



## I know who holds the future

In gardens and fields we see both death and new life. Some old familiar trees have fallen but already in their shadow new growth is pushing through. Moving into a New Year gives an opportunity to pause and reflect. A *selah* moment to weigh events and encounters of the last year and consider the road ahead. Goodbyes may need to be said to familiar places and regimes, or even to loved ones no longer with us but whom we leave safe in the Father's hands. Recalling the Lord's provision and presence even in the most difficult of circumstances we can turn to face the future, however unknown, with faith and confidence. For Jehovah *Selah* is also 'the Lord my rock', who gives us constant stability, a sure foundation and security in everything. ([Psalm 18:2](#); [1 Peter 2: 4-6](#)). *Praise God for all His faithfulness and pray that we might seek His face, know His guidance and walk the narrow road He has set before us in 2022.*

*"Seek the Lord all you humble of the land, who do His commands; seek righteousness, seek humility." (Zephania 2:3).*

## Church and mission

Nature teaches us that every new season is affected by the previous season and builds on whatever was good or bad, often adapting accordingly. As we begin a new year (season) we have the opportunity to learn from and build upon last year. *Father, help us this year to build upon what we learned last year, the good and the bad, and help us step into all the mission opportunities you grant us.*

Hope Countryside (originally Hope for the Countryside) is a partnership including Agricultural Christian Fellowship, Village Hope, the World Prayer Centre, Top Barn Trust and others. 'Hope Countryside' expresses our growing vision of beacons of prayer lighting up across rural Britain, bringing hope both to the countryside and from the countryside to the whole of the nation. Our aim is to promote understanding of, and prayer for, rural life and communities, church and mission, and farming and the land.

## Farming and the land

The long awaited 'Sustainable Farming Incentive' has now been published and this year will see the beginning of the roll out. Under the old basic payment scheme farmers were recognised as food producers, but benefitting from agri-environmental schemes as add-ons. This is now replaced with a patchwork of environmental incentives but with no attempt to maintain national food security. Farmers' concerns have recently been somewhat masked by generally buoyant prices but, as we all know, that can change very quickly. The prophet Amos was a herdsman ([Amos 1:1, 7:15-15](#)), called from the fields to speak against the prosperous and indulgent elite whose religion was a formality and their unjust ways oppressive. *We pray for a prophetic voice from the countryside to bring our nation back to the fear of the Lord and to Biblical principles of managing the land.*

## Hope for young people

In *The Lakes with Simon Reeves* the presenter meets people living, working and visiting various locations in Cumbria, from high on the fells to the rivers, flood plains and urban settings. In one episode he meets a young man (19) with the help of just two friends is running the family farm following the tragic death of both parents. Meanwhile at Brathay young people from an impoverished coastal town, with little to do, few expectations or encouragements, together find new abilities and achievement learning to sail, navigate and work as a team. *Give thanks for the inspiration and example these young people demonstrate. Pray others find purpose, healing and hope through engagement with the land and rural life, a growing understanding and respect among the younger generation from town and country, investment for young people in farming and rural communities, and Christ-centred leadership and initiatives and Christian fellowship for young people in isolated areas. (1 Tim 4:12; Phil 4: 6&7; 1 John 2:14, Psalm 16:3).*

## The voice of God in a great storm

Many eyes and ears were turned towards Glasgow and COP26 as nation's leaders gathered to take counsel, of one another. ([Psalm 2:2](#)). One commitment made was to combat de-forestation and plant millions of trees. Then on 25 November Storm Arwen hit and chaos ensued. Millions of trees were up-rooted and winds of 100mph flattened conifers like dominoes. Haddo House, Aberdeen, alone lost over 100,000 trees overnight. Oak trees flew through the air and the tallest redwood in Wales, the 51m "Champion" was brought down. In such a storm the psalmist recognised the voice and the power of God. ([Psalm 29: 5, 9 & 11](#)). *Lord gives us discernment and wisdom to truly hear and understand what you are saying to us, (Matt 3:10), and in the midst of all storms, physical and spiritual, please bless us with your peace!*

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