

Dean's Letter, 5 August 2018

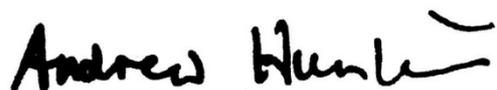
Dear Cathedral family

I am delighted that Rodney Bridger has agreed to convene the St George's Fair this year. The Fair is set for Saturday 3rd November, and an energised and creative team of planners is emerging to take this all forward, under Rodney's leadership. Thank you, Rodney, and thank you, planning team! We shall have a "voorsmakie" (foretaste) this coming Thursday, with the Women's Day champagne breakfast!

We are in what is often referred to as "Women's Month", with National Women's Day on Thursday, as a commemoration of the women's march to the Union Buildings in 1956. Last week saw #TheTotalShutdown on Wednesday, followed by the Rhodes University Silent Protest on Friday, all highlighting the appallingly high levels of gender-based violence in our society and communities. The harsh reality is that women and girls are not safe on the streets, or even at times in their own homes. Harassment and sexual abuse is the experience of many. As the body of Christ, are we able to live out and model healthy, respectful relationships within families and with colleagues and friends? How do we protect and restore the sanctity of marriage? It seems that many young couples simply choose to live together, or are in long-term partnerships and relationships, with children born and being raised, but not within the framework of marriage. It is not clear to me why there appears to be an aversion or resistance to marriage. Is it the sheer cost of a wedding, with all its feasting and traditions? Is it that people are happy not to make that kind of commitment? Is it that many see it as simpler to merely live together without any legal or sacramental shape to their relationship? Is it that many see intimate relationships as temporary, not permanent, so there is no point in getting married? Is it that some do not see any purpose in marriage? How can we best talk and think aloud about this, in the context of the church, as followers of Jesus Christ?

I acknowledge that I write and speak from the perspective of someone who is happily married. Having said that, I believe that marriage is necessary: it gives us a framework and common understanding in law and society for this complex relationship; it offers stability and protection for the nurture and care of children; it provides stability for the ups and downs of any relationship, so that we can't just walk away; it enables us to make promises and to keep them. As I see it, one of the difficulties facing teenagers and young adults is that there are no guidelines for their intimate relationships. Anything goes. There are no boundaries. Boys and girls entering into a relationship have to negotiate the rules of engagement on their own. This makes young people extremely vulnerable to manipulation, selfish behaviour, and emotional blackmail. Our law – the rules or customs of society – are, I argue, there to protect the weak and vulnerable. In the jungle, it is the strong who survive and who do as they please with those who are weaker. So for people to behave exactly as they like in this area of our life is to do them, and us all, a serious injury. Our free and easy society is doing us no favours. Can we as the church be different?

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.