A Pastoral Letter

Dear friends in Christ,

Over the last few weeks, preparing to retire as your Bishop, I have been recalling and reflecting on everything we have shared together in these 8 years, and it is with a full heart that I am writing to you today, for the last time.

When you elected me as Bishop in 2018, it came as a surprise to me, who thought he was just testing a vocation. But I also felt it as a real call, and I have never stopped feeling that, and experiencing it over these years of serving you. Because it is you, the congregations, clergy, and staff of the Diocese, who have made that call come alive for me over the past 8 years. You have given me hope whenever I needed it, and allowed me to challenge you whenever you have needed that. For all your encouragement and support I can only say how thankful I am, and always will be.

As I leave office, and as Carrie and I move home, I will take with me so many memories - the Consecration, Ordinations and Confirmations, the annual Chrism Eucharist, Diocesan Synods, gatherings and events. I'll treasure always the times of worship with congregations large and small, in all the varied communities of this beautiful Diocese. I'll remember confronting Covid together, and the hard work of many to make online worship available and pastoral contact possible. I'll not forget the faith and hope shown by clergy, vestries and congregations facing the future with all its uncertainty. I'll remember the commitment shown by all who have tested their vocation, and the ordinands who give so much of themselves to training for ministry. I'll always take inspiration from our partnerships with Calcutta and Amazonia, and the friendship of Bishop Paritosh and Bishop Marinez, and the visits to them and from them. And I'll find hope in the ecumenical partnerships I have known, nationally and locally, and the unity in diversity I have often witnessed.

I am deeply grateful to all those who have given me such support and worked closely with me - Deans Kenny and Graham; Registrar Paul, lay officers such as John, Brendan and Elizabeth; and staff of the Office - Carol and Eleanor, Ian, Martin and Siobhan. Your support, hard work and companionship have meant a great deal to me.

I want also to thank my colleagues in the clergy for your commitment to your own calling, for your service to your congregations and communities. And for the trust you have placed in me, in so many conversations, in difficulties faced and achievements celebrated, and in the laughter and learning we have shared at our clergy conferences. It has been a privilege to walk alongside you in ministry.

Above all, I give thanks for all your prayers. I have known, but I hope never taken for granted, that the Bishop is prayed for every day, because I have very often been grateful for those prayers, and the support they have represented. To know that I have been held before God by so many people has been a constant source of strength and encouragement. Thank you for your faithfulness, your friendship and your care.

Of course, there have been difficult times in the last 8 years for all of us or for some of us. And I have inevitably made mistakes as I have tried to lead you. But I'll always be grateful for your willingness to face up to difficulties, and to forgive failures in me or in each other.

Like the whole Church, this Diocese and its congregations face significant challenges and changes in the years ahead, which makes many anxious. But the Church is no stranger to a changing world, just as it is no stranger to the unchanging Love of God. In the end, as I have so often said, that Love is all that matters, and sharing that Love is what we are here for. Love is the purpose of our humanity and our faith, and the very being of God. Whatever changes lie ahead for any of us and for the Church, whatever difficulties we will face personally, and whatever new paths we will be called to follow, Love will always be at the heart of everything we do and are.

Although I am retiring as Bishop, I am not retiring as a friend and admirer of this Diocese, and of you who called me to serve you. I'll continue to pray for you, and for the one whom God will call to be your next Bishop, that she/he will know the reality of God's call as I have, and will experience the same generosity, encouragement and care that I have received from you.

It has been a great privilege to serve as your Bishop. Thank you for everything, for the memories, friendships and faith we have shared, for your honesty, patience, prayers, and love. Thank you for allowing me to serve you, and for making these eight years such a precious part of my own journey of faith.

Hold fast, then, to your own calling, as I have tried to hold fast to mine, trusting that the Love which calls us is the Love which sustains us, a Love that will never let us go.

With my warmest regards,

+Ian St Andrews

30 October 2026