

Scattering good seed

Several of Jesus' parables liken the preaching of the Gospel to the scattering of seeds, which sprout and bear fruit in due time. Our May online gatherings showed how the word of God has been scattered throughout our countryside and that shoots are sprouting up in all sorts of places. Believers are building relationships and community centred around the good news of Jesus Christ. People of all ages are asking questions, seeking a deeper and truer meaning to life. Christians have been prepared over time, often unbeknown to them, for the people and places to which the Lord has sent them. These may be a pub, a lunch for older residents, an after-school club, a quiet garden, a bible reading group or a new church thriving in a barn through the hospitality of a farmer. *Pray for the seeds sown, and for eyes to see what the Lord has been doing, where the seed is sprouting and where the fruit of the gospel is ripening to harvest. Pray for 'fruit pickers', safe and strong nurturing discipleship for new believers, and a growing connection across those ministering Christ in whatever way throughout rural Britain.*

A summer of opportunity

Throughout the summer, across the nation, thousands of people will attend country fairs and agricultural shows (bit.ly/cagshows; bit.ly/lbbshows). These provide great opportunities to celebrate farming, food and the land and 'Britain's rural culture', display skill, craftsmanship and artistry, and bring town and country and young and old together. They are also opportunities to give thanks and enjoy the divers bounties the Lord has blessed us with in this land. At many, there will be a strong Christian presence, including through services, church hospitality tents, chaplaincies and outreach ministries, and opportunities to offer prayer. Give thanks for these occasions. *Pray for the witness of local churches, rural chaplaincies and organisations such as Farming Christian Link (<https://bit.ly/fclshows>). Pray that, as people enjoy the gifts of Creation they will turn their hearts to Creator Himself.*

From farm to fork

Food prices in the UK (and across the world) are rocketing. At the same time, farmers face rising operating costs and diminishing returns, with some products (like eggs) being sold at a loss. In response, on 16 May, the Prime Minister met delegates from the whole UK food supply chain for a 'Farm to Fork Summit' (bit.ly/vloftf). Ahead of the Summit, government "confirmed a range of measures to help strengthen the long-term resilience and sustainability of the sector and provide greater stability for farmers following a difficult period caused by global challenges" (bit.ly/defrafft). After the event, DEFRA announced further measures to strengthen innovation, mobilise labour, boost exports, increase energy and water security and cut red tape (bit.ly/defrafftmore). *Pray for producers, consumers and policy makers, as they are both affected by, yet also influence, the food-supply situation. Pray for those in authority to 'do justice', especially for the 'poor and needy' (Psalm 72; Micah 6:8). Pray that, in straitened times, people will seek God and find Him (Acts 17:27). Pray for God's people to understand these matters in the light of God's word (eg Hosea 4:1-11; Haggai 1:1-11; Revelation 6:5-6) and know how to pray and act.*

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.

"I am the resurrection"

The message proclaimed by Peter and the other disciples on the Day of Pentecost uncompromisingly focuses on the unstoppable resurrection of Jesus, an event unique to the Christian faith. Pagans and others have stories of rebirth, but only for a while. We often draw parallels between the new life we see springing up in fields, forests and hedgerows and Jesus' resurrection. But this, whilst joyful, is only temporary, part of a cycle of life, decay, death and rebirth. Not so the resurrection life of Jesus, which sees no decrease or end. The disciples insisted on this message, praying for boldness to continue preaching in the face of opposition (Acts 4:23-31). Through this preaching, together with the quality of life among the believers, the Lord "added daily to the numbers being saved" (Acts 2:32-47). *Give thanks that Jesus rose "never to die again" (Romans 6:9) and for the assurance of resurrection for all who belong to Him' (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)*

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders and signs ... you crucified ... but God raised him up, having freed him from death because it was impossible for him to be held in its power" (Acts 1:22-24).

A 'movement of hope' in rural Britain.

10 am - 4 pm, Saturday 1 July, 2023.
Southfields Farm, Coleshill, B46 3EJ.

A 'day on the farm' hosted by John & Betty Plumb. Come and be inspired, encourage others and share in fellowship, prayer, worship and workshops as we look towards a movement of gospel hope growing across the countryside. Bring your own picnic. More details and booking at hcdagonfarm.eventbrite.co.uk.