

Dean's Letter, 17 May 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

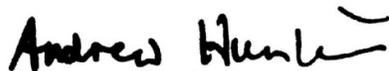
We are joined today, via our Facebook page, by descendants of the 1820 Settlers. The Settler-Ships "Albury", "Aurora", "Brilliant", and "Weymouth" all arrived within three days of each other at Algoa Bay (15th-17th May 1820), and this year, 2020, is the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Settlers. The plan had been for families of their descendants to come to South Africa for this commemoration. They would have joined us in worship at the Cathedral today, 17th May. Wreaths would have been blessed, and then we would have accompanied them to the 1820 Settlers Monument for the laying of the wreaths and prayers of thanksgiving for and remembrance of for the departed. But those plans, like so many others, have had to be cancelled. Instead, people from all over the world are worshipping and praying with us, in real time, via the internet. We welcome them very warmly indeed, and I thank Mr Grant Berry for contacting me, two years ago, about this commemoration.

So in the context of our worship today, we remember and commemorate the arrival of the 1820 Settlers, 200 years ago. We remember and acknowledge their lives, and the sacrifices made; for their contribution to this country and especially to the Eastern Cape. We give thanks for their lives of faith in God. We pray and give thanks for their descendants, here and all over the world, as they gather in memory with us. We remember those who died on all sides in the various Frontier wars, and we bring to God our fractured country. We pray for the wise and just use of land and other natural resources. We pray for the healing of historic wounds, the restoration of relationships, and for the reconciliation of all.

Our Gospel reading for today (John 14:15-21) brings us words of intimacy, hope and promise. The promise is that the Advocate or Helper, the Spirit of truth, will come to us; the hope is that because Jesus lives, we also will live; the intimacy is in the love for us of the Father and the Son. It is part of the resurrection experience. We are not left orphaned; Jesus comes to us by the Spirit. During these days of lockdown, the gift and promise of Jesus is that we are not alone. He gives us strength and courage during dark days.

I find this good to hold onto. For me, lockdown is not getting any easier. The initial excitement and sense of purpose is draining away. We are seeing an increase in infections. There is no indication how long this will be. These words of Jesus are once again an invitation to dig deep, to receive his love and grace, and to keep going. Social distancing. Food parcels. Love. Compassion. Hope. Trust. Courage. Faith. We offer our current struggles and times of quiet despair to God, asking for grace and strength each day.

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 horizontal line at the end.