

Revd. Rachel Frank Statement for Chepstow Methodist Church

Rachel arrived with us in September 2019 full of hope in using her numerous gifts to bring blessing and fresh missional impetus to Chepstow Methodist Church.

A series of personal situations in Rachel's family, and in her own health has meant that the Church has not had an opportunity to see the very best of Rachel. Rightfully spending time at her mother's bedside and her subsequent passing has hit Rachel hard. Upon returning to Chepstow, the first national lockdown in March 2020, alongside Rachel's physical health placed her in the vulnerable category, and this weighed heavily.

In June 2020 Rachel was referred to the Connexional well-being team for additional support and help. This support remains ongoing and we are trying to strengthen this for Rachel at this time. I allowed Rachel some time away on compassionate grounds in the summer of 2020 and Rachel found the strength to return to her full-time pastoral oversight at Chepstow Methodist Church, alongside an additional role as Local Preacher Tutor, which fits Rachel's skill-mix very well. The second national lockdown from December onwards has been difficult for many of us, and, in exercising a pastoral ministry in isolation and without physical contact has been, and is highly challenging.

As the Superintendent Minister for the Newport and Lower Wye Methodist Circuit, I was invited, by the Stewards of Chepstow Methodist Church, to a meeting where they expressed a number of concerns regarding Rachel's pastoral ministry at Chepstow Methodist Church.

I saw a jet-lagged and tired Rachel to speak about these concerns from the Stewards and I asked Rachel to take some time out from ministry for her well-being. I returned a few days later, when a less tired Rachel, supported by Tom, and had a conversation in more depth. My concern for Rachel's physical, psychological and spiritual well-being prompted me to ask Rachel to consider 10 weeks compassionate leave (until the end of this Connexional year). Rachel accepted this offer and, hopefully, this time will be a healing time for her.

Revd. Stephen Wigley, the Chair of the Wales Synod, is aware of the situation and we are in contact with the well-being team in order for Rachel to be supported in the best way possible. The Circuit Leadership Team have met and are in agreement that this compassionate leave and the use of the well-being team is the best way forward at this time.

The consequence of this is that I have stepped into Rachel's shoes as the Presbyter with temporary pastoral oversight of Chepstow Methodist Church. This arrangement is in place until at least the end of August.

In summary:

Revd. Rachel Frank is on compassionate leave at the request of myself, Revd. Gordon Gresswell, until at least August 31st. We are working with the well-being team to support Rachel at this time, and we await recommendations that will, hopefully, come from them. Revd. Gordon Gresswell is the temporary Presbyter for Chepstow Methodist Church and he will be seeking the help and support of all at Chepstow Methodist Church in these difficult times for us all.

Please do keep Rachel in your prayers.

Gordon