

The Listening Ear

No. 20

May 2021



ACA

The Agricultural Chaplains Association

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Richard's Scribblings

"First it's too dry, then it's too wet, then it's not warm enough, then I can't get on the land because it's too wet and the tractor sinks..." The weather never seems to suit everyone. No matter how technological we as humans get to be, we cannot control the weather. And isn't that fortunate, or else no-one would be suited. We have to be happy with what the Lord sends with each season.

In this issue we have articles on the Association AGM, the rise in rural crime, the Clewer Initiative, looking at modern day slavery, and a piece from the Arthur Rank Centre about Rural Mission Sunday this year. Thanks go to the Rural Services Network; Rural Services Partnership; the Telegraph; the Clewer Initiative and the Arthur Rank Centre.

Apologies for the corny joke at the end, but I couldn't resist it!!

Enjoy both *Listening Ear* and the springtime, being in my view the best time of the year, as we see the birds fledging their young, the hedgerows exploding into green again and, hopefully, the weather improving.

Reflection for the month

This month, Revd Alan Griggs, Lead Rural Chaplain from Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy, has kindly sent the following Reflection in to us. Thank you Alan!



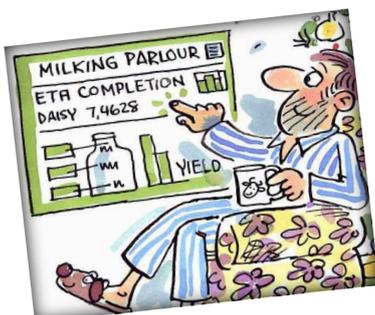
Did you hear that a football super league was a bad idea?! Joking apart, the attempt for a super league clearly struck at the very foundations and heart of football. As many have said, football is not about the money and "without the fans the game is nothing". There are clearly some foundational pillars in football that should not be meddled with.

I wonder what the foundational pillars are in farming for you? As many of you will know better than I, farming is entering another period of significant change with the phasing out of the Basic Payments Scheme over the next seven years. Naturally there are many questions about how the changes will affect your farming business and income, your family, and your motivation.

The biblical book of Isaiah talks about a time of deep change and uncertainty in the 8th Century BCE, when the people of Israel are overcome by the Kingdoms of Assyria and then Babylon. Yet, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah, saying: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a

sure foundation; the one who believes will never be shaken (Isaiah 28:16). Around 800 years later, the apostle Paul believed the cornerstone of which Isaiah spoke is Jesus Christ, saying: "For no-one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Football or farming, I wonder what foundations we can lay in life that will help us creatively navigate change? Perhaps we can have confidence to build the future if we carry the wisdom and timeless values of the past to a rapidly changing world. Of course, this is a challenge when we do not know what the future holds, but with the right foundations...?



**** STOP PRESS ****

We are pleased to announce that the Association Annual General Meeting will be held on 28 September at the Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford.

The Annual Meeting this year will be a hybrid of real and virtual, as we hope to livestream via Zoom. We hope to have a range of speakers and the Committee is approaching several as we speak.

Stafford is easy travelling from the majority of the West Midlands and is only one hour and twenty minutes train journey from London.



More information to follow - Book the date! - Don't miss out!

In case you missed it... this letter was published in the 21 May edition of 'Farmers Weekly':

Markets a welcome chance to 'just talk'

Now that the threat of Covid-19 in the UK is thankfully on the wane, may I give a massive shout out for the importance of the humble and much underrated livestock market.

During the various lockdowns in the UK, markets have either been closed completely or open on a drop-off-and-go basis. Obviously, farmers could not stay and watch their livestock sold, which on its own has been a struggle for many.

During this time, where stress and anxiety levels have in a lot of cases gone through the roof, mixing with other farmers has been virtually impossible to achieve.

We hear that mental health problems have exploded within the farming community and that suicide in the industry is as high as ever. Interaction within the farming community, which is normally very vibrant, has been at an all-time low during the pandemic.

At the Agricultural Chaplains Association, we encourage farmers and others to just talk their issues through. Hopefully very soon the restrictions at markets can be eased, so let us get back into markets and cafes "just to talk".

**Revd Richard Kirlew, Agricultural Chaplains Association,
Sherborne, Dorset**



Rural Mission Sunday, 18 July 2021 - 'Pilgrimage'

What goes through your mind when you hear the word 'pilgrimage'? Perhaps you've been on pilgrimage to a 'holy place'. Maybe you've watched others go on such a journey through the BBC's recent *Pilgrimage* series. Or perhaps you've simply found yourself encountering God in new ways as you've walked more during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whatever your previous experience of pilgrimage, this Rural Mission Sunday the Arthur Rank Centre is inviting you to walk with God and with your church community, exploring how this ancient practice might offer a new depth of life and faith.

Register for this year's resources for free via:

arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission/rural-mission-sunday-2021

Modern Slavery - The Clewer Initiative



THE CLEWER
INITIATIVE



The Clewer Initiative enables Church of England dioceses and wider church networks to raise awareness of modern slavery, identify victims and help provide victim support and care.

Five myths about modern slavery in rural areas:

Myth 1: Modern slavery is an urban thing

Wrong! Modern slavery is present in all communities. In cities, when streets are full of people and activity, it can be hidden amongst the hustle and bustle. In rural areas, it is often hidden in remote locations, off the beaten track.

Myth 2: The only form of modern slavery in rural areas is forced labour

Wrong! Every form of modern slavery is possible in rural areas. Forced labour is common, but so is sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and county lines. In fact, over the last few years, there has been a growing trend for criminal gangs to rent remote holiday cottages and turn them into “pop-up brothels”, keeping women against their will and selling their services online.

Myth 3: Forced labour is only present on farms and in factories

Wrong! Labour exploitation is the second most common form of modern slavery in the UK and can occur in every sector and industry. It is particularly prevalent in the agriculture, horticulture, food processing and packaging, shellfish gathering, warehousing and logistics, beauty, hotels, cleaning, construction, manufacturing and car wash sectors.

Myth 4: If slaves are found in a business, it is the fault of the employer

Wrong! It can be extremely hard to spot signs of modern slavery, and criminal exploiters go to great lengths to hide the evidence. They are extremely savvy and sometimes provide forged documents to get past reputable employers who are doing the appropriate checks. What’s more, workers who are employed in lawful employment can still be subjected to exploitation outside of their working environment, in their home lives. That is why it is so important that employers know the signs to look out for.

Myth 5: There is nothing that can be done to prevent modern slavery in rural areas

Wrong! We all have a part to play in knowing what to look out for. Spotting signs of modern slavery and reporting suspicions to the Police could result in victims being rescued and criminal networks thwarted. Also, if employers know how to follow best practice recruitment policies and find licensed labour providers, they will be able to avoid traffickers and illegal labour providers.

For more information on how you or your Chaplaincy/Group might help, see www.theclewerinitiative.org

Rural crime rising three times faster than national rate

Countryside crime rates are up by 33%, compared to 12% across the UK, as rural communities are 'left to fend for themselves', the Telegraph and the NFU tell us.



The NFU Mutual theft claim figures for 2019 revealed that rural crime cost the UK £54.3m - the highest cost recorded in eight years - up from £49.9m the previous year and £39.2m in 2016. Meanwhile, local authorities dealt with over one million fly-tipping incidents in 2018/19. Crime in rural areas has risen nearly three times faster than the rest of the country in the last decade.

Farms and rural communities have increasingly become the targets of criminals in recent years, leaving rural residents feeling more vulnerable. Crimes like hare coursing, fly-tipping on farmland, dog attacks on livestock and theft of large and small machinery have much wider knock-on effects on the farm business.

The National Rural Crime Network's Fair Funding for Rural Policing report, published in June 2016, said fixed non-staff costs were higher among rural police forces which cannot benefit from economies of scale because they serve more dispersed, low density populations. It stated that this equated to £32.1m across the ten smallest forces (by population) – the equivalent of over 600 officers. Meanwhile, the Rural Services Network estimated that in 2018/19 rural areas received £167.01 per head of population in police funding compared to £206.20 in urban areas – equivalent to a 23.5% difference.

Rural crime must be treated as a priority issue for rural communities. A cross-departmental rural crime task force would support a coordinated governmental approach to ensure coordination between Government departments, Government agencies, Police and Crime Commissioners, Chief Constables and local authorities to address the failures in dealing with rural crime. So far, 170 councils have banned the release of sky lanterns on their land and there should be an ambition to make this a nationwide ban. These objects pose a large fire risk and can cause suffering for, or even kill, farm animals and wildlife.

And finally...

Mo, my old farm boss, went to the doctors.

"Doctor, I keep hearing the same song in my head all the time. I can't concentrate on my work, it just keeps going through my head."

"What is this song?"

"It's Tom Jones' 'The Green, Green Grass of Home'. Is it common?"

"Well, it's not unusual!"

