

Dean's Letter, 11 November 2018

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

We are in the season of remembering. Last Sunday we celebrated All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, when we gave thanks for the many saints who have gone before us, and who have encouraged us in our lives, our ancestors in the faith of Christ. Today, 11th November, is Remembrance Sunday, when we remember all who have died in war. Today is of particular significance, as it is the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One. That dreadful war came to an end with the Armistice, at 11 o' clock on the 11th day of the 11th month: 11th November 1918. Every year since then, many countries have observed a minute of silence at 11 a.m. on that day, to remember. Representatives of local schools, together with soldiers and members of the SAPS, are gathering on Church Square this morning to do just that, to lay wreaths, and to remember.

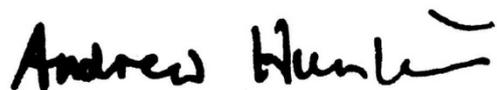
We are a nation of people who carry the scars and wounds of battle. Probably almost every town or village in our country has a War Memorial, to all who died in the two World Wars, and the wars since then; and ceremonies to mark today are being held all over our country, and indeed in many parts of the world. The clock tower at St Andrew's College contains the names of the 104 Old Andreans who died in World War One. Our Cathedral has a copy of the Roll of Honour, the book naming all the Union war dead from World War Two (it is in the glass cabinet near the West Door.) Today, which marks the anniversary of the end of World War One, we remember those who died in the tragedy of the SS Mendi, which sank following a collision in the English Channel, resulting in the deaths of over 600 men, many of them being soldiers of the South African Native Labour Contingent – a number of whom were from the Eastern Cape. The final words of Revd Isaac Williams Wauchope (or Dyobha), a minister and interpreter, have been preserved:

"Be quiet and calm, my countrymen. What is happening now is what you came to do...you are going to die, but that is what you came to do. Brothers, we are drilling the death drill. I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers...Swazis, Pondos, Basotho...so let us die like brothers. We are the sons of Africa. Raise your war-cries, brothers, for though they made us leave our assegais in the kraal, our voices are left with our bodies."

These words, we are told, calmed the men on the doomed ship and have provided inspiration for unity between people since. The men of the SS Mendi, black and white, faced death together.

Today we remember all who died in war and conflict; and those amongst us who live but who carry the scars and the wounds. Let us be instruments of healing and peace.

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.