



YR EGLWYS
YNG NGHYMRU



THE CHURCH
IN WALES

*The Rt Revd Cherry Vann
Bishop of Monmouth*



Dear Friends in Year 6,

Hello. My name is Cherry and I'm the Bishop of Monmouth. I'm quite new to the job, which is why you've not met me yet. I started in the beginning of February, so unfortunately didn't get the chance to visit any of the Church Schools in the diocese before the lockdown at the end of March.

Now we're at the beginning of July and you have only a few weeks left before you leave your current school to go on to secondary school in September. So, as I'm still not allowed to visit, I'm sending this special message to you on video as a way of encouraging you and wishing you well as you prepare to begin a new chapter in your lives.

The words I want to offer you are based on some words that Jesus said to his closest friends just before he left them to go back to his Father. He said, 'Remember, I am with you always, to the end of time.' He says that to you now: 'Remember, I am with you always to the end of time.'

I still remember my first day at secondary school. It's a very long time ago now, but there's a moment in that day that I can still vividly recall. We didn't have transition days when I was your age and so I'd never been to the school nor met any of the teachers before that first day. I remember getting off the school bus in front of this enormous building and suddenly feeling very small. I had gone from being one of the oldest in my primary school to one of the youngest in this new school. Everyone seemed bigger and older than I was. The building was much larger and my friends from junior school and I had no idea where we were going.

It was all fine, of course, because everyone was friendly and keen to help us find our way around. We soon settled and began to make new friends. But it was new and different and took a while to get used to.

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I'm aware that, had you been in school these past three months, you would have been able to visit your new school, meet some of the teachers there and get a feeling for the new place that you'll be going to. Sadly, that's not been possible, and it would be understandable if you felt a little more anxious as a result. But keep those words of Jesus firmly in your mind: 'Remember, I am with you always, to the end of time.' We are never alone as we journey through life, even when we may feel alone. For God is with us every step of the way. We may forget that. We may struggle to understand it. But it is true, nonetheless. And I can say to you now, in all honesty, that I have known it to be the case. Even in the most difficult times of my life, I have known that I am not alone, but that God is with me: wanting the best for me, leading me forward into the unknown, giving me the strength that I need for whatever lies ahead.

Over these next few weeks, you'll be saying a lot of goodbyes: to your school that you've been going to from being a very young child; to your teachers who have guided and helped and cared for you; and to your friends, some of whom will be going to different schools to yourself. Hopefully, you have experienced how important it is to belong to the school family and the church family, and you've learnt something of God's love for each and every one of us, and the world that he has created for us to look after and enjoy.

As you say your goodbyes, which will in some ways be sad, know that your friends and teachers will continue to remember you and to love and care for you, even though you have moved on to another school. But more importantly, know that Jesus continues to love and care for you. You will never be alone. Remember his words: 'I am with you always, to the end of time.'

May God bless you now and always.

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