

A Call to Discipleship
Hearing the Message from Arusha, Tanzania
in our Churches in Canada and the U.S.A.

An Invitation from

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry, The Episcopal Church
Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Archbishop and Primate Fred Hiltz, Anglican Church of Canada
National Bishop Susan C. Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

What is the Arusha Call?

Together with all 319 members of the World Council of Churches (WCC), our churches have received the **Arusha Call**, the report from a gathering in Tanzania in March 2018 which examined the current practice and understanding of Christian mission. For this task the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism assembled more than a thousand participants, whose diversities of cultural backgrounds and denominational traditions were unprecedented at this recurring conference. After deep and discerning listening, a summary statement was produced, The Arusha Call to Discipleship. It is found here:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/the-arusha-call-to-discipleship>

The hope of the WCC is to assist, inspire and connect churches like ours in our own reflections on these vital topics.

What does the Arusha Call say to our churches?

This Call helpfully comes to us at a decisive moment, as our four churches commit anew to engage together the challenges and opportunities of faithful mission in our fast-changing contexts. We are mindful especially of seeking racial justice, of honouring the Quad-Centennial (1619-2019) of the forced trans-Atlantic transportation of enslaved African persons to this continent; of challenging theologies which have endorsed dispossession of Indigenous Peoples; and of strengthening our support for the displaced and dispossessed seeking new beginnings in our midst.

We welcome this witness from Christians around the world. The Call is a document of realism and of joy, of honest assessment and of hope for transformation, of trust in the way of Christ and in the power of the Spirit.

Especially, we lift up these features of the Call, which gives voice to many of the same convictions increasingly emphasized in our four churches:

1. It identifies deepening the discipleship of Christians as the primary missional and evangelical concern, knowing that the Gospel truly lived is the best form of witness to it.

2. It defines mission in a manner that seeks to move away from colonialist perspectives, understanding that it is not the work of the Church directed ‘to the margins’ but God’s work originating ‘from the margins’.
3. It insists that all mission and evangelism must be integrated and holistic, not endorsing any false dichotomy between a spiritual salvation and the transformation of social, economic, racial, environmental, and gender injustices.
4. It understands that as the Church is called into ‘active collaboration’ in God's mission, this responsibility rests not only with those who serve in offices of leadership in the Church; it relies on a renewal of the vocations and ministry of all the baptized.

Read in our cultural settings, the Call provides a common touchstone in the continued shaping of our full communion efforts in mission and evangelism across the national border which separates us. This full communion is an important sign of our deepening unity as churches in ministry together on this land long known to many as Turtle Island, the continent of North America.

We thus commend the Arusha Call to Discipleship to our four churches as we expand and deepen the relationships of full communion among us. May our growth in unity also lead us to a 'personal and communal conversion, and a transforming discipleship', for sake of God's mission in the world.

We make this commendation recognizing, as did the Arusha message, that ‘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’.

Toronto, May 2019