

### Farming

After an expensive 2023 harvest, this autumn's weather has not been kind to farmers. Very dry conditions quickly turned to very wet. Crops thought to be safely growing have been overwhelmed by waterlogging and even flooding, with slugs and flea beetles adding to the damage. The political backdrop to this is a fundamental change in the way farming is funded. The Basic Payment Scheme, which has supported farmers to produce food, is being phased out in favour of incentives which exclusively support environmental benefits. However, while adjusting to the new situation, we give thanks to the Lord for 'Natural England' and 'Catchment Sensitive Farming' ([bit.ly/necsfb](http://bit.ly/necsfb)), which are doing a great job of educating farmers and signposting available support, and for 'Farming Community Network' ([fcn.org.uk](http://fcn.org.uk)), which provides practical help to those in difficulties. *Pray for all in farming who are feeling weighed down by the burden of weather, finance and regulation, for Christian farmers seeking to farm to God's glory and to serve their neighbour, for those who open their farms to school children and others, and for those involved with 'care farming' ([bit.ly/wicf](http://bit.ly/wicf)). Pray for wisdom and common sense for all who shape policies and formulate directives to promote healthy food production and to care for the environment.*

### Advent

Jesus, Messiah, who always has been and always will be, became human and lived amongst us ([John 1:14](#)). Not half-and-half, nor 'best of both', but fully God and fully man ([Hebrews 1:1-4](#)). How the Almighty God, by whom all things were made and in whom all things hold together (Colossians 1), became a helpless baby in a broken nation is a mystery beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Equally incomprehensible is that God "who made the sea and the dry land" ([Jonah 1:9](#)) takes an interest in every deed, word and thought on planet earth ([Acts 17:24-31](#)). The season of Advent reminds us that Jesus Christ will one day return to earth and will reign. Before then, He will visit judgements on the earth, including environmental devastation and economic collapse (Revelation 6-18), but in the sure hope of making all things new (Revelation 19-22). We join heaven's 'Hallelujah' because salvation and glory and power belong to our God ([Rev 19:1-6](#)). Into this big picture we seek to bring every detail of our daily walk and work. *As we ponder the cataclysmic events in our world, pray that the "eyes of our hearts" will be open to see the hope to which He has called us, and "the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints" ([Ephesians 1:18](#)), and to understand that "this momentary light affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" ([2 Corinthians 4:17-18](#)).*

### Christmas

Despite the seemingly relentless march of secularism in our society, and efforts to turn Christmas into 'Winterval' or 'the Festive Season', Christmas has not yet been wholly emptied of its Christian content. In rural areas especially, many, who may not profess Christian faith, will nevertheless attend Christingle, carol services, 'Midnight Mass' etc. *Pray for all seeking to use the Christmas season and such events to share the "good tidings of great joy" with their neighbours. Pray for a new openness to the true message and meaning of Christmas among many in our nation.*

### Light & liberation

This year, the Jewish festival of Hanukkah starts on 7 December, two months after the horrific massacre in Israel on 7 October. It commemorates the rededication of the Temple in 165 BC, following the liberation of Jerusalem from the tyrannical rule of the Hellenist king, Antiochus Epiphanes (who also tortured, burnt and dismembered his enemies, as 2 Maccabees 6:1-7:42 describes). Hanukkah is a festival of light, liberation and dedication, of the overcoming of evil and falsehood and returning to true faith. Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world" around Hannukah time ([John 9:1-10:39](#)). Later this month, Christmas will, once again, commemorate His coming into the world as the "true light which gives light to every man" ([John 1:9](#)). Give thanks that even in the deepest darkness the light of Christ still shines, that He has overcome and liberates us from evil, and that he calls and enables us to be faithful to Him "even unto death" ([Revelation 2:10](#)).

*Blessed are you, Sovereign God of all, to you be glory and praise for ever. In the darkness of this passing age, your saints proclaim the glory of your Kingdom, revealed among us in Christ, our light. Open our eyes to behold your presence and join our song with those of the saints in praise of all your marvellous deeds, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Blessed be God for ever.*

### A movement of hope in the countryside

7 December 2023, 7.30-9.00 PM.

Online prayer and sharing.

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

Meeting ID: 821 1671 9194

Passcode: 905289