

From the Rector

We have been enjoying some lovely weather recently, which has made walking our dog so much more pleasurable (not having to battle and slip and slide in the renowned Balcombe Mud!) Good weather always lifts the spirits and makes us feel better, but there are still times when things can get on top of us and make us feel down. This is natural and nothing to feel bad about.

The week of 12th to 18th May has been recognised as World Mental Health Awareness Week. Sadly, as a nation, many of us are struggling. Roughly one in four of us now experience a mental health problem every year.

According to the Health Foundation, for young people aged 10–24, mental health disorders now make up a staggering 45% of their overall disease burden.

While the medical profession is helping with medication and medical care, many Christians are also deeply concerned.

As one theologian, Professor John Swinton, has said: “Mental-health professions play a significant part in the healing process for people. Most people, however, are not acutely unwell… they live in ordinary communities, and work out their lives amid family, friends, society and church. It is there that the Church can offer important gifts and insights.

“The central intention of the Gospels is to enable people to come to know God, and to live with God for ever. Within this perspective, mental health is not the absence of symptoms or distress,” it is assurance of the presence of a loving God who cares.

There is plenty of emotional and mental pain in the Bible: just read the Psalms of lament, which express sorrow and desolation. (They include Psalms 3, 6, 13, 22, 28, 42, 44, 56, 57, 71, 77, 86, 88, 102, 120, 130, 137, 142.) Here you will find desolation and sorrow – but also hope and assurance that at the end of all things, God is still there for those who turn to Him.

The Bible assures us that God will “never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13). As Jesus told His followers: “I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you” (John 14:18)

So, darkness is not an aberration of life, if it is a part of life. At times it may be deeply painful, but is not outside the experiences of people who know God. The Bible assures us that, if we draw close to Him, He will draw close to us (James 4:8) and be a light in our darkness.

Whatever you are experiencing at the moment, may you find light at the end of your tunnel and may you know the comfort of God who walks with us in our darkness

With many blessings

Fr David