

Dean's Letter, 4 October 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Who would have believed, when lockdown started in March, that it would be six months before we were once again able to gather for worship! But here we are, together with Christians all over our country, as church buildings reopen and we begin to gather again. Yet things are still not back to normal. Covid is still with us. So, for a while, masks, social distancing, Communion in one kind only, and no congregational singing are restrictions we have to live with.

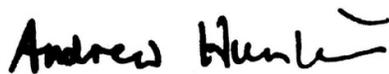
Grief and loss have been part of our experience of the past six months. People have died, but Covid restrictions have meant that we have not been able to come together to mourn and to give thanks. This has been very hard. At the same time, many of us have been able to follow funeral services via Facebook, elsewhere in the country, and to be part of events that we would not otherwise have attended. When we come to All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, at the beginning of November, we shall make that a special time of remembering.

Today in the life of the Cathedral is the Feast of St Michael and All Angels – traditionally our Patronal Festival. The angels (or heavenly beings, sons of God) rejoice at the creation (Job 38:7); Michael and his angels defeat the dragon (Revelation 12:7); the angels of these little ones behold the face of the Father (Matthew 18:10). Angels – great heavenly beings – are messengers from God; they aid us in our struggles against evil; they are defenders of the poor and the weak. They remind us that we are part of a great spiritual world that is bound up with our material world. Some of us can speak of our experience of heavenly beings. For others, angels are those opportune visitors, friends, strangers, who just happen to be there when we most need them.

A friend wrote to me this past week of his, and others', own experience of angelic intervention and protection. But what happens, he asked, when it doesn't happen? When disaster or tragedy strike and claim the lives or well being of faithful children of God? When angels don't appear? The age-old problem of evil – how, in a wonderful world, created by an all-powerful God of love, can evil and cruelty and sorrow and sin exist and be allowed to exist? How can tsunamis and Covid-19 and veld fires and human failure and pride do so much damage? And where do angels fit into all this? Why do they not come to save and protect us, even against the disastrous misuse of free will?

At the heart of our faith is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God in Christ suffers with us – even in the darkest desolation. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Yet out of that deepest darkness came the resurrection. New life and hope and a door opening. Is it always simple or straightforward? No. There is no easy answer to these deepest cries of our hearts. But in our desperate search for meaning and purpose in the face of tragedy and chaos, this profound truth of light and love overcoming darkness and evil and hatred gives us God's answer for life and a future with hope.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.