

'Harvesting little'

It is now official: 2025 was the hottest summer on record. For many farmers, particularly in the Midlands, South and East, it has been a disastrous season. Last year, 2024, crops failed due to waterlogging, this year they have failed due to drought. The small amounts of rain we did get quickly evaporated in the heat. Over a large portion of the country, cereal yields have been about half of what would normally be expected, with grassland and forage production even worse. By early autumn livestock were receiving winter rations, stocks of which will become critical over this winter. But we are believing for God's provision.

Pray that farmers facing critical times will cry out to God, seeking the Lord for His provision, and receiving it with thanksgiving. Pray for understanding and wisdom as we ponder these things and for deepening trust in the Lord.

Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little.....Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

(Haggai 1:5,6,9)

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*How precious is your unfailing love, O God!
All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of you wings.
You feed them from the abundance of your own house,
Letting them drink from your river of delights.*

(Psalm 36:7-8, NLT)

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*Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines
The produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food,
The flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*

(Habakkuk 3:17-18, ESV).

'The First Hymn'

The Oxyrhynchus Hymn, discovered in 1918 on an old papyrus in the ancient Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus, and published in 1922, is believed to be the oldest Christian hymn for which we have both words and music (bit.ly/oxyhym1).

Interest in the hymn was rekindled by the release in April this year of a modern song by Chris Tomlin and Ben Fielding inspired by the hymn (bit.ly/oxytomfie). A film entitled 'The First Hymn', chronicling "the hymn's journey from its desert origins to its modern resurrection" is due to be released later this year (bit.ly/oxyrfi). (A version of the original is here - bit.ly/oxygre).

The simple words of the hymn exhort all of God's creation, visible and invisible, to join His people, in awe and worship of Him, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Below is one translation (bit.ly/oxyhym1).

*Let it be silent
Let the luminous stars not shine,
Let the winds and all the noisy rivers die down;
And as we hymn the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Let all the powers add "Amen Amen"
Empire, praise always, and glory to God,
The sole giver of good things, Amen Amen."*

Forthcoming events

Online gatherings

Wednesday 17 September 2025

7.30 - 9.00 PM

'A movement of hope in rural Britain'
Sharing stories of mission; encouraging and praying for one another.

Saturday 8 November 2025

9.00 - 10.30 AM

'Themed online prayer'. The theme for this gathering will be 'The King is in the field'. Details will be posted on the Hope Countryside substack site and circulated via our networks nearer the event.

Login for all online events:

<https://web.zoom.us/join>

Zoom meeting ID: 821 1671 9194

Passcode: 905289

'Across Britain'

January - June 2026

Between January and June 2026, the [Across Britain](#) initiative is asking Christians to go for a walk, and as they walk to pray and re-dedicate the land to God - home by home, farm by farm, street by street, declaring this land is God's land, and seeking his blessing on the places where we live. Find out more and sign up at [Across Britain](#) (bit.ly/prayacbr).

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.

Preparation and celebration

These next few months are a season of preparation and celebration. Harvest Thanksgiving services will soon be underway, when we shall give thanks to God for His provision of food from our fields and for the farmers who steward them. This will be followed by preparations for Christmas services and outreach activities, culminating in a rich variety of traditions and creativity, giving thanks to God for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. It is also the season of biblical feasts that prophetically point to Jesus' return, as we prepare ourselves for His coming and give ourselves to the work of harvesting souls (bit.ly/autumnfeasts). This is a busy time for many across farming communities and churches. Emotions will range from anxiety to excitement, and uncertainty to expectation.

Pray for farmers as they gather and sow, and for churches as they prepare and celebrate. Pray for them to remember the One who provides the seed to sow and gives growth to the harvest, and who brings light into the darkness and hope to the world. Pray that the urgency and activity of mission is not lost during this busy time.

Rural church leaders

About 10,000 (66%) of Church of England parishes are in rural areas. The rural population of England is almost 10 million (bit.ly/rurpop). So there is roughly one CoFE church per 1000 people or one church per 650 people if the estimated 4000 other churches in rural areas are included. Many church leaders/vicars are responsible for several churches, and travel long distances to lead services, as well as meeting the many different needs of those communities over which they have pastoral oversight. In addition to regular worship and prayer, parish churches play an important role in the life of rural communities, and need to raise money locally to maintain many listed buildings. Ministering in a rural context is so different from urban ministry that it is often difficult to recruit leaders with a heart for the role. Congregations are smaller, but are likely to be a larger proportion of the local population than their urban counterparts, and, therefore, can be a major influence for good in the community.

Pray in this season of spiritual awakening that the people God has called will respond and move into rural ministry, that those already in post will be built up in their faith and able to shepherd their congregations faithfully, and that more local prayer networks will arise to undergird rural mission. When you next pass a country church, take a moment to pray for its leaders. Pray for the Crown Nominations Commission as they seek to nominate a person to become the next Archbishop of Canterbury this autumn (bit.ly/abccnc).

'The King is in the field'

'Seeds' has often referenced the land crying out under the burden of sin in our nation (bit.ly/deflan; bit.ly/vlotlm). The theme of this Hebrew month of Elul (ends 22 September) is 'teshuvah' - a time to repent and return to the King who is 'in the field' (bit.ly/ofkif). We are in a time of much needed exposure of corruption, abuse and unrighteousness in many areas of public life, including the church, with more to come. We also see dark forces threatening to overwhelm our nation. There is anxiety in many hearts as in the days of Hezekiah, when Assyrian invaders mocked and intimidated Jerusalem's inhabitants and their God (2 Kings 18 & 19; 2 Chronicles 32:9-19). The word of the Lord then was a call to deep heartfelt repentance, but it was not heeded: "In that day the Lord God of hosts called to weeping and mourning, to baldness and putting on sackcloth, but instead there was joy and festivity, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating meat and drinking wine" (Isaiah 22:12,13a). When land is turned over allowing light and heat in, disease and pests are exposed. Burning stubble also used to be employed to destroy these, thus cleansing the land. John came with water baptism for repentance, but the baptism of Jesus, winnowing fork in hand, is with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11-12).

Pray for us today to have the grace to lament, repent and return and to know God's presence in our fields and his consuming fire in our hearts and our nation.

A seed falls to the ground and dies

As we met to compile this edition of Seeds, Christian speaker and pro-life campaigner Charlie Kirk was shot whilst addressing a crowd of mostly students in Utah. Then came the sickening news he had lost his life. Some only saw him as a political activist, but it was his faith in Jesus that drove him (bit.ly/ctclck). He was a fearless advocate of free speech and the importance of engaging in dialogue and reasoning with those who disagreed with his views and faith (bit.ly/ckctdr). Confronting ideologies prevalent today, often in the face of vile and abusive opposition, he remained firm, but gracious, often calming and silencing opponents, and always unashamed of Jesus, who "saved me". Following Jesus was the most important thing in his life. He was passionate to reach his generation, so often lost and confused. He knew he risked his life whenever he spoke and ultimately his blood was shed (Revelation 12:11). He used his voice and was shot in the neck, the throat (Proverbs 3:3 & 4).

As we ask the Lord to comfort his young family and those close to him, pray for many more voices to rise up to speak truth, wisdom and hope, not only on big national and international platforms, but also to those around us in our village schools and halls, local hostels or coffee shops, or over the garden gate; wherever and whenever the Lord gives the opportunity. Pray that the seed that has fallen to the ground and died may yield much fruit (John 12:24).