

Rural Hope

'Heaven in Ordinary': prepare for Rural Mission Sunday, 19th July 2020

Rural Mission Sunday will go ahead this year despite organisers not being sure how it will be celebrated.

A spokesperson for the Arthur Rank Centre that compiles the resources for the Mission Sunday said:

"It is difficult to predict the extent to which we will still be impacted by social distancing restrictions by the time Rural Mission Sunday rolls around on 19 July. Where we are in the pandemic response will shape how you might respond.

"If we're still in lockdown or social distancing guidelines are still in place, you will need to focus on your use of phone or online resources, or on equipping your church family to mark Rural Mission Sunday in their own homes.

"If restrictions have been partially or entirely lifted, Rural Mission Sunday may be the perfect opportunity to bring your community together to celebrate!"

But however we end up worshipping on Rural Mission Sunday, the Centre asks you to consider with your congregations where you have experienced 'heaven in ordinary' or found yourself on holy ground during the pandemic.

The Centre has supported rural churches through Covid-19, and listened to stories of the impact the outbreak has had:

"We – in common with communities across the world – have been living in lockdown for a significant proportion of the early months of this year, living with a level of disconnection that many, if not all of us, have found unsettling and unprecedented.

As we have supported rural churches through Covid-19, and listened to stories of the impact the outbreak has had, we have become convinced that Rural Mission Sunday 2020 offers a timely opportunity to take stock and reflect, to engage intentionally with the changes of perspective that we have experienced in recent weeks.

"In Exodus 3 we read of an encounter between Moses and God at the burning bush. Moses is going about his normal, everyday life when he catches sight of a bush that's on fire. This is a fairly ordinary occurrence for him, but he's paying sufficient attention to notice that the bush isn't burning up. What follows is an exchange that transforms not only Moses but the future of the whole people of God."

"Whatever your experience, our prayer this Rural Mission Sunday is that you will see and take off your shoes. Leave the blackberry picking to others."