

**“Gathering in for the movement” a sermon based on Mark 1:14-20 preached in Knox Church, Dunedin, New Zealand on Epiphany 3, 25 January 2015 by Kerry Enright, Knox minister.**

I didn't set out to become a fisher. Walking past a friend's office – he was shifting to Australia - I noticed all his books had gone and I asked him – so have you managed to attend to everything. Yes, the house has sold, the books have gone, only my boat is left. Would you like it? And I don't know what led me to ask – how much is it? So one thing led to another, and we bought a boat, just before Christmas. When I told them, wise friends here at Knox gave me encouraging advice. Two said that the happiest day was when they bought a boat and the second happiest day was when they sold it. Then I heard horror stories of what could go wrong - forgetting to put the bung in, or forgetting to tilt the outboard up before towing, so there was a gash in the road from Castle Street to South Dunedin.

So I bought a book - “Boating for beginners - a kiwi guide”.

There was another person who did not set out to become a fisher. I encourage couples planning to marry to come to church as least twice before their wedding day. On this occasion, the couple brought both their families and they filled a couple of pews. It came to the sermon and one of them was heard to say rather too loudly – this is the boring bit. Anyway, that day the sermon was not as boring as it might have been; indeed it found its way into his heart. He and his partner started coming to Church and within six months, being an accountant, he became our treasurer. At that time, a psychiatric hospital was closing and patients were relocating into the city. This man was the Chair of the Crown Health Enterprise, and he persuaded us to buy a house and to provide accommodation for people with acute need.

There is lots of fishing here.

You could say that we had netted him, through the liveliness of preaching. We had drawn him to see that the gospel related to life, to his life, and he was drawn to this gospel. But he had also netted us. He had brought himself, with his connections, with his inspiration, with his imagination and with his heart for people in need, he had brought that into our midst. As chair of the Crown Health Enterprise, he knew the need to care for people in the community, and he had contacts. And because we made him treasurer so soon, he helped us see how we could be more effective in using the resources we had.

So we were caught up in being made part of what God was doing in the world. We were both being fishers, and learning how to be better fishers. And the catching was not about bringing people into the Church, it was about catching the Church, always being formed, always being constituted, it was about involving us, the Church, in God's movement in the world.

At the heart of that movement, were a group of people who were most in need in our community, people with psychiatric illness.

So I have this boat. But what do you do with a boat once you have whizzed around a bit? Fishing!

This part of the Church building is called a nave, from the Latin for a ship. The central part of a Church has the shape of a ship. So what is this particular ship for?

It's for fishing – it's for being caught up in God's movement in the world, and its for drawing others to be part of the movement. Constant movement; casting out, and being caught.

The Bible version we use here at Knox is the New Revised Standard Version. It is a good translation, but we can be misled by its phrasing some times.

The NRSV has Jesus say – “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

But one commentator suggests the passage is better translated “Follow me and I will make you fishers of people.”

The difference is between a task we perform – fish for people – and a way of being – fishers of people.

We are fishers. Because we are fishers, we fish. It is who we are; not a task we perform.

So when people say – what is the Church for – it's for helping people be part of God's movement in the world, and for being caught up in that movement ourselves. That is why we exist, collectively and individually. It's a whole of life vocation.

Next Sunday we are baptising Margaret. Why? We are affirming that she is a fisher, and we are helping her learn, with us, how to be a fisher. It's not optional. It's not for people like that. That's what Church is. Week by week, in being with us, Margaret will learn that she is fisher, and she will notice how people fish, and it will soak into her so it becomes part of who she is.

But she will need to be a fisher in her way. Just because the Queen Mother wore pearls to fish does not mean everyone has to wear pearls to fish. There is no required style. That is the beauty of belonging to the company of fishers. We each have our own styles.

I met a person, young, who managed a portfolio of \$7bn. He told me that he could be making a miserly amount working for an NGO but realised people would be prepared to pay him a lot of money for his skill. So he decided to make as much as he could and give as much as he could. And he decided to use his skills for the benefit of NGOs.

I had a history teacher, Mrs A. She respected her students and helped them learn. In the seventh form, our geography teacher suddenly resigned and so Mrs A became our teacher. She told us in our first class that she had never taught geography so we were going to have to learn together. She had friends – one had set the national geography exam for many years. It was the best class at school – we became a highly collaborative team and the teacher became our facilitator, just what we needed for university. And she helped me see that I was much more than I had imagined myself to be. She drew me into the movement of God and in the process helped me learn how to do it with others. Mrs A motivated – not by being better, but by being alongside.

Now I have to confess, I have not actually been fishing yet. The boat needed insurance and the insurance company took some persuading a person like me was not a significant risk. Then I found the boat needed servicing. And I needed equipment. The man at *Fishing and Hunting* was really helpful. But after ten minutes of speaking with me about lures and knots, he turned to Mavis and said – “I think he will need some help.” And then I found there were people who had lures they were not using, a community of fishers.

But it is easy it is to give up some times. How easy is it to say, really, this is beyond me. Just leave me be – God and me. It's too much to ask. The circumstances are not conducive.

Yes, the call to be fishers comes at a cost. It does require leaving. "They left their father Zebedee." The leaving is different for different people.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer worded it dramatically and then he lived it – when Christ calls a person, he calls that person to die. CS Lewis said that when Christ calls a person, that person is dethroned. They are no longer the centre of their lives, the ruler of their lives, the director of their lives.

The call though puts us at the centre of what life is – the movement of God in our world – our whole lives enabling people to be part of that movement – our whole lives open to others drawing us into that movement.

We are fishers.