



OUR RURAL TIMES



Pretty Poverty Report

[The Pretty Poverty Report \(2025\): Cornwall Rurality Matters argues that poverty in rural Cornwall is often concealed by the county's attractive image...](#)

Seasonal Worship Resources

[Sometimes its hard to find fresh ways to celebrate the seasons of our rural communities. Here are some links to resources for supporting creative and traditional worship services and spaces.](#)

Hospitality at the Heart of Rural Ministry

[From pop-up cafes, to community spaces, here is just one of many examples of ways our rural Churches are building and maintaining bridges into thier local communities.](#)



Rural Missioners' Guild

[The Rural Missioners' Guild](#)

The Rural Missioners' Guild is a growing fellowship for those who care deeply about rural life, faith and mission. Rooted in prayer, encouragement and connection, it exists to support those serving Christ in villages, market towns and scattered communities, where ministry can be both deeply rewarding and quietly demanding. In rural ministry, so much of what we do is built on faithful presence, relationships and attentiveness to place. The Guild is a timely reminder that this work matters, that rural mission is worthy of recognition, and that none of us serves alone. Through prayer, mutual support, and shared learning, it offers a hopeful, prayerful network for those committed to seeing Christ's love lived out in the countryside.

Worship For Rural Life's Seasons

- Plough Sunday - 1st Sunday in Epiphany
- Rogationtide - Sixth Sunday of Easter
- Lammastide - 1st August
- Harvest Thanksgiving - Through September and October
- Prayers in times of Agricultural Crisis

Love Rural: National Rural Mission Conference 19th - 20th October 2026
<https://ruralmissions.org.uk/loverural>

Missional Toolkits -
<https://ruralmissions.org.uk/toolkits>

ARC Resources
<https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/resource/>

Common Worship Times and Seasons
<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/churches-year/times-and-seasons-4>

The Missioners' Guild Purpose and Prayer

We commit to pray for one another as we serve God's mission in our rural areas

We commit to share the Good News and hope in the areas where we serve.

We commit to be open to the guiding of your Spirit as we seek to bring hope amidst the challenges of living in rural areas.

We commit to sharing stories of hope to encourage each other and to inspire others.

Heavenly Father, We pray for all who are called to the mission of the Rural Church that we may bring your message of hope to all who live and work in our rural communities. We pray that we may share your Good News amidst the challenges of rural working & living We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Missional Hospitality and Community Service

Eight Years ago the Open Door Community Café first opened its doors at St Michael's, Cherry Burton, with a simple aim: to reach out more widely into the village and offer a place of welcome. Since those early days, it has quietly grown and evolved, becoming something much loved and well used at the heart of village life.

Each Friday, for four hours, the church Center is transformed by the sound of conversation, the smell of home baking, and the steady flow of visitors. The café offers not only high-quality homemade food at very reasonable prices, but also something just as important: a sense of warmth, welcome, and belonging. It is used by a wide cross-section of the community, as well as cyclists, walkers, and visitors from further afield, many of whom comment on the friendliness of the atmosphere as much as the food itself.

At its heart, the café is now firmly established as both a valued village amenity and a living bridge between church and community. That sense of welcome is made possible by a remarkable team of volunteers drawn from both church and village life. Each week, bakers faithfully provide a wonderful range of cakes, sausage rolls, quiches and other home-baked treats, prepared in their own kitchens and brought in with care. Alongside

them, a rota of volunteers serve in the café itself, offering hospitality with warmth and efficiency, while others work faithfully behind the scenes with cleaning and laundry

Over time, the café has also become financially self-sustaining. The original start-up loan from the church has now been fully repaid, and running costs are met through its own income. In keeping with the original vision, everything beyond these costs is given away in support of good causes. In recent years, donations have been made to Dove House Hospice, totalling £11,500 so far, with further gifts planned for 2026. In addition, the café has also partnered with the Friends of St Michael's in funding improvements to the church kitchen, contributing £2,000 towards its refurbishment.

What began as a simple idea has become something quietly significant: a place of welcome, generosity, and connection, week by week, in the heart of the village.



The Pretty Poverty Report – Summarised by Revd Richard Parkinson

[Click Here To Download the Report](#)

The Pretty Poverty Report (2025): Cornwall Rurality Matters argues that poverty in rural Cornwall is often concealed by the county's attractive image and is significantly underestimated by the government's current measure of deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

The central argument

The report introduces the idea of "pretty poverty"—the reality that places which appear prosperous and idyllic to visitors can contain deep, persistent poverty experienced by local residents. Because rural poverty is dispersed rather than concentrated, it is often invisible to national statistics and therefore overlooked in funding decisions.

The researchers interviewed residents in six deprived rural communities across Cornwall to understand their lived experiences and compare them with what official statistics suggest.

Six themes emerged

The report identifies six interrelated features of rural deprivation.

- Transport dependency – Owning a car is not a luxury but a necessity. Without one, people struggle to reach work, healthcare, education or even shops. The cost of maintaining a car becomes an unavoidable "rural tax."

- Housing displacement – The housing crisis is driven not simply by high prices but by a shortage of homes available to local people, caused by second homes and holiday lets. Many younger residents can only remain locally through family support or inheritance.
- Employment precarity – Although unemployment figures appear relatively low, many people experience insecure, seasonal or low-paid work with limited opportunities for progression. Tourism dominates much of the economy, creating instability.
- Healthcare withdrawal – Increasing centralisation of services means people often travel long distances for appointments, while digital-only services disadvantage those with limited internet access or digital skills.
- Educational isolation – Rural schools and colleges face additional barriers, including transport difficulties, teacher recruitment challenges, and fewer educational opportunities for young people.
- Community resilience – Strong local communities often support one another through informal networks. While this resilience is a strength, it can also mask genuine need, as communities cope quietly rather than appearing in official statistics.

Critique of the current system

A major criticism is directed at the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

The report argues that the IMD was largely designed around urban patterns of poverty. It works well where deprivation is concentrated but performs poorly in rural areas, where hardship is spread across wider geographical areas. It also gives relatively little weight to transport and access to services—issues that dominate rural life. As a result, Cornwall often appears less deprived than residents actually experience it.

What the report recommends

The authors call for:

- A new rural-specific measure of deprivation;
- Greater weighting for transport and access to services;
- Funding formulas that recognise the additional costs of living in remote areas;
- Housing policies that tackle both affordability and the loss of homes to second-home ownership;
- More locally based healthcare, education and public services;
- Greater use of local voices and lived experience when shaping public policy.

Overall assessment

The report's most significant contribution is not merely documenting poverty in Cornwall, but demonstrating that how we measure poverty determines where resources are allocated. If the measures fail to recognise dispersed rural deprivation, rural communities risk being systematically underfunded despite experiencing profound disadvantage.

It is therefore both a piece of social research and a call for a fundamental rethink of how rural deprivation is understood throughout England.

Rural Communities and Housing

Ripon Cathedral hosted a Rural Housing Conference for North Yorkshire June 2026. Dean John wrote: 'The cathedral was full of energy and hope as people from a variety of sectors and organisations came together to explore how, together, we can overcome obstacles to the provision of high-quality, affordable, and social homes in the rural communities of North Yorkshire and the wider region'.

Nationally, there is an annual shortfall of more than 2000 affordable houses in rural areas. This is particularly acute for adults aged 25 – 34. Since the 1990s, home ownership among this age group has halved, from about 50% to 20%. Over the same period, house prices have risen from 3x the average salary to 10x the average salary.

The impact in rural areas is particularly acute because younger adults, often with young families, are priced out of the housing market and have to move away from their home community to find rental housing. This affects local services, especially declining school numbers, and the social and demographic structures of rural communities. People have to spend time and money commuting because they cannot afford to live near their work. Broadacres has been successful with its strategic planning for the needs of affordable housing in North Yorkshire. Developers can be incentivised to build affordable housing if some houses are available for sale within the development.

Caring For God's Creation: Successful Ecumenical Holiday Club **by Margaret Price**

How can we reach children with the Christian story in small, rural villages? In a rural village in the Easingwold Deanery, we had been running a Christian 'after-school club' for nearly 10 years, but numbers had dwindled. We were looking for a more effective way to use our limited energy and resources, so we decided to run a one-day Holiday Club during May half-term. We publicised through schools, churches, and social media, and 12 primary-age children attended this free day. Our venue was the Sports and Social Club, with plenty of safe outdoor space. A key to our success was our large ecumenical team of 12 volunteers, all with DBS clearance and completed safeguarding modules, supported by the employed Methodist Children and Families Worker. We used the Creation stories from the Lion Story Teller Bible, followed by craft activities. In one of these, we provided the children with a picture frame and invited them to create a picture using natural materials found in the woods. An instant camera provided a lasting memory to take home. Games, a picnic lunch, a range of prayer activities and worship rounded off a busy day. Tiring but encouraging, we are now planning another Holiday Club for Autumn half term in the Methodist Church in a neighbouring village.



Borrowing the Land: Faith, Farming and the Gift of Stewardship - An Interview with an East Riding Farming Family by Revd Richard Parkinson

"We don't own the land. We're just borrowing it for the next person." It was one of the first things said in my conversation with Ian and Becky, and in many ways it summed up what followed. For those whose lives are shaped by the land, faith is often quietly woven into the daily rhythms of work, family and the changing seasons. It is less about having all the answers and more about learning to live with uncertainty, resilience and hope.



Living with the Land

Ian and Becky farm on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds, where the Wolds' lighter soils meet the heavier clays of Holderness. That unique location brings both opportunities and challenges. Every field, soil type and season requires careful judgement. Yet for all the science, machinery and experience involved in modern farming, there comes a point when every farmer reaches the limits of what they can control. For instance, weather.

"We can do everything right," Ian reflected, "but you still have to have faith that it will rain."

This year's crops are a reminder of that reality. Spring brought weeks of worrying drought before timely rain transformed fields that had seemed beyond hope. It is a familiar lesson in agriculture: what appears lost can sometimes recover remarkably quickly. That dependence on something beyond ourselves cultivates a certain humility. Farming is not about mastering nature but about learning to work alongside it.

Learning to Trust

As our conversation progressed, it became clear that faith is not simply something reserved for Sundays. Like many Christians, Ian and Becky spoke less about certainty and more about trust.

There are moments when experience runs out, when difficult decisions must be made, and when there are no obvious answers. Whether facing changing markets, unpredictable weather, or the difficult decision to reshape part of the business, faith becomes the confidence to take the next step, even when the outcome is uncertain.

As Becky observed, faith often means trusting one another and trusting that God continues to guide, even when the way ahead is unclear.

Church, too, has become part of that rhythm. Amid busy weeks, an hour of worship offers space to reflect, pray and remember that life's burdens are rarely borne alone.

"It's amazing," Ian said about the local rector's sermons, "how often I think, 'Why are you talking about me again?' Then you look round and realise everyone else is nodding too."

Faith and the Freedom to Keep Learning

One of the most refreshing aspects of our conversation was that neither Ian nor Becky presented faith as having all the answers. Instead, they described faith as giving them the confidence to keep asking questions. That seems particularly fitting for farming.

No two seasons are identical. New challenges arise each year. Markets shift, weather patterns change, pests evolve, and farming methods continue to develop. Standing still is rarely an option. As Becky observed, the hardest decisions are often the most necessary. Letting go of something that has always been done a certain way may create space for something healthier to emerge.

There is wisdom in that for all of us. Christian faith has never been about pretending that life is predictable. Rather, it is about trusting that God remains faithful as we continue to learn, adapt and grow.

Resilience Through the Seasons

One word kept recurring throughout our conversation, even when it wasn't spoken directly: resilience.

Farms cannot simply pause during a difficult year. The seasons continue. Animals still need feeding, and crops still need planting. There is always another harvest to prepare for. Over generations, the family has weathered shifting markets, disease outbreaks, political decisions and economic uncertainty. More recently, they have again adapted their farming practices, exploring regenerative methods to improve soil health and work more closely with natural systems. Looking back, even apparent failures have become opportunities to learn.

"We've never really done anything that we've got nothing out of," Becky reflected. "Even if it didn't work financially, there was always something we learnt."

Maybe resilience is less about never failing and more about refusing to stop learning.

Receiving and Passing On

One of the strongest impressions I was left with was how deeply Ian and Becky understand themselves as part of a much longer story.

This is a family farm, first bought by Ian's grandfather in the 1950s. Across the yard, buildings are still repaired with reclaimed timber, machinery has served three generations, and the history of the fields is remembered not only in photographs but in family memory. Ian spoke of wanting to photograph his son one day sitting on the same tractor, in the same field, where there is already a picture of his grandfather from decades earlier.

That image stayed with me. Modern life often encourages us to think in terms of immediate results and short-term success. Farming teaches a different lesson. It reminds us that much of what matters most takes years, sometimes generations, to bear fruit. Perhaps that, too, is an expression of faith: receiving with gratitude what others have built

before us, adding what we can in our lifetime, and trusting those who come after us to carry on the work.

Caring Rather Than Owning

Throughout the interview, one theme surfaced repeatedly: stewardship. The land does not ultimately belong to us. Each generation receives it, cares for it and passes it on. That understanding shapes everything from soil management to hedgerows, wildlife habitats, and the family's growing appreciation of regenerative farming.

Ian spoke warmly about wanting to leave the farm in better condition than he had inherited it. Becky described their role as guardians of "our little corner" of creation.

It is a deeply biblical perspective. The opening chapters of Genesis portray humanity not as owners of creation but as its caretakers. God's first commission was not merely to use the earth but to tend and care for it. That responsibility feels especially significant today, as farming balances environmental care, food production and economic survival in an increasingly complex world.

Wonder Alongside Work

One of the unexpected joys of our conversation was how often it returned to wonder. Before work begins each morning, Ian and Becky walk the dogs around the farm. Those short walks have become moments to notice barn owls, deer, skylarks, yellowhammers, woodpeckers, and countless small signs of life around them.

Their children, too, continue to remind them to look with fresh eyes. Sometimes it is a bird. Sometimes a wildflower. Sometimes even something as ordinary as insects in the farmyard. They suggested that wonder is something we can easily lose in the rush of everyday life. Does faith help us remain open to the wonder of even the most mundane things.

Looking Forward

Like many farming families, Ian and Becky are aware that the future is uncertain. Global politics, shifting environmental policy and volatile markets affect daily life on a Yorkshire farm in ways few people realise. Yet their hope is not rooted in certainty. Instead, it rests in continuing to care faithfully for what has been entrusted to them today. As our conversation drew to a close, I was reminded again of those opening words.

"We don't own the land. We're just borrowing it for the next person."

As we finished talking, I realised that Ian and Becky's faith rests not on certainty but on trust. Life, like farming, is unpredictable. Seasons change, plans shift, and not every harvest is abundant. Yet, as Ian quietly reflected, "Life isn't easy. You just have to have faith that either it's going to get better, or you can get through it."

Perhaps that is true for all of us. Whether we are caring for land, raising children, serving our communities, or nurturing our faith, we are all stewards of gifts entrusted to us for a time. Our calling is not to possess them but to care for them well, so that those who come after us inherit something richer than we ourselves received.