

Dean's Letter, 10 June 2018

Dear Cathedral family

We congratulate Revd Monwabisi Peter on his appointment as chaplain to Diocesan College (Bishop's), in Cape Town, starting in January 2019. We shall be very sorry to lose him, his wife Nokulunga and their daughters Ongamela and Onathi, from Grahamstown and the Cathedral! Let's hold them all in prayer in the months ahead; and also let's pray for the process of finding a new chaplain for St Andrew's Prep.

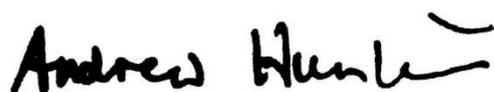
Our Old Testament reading for today, 1 Samuel 8, continues with the story of Samuel. Today we "fast-forward" to when he is now an old man, having judged the people of Israel all his life. They were good years.

At some point during this time, Samuel decides to make his two sons judges over Israel, but his sons "did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice" (1 Sam 8:2). Memories of Eli's sons? One commentary puts it like this: "Samuel's sons prove no better than Eli's – and that reinforces the warning from Chapter 2 against the hereditary principle" – against passing rule and authority down a single family line. Although this was the tradition and practice in many countries with monarchies, in world history, it was no guarantee of a wise ruler! Certainly the history of Israel, apart from a few exceptions, sees disaster and eventual defeat and destruction, caused by the misrule of their kings.

Deeply dissatisfied with Samuel's sons, the people now ask for a king to rule over them, like other nations. For Samuel and, we read, for God, this request is a rejection of God's rule over them. But God nevertheless instructs Samuel to set a king over them. Samuel finds and anoints Saul (1 Sam 9). And, years later, Samuel anoints David as king (1 Samuel 16). Why was this a problem? Were the people, in asking for a king, wanting the security of a known system of government and rule, rather than the uncertainty of the judges? Was it wrong for Samuel, or any other leader put in place by God, to listen to the voice of the people? What does this say about democracy and democratic government? Is the development of shared leadership in church and state, a bad thing? Who is to lead our community, and how is such a person to be chosen? Do we wait for God to raise someone up? Do we wait for hearts to be stirred and for the right person – or people – to emerge to take a particular project or ministry forward?

Is the will of God to be known through the voice of the people? In many ways, we believe that it is. That is why we as the church have vestries and synods, when we discuss matters of mission and ministry; we elect churchwardens and PCC; we have elective assemblies to choose our bishops; and we support a democratic system of government for our nation. And today we are reflecting together on the mission and life of the Cathedral, and we are asking each member to complete a short questionnaire. Let's see where all this takes us!

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.