

Dean's Letter, 18 February 2018

Dear Cathedral family

We give thanks to God for the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, last week; for the gift of God's love through others (Valentine's Day, which coincided with Ash Wednesday) and for the political transition, also on Wednesday, with the resignation of Jacob Zuma as President. We continue to pray for all in authority in our land.

Today sees the start of our Cathedral Student Ministry (CSM) services on Sunday evenings, at a slightly earlier time of 6.30 p.m. It is wonderful to welcome back our returning students; and to welcome to the Cathedral and to Grahamstown, students with us for the first time. Student ministry is one of our crucial areas of outreach; we have students at our various services in the morning, and we are blessed with a strong student Core team for our evening student services. The Core team met at the Deanery this past Monday for a very cheerful meal together, and to do some planning for the term ahead. The CSM camp is just around the corner as well. Let us continue to hold them all in our prayers and our love. We have the privilege of investing in the lives of young people during their deeply formative years as young adults. Students, we welcome you all, very warmly indeed! Thank you for allowing us the privilege of walking with you in your journey of faith.

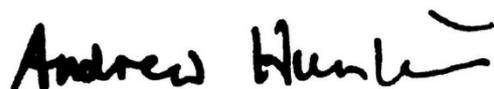
Today is the 1st Sunday in Lent, with its traditional focus on the temptations of Jesus – and the temptations that we all face. A great deal happens in the few verses of our Gospel reading (Mark 1:9-15) – really a summary of key events: Jesus is baptised by John; the Spirit descends on him; the voice of the Father speaks words of love and identity to his Son; the Spirit sends him out into the desert; he is tempted; he is surrounded by wild beasts; angels minister to him; John is arrested; Jesus begins his public ministry, proclaiming the good news of God: “The time has come; the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

That last phrase is what we heard on Ash Wednesday when we received the imposition of ashes: “Turn from sin and believe the good news.” It is an annual call to change our lives, to start afresh, to do some self-examination, to be honest with ourselves and with God, to turn away from destructive behaviour or attitudes.

There is so much around us that is broken, wounded, in need of healing: households where there is neglect and abuse and drunkenness; hatred and fear and violence; drugs, all too easily available, that are destroying young minds and lives; people living self-centred, greedy lives. And on a national level, corruption, dishonesty, abuse of power. It is easy to point fingers and look at what others need to do to put things right.

But repentance, turning from sin, must and should start with you and me. It is our changed lives and hearts that become the catalyst for the transformation of families, neighbourhoods, communities, our country. That is sobering! The message of Lent says that none of us can escape or avoid the Lord's call to turn from sin. Our deep repentance and our renewed openness to God always leads to new doors opening, a ground-swell of hope, unexpected things emerging.

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.