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May 2022

HOPE COUNTRYSIDE

Seeds of Prayer

The seasons

It is wonderful to see spring flowers, ewes and lambs enjoying the sunshine. The morning chorus is growing louder and earlier each day. Garden centres are replete with plants of every colour, enticing us to restock borders and hanging baskets as we welcome warmer and longer days. But look a little closer; all is not quite as happy as may first seem. Many trees have fewer leaves than before, the blossom is not so abundant and dead and dying trees stand out starkly against the greenery. Oaks and hawthorns that have stood for decades, even centuries, are bare and some holly is no longer evergreen. Spring is here, but so is the evidence of the ravages of drought and strong winds. *Praise God for His assurance that those who remain faithfully trusting in Him will not only stand but flourish and be at peace when the heat comes, continually yielding fruit (Jeremiah 17:7-8).*

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke and exhort, with complete patience and understanding" (2 Timothy 4:2).

'Hope for the earth'

Saturday, 2 July; 10.00 - 18.00

Southfields Farm, Coleshill, B46 3EJ

Agricultural Christian Fellowship invites you to a 'day on the farm', hosted by John & Betty Plumb. Come and share in fellowship, prayer and worship, presentations and workshops, children's activities, a picnic and a farm walk, as we explore the biblical theme of 'hope for the earth'.

Find more details and register at acfdayonfarm.eventbrite.co.uk

The land mourns

Those closest to the land often have a special sensitivity to shifts in seasons, the atmosphere and ground beneath our feet, as creation responds to changing conditions. Many biblical prophets had an affinity with the countryside, identifying the faithfulness or wickedness of the people as being reflected in weather, growth, health and harvest gathered. When the people sinned, land, rivers and seas suffered, whether by natural disaster or invasion, as did all that depended on these for life (Hosea 4:1-6; Joel 1:9-12). Those same prophets could be describing our own nation today; we face perilous times. The remedy is also the same: deep conviction, rending of hearts, and repentance from all wickedness and returning wholeheartedly to the Way of the Lord (Joel 2:12-14; Hosea 12:6; Isaiah 57:14-15; 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 6:16). *Pray for a deep conviction among the people of God and for the prophets of the land to find their voice and lead in true repentance to the Lord in word and deed.*

Take courage

Through Haggai the Lord spoke to Zerubbabel, Joshua and the remnant people highlighting their desperate plight. Despite hard work, they have harvested little, never having enough to eat or drink. They are clothed, but cannot keep warm and wages earned disappear. With worse to come (Haggai 1:1-11). Sounds familiar? The cause. They have built for themselves instead of prioritising the house of the Lord. But stirred up within a few days they begin the work. When disheartened the Lord encourages them. "Take courage all you people of the land...for I am with you...I will fill this house with splendour" (Haggai 2:3-7). *Praise God for many creative ways people are finding to worship and reach out to others in rural communities. Pray for 'the people of the land' to be stirred up and encouraged to prioritise and persist in building the house of the Lord through worship and prayer, teaching and testimony, as they themselves are also being built into His holy dwelling place" (2 Peter 2:4-10; 1 Corinthians 14:26).*

Mercy and compassion

In the challenges facing our nation farmers are often on the front line producing food whilst battling pressures from all directions, whilst our poor and vulnerable struggle to feed and clothe themselves. *Pray for leaders like Joseph to rise up, nationally and within local communities, with Godly reverence and wisdom; for all working on the land, policy makers and budget holders, to be open to change, to make the right maybe radical decisions and listen and communicate well; for pastoral support for farmers, workers and families; for new creative local food supply networks reducing waste; for miracles of provision feedign the hungry and giving glory to God; sharing of food and drink to be channels of spiritual refreshment for those hungry and thirsty; for an end to a famine of hearing the words of God (Amos 8:11; Psalm 85).*

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.

'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.