

Dean's Letter, 8 November 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

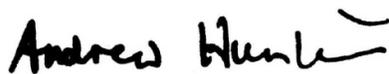
The 2nd Sunday in November (today) is recognised as Remembrance Sunday, when we remember before God those who have died in war. This is not a time to glorify or justify war or violence, or necessarily to argue about the rights or wrongs of war as a means of solving problems. It is a time to acknowledge our past, and to remember and honour all who have died in battle or as a result of war. And it is also a time to acknowledge the terrible damage done to people caught up in battle, whether as soldiers or as civilians. Many of those who have survived wars carry their own scars and wounds, whether physical or emotional. From our lectionary for this Sunday: "We pray for all who suffer as a result of war, for the injured and disabled, and the mentally distressed, for the homeless and refugees, and those who have lost their livelihood, for those who mourn, and especially those who have no hope."

I have a cousin who is a priest in the Church of England, a Royal Marine and a part-time military chaplain. Like many others of my age and generation, I did my two years in the army in the then SADF. In some ways it was the easier option, although I didn't think so at the time. Others chose to be conscientious objectors and paid a heavy price for their stand. Both my grandfathers, who were English born, served during World War One. One was wounded and both were decorated. The history of the Eastern Cape is of warfare and bloodshed. The plaques in the Cathedral are a silent witness and testimony to those who died, on all sides, of the many years of conflict. The society in which we live is a product of conflict and warfare. And in various ways we carry the baggage of the past.

The parable of the ten young girls (or virgins, or bridesmaids, depending on the translation) – with five of them being wise and five foolish – is about being prepared for the end, for the final coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 25:1-13). Not to be lulled into complacency. To be ready for the unexpected opportunities, the gifts of the Spirit of God, that offer life and hope and a way forward. To have extra flasks of oil at hand: to be prepared (like any good Boy Scout or Girl Guide); to be wise, to think ahead, to realise that sooner or later a crisis is coming. If we don't make preparations now, we shall be caught out.

We are living in an extended time of crisis. There is no room for complacency – whether about Covid, or anything else. It is astonishing to hear of people partying till all hours, regardless of the risks of Covid infection. Or living self-centred lives, unconcerned about others. This is a time for us all to be awake, to watch, to be prepared. We may well be at a cross-roads, either personally or nationally. Let's be prayerfully ready for whatever is coming.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.