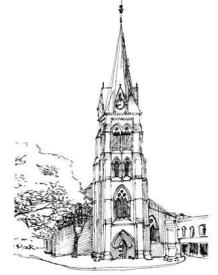




## Cathedral Church of St Michael & St George Grahamstown

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Thursday, September 05, 2019

### Dean's Letter – The State of the Nation

The cruel and terrible rape and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana, a UCT first year student, has shaken us all to the core. We are a nation in mourning and rage, horror and despair. Her death at the hands of a member of our civil service, in the middle of the day, in a suburban post office, has come to represent so much of what is wrong with our country, our society: a man with a criminal record, using his position to lure a young woman into his government office, his place of employment, to then assault, rape and murder her. This as yet officially nameless person has destroyed not only the life of one of our own. He has all but destroyed her family. But he has also burst the fragile bubble of complacency in which we have been living, with regard to the extent and scope of gender-based violence in our beloved country.

Let us no longer remain silent. Uyinene's assault and death is but one among many, many terrible crimes of this nature that have become all too common in our country. And all too often, these crimes go unpunished, unreported, and unresolved. The high rate of under-reporting of sexual assault and gender-based violence is well known, and the reasons for it are many-fold. But amongst those reasons is the tragic reality that it is the victim who is doubly shamed and victimised, in her reporting of the assault; that many girls and women are silenced by fear and shame; that many believe they have no other option but to continue to live or co-exist with their assailants; that the capacity and ability of the SAPS to deal with gender-based violence has all too often been called into question; that rapists, again and again, simply get away with it.

This is completely unacceptable.

Nor has the church always done what is needed. In promoting and teaching an unquestioning male headship and female submission within marriage; in encouraging a flawed theology of forgiveness in the face of gender-based assault, marital unfaithfulness and domestic violence; in turning a blind eye to males in leadership who use their position to dominate and control; in relaxing in our all-too-comfortable (for men) and complacent patriarchal hierarchy of leadership – in

these and other ways we have failed to be true to the gospel of liberation and grace, the freedom that Jesus came to bring and proclaim (Luke 4:16-20).

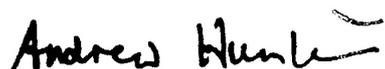
For a number of years, the Cathedral has been the venue for *Breaking the Silence*, the annual program arranged by Rhodes University students and staff, to address gender-based violence. We continue to offer the sacred space of the Cathedral for this purpose, and shall further engage with the university community of ways in which we can help.

As the Cathedral, we further commit to the following:

1. We shall ensure that the Cathedral is a safe space for all who come to us. The Pastoral Standards of ACSA will be our guide, to all who minister in any way in the name of the Cathedral.
2. We shall, through sermons, confirmation classes, and other means, address the flawed theologies noted above that are all too pervasive in our society. And we shall call out and challenge these theologies when we see them amongst others.
3. Together with other churches, we shall engage with the local SAPS about their response to allegations brought to them, of gender-based violence, and their preparedness to deal with compassion and care, with such cases.
4. We invite our women's and men's organisations, together with our young people, to engage with these issues.
5. Together, our Cathedral men and boys stand against all abuse, sexual assault and violence.

We hold the family of Uyinene, and all survivors and victims of sexual violence, in our hearts and prayers. And we affirm for them, and for us all, the words of Jesus, who came "that we might have life, and have it in abundance" (John 10:10).

Yours in the love and service of Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Very Reverend Dr Andrew Hunter  
Dean of Grahamstown