Christian vocation and the mission of God: a missing link?

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Elwood and Jake Blues, played by Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi, were trying to get their band back together in the classic movie ‘The Blues Brothers’. As they visit the old members of the band and encounter a few obstacles they fall back on one thing: ‘Does it help for you to know, we are on a mission from God?’ The term ‘mission of God’ can be used rather loosely. It is certainly understood in many different ways. This paper aims to bring ‘mission of God’ and ‘Christian vocation’ into conversation. The intention is to enrich our understanding of mission in such a way that mission is restored as a joy and a privilege for Christians, and that we might have a good conscience about our involvement in the mission of God.

The concept of the mission of God (missio dei) has spawned significant missiological reflection, especially following the International Missionary Council at Willingen, Germany, in 1952. This was closely followed by the work of George Vicedom, translated into English and published in 1957 as The Mission of God. In recent decades there has been renewed understanding of the theology and practice of Christian vocation. This has assisted Christians to think about the way God is at work in their daily life, and to become aware of the temptation of a new type of false monasticism, in which Christians retreat from the world rather than love and serve and give witness in the world.

To reflect further upon the relationship of mission and vocation, this paper starts by introducing the concept of missio dei. This is followed by an exploration of Christian vocation and further reflection on how they relate. Finally the paper asks and begins to answer the question: what do Christians need to assist them to live vocationally in the mission of God?

What is the mission of God?

There are many different ways to answer that question. Initially, a comprehensive study of biblical texts will undergird the fact that mission is an activity of God, his ongoing salvific activity in history. Mission takes place through the church and with all the pastors and people of the church being involved. Nevertheless, it is God’s mission. In the narrow

1 For a reminder of both their conviction and their strategy see http://youtu.be/-4YrCFz0Kfc, accessed 19 June 2014.
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sense of conversion mission takes place through the Spirit-filled ministry of the means of grace in the life of the church.

Therefore, on the basis of God's Word we now want to give a further account of how the human being is converted to God; how and through which means (namely through the oral Word and the holy sacraments) the Holy Spirit desires to be active in us and give and effect true repentance, faith, and the new spiritual power and capability to do good works in our hearts; and how we should respond to such means and use them.³ (FC SD 2,48; Kolb and Wengert: 553)

This basic groundwork of biblical and theological study assists the church to see the central function of the means of grace in the mission of God.

There is, however, further biblical study that is necessary to expand the picture of mission. In God's mission, pastors and all the people of God have special callings.⁴ Pastors are called and ordained to preach the Gospel, to forgive sin, to administer the sacraments, and to weigh and judge the truth of teaching, and in that sense they are the front-line in the mission of the church.⁵

All the people of God are called to make use of the means of grace in the church, to support the work of their congregation and the wider church, and to live the faith where God has placed them. This means taking up the calling to be 'in the world but not of the world', to bring the needs of the world to God in prayer, and to be ready to witness to their Christian hope in word and deed. In that sense, the life of the faithful in the world is a critical component of the mission of God. It bears witness to the grace of God, to Christian confidence and hope, and to the truth that God does not call his people out of the world in order to be his witnesses, but into the world, right into it, where he has placed them, to serve in love and charity and prayer, and to be ready to give the reason for their hope when asked.⁶

Secondly, there is much to be learnt from exploring the contribution of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions in understanding the mission of God. This is a growing area of missiological studies as a new generation of theologians discover that the Confessions

³ FC SD 2,48; BC: 553. Quotations from the Book of Concord are from Kolb and Wengert, eds, Fortress 2000.
⁴ A good place to begin study of this topic is the paper, ‘The ministry of the people of God and the public ministry’, https://lca.box.net/shared/static/ebem50bgk3kkrdjt6er.pdf (last accessed June 23 2014).
⁵ AC 28.6,7,21; BC: 92,94; see also Tr 60,61; BC: 340. There are many biblical texts to study with respect to what we call the office of the holy ministry such as John 20:19–23; Luke 10:16; Ephesians 4:11–14 and the entire Pastoral Epistles, for example (note also Matt 28:18–20 and 1 Cor 11:23–26). That study has been taken up in many different places. See for example the LCA’s Theses of Agreement, Theses 6 on ‘The office of the ministry’, LCA Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions, http://www.lca.org.au/doctrinal-statements--theological-opinions-2.html (last accessed 23 June 2014) and the paper ‘The Pastoral Ministry’, https://lca.box.net/shared/static/lf7cilf1yanvbexilgpo.pdf (last accessed 23 June 2014).
⁶ Starting points for biblical study concerning the way in which daily Christian living is a key component in the mission of God would be 1 Peter 2:9–13; 3:15; Ephesians 2:10; 4:17–24; Colossians 1:9–14, 2:6–8; Hebrews 4:14–16; 10:19–25 and Romans 12.
move beyond an apparent minimal contribution to mission thinking, and understand that for Lutherans, mission is grounded in an understanding of the justifying work of God through the means of grace in the life of the church. So, studying the articles of faith that we might variously refer to as God, sin, free will, justification, baptism, church, ministry, and the Christian life (or the new obedience), is essential for understanding the mission of God from a Lutheran perspective. The Confessions also incorporate an understanding of Christian living that recognises the significance of one’s station in life and the associated callings, as critical to understanding Christian discipleship. We turn to this in more detail later.

Thirdly, to understand what mission is, the Lutheran Church of Australia has produced its own mission statements which guide its thinking. The 2001 statement has an opening set of affirmations that still serve as a very helpful basis for studying the mission of God. The grounding of mission in God’s saving activity to the lost through the means of grace is well summarised. The statement then begins to explore the role of the laity in the mission of God in their daily lives. Without using the term ‘vocation’ per se, the statement speaks of the fact that Christian witness involves the whole Christian life:

Christians witness not only by their words but also by their lives of faith active in love for their fellow human beings. Reunited with God through Christ, Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead a new kind of life (Rom 12:1–3). Christians love other people because God has first loved them and all humankind (John 3:16; 1 John 4:19–21. This love for others is expressed in care and concern for the welfare of other people as spiritual, physical and emotional beings (Matt 25:35,36; A statement on mission, 1.8).

Finally, for further exploration of missio dei there are now many in-depth studies. David Bosch, the author of a key missiological textbook titled Transforming mission, sees Gisbertus Voetius (1588–1676) as one of the first Protestants to develop a more comprehensive missiology which saw mission grounded in the ‘very heart of God’ and aiming ultimately to bring glorify to God.

The immediate aim was conversio gentilium (conversion of the Gentiles), which was subordinate to the second and more distant goal, plantatio ecclesiae (the planting of the church); the supreme aim of mission, however, and the one to which the first two were subservient, was gloria et manifestatio gratiae divinae (the glory and manifestation of divine grace). (Bosch: 257)

The International Missionary Council at Willingen in 1952 defined missio dei not so much in terms of the church’s activity in obedience to a command of the Lord, but primarily

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7 See for example Hartenstein (2001), Oberg (2007), and Stolle (2003).
8 For an excellent recent example of this emphasis see Schulz (2009).
9 AC 27.49; BC: 88; and AC 26.10,11; BC: 76.
as God's activity. For the church, this meant mission was more the gift of participating in God's gracious activity of salvation. Bosch explains the development of mission thinking at this conference:

Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *missio dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. (Bosch: 390)

Within a few years of the 1952 council George Vicedom had written *The mission of God*, a work in which he explained the role of the church in participating in *missio dei*.

The mission is not only obedience to a word of the Lord, it is not only the commitment to the gathering of the congregation; it is participation in the sending of the Son, in the *missio dei* with the inclusive aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole redeemed creation. The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God himself. (Vicedom: 5)

And, describing the mystery of God's mission, the same author writes: ‘God sends his Son; Father and Son send the Holy Ghost. Here God makes himself not only the one sent, but at the same time the Content of the sending, without dissolving through this Trinity of revelation the equality of essence of the divine Persons’ (Vicedom: 8). In the context of a discussion about holiness, Harold Senkbeil has reflected on the vitality and centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit in the triune God's saving work. ‘All that the Father planned for our salvation from eternity was earned by the Son in history and is now continually delivered by the Spirit through his appointed means’ (Senkbeil: 264).

The Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the church by the gospel for its life of love in the world, and not as a work in isolation. It is a trinitarian saving work. By reflecting on Luther’s explanations to the three articles of the creed we can see that the Holy Spirit calls and sanctifies the church through the gospel, keeps the church united with Jesus Christ, living under him and with him in his kingdom, and living by faith, part of which is giving thanks and praise to the heavenly Father.11 This trinitarian approach to mission is not just an abstract theological construct. Schulz describes how the mission is fulfilled practically as the pastoral office attends to its calling, and then as the people of God go about their daily vocations, playing their role in God's mission.

Vocation contains great mission potential, for it demonstrates how Christians may contribute in the civil sphere toward the promulgation of the Gospel. Vocation broadens the scope of mission by taking into consideration that, through their everyday service, Christians contribute to the spread of the Gospel. Indeed, every Christian with his or her special talents, abilities and gifts contributes to the mission of God in his or her particular way. (Schulz: 105)

11 LC 38,64,65; BC: 436,439,440; see also LW 40: 213,214.
The contribution takes place in two ways. Christians bring the gospel, God’s blessing and love to the world, and they bring the needs and concerns of the world to God in prayer (see Huffmann: 30–32). When exploring the trinitarian nature of prayer, John Kleinig writes:

Prayer, then, is a gift of the triune God. When we pray, we engage with the three persons of the Holy Trinity. We pray to the Father; we pray together with the Son; and we pray by the power of the Holy Spirit. What we do when we pray depends entirely on what the Son gives us in His Word and on what the Spirit does with us through our faith in Christ. (Kleinig: 167)

We might add, when we pray from within the context of faithful baptismal living, we are involved in *missio dei*. That context, that location, puts before us the needs of the world in that place, which become in turn a focus for prayer. On the one hand there is a strong sending aspect in *missio dei* as God does his salvific work in the world through the church loving and serving the world. Yet as the church takes its place in the world, living vocationally and being a praying priesthood, it is empowered by the Holy Spirit to pray with Christ the Lord of the Church to the heavenly Father for the needs of the world. This dimension is part of the goal of the sending. Mission has the dual purpose of bringing Christ to the world and the world and its needs to God in prayer.

So let us now consider the concept of Christian vocation in order to be able to explore further in what way Christian vocation might be an integral part of the mission of God to the world.

**Christian vocation**

Martin Luther struggled in his own life with the question of living a God pleasing life. In his early years the road to holiness seemed to be via the pathway into monasticism. If one could only escape the distractions and temptations of the world and give oneself to a life of prayer and study of the word surrounded by spiritual support and mentoring, then surely the result would be a good conscience in serving God. The history of Luther’s struggle is well known. What is significant for this paper is the way in which that struggle led Luther to a renewed appreciation of the way in which God is at work through Christian vocation. Christians who serve their neighbour faithfully in their daily life can not only have a good conscience before God in knowing they are doing good and God-pleasing work, but even more, in knowing that they have God’s blessing as they attend to their life callings, and in some ways are working for God and with God in that calling.

In his ‘Confession concerning Christ’s Supper’ of 1528, Luther reminded the church of three divinely instituted orders in life. God delivers his blessings to the world through these orders: ‘The holy orders and true religious institutions established by God are these three: the office of priest [pastor], the estate of marriage, the civil government’ (LW 37: 364). Today we could speak of the three orders as church, marriage, and civic society.

In addition, Luther taught the church again about the priesthood of all believers. Together, the people of God are ‘a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special
possession’ (1 Pet 2:9). Christians serve together in the priesthood by living lives of sacrificial service (Rom 12) which includes bringing God to the world through word and loving service and the world and its needs to God in prayer. This prayer calling is lived out in individual lives but also as Christians assemble together to receive the means of grace and to ‘pray for the whole people of God and all people according to their needs’ (LCA hymnal: 13).

Christians also love and serve specifically in the callings of their daily life. This reality helps Christians not to over-complicate or aggrandise the idea of priestly service. It keeps the focus on the simplicity of Christian living. It encourages Christians to reflect on the three orders and to identify their current calling in each order—in church, in marriage and family, and in society. This is the thinking behind the last section of Luther’s Small Catechism which according to its longer title is: ‘The household chart of some Bible passages for all kinds of holy orders and walks of life, through which they may be admonished, as through lessons particularly pertinent to their office and duty’ (LC; Kolb and Wengert: 365). The so-called Table of Duties moves from being seen as an imposed burden to a God-given arena of service when we understand God calls and blesses us to live as his children where he has located us. Living a God-pleasing life doesn’t begin with an escape from daily life but by embracing it and making the most of its opportunities for service in all of its facets.

In the order of the church a Christian’s life looks very different from the world—regularly assembling with fellow saints around the means of grace, using their gifts to serve the congregation, bearing one another’s burdens, praying for one another and encouraging all the people of God to stand firm in faith. In the orders of family and society a Christian’s life may, from the outside, look little different from any well-intentioned civic or family minded person. In one sense it is similar. Both, whether unintentionally or intentionally, do God’s work in their daily vocation. Yet there is a difference, and it comes with the perspective of faith. So Luther can say: ‘See to it that each remain in his station and not cast it aside. This work is pure gold when it proceeds from faith’ (see Basely: 166). Yes, it’s pure gold. Faith recognises that God is at work in daily life through the service of a Christian in family and the civic realm. This gives meaning to tasks and callings in life beyond their surface appearance and opens opportunities for prayer, witness and spiritual vigilance.

Luther’s sermons are rich in this thinking, especially when he is contrasting God pleasing Christian living with any type of Christian discipleship that we are tempted to invent for ourselves. For example, in a sermon on the Gospel for St John’s day he says:

There are many people who do everything except what is commanded them. Many hear that certain saints made pilgrimages, for which they are praised. So the fool starts off, leaves his wife and children sitting, who are entrusted to him by God, and runs to St James, or here or there, and does not recognise that his calling and command are much different from that of the saint he is following. The way of God … does not tolerate self-sought or self-chosen works. Then you may
He then goes into specific exhortation on various estates, including that of secular rulers and the bishops of the church, and reminds the congregation of one of the devil's focal points of spiritual attack, namely, to bring one to 'the point of forgetting and abandoning his calling' (LW 75: 354). Thank God it is never too late to walk again in one's callings in faith, forgiven in full for past failures on account of the sacrificial death of Christ, and encouraged by the fact that vocational living has God's blessing.

One of the benefits of this teaching for the church today is that it leads Christians to see their lives in church, marriage, family and the world, as all being critical components of Christian living. The realm of the congregation is primarily for the Christian a receptive realm. In this sense participating in missio dei is as much about receiving as doing. Yes, there are opportunities for service and love and prayer in many forms, but the congregation is primarily a realm of God's activity through the means of grace. It is where God liberally gives and offers his gifts for the forgiveness, life and salvation of many. While marriage, family and society are also realms of God's activity, that activity takes place primarily through Christian service and witness.

The vocation of the laity is not to seek some sort of affirmation by imitating the clergy – this is actually a veiled form of clericalism. You are good for something in this church as you do what pastors ordinarily do! So it is thought that the laypeople are elevated, given a higher status if they have a role in liturgical leadership. On the contrary, there is God assigned dignity in living within the ordinary places of human life. (Pless: 94)

A vacuum in the church regarding the teaching and understanding of Christian vocation has become a seed bed for a potential new monasticism which has sometimes seen Christians so involved in self-chosen spiritual activities, or even in aspects of congregational life, to the point that they no longer have time or energy for their vocation in their marriage, family, workplace or community. One of the temptations for Christians is to seek arenas of service that they have not actually been called to, and in the process to abandon arenas of service they have been called to, and in which they receive God's blessing, and which is central to God's mission.¹²

The church has a treasure in the teaching of vocation that has, at times, been hidden, and that has impacted the mission of God. As Christians start to discover again their calling in daily life the church needs to walk alongside them. Christian living in station and vocation is not easy. In fact, it is often quite difficult to take up the cause of being God's servants in family, workplace and civic life. Sometimes it involves bearing the cross in one's vocation and it certainly involves spiritual struggle (Veith: 111–14). Christians

¹² AC 26.8–11; BC: 76; and AC 27.49; BC: 88.
need teaching and sermons and pastoral care that encourage them to seek God's help to remain faithful in their callings. Matthew Harrison has this in mind when he says:

It takes courage for a man to be faithful in his calling to the office of father. Fathers must balance the pressures of the workplace with the need to be present for their children. A father's calling into the office of fatherhood is a call to sacrifice for his wife and family, even as Christ made a willing sacrifice of Himself for the children of his heavenly Father. And it doesn't take long for a new father to realise that his call to sacrifice increases tenfold upon the birth of his child. (Harrison: 235)

Having explored *missio dei* and Christian vocation separately, it is time to reflect on them together.

**Missio dei and Christian vocation**

The *missio dei* requires, if it is to find full expression in the church and the world, the reality of Christian vocation. Mission sermons based on texts such as Matthew 28:16–20, Luke 24:46–50 or John 20:21–23 proclaim the Lord's mission vision and mission means. It is impossible to think of the mission of God without considering baptism, teaching, absolution, and preaching repentance with a view to the forgiveness of sins.

At the same time, when Paul teaches the faithful about Christian living and their role in the mission of God, he does not say that all Christians are to baptise, teach, preach or preside at the Lord's Table. It is understood that there is an office of preaching whose task it is to attend to the public ministry of the means of grace, the means of the Holy Spirit.

Paul teaches Christians to lead a life sanctified by the word in accord with the faith they have received, a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life of service and hospitality worthy of the Lord, a life lived in the world but different enough from the world to invite scrutiny and inquiry.13 So what is the difference? As we have noted above, in one sense Christian living might not be all that different from any other well-intentioned citizenship. Luther spoke of people being masks of God in the sense that they do the work of God, intentionally or unintentionally (Veith, 2010: 89–116). For example, parents who feed their children, care for them and keep them safe are doing God's work—not only Christian parents but all caring parents. Farmers who look after the land and sow seed do God's work of feeding people—not only Christian farmers but all farmers of integrity.

For Christians, however, there is an additional dimension to their vocational living. By faith, they now see their callings in life as callings from God. They are aware that what they are doing in marriage, family, work and society is God's work, and it is done on God's behalf. They take up their callings as part of a response of faith, and in that sense they work with God in their station and vocation. John Kleinig has captured this when he writes:

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13 See for example Ephesians 2:10; 4:17–24; Colossians 1:9–14; 2:6–8; see also 1 Peter 2:9–13; 3:15. This has been explored in my paper, 'A comparative study of Ephesians, Colossians and First Peter: implications for the evangelisation of adults', LTJ, 34/2 (Aug 2000), 61–72.
The practice of Christian spirituality rests on the teaching that everything that has been created by God can be made holy by the Word of God and by prayer. This applies to all areas of our life because the goal of our piety is the sanctification of our whole journey through life. Thus, just as every meal is sanctified by saying grace, so everything that we are and have and do is sanctified by the use of God’s Word and prayer in our daily devotions. Every home and every marriage, every gift and every possession, every day and every night, all our work and all our sleep, all our joys and all our sorrows; everything is made holy by God as we use His Word to guide us in our prayers. But most significantly, we are kept holy by listening to His Word and by praying as guided by it. The Word that sanctifies us sanctifies our meditating and our praying so that we can serve God the Father as His priests in our station and vocation. (Grace upon grace: 279)

The Christian life is a holy life sanctified by Word and prayer, lived in the daily callings of marriage, family, workplace and community (Eph 5:15 – 6:20; Col 3:1 – 4:6). As Christians move from the liturgical assembly with the blessing of God for their week of service they go as the baptised and the fed, they go as people of Word and prayer, the holy ones going to their God given callings. At 1 Peter 3:15 Christians hear that one aspect of their holy living will be that people ask them to give the reason for their hope, and so they need to be ready to give the reason for their hope. The word ‘reason’ is perhaps a little weak for modern ears. The word is *apologia*, and so a better translation could be, be ready to give a defence, or an account, of the gospel. This means that Christians need to know the Christian faith and be prepared to engage with the questions of those who ask. It may be that it is rare for people to ask straight out why someone is a Christian, but people are asking spiritual questions all the time: Why does God allow bad things to happen? Will you pray for me? Being religious is about living a good life, isn’t it? I can be a good Christian without going to church, can’t I? Does Christianity really help you? Sometimes they come out as assumed statements of fact, but if we listen, often they are also questions. Be ready to give a reason for the hope you have. But do it with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, St Peter writes (1 Pet 3:15). Gentleness and respect are fruits of the Spirit, and they have to do with care for the person who has asked. Conscience has to do with standing before God and challenges Christians to check their motives and intentions when giving a defence of the gospel.

One of the differences in living mentioned earlier is that, when we do speak, we are called to speak in a gracious way inviting people to further conversation and the exploration of additional questions (Col 4:5,6). This conversation and prayer, emerging from simply living and loving and serving in the regular context of daily life, is vital in the mission of God.

The question for this paper is, what does it mean for the mission of God when the church encourages and teaches the faithful to see that part of their involvement in *missio dei* is the call to live out their faith in marriage, family, workplace and community? Through that vocational living, that service, God is at work blessing his world, and opening up new conversations that lead to inquiry and prayer.
Mission is not some kind of alternative theological orientation. For example, mission is not either ‘moving out or inviting in’, but both. The church is not either ‘mission or maintenance’, but both. Worship is not either ‘liturgical or missional’, but both. Similarly, the mission of God is not either about baptism, preaching and the Lord’s Supper, or, about Christian vocation. The two live together hand in hand in an integrated way in the mission of God. In one sense the locus of mission is the church and the teaching and sacraments of the church. All people are invited, urged and encouraged to be baptised, be taught, receive absolution, and to receive the Lord’s Supper. And these gifts are given to, and administered through, the church. In another sense the focus of mission is the world. We are sent into the world. Christians live their lives in marriage and family, in the workplace, in the community where they are located. They serve with love and bring the needs of the world to God, both in their own devotional life, and as they gather together as the priesthood in the liturgical assembly.

Sometimes mission strategies can set targets or goals too much in the future. The same thing applies when we think of the link between Christian vocation and the mission of God. The goal is not that we live vocationally so that some people in our family or workplace or community will become Christian. We live vocationally because this is God’s call and it has God’s blessing. God will take care of his mission. He calls us to attend to our vocation. He will open opportunities for love, hospitality, conversation, prayer, loving service and even verbal witness for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

**Serving the faithful for vocational living in missio dei**

This paper closes by posing a question and offering some initial solutions. When the church comes to embrace Christian vocation as an essential dimension of the mission of God, and when Christians come to see that living a life of faith and service where they have been placed means involvement in the mission of God, then what do the people of God need from their church to encourage and sustain them in this aspect of their mission? I suggest eight things.\(^4\)

1. *Teaching the baptised for their daily Christian vocations*. This means also being released from the burden that to be a good church member means to be involved in every latest congregational program. There are many excellent resources available for congregations and Christians wanting to study Christian vocation (see especially Hooper, 2007, and Veith, 2011).

2. *Preaching which recognises the struggles of vocational living and offers spiritual help*. This takes note of the fact that it is often difficult to be a Christian in one’s daily vocations, but that such discipleship has God’s command and God’s blessing.

3. *Teaching the baptised to pray for the world in the mission of God*. This includes both the individual and the corporate components of intercessory prayer. Pray as the

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\(^4\) These can be read together with the five suggestions noted in my essay, ‘Strengthening the congregation for service in the community’, LTJ, 46/3 (Dec 2012), 199–207.
people of God gathered together for the needs of the world and personal and family prayer for the needs associated with one’s own sphere of life and callings.

4. **Encouragement to practice hospitality.** Two tables are significant in any Christian’s life. The table of the Lord from which we receive forgiveness and life, and the table of our home at which we practice hospitality by offering food, fellowship and conversation.

5. **Teaching the Christian faith to the faithful clearly and unapologetically.** In a culture where we can no longer assume that Christians have been well catechised, we need to start with the basics: the ten commandments, the creed, and the Lord’s Prayer. Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms have a place in mission education.

6. **Working with the confidence that God’s Word and sacraments are effective mission means.** In an ecclesial culture of spiritual activism and a secular culture of reward for effort, the church needs to be confident in the work of the Spirit through the means of grace, and to teach and encourage a spirit of receptive spirituality among the faithful. The power for Christian life is the gospel and the gospel is offered and ready to be received through God’s means of grace, both for long time Christian and new inquirer.

7. **Regular opportunities for the instruction of inquirers.** According to 1 Peter 3:15 when Christians live their faith in their daily life there is every likelihood that people will ask them to give the reason for their hope. Christians can do this, but just as they need opportunities for spiritual growth, so also the church needs to offer opportunities for believers to invite inquirers to learn Christ by exploring the core teachings of the Christian faith at more depth.

8. **Prayer for the fruit of the Spirit.** St Peter encourages Christians to give their defence of the faith with gentleness and patience (1 Pet 3:15). Sometimes the verbal Christian witness is imbued with aggression rather than gentleness, impatience rather than patience. Christians need the church to be praying for them and their witness regularly in the general prayer of the church.

**Summary**

Sometimes Christians are confused about mission. Perhaps they are carrying the burden of thinking that they are responsible for the salvation of their family or work colleagues (John 17:20). Perhaps they have lost confidence in God’s Word and are willing to try any mission idea or program even if they have some doubts that it is theologically credible (Rom 1:16). Perhaps they are finding it difficult to persevere (Heb 12:1-3). Perhaps the cross is becoming unbearable (Gal 6:2).

Is a renewed understanding of Christian vocation the missing link for Christians seeking to take their place in *missio dei*? This paper suggests that it is worth considering. Christians who embrace their God-given callings where God has placed them, and find the blessing of God in those arenas of Christian service, will not only find a good
conscience as they respond to God's call in their lives, but they will find their niche in *missio dei*, and peace and joy in their Christian service, even and perhaps especially when it brings the cross.

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