

Countryside Challenges – Meeting Room Chat

Responses from Breakout rooms

How do we respond to the issues raised?

How do we respond? sadness that farmers are not being listened too. Amazement at the size of the issues.

We talked about the human tragedy of the stat of one farmer dying per week and what that means for the remaining family who don't have time to grieve and process what has happened because farming life has to continue. We also spoke about the financial worries facing farmers and the isolation that they face, especially at a time when those natural meeting places, like market days and shows, are not happening.

The paperwork is a real issue, disappointment and disbelief by farmers that they still have to do paperwork post Brexit. Many will be unable to fill the forms in and have to employ costly consultants to do it for them.

What can our churches do to support the faming community?

We talked about finding points of contact with farmers so that relationships can be built, recognising that they often don't have much time for conversation.

Be present where farmers gather. Form social groups eg the Butty Van or tea and chat. Send thank you cards and letters. All these are about building relationships with farmers so that we can listen and support

Appropriate service times regularly praying for the farming community and weather. Reminding the non-farming rural community about what is happening in farming.

The pastoral contact is really important, but it takes time to develop trust with farmers. Occasional offices – especially funerals – are helpful with making contacts. Market chaplaincy is important for making contacts as well.

Health and Safety is an issue and the impact of that is seen in the pastoral contacts and occasional offices where people have died.

Encourage churches to have an informed understanding of the challenges experienced but ensure from reliable sources. Host events/worship with a farming related focus e.g. a café church with an invited guest from the faming community. Spend time with farmers to understand the challenges faced. Go where farmers are, have a brew e.g. their own farm, agricultural show, local famers markets, the pub etc. Raise awareness of issues faced. Drop a note of support to farmers. Support agricultural chaplaincy.

Copy of prayer used in closing devotions

Prayer on the road of life (attributed to Augustine of Hippo)

God of life, there are days when the burdens we carry
are heavy on our shoulders and weigh us down;
when the road seems dreary and endless,
the skies grey and threatening,
when our lives have no music in them,
our hearts lonely, our souls losing their courage.

Flood the path with light.
Turn our eyes to where the skies are full of promise;
tune our hearts to brave music;
give us the sense of comradeship with heroes and saints of every age.

So quicken our spirits that we may be able to
encourage the souls of all who journey with us on the road of life,
to your honour and glory.
And may all our lives today be flooded with light and filled with courage
as we turn our eyes to the skies to see where you will lead us.

May the sending God bless us,
may Christ walk with us,
may the Spirit give us strength for the journey
this day and everyday.

Amen.