

# The Arusha Call to Discipleship

## 'Economy' is a stolen, warped word

*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 3, written by Chris McMullen.*

“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).

Today, business and political leaders often speak of the “economy.” By that, they invariably mean the financial transactions of our society.

When the economy does well, it is because people are buying and selling lots of goods and services — goods that some of us really don't need and services often for our personal pleasure and consumption.

Services like looking after God's creation or other people don't count, unless, of course, they are for for-profit corporations.

When the economy is not doing so well (as it apparently is not right now), employment is low, at least compared to a few generations ago, when many households were able to afford housing, food, and the

other basics of life, along with some treats, on one paycheck.

Now as the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard suggests (Matthew 20:1-16), in God's purpose, everyone is entitled to meaningful work. But everyone is also entitled to an adequate living, whether they were able to work for pay full-time or not.

That parable will be our Gospel Lesson on Sunday, Sept. 20 this year. It really challenges our “market-system” values. Wait for many preachers to try to explain it away: It applies to some spiritual realm, certainly not to the economy! The economy — based on healthy competition, gaining, spending, and media-motivated greed — must reign supreme!

Now the Arusha Call to Discipleship is not condemning the market system per se. That would make no more sense than condemning tools for human living like the highway system or a hammer.

It is condemning turning it into a god: a god to which all must answer; and who answers to nothing or no one else. A god who many “worship” (give it ultimate value, and look to it for our most important loyalty and hope) in place of the “one Triune God ... of justice, love, and grace.”

Notice the Arusha Call highlights “the Triune God” — the Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forever the single yet multiple community of love and grace; whose will it is that all creation reflect God's glory — the ultimate and beautiful reality of God's love and grace — in human and ecological relations, and, by golly, even “economies” of justice.

You see, “economy” is a stolen, warped word. It comes from a wonderful word in the original Greek of the New Testament: “oikonomia,” or household. It is interesting to note that the “oikoumene” motto of the World Council of Churches identifies the whole world as God's family or



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### Arusha Call # 2:

***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).***

**This call to transforming discipleship is not a one 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.***

“household.”

The root word “oikos” means “house.” It denoted personal homes, but also the temple or house of God. With the Incarnation of Jesus and the gift of God's Spirit, the “house” or “household” of God has become the eternal family of all God's people (Ephesians 2:19).

Though financial matters are part of the management of a household (and even of God's on earth), there is, of course, far more to it than that: relationships, children coming to maturity, the welcoming of strangers, love and grace and justice.

The “intrapersonal system” of the Triune God is the origin of our creation, and the destiny of our pilgrimage through this earthly life as God's adopted children.

So our “interpersonal”

interactions as the “household” of God have everlasting consequences; and our true “economic” destiny may be and ought to be anticipated and lived for even now.

So we are called by Jesus to discipleship, even in our financial dealings and plans.

And we are called to work for a society where humanity can flourish, hear the Gospel and fulfil our destiny in a healthy economy where everyone may have meaningful labour and adequate income — without, according to Jesus in Matthew 20:1-16, one element being myopically reduced to another.

When we tithe, for instance, that may mean less direct spending on goods and services in the profit-making dimension of our economy.

But it may mean an enrichment of human value

and God's purpose in the real economy of the purpose and promise of God: Father, Son and Spirit.

And that is no doubt why Jesus, probably with a twinkle in his eye, challenges us with his parable. May our priorities and outlook become closer to those of the Ultimate Household Manager? It would be for our best interest — and delight!

“No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Luke 16:13).

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