

For I know I have plans for you

'For I know the plans I have for you', declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'. Jeremiah 29:11

For the past year we have not been able to make any plans or if we have most likely they will not have been able to happen. I am sorry to bring up the words Corona Virus or Covid-19 once more, I am sure we are all sick of hearing about the virus, lockdown, terrible suffering and death to so many people whilst feeling desperately sorry for those who have really suffered. We may have thought that this can't go on, we will beat this terrible disease, all things have a season even if it seems interminable, a long winter, the good times will come again I am sure, but when? However, yesterday, March 29th, we arrived at one of the dates on which the government lifted some of the restrictions on our lives a sign of hope.

I am sure that most of us are just hoping that the virus won't suddenly take off again as it has in Europe, that soon we will be able to visit friends and family even if it is just in our gardens. From what people have said, the lack of being with people has been the worst aspect of this time of virtual isolation and especially not being able to see and hug our loved ones..(From the Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy) "I've discovered something better than cake". "No you haven't" said the boy. "I have" replied the Mole "What is it" "A hug. It lasts longer".

Throughout the year from March 23rd 2020 we have had to live in hope, hope that we would remain healthy, hope that it wouldn't last too long, that our families would be safe, that we would be able to have plenty to eat, that supplies would not run short. At the beginning when toilet rolls, hand sanitiser, pasta, and flour were items normally taken for granted, suddenly they could not be found on the supermarket shelves.

So how have we managed to get this far. For me, especially in this last lockdown, there have been many dark days but I have tried to live in the hope that soon, it would be over and we would emerge from this nightmare. Now we are told the virus will never be eradicated, but we have vaccines medications for which we need to be thankful for, and we will learn to live with it like flu.

As we approach Easter for people with a Christian faith we know that Jesus is our constant companion, he is our burden bearer for he knows what it is to suffer. Adverse circumstances can become growth opportunities when we affirm our trust in Him, we can gratefully receive blessings and our continual assertion of trusting in Him can strengthen our relationship and keep us close to Him.

I said to the man who stood by the gate of the year, 'Give me light that I may tread safely into the unknown'. And he replied, 'Go out and put your hand into the hand of God, that shall be to you better than a light, and safer than a known way'. (Minnie Louise Hoskins, *Desert*, 1908 and quoted by King George VI in his Christmas Broadcast 1939).