

Dean's Letter, 23 July 2017

Dear Cathedral family

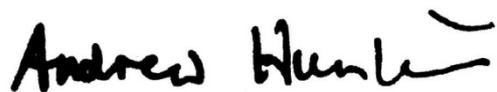
As mentioned in my pew leaflet letter last week, we are planning (in consultation with PCC) "Part 2" of our sermon series on 1 Corinthians, tackling tricky issues that were part of the life and experience of the church in Corinth, and that have relevance to us today. The big question to ask is how we are to understand and apply what was happening then, over 2000 years ago, to our Christian life and experience today. It is essential that we understand the context in which they were living, and therefore into which St Paul was writing, as an important tool to see how we can make links with our life and witness here, in 2017, in Grahamstown, SA.

There are big questions that we face. Does God give us an unchanging, universal ethic, applicable for all time and for all people, across the ages? To what extent do the norms of society impact on how we interpret scripture? How do we respond to situations and experiences that were not part of the experience of the early church, or the community and faith tradition that produced the Bible? We have seen big shifts, for example, in the liberation of slaves (yet slavery was condoned and accepted in the scriptures), in the role and ministry of women in society and in the life of the church (yet for some, women in leadership is against the teaching of the Bible); and in the place of gays and lesbians in the Christian community. Some churches are now conducting same sex weddings; civil unions (between people of the same gender) are legal in SA and in a number of other countries. We are increasingly aware of the LGBTI++ community, including those facing personal questions of gender identity. And there is also a diverse experience of family life and families: single parents, children being raised by grandparents, child-headed households, step-parents, blended families (as partners with children from previous relationships form a new family), divorce and remarriage, couples living together outside of marriage. Is this diversity a good thing? A sign of brokenness? A sign of empowerment and choice? What, in the light of all this, is the place of Christian marriage? These are all big questions.

One way we engage with these matters is in the careful reading and interpretation of scripture. In engaging with 1 Corinthians (Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth) we shall be doing our best to understand what Paul was saying to the church at that time and place, and to see how we are to apply this to our current context and experience.

All going well, we shall be joined by a team from IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries), on Sunday 6th August. We have asked them to help us set up a process of dialogue on the issue of same sex relationships.

My love to you all

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