

In praise of smallness

The economic philosopher **E.F. Schumacher** wrote a wonderful little book in the early 1970's called '**Small is Beautiful**', its subtitle being 'a study of economics as if people mattered.' It is a book I plan to revisit in the near future.

Schumacher's proposition, or starting point, was that people, all people, do in fact matter and that any approach to economics should start with an acknowledgement of this basic moral truth. He then went on to advocate the benefits of small and local institutions offering local and contextualised solutions. He was in many ways anti the big and depersonalised. Schumacher was, I think, a man ahead of his times. His voice was prophetic.

I think intuitively we all know and appreciate the benefits of small and well thought through acts of kindness. We like to see the small business do well and we enjoy a wry smile of satisfaction when a minnow, a David, beats a big team, a Goliath, in the FA Cup or another sporting fixture. Yet, paradoxically, we are also encouraged to celebrate the big and to stand in awe of celebrities from the world of business, sport and entertainment. Big in many ways doesn't like small. I think part of the reason is that small pricks big's ego – back to **David and Goliath**.

At the end of November the church, alongside the Scots, celebrates the life and witness of my name's sake St. Andrew. But, what is St. Andrew famous for? Well, he certainly isn't recorded in Scripture as doing anything remarkable, big or heroic. In many ways he can be seen as small, perhaps even naive. Andrew is, of course, the first apostle to be called by Jesus. His reaction is interesting, 'yes I will come and follow you but first let me go and get my brother Simon.' Simon, who is to be renamed Peter, is ultimately to become 'the rock' on which the church is built. The next account of Andrew doing anything is in the **Feeding of the Five Thousand** when he is the apostle who when faced with the problem of how to feed a great multitude of people identifies a child with a few scraps of bread and fish as a possible solution. The third time Andrew is mentioned in the gospel narratives is when he introduces some Greeks to the Jewish Jesus and, thus, renders it possible for Christianity to become a global faith. Three small acts, that's all, but all with significant and world changing consequences.

Andrew is a true champion of the small. He reminds us of the importance of simply doing our bit and having a little faith. I am glad to be his name sake!