

Covenant and Care: A baptismal promise to safeguard creation

Mary Raddon

*“Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth?
I will, with God’s help.”*

These words were added to the baptismal covenant in the Book of Alternative Services (BAS) as the ninth question of the “covenant inquiry” in the 2013 general synod.

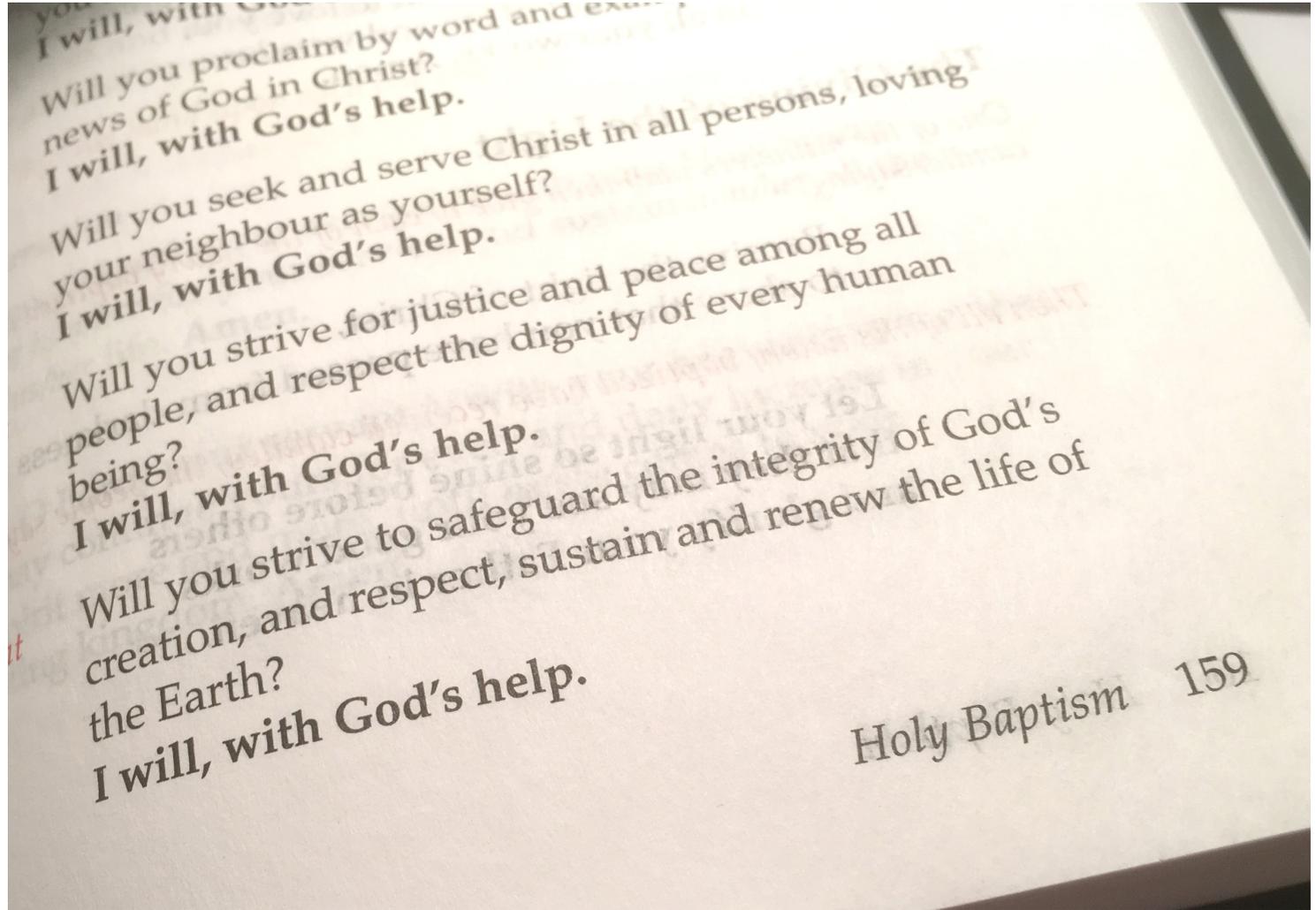
Although it quotes directly from the fifth Mark of Mission (part of a framework used to describe and encourage ministry throughout the worldwide Anglican Communion), the addition to the baptismal covenant comes from a grassroots movement in the church.

“Sometimes the national church catches up with what’s going on at the grassroots level, and in some ways that’s what’s happened with this,” said the Very Rev. Louise Peters, dean of Kamloops cathedral in the Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior, and mover of the resolution.

“This came from families and young people and adults who were coming to receive baptism, wanted and needed something more, and were asking about our role as stewards of creation. It reflects what the church has been exploring for the last 30 to 40 years—the understanding that to be faithful as Christians and as God’s created beings is to be co-stewards with God.”

We have the great privilege as Christians to be commissioned by God to care for his creation, and as his beloved created ones to care for our fellow creatures. We were placed in the Garden of Eden to “tend and nurture.” This vow engages us in our calling, and has become part of the BAS for that reason.

Some have said that there are no baptisms in our churches these days because there are few infants brought in. Nonetheless as faithful Anglican Christians, these vows are part of who we are and can be repeated and renewed at



The Diocese of Ontario Green Group is providing copies of the ninth question of the ‘covenant inquiry’ for addition into older copies of the Book of Alternative Services. Photo-Mark Hauser.

any time. The need for creation care is pressing and urgent, and it is appropriate and helpful for us to be reminded of our calling in this baptismal vow.

Your diocesan Green Group is aware that most churches in our diocese are using the older version of the Book of Alternative Services which precedes this addition and that most of us have no intention of purchasing the most recent edition.

We have offered a way to insert this addition to the baptismal covenant. The Green Group can supply multiple copies of the vow on a transparent Avery label

that fits on the bottom of page 159 of the older version of the BAS. Cut it out of a sheet of 16 labels and remove the backing. Then align the label and press it onto the bottom of the page. We have included a capital B which you can stick on the front or spine of the book to indicate that the vow has been inserted. If you need more, or have questions, please contact us at greengroup@ontario.anglican.ca. Some of you have already received copies of the labels and will notice that there is a mistake, which has since been corrected. Contact your Green Group if you wish replacements.

The Green Group also offers a complete page for the vows during the Great Vigil of Easter to update page 332 in the older version of the BAS; it looks the same as the recent version of the BAS and can be similarly affixed over the existing page.

For those who project your services on screens, please be sure to use the updated version of the BAS as your source. It is available online through the Anglican Church of Canada website: <https://www.anglican.ca/about/liturgicaltexts/>.

Our earth is a beautiful and life-giving gift of God; it is both a joy and a duty to safeguard it.