

Dean's Letter, 5 April 2020, Palm Sunday

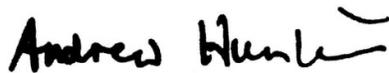
Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

What a time we are all living in right now. It is probably completely outside our experience. Who of us has lived in a time of pandemic, plague, extended shutdown, social distancing? This is challenging for each of us on a number of levels, and the impact of the pandemic and its ramifications are only just beginning to be felt. After the initial anxiety, excitement and shock of being put into lock down, the reality is dawning. No school or university for the foreseeable future. Children and students being taught online. Big - huge - implications for schools and households who do not have access to the internet and other resources – computers, cell phones, adequate data or WiFi. Many in our country live in environments that make it virtually impossible to keep social distancing, or remain indoors, or even to wash hands regularly. Queues of people outside food shops, waiting for other shoppers to exit so that they can take their turn, make social distancing difficult. If and when the pandemic hits us here in Makhanda (Grahamstown), we shall be in trouble. Then there is the economic impact of businesses and companies shutting down, possibly unable to pay their staff due to lack of turnover and income, retrenchments, closures, stagnation. It is a scary world we are living in, and the future is impossible to predict.

It is in this unique and daunting context that we gather across the world – albeit online, socially and physically distant from one another – for Palm Sunday, to mark the events of Holy Week and Good Friday, and finally, next Sunday, to celebrate the feast of Easter. A roller coaster of events in a few days: the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with the adulation of the crowds; the growing tension during the early days of Holy Week; the foot washing and first Eucharist on the night of Maundy Thursday; the betrayal by Judas, the Lord's night watch in the Garden of Gethsemane while his disciples slept; his arrest, mockery of a trial, his flogging, suffering, crucifixion, death and burial: joy and sorrow, delight and horror, blessing and agony, words of love - "do this in memory of me" with "do you betray your master with a kiss?" - side by side.

We are living in an extended Holy Week and Good Friday. Easter is a way off. We walk these days, the way of the cross, following our Lord's example. It is through his suffering and death that we are given courage. And we find ourselves part of the Easter story of new life and hope.

My love to you all

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