

Dean's Letter, 6 September 2020

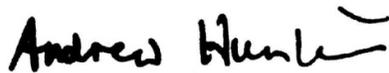
Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

September 1st marks the start of Spring; we celebrate this month as the Season of Creation, focusing in our worship on what it means to be good stewards of the natural environment in which we live. One of the themes of the Season of Creation is to love our neighbours. From Romans 13:9-10 "The commandments... are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." This is a time "to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through repenting, repairing, and rejoicing together"¹. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed our vulnerability as communities, and highlighted the inequalities and the structural injustices in our society. It has also brought out the compassionate response of many to the needs of those around us.

September has also been declared, by the South Africa Council of Churches (of which we as ACSA are a member), to be a month of Prayer, Lament and Protest against Corruption, specifically corruption linked to Covid-19. We have seen recent statements in the media about the widespread concern and allegations of the looting of state resources, by well-connected individuals. In the words of Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, quoting the Ten Commandments, "this is stealing". I think that many of us despair at what is happening, both in our municipality and also at national level. Are we able to get ourselves out of the quagmire of poor governance and dishonesty, the systemic corruption, that seems to have become the norm? To face up to and address the unethical behaviour that threatens to destroy us?

It is hard to deal with wrongdoing, or to face someone who has wronged you or insulted you. None of us, I would think, can say that we have never argued or quarrelled, or had a serious disagreement. And the history of our country is one of violence and conflict, which continues to have its effects today. The TRC was an important attempt to enable perpetrators and victims to face each other and to acknowledge what had gone so terribly wrong. Now, some 20 years later, we continue to deal with unresolved conflict, real anger, deep wounds. Our Gospel reading for today, Matthew 18:15-20, gives the church an important model to restore relationships that have been broken, not by avoiding the issue or walking away from the problem, but by confronting the one who has done wrong, and making it possible for that person to acknowledge what they have done wrong, to repent and to be restored. It doesn't guarantee repentance or restoration, but at least it makes it possible. The way we as the church deal with conflict and sin within the life of the church is a sign of our commitment to Christ. Let our Christian witness help build a new ethic of morality, honesty and integrity in our country.

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 long horizontal stroke at the end.

¹ A Rocha SA newsletter, September 2020