

Dear Friend

You may have heard the Thought for the Day yesterday with Archbishop Justin on the Today programme on Radio 4. It came at the end of a week of talks in the Rethink series. He was also interviewed later in the programme. He was asked if he was optimistic about the future. He replied that he was more of an Eeyore than a Tigger! Such comparisons are a great way to connect in our household as we are lifelong and intergenerational fans of Pooh Bear and all his companions!

He went on to say that although he wouldn't describe himself as an optimist, he is certainly hopeful. In his "Thought", he described his visits to the local hospital where he regularly assists with the chaplaincy work. He described his meetings with the lowest paid and most invisible of the staff, cleaners and porters for example. The hospital could not function without them and demonstrated the inter-dependence we all have on all of those around us. This has been particularly evident in recent times with the flourishing of the help that neighbours have been giving one another. One of the joys we have found with the lockdown is getting to know those in the houses in our immediate surroundings, especially during the "Clap for Carers".

These are the sorts of experiences that we have had in recent times which help us to change and see things differently. Archbishop Justin explained that the meaning of Repentance is a change of direction. We are given the chance to see things differently and if we think about these experiences we may learn something that changes our direction. Covid-19 has certainly given so many of us an experience we would not have wished for, but which has changed our lives so that there really is no turning back. As things move on to a lessening of the lockdown, we need to reflect on what our experiences can teach us and find our own Repentance therein.

Whether you consider yourself an optimist or a pessimist, or whether your glass is half full or half empty, hope is the support of all Christians and will see us through to the next stages of our lives.

Here are some words from Romans Chapter 5 (Good News Translation) which say it so much better than I can:

1 Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. And so we boast of the hope we have of sharing God's glory! 3 We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, 4 endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. 5 This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us.