

HOPE COUNTRYSIDE

Seeds of Prayer

A season of contrasts

October brings its own special light and colours. Trees display their autumn finery in brilliant colours, and branches are laden with berries, fruits and nuts. Autumn sun illuminates trees and hedgerows against darkening and cloudy skies, the contrast making the colours even more striking. The leaves of the trees die and fall to the ground, and nature prepares for its 'winter sleep', but with the promise of spring beyond. The fruits of the hedgerow provide food now, but also carry within them the promise of new life to come. At the end of the month, the clocks change and the night arrives sooner and seems darker. But Jesus, the Light of the World, shines in every season and gives us full assurance of resurrection and eternal life to come. Against the darkness, the light is even brighter. *As the days darken, give thanks that Jesus, the true Light, has overcome the darkness, triumphed over sin, death and the devil, and opened the way to everlasting life (John 12:46; 1 Corinthians 15:66).*

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5). I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12).

Webinar - BOOK NOW

Countryside at the crossroads - an ABC of agricultural change. A joint Agricultural Christian Fellowship and Village Hope webinar to explore, from a Christian perspective, three critical issues that will shape the future of farming, the countryside and rural life. Saturday 30 October 2021, 10.00-15.30. For more details and to register, go to acfvhbc.eventbrite.co.uk.

All good gifts...

We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land, but it is fed and watered by God's Almighty hand. These familiar words remind us that while we must work in order to eat, it is God who causes the seed to sprout and grow (Psalms 65:9; 104:14; 147:8). Empty supermarket shelves and fears of food shortages (bit.ly/times249; bit.ly/bbc100921) remind us of the fragility of our food system, our connection and reliance on people in other parts of the world, and, ultimately, our dependence on the Lord. *Pray for a renewed sense of gratitude to our loving Heavenly Father, from whom all good gifts come (James 1:17). Pray that we will be alert to the needs of the poor and vulnerable, close to us and in many other places in the world (Isaiah 58:6-10).*

UN Climate Change Conference (COP26)

In the first two weeks of November, leaders from 197 nations will assemble in Glasgow to decide what to do about 'climate change' (ukcop26.org). Although contested, the global climate change 'consensus' is prompting policies that will deeply impact every aspect of life across the whole world, including farming and the countryside. We are called to care for God's earth (Genesis 2:15), and Christians need to be at the forefront of this. But we also pollute and destroy the earth (Isaiah 24:5; Hosea 4:1-3; Revelation 11:17-8). Science helps us understand how we have affected the earth, but we are not to 'follow the science'; rather we are to follow the Lord and be guided by His Spirit and His word. *Pray that we will understand both the times and the will of the Lord (Matthew 16:1-4; Ephesians 5:17). In the face of complex and multiple agendas, pray for prophetic discernment of 'God's hidden counsel behind visible states of affairs' (bit.ly/jcprovidence) and clear directions for prayer and action in accordance with His will and His Kingdom. As the 'kings of the earth take counsel together', pray that they will know that "they are but men" (Psalm 9:19-20) and that God's sovereign purposes will prevail (Proverbs 19:21; Isaiah 66:18).* [To watch Peter Carruthers' recent seminar on 'God & Climate Change', go to bit.ly/godclimatechange.]

The Good Shepherd

At the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in September, the Bible Society's 'Psalm 23 Garden' attracted much attention (bit.ly/bspsalm23). Many were touched by the garden, by the Psalm that inspired it, and by the Good Shepherd Himself: "I suffer from paranoid schizophrenia, I saw the garden and wanted to pray there, I've got a deep faith in God now, it's helping with the anxiety and voices", said one visitor (bit.ly/bs23josh). Others are now creating Psalm 23 gardens in their localities. *As individuals, schools and communities read the Psalm and plan their own gardens, pray that they will hear the Lord speaking and come to know Him as their shepherd and dwell with Him for ever. As nature and gardens attract so many different spiritualities and therapies, pray that the Lord will lead people to create gardens inspired by His Spirit that will truly restore souls.*