

Dean's Letter, 22 March 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The President's statement last Sunday, outlining the national response to the coronavirus pandemic, is in my mind as I write this letter. Every day brings fresh developments, cancellations, closures, restrictions to movement and travel. Yet I think that we all recognise the necessity of these steps, tough as they may feel at times.

Our response as the Cathedral community is, I suggest, three-fold. There is the practical response: using hand sanitisers; waving, not shaking hands; intinction or touching the base of the chalice at Communion; being careful how we sneeze or cough. Staying at home if we are not well. Being sensible. When we visit one another, let's be careful to wash hands before and after the visit. It is fortunate that the number of people who come to the Cathedral for Sunday worship is just on or slightly under the 100 mark. So for now, we are able to continue to gather on Sundays and during the week.

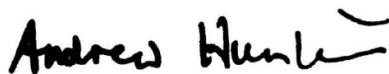
There is the response of compassion and care. Being alongside one another in our fears and disappointments and anxieties. The clergy will visit and minister to any who are housebound, or unable to attend church. Home Communion will be offered: please speak to me if you or anyone you know, needs Communion or pastoral care at home. This is not a time for panic.

There is the gospel response: in Jesus Christ we are people of hope; we are given the deep assurance that nothing can separate us from God's love; and as people of faith we are given light in the darkness. As someone close to me wrote recently, "...being people of faith is so grounding, especially in trying times such as these. We have hope, faith and love. Hope! Faith! Love! What gifts for scared souls!"

The following wise words were written by Martin Luther at the time of the Black Plague in Europe, in the 16th century:

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy..." —Martin Luther, Works v. 43, p. 132. Letter "Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague" written to Rev. Dr. John Hess.

My love to you all

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