

HOPE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Seeds of Prayer

The seasons

In May, Creation breaks out in a glorious effusion of growth, colour, scent and sound. May is also the month of Pentecost, the feast of the "first fruits of the wheat harvest" (Exodus 34:22), when the Holy Spirit came upon the first disciples and the Church was born (Acts 2). As we join in the praise of all Creation (Psalm 145:10) and celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, *give thanks to the Lord who sends His Spirit "to renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30) and to give us power to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8).*

*"All Your works shall praise You,
O Lord, and Your saints
shall bless You."*

Psalm 145: 10.

Current issue

The political scene for farmers is even more unpredictable than the weather. A recent government paper, 'Health and harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit' proposes an 'agricultural transition' during which direct payments to farmers will be phased out, but with no suggestion of improved prices to replace lost income. This is, "a huge opportunity for UK agriculture to improve its competitiveness" - words that will invite cynicism and intensify apprehension for many farmers. *Pray for our farmers to put their hope in the Lord (Jer 14: 22).*

Farming and the land

After the prolonged cold and wet, an abrupt change in the weather took us from winter to summer in a day. Though welcome, it could herald yet more serious issues for farmers. Crop roots that have grown accustomed to a surfeit of surface water cannot quickly adjust to a rapidly dropping water table. And the sudden change has brought on an almost panic level of activity on the land for the Spring catch up. *Pray that the Lord would keep farmers safe as they work long hours to get the work done (Ps 72: 16).*

Rural life

Recent figures reveal a sharp rise in rural crime, prompting NFU Mutual, a major rural insurer, to issue a warning to farmers and country dwellers to increase security. *Pray for both the victims and the perpetrators of crime, and for peace and protection for all who live in the countryside. Pray that many come to know that, ultimately, it is the Lord who makes them dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8).*

Church and mission

This month will see hundreds of churches and individual Christians taking part in 'Thy Kingdom Come', praying for the empowering of the Holy Spirit that many will come to faith in Jesus Christ. Now in its third year, what started out as a simple call to prayer from the Church of England has blossomed into an international ecumenical prayer movement. "Our heart is to see every church across the land take part, no matter how big or small, from Ascension Day to Pentecost 10 - 20 May" (www.thykingdomcome.global). As many rural churches and chapels will be open for prayer meetings and services, let us join in and *pray for people across rural Britain to come to know Jesus and for every rural community to be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2: 32).*

*Almighty God,
Your ascended Son has sent us into the world
to preach the good news of Your kingdom:
inspire us with Your Spirit
and fill our hearts with the fire of Your love,
that all who hear Your Word
may be drawn to You,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

(Thy Kingdom Come prayer for 2018)

'Hope for the Countryside' is a partnership between Agricultural Christian Fellowship, Village Hope, the World Prayer Centre and Top Barn Trust. Our aim is to mobilise and resource prayer for rural Britain. Our vision is of beacons of prayer lighting up across our countryside. Our prayer is for a fresh move of the Holy Spirit across the countryside of our nation.

'Seeds of prayer' is offered as a resource for prayer for individuals and prayer groups and for use in church services and other meetings. If you have found the 'seeds' helpful and inspiring or would like to feed back your own insights and prayers then we would be very happy to hear from you.

