We seem to have been living through frustratingly uncertain times for a very long time now.

Always in life there is a question of how we cope with uncertainty.

That was the situation facing the American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in 1804 in their search for the Northwest Passage.

After spending fifteen months paddling and carrying canoes up the Mississippi-Missouri River to its source, Lewis and Clark were full of expectation that they were about to realize the dream of centuries of pioneers.

They believed that all they and their party now needed to do was to walk up the little hill in front of them, look down a gentle slope that would take them a half day to cross with their canoes on their backs, and then they would see the Columbia River, that would swiftly whisk them to the Pacific Ocean and the climax of their quest.

But, in the next moments, what they actually found was something entirely different.

In front of them was not a gentle slope down to a straight-forward river running to the Pacific Ocean. What they actually found were the Rocky Mountains, stretching out for miles and miles as far as the eye could see, one set of peaks after another.

There was no Northwest Passage. No navigable river for their canoes. Just mountains.

Where to next for them?

They were going to have to go off the map into uncharted territory.

All was uncertain.

They might have felt like giving up and turning back – but they didn’t.

Instead with courage, resilience, openness and versatility, they kept going.

The true adventure had just begun.

In the Church, too, we are facing uncertain times at present – having to head into uncharted territory as we explore new ways of being and doing church for today.

It can seem daunting and we need courage and versatility to press on.

In our wider uncertain times, I dare say there are moments when you want to put head in hands and wonder, ‘What next?’

The Church’s tasks seems difficult enough, I don’t envy yours at all!

But I pray you will each know the courage, resilience, openness and versatility you too need to pursue paths of potential ahead.

And before then, may you each importantly be able to make space for true rest in the recess, to recharge your batteries and be refreshed for the task.