

Tuesday, February 10th 2026

Dear Sisters + Brothers across the Diocese,

A Letter to the Diocese of Guildford on the State of my Health

Over the last few months I have had a series of investigations into a persistent band of pain in my stomach. This has been accompanied by an aversion to eating and consequent weight loss.

On January 12th – shortly before our last Bishop's Council meeting – I learnt that the source of the pain has been identified as a substantial tumour in my pancreas, which is interacting with the nervous system that runs down my spinal cord. A CT scan also found smaller lesions in my liver. The results of further investigations – a biopsy and MRI scan – came through last Thursday, revealing both the primary tumour and the secondaries to be cancerous and inoperable.

As yet we await further information on the options available to us, though it seems likely that I will undergo some chemotherapy to make life a little more comfortable. These are early days, and at present I am hoping to be able to fulfil my responsibilities as Bishop of Guildford for a while longer (with Easter as my first landmark) whilst recognising too that any decision we make at this point is necessarily provisional. We will make alternative arrangements if I need to step back at any point, and will commit to keeping everyone in touch with further developments as they unfold.

As you can imagine, the speed of events since the turn of the new year has been a severe shock to us and to our family, though we could hardly be better placed in terms of support. There have been tears, of course, and plenty of them (generally prompted by people saying nice things about us!); but that doesn't preclude a very real sense of God's presence in it all. Even January 12th, the day on which I first heard the news, was redeemed for me by Kirsten Rosslyn-Smith's choice of reading at the beginning of our Bishop's Council meeting, words from Eugene Peterson:

"Every day I put hope on the line. I don't know one thing about the future. I don't know what the next hour will hold. There may be sickness, accident, personal or world catastrophe. Before this day is over I may have to deal with death, pain, loss, rejection... Still, despite my ignorance and surrounded by tinny optimists and cowardly pessimists, I say that God will accomplish his will, and I cheerfully persist in living in the hope that nothing will separate me from Christ's love."

There will be much more to be said over the coming weeks. But for now I would deeply value your prayers for my family, for my senior team, and for the diocese at a time of quite such unexpected upheaval. Those with great faith might wish to pray for my complete healing, and that, of course, would be wonderful; but 'cheerfully persisting' towards a good death also bears testimony to our living Lord, and St. Paul's testimony – that *'for me to live is Christ, to die is gain'* (Philippians 1:21) – is the greatest comfort of them all.

Whatever the future holds, I remain deeply grateful to God for the journey of the past 64 years – not least for the privilege of serving as your Bishop in a diocese where the vision of a *Transforming Church, Transforming Lives* has been lived out in quite such a rich and joyous variety of ways.

Every blessing,

+ Andrew