

Dean's Letter, 12 November 2017

Dear Cathedral family

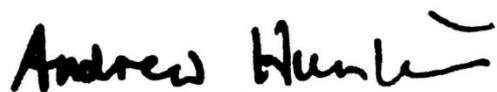
Today is Remembrance Sunday, the Sunday closest to November 11th. This remembrance goes back to the end of the First World War, Armistice Day, at 11 a.m. 11th November 1918, when the war finally ended: the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. As a way of remembering the immense loss and sacrifice of that war, it was decided, not long after the end of that war, to have a minute's silence every year at that time on that day. Since then, Remembrance Sunday has become a day when we remember all who have died in the many wars over the years: both the World Wars, and also the battles and wars since then, including our own wars here in South Africa.

On Church Square this morning, the military, representatives from many of our local schools, the Makana City Council led by Mayor Gaga, and others, will gather with old soldiers – veterans – to lay wreaths at the war memorial on the east side of the Cathedral, and to pray. This ceremony and these memories are being held all over the world today, at about this time.

I remember at Provincial Synod a few years back, looking at the young school children from St Dunstan's College, Benoni, who were acting as our helpers, and realising how grateful I was that they would not have to face conscription, or battles, or warfare – hopefully, at any rate. Like many white males my age, I was in the SADF as it was then, after school, doing compulsory military service. I was shaped by it. In some ways, it was a rite of passage into manhood – as the military often is, in countries all over the world. But as we know, there was a political context to military conscription in SA, which, for many, makes the whole idea of conscription distasteful and unacceptable. Yet at the time I served with a degree of pride. It was only later that I became more aware of the way in which we were deeply divided as a country; that many black men my age would be on the other side; that many left the country to join MK and to fight for liberation. But now we are all together, in this country, to build and to make peace. I have immense respect for those who took a different path to the one I and others walked: those who refused the call-up, those who left the country, those who chose to fight, and those who chose other ways of working for our freedom.

We are, as many have said, in a new struggle as a country: a struggle for what is right, a struggle against poverty and inequality, a struggle for peace. There is fear, hatred, despair, seething anger; but there is also hope, love, and the grace of God. Let's continue to hold one another in prayer; and let's pray for all in our armed forces.

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.