

Andrew's Cancer Journey

In May 2023 I was diagnosed with bowel cancer following a screening test and thus began a series of treatments.

I underwent sessions of Radiotherapy, (St James, Leeds) and then cycles of Chemotherapy, (Harrogate Hospital) and through all this Sally and I received support from members of the congregation, both with prayer and practical help such as the creation of a group called "Andrew's Carriage" which provided transport for each and every appointment or treatment session I had.

In January 2024 I attended a consultation with my oncologist in Harrogate to be informed that the cancer was advanced and that nothing could be done except eventually being offered palliative care or in other words, end of life care.

I was devastated for Sally, our sons and myself even though I had my faith I wondered why me ? why is my faith failing ?,

I was approached by members of the congregation asking if I would allow a prayer session with me and I agreed. On a Tuesday night in Room 3 I was at the centre of a group of parishioners and felt Gods presence, members laid their hands on me as they prayed – For me a new experience as I am not a tactile person – during the prayer session one of the members stated that they had a vision of the boat caught in the storm and the calm that followed from Jesus's command of the sea.

After the prayer session I was still struggling with the question Why me ? and then I received a telephone call from my surgeon asking me to come to St James straight away. I went and met Mr Teirnon, and he stated that he had reconsidered my case and even though my case was complicated due to the cancer spreading, He was prepared to operate if I agreed.

12 hours of surgery, two surgeons and 2 surgical teams, 28 days as a inpatient at St James and I was discharged from the hospital. Whilst I was in hospital the support did not waver, transport for Sally, visitors for me once they were allowed and meals prepared for Sally and I during a difficult recuperation at home.

This week after 24 months post op I underwent an internal camera investigation and was informed that there was no sign of cancer and therefore **I was considered clear** with only remote possibility of the cancer returning.

Throughout all of my cancer treatment; even in my deepest despair in the oncologists office; I knew deep down that my faith in Christ has been resolute and that Holy Trinity Church is an absolute powerhouse of prayer.

There are many people who deserve my deep thanks, and I wish to mention a small number, Barry C for creating and managing Andrew's Carriage WhatsApp group, the mere fact that I knew that transport would be available reduced my stress at a time when it was very high. Each and every member of the WhatsApp group who provided transport to each appointment, even when sent shopping at Waitrose whilst I underwent Chemotherapy.

The group of chaps who accompanied me and encouraged me whilst undertaking a sponsored walk on behalf of the Bowel Cancer Charity and those members of the congregation who sponsored me.

Jed B for his quiet support and explanations about treatment and just being there.

Chris T who held my hand when my faith felt far away and provided intense spiritual support and reminded me that if we believe in God's authority, we must know God has authority over everything that happens in our lives even down to the cells within our bodies.

Not only did members of the congregation care for me, but supported Sally immeasurably, I must give thanks to the ladies helped, Liz T, Ruth B, Julie B, Michelle L, Sam P, Liz C, Di T.

Adam, our oldest son, is a cancer specialist nurse who works at St James within the Paul Sykes centre. Adam accompanied me to every consultation and sat beside me when I was told I was beyond help he has been an absolute rock.

Finally, Sally who has been with me every step of the way, despite her own battles with health.

The last 3 years have been a roller coaster of emotions and test of my faith in Christ and I now know that I have been in God's hand through out all of this journey and now realise that God's love is very real and his presence has been a constant in my life even if I did not realise or accept it.

I have long held onto one bible verse and used the promise and inspiration it gives:

Hebrews 6:19

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul secure and firm.

These words have kept my belief in Christ alive and encouraged my faith journey.

In Christ

Andrew