

Dean's Letter, 12 August 2018

Dear Cathedral family

I was so, so sorry to hear the news of the suicide of a Rhodes student, Khensani Maseko, last Friday (3rd August). Many of us have been deeply saddened and shaken by her tragic death, following her report of an incident of alleged rape that took place earlier this year. Our hearts go out to all who knew her, or who have in any way been impacted by her death and the events that surrounded it. Another high-profile suicide, that of Professor Bongani Mayosi of UCT, is also a source of deep and profound sadness, with memorial services happening in Cape Town and East London.

With both these suicides, there has been blame and finger pointing, accusations and anger. The two issues that convulsed many of us in 2016 – the RU Reference List protests against rape, sexual violence, and rape culture, and the Fees Must Fall protests against the high costs of university education – have come to the fore once again. These two deeply tragic deaths are a symbol of the pain and devastation experienced by so many in the context of those protests, as well as the issues and causes of the protests, and the costs and impact of the protests. We weep with their families and with all who are grieving at this time.

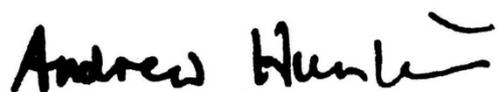
What about others, whose lives have been shattered through circumstances beyond bearing? We are very aware of the need to be there for one another. But what about those dark times, when people are often alone and face despair?

I turn to the psalms, which reflect the heights and depths of human experience: “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...” (Psalm 23); “Oh Lord my God, I cry out for help by day, and by night also I cry out before you... for my soul is filled with trouble, and my life has come even to the brink of the grave...” (Psalm 88); “nothing in all creation can be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). These are not trite, empty words. Instead, they reflect and call us to faith and trust in God. Without God there is indeed only darkness.

There have been some responses to my letter of last week, in which I wrote about the appallingly high levels of gender-based violence in our society and communities, the need for and importance of marriage – in a context such as today when many choose to live together without getting married; and the difficulties facing teenagers and young adults when there are no guidelines for their intimate relationships, with the result, it seems, that anything goes.

One person wrote to me: “Even though we have marriage, people still walk away through divorce. I think that we need to start with ourselves. For those entering marriage, we each carry our own baggage into the relationship. We need to help each other in a loving space to be more aware of ourselves. We need to acknowledge that we are all broken and hurt, especially with our violent history.” Yes. Indeed we do.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.