

## Dean's Letter, 10 December 2017

Dear Cathedral family

We are well into the season of Advent, the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. The word "advent" means "arrival" or "coming". Advent is the season during which we prepare our hearts and lives for the coming of Christ at Christmas, and for his second coming: his return as Lord and King and Judge at the end of time.

We are invited, during these weeks of Advent, to a fresh start, a change of heart, repentance; but there is also a note of warning to make ourselves ready to face our ultimate destiny of our individual souls, and also of the whole created order.

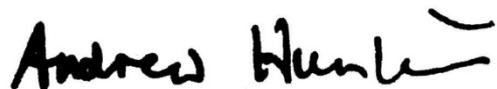
Advent is a time which gives expression to all our hopes and dreams and longings for ourselves, for our families, for our country: our longing for a new world, a new society. In Gospel terms, we long for the coming of the kingdom of God. And we find in the season of Advent that our dreams and longings are answered – by God's promises of transformation and renewal, the dream of a new world that we read of in the Old Testament prophets, and by God's coming to us once again in Jesus Christ.

There is a strange contradiction in what is happening around us. On the one hand, there is excitement and relief, end of year parties at work, matric rage, the madness of Black Friday – and suddenly everyone has money to spend! By contrast – and this is the contradiction – the season of Advent is the call to a deeper rhythm, to be aware of a deep current of hopes and longings and prayers, to listen to the inner drumbeat of stillness and silence and expectation.

The Old Testament reading for today, Isaiah 40:1-11, is one of the great prophecies. It deserves to be read to the sound of trumpet blasts and drum rolls, great music that inspires us in the way that these words inspire us. "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term... A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low... Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken..." Words and a promise of hope, in the face of desolation and despair.

Our Gospel reading, Mark 1:1-8, introduces the ministry of John the Baptist as herald, sent to prepare the way for the coming of Christ, pointing others to Jesus. You and I are called to be little "John the Baptists", pointing others to the source of life and truth. How shall we do 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.