

HOPE COUNTRYSIDE

Seeds of Prayer

Hope renewed

With the onset of April bringing increased daylight and rising temperatures, nature's barrenness is transformed as leaves unfurl, flowers bloom and new life in bird, fish and animal arrives. An invitation perhaps for us to pause and give thanks for the gift of hope and new life, both to ourselves and our hurting world, made possible through Jesus' death and resurrection. "We do not live by what is possessed, but by what is promised" (Walter Brueggemann).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you. (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Hope for Ukraine

In the midst of the horror it is good to give thanks: for the wave of prayer that has arisen across Europe and globally to see God's protection, deliverance, provision and miracles (attested to by those in Ukraine in the past weeks); for the courage of the Ukrainian Church; for farmers going out in convoy to sow spring seeds (likely to be sunflower for oil); for those welcoming refugees; for those who are finding faith in Jesus. [The sunflower is Ukraine's national flower and a powerful symbol of hope (bit.ly/helihope)!] There is much to contend for too, as we press in to see God's purposes and plans worked out in every nation involved in this conflict. "The counsel of the Lord stands forever; the plans of His heart to all generations" ([Psalm 33:11](#)).

Hope restored

'I will never betray you', Peter declared at the Last Supper. And indeed he stayed close to Jesus all through his arrest and trial, albeit in the shadows. Yet, before the cock crowed he had denied Jesus three times ([John 13:37; 18:15-27](#)). Knowing this secret he had to watch and wait three agonising days with the other disciples, sharing their anxiety and sorrow. No wonder he ran to the garden on the third day when Mary brought the news that the tomb was empty; the beginning of hope restored. Back on the shores of Galilee where he had first met Jesus, he is embraced, forgiven and recommissioned ([John 21:16-19](#)). *Pray for any feeling disqualified or who have lost their way with Jesus, or are facing the sifting Satan demands of us all (Luke 22:31). May they know His love, understanding and restoration to the hope eternal and the call to run the race and fight the good fight once again (2 Timothy 4:7-8; Psalm 51:10-12).*

Hope in rural mission

Spring has arrived a few weeks early for many this year. Dancing flower heads of the daffodils remind us of our heavenly Father's provision in and through all seasons of our lives ([Matthew 6:28](#)). Emerging from winter and the pandemic, remember that prayer changes things! If we feel inadequate to pray, simply ask Him for help like the disciples ([Luke 11:1-13](#)). We can be assured we are not alone and will not be overcome. The resources of heaven are at our disposal. Jesus demonstrated what it means to live in the world, being with people in and through the most difficult circumstances ([John 16: 33](#)). God has a plan and purpose for our rural communities. *Pray to seek Him hand in hand, conversation by conversation, encounter by encounter for what this looks like practically and how we must partner with Him in all He has for us as we journey on, grounded in the hope, grace and love of the one who sends and equips us.*

Hope for schools

Christian school's work is a great way to bring the good news from the Bible to children who do not hear it anywhere else. Whilst every day we face the sadness of meeting children in our communities who know nothing of the gospel, there are grounds for hope. Hope in the continued openness of schools to Christian workers and the openness of children to the message they hear. *Pray for all engaged in this work, from small local groups to national ministries, that God would bless and resource this work; that schools will remain open to Christian work in our increasingly secular culture and that children would be given the chance to be taught what is "true, right and noble" (Philippians 4:8). Pray that God would draw us to the commitment to "open our mouths in parables ... to tell the next generation, the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power and the wonders He has done" (Psalm 78:2-4).*