

## Dean's Letter, 28 July 2019

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

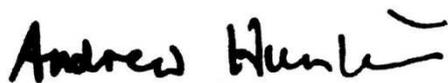
Our first reading for today, Hosea 1:2-10, begins on a brutal note. God commands Hosea to “take a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom”. Hosea does so; he marries Gomer, and they have three children. Each child is duly named by God with names that speak of God’s rejection of his chosen people. God is to have no mercy or pity on his people; He will reject them because of their faithlessness. The faithlessness of the people to God is likened to adultery, the breaking of the solemn marriage covenant. Hosea’s wife, who was unfaithful to him – “a wife of whoredom” represents the people of Israel in their faithlessness to God who had redeemed them and made them His own. Hosea’s family life is in tatters, and it becomes a symbol of the broken relationship between the people of Israel, and God. The book is an extended lament as God mourns the way in which His people have deserted Him, the one who created and redeemed them. How tragic is this!

The faithlessness of the people of God is not the end of the story. God’s faithfulness shines through and beyond, and continues through the history of God’s people. It re-emerges in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus Christ. St Paul writes to the church in Colossae: “And when you were dead in trespasses... God made you alive together with Christ, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross” (Col 2:13-14). And then, in the Gospel reading, Jesus teaches his disciples, and us, about the nature of prayer – the intimacy with the Father into which we are invited. This is a far cry from the faithlessness of God’s people and God’s complete rejection of them.

Prayer begins with the words we know so well, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...” (Luke 11:2f) and moves into the place of deep and complete dependence on God for our needs (not our greed) - the “daily bread” that is our daily need. We are to persist in prayer; and there is the promise of the Holy Spirit which the Father will give to those who ask him (Luke 11:13). Intimacy, belonging, looking to God for all things. Finding refuge in the midst of the storm and turmoil around us: the tragedy of communities in the Western Cape ravaged by gang violence and drugs; our fragile national picture with accusations and counter-accusations of corruption and fraud; our brittle, struggling economy. It is as people of prayer and trust, who depend on the faithfulness of God, that we walk through these days.

I am grateful to all who are asking after my forthcoming hip replacement op. All going well, Claire and I shall be back in town on about 16th August; I shall then be recuperating for several weeks at home. Thank you for your prayers!

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a small flourish at the end.