



Dear Friends,

We are all trying to adjust to the new situation in which we now find ourselves. We thought you might find it useful to read some insights which David Ison, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, has shared from a group which worked on a three-year project on trauma and tragedy in Christian congregations:

*This crisis is traumatic for communities, the nation, the world. It's not a shock-event like a fire or a terrorist attack, but a slow-building crisis – a crisis that shatters our assumptions that the world is generally safe and reliable, and that all that we've worked for in businesses, churches and communities will be fruitful. The loss of security and hope, the breaking down of supportive connections between people, and the fear that this crisis is overwhelming – all of these are characteristics of trauma.*

*Some of the wisdom that has been gained about trauma recently can help:*

*a) Our whole selves are affected – we may feel all sorts of strange symptoms, because our body is reacting to the fact that we don't feel safe. Concentration and sleep may be difficult. We feel distracted, and find it hard to cope. Emotions will be all over the place in surprising ways. Knowing that in traumatic situations it's normal to be up, down, energetic, exhausted, afraid – will help us to cope with it.*

*b) People react very differently, depending on different backgrounds and experiences, including past traumas. We need to be kind and understanding to others, and also to ourselves.*

*c) We respond best when we have clear, reliable information; when we have something practical that we can do; and when we can be connected to others, if not in person then by phone or through social media, T V and radio.*

*d) We make sense of things by making them part of our story – the story of our own life, and the stories of our communities and of our world. But this takes time. While the trauma is unfolding and we continue to experience the pain of losing what we once had, it's very hard to make sense of it. We need to remember that holding on together is how we'll eventually be able to come through and look back on what we've experienced.*

*Communities (and individuals) typically respond to disaster by first going through a 'heroic phase', full of energy and self-sacrifice. This eventually burns itself out, and is followed by a 'disillusionment phase', which may contain much mutual blame and suspicion. Only as the disillusionment phase loses its force can realistic, hopeful rebuilding take place.*

*This is a very confusing and draining time, a time when ordinary healthy rhythms are lost. We may be feeling in our minds and bodies the impact of trauma – feeling low and anxious one day when it's hard to get your brain in gear, energetic the next day, and all at a time when we need to be able to change and adapt to unusual events. So, taking care of ourselves and our own well-being is vital. That includes the basics of good rest, eating, and exercise. It also includes as far as possible having people we trust whom we can share with, and being in touch with them.*

We pray you will know the comfort of the Holy Spirit in this difficult time, and know more of the Father's love for us. Thank you for all that you are continuing to do in your communities.

With our prayers for you all,

Bishop Tim, Bishop David and Bishop Debbie  
And the Bishop's Staff Team:

Andrew Robinson, Diocesan Chief Executive; Catherine Ogle, Dean of Winchester; Peter Rouch, Archdeacon of Bournemouth; Richard Brand, Archdeacon of Winchester; Mat Phipps, Bishop's Chaplain