



November 2019

Dear Friends,

Each November on All Souls Day and at Remembrance we remember loved ones who have died. We take some journeys by choice, others are imposed. Grief is one of those life shattering life changing journeys. We can feel empty and broken when someone significant dies. That's how I felt following the death of my parents. At the death of a loved one, we come to realise that there is a '*time to weep... a time to mourn*' Ecclesiastes 31-4. How we journey through grief is unique to each individual, although there are many common elements.

*Grief moves us emotionally:* we can be sad, tearful, shocked, disbelieving, angry, depressed, heartbroken, anxious, guilty, angry, confused, fearful and much more. Our thoughts may race. We may lack concentration. *Grief can impact us physically:* with difficulty sleeping, or not wanting to wake up; loss of appetite, or comfort eating. The stress of grief can precipitate illness or worsen existing conditions. *Living with loss has a practical side:* dealing with funeral arrangements, managing a loved one's affairs, getting rid of old clothes - all whilst we're riding the rollercoaster of our grief emotions. *Our life may change considerably:* we might need to adjust to living alone or not having caring responsibilities. Shopping and cooking for one less or doing things that our loved one used to do for us. We might be lonely or fear for our future. *Grief can be isolating:* everybody else's life seems to be going on just as it was, but our life is forever changed. Bereavement can change family dynamics drawing us together, or drive us apart.

Faith may bring us comfort, or our grief may push us away from our faith. We might find ourselves questioning long-held beliefs, wondering why God allowed what happened. As Christians, we live in hope of the resurrection, but even a firm personal belief in where our loved ones are now doesn't change the fact that they aren't here.

Life might never be the same again. We need to find a new way to live and regain our hope and joy. It's important to allow ourselves time and space to grieve and cry. *Cherish the memories:* but remember there's a balance. Whilst we honour the memory of our loved one, we also need to live our life including giving ourselves permission to be happy. It's not betraying them to smile again. *You may feel as though you're alone:* but others have gone through broadly similar losses. It's often good to talk and many find comfort through support groups or grief counselling. *Have patience with yourself:* We often judge ourselves harshly; feel we aren't coping with our loss or feel guilty that we're not behaving how we think we should. There's no right or wrong way to grieve. It takes time to adjust to loss; there's no schedule; no set timeframe. The journey of grief can lead from dark to light. So, take a deep breath and walk one step at a time.

*Rev'd Nicki*