

Dean bids Makhanda farewell with final service

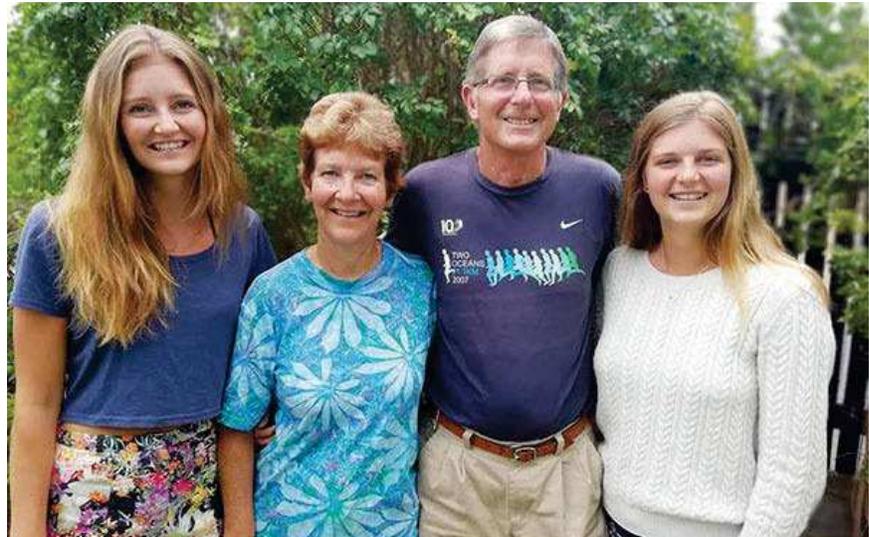
Thirteen lucky years for Makhanda - but now the Hunter family is moving on to another Parish, writes Maggy Clarke.

Dr Andrew Hunter will preach for the last time as Dean of Grahamstown on Sunday 31 January 2021. The Hunters' last morning service in the parish will be streamed live at 08:30 on the Cathedral Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/grahamstown.cathedral>. Following that, from 11am, parishioners and friends will be welcome to drive down High Street and pause in front of St George's Chambers to say a brief goodbye, and convey their love to Dean Andrew and his family. Please remember to wear masks, and sorry – no hugs!

It was thirteen years ago, in January 2008, that Andrew Hunter arrived with his wife Claire, also a priest, and their daughters who were going into Grades 7 and 5 at DSG, expecting to stay about eight years. In the event, Andrew Hunter broke a record, by being the longest-serving Dean of Grahamstown in the Cathedral's nearly 200-year history.

Now the Revd Dr Claire Nye Hunter has been appointed Rector of St Thomas's Church, Rondebosch, from February 2021, and it is this appointment which takes her and Andrew away to Cape Town. The Cathedral of St Michael and St George in Makhanda is losing special friends, and an outstanding Dean: scholarly, yet a pastor; a man of prayer; wise, yet witty; loving music, people, exercise and the outdoors, fun.

Within weeks of their arrival the Hunters had reached out to the local student population, with special Sunday evening services. The Cathedral tradition of choral music was given a huge boost with the founding of the Makana Choir School, training youngsters from local Government schools. Worship became vibrant, multi-cultural, and varied: from the quiet of Taizé services to the glorious pageantry of diocesan events. During successive National Arts Festivals countless Spiritfest events took place in the Cathedral, with Dean Hunter's enthusiastic encouragement. There were inter-faith



Andrew, Claire, Rachel and Nicola Hunter are moving to Cape Town.

Photo: Maggy Clarke

services for such occasions as AIDS Sunday.

The Hunters' ministry was public, but also pastoral and private. Not only do both Andrew and Claire preach challenging sermons rooted in deep faith, but many parishioners have valued them as counsellors, wise friends, shoulders to cry on.

The Hunters are a family, but they also treated the Cathedral as their family. When they had family events, the parish was included: Andrew obtained a Master's degree in Canon Law from the University of Cardiff in 2011 - no mean effort as it involved several periods in residence in Wales. Claire got her Doctorate from the South African Theological Seminary in 2016. Not to be outdone, Dean Andrew received his Doctorate from Nelson Mandela University in April 2019.

Drawing on his recent experience, he chose as his thesis subject "Conflict resolution and campus protests at Rhodes University, 2015

– 2016". When the Hunters celebrated these achievements, as well as special birthdays, and their Silver Wedding, on each occasion the whole parish was invited to share in the party!

Then, abruptly upsetting the pattern of all our lives, came Covid-19. At that point the Cathedral doors had to close. The choir, the organ and the marimbas were silent. How could the people worship God? Without a break (though of course there were glitches!) Dean Andrew took the Cathedral worship online via Facebook, and services went out twice daily, during the week as well as on Sundays. Cathedral people joined with others in packing food parcels to ensure that the most marginalised did not starve under the hard lockdown. The building might be closed, but the Church never closed.

Sadly, it is with the Cathedral doors again closed that we have to say goodbye. Go well, Andrew, Claire, Rachel and Nicola. The love, gratitude and prayers of the Cathedral people, and so many others, follow you.

SOUTH AFRICAN CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

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