

Dean's Letter, 3 May 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Every week is bringing new things into the mix of our uncertain lives. We are getting used to watching TV with anticipation on Thursday evenings for our President to address us, and to inform the country what to expect in the next while. The move to Level 4 of lockdown is good news. But as we know, schools remain closed, with online learning taking place for some, and the shape of the school and university academic year uncertain.

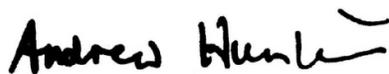
The need for food aid is growing. Here in Makhanda (Grahamstown), civil society efforts to provide food in the form of vouchers and parcels have been wonderful, with hundreds of thousands of Rands worth of goods or vouchers being purchased and handed out. Sadly, in spite of the large amount promised by central government to assist with food aid, it appears that not much has reached us, and the bulk of food aid being given is coming from private donors. At the same time, we salute government officials, including the SAPS, who are doing what they can. There are many wonderful caring people around, officials and volunteers, and it is a privilege to work with them and to join hands in this way.

Good Shepherd Sunday (today) has as our gospel focus the words of Jesus, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out..." (John 10); "he will make me lie down in green pastures and lead me beside still waters..." (Psalm 23). The image of the leader as the shepherd of God's people is a familiar picture in both the Old and the New Testaments. In the OT, the shepherds were the prophets, the priests and the kings of the nation; in the NT, the shepherds are those who care for and lead the church. Shepherds in today's context need to vision and look ahead, to see what is coming, and to respond accordingly. What does that mean for us, both during and after this time of the Covid pandemic?

Some are pointing to a major paradigm shift as we reimagine what our world could and should be like. I suggest three areas (there may well be more) that are emerging, crying out for fundamental change and re-evaluation: the nature of our society, especially in our care for the poor and vulnerable; the sustainability and protection of the environment, battered by growing consumption and exploitation; and the nature, life, ministry and witness of the church. This crisis presents us with the opportunity to rebuild, to start afresh.

The picture of the life of the NT church (Acts 2:42-47) gives us a glimpse, at grass-roots level, of a caring Christian community. How remarkable that we are seeing this right now, here in our midst. Is this a new beginning?

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.