

Both of my Grandfathers, my father and six or seven uncles were fishermen who fully respected the powerful and unpredictable force of nature we call the sea and I grew up afraid to even get into a boat after hearing stories about their steel hulled trawler being tossed about by the waves as if it was a matchstick.

But for a moment, let's imagine what it would be like in that little wooden boat alongside those twelve disciples. What might have been a pleasant trip has turned into a living nightmare. After many hours we are in the middle of the lake, not making any headway at all. Our little wooden boat seems to be becoming frailer by the minute as the waves crash over the sides, soaking us. The wind is screaming in our ears. We can't see either shore because it is pitch dark and this nightmare has been going on for hours.

I'm certain I would be absolutely petrified; probably on my knees praying like I'd never done before; just like the disciples, I'm sure. A ghost like figure approaches the boat; the disciples are terrified and cry out in fear and then the ghost speaks.

Twelve disciples were sitting in that boat and we don't know how eleven of them responded to that voice. But one of them, Peter, decided to do something extraordinary.

The other week I was showing off my Ninja Turtle defence prowess to my 3 year old grandson Samuel. He thought this was wonderful and immediately wanted to join in and do the same. And I think that illustrates what is going on in Peter's mind.

He recognizes Jesus is doing something extraordinary; this is an adventure not to be missed. He wants in and blurts out "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you".

"Come" says Jesus. And Peter obeys.

He sinks after a few steps, yes. But for a brief moment, Peter walked on water. Just like Jesus. Peter shows great faith in getting out of the boat and going to Jesus and it is only when his faith starts to falter that he starts to sink. And in his moment of need there is the strong hand of Jesus to rescue him. [\[art picture\]](#)

John Ortberg, an American church leader, has written a book called "If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat" and he says we all have our own boat.

That boat might be whatever represents safety and security to us apart from God himself. In other words our boat is whatever we put our trust in instead of God, especially when life gets a little stormy and he goes on to say we all have our boat and if you want to know what your boat is, listen to your fears.

We should ask ourselves "What is it, that most produces fear in me – especially when I think of leaving it behind and stepping out in faith?"

It might be your lack of self worth. Moses told God that he was a nobody, wasn't good enough to speak to Pharaoh; that he was not eloquent; that he was slow of speech and tongue and in desperation begged God to send someone else. But eventually he stepped out of the boat.

Or your boat might be your lack of confidence or the prospect of embarrassing or making a fool of yourself and maybe that is what stopped the other eleven from stepping out.

It takes courage to step out of the boat; to overcome your fear and as Peter found out there's no guarantee that things will turn out as you expect. Fortunately, there are a number of instances in this church where people have overcome their fear and successfully stepped out of the boat.

In the past year, Roz, Carol and Jenny have all volunteered to lead or preach at Lynwood services. I know as a fact that their initial response when asked was 'no way', but eventually they stepped out of the boat. And only this week, Helena stood in at very short notice to lead morning prayer for the first time when neither Jon nor I were able to be there.

Out of their comfort zones? Definitely. Responding to Jesus's invitation? Certainly. Was it worth the risk? Well you'll have to ask them, but the only way of finding out is by being willing to get your feet wet.

So my question to you is, if Jesus offers you the invitation to 'come' would you be willing to get out of the boat?

I can't really expect you to answer that if I'm not willing to answer it myself. So let me share with you how I've been getting my feet wet for the past six months.

Since 2006 I have felt that I was being called by Christ to ordained ministry generally and specifically to become an assistant minister here at Holy Trinity In my own Moses like way I have persuaded myself time and again that I should say no to Christ's invitation. I reasoned I was imaging it, I wasn't good enough, ordination is for younger people, I'm too busy to switch careers and so on

At one point I decided that becoming a LLM was answering the call, well sort of anyhow. But the sense only intensified subsequently until finally during a talk at Spring Harvest on why we should surrender fully to God I realized that I had to step out of the boat.

Quite rightly the Diocese have very rigorous procedures to test and validate an individual's calling.

Six months on, that discernment process is well under way but there are any number of obstacles to overcome, not least that I am already older than the Diocesan guidelines permit or that the process may not be completed in time for Bishop Andrew to make a decision before he retires.

As they must, the PCC haven't yet been asked their opinion as to my suitability or issues may arise through the series of indepth interviews I'm undertaking which could end in my application being rejected.

In the 1980 film *The Blues Brothers*. The two leads play a couple of ex-convict wanna be musicians trying to raise money for an orphanage. Anytime they were asked about their work, they had a standard response [\[film clip\]](#).

Does my exploration of my calling mean **"I'm on a mission from God"**? Maybe. But one thing is certain, at every ordination service the candidates are asked to declare to the congregation that they will undertake to do certain things and each declaration ends with the words "with the help of God I will".

And that, I think is the key lesson in our story today. We can not do things in our own strength. Peter could not have walked on water by himself; instead he put his faith and trust in Jesus; and even though things didn't turn out as he expected and it was nearly a disaster; Christ was still there to help and rescue him.

My application may not be successful and I might end up with egg on my face, looking a fool for even thinking I might succeed but that's what stepping out of the boat sometimes entails. But not sharing this news with you would have made a mockery of preaching about stepping out of the boat.

So, did Peter fail?

In a way I suppose he did, but at least he responded to Christ's invitation to walk with him. With the help of God each and every one of us can walk with Christ by serving in so many different ways. Thankfully, God is patient with us when we are reluctant to leave our comfort zones.

But remember, if you want to walk with Jesus, you first have to get out of the boat.

