

Dean's Letter, 30 August 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The month of August is normally observed as the Month of Compassion, and also Women's Month, with National Women's Day as a particular focus. As part of this, we have had a series of women preachers at Evening Prayer on Sundays. Some weeks ago, a group of Anglican women put out a fairly provocative statement, "Gatvol yet hopeful" and invited debate. It evoked wide response, but has got people talking. This is also in the context where there is growing outrage at the levels of gender-based violence. It has been called a second pandemic. The church is not free of this. Part of our response is to look at our theology, our attitudes, our cultural norms, that implicitly allow or turn a blind eye to violence against women. The Old Testament has some horrific accounts – which the theologian Phyllis Tribble refers to as "texts of terror" – stories of rape – including gang rape, cruelty, callous behaviour, in which women are the victims.

The fact that these stories are in the Bible, and the fact that we read them – e.g. the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13) was the reading for Evening Prayer a few Sundays ago – invites us to look at what happens within communities and within families. And we can interrogate how we respond when these things happen. We tend to want to cover up things like this, or make excuses – she asked for it, what was she wearing – or keep it a secret – don't tell anyone – or simply do nothing about it. King David's inaction, when his son raped Tamar, nearly brought down the entire kingdom.

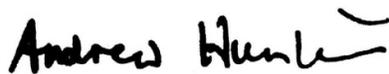
The other pandemic that we are facing is that of corruption in the public and private sector. The South African Council of Churches, with other organisations, met this past week with President Cyril Ramaphosa and the "top six" of the ANC to voice their concerns. The SACC said

"There comes a time when the moral depravity of some in positions of authority, and in the private sector, undermine the very notion of nationhood and the underlying value of public service. We are compelled to assert: This is not how we shall be known as a nation. We refuse to allow corrupt networks in different provinces to go about their criminal activity, trampling on the rights of honest and law-abiding people."

Addressing President Ramaphosa in a video and audio message, Archbishop Makgoba said: "Today, Mr President, our hearts, our souls, our bodies and our minds are consumed with the national crisis that faces South Africa. The public's money, life-saving money that is meant to provide oxygen to the breathless poor in the midst of a pandemic, has been misappropriated, stolen in brazen defiance of the commandment in the Book of Exodus which enjoins each of us: Thou shalt not steal..."

We continue to pray for our beloved country, South Africa, for all in authority, and for an end to corruption and the abuse of power. We pray, too, for Zimbabwe, facing its own ongoing crisis of government abuse of power.

My love to you all

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