When I was teaching, we used to teach an RE unit on leaders, about faith leaders today, such as vicars, and about Jesus as a leader of the whole church.

We began by playing Follow My leader and then talked about what it was like to be both a leader and a follower.

They all liked the idea of being the leader but found it much harder then they expected. Because not only did they have to look and listen to make sure the followers were keeping up, but at the same time they had to actually decide what to do! And they discovered that to be a follower, they had to watch and listen to each other as well as the leader.

The disciples, of course were followers. That's what tthe word disciple means. It comes from the Latin word meaning pupil, learner or follower. And they were *loyal* followers. In order to follow Jesus, they'd left their old lives behind and began a new life with him.

They listened to Jesus even though they often didn't understand him. And they watched as he engaged with many different people. And Jesus was their leader. He chose his followers, he decided where they were going and answered their questions, even when they failed to understand him.

In the gospels we learn about Jesus the leader and his followers,the disciples.

But in this mornings' gospel reading, something different seems to be happening. We know that the gospel writers sometimes play about with the actual chronology of events in order to give us a clearer picture of who Jesus is. Nevertheless, the events in this morning's gospel seem to have come near the start of Jesus' ministry.

So far, Matthew has recounted how Jesus called the first four disciples: the fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James and John. How Jesus has delivered the lengthy Sermon on the Mount, and has performed a number of healing miracles. And now we hear of him calling the rest of the disciples.

But then, what seems to be the very first thing Jesus does?

He sends those  new disciples out with authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal the sick.  He gives them strict instructions but, when you read on in chapter 10, he certainly doesn't promise them an easy ride.

And this is the discipes introduction to following Jesus.

I wonder how that would have made them feel...

Daunted perhaps, Nervous, Scared they'd let Jesus down.  Because suddenly, they are to be followers no longer. They must learn to be leaders.

And in this reading, I believe, Matthew is telling us that we are called to do the same.  To be, not only followers of Jesus but also, in our own way, leaders for jesus.  Which is a wonderful catchphrase - But what exactly does it mean?

In the uncertainty facing our world In the turmoil of our national politics we too feel  "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

And in our particular situation, here in this parish, we certainly feel leaderless and becoming leaders is probably the last thing we feel like doing.  But perhaps, it is in the reality of  our very sorrow and bewilderment, that we have a special opportunity to, become, in our own ways,  leaders in our church and in the community.

Of course, I don't mean that everyone should suddenly leap up and organise everyone else because that's not what leadership means.  But this morning, I'd like to suggest a few ways in which we can get better at being those 'leaders for Jesus'.

Leadership is about listening.  We can all listen to each other.  We can find out what people are good at. Discover what is giving them joy as well as making them anxious. And be a support in good times and bad.

Leadership is about encouraging others and helping them to be good followers. It's about helping our fellow followers to discover and explore new potential for engaging with the church and the wider community.  Occasionally, it may mean stepping back from a role we enjoy to enable others to flourish in God's service.

And leadership is about making decisions.  Not about the big issues and opportunities facing our church -that is the job of the PCC; though ideas are always welcome.  It's about making decsions on what we think is important in life about trying to work out what God wants and how we can best live in the way Jesus taught us.  As we change, and the world changes, we will need to reassess our priorities, but we can be leaders of those around us in everything we say and do.

And finally, Leadership is not about staying still, but, as my pupils discovered, about moving forward.

And at our Bible and Banter discussion this week, we realised that all the readings this morning are about moving on.

Moses is reminding the Israelites how the Lord led them out of Egypt and how they will become a holy nation.

Paul, with his usual relentless logic, is explaining how, Jesus has brought  us closer to God.  Sin is what separates us from God but despite our sin and suffering we are brought through faith into the peace of God.

And in this morning's gospel, the followers of Jesus are being led into leadership. A leadership which after the death and resurrection of Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit and founded the church of which we are a part.

And so let us pray this morning that we will move forward together, as the leaders we are all called to be so that we may help to build God's kingdom here in the people and the community of which we are a part.

Amen