



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich

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Bishop Martin Seeley editorial

My eye was caught this week by a social media post urging us to be positive.

“We don’t want blame, we don’t want argument, as if we were in a general election...We want hope, optimism and faith in our country. Less negativity, more positivity.”

The post slightly undermined its own message by blaming journalists for being negative, but I think we all get the point, and in fact it is good advice for all of us.

There is always a bit of a tendency for some in a crisis to become paralysed, to turn on others to blame, and to forget that we all have a part to play in getting us out of the crisis.

Even if our part is just encouraging those who are in a position to do something about it.

And it comes down to how we tell the story, how we see the crisis.

Are we going to run to the negative, behave as if we are paralysed by the challenge, and succumb to blaming others?

Or do we acknowledge the reality of the challenge, and look for ways we can help?

The PPE crisis is a case in point. There is clearly a crisis of the shortage of the right sort of equipment getting to the right places.

This has been presented day after day as a failure of planning, a failure of government, a failure of NHS logistics.

All very negative, and does not actually achieve anything except fuel people’s anxieties – and stir a them-against-us or them-against-NHS staff attitude that just spirals down into more negativity.

So it was helpful to read a rather different version of the same story, explaining that a great deal of preparation had actually been in place, and that the challenge has been sourcing new supplies of protective gowns which requires specialist production and specialist materials – and the UK has only one manufacturer of such gowns.

The story pointed out this is an international problem, and China is the biggest manufacturer of these gowns but its production has been hit by the very virus that people need the kit for.

The story went on to describe the logistical challenge of the supply chain, which, in a different report, General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, described as “the single greatest logistic challenge that I have come across” in his 40 years of service.

It is all a matter of how you tell the story – do we say, this is a crisis and this is how we are dealing with it, and we want to help and encourage those facing the challenge, or do we say, this is a crisis and it’s all your fault, what are you going to do about it?

There are many dimensions, personal, organisational and societal, to the crisis we are in. We can all make a difference by recognising the extraordinary reality of the crisis and then playing our part to respond – in faith and hope in the good we all want, for everyone.