

Dean's Letter, 12 July 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

It is sobering to hear, almost daily, of new infections, and deaths. We are living with such uncertainty. Plans are on hold. Dreams for the future are deferred, or have ended. There is despair, fear, shock and disbelief. For young people especially, this is a strange and often very difficult time. I spoke with a colleague whose 19-year-old son hopes to go to university in PE next year; but many of the departments are not currently taking any applications for 2021. Like the lives of so many young people, his life is on hold. Schools are doing what they can, with the various grades returning bit by bit, or children attending every other day so as to be able to space them out. But other schools are not coping. As the year moves on, the prospect of a lost academic year for many young people may become a reality.

In our country, and elsewhere in the world, people continue to seethe and rage over injustices done, historic hurts, deep inequalities. And we live with these, on our doorstep, on TV, on our phone screens, in our daily lives and our own lived experience. Struggles against prejudice and racism. People begging for help with food, or rent money. Statues falling. History being interrogated. Protests against acts of gender-based violence. Businesses closing and people unemployed. There is so much pain, all around us. Will things ever change? Is there a future for any of us?

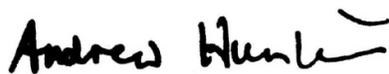
Our Old Testament reading for today (Isaiah 55:10-13) is a word of hope. It comes from a very dark period in the history of Israel, the time of exile. All the signs of God's presence and God's love for His people – the temple, the land, the kingship - had been destroyed or had come to an end. It was a time of hopelessness.

In that time of hopelessness, exile and despair – and in our time of exile and despair - Isaiah spoke – and speaks - words of hope, to reassure God's people – and to assure us - that God would accomplish His purpose, and would lead the people back to the Promised Land.

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In some ways, Covid and the events of our times are a time of exile. Signs of hope are few. It is tempting to throw in the towel, give up. But we cannot and we must not. Using the image of the sower and the seed from the Gospel reading (Matthew 13), we are walking amongst thorns and rocky ground, and the harvest of hope and transformation seems thin and almost worthless. We labour on, wearily, seeing little result, or seeing our efforts blown away in the wind. But in the end, we are assured, the harvest will be gathered, "in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty and in another thirty" (Matt 13:23). Let us keep on sowing the seed of love and forgiveness and justice and honesty and truth.

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.