



If this was a recruitment strategy for a school, a choir, a business or a volunteer organization, I suspect it would fail miserably. Who would join this group? Who would stay with it?

Jesus says to the twelve:

There's very few of you.

Don't take anything with you.

You're sent out like lambs in the midst of wolves.

You will be treated harshly.

And people will probably reject you.

What was Jesus thinking as he delivered these instructions to the newly minted "twelve"? Perhaps it was intended to be a reality check, but I wonder if the twelve had second thoughts about what they were saying "yes" to.

However, they were given a fair bit of authority.

"You have the authority to cast out unclean spirits and cure diseases." Well, that's a small consolation given all the other challenges they were faced with. "Oh, and when you don't know what to say, don't worry, you will be given the words."

"And when a town does not accept you, shake the dust off your feet and move on."

"Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

It is all *so* vulnerable. There's so very little comfort or security here.

It was the same for Abraham and Sarah. Having a child, in the wilderness, away from home, in their old age. What was God thinking? It is no wonder that Sarah laughed. And then when it came to pass, that Sarah gave birth to a child, she laughed even more because it was *actually* true. But how vulnerable they all are.

While we all long for comfort and security, for stability and safety, this God of Abraham and Sarah who sends them into the wilderness, and this Jesus of the gospels who are sending twelve people to the wolves, perhaps is recognizing that for most people in the world, for most of our experience of life, there is very little safety, security, stability or comfort.

In fact, as much as we wish to protect ourselves and our loved ones, it often feels like we don't have enough, or we don't know what to say, or we are displaced and dependent on others.

It was under the oak tree of Mamre in the middle of the day that Abraham saw three unnamed visitors coming towards him in the wilderness. Remember this is in the heat of the day. Was it a mirage? Rather than run inside the tent and close the door, he ran towards them and bowed down to these unnamed strangers offering them water, rest and sustenance. They said, "Oh, yes please."

There was this extravagant and generous hospitality offered to some people that Abraham had never met: cakes, milk, curds, a fatted calf. It was 't just afternoon tea, it was extended over a period of time. It is the same extravagance offered by the good samaritan and the prodigal son's father: far beyond what would ever be expected or even imagined. Their cup overflows.

And in response to this generous outlay, the three guests ask after Sarah, the source of this generosity, and honour her by saying that she would become the mother of a multitude of nations. Sarah overhears this and laughs.

It's like the apostles, who would become the forerunners of an entire movement of followers known as "the way." It seems so incredulous.

Behold, I make all things new.

They had no idea who these guests were. They had no idea that they would be the pro-generators of a whole nation of people called "Israel". The apostles had no idea, in being sent out, that they would start a whole movement of followers of the new covenant. They learned to laugh with strangers and become friends with wolves.

All because Jesus looked at the crowds and had compassion on them, "for they harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." They were, like most

of us, vulnerable, lost and starving for something that gave substance and stability.

Two years ago we approved a Vision for St. John's with four areas of priority. It was a bold vision: Proclaim the Love of Christ; Engage and Involve; Musical Outreach; Open Doors.

This week, we will see and hear the priority of Musical Outreach expressed at the Parish Choir concert this afternoon, the debut of a new Children's Choir, the Compline Service, the Song Circle and the music recital on Friday evening. Today, over coffee and tea, you are invited for conversation on the Open Doors project - something we approved at a Special Vestry last December to begin the process of site plan approvals with the Bishop and the township.

All of these exciting initiatives are born out of your vision. It comes out of the deep well of our resources, your love for God and your commitment to the community. Far from being vulnerable like Abraham and Sarah, or the twelve, we are blessed to be able to offer these activities for our community. In the spirit of generosity that Abraham and Sarah, the good Samaritan, the prodigal son's father offered, and same spirit of risk that the twelve who were sent out embodied, we too take the risk to trust that God goes before us to make all things new, and offer something to our community that feeds them and inspires them for the glory of God.