

## Dean's Letter, 5 July 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Today marks what would have been the end of another National Arts Festival. By many accounts the virtual Festival has gone well and there has been some wonderful stuff available. Nothing, however, beats the live, face to face experience, and we hope and long for a return to the real thing in 2021. So much has been put on hold during this Covid time. I miss seeing people's unmasked faces, their smiles, hearing their unmuffled voices. It is good to be out and about, but it is a strange experience. For me, there is an underlying sadness and grief, and also fear: loss of contact, our worried, anxious social distance, fear of infection. Yet I am grateful for the contact that we are able to have with one another, through whatever means.

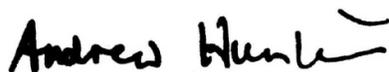
There are horrific reports of what is happening in our hospitals, both locally and also in Port Elizabeth. A colleague in PE told me of someone taken to hospital with a broken hip; there were no blankets available, so she was covered with newspaper. Parishes in PE are providing soup and food and bedding and clothes to the needy on a daily basis. I am grateful to all here in Makhanda (Grahamstown) who help with Food4Futures and in other ways. Our infection rate is climbing. We hold in love and prayer all who are infected, or in quarantine, or waiting for test results, living with uncertainty and anxiety and fear. We especially hold our schools and our hospital in our prayers; health care workers; teachers; and Rhodes students who are returning to town but who then go into 14 days quarantine, in res (or digs).

One of the gospel readings this past week was of the stilling of the storm (Matthew 8:23-27). We find a number of accounts of this event, in the gospels. The disciples with Jesus are in the boat; Jesus is asleep; the storm rises and threatens to swamp the boat. In terror, the disciples call on Jesus for help. He wakes up, calms the storm with a word, and then rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith. They question amongst themselves, 'What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?'

The boat is often seen as a symbol of the church; the waves and the storm, the chaos in which we live; Jesus proclaims the word of peace and shows that he is lord over the chaos. The disciples' responses are familiar to us: fear, despair, terror. How often have you or I called on Jesus for help, to wake up and do something? The assurance, however, is that Jesus is amongst us, present, in the boat, in the midst of the storm, speaking the word of peace, taking authority over chaos and despair.

Our acts and deeds of compassion and kindness, and our prayers, are signs of Christ to one another. We are surrounded by brothers and sisters, fellow disciples, in the same boat. Let's do what we can.

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.