

Harvest festivals

Following the 'summer recess', we enter another 'festive season' in the biblical calendar. This year, Yom Teruah (Feast of Trumpets) (also known as the 'Head of the Year', Rosh Hashanah), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), and Succoth (Feast of Tabernacles) all fall in October. Tabernacles is also known as the Feast of Ingathering ([Exodus 23:13](#)), because it celebrates the year's final harvest.

As with the four spring festivals, these mark out the agricultural year, prompting both thanksgiving for the Lord's provision in the past year and prayer for His blessing on the year to come. They are "feasts of the Lord, holy convocations" ([Leviticus 23:1](#)), reminders that He is the Lord of time and calls us to set apart special times to turn our hearts to Him in worship, repentance and prayer.

Give thanks for the Lord's provision and blessing this year. Mindful that these festivals are the feasts of Israel, "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" ([Psalm 122:6-9](#)), for God's ancient people the Jews, and for Christians in Israel, Gaza and the region at this time.

The festivals are also prophetic and eschatological. As the spring festivals recapitulate Jesus' first coming, so the autumn festivals anticipate His return. 'Trumpets' looks to the coming of Jesus, the rising up of believers, the releasing of God's judgements and the coming of His Kingdom. 'Atonement' is fulfilled by Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice for sin, by the repentance and redemption of Israel, and by the day of God's favour and vengeance. 'Tabernacles' looks forward to the Messianic Kingdom, when "every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid" ([Micah 4:4](#)).

As we ponder our turbulent times, give thanks the Lord is still working His purpose out and the time is drawing ever nearer when Jesus will return and the "earth will be filled with the glory of God" ([Habakkuk 2:14](#)).

'The harvest is plentiful'

Farming Christian Link (FCL) (bit.ly/fclx) "seeks to bring a Christian witness and help to those in farming and rural areas". Thanks to all who prayed for their planned work this summer at agricultural shows. FCL teams reached people with the Gospel at over fifty shows; thousands accepted New Testaments, gospel leaflets and other literature, and hundreds of gospel conversations took place, particularly with younger people. FCL was very encouraged by the number of people who said they were reading the New Testaments or had been helped by literature provided at other shows this or last year.

Give thanks for answered prayers, for the Lord's presence and goodness in all these conversations and for His prospering His work at these shows. Pray that He will water and give growth to the many seeds sown.

'Sending labourers to His harvest'

Rural Missions (RM) (bit.ly/rumiss) supports rural churches in their outreach to their local communities, through consultations, online mission forums and resources. Thanks to all who prayed for RM in response to summer's Seeds.

Pray for their two new team members, and their work to develop local networks to support those involved in rural ministry ([1 Thessalonians 5:11](#)). A new series of videos presents the Gospel through object lessons from the farm; pray that these will be taken up by many schools and churches and prompt many to consider the truths of the Gospel. Pray for the next 'online forum' in October and for the RM team as they come alongside rural churches in Derbyshire in November for a 'tailored mission weekend'.

News & events

Team meeting

On 4 November, the Hope Countryside Team will meet in-person to pray and plan our programme for 2025.

Pray that the Lord will lead, guide, inspire and strengthen us, and for clarity and unity of vision and strategy.

New website

We recently launched a new Hope Countryside 'Substack' website (hopecountryside.substack.com). Our aim is to make this the 'one-stop-shop' for 'all matters Hope Countryside'.

Seeds of Prayer will be published online here (with a link to a downloadable PDF), as will notices of upcoming online and in-person events. In the coming months, we shall also transfer content from the old site and upload new articles and other material.

Visit hopecountryside.substack.com.
Subscribe (bit.ly/hcsubsub), so you can receive Seeds, and other content, as soon as it is published.

Hope Countryside is a partnership including Village Hope, Agricultural Christian Fellowship, the World Prayer Centre 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.

'You have sown much.. but harvested little'

This year's harvest must go down as the most disappointing for a generation. Some areas fared worse than others. A waterlogged winter followed by a late spring damaged or destroyed many autumn sown crops. Some land was replanted, but many fields were given over to non-food use under the new Sustainable Farming Incentive (bit.ly/sfguide). This combination of events means that UK cereal production will be greatly reduced, and our dependence on imports increased. Nevertheless, the Lord calls us to be 'thankful in everything' and 'anxious for nothing' ([1 Thessalonians 5:18](#); [Philippians 4:6-7](#)) (bit.ly/vlojwthanks). As followers of Jesus we hold to the hope that God will use every sad or tragic event to bless and build His people.

Give thanks, therefore, for this year's harvest. Pray for people in those parts of Africa where drought and other factors mean there has been no harvest at all and where without help people will starve (bit.ly/eaharvest). Pray that all who work the land will find the God of hope.

'Setting the captives free'

Modern slavery in rural areas is often hidden in remote locations. Some are aware of exploitation in agricultural and horticultural businesses, especially of migrant workers. But every form of modern slavery is possible in rural areas: forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and 'county lines' (bit.ly/coulines).

Sexual exploitation is happening in remote rural areas. Victims are trafficked to temporary 'pop-up' brothels, which take over holiday lets, often during the off-season, keeping women against their will and selling their services on-line.

'County lines' involves organised criminal gangs coercing vulnerable children and young people to act as mules to run drugs into rural areas. Mobile phones (the 'lines') are used to control a young person delivering drugs, outside their home county. To aid their expansion into rural areas gangs also take over houses of vulnerable people as bases for their activities.

Ask God for forgiveness when we have allowed these deeds to continue. Pray for healing for victims and for cleansing of our land and communities ([Isaiah 24:5](#)). Pray for greater understanding and exposure of these things in rural Britain, and protection of all potential victims, old and young. Pray against fear and intimidation and for good partnerships amongst police, churches and members of local communities. Pray for the National Rural Crime Unit and the Clewer Initiative (bit.ly/clewer).

'Remember your creator in the days of your youth'

As a boy, Samuel responded to the voice of the Lord when "the word of the Lord was rare" but "the lamp of God had not yet gone out" ([1 Samuel 3:1-3](#) & [10](#)), thus beginning a spiritual revival in the nation. As a young man, Daniel with his friends was taken captive to Babylon. Sent to the highest place of privilege and education he "resolved not to defile himself with royal rations of food and wine", sacrificed to pagan idols ([Daniel 1:8-17](#)). Even in the face of death they retained their resolve not to bow the knee to any but the living God. So God blessed Daniel with wisdom and knowledge beyond human capacity, winning favour with the king and jealousy from his peers practicing the occult.

This summer our countryside and coast have hosted thousands of young people on Christian camps and beach missions hearing the gospel, learning more of the love of Jesus, studying scripture and praying whilst enjoying fun and fellowship around camp fires, on beaches and under canvas. These weeks are highlights in their year and profound times in their lives deepening foundations of faith and understanding.

Give thanks for all Christ-centred holidays, the dedication of the volunteer teams leading them and the landowners who welcomed them. Pray for children and young people as they return to school, college or go on to university, that they may remain strong in their faith, be encouraged and able to continue in good fellowship and shine like stars in the darkness amongst their peers and academic staff.

'The beasts of the field will be taken away'

England and Wales have 25-year eradication policies for bovine TB (bTB), ending in 2038 and 2041 respectively. Scotland is still officially bTB free. In England, for the last 10 years, culling badgers to control their population density has been a major component of the eradication strategy, and is believed to have contributed to a downturn in disease prevalence (bit.ly/deccull; bit.ly/bcvatbfm). In August, the government announced a new strategy for England (bit.ly/btbnew): badger culling will be phased out over the next five years, "badgers will be vaccinated instead of killed, and work to develop a separate livestock vaccine will be stepped up" (bbc.in/4d4ISBL). Wales has not employed mass culling of badgers and in 2021 ended all culling.

Pray for scientists and policy makers to have the wisdom, integrity and courage to give sound advice and make good decisions. Pray for affected farmers to work constructively with regulators, when there is little business incentive to do so and much personal inconvenience and frustration to endure. Pray for the healing of our society, in which the control policies for this disease have exacerbated the divisions between livestock farmers and farming interests and those concerned about wildlife conservation and animal welfare (bit.ly/hcnjtb).

Livestock disease epidemics are part of a fallen world, exacerbated by the direct (eg over-exploitation of natural resources and domestic animals) and indirect (ie the 'moral conduit' - [Hosea 4:1-3](#)) actions of sinful humanity.

Pray for greater understanding among believers of both the scientific and the moral, spiritual and prophetic aspects of such 'plagues and pestilences', and a recognition that every calamity is a call to personal and corporate repentance and prophetic intercession (see bit.ly/vlospclion; bit.ly/vlospcreap).