

To the people of Chepstow and beyond:

There is no doubt in my mind that many of you reading this are weary. I know it because I am weary myself. We are now several months into 'lockdown', and I know that how we are all feeling now is very different to how we felt when the announcements about 'social distancing' first came. Nearly all of us are grieving the loss of something or someone, and being unable to hug those we love the most during these times can take its toll.

We are also seeing a lot of division and tension in these times, including those regarding when the 'lockdown' should or shouldn't be lifted. While I have my own views on these matters, as we all do, I think that what is most important is that we continue to love and show compassion for one another and recognise that a lot of what we are feeling right now is rooted in fear: fear of this virus, fear of losing a loved one or our own lives, fear of not being able to financially recover, fear of what continued isolation will do to our mental health. Remembering this when we encounter those who disagree with us will help us all to empathise and find middle ground.

The other thing that is incredibly important in the middle of all of this is to remember that we are the Church. The Church is not the building in which we meet; it is us, the body of Christ. No matter how long it takes for us to be able to meet in person again, or how long it takes to feel like anything is back to 'normal', we can still be the Church in this world, making justice and love for neighbour our top priorities.

We must keep hold of the hope we have and know that we are together through all of this, even if we can't gather in one place. But even more, God is with us, too.

Blessings,
Rev. Rachel