

They answered the call together. Fishing partners, impressed by the catch straining their nets, Peter, James and John follow Jesus eagerly. Especially if life with him will be that abundant. As Jesus keeps teaching and healing, others answer the summons to come. Maybe by now, for us, it's assumed, taken for granted—central to Jesus' ministry is a community to share the effort. His call wasn't solitary. Nor is ours. As we follow Christ, that's why we're here or yearn to be. Truth is, friends we all need companions on this pilgrimage through life. God makes us for relationship, each in our unique way. None of us makes it on our own. Whatever draws us here—good music, sermons, service—relationships are what we gain when we join and grieve when for whatever reason we leave. Beyond their nets Peter, James, John become a network of love and life, hope, compassion, service, to entwine others caught up in Divine Grace too.

It seems simple and basic. Still, just for a moment, pause and savor times when we felt that call. Amid ordinary routines and places or special encounters and experiences when goodness in life seems to strain our capacity to behold. Hearts as full as those nets bulging with gratitude, joy, earnest purpose compelling us to share it all with other people. I wonder what moments arise in mind and heart—maybe long ago and far away, or just yesterday. I'd love to hear your gospel stories, how we're touched by the Holy, feel the Spirit move, give our lives to Christ ... however we'd say it.

We savor such moments, friends, because truth also is: we'll have times when our nets bulge with hard stuff we try to hold—losses, illnesses, stresses, conflicts, cultural concerns. And what makes or breaks our bonds of love and living faith—in families, church families, all society—isn't just how we celebrate good times. It's how we walk together through fears, faults, hurtful words, forgiveness. As we follow Jesus on pilgrimage it's not always sun, flowers, bird songs, and beautiful vistas. Sometimes we're caught in a squall or storm with no shelter—if we're lucky a little old church to duck in. Blisters burn on the heart. Our way runs through industrial waste, conflicts, regrets. Lost in our mind not paying attention, we miss a yellow arrow, then realize we've seen no one for a while. Happened to me more than once in Spain ... backtracking, until I find the route, the people again.

From all we know that's why Paul wrote early Christians in Corinth. Cosmopolitan city at the intersection of major roads, not unlike Kalamazoo, with all that's good and not in Roman society—possibilities, bias and inequity. Church has done well there in activities, service, different spiritual gifts flourishing. Trouble is, there's some conflict—who's more important, whose gifts more valuable. As they follow Jesus, their net strains, frays. Too much in their own mind and concerns they lost the plot of his purpose, the thread of grace, the way of shared love, compassion, collaboration. After all they'd learned and done, in our time maybe we'd use some metaphor of the basic operating program of peace uploaded into their minds and hearts, the hard drive circuitry running it all went bad, corrupted. No longer answering God's call together. When I hear news, listen to you, I get why this letter got passed on, still relevant over all the ages. Real concern. And hope.

Maybe something like our phones here at church recently. Basic functions still happened. Phone rings, someone can pick up and pass on the call to that person in that moment. But a central little hard drive or chip went bad. So no voicemail, no recorded message for us to offer or receive from anyone who calls. A fleeting not

full connection. Rick and Mary began worshipping with us weeks ago about the time it went bad. Sitting in the pew as we stand up here week after week saying our phone system isn't working, you can't leave a message, blah, blah, blah. Turns out Rick has installed and repaired tech stuff like this for years. Maybe he heard Jesus call along his lakeshore. One day God sends me this message, I mean I get an email from a guy with a name about as unique as Weeldreyer. First miracle—I didn't delete it as spam! "You don't know me ... a little experience ... maybe I could help." So Rick spends hours getting lost in our building, backtracking on his own sort of Camino, tracing all the old system wires to figure out what we have, what's wrong, and then Googling at home. He gets a used part off Ebay for \$56. "Well, it's worth a shot," he shrugs. Plugs-in, system boots up—here's where it gets fun. The phone system answers as some doctor's office in Louisiana! Very nice accent, but not quite our message to send! Rick does more reverse engineering—I wonder if mice getting out of a maze call it that! Losing hope because we can't find the phone the system thinks is the administrator with ability to reset. One more in the basement to try ... SUCCESS his next email says. We've all recorded our name and greeting. And now, with great thanks to Rick, who saved us tens of thousands of dollars for a new system, I think we're up and running, ready to all answer God's call together now with anyone, anytime again! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

Unless I'm getting it all wrong, like still hearing the voice of a Louisiana doctor's office, Paul would affirm it's a blessed gift of the spirit, used for the common good. And it seems to me, friends, that's the key for all of us. That central part of our hearts sometimes goes bad—corrupted by fear, ego, anxieties that cut off ability to really connect. It needs to get repaired, reprogrammed again to share messages in life together. You see, we answer God's call each in our way. Ultimately, we answer God's call together. So it has been since the first disciples on the sea of Galilee through anyone who follows, gathering around this font.

The net of my heart bulges, about to burst as I savor gifts of the Spirit among us. Singing and music, teaching children, office record keeping, cooking, cleaning, serving at Celebrate the Vision—I love the picture in our announcements of people from our church each with their gift to offer—soup, sandwich, fruit, chips, cookie, water, coffee (that was this week) strung together like a net. Catching people, nourishing body and spirit with grace to live abundantly. So many gifts in committees and study conversations, folding newsletters and counting money ... and so many of you who've offered volunteer help through and beyond this transition time for us. We need you all. We will call. God / the Spirit of Holy Love needs each and every one of us to share the mission of Christ's ongoing life and work transforming our world.

Each follower of Jesus is given a gift of the Spirit—same Spirit, one Spirit we hear over and over to not miss the point—for the common good. As we answer that call, Paul offers help to know when it's spam and not. My caller ID recently started reading "spam likely." Hope that's not been any of you! What's our caller ID? According to Paul it's when filled with the Spirit we say "Jesus is Lord." When Christ's love and compassion and healing and courage inspire us to serve someone else more than our self.

In a few moments we'll ordain and install church leaders who answered God's call to serve. Not just my or your call, our call to common good. We'll answer questions—some more complicated as if in a court of law; some more simple about companionship in peace, unity, purity, friendship, and prayer. In months ahead, we'll share sunny laughter and stormy hard stuff as we try not to lose the plot of Christ's purpose, the thread of grace, the program of peace. As we follow the way of Jesus, voices from our past in our Book of Order urge us on. Balance continuity and change, unity in diversity, individual conscience and corporate judgment. When inevitably people of honorable faith differ, listen with mutual forbearance. Tend

power by seeking consensus, trusting the mark of truth is how much goodness in life gets nurtured as fruits of our action.

We'll all sing together "Here I Am, Lord" just before we end worship and go back into the world. Maybe we'll feel something like the first disciples when Jesus called them from their nets—full of love, eager, hopeful, committed. Dear friends, savor and celebrate holy gifts inside each of us for the good of all. And let's be real as Paul was with the Corinthians, passed on to us over the ages. On this weekend when we celebrate the life and witness of Martin Luther King Jr as a follower of Jesus, I feel real concern for our society ... too often, short of the Beloved Community for which, like Jesus, King gave his life. And inspired by that vision and the gifts we see generously offered in all of us, we have real cause for hope. Hear God call us along the lakeshore of our lives—searching us, and while smiling speak our name. Respond Jesus is Lord! And with constant love that keeps on loving, together, by Christ's side let us seek other seas.

Thanks be to God.