

## Dean's Letter, 22 September 2019

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

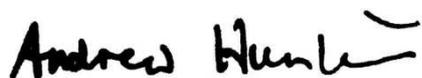
Part of our response to the recent terrible attacks on young women has been to engage with the local SAPS, to hear from them how they respond when people come to lay charges of sexual assault; and to see how prepared they (the SAPS) are to respond with compassion and care, in such cases. Members of the Cathedral staff met this past Monday (my first day back at work) with Lt-Colonel Monray Nel and Captain Malinda Coetzer. It was an enlightening and very encouraging meeting. We sat together for nearly two hours. They promised to provide us with a flow chart to illustrate the steps that are taken when one reports a case of sexual assault.

Our overall conclusion was that the SAPS team here in Grahamstown and Joza is well prepared and trained to respond appropriately when people come to the police, in cases of domestic violence and in cases of sexual assault; that we are blessed to have a network of caring people at a number of levels, to respond appropriately and promptly; that our small town has in its midst the resources to provide support and care where needed. Positive mention was made of work done by the Director of Public Prosecutions and especially Advocate Nickie Turner; the Chief Magistrate, Mr van Vuuren; the Rape Survivors Support Group; volunteers and active citizens who help out; and caring and trained SAPS members. There is a special room which is used to take statements. Only female SAPS members are allowed to take statements.

It was acknowledged that not everything is as it should be. It can take up to two years to bring a rape charge to court, due to the delays in the DNA testing and other tests – the centre we and the entire Eastern Cape use is in PE, and that alone can take up to six months before a report is received, due to the volume of work. Detectives carry very large caseloads – the minimum number of cases that an individual detective will have is seldom less than sixty, and can be as high as 120 cases. The number of sexual assault cases in the Grahamstown area averages about six per month (adults and children). Almost all of the cases of sexual assault are NOT of “stranger danger” but are rather assaults by people known to the victim. Many assaults are not reported. And, yes, there are false accusations made as well. Not everyone tells the truth. It is a painful and traumatic part of our community – and at the heart of it all is the dreadful reality of sexual assault, largely by males against females. We have a national crisis on our hands. Perhaps, tragically, the recent deaths have provided the wake-up call for us all.

Our meeting with them concluded with prayers for the SAPS and for all who are part of bringing healing.

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 small flourish at the end.