

# HOPE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

## Seeds of Prayer

### The seasons

As the weather warms and holidays approach, thousands of people head out of towns and cities for rest and recreation, and to be restored by spending time in the beauty and peace of our countryside.

“He makes me lie down  
in green pastures;  
He leads me beside still waters;  
He restores my soul.”  
(Psalm 23: 2-3)

As folk draw breath and re-connect with the wonder and rhythm of creation, *pray that they will also be embraced by the reality, love and awesome majesty of the One who made it all.*

### Church and mission

Pilgrimages are fashionable! Across the world, participation in religious pilgrimages has increased by up to four times in the last 20 years ([tinyurl.com/ruralpilgrims](http://tinyurl.com/ruralpilgrims)). This is indicative of a spiritual searching and represents an exciting, new opportunity for rural mission. Pray for churches close to established routes to serve and reach out to pilgrims, by providing resources, hospitality, accommodation and explanation. *Pray for initiatives to discover, develop and promote new routes. And pray that all who set off on pilgrimage for whatever reason will be led to the ‘highways to Zion’ (Psalm 84:5, ESV).*

### Farming and the land

On the 9th of June, many farms across the country will open their gates to visitors for ‘Open Farm Sunday ([farmsunday.org](http://farmsunday.org)). This day is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the relationship between grower and consumer, between those responsible for the land and those who often feel excluded from it. *Pray that visitors will better understand farming and be drawn closer to the farming community, and vice-versa.* Farmers are both food producers and custodians of the countryside. *Pray that we farmers will repent of practices that we now know damage the environment, and for exclusivist attitudes that have alienated urban dwellers. And, as we do repent, pray that the Lord will send much-needed rain upon our fields.*

“If My land cries out against Me and all its furrows are wet with tears, if I have devoured its yield without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants, then let briars come up instead of wheat and stinkweed instead of barley.” **(Job 31: 38-40).**

May God have mercy.

### Rural life

People living in rural areas are, on average, older than urban residents. Of the 9.5 million people living in rural areas of England in 2017, 55% were over 45 years of age and 31% were over 60, compared with 42% over 45 and 22% over 60 in urban areas ([tinyurl.com/ruralage](http://tinyurl.com/ruralage)). And, as young people move away for education and employment, rural populations are set to get even older. For older rural people, access to health care, shops and other services is becoming increasingly difficult and can lead to feelings of vulnerability and isolation. *Pray for vulnerable older people to be identified and reached out to by local authorities and churches, and that resources made available to meet their needs (Leviticus 19:32).*

Following the local elections in May, many new councillors are now taking up office, including in many rural councils. *Pray that they will have wisdom, integrity and a good understanding of rural life, and will ensure the provision and funding of services to meet the needs of rural communities (1 Timothy 2: 1-2).*

‘Creation’ and ‘community’ are for many the defining marks of the countryside. But there are also dark, occult influences. *Pray that Christian communities in rural areas will shine as lights in the darkness, share the love of Christ and witness to His truth in the midst of the many alternative spiritualities (Matthew 5:16).*

‘Hope for the Countryside’ is a partnership between Agricultural Christian Fellowship, Village Hope, the World Prayer Centre and Top Barn Trust. Our aim is to mobilise and resource prayer for rural Britain. Our vision is of beacons of prayer lighting up across our countryside. Our prayer is for a fresh move of the Holy Spirit across the countryside of our nation.

‘Seeds of prayer’ is offered as a resource for prayer for individuals and prayer groups and for use in church services and other meetings. If you have found the ‘seeds’ helpful and inspiring or would like to feed back your own insights and prayers then we would be very happy to hear from you.

