

Eternal spring

Spring is a 'festive' season, in both the natural world and the biblical and Christian calendars.

Meteorological spring began on 1 March; this year, astronomical spring begins on 20 March (bit.ly/whenspring). The days are lengthening and new life is emerging in hedgerow, field, farm and garden. Once again, we are reminded of the Lord's enduring love and provision for humanity. He "causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth" ([Psalm 104:14](#)). And He has promised that, "while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night, shall not cease" ([Genesis 8:22](#)).

This year Jewish Passover coincides with Christian Holy Week, starting on Palm Sunday (13 April) and ending on Easter Day (20 April). Passover, the festival of redemption, looks back at God's deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt, and forward to "Christ, our Passover, sacrificed for us" ([1 Corinthians 5:7](#)), who delivers us from sin, death and the devil (bit.ly/witg) so that we might "walk in newness of life" ([Romans 6:4](#)).

Give thanks for the beauty and joy of spring, and for the Lord's unfailing mercies and compassions that are new every morning and in every season ([Lamentations 3:22-23](#)).

Pray for all who in their hearts and lives remain in the dark and cold of 'winter'. Ask the Lord to open their eyes to the One who rose again in springtime, never more to die, and promises 'eternal spring' to all who believe in Him (bit.ly/vloets).

Farming and family

The family farm is surely our best assurance of food security, yet its value far exceeds its consumable produce (bit.ly/vlovft). Community hospitality, cultural identity and intergenerational links can thrive in that place where we work with learning and play intermingled. But this way of life has been under increasing threat, and the 'land-grab' is accelerating. Net-zero targets drive bureaucracy, which dictates land use and give rise to corporate seizure of fields that should be producing wholesome food. Land, once valued in terms of its ability to produce crops, is now worth more in terms of easier planning applications to build, to generate energy or offset carbon release elsewhere. God made the land. It is still His ([Psalm 21:1-2](#)). We are stewards, sojourners and tenants ([Leviticus 25:23-24](#)).

Give thanks to the Lord for the two great institutions of family and farming, which together form the foundation of rural life.

Pray for repentance and mercy for those mistreating the land ([Isaiah 5:8](#)), for godly understanding of these precious resources, and for the gospel to flourish on farms.

Rural crime

Last year, NFU Mutual reported that "rural crime is becoming more organised, sophisticated, and determined", with a "concerning rise in criminals targeting our farms and rural communities" (bit.ly/nfurf). Most farmers have been the victim of theft of many sorts, sometimes repeatedly. Criminals are becoming more violent, as a recent BBC report about illegal hare coursing illustrates (bit.ly/rchcvi). Victims are traumatised; many farmers are increasingly anxious and fearful.

Pray for all who have suffered criminal attacks or fear being attacked. Pray for peace in the countryside. Pray that the Lord will "deliver us from evil men and preserve us from violent men" ([Psalm 14:1](#)). "Arise, O Lord, let not man prevail" ([Psalm 9:19](#)).

Forthcoming events

COMING SOON...

Climate change, faith and farming

Themed online gathering, **Saturday 5 April, 9.00-10.30 AM**

This event will address the implications of the drive towards 'Net Zero' on farming and farmers, from a biblical and prophetic perspective.

The meeting will include input from the Hope Countryside team and guests, Q&A, listening and prayer.

Read background briefings at Village Link Online (bit.ly/vloclimchan) (check back for more content nearer the time).

All welcome. Log in below.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

Thursday, **29 May 2025**, 7.30 - 9.00 PM, 'A movement of hope', Online prayer and sharing.

Saturday, **28 June 2025**, 9.30 - 16.00, 'A day on the farm', Coleshill. DETAILS SOON.

Wednesday, **17 September 2025**, 7.30 - 9.00 PM, 'A movement of hope', Online prayer and sharing.

Saturday, **8 November 2025**, 9.00 - 10.30 AM, Themed online prayer.

Login for all online events...

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82116719194?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82116719194?pwd=cmJtem50OWg4SExPM3ozcUlveDYyQT09)

[pwd=cmJtem50OWg4SExPM3ozcUlveDYyQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82116719194?pwd=cmJtem50OWg4SExPM3ozcUlveDYyQT09)

Meeting ID: 821 1671 9194

Passcode: 905289

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.

Our common life

In the heart of Chester, by the market square, a timbered building is adorned with a statue of King Edward VII beneath a scroll inscribed with the words: "The King himself is served by the field and the profit of the earth is for all" ([Ecclesiastes 5:9](#)). It is a reminder that all benefit from, and rely upon, the bounty of the earth, town and country, high and low, under the sovereignty and kindness of the Lord. This should instil humility and a sense of responsibility in leaders, to care for the land and its people, respecting those who work it. Sadly, this is eroded through prevailing ideologies, a profound lack of understanding and a rhetoric that creates envy and distrust, amplified by anxiety over the availability, accessibility and cost of food for many in urban centres. We need to pull together. A narrative of jealousy and materialism sows seeds of fear and resentment.

Pray for repentance in attitudes towards the land ([Psalm 106:24](#)), for love, respect and peace between those who work the land and townspeople, and for the seeds of division and enmity the enemy sows to come to nothing. Pray for the Lord's 'shalom' peace, a cessation of anxiety and anger, upon those fearful about providing for loved ones and for all working to alleviate poverty and ensure that families, children and the elderly can eat well. Pray that Christian believers will be at the centre of divine reconciliation and provision in our nation, hosting tables of physical and spiritual food and hope.

The land mourns, farmers are dismayed

Last month, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) (bit.ly/clchco), the UK government's 'expert advisor on climate change', released its 'Seventh Carbon Budget' (bit.ly/ccseven). If its advice is accepted by Parliament, it will mean that 9% of England's farming land will need to be converted to forest and wild habitats, and meat and dairy consumption will need to be reduced by 35%, by 2050. "Farmers and land managers", the report states, "will play a crucial role in delivering the transition" to 'Net Zero' - by cutting emissions (especially by greatly reducing livestock numbers) and locking up carbon (in woodland, peatlands, agroforestry, hedgerows, and energy crops). While some farmers feel they can rise to the challenges, others see this agenda as an existential threat. Farmers' groups dispute some of the CCCs' recommendations, which, for example, omit the potential role of rotationally and regeneratively grazed grassland to both "meet climate objectives, and deliver more holistically for nature, public nutrition, cultural heritage and rural communities" (bit.ly/7cbcla).

Pray for 'common-sense' policies that recognise the full range of concerns, integrate the needs of all 'stakeholders', and help retain our 'green and pleasant land' in all its rich natural and cultural diversity. Pray for farmers fearing the end of farming as they have known it.

'Wild beasts will lie there'

Recent research estimated that reintroducing c 167 wolves to the Scottish Highlands would help control red deer and promote forest regeneration, making each wolf worth about £154,000 in terms of carbon removal (bit.ly/wolcar). Other measures proposed in pursuit of 'Net Zero' also favour 'wilding' or 'letting nature back'. Leaving aside the value of controlling red deer, re-establishing former denizens of our wild places, and, more widely, 'restoring nature', there is an unintentional symbolic significance to this plan. In biblical prophecy, the return of wild animals is associated with desolation and judgement - the consequences of national sin and a turning away from the Lord ([Leviticus 26:22](#); [Isaiah 13:21-22](#), [34:14-15](#); [Jeremiah 50:39](#)).

Pray for a prophetic understanding of God's hidden counsel behind these visible phenomena. As we see signs and symbols of God's judgement, pray for contrition and repentance in our nation, especially among God's people ([2 Chronicles 7:13-14](#)).

'Spring harvest'

Britain's rural communities need the Gospel as much as ever; churches need to grow in numbers and maturity; new churches need to be planted. *Pray for our partners and friends below and for all seeking to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the countryside and to equip and support rural churches. Pray "the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest" ([Matthew 9:37-38](#)).*

Agricultural Christian Fellowship (ACF) (acfhub.com). *Pray for the new, vibrant ACF group in Scotland, and for ACF's leadership as it seeks new ways to strengthen its ministry among farming people and to bring a Christian critique to current issues in farming.*

Village Hope (VH) (bit.ly/vlosub) is entering into a new phase, and has recently appointed two new trustees and a head of operations. *Pray the Lord will guide and bless Village Hope and its leaders, and open new doors for effective ministry in Britain's villages.*

Farming Christian Link (FCL) (bit.ly/fclx). *Pray for FCL as it prepares for outreach at agricultural and county shows. It aims to offer New Testaments and Gospel literature and engage in conversations at over 55 shows this year, starting in North Somerset on 5 May.*

Rural Missions (RM) (bit.ly/rumiss) supports rural churches in their outreach to their local communities. *Pray for fresh opportunities to help rural churches' mission, for RM's growing staff team, and for the development of the best ways to serve churches.*

Centre for Rural Ministry (CRM) (bit.ly/fcscotcrm). The Free Church of Scotland's recently launched CRM seeks to encourage its rural churches to help fulfil a vision for 'a healthy gospel church in every community in Scotland'. *Pray for CRM's work and its newly appointed director (bit.ly/fcscotimac), as it seeks to realise this vision in rural Scotland.*

Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) (bit.ly/arcnow) seeks to equip rural churches to be places of welcome, witness, and support, and to strengthen and inspire rural leaders to serve their communities with confidence. *Pray for the resources needed for ARC to continue offering training, guidance, and encouragement to rural churches and farming communities across the country.*

The Rural Project (TRP) (bit.ly/fectrp) is a partnership of independent evangelical churches to advance the gospel in rural communities in Great Britain. *Pray for the Project and for its first 'Rural Residency' scheme in North Northumberland.*