

## THE ARUSHA CALL

# The Arusha Call to Discipleship # 2

## *Is there really something behind baptism?*

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 last summer, 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 part 2, written by Shawn Branch.

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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.

As Christians, we believe that baptism is an important and central part of our journey. We have embraced this practice as a foundational component of our polity as Anglicans.

Our baptism is much more than a sprinkling of water, or for some a full immersion of body, it is committing our lives to live as Christ.

St. Paul suggests that in our baptism, we have set aside the desires of our flesh and those of the world; we have committed ourselves to live, serve and love like Christ. (see Colossians 2).

While many of us were baptized as children, we affirm this in our confirmation – we see this in the promises that the bishop asks each candidate.

Scripture tells us that Jesus' ministry started after his public baptism and 40 days and nights of fasting in the desert.

This is significant because it models for us for the public and private sides of our Christian life and ministry and shows us that we are called to reflection and time away.

Far too often, we get caught in the trap of thinking that we are not able or not confident enough.

While Paul was in custody, he wrote to the believers in Philippi giving thanks for their care of him – “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13).

Many of Paul's letters were written from a jail cell, encouraging the believers as they began to hear the Gospel of Jesus.

We live in a world where we have freedom to exercise our faith — our buildings are not being destroyed or bombed, we do not experience persecution in the public square.

For us, our challenges are different. Many in our communities have become indifferent to the Gospel and yet the need for Good News and Hope is just as great as it has ever been. This indifference comes as a result of them not having experienced the transforming power of the Spirit.

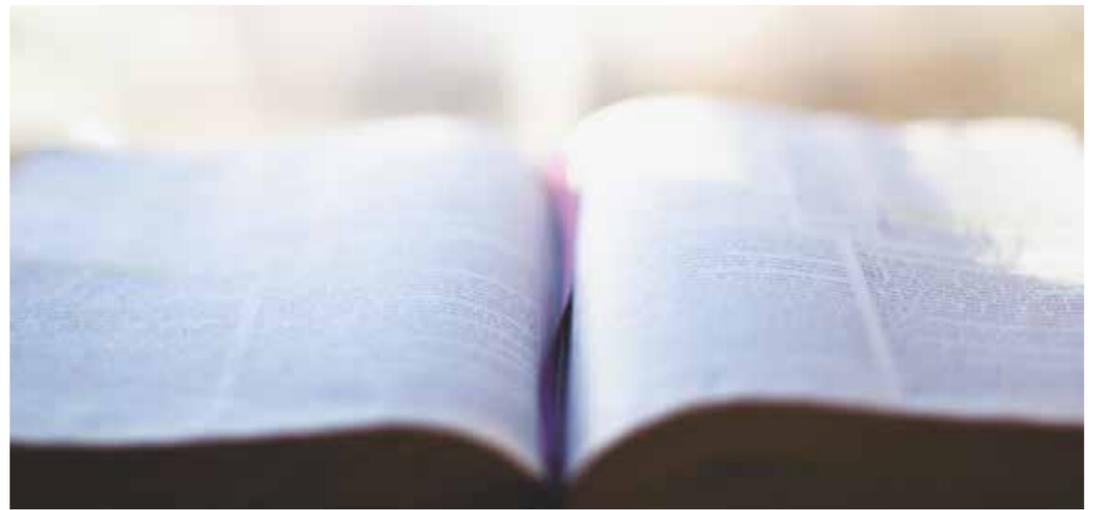
In living out our baptism, we are called to a journey of faith and life in a way similar to Jesus – taking time with the Father, time with other believers, caring for those in need and standing up against injustices.

We are called to live lives that are “questionable” as Michael Frost suggests. We are meant to be different – to have people look and wonder what is different about us.

What is different should be Jesus.

This does not mean that we are called to be loud and vocal or writing letters, and so on, but we are called to act in the ways that God has called us to. For some, it is a gentle presence of quietly coming alongside our neighbour, while others have been called to have that prophetic voice in the community.

Our baptism is not a simple ritual to complete because



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.*

it has been handed down through the ages. Our baptism is our declaration that we have been chosen as part of God's family and our response is to

strive to live as Christ and reflect His love to those around us. We do this, together, because we were designed for community and connectivity.

How has your baptism and journey been transformational?

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