

# Devon Churches Rural Forum



Newsletter no. 7 February 2020

## Modern Slavery and Rural Crime

At our meeting last October we heard from Deputy Chief Constable Paul Netherton (D and C Police and chair of the Christian Police Association), Det Sup Jenny Bristow (lead for Modern Slavery), PC Martin Beck (Rural Crime Officer for Devon) and Chris Forster (lead for Modern Slavery for the Diocese of Exeter).

When we think of rural crime we often think of farm thefts of machinery or livestock but rural crime also includes all the same crimes that can occur in any context with some more specialist rural crime such as wildlife, agricultural, heritage (think church roofs) added in. Domestic abuse is the highest reported crime, and rural isolation can make it even more difficult for the voices of those in need to be heard - you can find a full report on this sad subject from the National Rural Crime Network [here](#). Isolation can exacerbate rural crime in various ways and Paul particularly encouraged us to get to know our neighbourhood beat officers, invite them to church events and explore ways we can work together to help serve our communities. You can find out who your local policing team are via [this link](#).

The police are networking with various rural agencies including the NFU and CLA and there are also schemes such as "Farm Watch" and "Hotel Watch" – Martin asked what about "Church Watch?" He is happy to come to any meetings with churches and other organisations to discuss how we can work together and he can be a conduit into other policing areas for us. If you'd like to ask Martin to come to your church or community, please let me know at [info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk](mailto:info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk) and I can pass the request on.

You may think that Modern Slavery is not something that affects rural areas, but sadly cases can occur anywhere. The term "Modern Slavery" is an umbrella for different forms of exploitation including sexual, criminal and labour based crimes. As Jenny said, numbers may be small, but the cases are extremely complex and the harms can be huge.

Churches can help by keeping alert to specific signs. For example there may start to be a lot of comings and goings at a property that weren't there before. People may be coming to churches and soup kitchens for help when they appear to be working. A list of what to look out for is available via the Clewer Initiative Toolkit for Slavery in Rural Areas which can be accessed via our website [here](#). Churches can notice these things, ask questions and help. The Roman Catholic Church has a really important part to play as many trafficked people belong to the RC Church and are allowed to attend services – one of the very few opportunities they have to mix with people.

Chris is the lead for Modern Slavery for the Diocese of Exeter. He spoke about Modern Slavery from the church's point of view explaining what is already being done and what we can do. The Hidden Voices training materials which help turn awareness into action can be accessed [here](#). Chris can offer both training and awareness sessions in our churches and communities across Devon and his contact details can be found [here](#). He would also like to develop a group of Modern Slavery Champions across Devon churches so if you are interested, please do contact Chris direct.

Though the harm people can do to each other can be huge, we are not powerless to help. We can pray, and as Paul said, he often asks people in communities the question "do you know who your neighbour is" – a very biblical question – and he believes the church has a significant role in developing neighbourliness, which can both help support individuals and protect communities against crime.

# Rural Worship

## Rural Worship Day 2019 God in Farm, Field and Village

On 12th October 2019 56 people from across Devon gathered at the Teign Valley Community Hall to share ideas and experience and create new ideas for rural worship under five headings:

- Traditional Farming Festivals
- Traditional Christian Festivals
- Spirituality and Prayer events
  - Blessing the Community
- Connecting with special "National Days"

We also had a presentation from the Farming Community Network about their work in supporting our farming families and workers and the worship events they lead around Devon for Plough Sunday, Lammas Day and of course the wonderful Exeter market carol service.

The workshop focused on "special occasion" worship and spirituality events –and particularly in reaching out to members of the community who are not already members of the regular Sunday congregation. We discussed how we make connections, build bridges between the sacred and the secular, meet people in ways that are familiar to them, have fun, join people together and build community. And, how all this comes through the actions of worship, praise, thanksgiving, spirituality, shared times of celebration and sadness and offering opportunities to raise awareness and pray about social justice and environmental concerns.

One of the things that unified the different ideas in the workshop was the sense that through worship, prayer and spirituality events in and around our villages, people are being helped to see where God is already active in their midst – whether that be in farm, field or village – and in the day to day run of life. The encouragement that emanated from the day was palpable. There is so much going on and so much enthusiasm and creativity in our rural parishes from the whole people of God. People working together – within and without the church to celebrate the seasons, community life and give thanks and praise to God.

### Resources

On our website [here](#), you can find a report of the day which covers what is special and distinctive about rural worship, ideas about practicalities, place and venue, the



Discussions  
continue  
over lunch!

importance of movement in worship, content, nature, hospitality, use of symbols and social justice. There is also a link to the FCN presentation and audio and written feedback from individual working groups.

We are still working on the "Calendar of Seasonal Worship" which will bring together worship and prayer event ideas for each month of the year covering Christian and farming festivals as well as special days relating to social justice and the environment.

We are also developing a library of resources relating to all sorts of rural worship and prayer events and these can be found [here](#). This library is a shared endeavour and will be as rich as the resources YOU send us - so please - if you have enjoyed a worship or prayer or village celebratory event in your parish - do email a copy to me at [info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk](mailto:info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk) and I will add it to the library - **THANKYOU** in advance.

And finally ... we give thanks for the great diversity, enthusiasm and creativity that is happening right now in so many of our wonderful rural parishes. When we get downhearted with some of the struggles of rural mission and ministry, this day has shown how special rural worship is and can be – what amazing resources we have in our buildings, in nature and in our people. How good God is in bringing new life in so many ways.

## Rural Worship Day 2020 Saturday November 21<sup>st</sup> at Cullompton.

Hot of the press! There will be another Rural Worship Day, which will focus on planning and using resources and building confidence in leading worship. This will be led by Praxis Southwest in conjunction with the Diocese of Exeter, Devon Churches Rural Forum and Growing the Rural Church. The speaker will be Rev'd Chris Thorpe who has written extensively on worship and is shortly to publish a book on Rural Worship in particular. Please **SAVE THE DATE** for now and more details will be available shortly.

# Focus on Farming



## Brexit and Climate Change

- Brexit and Climate Change mean big changes for farming in the UK over the next few years with measures to protect the environment being entwined with the changes to farming subsidies post Brexit.
- Whilst the agreement of the Brexit transition period has brought stability at least in the short term, this year of post Brexit trade negotiations will be crucial for our farmers both in terms of import and export tariffs and in maintaining a level playing field for our food and farming quality standards - which are particularly high in the UK.
- The report from the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), which provides independent advice to the government on building a low-carbon economy and preparing for climate change, published its report "Land Use: Policies for a Net Zero UK" on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan. The five key findings are to increase tree planting, encourage low-carbon farming practices, restore peatlands, encourage bioenergy crops and reduce food waste and consumption of the most carbon-intensive foods. Essentially it lays the ground work for a new basis for supporting British farming post Brexit with the emphasis on subsidies based on good environmental practices. You can find both a summary of the key findings and a link to the full report [here](#).
- The Agriculture Bill was re-introduced to parliament on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020. This has changed since its first introduction with more emphasis on food security and encouraging food production, but there is still concern that the Bill does not commit to upholding British farming and food standards in any trade negotiations. You can read an analysis of the main changes in the new Bill from the NFU [here](#); Minette Batters' (NFU President) view on the Bill [here](#); a report from the Daily Telegraph quoting Teresa Villiers (Environment Secretary) on the subject [here](#). The Bill itself can be found [here](#)
- If you would like to read about the NFU's report on UK farming becoming net-zero by 2040 – 10 years

## Weather, Crops and Prices

- The weather in 2019 held well until the end of September, when it started to rain and hasn't seemed to stop much since! Unless sowing was very early the wet autumn meant less acreage of arable crops was able to be sown, and even then some seed failed to germinate or the seedlings rotted. This means more corn will be sown as a spring crop this year, with lower yields come harvest time.
- Livestock farmers have good stocks of feed, but there is upward pressure on corn prices which will affect most farmers this year. Good if you are selling but not so good if you are buying!
- Last summer was good for sheep with warmth and good grass and thus there are less fat lambs left to go to market than usual at this time of year as many were ready early. The price of lamb is therefore quite buoyant at present. The wet winter has led to "poached" fields where the sheep's hooves bite into the pasture.
- Beef prices are low. This is partly due to a change in export patterns around the EU but beef prices have been low for a long time now making production unsustainable for some. Further complications may arise post Brexit because most of the beef processors are Irish, which means much border crossing. Store cattle prices are improving.
- The milk price varies according to the purchasing dairy and the purpose for which the milk is supplied. Generally the milk price has held over the winter but some cheese producers have struggled to maintain their prices.
- A good dry spring would be welcome!

# News and Events



## Christmas in Parracombe

Thanks so much to Christ Church, Parracombe, for these pictures and news of two marvellous Christmas events.

First a festive Christmas Tree festival with trees sponsored and decorated by local people, families and businesses together with stalls from local producers including one from the local young farmers group. Combined proceeds raised a total of just over £670.

Then the Exmoor Carollers came to play and sing - Mervyn Mugford writes "at the start of the evening, we were told that John Wesley would encourage his congregations to "sing lustily and with good courage" and we should do the same. Indeed, there was enthusiastic encouragement of audience participation by their leader and musical director, Rupert Kirby." The evening helped to raise funds for the church and the Carollers chosen charities for the year.

I know from personal experience what a marvellous group of musicians and singers the Exmoor Carollers are - a fantastic blend of traditional and folk carols - they really help make Christmas special.



## Farm Visits Programme

These visits are for anyone in our churches who would like to learn first hand a bit more about the different aspects of farming and how our food is produced so we can understand the issues behind the headlines and support our farming community as much as we can.

Our next visit will be to the Arla factory in North Tawton where we'll see how the milk from Dairyfield farm (which we visited last year), amongst others, is processed after leaving the farm. Then on August 5<sup>th</sup> Bishop Robert will be visiting the North Devon Show in the morning and then joining our visit to Rhude Farm near Holsworthy in the afternoon when our visit will coincide with the birth of the calves and we can see the "nursery" side of dairy farming.

The Arla visit will be advertised shortly with date and times and I will send a "newsflash" email to let you know how to book.



Don't forget to check our ["What's On"](#) page for details of local and national events and conferences related to our work. The next big day is The [Big Green Event](#) on 22<sup>nd</sup> February at Exeter Cathedral

# Reports and Conferences

## Reports you may be interested in

[Leadership and Ministry](#), Lay and Ordained - Insights from Rural Multi-church groups. A major ecumenical report from the University of Derby

[Faith and the Future of the Countryside](#) - Notes taken from the five sessions of the conference "Faith and the Future of the Countryside" given by Bishop Alan Smith at Lee Abbey 23rd to 27th September 2019

[Social Prescribing](#) - This presentation was given at the 2019 AGM of TTVS - The Council for Voluntary Services in Torridge. It explains all the whats, whys and wherefores of social prescribing and while focusing on examples in northern Devon is widely applicable across the county.

## National Rural Officers Gathering 2019

In November 2019 approx 20 rural officers from around the country met for 24 hours at Launde Abbey. We managed to pack a huge amount into those hours and you can find various outputs below:

- ["The Theology of Social Action"](#),
- [news from the Arthur Rank Centre and the National Rural Officer and a talk from the CPRE \(The Countryside Charity\) looking at sustaining rural life,](#)
- [good news from around the country,](#)
- a presentation from the [GR:ACE project](#) (connecting social action and church growth).

## DCRF - Contacts and Next Meetings

We thought it might be helpful to make available contacts for members of the DCRF and to know "who does what" in case you have a particular interest you'd like to follow up or get more involved in the Forum itself. Our contact page can be found [here](#) and our "Who does what" page [here](#).

Our next meeting will be on **8<sup>th</sup> July** when our theme will be **"Farming Now"** and we will take a look at the issues surrounding food and welfare standards, particularly in the context of the various trade negotiations, and examine some of the facts about environmental sustainability and meat production/consumption. You can find details of all our meetings [here](#). Just email as below if you would like to come.

Devon Churches Rural Forum is an ecumenical group that meets three times a year to bring people with an interest in rural affairs and ministry together to discuss and respond in practical ways to issues relating to ministry and mission, training and resourcing for rural ministry, farming matters, pastoral care of our farming community, and various rural social, economic and environmental concerns.

Website: [devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk](http://devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk) Email: [info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk](mailto:info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk)

Chair: The Ven Dr Mark Butchers Secretary and Editor: Rev'd Penny Dobbin

If you have details of any events, book reviews, liturgies or good news stories to share please let us know so we can share via the website and newsletter – as always via [info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk](mailto:info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk)

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