

Dean's Letter, 6 August 2017

Dear Cathedral family

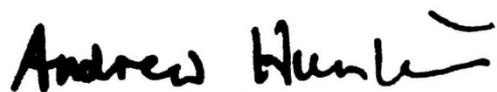
Today we embark on what is probably the most controversial in our sermon series: homosexuality. Or, to put it more broadly and inclusively, the LGBTQI++ community; all who identify themselves as something other than heterosexual, i.e. drawn or attracted to someone of the opposite sex. While the vast majority of people are born as either male or female, there is a broad spectrum of human sexuality, orientation and identity. And increasingly people are coming out as different from the accepted norm. This is not an easy road. Historically, communities and much of society, including the church, has sidelined, marginalised or actively persecuted those who do not fit into the perceived norm of the "straight" heterosexual male-female relationship. While a heterosexual relationship and orientation is the experience for most people, it is increasingly clear that not everyone is "wired" in this way. How do we respond to, and live with, difference?

I am very grateful to the team from Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) who are with us today at the Cathedral, and who will be with the students at the College of the Transfiguration in the week ahead. They will help us dialogue and discuss (rather than debate) on this important matter.

As I asked in my pew leaflet letter last week: are those amongst us who identify as somewhere along the spectrum of LGBTQI++ to be excluded from the option of intimate relationships? Of having a family? What about Christians who long for a committed, faithful relationship, with children, yet are in a same sex relationship? We cannot walk away from these realities. They are our brothers and sisters. How do we embrace, include, welcome, and not reject, exclude? Some churches would rather not even talk about these things; some churches have agreed to bless same sex marriages, conduct blessings of same sex couples. How do we support lesbian girls or women who are in danger of being victims of corrective rape? How do parents respond when their son or daughter comes out as gay or lesbian? Do we reject, throw them out? Do we love and embrace and accept?

There are several passages in the Bible which refer – or are thought to refer – to same sex relationships. As part of our series on 1 Corinthians, I shall attempt to engage with one of these passages, 1 Corinthians 6:9. Most of us are probably familiar with the traditional understanding or interpretation of this and other passages which Christians usually refer to, when discussing same sex relationships. I am deliberately attempting to present another point of view, and asking the question whether there may in fact be space within our Christian tradition and belief, for the recognition and acceptance of committed same-sex relationships. The team from IAM will help us dialogue about this.

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.