

Dean's Letter, 20 January 2019

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

We are very much in “beginning” mode: opening events and services to mark the start of the new academic and working year; dairies filling up with dates and commitments; plans for the months ahead. Our annual Back to School service takes place in two weeks’ time (3rd February), Rhodes students return mid-February, and Vestry is scheduled for mid-March. It can feel (and sound) rather intense! But underlying everything we do is the faithfulness and love of God. Our Old Testament reading (Isaiah 62:1-5) uses the image of marriage to describe the relationship between God and God’s people: “For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you (Is 62:5). An image which speaks of deep love, delight, faithfulness, enduring commitment... and joy. We are held in the embrace of God.

The gospel reading of the wedding at Cana contains the first of the seven Signs found in John’s Gospel, signs which speak of the new life and transforming power of God. Jesus turns water into wine (John 2:1-11) as a sign of transformation. Though in our drought-stricken town, we might want to save the water! It is good to go into the months ahead with these signs and reminders of hope and life. We are surrounded by possibilities. Let us offer the everyday water of our lives to God. Who knows what will happen?

Astonishing and exciting news which reached me on Christmas Eve, is that Cameron Luke appears to have obtained a work visa after all and hopes to join us from the UK in February, as our new Cathedral Director of Music! Details are not completely clear as yet, but he wrote with optimism and excitement to say that he had been pressurising things at his end and pursuing a line or two in SA, and that it had paid off.

I share with you a draft “Statement of Inclusivity” which your PCC has been working on. We would like to table it at Vestry for discussion and possible adoption. The questions around human sexuality, and our holy use of this great gift from God, continue to exercise our thoughts and pastoral concern. The relationship between a man and a woman is the experience of most people, and the Church continues to see faithful Christian marriage as a God-given framework for love and sexual intimacy and children. At the same time, other forms of families, and relationships, are also very much part of our lives - single or adoptive parents, those divorced and on their own, people in same-sex relationships. And increasingly we recognise that sexuality and gender is not cut and dried. As the Cathedral, I hope that we welcome and affirm same-sex couples, and their children; and that young people who are struggling with gender identity and sexuality know there is space here for them. For us all.

My love to you all

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

Cathedral of St Michael & St George, Makhanda (Grahamstown)

STATEMENT OF WELCOME AND AFFIRMATION

I praise you, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made
Psalm 139:14

We affirm all human beings equally as created in the image of God, all equally sharing in God's love and grace.

We acknowledge centuries of bias and discrimination against those whose sexual orientation and gender identities differ from the dominant heterosexual male/female experience and understanding.

We welcome developing understandings of the complexity and diversity of our human sexuality, sexual orientations and gender identity. We affirm and support those who identify as part of the LGBTQIA++ spectrum.

As the Cathedral, we are actively participating in the Archbishop's Provincial Task Team on Human Sexuality which is exploring ways in which ACSA may minister more effectively to all members of the LGBTQIA++ community.

We do so in the context of the Pastoral Standards of our Province, which have the intention of the church being a safe and welcoming space for all.

I came that they may have life, and life in all its fullness
John 10:10

The Dean, Church Wardens and Cathedral Parish Council
Cathedral of St Michael & St George
Makhanda (Grahamstown)
November 2018