

The Arusha Call to Discipleship

Proclaiming the Good News in word and deed

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 4, written by Nancy Stevens.

"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."

The word "proclaim" emphasizes the importance of the message. The gospel is not only important, it is truly good news!

Many view God as irrelevant or as a tyrant out to spoil our fun. Nothing could be further from the truth. God gave His Son Jesus to provide a way for people to be reconciled to Him and to experience life as He intended it to be.

In a world where millions live in fear and despair, finding out God loves us and wants to have a relationship with us is good news indeed!

Through repentance and faith in Jesus, we are not only forgiven, we are made new

creations (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We receive a fresh start and embark on the path of eternal life. Eternal life is not just about living forever in our heavenly home, it is about the quality of life we can have now as we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

Jesus speaks of it as the "abundant life" (John 10:10) — a life full of love, joy, peace, hope, purpose, etc. He does not promise we will not have trials or heartaches in this life. Rather, He promises that we do not have to face them alone, as we lean on Him in our time of need. That, too, is good news!

While some Christians are called to vocational ministry, it is the responsibility of every believer to proclaim this good news both in word and in deed.

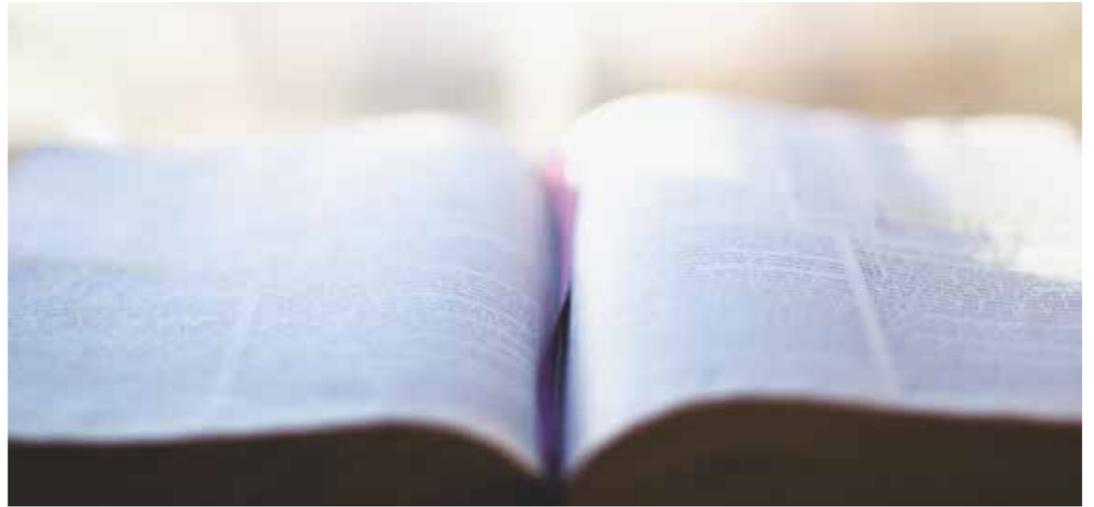
Followers of Jesus are called to action — to love others, to protect the weak, to provide for the destitute, to fight for justice, etc.

The list is long because the needs are many! The church is meant to be salt and light or, in other words, to be agents of healing who point others to Jesus, the only way to the Father.

Christians are called to proclaim this good news in a world that is filled with violence. Every day we hear of war, brutality, murder and abuse. It is easy to become callous towards human suffering. It is even easier to feel helpless.

What difference can we make in this world? It may seem like so little, but each good deed and word of witness sheds some light in the darkness and can make a real difference for at least one person.

Jeremiah 32:35 refers to God's abhorrence towards human sacrifices offered to Baal. The practice is perhaps shocking to modern readers. Yet, even today, millions of people are "sacrificed" as dispensable objects exploited by those who have power over them — child soldiers, suicide bombers,



CAROLYN V ON UNSPLASH

Arusha Call # 3:

As disciples of Jesus Christ, both individually and collectively, 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.

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.*

***“What difference can we make in this world? It may seem like so little, but each good deed and word of witness sheds some light in the darkness and can make a real difference for at least one person.*”**

refugees, sex slaves, humans trafficked around the world, to name a few.

Then there are socially acceptable practices which also devalue human life — abortion and euthanasia. Thankfully, there are Christian organizations actively working to address these many forms of evil in our world. They deserve our prayers and financial support.

Finally, followers of Jesus are called to take the good news to those who have not yet heard it. The world has an estimated 7,408 unreached people groups representing

3.23 billion people. (For more information see <https://www.joshuaproject.net/>) How will they hear unless someone goes to tell them?

Thankfully, the church is growing in many parts of the world and is actively sharing the good news beyond their borders as well. Still, the spiritual needs of the world are great and the ones prepared to go as messengers of the gospel are few.

Then there are the needs here at home. As church attendance continues to shrink in Canada, the need for evangelism in our own backyard

grows.

Take it from me, as someone involved in cross-cultural ministry for many years, it is relatively easy to get on a plane and go proclaim the good news somewhere else.

It is much more challenging to speak of Jesus with one's own family, friends and neighbours.

As His disciples, both individually and corporately, may we embrace our calling to proclaim the good news wherever God has placed us.

Nancy Stephens is chair of the Diocesan Mission & Outreach Team.