

## Dean's Letter, 2 December 2018

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

Claire and I are delighted to be hosting our guest preacher for today, Advent Sunday: The Revd Dr Mary Ellen Ashcroft. She is an old friend from Cape Town days, now based in the USA, and is with us for a visit.

The season of Advent, which we begin today, is a time of waiting, preparation, expectation. It marks the beginning of the church's Liturgical Year. All our anxieties of what is happening around us, all our uncertainties of what next year might hold, our hopes and dreams and longings, are given expression in the rhythm and themes of Advent. They are joined with the great Old Testament prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, and all that this means: fulfilment of God's plan for the world, and the new age of hope and restoration and healing and salvation, which Jesus brings. The season of Advent has as its central theme the Christian hope of the Coming of Christ.

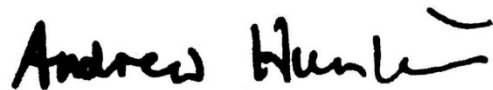
The introduction to the Season of Advent, contained in our Lectionary, tells us:

"Bernard of Clairvaux [d. 1153] summarises the theology of the season of Advent as the three comings of Christ, past, present and future. 'In the first coming [his birth], Christ was our redemption; in the last coming, he will appear as our life; in this middle coming, he is our rest and our consolation.'"

"The first two Sundays of Advent focus our attention on the second coming of Jesus as our hope, and in the prophecies of the First Covenant. The second two Sundays remind us of the preparations God made for Jesus' birth at Bethlehem in fulfilment of those prophecies. We are reminded that we live in the between times, the 'now' of our salvation and the 'not yet' of its complete fulfilment. The themes are those of hope and expectation for both the first and second comings of Christ. They challenge us to reconsider and engage with Word and Liturgy the revelation of Christ's time in the midst of our time. We begin the year praying together about the end of all history."

As I mentioned a few weeks ago, I am among those nominated for the forthcoming Elective Assembly, diocese of Port Elizabeth, which gathers this week, 5th – 7th December. However, at this stage, no-one from within the Assembly itself has been found who is willing to nominate me (my original nominees were both retired clergy, who do not form part of the Elective Assembly). Nomination from within the Assembly itself must be done either by active clergy (not yet retired) or lay people who have been elected to represent their parish. If no-one comes forward in the next few days to do so, I am effectively out of the picture. Let's continue to hold the Assembly and the diocese of PE in our prayers; and let's pray also the diocese of Mzimvubu, whose Elective Assembly is 10th – 12th December 2018.

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.