

## **The Future of Church in Rural NSW**

### **Draft Conclusions Summary.**

From this research much could be concluded and others would view the responses from different perspectives. I have come to a number of conclusions from the survey interview responses and have included those that have a consistency of perspective. The following points are made only from the survey responses and not from any other material. I have deliberately not compared the results to the National Church Life Survey, my thesis written a number of years ago based on clergy responses to similar questions or to other published material.

The conclusions are as follows:

1. Spirituality in rural areas is assumed to be Christian spirituality and even more so traditional Christian spirituality.
2. Those surveyed assumed that church as we know it will not be appropriate in the future.
3. Those surveyed said that church has a low priority and a low credibility from the people within the rural settings they exist in.
4. Church doesn't make sense to non-church people. (ie. The Jesus message doesn't make sense)
5. Church people expect church to serve them.
6. Non-church people expect church to serve them at some point of need (Birth, deaths and Marriages)
7. The most difficult part of ministering to rural Australians is other Christians notably leadership.
8. The most rewarding part of ministering to rural Australians is seeing people respond to Jesus.
9. The main thing that could be done more effectively was to have less programs and spend more time with people.
10. Church buildings should be used more creatively and used every day of the week.
11. Rural churches don't necessarily want more pastors but the right pastor for their situation.
12. Rural churches want to work with a pastor, not be told what to do by a pastor.
13. Pastors should be paid appropriately but they can't afford so what can they do?
14. Baptist Rural people will worship with other denominations IF the preaching is Biblically orientated but would like to keep their Baptist connection somehow.
15. Rural churches want to do mission in their area but spend most of their time maintaining the church building and church structure.
16. Rural Church people don't want to be told how to do church, they want to be church.

While these are in point form and gleaned from a large number of responses (some of which would disagree with these conclusions!) they are the main streams of the responses to the survey. From the responses it is noticeable that there is a lot of passion for ministry and mission in the rural areas and much frustration as the opportunities are often being over looked or passed by.

It is noticeable that these conclusions can be addressed with resources yet those needed resources are financially and time wise restricted. Rural communities, and this includes the churches, no longer have access to financial backing and now have become mission fields that will require logistic input from the wider Christian community.

I would like to thank those who participated in this research and that the research be considered an ongoing project. The next level is to survey rural community members that are not involved in church life. This would give us some understanding of the attitudes of those in our mission field.

Rev. John Armstrong  
PO Box 40  
Yeoval, 2868  
[johnmarianne@northnet.com.au](mailto:johnmarianne@northnet.com.au)  
(02) 68464117  
0408265463