



# Cathedral Church of St Michael & St George Grahamstown

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Thursday, June 04, 2020

## The Cathedral community

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

Since the announcement by President Cyril Ramaphosa that church buildings may be reopened for worship under Level 3 of lockdown, there has been a great deal of discussion, backwards and forwards, around this. In this regard I commend to you the special *Ad Clerum* written to us all by Bishop Ebenezer, dated 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020, and *A Letter for Pentecost*, from Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, dated 4th June 2020. Both of these are available on the Cathedral website. These two letters sum up the issues facing us.

Many are longing to return to gathered worship, to receive the Sacrament, to sing and pray, to hear the word of God read and proclaimed, and to join together with others. However, it won't be simple: for the foreseeable future, we shall need to wear masks, observe social distancing, keep a register, limit numbers to 50, probably no singing, receive Communion in one kind only, and sanitise and wipe down pews etc after each service. We shall probably ask people to bring their own spray bottles and sanitiser cloths with them to church.

We are being warned repeatedly that the easing of lockdown restrictions is almost inevitably going to lead to a rise in infections; that the worst of the infections is yet to come, and that July, August and September are the months when we shall probably experience this. We are not out of the danger zone yet.

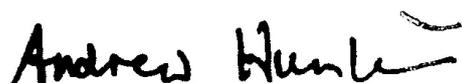
It is therefore with some sadness that I am expressing caution. I think that it is too soon to reopen the Cathedral for gathered worship. I was concerned to hear the President's announcement that we are allowed to do so, this early in the pandemic. Significantly, no diocese within ACSA has as yet decided to go ahead with reopening for gathered worship. All are either still discussing it, or have concluded that it is too early - in terms of the rate of infection and the containment of the virus; and too dangerous - in terms of the possibility of infections when people gather together in a confined space for an extended period of time.

So I am appealing for us to tread carefully with this one.

At the same time, we are preparing for reopening. The office block (St George's Hall, Cory Room and offices) are all being deep cleaned this coming Monday. The Cathedral office will reopen on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June. Our office staff, and all visitors to the office, will need to wear masks, fill in a register, keep social distance, have their temperatures taken and sanitise their hands when they enter. The Cathedral, having been locked up for all these weeks, is receiving a thorough clean. Once that has been done, it will also be deep cleaned and sanitised. In our diocese, the Bishop and Chapter are meeting (on Zoom) next week to finalise our policy and the way forward for us all as a diocese. We shall be guided by this, and the regulations and guidelines that will be issued. When we are given the green light to gather for worship, we shall be ready.

Let us continue to be people of faith, trust, prayer, love, worship, witness and service. Remember: the church has never closed, only the buildings.

Yours sincerely in Christ

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

Dean of Grahamstown