

REVISIONING RURAL MINISTRY: WHAT ARE OUR PURPOSES?

Gary Farley

1. Upgrade the role of the town and country pastor--a variety of exciting challenges await.
2. Enable urban-raised ministers to be effective in rural parishes.
3. Explain how the historic role/tasks of minister, e.g. pastor, prophet, priest, and evangelist, may be expressed in a rural context.
4. Review how the rural churches came to be.
5. Review how rural communities and regions have evolved and seem to be evolving. See the diversity/uniformity.
6. Heighten understanding of issues impacting rural America and her people.
7. The reforming of community is a focal task for rural pastors: reviewing old six mile, and/or participating in the new 30/60 mile communities.
8. A second focal role/task is promoting environmental stewardship.
9. A third focal role/task is to challenge town and country pastors to be creatively involved in re-churching and evangelizing rural America--yokes, coops, blended, new, federated, etc--also principles of evangelism and of church growth from parish to eco-system ecclesiology.
10. Suggest how living in a rural setting offers opportunities for spiritual formation and development of staff, family, and congregation.
11. Lift up examples of effective ministry in all of these areas.
12. Encourage active interaction with other pastors in the neighborhood/community/county.
13. Explore a theology of the rural.
14. Open up the door to smaller church literature and to mid-sized church literature.
15. Stress "mission" over against "management". This calls for processes of futuring and of strategy development.
16. The Rural Church Movement at the beginning of this century operated off of a vision for life in rural community. There was cooperation of denominations, university, and

- government around the common vision. Do we have a common vision? Can we offer one for consideration and discussion?
17. Provide tools for analyzing the structure and dynamics of the community (county) in which their church serves.
 18. The old RCM did survey work--should we revive this?
 19. How does GATT and NAFTA impact the prospects of the vision?
 20. I want a book that will be usable in Baptist, Assembly, and Nazarene schools as well as in UMC, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic orders.
 21. The special case of the rural poor, the ethnics, the ex-urban (new-to-rural retirees), and the telecommuters, as well as the yeoman farmer need to be addressed.