

**SERMON PREACHED AT ST ANDREW'S WALKERVILLE BY THE REVEREND STUART
LANGSHAW ON SUNDAY AUGUST 27, 2017**

SCHOOL SERVICE – BAPTISMS & ADMISSION TO HOLY COMMUNION

There is nothing that is calculated to make you look down and inspect the shine on your shoes quite as much as a call for volunteers. It's our very first instinct to look away from the gaze of the person asking for volunteers so that we can avoid any eye contact and give the mistaken impression that we might just be interested in volunteering. Maybe we don't want any more responsibility ... maybe we genuinely don't have time for the job that's being offered to volunteer ... maybe we're a bit afraid of what friends will say if we volunteer.

But there does seem to be a human default position against volunteering. Of course, we're glad enough when someone else does put up **their** hand for the job, and we're glad that the job is being done ... just not by us. From time to time we hear someone give the advice to another person, "Don't volunteer for anything."

It would be interesting to have a show of hands right now (and please don't worry, we're not going actually to do this) to see how many people here at St Andrew's this morning volunteer in some capacity or another. It wouldn't surprise me to find out that the great majority of us do volunteer work. Because they are overseas at the moment, I can talk about one parish couple who volunteer at the zoo, working with animals. They make interesting and challenging puzzles out of recycled materials for the animals to get to their food. Or another member of the congregation who volunteers with Meals on Wheels.

If a job is interesting, we feel happier about volunteering for it than if it was boring. If a job interests us, we may well volunteer to do it. If a job has clear, tangible and measureable benefits, we may volunteer to do it. But if a job is really difficult ... time consuming ... repetitive ... dirty ... we look at the shine on our shoes when the opportunity comes.

The Bible contains the stories of many people who were volunteers. Isaiah was a volunteer. **(In our first Bible reading** in Chapter 6 of his book, Isaiah had a strange vision ... he thought he was in the temple seeing the glory of God ... seeing the heavenly creatures called seraphim, each with its six wings ... hearing these seraphim call out to each other about God's greatness ... seeing one of the seraphim take a burning coal from the altar and put it against Isaiah's lips to purify his words and speech ... hearing God's call for a volunteer – "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" At that moment, the shine on Isaiah's shoes could have been of great interest for him. But no. He said, "I'll do it. I'll go." His words are recorded as being "Here am I; send me." And what a miserable job he was given to do as a volunteer - - - to tell the people that they had failed God, that there would be dire consequences, but with a glimmer of hope at the end.

Or there was Amos – a shepherd and orchardist. He said "Yes" to God ... he volunteered ... and how his life changed ... from shepherd and orchardist to spokesperson for God right up to the king himself. There was a young girl called Mary who said "Yes" to God ... she volunteered ... and she became the mother of Jesus and made possible all the things that Jesus did and said. There were 12 fellows who said "Yes" to Jesus. **(We heard about them in the Gospel reading this morning).** Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip,

Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, another man named James, Thaddeus, Simon and Judas ... they volunteered ... and how their life stories changed so that we talk about them 2100 years after they lived. There were 2 other men who “were volunteered” – Barnabas and Paul – and they were sent on a journey to tell the story of Jesus’ life.

Mother Teresa who volunteered to serve the poorest of the poor ... Martin Luther King Jr who volunteered to work for justice for African American people ... and your own personal volunteer heroes who put up their hands, said “Yes,” and have made a difference in their various areas of service.

All of us here this morning who are here because we love God and want to live God’s life in ours – God calls us to be volunteers. ***(We have sung the hymn “Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.”)*** That hymn could have been written by Isaiah – “Here I am ... send me.” All of us who have been baptised – not just the three children this morning, but all of us who have been baptised regardless of the decades of time that have passed all of us who regularly receive the Holy Communion – not just the five students from St Andrew’s School admitted to Holy Communion this morning, but all of us who receive the bread and wine of Holy Communion – and by faith, the body and blood of Christ all of us are called on to say “Yes” to God day by day ... to say “Yes” to living today in God’s name, and in God’s love, and in God’s strength all of us are called on to say “Yes” to God situation by situation, demonstrating the beauty and the grace and the love of God in our words and actions and attitudes.

“Here I am, Lord,” we have sung/***will sing***. “I will go, Lord, if you lead me,” we have sung/***will sing***.

Today let us follow the example of Isaiah Mary ... the 12 disciples ... Paul and Barnabas ... Mother Teresa ... Martin Luther King Jr ... We are baptised. We are blessed and enriched by the Holy Communion. Let us say “Yes” to God, and live as God’s volunteers and as God’s agents, so that the world may see God in us, and see God for themselves.