

## Dean's Letter, 1 July 2018

Dear Cathedral family

A very warm welcome to all who are in Grahamstown for the annual National Arts Festival, and to all visitors to the Cathedral this morning! It is wonderful to have you all here. Our thanks go to Maggy Clarke and the Spiritfest committee, comprised of people from several different churches in Grahamstown, for the creative and interesting programme that they have once again put together. We are wonderfully blessed by our teams of musicians – organist, choirs, marimbas – who bring so much to this act of worship. And others behind the scenes - our sacristans, church administration team, verger, cleaners, flower team – who have prepared for today. Thank you, one and all!

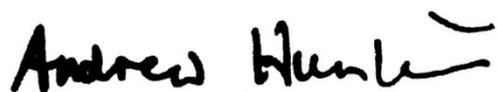
Our scripture readings today take us on something of a journey: from lament and grief, to compassion and care, and finally to hope. We hear the lament of David over the deaths of King Saul and his son Jonathan. Then comes the call for compassion and awareness of one another's needs in our reading from 2 Corinthians 8. Lastly, the gospel reading is the story of Jairus' daughter being raised from death, and the healing of the woman with the flow of blood. It speaks to us of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, new beginnings, new opportunities, hope.

There is a time for lament. In many ways, even in the midst of the Festival, we are in the midst of lament. Suffering and heartache and struggle are all around us. The news carries daily reports of brutal killings, violent crime, anger, bitterness, growing divides, broken families. We need to lament, to weep, to grieve over what is happening and not simply walk by on the other side. To be at the National Arts Festival is in some ways a wonderful escape from it all; but it is also a time when many of us are longing to encounter beauty, to be transported in some ways, lifted out of our every-day reality. We are searching for meaning, we are trying to understand and make sense of our existence. We are wanting to find life and light and hope in the midst of darkness. For some, under the surface of our smiles, there is fear and despair and deep sorrow. Lament.

St Paul, in his letter (2 Corinthians 8:7-15) speaks of "testing the genuineness of your love", and "a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need". Compassion. Walking with open hearts, open eyes, to see need around us. Receiving with gratitude from the abundance of others. Are these words of relevance for our national debate on resources, equality, and land?

And then to the Gospel reading: Jesus amongst us, touching lives, bringing healing and hope. The good news of the one who came that we "might have life, and have it in all its fulness" (John 10:10). This is no empty promise. Let's embrace it!

My love to you all

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