

Dean's Letter, 24 May 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

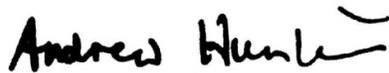
Over the past few days I have been re-reading the magnificent biography of Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton, *Apartheid and the Archbishop*, written by Alan Paton. Clayton was Bishop of Johannesburg from 1934 - 1948, and Archbishop of Cape Town from 1949 until his death in 1957. On Ash Wednesday of that year, he, on behalf of the Synod of Bishops, signed a letter written to the then Prime Minister H F Verwoerd. The letter stated the total opposition of the Anglican Church to the government attempt to regulate worship according to race. The Archbishop stated his intention to disobey the law, and to encourage others also to disobey it. He died the following day.

There is much that can be said about the life and times in which Archbishop Clayton lived and ministered. They were difficult years for the country. Certainly, they were years of immense conflict: on a global scale, the 2nd World War tore the world apart; in South Africa, there were deep divisions between white English and Afrikaans speakers; and between white and black. The Nationalist Party came into power in 1948 and so began the avalanche of racist legislation which deeply scarred our country and from which we are still recovering. Division. Suspicion. Hatred. Broken relationships. Injustice. Intolerance. Cruelty. Greed. Revenge.

I wonder how we shall look back, in years to come, on this time of the coronavirus. Almost certainly, we shall remember it as a time of significant change, when the world as we have known it has been turned upside down. What about our life and witness as the church? Pope Francis is quoted as saying that the church should be a 'field hospital' – a place and community for healing. Healing from the "cycle of violence, hate, fear, racism and division that plagues our human family" (to quote Monsignor Tomas Halik), and to replace these with "peace, tranquillity and unity".

This can happen only when Christ is our centre, our source of life, and our salvation. There is no way that we can be healed from the hurts of the past without opening ourselves to the love and forgiveness of God. We are too ensnared in anger and hatred to be agents of healing – unless we are first restored and made new people by Jesus Christ. The Christian witness is always to the kingdom of God and to the transforming power and love of the Gospel. Jesus came to live amongst us, he died and rose again, and ascended into heaven, to unite us to the Father and to reconcile us to one another. He prays for us: "May they be one, as we [the Father and the Son] are one." Indeed, may we be one.

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.