



# CNI



## **FAITH FOCUS - More than a number**

**Rob Fairborn a Presbyterian pastor/  
evangelist writes on farming, rural life and  
mission in Ireland**

The routine on a Friday night has been the same for many years now: Boiler suit, body warmer, thick socks, Wellington boots, woolly hat and

gloves, yes gloves, as I don't want my hands smelling of silage on Sunday morning when I shake hands with people at the door of the church. They are all set out on Friday evening ready for the farm on Saturday morning.

Some people may play golf on a Saturday, go to the gym, or meet friends for coffee, but for me it is the farm, it's my way to switch off, relax, get some fresh air and exercise.

With farming, every season brings the jobs that need to be done. Spring isn't far away and for us it's calving season. One of the many tasks to be carried out with the new arrivals is to tag them. A unique number that identifies the animal with details of its date of birth, sex and father - all registered, noted and recorded with the Department.

How different to the fictional stories told by James Herriot in his books about the life of a vet in the Yorkshire Dales? He tells of visiting farms with a few cows or pigs, but not known by an ear tag, but by name. Names like Bluebell, Daisy, Ruby, Marigold, Primrose. Animals that were part of the family and loved with affection.

They were not just a number on a database being checked by an official in an office. No,

they were animals with personalities; they were known and cared for as individuals.

We live in a world where like the farm animals, we too are known as just a reference number. Make a telephone call today and you seldom get speaking to a person, just a machine. If you do get a real person they don't know your name, it's your account or reference number that identifies you.

How wonderful when we read the Bible to discover that this isn't how God works. The God of the universe who placed the stars and named them knows us by name. Isaiah 43:1 says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." Psalm 139 reminds us that the Lord is 'acquainted with all my ways' (v3).

Even our thoughts are known to Him, 'You understand my thought' (v23). God knows our words before we speak them, 'There is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether' (v4), so the psalmist's response to this is understandable, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,' (v6).

The Apostle Paul urges 'That I may know him' (Philippians 3:10). The word 'know' that Paul uses is to know personally, intimately. Can

we know God like that and if so how? The simple answer is knowing Jesus.

John 8:19 says, 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also.' That's the good news of the Bible - each of us can know God, not just as creator but personally, intimately as our Father when we know Jesus as our Saviour and friend. The Bible is clear that Gods knows us. But do you know God?

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Robin Fairbairn is pastor/evangelist with Ballygowan Presbyterian Church in County Down and also works as ministry development officer with The Good Book Company. He lives in the country and has been farming every Saturday for more years than he cares to admit.

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