Fishing is hard work. My grandmother was quite a fisherman. She would research appropriate bait and buy it. Then she would check which way the wind was blowing, because she believed some directions provided her with a better opportunity than the others. Timing was everything. Then on the morning of the day of the fishing expedition she would get up really early, drive to the river where the boat was kept, undock it and go out into the Rappahannock River or the Chesapeake Bay with her bait and rods and reels and lines and her bucket to throw the fish into after she reeled them in. She would bait the hooks (usually she did a couple of lines at a time), cast them into the water and wait. My grandmother could wait patiently for hours. Then when the fish took the bait, she responded carefully and thoughtfully so that she could hook him. Then she would need to reel them in, which often also required some effort. At the end of the day she’d come back in, redock the boat and cook and clean what she’d caught before taking them home or to family members.

Fishing for people is hard work, too. We have to carefully research how best to entice folks to come take a look at Jesus. Some events, typically less formal ones than Sunday church, are usually better “bait” in fishing for Jesus.

We also have to consider the timing -- often there are times in their lives when folks are more susceptible to coming to church with us or hearing about Jesus than others. All people are different but many people are most susceptible after losses, after the birth of children or grandchildren, after deep hurts, after moving to a new home.

Then we undock from our home base – the church building -- to go out to where the people are, just as my grandmother undocked her boat to go out to the river or the bay. The river, by the way, yielded different types of fish than did the bay so she had to think about which kinds of fish she wanted that day before she cast off and, in fact, even before she bought the bait. Fishing for people is similar. We may find different demographics among people at our workplace or in our hobby club than we do among our close friends or our children’s school friends. We think about this before we decide how to approach them.

Then, once we cast out our line, we are patient. These people “fish” may take the bait immediately or we may have to wait for quite a while with our rod in the water. We are alert, however, because once they take a little nip of the bait, we want to make the right moves so that we can hook them and reel them in.

Our patron saint, Saint Andrew whose feast we celebrate today, was a fisherman. When Jesus called him, he knew Andrew, through the help of Jesus’s instruction and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, also potentially could fish successfully for people. Fishing for men or people is an expression used for going out to preach the Gospel, finding, hooking and reeling in people who want a relationship or deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Andrew was the first disciple and we see him several times in the Gospel bringing other people and their gifts to Christ. Andrew meets Jesus first and then brings his brother, Peter, who also becomes a disciple, for example. Andrew brings the gift of loaves and fishes to Jesus for blessing and use, for another example. In the Episcopal church, the Fellowship of St Andrew is one whose members are devoted to encouraging personal evangelism and the bringing of one’s friends and colleagues to the knowledge of Christ.

Clearly, then, we at this church that is named for Andrew the evangelist are called also to evangelism. We are called to go out wherever we need to, to cast our metaphoric line into the river, well baited, at the right time and wait. We are called to cast our lines and nets far and wide, on one side of the boat and then the other. We are called to pray and to know that God is always with us and that God will help us to reach people with the message of the unconditional love of God.

We, like Andrew, are called to follow Jesus and, as part of that following, fish for people.

Let’s all go fishing.