

Dean's Letter, 3 February 2019

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

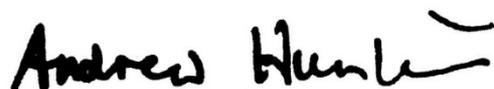
Today is our annual Back to School service. As usual, we have invited schools from all over the town to join in. The service is led largely by our Cathedral youth, together with representatives from various schools. The service includes an act of dedication by pupils (learners), teachers, and parents. Our prayer and hope is that our schools be places of learning and growth; and that they be safe spaces for all our children and young people. It is deeply disturbing when schools and staff appointments become a battleground; or when drugs are sold and used on school property; or when there is violence, and guns and knives are used to fight and hurt and kill; or when there is sexual abuse between staff and pupils. And it is tragic, and senseless, when schools are vandalised, or robbed of their resources, or burnt in acts of protest and rage by communities or even by parents. Nothing is gained by such actions. All that our children are left with is destruction and devastation. So our prayer is that this year will be a fruitful and happy year for all our schools. We recognise and congratulate the successes of last year, in a number of our schools here in Grahamstown (Makhanda), and thank all who have worked so hard, and continue to do so, to bring this about.

This year, the service coincides with the start of Rhodes University Orientation Week (O-Week) for 1st year students. So the town is full of bright eyed and eager newcomers, with their proud but anxious parents! We hope very much that some of the new students will make their way to the Cathedral, and become part of our youth and our Cathedral Student Ministry, in the weeks ahead. Our evening Student services begin on Sunday 17th February.

Our scripture readings for today speak of calling (Jeremiah 1:4-10) and opposition (Luke 4:21-30). The call of Jeremiah as a young man, and his response, was the start of a profound and powerful prophetic ministry which stretched for many years, culminating with what were the darkest days of Israel's history – the overthrow and defeat of the nation, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the journey of the survivors into captivity. Jeremiah was called to speak the "hard" word, not words of comfort or peace. Truth is not always comfortable or pleasant. When injustice or corruption or mismanagement or abuse of power is destroying a community or a nation; when unfaithfulness is destroying a marriage; when terror and thuggery run riot on the streets, then truth needs to be spoken.

The drought and the water crisis has brought people together, in a number of prayer meetings and acts of worship, in recent weeks. We are all in this together. So let us continue to pray for rain, and also that we may be good stewards of the resources we have been given. We also continue to pray for Zimbabwe. Horror stories of violent and brutal actions by police and others are emerging from that country.

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.