



**BRISBANE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY  
UNIT OUTLINE**

**BACHELOR OF THEOLOGY**

UNIT TITLE	RURAL MINISTRY
UNIT CODE	E52034
UNIT STATUS	Elective
HOST FIELD	E
PREREQUISITE/S	Nil
INCOMPATIBLES	-
CREDIT POINTS	10cp
REQUIREMENTS	26 hours attendance at lectures, a five day rural ministry practicum (40 hours) followed by 4 hour group reflection on placement and approximately 64 hours of individual study over the semester.
FREQUENCY OF OFFERING	Odd Years - Semester 2
PREPARED BY	Rev Dr Don Saines
UNIT COORDINATOR	Rev Dr Don Saines
TEACHING STAFF	Rev Dr Don Saines with visiting personnel who are qualified practitioners in different areas of rural ministry.
DATE PREPARED	6 September 2006

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**Rationale**

Students preparing for ministry (paid or unpaid) and students wishing to understand the way the church responds to its changing circumstances benefit from reflecting theologically upon the dynamics of the church in relation to the society in which it is situated in rural and remote areas, in order to develop their own response, as church, to varying societal conditions. The decline in rural population brings into sharp focus issues which the church as a whole, whether rural or urban, faces. In particular the size of the State of Queensland means that much of the church's activity happens in rural or remote settings. On graduation many students may be asked to exercise ministry in a rural or remote setting.

This unit explores the particular characteristics of rural contexts and the rural church and its ministry and mission. It examines the nature of rural life and community in the light of recent social, economic and environmental trends and explores possible pastoral and ministry responses. As well as addressing the particular nature of rural church life the unit also addresses the theology and vision of rural ministry, and looks at the hope that is present in small congregational life including ministry community models. A discussion of rural life and

culture is undertaken with a view to encouraging a positive view of the rural church as a “frontier” ministry.

### Relation to program

The unit examines the ministry and mission of rural churches and fosters a dialogue between the church, its surrounding rural social and environmental contexts. The unit draws upon the other Fields and focuses on enabling practitioners in ministry to gain understanding and experience of ministry and mission in rural communities, and to reflect on the practice of rural ministry in the face the range of issues specific to the Australian rural context.

### Aims

The unit aims to provide students with a critical appreciation of the rural church and of rural communities in general. It seeks to help students evaluate strategies for ministry and mission in the light of an awareness of pastoral, ethical, social, environmental and economic issues that impact upon rural communities and so the mission of the church. The unit also aims to offer students opportunity for practical experience in a rural ministry and to reflect *in situ* on ministry in a particular rural community.

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	
At the end of this unit the student should be able to:	
1.	Identify the issues that are characteristic of rural communities and of rural churches;
2.	Explain the challenges of rural ministry and mission in the light of current trends present in rural communities;
3.	Apply methods of theological reflection and the practice of ministry to particular pastoral or ethical issues faced by the rural church;
4.	Analyse a rural church within its context and offer a strategy for rural ministry and mission within that particular rural setting.

### Content

- 1 Understanding of the context of the contemporary “rural church”
- 2 The challenge of sustainable community in rural and remote areas: land and environment, economy and employment
- 3 The dynamics of the rural Church and ministry: spirituality, pastoral issues including clergy stress and their families
- 4 A theology for the rural church: “frontier” church
- 5 The mission, witness and worship in the rural Church
- 6 Renewing Rural Church Structures: Small Christian Communities Ministering Communities
- 8 Developments in Rural Ministry within Australia and overseas
- 9 Opportunities and challenges for ministry in rural areas

### Organization and Teaching Strategies

The contact time comprises lectures and seminars, the latter including both small group and whole class discussion of issues raised in lectures, a rural church field placement followed by group reflection, as well as the students’ own reading and selected primary texts..

The unit includes a rural ministry practicum of approximately 40 hours in order to enable the student to undertake theological reflection in a rural church context. The practicum enables the student to integrate their theology and ministry learning with an experience of “hands on” rural ministry. This offers students a significant context for their theological and ministry

reflection through first hand experience of rural conditions and issues. Students are placed in parishes with a suitably qualified and professional minister/priest and with a guided supervised ministry project to focus their reflection.

### Assessment

	Type of assessment	No of words	Weighting %	Due date	Learning Outcomes covered
1	Seminar paper	750	10%	Weeks 2-9	1, 2
2	Folio of Reflections	1500	25%	Week 12	1, 2, 3
3	Project Report	2500	65%	Week 14	1, 2, 3, 4

### Notes on Assessment

- Item 1 Will develop the student's knowledge of the issues confronting rural communities and churches.
- Item 2 Will develop the student's ability to engage in reflective practice within the Church and community, to make evaluative opinions and reflect critically on the justification for such decisions, by applying such insights to a particular church issue or context.
- Item 3 Will develop the student's ability to apply critical reasoning to issues through independent thought and informed judgement; to identify problems, create solutions, innovate and improve current practices; and to develop a strategy for a specific ministry within a specific context.

### Bibliography

#### Textbooks

Gray, I & GA Lawrence. *A Future for Regional Australia*. Cambridge: CUP, 2001.  
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#### Recommended

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 Greenwood, Robin. *Transforming Church: Liberating Structures for Ministry*. London: SPCK, 2002.  
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 Zabriskie, Stewart C. *Total Ministry: Reclaiming the Ministry of All God's People*. New York: Alban Institute, 1999.

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Alston, Margaret. *Women on the Land*. Sydney: University of NSW Press, 1995.  
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- Parsons, George & Speed B Lees. *Understanding Your Congregation as a System*. New York: Alban Institute, 1993.
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- Sturme, Ruth & Helen Edwards (eds). *The survival skills training package*. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health, February 1991.
- Van de Weyer, Robert. *The Country Church: A guide for the renewal of rural Christianity*. Darton, Longman & Todd, 1991.
- Willimon, William H & Robert L Wilson. *Preaching and Worship in the Small Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.

### References – Journals and other readings

- Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University. "Communication and Culture in Rural Areas". *Key Paper Series* No 4, 1995.
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<http://www.diocese.oregon.org/programgroups/totmin.htm>
- Total Ministry Home Page <http://www.todmaffin.com/june/totalmin/>
- Total Ministry in the Episcopal Church <http://www.ecusa.anglicanb.org./ministry/total.htm>
- The Arthur Rank Centre, UK <http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/arc3/>