

Living and Sharing Jesus Shaped Life



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In 2016 a central body of the Anglican Communion – the Anglican Consultative Council - issued a remarkable call to every Church and every Christian to return to a focus on being intentional in our discipleship.

Jesus invited people to follow him, and that call remains central to Christians today. Jesus invites people not just to join him, not just to worship him, but to live and share a life shaped by him and like his.

As we each respond, individually and collectively, we become part of a new movement of God world-wide. We become part of a learning community, apprentices formed by the Jesus whom we meet in scripture and who is active in our ordinary lives.

In light of the Gospel and theological imperative to make disciples, [we] recognize the need for every province, diocese and parish in the Anglican Communion to adopt a clear focus on intentional discipleship and to produce resources to equip and enable the whole church to be effective in making new disciples of Jesus Christ

Anglican Consultative Council 2016 Resolution 16.01

All across the Anglican Communion people are re-discovering in Provinces, Dioceses and Congregations how following Jesus shapes every part of their lives. In Cyprus and the Gulf they call this ‘Doing Good and Doing God’; in the Church of England it is ‘Set God’s People Free’; in the USA it is a call to ‘The Way of Love’ and in Kenya they speak of ‘A Wholesome Ministry for a Wholesome Nation’



After a Consultation in Jamaica on whole life discipleship, Bishop Howard Gregory observed, ‘I have never seen such enthusiasm and energy in a Church gathering. Men and women, children and youth in every parish are being trained and helped to live a Jesus-shaped life.’

A Whole Life Discipleship Consultation, Jamaica, 2017

In South Africa large numbers gather as ‘Anglicans Ablaze,’ while in Ghana Archbishop Daniel Sarfo says, ‘This focus on whole-life discipleship is exactly what the Church in my country needs at this time.’

In this booklet, you will discover just some of the ways and places where this is happening, the meaning of discipleship for us today, and some guidance for embarking on this faith journey - a journey that changes us by Jesus’ love and also changes our surroundings.

What Shapes Us?

So, think about what shapes you.

Is it Jesus Christ? Or things in your past?

Or many other factors in your present situation?

As Christ’s followers we are not to conform to our prevailing culture.

We are to be shaped instead by God.

For Christians, discipleship is a journey of learning and living the way of Jesus in community, for the sake of the world. We become more Christ-like and more dedicated to model Christ’s transforming love, personally, communally and in our wider societies.



Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what God’s will is – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12.2

Discipleship requires mentoring, accountability and immersion in relationship with God, working out our faith in Jesus and sharing it with others through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is **Jesus-shaped life**.

What is Living and Sharing Jesus-Shaped Life?

Living

- Being disciples transforms our whole lifestyle and our whole lives.
- As disciples we are drawn into God's abundant life.

and

- Jesus-shaped life is holistic: we are sent to live for him every day and in every way day
- Living and sharing are interdependent; the personal and the cultural cannot be separated.

Sharing

- God's love and generosity enables us to share ourselves and all that we have with others.
- As our lives are shaped by Jesus, we proclaim the gospel and invite others into this abundance of life, so they can live and learn as His disciples.

Jesus-Shaped Life

- God transforms us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to become more like Jesus

Disciples: who, what, how, where, when, and why?

Who?

Disciples are those who follow a way.

Disciples respond to God's love and forgiveness, by learning to love and follow Jesus and his way in every aspect of everyday life and sharing that life with others.

In the time of Jesus of Nazareth, a teacher, or "rabbi", would invite a group of students, or "disciples", to walk so closely behind him that they were covered in his dust. They were chosen by him, and shared their everyday life with him, reflecting together on his every Word and learning his way(s) by imitation.

"If you make disciples you will always get the church, but if you try to build the church, you will rarely get disciples."

Mike Breen, Author & former leader of 3DM

Cultural norms were radically challenged by Jesus as they walked alongside him, and shared their lives with him and each other.

Disciples today are similarly called to follow the way of Christ, focus on Him, and learn from one another and those who are willing to mentor them. St Paul, who described this relationship as parent/child (1 Cor 4.16), said “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”



A Youth Discipleship Camp in Santiago, Chile

This will always involve some sort of repentance, or change of direction, as we learn to walk in God’s ways. Indeed, we can’t do it without God’s Spirit, who brings us into new life through faith in the work of Jesus on the cross.

So, being a disciple is usually caught rather than taught. Disciples thrive in a culture where they are expected to make disciples and be mentored themselves.

What? Disciples are those who learn ...

*Jesus said: “Whoever wants to follow me, must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me”
Matthew 16.24*

We are used to classroom learning as “information exchange”. But whilst a disciple must learn much knowledge, discipleship is more about “habit change”, which comes through imitation and innovation. If we are immersed in a community of learners, this helps us to discern what God may be saying to us, and what we should do about it.

In this way a disciple learns to be more like Jesus, and to be shaped by his words and his Spirit within us. The training ground for this kind of learning will often be in everyday life, eg. practising patience when we least feel like it.

This does not happen overnight. Learning and growing is not achieved just as a beginner. We continue to learn throughout our lives, especially as we are intentional about being and making disciples.

“I have been profoundly impacted by ordinary people who have invested in me and invited me to learn by following their imperfect example as they follow Jesus.”
Bob Rognlien, ‘A Jesus-Shaped Life’

*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and become my disciples.
John 15.8*

How? Disciples are those who are shaped by Jesus ...

Disciples are shaped by Jesus, as they allow His character to be formed in them by the Holy Spirit and by following His teaching and example. Jesus promised His disciples His presence, but also that they would follow the same road as him. There is a cost to this.

This may include personal sacrifice, suffering, even persecution.

A disciple will grow in character and competence as he/she is accountable for new habits and ways of doing things, and in the process will find freedom. The ultimate test of this change is whether we are growing in our expression of love for God and love for others. (Mt 22.37-39)

Disciples seek to be loving in all relationships, honest, thankful, generous and forgiving. They seek to honour marriage and the importance of family, to work for peace and justice, and to be responsible stewards of God’s creation.

Where and when? Disciples are those who continue Jesus’ work wherever they are ...

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. Jn 20.21

A disciple also learns how to do the things Jesus did. Jesus started by showing his disciples how to do things, then by letting them do them with his help, and finally by leaving them to do them alone. A disciple today exercises gifts of healing, both



Young people in West Indies learn together about Church and Community Transformation

in power and service, shows love to the unloved, crosses social boundaries, and preaches good news to the poor.

We should ask “what does a Jesus-shaped parent look like?” Or “a Jesus-shaped employer?” At the same time, a disciple is able to bring new hope to those who are seeking this new life. Following Jesus needs to touch our attitudes to work, relationships and culture.



Enjoying life together in South America

Why? Disciples are those who make other disciples ...

Jesus' method for multiplying his followers down the ages has been for each one to make disciples. Being a disciple is about being sent out in mission, as Jesus was, and passing on the love that we have received. This is life-giving, as it communicates a message, and encourages others in their journey.

Where this happens, the reality of new life is communicated. Those who learn and teach are known to be disciples by their love one for another.

“Often within our churches, people have been taught, but have stayed put. Disciples are more than people who do courses. They feel the responsibility to go out and share their lives and the good news of God’s love. They follow Jesus, walking with Him, together with others. They love because they have been loved.” Bishop Martin Breytenbach from Anglicans Ablaze, Southern Africa

Living the Five Marks of Jesus-Shaped Life

The Anglican Communion has a definitive statement of all it means for us to live a Jesus shaped Life. It begins by reminding us that: 'The mission of the church is the mission of Jesus.'

How we live Jesus-shaped life will vary from nation to nation, culture to culture, generation to generation.

Whatever our context, we can strive to live out – and be transformed by – these characteristics of Jesus-shaped life (known as the Five Marks of Mission)



1) **Disciples TELL:** We proclaim the Good News of God's Reign



Evangelism training in the United States of America

Episcopalians are reclaiming and embracing the ministry of evangelism, and it is remaking the whole church. As they walk the Way of Love, and practice blessing the world with their stories of life with Jesus, they're helping their neighbors to grow relationship with Jesus, too.

Thousands of Episcopalians have participated in Evangelism trainings, where they learn to share and

celebrate faith stories. One popular exercise at these trainings is Cardboard Testimonials: recalling your own story of resurrection and capturing the essence of the story on two sides of cardboard, then sharing the story of God's love and faithfulness with a partner.

Consider making a personal commitment to:

- Prepare and share your own story of faith
- Find new ways to share faith through everyday living (family, work, school, community, church)

2) Disciples TEACH: We teach, baptise and nurture new believers.



A youth congress in Chol Chol, Chile, Nov 2018

In Chile, a focus on mission, discipleship and leadership has led to a reported 30% growth of the church since 2000. Clergy and lay leaders actively search out young people, mentor them and offer a one-year walk along program with a parish priest.

One young person said, 'I was only a nominal Christian until someone came alongside and mentored me to fullness of faith.'

Consider making a personal commitment to:

- Read scripture daily
- Pray daily e.g using the Lord's Prayer as a guide
- Gather regularly with others to worship, pray, share and learn

3) Disciples TEND: We respond to human need by loving service.



An assembly at St Barnabas' School

Several inner-city churches in Kuala Lumpur are working to provide schooling for refugee children from Myanmar.

Churches are full of children and teachers every day, and it is proving to be life-changing for the children and a powerful Christian witness to their families.

One example is St Barnabas' School for the Rohingya children

Consider making a personal commitment to:

- Tend to my own spiritual, emotional and physical well-being
- Use time and talents to serve others
- Protect the poor, marginalised and vulnerable

4) Disciples TRANSFORM: We work to transform unjust structures of society, challenging violence of every kind and pursuing peace and reconciliation.



Moumita Biswas, Shillong, North India

Moumita Biswas lives in Shillong, North India. She is breaking the silence about women and sexual violence in her context. Molested as a child and abused during her marriage Moumita describes herself as a wounded healer who has been strengthened by her faith to transform her pain into action.

She has supported vulnerable women through micro-entrepreneurship projects, giving them the confidence and resources to further their education.

But Moumita knows that empowering women alone will not solve the problem. By campaigning, teaching and biblical reflection at the Asian School for Ecumenical Formation for Gender Justice, Moumita has trained many church leaders, both men and women.

Consider making a personal commitment to:

- Repent of any sin in this area, asking and offering forgiveness
- Pursue reconciliation of broken relationships in personal life, community and society
- Advocate for justice and peace

*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.
- Jn 13.35*

5) Disciples TREASURE: We strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.



Green Anglicans clear beaches in Southern Africa

In October 2016 the Anglican Church of Southern Africa launched a Decade of Intentional Discipleship as part of its vision to be Anchored in the love of Christ, Committed to God's mission and Transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Green Anglicans, young followers of Jesus, express their whole life discipleship by campaigning about environmental concerns and cleaning up the beach themselves.

Consider making a personal commitment to:

- Live more responsibly and consume less
- Live creatively on earth
- Find practical ways to demonstrate care for creation

How might we move forward with living a Jesus shaped life?

We all have much in our lives that needs to be re-shaped by Jesus!

When Jesus called his first disciples he gathered a group to learn and grow together. We are wise to do the same.

So to start we might prayerfully ask:

- Are there others who might go on this journey with Jesus alongside me? If so, invite them to join you.



Studying Jesus' way together in the bible

- Who is further along on this journey who can disciple and mentor us or me? Then approach them.



An Agents of Change Workshop in Lusaka, Sept. 2017

- Is there a local group or Church who are already on this journey? Then join them.

- Is there someone who needs my help and experience to become more Jesus-shaped (being a mentor to someone else keeps us on our toes)? Then offer to meet with them.

Once we have agreed to follow and imitate Jesus together we need to look carefully at what Jesus says and does in the bible and ask his Holy Spirit to make our lives more Jesus shaped in character, behaviour and purpose.

At the same time it is good to look outwards at our community and everyday lives asking 'Where is God at work and how does he want us to re-shape our community for Jesus?'

Finally it is worth realising how many different areas of our life Jesus wants to re-shape. Every area of our life is submitted to Christ in baptism. He is interested in and present with us, by His Spirit, in every aspect of life.

Therefore spend time personally, and with others in your context, working out how you might begin to make a difference in each of these areas:

1. home and family life
2. response to human need
3. daily work
4. all relationships
5. care of creation, our bodies and every living thing
6. justice and social issues, especially in our local community and our country
7. enjoyment and use of time, including leisure time
8. exercise of our gifts and talents
9. how we handle and honour God with our income and all the wealth entrusted to us
10. habits of worship and prayer which put us in the way of Jesus' transforming grace

Resources to help you get started and to keep following too include:

- JSL Life Guide has 12 Sessions covering different areas of Jesus Shaped Living
- A Discipleship Resource Hub full of good ideas from across the world can be found at: anglicancommunion.org/discipleship

For help and support contact the Anglican Communion Office at: mission@anglicancommunion.org or your local Church

Prayer for Living and Sharing Jesus-Shaped Life

Almighty God,

You have called us to live and share

Jesus-shaped life

in a Jesus-shaped church

for a Jesus-shaped world.

Empower us with your Holy Spirit

to live as disciples who make disciples

of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

