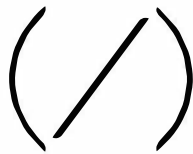


# Gloriavale Christian Community



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# News

The following is an open letter from the Principal of the Gloriavale Christian School.

7<sup>th</sup> Day, 8<sup>th</sup> Month, 2022

Kia Ora

Ko Rachel ahau.

I have lived at Gloriavale my whole life from childhood through to today. I am now a mother and wife with a loving family.

Today, I am happy to announce that I am the new Principal of Gloriavale Christian School.

From a young age, I loved helping care for my younger siblings and cousins. I loved my childhood at Gloriavale, it was filled with happy memories of learning new things and being part of a nurturing spiritual life and inspiring social life. As a mother, teacher and now principal – that is the life I would like to give to mine and all children here at Gloriavale Christian School.

Recently, the wider Gloriavale community has been targeted, leading to uncertainty and a level of insecurity for our children because they love their school life and their teachers. School is one of the highlights of our children's lives and I want to be able to give this back to them. The pressure being put on us is threatening their way of life and has taken away the daily security that our children used to have in being able to go to our school.

A small group of people have made a coordinated effort to shut the school down and take our children away by lodging complaints against all our teachers simultaneously. Everyone knows that a school cannot function without teachers.

Many may be unaware of Gloriavale's new Child Protection Policy, created in 2021 under guidance of an independent agency chosen by Oranga Tamariki. This policy is strong, and our intention in creating it was to provide a very high level of protection for all our children as a response to events that had happened in the past.

The complaints had stopped almost all of our teachers from teaching while an investigation is carried out. Additionally, the media has falsely associated the current shutdown with sexual abuse from the past against individuals who either no longer teach or live at Gloriavale. I want to make it clear that none of the current teachers have been stood down due to allegations of physical sexual abuse.

Regardless, my kids want and need to get back to school. I am very anxious about accepting this leadership role because I know that anyone in our community who takes on any position of responsibility or leadership immediately becomes a target of discrimination.

There are many who claim that ladies like me in Gloriavale have no voice. I believe the people who live here now should be allowed to speak for themselves.

I am aware that in taking on this position makes me an open target for abuse. All I ask is that I be judged on my actions and my actions alone, not the actions of others from the past or activities I have had no involvement with. I ask that I be allowed to do my best as a new principal to lead this school and care for the children here at Gloriavale Christian School.

While this may be a temporary position, I am taking up this challenge to protect what I hold dear.

I understand that those outside our community are rightfully angry about things that happened in our community in the past by individuals who lived here. However, it's time for them to start making adjustments to how they perceive the Gloriavale of today.

In recent years Gloriavale has made extraordinary changes to the way it operates and has made a heartfelt public apology about what occurred. It makes me sad that people outside our community conveniently forget that some people who still live here were also victims – they include many of our own children, and whanau.

Those who live here simply want to be able to live their lives peacefully. We are heartened by the many changes that needed to be made as we are realizing that what worked for 200 people has not kept pace for 600. We very much want to stay living here with our families.

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More important than my teaching career is my love for my God, my love for my children, my love for my friends and my love for my people. I love the people I have chosen to be with, and I love my God who I have chosen to serve in this way.

I am grateful that I am a New Zealand citizen and that we are a free multicultural country. I know that my life isn't for everyone, and I never want to force my ideas on others. But I hope that I can continue to have the freedom to express my religion and culture as I choose.

“Titiro whakamuri, Kōkiri whakamua.”

Look back and reflect so you can look forward.

Nga mihi nui

Rachel Stedfast

*Principal*

Scroll

# Active prayer

"But we will give  
ourselves  
continually to  
prayer, and to the  
ministry of the  
word." (Acts 6:4)

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