

HOPE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Seeds of Prayer

Beacons of prayer

Earlier this month, we held two online prayer gatherings (bit.ly/hcNov20). The themes in this special issue of Seeds arise from these. The gatherings took place around Bonfire Night. With the usual community bonfire events cancelled, many families lit bonfires at home instead. Likewise, as congregations are unable to meet, so the context of fellowship has shifted to homes and families. *Pray for the fire of the Holy Spirit to ignite beacons of prayer in hearts, homes and households across the nation.*

*Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.
(James Montgomery)*

The earth is the Lord's

'Earth' is the essence of the countryside. Its economy relies on a thin, delicate layer of topsoil, teeming with life. Its beauty is shaped by diverse landforms and soils, and the vegetation that grows on them. *Pray for those farmers who are working to restore soils that have been eroded and impoverished (Isaiah 49:8). Pray that those who go to the countryside to enjoy the beauty of God's creation, will be led to their Creator and Redeemer. As more and more land is built on, pray that green spaces will be preserved as places of peace and closeness to God (Romans 1:20). Pray that we will be better stewards of the earth, which is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1).*

Agriculture Act 2020

Hidden by other news, the Agriculture Bill 2020 (bit.ly/agbill20) has been bouncing between the Commons and the Lords for several months, but has now been finalised and received royal assent. The good news is that Lord Curry's amendment, the setting up of a Trade and Agriculture Commission, has been included. Its purpose is to protect the UK's higher standards of environmental protection, animal welfare and food quality in farming and food production against imports produced to lower standards. Thank the Lord for godly intervention and *pray for our government and for those who work in our food industry* (1 Timothy 2:1-4). The new legislation will bring substantial change in how farming and food production are supported; *pray for our farmers as they adapt* (Isaiah 28:24-29).

Triumph of hope

Sadly, some rural chaplains report that recent months have seen an increase in levels of stress and tragically in suicides, especially amongst younger farmers. A difficult farming year and harvest, the impact of the pandemic, TB and increasing risk of avian 'flu, with the uncertainties of Brexit have added to often isolated working and living conditions leaving people stressed, vulnerable and feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. *Pray for the work of chaplains and all those ministering to farming communities and families; pray for protection and healing and that they would be found by the Good Shepherd and come to know the love, light and hope of Jesus Christ* (Luke 4:18).

Hearts set on pilgrimage

In these days, as security and expectations continue to be shaken, with people once more locked down, many are coming to the countryside for space, exercise or peace; to breathe the air and behold the beauty of creation. Some come for a day, some for a new life; often they are asking profound questions and seeking a deeper and more spiritual meaning and purpose. Many may walk in the hills, coming up higher. Knowingly or not, they are on a pilgrimage, physically and spiritually (Psalm 84:5). Who it is who meets and welcomes them first may change the course of their lives, in this world and the next. *Lord, Your word says you will show us the paths and steps to take. You can give us a meeting point when you have desired it. Equip us and make us ready and available to witness to those you are sending to us* (1 Peter 3:15).

'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 a resource for prayer for individuals, groups, church services and other meetings. If this is helpful and inspiring or you would like to feed back your own insights and prayers then we would be very happy to hear from you.

