

THE ARUSHA CALL

The Arusha Call to Discipleship

Leading like Jesus

The World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism met in Arusha, Tanzania, in March 2018. From this meeting the more than 1,000 participants, who were all regularly engaged in mission and evangelism, issued the Arusha Call to Discipleship.

At our own national church General Synod in 2019, resolution A-129 was passed that we affirm the Arusha Call; encourage bodies within the General Synod to integrate this call into the guiding principles of baptismal living for the shaping of national ministries; and commend the Arusha Call to dioceses for study and inclusion in their considerations of evangelism, witness and discipleship.

For one year, Spiritual Development Team members and others will offer reflections in the New Brunswick Anglican on the 12 points within this call. This is Call # 9, written by Cole Hartin.

We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money (Luke 22:25-27).

Power, wealth, and a culture of money — these are all seductive enemies.

When we encounter Jesus, and are grafted into his body in Baptism, we learn, however haltingly, that our Lord laid aside his power in love.

This is evident in the event of the Incarnation itself, when the second person of the Holy Trinity entered into human life by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary.

The one by whom all things were created stepped into creation, entered a life of obscurity and poverty, and took on the toils that we all know too well.

He gave himself to be crucified and buried, and this was followed by the great mystery of his descent into hell. There is no lower place to go.

At pivotal points in his life, moreover, the seduction of

power reasserted itself to our Lord, in the form of Satan's temptation in the wilderness, but also in the disciples' constant calls for him to topple their enemies.

Topple their enemies he did, but not with political revolution or agitating for better representation in a corrupt empire, but in obliterating their sin, and taking it on himself, destroying it in his body, and rising to new life.

In Luke 22:24-30, when his disciples disputed who among them was the greatest, Jesus reminded them that true greatness lays aside the fight for privilege and status and takes the form of a servant. Jesus reminded his disciples that he, their teacher and messiah, was willing to be their servant.

How can we learn to lead like Jesus? How can we find greatness in serving, in laying aside the desire for power and wealth?

As I said, these are seductive and cunning enemies.

Who has power and wealth in our society? It is easy enough for us to spot those who wield the most of both. They stand at the intersection of technology and culture.

The top executives at Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, and perhaps those in the film industry, are ready examples. Not only do they have inordinate wealth, but also the ability to communicate with vast swaths of the population (in their own homes!) by means of phones, computers and televisions.

No one in human history has had such a far-reaching ability. And most of us are enmeshed in these systems of wealth and power as we purchase their products, using them for good or ill.

We resist the draws of power and wealth not by shunning the wealthy and powerful, however, but by ordering our own lives in the way of Jesus. This takes time, patience, a local community, and an openness to grace.

There is nothing less conducive to attaining power

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CAROLYN V ON UNSPLASH

The text of the Arusha Call:

As disciples of Jesus Christ, both individually and collectively:

- We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness.
- We are called to worship the one Triune God—the God of justice, love, and grace—at a time when many worship the false god of the market system (Luke 16:13).
- We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ—the fullness of life, the repentance and forgiveness of sin, and the promise of eternal life—in word and deed, in a violent world where many are sacrificed to the idols of death (Jeremiah 32:35) and where many have not yet heard the gospel.
- We are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency, in the search for justice and dignity (Acts 1:8; 4:31).
- We are called to discern the word of God in a world that communicates many contradictory, false, and confusing messages.
- We are called to care for God's creation, and to be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of a ruthless human-centered exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed.
- We are called as disciples to belong together in just and inclusive communities, in our quest for unity and on our ecumenical journey, in a world that is based upon marginalization and exclusion.
- We are called to be faithful witnesses of God's transforming love in dialogue with people of other faiths in a world where the politicization of religious identities often causes conflict.
- **We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money (Luke 22:25-27).**
- We are called to break down walls and seek justice with people who are dispossessed and displaced from their lands—including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers—and to resist new frontiers and borders that separate and kill (Isaiah 58:6-8).
- We are called to follow the way of the cross, which challenges elitism, privilege, personal and structural power (Luke 9:23).
- We are called to live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation.

This is a call to transforming discipleship. This is not a call that we can answer in our own strength, so the call becomes, in the end, a call to prayer:

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life in all its diversity and beauty. Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, we praise you that you came to find the lost, to free the oppressed, to heal the sick, and to convert the self-centred. Holy Spirit, we rejoice that you breathe in the life of the world and are poured out into our hearts. As we live in the Spirit, may we also walk in the Spirit. Grant us faith and courage to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus: becoming pilgrims of justice and peace in our time. For the blessing of your people, the sustaining of the earth, and the glory of your name. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

and wealth than setting aside Sunday morning for worship, prayer, and fellowship.

There is no better way to resist the temptations of the world than to read Scripture and pray together, bleary-eyed, in the morning or before bed.

But here's the rub. Even our desire for God can devolve into a desire for power. Discipleship, the means by which we follow Christ, can become misguided.

We might follow the steps

of a disciple in order to get a handle on God, to have some leverage in bargaining in our prayers for more financial blessings, or we might use our position in our church to agitate for our own agenda.

The tools that God gives us in our path toward holiness can be co-opted as another means to secure power over God or over his Church, so that we miss the focus we had when we began.

Thankfully, by his grace,

God can even use our paltry aims and questionable means for his ends. True discipleship, then, requires us not only to turn to Jesus over the temptation in the world, but to sacrifice our own attempts to make our lives acceptable to God. True discipleship begins and ends with us calling out to our Master, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner!"

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