

## God Calls the Team

I must admit that I was greatly disappointed and frustrated to read yesterday of another person shot in Minneapolis during confrontations between protesters and security personnel. The protest was related to the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, otherwise known as ICE, raids. The raids are aimed at the removal of undocumented immigrants. However, many others have been caught in these raids. The protestors come from across a wide spectrum of society.

Whatever your views on the issue of undocumented immigrants, the methods being used are causing fear in that community, and in many other communities that should have no reason to be fearful.

It is not easy to find the facts on these events as everyone tells the story in the way that shows themselves in the best light or to prove the point that they are trying to make. The truth, at times, seems to be elusive.

The reality is that most of the stories are quite a lot more complicated than the headlines or news clips would suggest.

That said the fear in many communities is palpable; people are hiding, unwilling or scared to go to work or to send their children to school.

The people that had gathered along the River Jordan near Jerusalem with Jesus and John the Baptist would have understood this fear. The Roman soldiers could be quite brutal, and the Jewish leaders were at times complicit to gain some peace.

Jesus has just heard that John the Baptist has been arrested. John's crime was to make critical comments about King Herod's marriage. The king, Herod Antipas had married Herodias, who was his brother Herod Philip's wife. John objected because the marriage was illegal under Jewish law because it was considered to be incest. Some scholars believe that Herod Antipas and Herod Philip were the uncles of Herodias.

With the news, Jesus withdraws to the Region of Galilee and moves from the town of Nazareth where he had been living as a carpenter, to the village of Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. If John had been arrested for making comments about the king's marriage, what will happen when Jesus proclaims a whole new kingdom?

We know what that outcome will ultimately be, but in the meantime, Jesus has much work to do.

Now, if you want to get much work done, a team is needed because we know that there is truth in the old adage that many hands make light work. A variety of people bring a range of skills and gifts to the job at hand. It is easier to share these tasks.

We know this well in the church. Most jobs take a crew of people, whether it is:  
cleaning up the grounds in the fall,  
preparing the pancake breakfast, or  
sharing worship.

Think for a moment about our services, a regular service on Sunday morning, we need:  
greeters, bulletins to be prepared, camera person, custodian to set up, altar guild, servers, crucifer, readers, intercessors, communion assistants, choir, musician, coffee set up and

dishes done. And on feast days and other celebrations there are special decorations to put up and then put away afterwards. It is a long list of people who are involved. That does not include the property, maintenance and custodial folks so that we have a warm, dry, comfortable building to gather in. A lot of people called to share their gifts and ministry. In addition, within the parish there are others called to different ministries beyond those needed for our worship services.

Jesus is walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, contemplating how he is to accomplish his goals, his mission of proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."  
(v17)

Jesus spots Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea for fish. He calls them and says, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." (v19).

Then Jesus sees James and John, the sons of Zebedee mending their nets, and he calls them too. They leave their boat and their father, and follow Jesus.

It is the start to Jesus team, the first four of the twelve disciples, who will follow Jesus for the next three years, witnessing and learning.

One of those called to St Andrew's worship team is Matthew Gartshore, playing the piano and organ, and directing the choir.

And I have been told that Matthew would not be stopped during COVID. If we could not gather in the church, then we would gather outside. A little thing like COVID was not going to stop Matthew and the choir.

In a world that feels that it is in the midst of a major upheaval, and during changes in the parish, you have been a stable influence.

Thank you, Matthew. You and your ministry will be missed. We wish you well in whatever the future holds for you and your wife.

Jesus built his team during a time of unrest and disruption, so that he could fulfil his mission.

We, at St Andrew's, have our own team. Everyone is part of the team. Everyone! We are in it for the long haul, much longer than the three years of Jesus ministry on earth.

We are also in it for so long that our team members change over time, but the team is still here. We have been together for 75 years.

And the parish continues to thrive, fulfilling God's call in this neighbourhood.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Readings: Matthew 4:12-23