

Dean's Letter, 31 March 2019

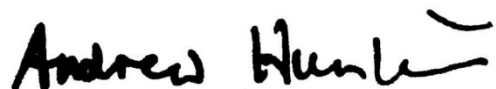
Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

Today we thank God for the life and witness of our CR (Community of the Resurrection) Sisters, and in particular their care over a number of years for the old and frail, as well as for children. The Sisters recently decided to close St Luke's, which is their frail care section, and in fact today (31st March) marks that closure. I am so thankful for the time that my mother had in St Luke's, during the last few months of her life, and for the care and love she and we received during her last days and beyond. I know that many others can tell similar stories of gratitude and thanksgiving for the love and care of the CR Sisters. Those in frail care have moved either to Brookshaw, or Somerset Place, or (one person) to Alexandria.

As most of you know, I have been awarded my PhD (actually, for some or other reason, it is a DPhil) by Nelson Mandela University (NMU), in Port Elizabeth. The degree will be conferred at a graduation ceremony on Friday 5th April, this week. My thesis title was "Conflict resolution and campus protests at Rhodes University, 2015 – 2016". Many of us were around during those years, not that long ago; and many of the issues that emerged during the protests are still with us. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to do this research, and I could not have had a more supportive community: the Cathedral family; the diocese – Bishop Ebenezer has been wonderfully encouraging throughout; my informal friend networks such as my early morning running group; a brilliant supervisor in the person of Professor Lyn Snodgrass; a rich data field for research 400 yards up the road; open doors and people willing to share their stories and give of their time; two wonderful transcribers – Lou-Anne and Chantel - of my 55 interviews (who worked in their own time, after hours); a brilliant team of proof-readers - Geoff Antrobus, Paul Walters, Peter Rose, and my NZ niece, Lucy Castle; and my darling Claire, Rachel and Nicola for their love and support throughout. What a journey it has been! I have learned so much, and been enriched beyond words. It was also a sad time: an encounter with anger, pain, frustration, despair, disillusionment, and some of the bleak realities that we face as a country, and all too many manifestations of human sin and frailty; yet also an awareness of faithful people doing what they could to bring resolution and a way forward; and a profound awareness of how much we as people need the grace of God to bring us to healing, reconciliation, a change of life and heart, transformed behaviour and changed attitudes. There is much ugliness around. Sin is a reality. It is good during this season of Lent to be very honest about this.

The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32) which is today's Gospel reading, is a story of sin and repentance, embrace and restoration, the love of the Father for his two sons, each of them wayward in their own way. May we experience the embrace of God for each one of 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.