

Dean's Letter, 28 January 2018

Dear Cathedral family

It is good to be back in Grahamstown after a very special holiday and time away. Thank you for love and prayers that came our way! We spent the time at Great Brak River, with extended family members and friends coming and going. Thank you to the Sub Dean and the clergy team, and our many volunteers, who have ministered and "held the fort" over these past weeks.

I concluded my holiday last week with a trip up to Johannesburg to attend the annual Canon Law conference, 18th – 20th January. It was well-supported, with about 50 present, most of them lawyers who act as our diocesan registrars and chancellors, all over the country, and including Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho and Namibia. The sub-text of the Anglican Canon Law Council is "Theology provides the Church with a vision, purpose and Christian values... these are implemented in the form of Canon Law..." The conference theme was "Religion in Africa: who regulates?" We were addressed by Judge Dikgang Moseneke (retired Deputy Chief Justice of SA). We looked at possible amendments to Canon 4 (the election of bishops); we were given input on the responsibilities of trustees and others who are part of church governance, including parish councillors; we looked at what registrars need to know when they advise the bishop at Synod; and we looked at some fascinating – and disturbing! - case studies of a couple of canon law issues that dioceses have faced recently.

We also looked at our response as ACSA to the report, from the CRLC (Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities). This report was put together following concerns about some ridiculous practices in recent times by some pseudo-churches and sects – eating grass, spraying people with Doom, etc., as well as questions around the finances of some of these groups. The CRLC claims to have found "evidence" of the "commercialisation" of religion in SA, and "non-compliance" with the law of our country. The CRLC is now seeking to regulate religious practices, by sending a Bill to Parliament which, if passed, would require all religious organisations, and every pastor, to register. We as ACSA are strongly opposed to this.

We as ACSA have nothing to hide with regards to our finances or our religious practices. Church representatives (including our deputy Provincial Registrar, Rosalie Manning) appeared before the Commission and made a presentation on ACSA's history, theology, practice and governance. However, we are strongly opposed to any attempt by the State to regulate religious practices in this way. We see it as an attack on religious freedom, rights guaranteed to us in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. Let's see how this unfolds in the months ahead.

Our Chancellor (Canon Claire) has been asked by the Archbishop to conduct the retreat for the Bishop-elect, diocese of Kahlamba, and to preach at his consecration on Saturday 24th February. The retreat will be from 13th – 18th February – just around the corner – and will be held here in Grahamstown, at the CR Sisters. Please pray for Claire as she prepares for this, and for the Bishop-elect, Archdeacon Moses Madywabe.

My love to you all

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