

12th March 2021

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I want to thank you once again for your prayers, support, and encouragement during these past months, as I have undergone three courses of chemotherapy and then in December received a stem cell transplant. We are still in Bristol where Jane and I are having to shield for three months, while I receive ongoing medical treatment and care. Inevitably there have been some setbacks, but I am getting much stronger and seem to be recovering well. It therefore looks very likely that I will be able to return to Wells again fairly soon, although I will still need to continue to shield, perhaps for quite some time.

We have been so moved by people's love and care; and to know that people have been praying for us right across the diocese, and indeed across the country and beyond, has been humbling and uplifting.

I am writing however, with some personal news. Whilst I was very much hoping to be able to return to work before too long, that does not look like it will now be possible. My consultant has signed me off as unfit to work for six months and has said that this may need to be extended further, perhaps up to a year. During this time, I will not be able to go into public spaces, need to be very careful about meeting people and will be unable to conduct public worship or services. So, after much prayer and reflection, I believe this means that I need to take early retirement on medical grounds. I have discussed this with Bishop Ruth, the Archbishop of Canterbury and of course with Jane and the family. After seven years as Bishop of Bath and Wells I could not be more grateful for all the opportunities that I have had to serve the Diocese and during this time I have met so many inspiring, faithful, creative, and courageous people and visited so many wonderful places. I don't yet know what lies ahead, but I am sure the Lord will continue to lead and guide me and provide opportunities for ministry and service in the future. I remain hopeful and confident in His future for me.

Plans for my retirement service have still to be finalised. However, it was on Pentecost weekend in 2014 that I was installed as Bishop of Bath and Wells and that same weekend this year might be a good occasion to step back from public ministry. Perhaps that might also be an opportunity to ask for your prayers as I prepare for what lies ahead for me. More details of what is being planned will become available soon.

Cont'd ...

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I am very aware of the challenges we are all facing and the extra burdens and responsibilities that we are all carrying. I am therefore particularly grateful for all that you are doing to sustain and support the life of the diocese and especially for all that Bishop Ruth has been doing as Acting Diocesan Bishop. The Diocese is clearly in good hands and good heart, and my prayers and thanks are very much with you all.

In Morning Prayer today, the refrain for the canticle was:

‘Full of compassion and mercy and love is God, the Most High, the Almighty’.

In the midst of all that is happening in the world today let us not lose sight of God’s gracious, loving care for us all.

With my warm greetings in the Lord and with my very best wishes,

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