

Dean's Letter, 10 March 2019

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

This morning, in the context of our 9.30 a.m. service, we shall be admitting Tandiwe Gabavana as Cathedral Youth Intern. We are all familiar with our choir intern (Kepa- who is also our acting director of music) and our marimba intern (Asakhe), and the wonderful work that they are doing, but this is the first time (as far as I know) that we have had a youth intern at the Cathedral. The idea was warmly welcomed and approved at the recent PCC meeting. The aims of the youth intern program are multi-faceted, and include giving work experience, training in administrative skills, exposure to governance, personal growth and development, and discipleship. Thus far, Tandiwe has taken on the administration for the Synod planning committee, has assisted with preparation for our Annual Vestry, and a number of other letters and projects. It is good to have her as part of the team.

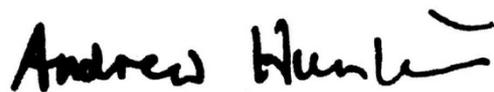
We are in the season of Lent, which started this past week. Together with Christians all over the world, we gathered in worship to mark Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent, the 40 days, excluding Sundays, between now and Easter. It is tradition to observe Lent with a number of outward signs and symbols. We use the liturgical colour purple, for sorrow and mourning. The church is stark and undecorated – the banners have been removed from the High Altar; no flowers until Easter. We repeat the Ten Commandments. And the particular symbol of Ash Wednesday is the cross, marked in ashes on our foreheads. Why do we do all this?

There are two reasons. Firstly, ashes are a mark or sign of grief and sorrow, and also of repentance. At the end of his great trial of suffering, and his debate with God, Job answers the Lord, "I know that you can do all things and that no purpose is beyond you... Therefore I yield, repenting in dust and ashes" (Job 42:1-2, 6). In the book of Daniel, Daniel turns to the Lord God "in earnest prayer and supplication with fasting and with sackcloth and ashes" and makes confession to the Lord God on behalf of the people of God (Daniel 9:3). Ashes are an ancient symbol of grief, mourning, sorrow, repentance, turning back to God.

Secondly, Lent: the entire season of Lent is an opportunity for spiritual and personal renewal. After Jesus was baptised, he went into the wilderness for 40 days, where he fasted, he prayed, he was tempted, he was amongst the wild animals; he faced the demons. He prepared for the ministry and the challenges that lay in front of him. These 40 days of Lent are our time in the wilderness, a time to search our souls and examine our hearts, and to listen for the voice of God.

You and I have a personal invitation from God! An invitation to go on inward journey of spiritual deepening, a time of introspection, to take an honest look at our lives, our actions, our attitudes; to enter into the wilderness. Let's enter this Lent with expectation that God will meet us and will speak to us.

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.