

## Dean's Letter, 6 December 2020

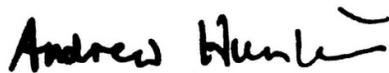
Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The early part of Advent overlaps with The Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December). South Africa has the unenviable reputation of being a country with very high rates of gender-based violence (GBV). Our women and girls in particular are not safe. And there is also violence against those who identify as being part of the LGBTQI+ community. The extended lock-down under Covid has sadly added to the pressures on households and led to heightened levels of domestic violence. In gender-based violence, our country is experiencing what is being called a “second pandemic”.

Here in Makhanda (Grahamstown) we have our own terrible share of gender-based violence. Sexual assault and harassment, rape and abuse, violence and intimidation, murder... our hearts break at each and every such tragic and brutal event of this nature. Some of these hit the media; others happen behind the scenes. The scars and wounds are often invisible, yet very real. Our recent meeting of Provincial Standing Committee noted that GBV “flourishes in an environment of silence, shame and stigma, of unbelief and avoiding so called difficult conversations and justice.” It acknowledged that “patriarchy is evil, a sin and a heresy, especially when interpreting scriptures to reinforce concepts of male dominance and headship...”

Claire and I, with our daughters, are away for a few days this week, returning on Friday in time for the ordination being planned for Saturday. Please hold Claire in your prayers as she prepares to take up the leadership of St Thomas's, Rondebosch. The prospect of moving, after 13 years here, is daunting! We intend to shed books and possessions as much as possible. Those of you who have moved house know the challenges! Both our daughters will be with us through this time of leaving. The Cathedral community, the Deanery, and Makhanda (Grahamstown) have been an immensely significant part of their lives, as well as ours, and it will be a huge wrench for us all when we do leave here. We have very mixed feelings about leaving, as much as there is excitement about the move to Rondebosch and the new ministry opportunities opening up there for Claire. I wait to hear what might come my way! As our Advent readings tell us, this season is a time of waiting. And while the season of Advent has a clear time frame of four weeks, waiting for things to evolve or unfold – waiting – waiting for fruit to ripen, for seeds to sprout, for a baby to be conceived, for a child to be born - waiting for God – does not have a predictable time frame. I feel both quite relaxed about it all, and also anxious and worried at times ... a strange space to occupy.

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.