A Conversation about Christian Vocation

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The apostle Paul, in most of his letters, uses the first half or two thirds of the letter to write broadly about the meaning of Christ’s life and death for us. Then, often with a “therefore,” he moves on to offer specific counsel for Christian living. In Romans, this turn comes at 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.…” Paul’s phrase, “by the mercies of God,” is a reminder of what he’d already written about how all are justified by God’s grace as a gift (for example, 3:21-27).

The baptism service often makes the same move. One is baptized in the name of the Triune God and is marked with the sign of the cross. A candle may be presented to the newly baptized with the words, “Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” The words might almost have said, “Therefore let your light shine.…”

God is at work in our daily lives, individually and together. We pray to be transformed daily by God’s love.

Have someone read aloud Romans 12:1-13 (or 12:1-21). As you listen, think about how God works in your own life and in the life of your Christian community.

Martin Luther wrote often about our vocations or callings as Christians. He reminded us that in each of many roles in life God calls us to serve others and has given us the power to do that.

You have many roles:

- In the close circle of family and others, you may be child, parent, spouse, sibling, friend, partner.
- In the larger circle you are neighbor, citizen, voter, stock holder.
- You may have a job or be a student. You may own a company or be retired.
- You are part of a congregation and of the larger church and may be a teacher, a worshipper, a giver, a planner, a choir member, a missionary, a builder.
Invite each person to name two callings from their own life. Then name some callings we have as groups of Christians—as a congregation, a denomination, an agency or institution.

Now listen again to the Romans text. What sentence or phrase speaks to you today about one of your individual or shared callings?

Close with prayer, inviting people to begin with prayers, silently or aloud, for their own vocations. Conclude with these or similar words, “Our gracious God, we thank you for the life we have every day in Christ, through your grace. We ask you to let your light shine in everything that we are and do. Amen.”