

Dean's Letter, 3 June 2018

Dear Cathedral family

We are now, in the Sundays after Trinity and Pentecost, in the “green” season of the church’s year, which runs from Trinity until Advent: the season of life and growth and discipleship. What does it mean in our daily lives to follow Jesus as Lord of our life? What are the implications for our life together as the body of Christ? For our family life? For my life as a student, or at work? For my work in the community? For my care for others? It is all quite simple – love God, love your neighbour, and don’t forget to love yourself - but it takes a life-time to work it out!

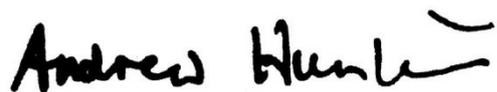
My sermon focus for today is the call of Samuel, found in our Old Testament reading. I was struck, while preparing, by the relationship between Samuel and the old priest Eli, and the contrast between the two. Eli, an old man, has two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They, like their father, are priests - the sons following in their father’s footsteps. Yet, tragically, those young men were abusing their position. “They had no regard for the Lord or for the duties of the priests to the people... they treated the offerings of the Lord with contempt” (1 Sam 2:12, 17) and “lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting” (1 Sam 3:22).

Samuel is given to God by his mother Hannah and is under the care of Eli. He becomes a spiritual son to Eli. He lives in the house of God – like Hophni and Phinehas, but very differently. It is there in the house of God that he hears God’s call. Guided by Eli, he responds. God speaks to him, and from then on, “all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba” knows that there is a prophet in Israel. And in due time, Samuel is the one who anoints both Saul and David as king.

Eli – what happens to him and his sons? In a battle against the Philistines, Hophni and Phinehas take the ark of God with them into battle. The ark is captured, Hophni and Phinehas are killed, and Eli, on hearing the news, falls off his chair and dies (1 Samuel 4).

The story of Eli and Samuel is the story of an old man who helps a youngster to hear and discern the call of God. It is a story about each of us, whatever our age or status, hearing the voice and call of God and responding. Our psalm for today underlines that each one of us is valued and treasured in the sight of God. “For you have created my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother’s womb... You knew my soul, and my bones were not hidden from you when I was formed in secret...” (Psalm 139:12-14)

My love to you all

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