

Dean's Letter, 25 November 2018

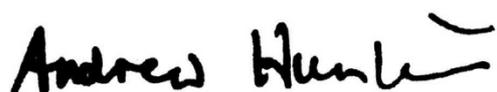
Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

My first memory of grief was when I was in Std 3 (Grade 5). We were living on our farm just outside Stellenbosch, and went to and from school each day with the school bus. The farm next door had children our age (my sister and me), also a boy and a girl, and we became good friends. Sometimes we would walk across their property to go and visit them, and it was always fun to see someone else's home. But one afternoon, tragedy struck. The school bus had dropped me and my sister off at our farm. We walked home up the hill, to our house. The bus went on, stopped for these two other children to get off. The girl was so eager to get home that she rushed off the bus and ran across the road without looking. An oncoming car knocked her down and she was killed.

That was my first experience, and memory, of grief. I remember hearing the news, my sister and I. We were devastated. In tears. Angry with the driver of the car – who herself was deeply shocked and upset. Heartbroken. Lost and sad. These two children – the boy and the girl – were the first real friends we had made since moving to Stellenbosch from Pietermaritzburg. We were just getting to know them and to like them. And now this. A few months later we went to visit the family. The girl's room had been cleared out – it was now empty of any sign of her. We ran through it, not stopping to talk, wondering how it felt to be in the room of someone who had died. We were almost nervous to enter. And then, a bit later, the family sold the farm and left Stellenbosch. The parents took strain in their marriage. We lost touch.

Why am I telling this story? Because it is my experience, as a child, of losing a friend. A number of school children here in Grahamstown have died in recent weeks: a boy at Graeme College; a girl at Good Shepherd; and two boys at St Andrew's College, the most recent one, a week ago, by suicide. Our hearts go out to their families and school friends during this immensely sad time of loss and shock and grief. The death of someone close to us is overwhelming. The death of someone by suicide is in some ways much harder to deal with. We are left with grief, but also at times with guilt, anger and resentment. So we hold in particular the family and friends of that young boy, Tom, in our love and prayers at this time. The prayer of Committal in the case of a suicide is helpful: "We commit the body of our dear brother/sister to the ground, and we commend him to the just and merciful judgement of God who alone has perfect understanding".

My love to you all

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