what structures and systems do we have? What works well, what could work better? What needs to change?

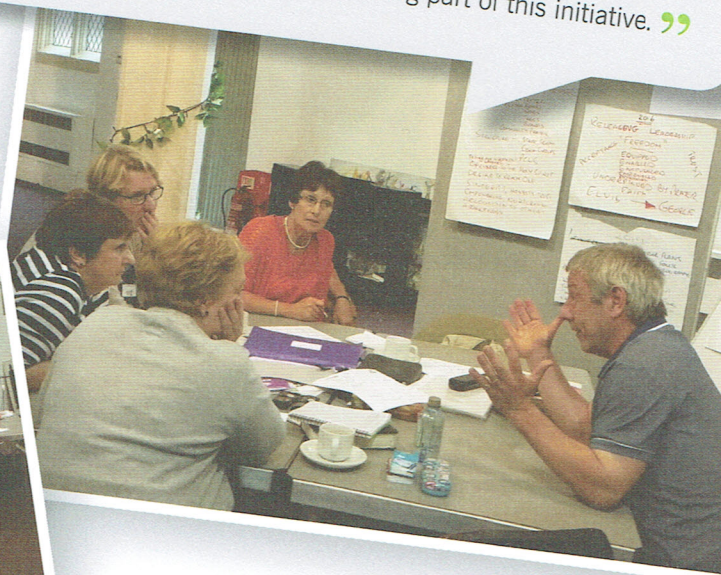
Each session includes an exercise to help the groups envision the future to which God is calling them, and identify the key decisions and turning points. An action plan then sets out key steps for the next six months. We recommend the appointment of an accompanier for each group to visit between sessions and facilitate a review of progress.



WHAT THEY SAY

In our pilot programmes, participants said they especially valued the opportunity to share insights with others, to have conversations in a “safe space”, to “build a picture of where we are and where we need to get to”, and the time to plan a strategy in a structured way with a team.

- “ Very positive... Going home fired up to support the church. ”
- “ Very valuable time away... we are growing together. ”
- “ Very good... creative thinking time and the stimulation of shared thoughts and ideas. ”
- “ I loved the prayerful start and the fun TV clips. ”
- “ Very helpful to be away with colleagues and reflect. ”
- “ Good to focus on how the churches in our group can work together. ”
- “ Thank you for the privilege of being part of this initiative. ”



COST

The cost is just £250 per year for two years for the whole learning community (i.e. between four and eight multi-church groups, so probably less than £20 per church). This includes full facilitator training, all materials (participant booklet, slides, speaker notes and facilitator guide), telephone support and oversight. You will need to provide the facilitators, venue and arrange refreshments.

NEXT STEPS

Do contact us at an early stage to express your interest. We will send you the facilitator's guide, which explains how to set up a Germinate Group programme in your area. We can also advise you, show you some of the material, and put you in touch with anyone else in your area who is interested.



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