

# HOPE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

## Seeds of Prayer

### The seasons

February, the last month of winter and the shortest month of the year, is usually also the coldest. But, with the lengthening of daylight, the early flowers such as snowdrops, aconites and daffodils, release hope for what is to come. *Give thanks for God's faithfulness to us and to His world: 'As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease' (Genesis 8:22). Truly, 'the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want' (Psalm 23:1).*

### Current issue

In February, the Brexit debate will no doubt become even more heated and the many different voices even louder. In rural areas, farmers especially are anxious for the future under whatever 'deal' is finally agreed. Across the nation there is fear of increasing division and unrest. Pray for all in authority (**1 Timothy 2:1-2**), declaring that the 'Lord reigns.. high above all' (**Psalm 99:1-2**), that 'He will be exalted among the nations' (**Psalm 46:10**) and that 'He stills .. the tumult of the peoples' (**Psalm 65:7**).

Guide our prayers for those in power,  
Lead us through this crucial hour,  
Grant them wisdom from above,  
Show Your mercy and Your love.  
Humble us, Your people here,  
Our repentance reach Your ear,  
Through this land Your kingdom  
come,  
In our day Your will be done.

### Farming and the land

'We have safe, nutritious, affordable food in abundance because of the hard work, enterprise, and commitment of our farmers.' So said our Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Farmers are further charged with the huge responsibility of caring for our precious environment, with its variety and beauty of wildlife. And now, in midwinter, to add to this our farmers are dealing with the legacy of an extraordinary season. Crop yields and grass production were down, meaning that, about now, many livestock producers are running low on feed stocks, and short supply means higher prices of bought-in fodder. *Praise God for his amazing supply in the midst of every situation. Pray for those in stressful circumstances on the land, that they may know the Lord's provision, but above all that they may turn to God our Father, who is our Provider and the Giver of every good gift (James 1:17), and to the Lord Jesus Christ, 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians 2:3) and through whom is 'salvation and the forgiveness of sins' (Luke 1:77).*

### Rural life

Poverty and deprivation are seen primarily as urban problems, but DEFRA reports that 16% of rural households were in relative income poverty in 2017. Low-income households in rural areas struggle with poorer access to lower-cost supermarkets, higher transport and heating costs and low-paid, seasonal employment. About 17% of the population is rural, but 28% of food banks are located in rural areas. *Pray for policy makers in national and local government as they seek to address these issues, and for rural Christians to 'remember the poor' (Galatians 2:10) and 'reach out their hands to the needy' (Proverbs 31:20).*

### Church and mission

Church buildings are both an asset and a liability. There can be as many as seven times more church buildings per capita in rural areas than in urban areas. But there are fewer people in them and many struggle to stay open, well-maintained and (at this time of year) warm. Yet, some rural churches have found creative new ways to use their buildings to reach out to their communities. *Pray that the Lord will give rural believers a right attitude to church buildings, that they will be houses of joyful prayer for all (Isaiah 56:7; Mark 11: 17), and will be used rightly in His service and to advance His Kingdom.*

'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.

