

Dear Friends,

I have been noticing how prevalent '*all or nothing*' thinking is. We see it with the so-called Freedom Day, when we had hoped that all restrictions would be lifted, and then we were urged to be careful, and then we learned that many travel restrictions would be tightened. Some people have questions whether all restrictions should in fact be lifted at once and Covid cases in Surrey have risen to 3,000. All things are lawful but not all things are helpful.

Students of theology should be used to caveats and phrases like, 'on the other hand'. So often doctrines have to be held in tension. God's love and God's justice are often seen in this light. Yet nevertheless, religion is often the perpetrator of 'all or nothing thinking'. In 1 Kings 19 God spoke to Elijah in a still small voice. I wonder if God sometimes speaks to us in the uncertainty and the shades of grey, rather than the black and white certainties.

For example, some people have responded to me saying they think this pastoral email has run its course. A roughly equal number have said that they would like it to continue. How about a compromise, now churches have reopened? Perhaps a shorter and less frequent email to keep in touch? Please let Sue Howson know if you would still like to be kept in touch. Please also be aware of other resources available on the District and Connexional websites.

Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis pioneered the study of how thought patterns affect the way we feel and behave. Indeed, inflexible either/or, all or nothing thinking has the effect of making us prone to anxiety or depression.

"Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus" . wrote Paul (Philippians 2:5). Whilst Jesus was resolute in His obedience to God and His compassion towards the needy, He was flexible in the way that He lived out His calling. So, whilst his primary ministry was to the people of Israel, His compassion also spilled over to Gentiles like the Syrophenician woman (Luke 18).

So, let us celebrate and enjoy our freedom. But let us also be 'as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves' (Matt 10:16) .

God bless you,

Keith

Keith C. Beckingham, Superintendent Minister