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I am with you

It feels like quite a lot has happened since a Together Apart email landed in your inboxes last Tuesday! Globally, we've watched the unfolding story of the US election and the announcement that the first COVID-19 vaccine may well be available in limited quantities by the end of this year.

The UK's COVID-19 response continues to evolve: England has gone back into a national lockdown, Wales has come out of its 'fire break', Scotland has been adjusting to life under its five-tier structure of restrictions, and a four-week 'circuit breaker' lockdown in Northern Ireland is due to end on Thursday.

In the lives of our churches and communities, COVID-19 has brought huge disruption to our Remembrance commemorations, something Elizabeth Clark helps us acknowledge and engage with in her reflection.

Some of us will look back on the week just gone and see glimmers of hope; others will be experiencing disappointment and anxiety. Some may be looking ahead and seeing opportunity; others may see only challenges ahead.

Whatever you saw last week, whatever you see for the weeks to come, whether you're navigating the way ahead with others or on your own, may you feel the loving arms of the One who assures us that 'I am with you always, to the end of the age'.

And don't forget your oxygen mask.

Go well!

Louise, on behalf of the wider Arthur Rank Centre team

A New Covenant

Bible reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,^[g] says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Reflection

As I write this, I am aware that you will be reading it on 11 November, a day heavy with remembrance. Few of us have first-hand memories of World War Two these days. I still remember my Dad's amazement that I studied the second world war as history; for him it was part of his life. However, as a nation we remember not only the world wars but those of more recent times.

This passage from Jeremiah is also about remembering; the people are called to remember their history, good and bad. For Methodists this is a familiar passage as it is central to our annual Covenant Service. For some that service is difficult, the covenant prayer is certainly challenging. People remember the times they have got it wrong rather than the loving God who calls them. That is why the last phrase of this passage is so important: 'I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more' (v34).

How does any of this speak to us today? For many, remembering today is going to be painful, especially as we look back over the last year. Some will have lost loved ones, others, ways of life that they valued. Without wanting to minimise any of this, there are other memories too. The way we have come together in so many communities to help each other. The small kindnesses that have made us smile. The silence that has allowed us to hear birdsong, the slower tempo that has enabled us to stop and look. The remembrance of how essential relationships are.

Under all of this is the remembrance of a God who calls us to be his people, who chooses to forget the mistakes we make. The God who loves us with an everlasting love who will never break a promise. This God calls us to be the people he created us to be, encourages us to remember whose we are. That remembering will spur us on to reach out to others with love and care, so that they too will know God.

Prayer

Loving God,

You have called us, each by name.

You never forget your love for us
and for your world.

We give thanks as we remember all who have helped us
over these last months:

the smiles and greetings of strangers;

the patience and good humour of those

working in so many ways to make life safe for us all.

May we never forget your love for us

and remember to do all we can to take that love to others.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Response

- Who might be feeling forgotten today? Can you make contact by phone or note?
- Who do you remember today for helping you over the last months? How might you say thank you?
- Spend time with God today; go for a walk look at creation and remember the Creator God.