



## Yes, it's depressing but there is hope

It strikes me that, as we go into our seventh month of living with Covid, the nation is experiencing a sort of collective depression.

At an individual level, there will be particular reasons: grief for dead relatives, lost jobs, failing businesses, loneliness in isolation. At a corporate level, we are all sharing in the loss of the vast majority of human touch, the freedom to go where we like, the inhibitions on normal elements of hospitality. It's a malaise that is hard to define.

Normally rational, law abiding people seem to be increasingly breaching a government restriction not with a particular argument but more a sense that they just don't care any more. So many easy things are difficult, and the end is, if not nowhere in sight, sufficiently distant not to be worth giving much consideration to.

Depression isn't a condition I have experienced myself, but it affects about one in three of the population at some time, I think, and that ratio would definitely be reflected in our congregation.

With it, there can be just a rejection of any new initiatives and a frustration with anything that gives off too much enthusiasm. It's too much to take.

At the same time, it's a condition people successfully live with and through, rather than submit to. And one of the ways of countering it is holding on to is hope.

Hope doesn't deny depression or misery; rather it notes that those emotions have to be understood in a life that also brings joy.

And here, there is a real virtue in working at a church with a history. Every church has gone through tough times, but this is the 80th year anniversary of the bombing of St Mark's church in Surbiton. Had I been vicar here at that time, today, the 9th October, would not see me walking from the vicarage into the church to pray and to check up on the IT but going in to look through the rubble to see what was or wasn't salvageable. And looking at the sky through the broken arches and knowing this church might never return.

And you look back and wonder how they lived through that. In October 1940 there was no knowledge that the war would come to an end; certainly not that it would end in victory. There was no knowledge that the bombing would come to an end. Every evening brought with it the chance that it would be your last, or that your life's work would be destroyed. And it stretched on into the distance.

For us, while the vaccine is not round the corner, nevertheless it will arrive. To hope in a future, freer world is based on hard facts. We shouldn't deny where we're at, but we can have good hope for our future. And there will be a time when we dance and sing and laugh together, and we will delight in that more than we ever have before.

*Oct 2020, Thought for the Train is a short column by the Rev'd Robert Stanier, vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train. You can also read "Thought for the Train" at [www.surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://www.surbitonchurch.org.uk).*