



CULTIVATE

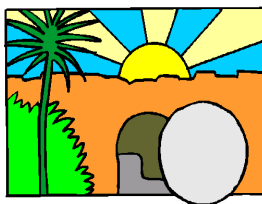
A Newsletter for rural parishes
across East Sussex

SPRING 2022

Welcome to this SPRING edition of CULTIVATE!

During the last few months I've really valued and enjoyed the opportunities to meet many individuals, attend various deanery chapters and synods in East Sussex, and to engage with those 'stakeholder' organisations and groups who are committed to rural communities across the county. As Rural Officer for East Sussex I've resolved to listen to, and learn from, those living, working & serving in rural communities and, in doing so, I've been struck by the creativity and dedication of individuals to their local church and community. This was evidenced at the recent Rural Resource event (see overleaf). I've also become more aware of the pressures facing many farmers at present, not least with the impact of high fuel costs (like many in rural areas who rely on transport and often have oil heating), as well as the shortage of feed and fertilizer, as a result of the war in Ukraine. Shortages inevitably increase prices. This, alongside a shortage of labour, changes in eating habits, and environmental concerns, mean our farmers are facing unprecedented challenge and change right now. Thus, we need to be mindful of our farmers and use occasions like Rogationtide (see overleaf) to increase awareness and to offer support.

I am also mindful that the effects of the covid pandemic are still very real, not least as the level of active volunteers in many of our churches is diminished compared to previously. This can cause discouragement, concern and, dare I say, anxiety for some. However, as we approach Easter let us not forget that the message of triumph of life over death, light over darkness, love over hatred, peace over anxiety and joy over grief remains unchanged. Christ has died! Christ has risen! Christ will come again! Thanks be to God! Alleluia!



Wishing you a happy and joyous Easter, Gary Cregeen

RURAL RESOURCE EVENT @ PLUMPTON COLLEGE

When? Wednesday 22 June (10 am until 2 pm)

Where? Plumpton College, BN7 3NE

What? Hear about, see & experience life at Plumpton College. As well as a keynote address by the Principal, we'll tour the college, share in a short act of worship together at St Michael's Church (at the heart of the college), as well as enjoy a buffet lunch.

Who? Open to all interested in rural ministry (lay or ordained)

How? Tickets will be available via Eventbrite after Easter. Cost £8

(Further details via the Diocesan eNews or Sussex Rural WhatsApp)

AFTERNOON TEA WITH THE ARCHBISHOP!

It was a delight to welcome Archbishop Justin to the Diocese in early March and, among his various engagements, to have an opportunity for those living and serving in rural communities to meet him over afternoon tea! Those of us involved in rural ministry know that it can be deeply rewarding but also challenging. Therefore, the aim of this deliberately informal gathering was simply to relax over a nice afternoon tea, to



enjoy the company of those around us, to offer support and encouragement, and to hear about ++Justin's own experience and insights into rural ministry. He spoke

'from the heart', acknowledging both the challenges and opportunities we face, but also his hopes for rural ministry in the future. Besides speaking at the event the Archbishop engaged in table conversation, meeting individuals and responding to the concerns some feel, that the rural Church is not always given the support and 'investment' by the national church as more urban areas. As a result of the event it is hoped that 'table WhatsApp groups' will provide ongoing support and encouragement to those serving in rural communities, alongside the 'Sussex Rural' WhatsApp group which will be a forum for exchanging ideas, sharing good practice, and seeking advice. The feedback from the 'Afternoon Tea with the Archbishop' was really positive & we're grateful to Revd Julie Sear, Rector of St Mary's, Hartfield (the venue), & those involved in the planning & hosting of what was an enjoyable and encouraging occasion.

AGRICULTURAL SHOWS & EVENTS IN EAST SUSSEX

23rd/24th April – Spring Live, South of England Showground

22nd May – Southern Shears, Copford Sawmill, Heathfield

28th May – Heathfield Show (www.heathfieldshow.org)

10th, 11th, 12th June – South of England Show, at Ardingly

24th, 25th September – Autumn Show, South of England Showground, Ardingly (www.seas.org.uk)

Please check websites for details and why not go along!

If you have news items, photos or adverts which could inspire and encourage those in rural communities please forward these to: Revd Gary Cregeen, Rural Officer for East Sussex. Email: Gary.Cregeen@chichester.anglican.org



Rogationtide

'Rogation' is an ancient church festival which seeks God's blessing on the local community. This year, Rogation Sunday falls on the 22nd May, being the Sixth Sunday of Easter. While celebrated mainly in rural communities, Rogationtide can be adapted in any context, and is a great opportunity for the local Church to serve and reach out to the wider community, not least those who would not ordinarily attend a church service. This is because Rogation Services tend to be outdoors and, therefore, more visible and accessible, and less intimidating than going into an unfamiliar building.

The word rogation comes from the Latin verb *rogare*, meaning "to ask" and involves making supplication to God for protection, to provide & to bless, while acknowledging His goodness and our dependency on Him. A Rogation Service can 'move around' the 'key' locations within a village, town or local farm, and prayers offered accordingly - outside the village school, overlooking livestock or ploughed fields, beside the village school, pond, hall or local pub, as well as the church. Prayers and readings can involve people of all ages from the wider community and enable the local church to get alongside those it serves.

The three days immediately after Rogation Sunday, are called 'Rogation Days', leading up to Ascension Day. These three days sometimes involve 'beating the bounds' of a parish and, again, can be used to pray for the well-being of a local community and to ask God's blessing on agriculture and industry particularly. These 'processions', along with the Rogation Service, are a wonderful opportunity to share our hope in God's goodness and to *'tell and show the people of Sussex that God loves them and wants the best for their lives, not just now, but for eternity'*, as stated in our diocesan vision.

Walking around our villages and towns and praying at various points is a positive way of supporting those communities, and a good way of connecting with them. Rogationtide also provides us with the opportunity to praise the Creator God, give thanks for our food and those who produce it; to pray a blessing on the communities in which we live and share together. Therefore, let us celebrate in thankfulness for all the Lord's amazing provision.

For a Rogation Service Outline and other ideas on how to celebrate Rogationtide visit: www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk and search 'Rogation'. Also, if you celebrate Rogationtide do please send any photos to the Rural Officer for East Sussex - these could feature in future editions of Cultivate! Thank you!



RURAL RESOURCE EVENT:

USING YOUR CHURCHYARD FOR MISSION

The Patmos Lodge at Ashburnham Place was the scenic location for a recent Rural Resource Event: **Using Your Churchyard For Mission**. The aim of the event was to help clergy, churchwardens and all who have care for churchyards to consider their wider purpose within the mission of the Church. This event, hosted by Gary Cregeen, Rural Officer for East Sussex, proved very popular and was fully booked up within 36 hours of going 'live' on Eventbrite.



The programme included a keynote address by the Revd Mark Betson, National Rural Officer For The Church of England, & co-author of *The Nature of God's Acre*, entitled **'Churchyards: People, Perceptions and Engagement'**. This was complemented by three practical sessions, led by current parish clergy based in East Sussex, who have recently pioneered missional projects in their churchyards and were keen to share resources and reflection on what they have learned. The Ven Dr Edward Dowler, Archdeacon of Hastings, spoke about: **'Education Initiatives in the Churchyard'**. While the Revd Arwen Folkes, Rector of East Blatchington & Bishopstone, described some of the outdoor initiatives in her parishes, which have come about as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, under the heading **'Stepping Outside in Faith'**. To conclude, the Revd Brendan Martin, Rector of Frant with Eridge, talked about **'Creating a Forest (or festival) Church'** (see photo)



The feedback from this Rural Resource Event has been very positive and will hopefully inspire similar or other outreach initiatives elsewhere. Clearly *'making churchyards a resource for the living as well as a resting place for the dead'* really connected with and engaged the 50 people attending.

For those disappointed at not being able to be there, don't despair! A video of the event is being produced and will be freely available to PCC's, and individuals, wishing to explore how their churchyard could be used for outreach. Details will



appear via the Diocesan eNews or on the **'Sussex Rural' WhatsApp Group** - to sign up for the WhatsApp Group please text Revd Gary Cregeen (07749 904887) and state your name. Thank you!