

## Dean's Letter, 19 May 2019

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

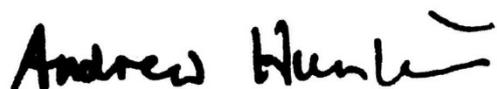
"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35). These familiar words in St John's Gospel come during the Last Supper, shortly after Jesus has washed the feet of his disciples. The night lies ahead. Judas is about to betray Jesus. The night lies ahead: his arrest, the mockery of a trial, flogging, crucifixion, death. All done, St John tells us, as a sign of God's love for the world: "God so loved the world that he gave his son..." (John 3:16). God's love embraces the entire world, all people.

But this new commandment is for you and me, as we live with the deep divisions and levels of suspicion and mistrust that are so much part of our community – between race and culture and language and class and gender – but as followers of Jesus we are called to live differently. To be that alternative community, that loves across and in spite of barriers. The first reading, from Acts 11, gives us the beginning of this new community: it is Peter's sermon or testimony, telling how he was sent by the Spirit to the centurion Cornelius, and how the Spirit of God was poured out "even on the Gentiles" – the foreigners, the aliens, those decidedly not part of God's chosen people. And so this new community is born.

We have emerged from the recent national elections unscathed, and we give thanks for the work of the IEC in facilitating a smooth electoral process. However, we have not been helped by the election rhetoric, and heightened levels of anger and resentment, that has been a feature of these past few months leading up to the election. Each one of us has strong opinions and views on the things that matter to us, and we are free to agree and disagree. But as the people of God, our relationships with one another are to be shaped and defined by love, and the new commandment that Jesus gives us. Love, where we seek what is best for one another. Love that puts oneself into the shoes of the other. Love that reaches out across barriers, and through disagreements, and through suspicion and mistrust and years of alienation. Can we do it? Jesus commands us to do so!

We have probably all seen Christians, members of the body of Christ, turn on one another in anger. Quarrels and disagreements do happen. The history of the church with its numerous divisions is a sad testimony to this. But God's grace is there for us to hold us together, and to decide and choose not to go down the road of alienation. We belong together, brought together by the love of Christ.

My love to you all

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