

## Dean's Letter, 30 July 2017

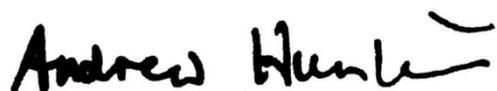
Dear Cathedral family

Last week, with 1 Corinthians 7 as my major text, I preached on Christian Marriage; today, Sub Dean Mzinzisi is preaching on singleness, which includes all who are divorced, widowed, single parents, and those living on their own. This is an important pastoral matter. The church has over the years been particularly tough on those who are divorced. I remember as a child, a family friend of ours was not allowed to teach Sunday School, because she had been divorced. And remarriage after divorce was unheard of. As I noted in my sermon last week, there are situations when a spouse chooses to walk away, or behaviour such as abuse or unfaithfulness destroys the marriage relationship. Marriages do end and sometimes they need to be ended. Those of us who are happily married, or who have known a happy marriage, can sometimes be quite blind to those whose experience has been different. Let's be aware of this, and be compassionate towards one another.

I repeat something of what I said last Sunday: to make a call for a renewal of marriage and family life amongst us all as the people of God. We should not view marriage as an optional extra, not really necessary, but rather as a very great gift, given for our good. There is so much badmouthing of marriage – abuse and violence; hierarchy and control; power and dominance; trapped and imprisoned; domestic slavery, divorce and scandal; public and glamorised unfaithfulness amongst high profile people – all of which is used by people to say that marriage is bad, dangerous, a failed institution, outdated. And many people argue that “we don't need marriage: – they are single by choice or circumstance, yet with children; we have many wonderful, caring single parents, especially single mothers; many cope and survive and flourish, yet are not part of the traditional family structure. I think that we are in danger of losing something very important and valuable. There is growing awareness of the harm done to children by an absent parent – usually the dad, but in some cases, the mother. Our children need both parents, as far as possible. There is a great deal to suggest that many of the problems we face as a society are due to broken families, absent parents. It is up to each young person – what sort of relationship do I want, for my life? Is there a better alternative? Each of us, whatever our age or marital status, to nurture those around us, should be icons of love and stability and trust.

What about the LGBTI++ community? Are they excluded from all this? What about those who are transgender? What about Christians who long for a committed, faithful relationship, with children, yet are in a same sex relationship? We cannot walk away from these realities. They are our brothers and sisters. How do we embrace, include, welcome, and not reject, exclude? Some churches would rather not even talk about these things; some churches have agreed to bless same sex marriages, conduct blessings of same sex couples. How do we support lesbian girls or women who are in danger of being victims of corrective rape? How do parents respond when their son or daughter comes out as gay or lesbian? Do we reject, throw them out? Do we love and embrace and accept?

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.