

Dean's Letter, 22 April 2018

Dear Cathedral family

Today is commonly known as "Good Shepherd Sunday", with the gospel readings from John 10, and the words of Jesus as our good shepherd. The psalm for this morning, Psalm 23, is probably familiar to many: "The Lord is my shepherd..." In the Bible, the picture of God as the shepherd of his people is found all over. Jesus is the Good Shepherd – the one who knows us by name, who calls us to follow him, who leads us to green pastures and beside still waters, who is with us through the valley of the shadow of death. The Risen Christ is with us as our Good Shepherd.

The shepherd is also the image, in both Old and New Testaments, of leaders – those in authority. All who have responsibility in church or community are called to be good shepherds of their people, caring for them, serving them, protecting them from wolves who come to steal and destroy. How do we heal the wounds of our community, our nation? At the funeral of Ma Winnie Madikizela Mandela, President Cyril Ramaphosa said:

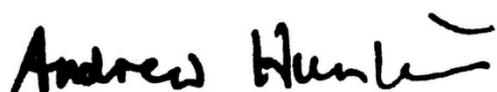
"We must also recognise our own wounds as a nation. We must acknowledge that we are a society that is hurting, damaged by our past, numbed by our present and hesitant about our future. This may explain why we are easily prone to anger and violence."

What can – should – you and I do, to be instruments of healing?

There are times when it is the church, the people of God, which needs healing. In his Easter Day sermon, Archbishop Thabo referred to the recent allegations of abuse in Anglican parishes, some years ago, that have come to his attention. The full text of his sermon is available on the Cathedral website. He noted that

"I cannot say reliably how widespread abuse may have been in the Church. My impression is that it has involved only a tiny minority of those licensed to minister, but I am still waiting for the Bishops across the Church to notify me of cases brought to their attention. But no matter how many cases there may have been, we should welcome and embrace the newly-found willingness by some to speak out and we must use it as an opportunity to address the issue... Most importantly, what about the survivors of abuse? Whether or not charges are brought in Church or State courts, what is far more important to us as pastors is to address the needs of those who have been abused, to restore their dignity and to bring about holistic and sustainable healing... Our efforts to address abuse should not detract from the fact that the overwhelming majority of clergy and church workers in our Province is comprised of dedicated and caring pastors with a deep commitment to the welfare of all our people. But even one case of abuse is one too many. Those who allege abuse need a place where they can be heard, and those who are accused of abuse need a place where they can be heard. Every human being deserves to have the dignity bestowed on them by God respected. Anyone who demeans this through any form of abuse demeans themselves and God. As I have said previously, I take responsibility for what has happened in the church in the past and where we have wronged or failed anyone, we beg their forgiveness."

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.