

Exploring a missional pedagogy for transforming discipleship: implications for missional discipleship within the DRC

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Abstract

Within the international discourse on missional theology a recovery of a transforming discipleship has taken place to bring about a synchronicity between mission and discipleship. In the Dutch Reformed Church's (DRC) missional turn, there was a shift in church polity and discipleship was added to the description of the roles and responsibilities of ministers and elders in the Church Order. In this article, this transforming discipleship will be researched in terms of a missional discipleship wherein a pedagogy for the cultivation of a transforming discipleship is proposed. Different elements of a missional pedagogy will be described as habitus, habit, habituation, and habits. The research concludes with a proposal regarding the formation of missional habits by means of a missional rhythm of life and eight rhythms are proposed. This missional rhythm of life provides a discipleship imagination for embodiment. A missional rhythm of life may be a useful model for the DRC's engagement of a transforming discipleship.

Keywords

missional pedagogy; missional habitus; habitats; habits; rhythm of life

Background

Moving in the Spirit: called to transforming discipleship was the theme of the 2018 World Council of Churches' (WCC) Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) held in Africa at Arusha, Tanzania (Jukko & Keum 2019; Ross 2020). The conference's call and recovery of

a transforming discipleship follows in the wake of other discoveries that were made at mission conferences in the last century. Ross (2020:7–9) highlights two: first, the recovery of God’s agency in mission at the 1952 Willingen conference described as the *missio Dei*, and second, that mission is concerned with all of life, as stated in the WCC’s affirmation in *Together toward Life* (TTL). Transforming discipleship involves mission that is toward life, “Without the Christ-like way of life that is discovered on the path of discipleship, any missionary endeavour is going to lack credibility” (Ross 2021:11). Therefore, during the WCC conference a much-needed integration was made between the categories of mission and discipleship that was sometimes ignored (Kim 2018:418).

This renewed interest and recovery of discipleship (Niemandt, 2016; Nel & Schoeman 2019) is the subject of this article and will be discussed in terms of the Dutch Reformed Church’s (DRC) quest of being a missional church. In the same way that the DRC’s missional ecclesiology is in line with the ecumenical insights of TTL (Niemandt 2015:4), it is also important to include the new recovery of transforming discipleship in the ecumenical church within the DRC’s quest of missional transformation. This recovery of the link between mission and discipleship will be described as a missional discipleship and the cultivation of this discipleship as a missional pedagogy that is built on pedagogical elements of habitus, habitats, habituation, and habits. The goal of this research is thus to describe a missional pedagogy.

Missional discipleship

Similar to Bosch’s (2011:loc.306) use of the phrase “transforming mission”, “transforming discipleship” can be used as an adjective describing the transforming of discipleship or as a present participle connoting a discipleship that transforms (cf. Bevans 2016:78). In terms of the adjective in “transforming discipleship”, there is a growing awareness and articulation of a crucial link between discipleship and mission, which gave rise to the terminology of missional discipleship (Akkerman & Maddix 2013; Hardy & Yarnell 2018). This discipleship is not focused on inward piety alone but, as Beard (2017:248) notes “is the experiential process of identity formation which results in a disciple who exhibits tangible evidence of mission, community, and obedience in his or her life.” Bevans (2016:76) notes that

disciples are learners and therefore missional disciples are learning how to participate in the *missio Trinitatis*. Missional discipleship is a lifelong, communal process of being immersed in the *missio Dei* for the sake of the world. Kim (2018:418) states that discipleship is transformed when conceptions of discipleship that are individualistic are expanded to include missional dimensions. Niemandt (2019a:87) concurs, “[T]o be a Christian is to be a disciple, and that implies participation in the mission of the church.” This mission is embedded within the being of the Trinitarian God.

During the DRC’s 2013 General Synod, a comprehensive policy document: *Raamwerkdokument oor die Missionale Aard en Roeping van die NG Kerk* (Framework Document on the Missional Nature and Calling of the DRC) (DRC 2013) was approved. This missional document describes a missional ecclesiology with new imagination and language that aids in the transformation of the denomination towards a missional denomination. Discipleship is also mentioned in the document. In the first section (5.4), discipleship is described as one of eight values that can serve as a framework for missional churches, “the church *makes disciples*. It calls people into the transformative power of faith in Jesus Christ” (DRC 2013:6, original emphasis). In the second instance (9.3), discipleship is described as a sub-category of “New Insights on Congregations” which includes: the importance of congregations, missional congregations, and discipleship (DRC 2013:10). This discipleship is explained as an important part of missional churches. Discipleship is a learning process of following Jesus in renewing the world through relationships. This discipleship is transformative and asks, “What is God busy doing?” and “What does God want us to do with Him?” (DRC 2013:10). A missional understanding of the church brings the importance of discipleship to the foreground (DRC 2013:10). In the DRC’s acceptance of the *Framework Document on the Missional Nature and Calling of the DRC*, several changes were made to the church order to align with the new language and imagination of missional theology. Although Niemandt (2015:9) and the Task Team for Missional Church (DRC 2019a:174) describe changes to different articles (2, 9, 10, 16, 53, 55) the addition of discipleship to the church order is not mentioned.

In Article 9 of the church order, which deals with the responsibilities of a Minister of the Word, additions of discernment and church planting were made as well as the minister’s responsibility of discipleship in 9.4

(DRC 2019b:4). Similarly, in Article 16.1.9 wherein the role of an elder is explained, discipleship was also added to the responsibilities of elders (DRC 2019b:6). In the DRC church order discipleship is mentioned in these two instances and in a third instance in a reflection on the way in which the Bible is the basis of identity and discipleship (DRC 2019b:204). The addition of discipleship to the roles and responsibilities of leaders in response to a missional theology is in line with the CWME's call and recovery of a transforming discipleship. As a value of the missional church, discipleship is a key recovery within the DRC's overall strategy of becoming a missional church. The question is whether this addition of discipleship will be a transformed discipleship or be stuck in individualistic discipleship imaginations. To make sure this doesn't happen an adequate pedagogy is needed for the cultivation of missional disciples. The goal of this research is to participate in the description of such a pedagogy.

Missional pedagogy

If one of the values of a missional church is to make disciples, one need to ask how disciples are formed and therefore which pedagogies will lead to a transforming discipleship that can be termed missional discipleship? Frost & Kreminski (2018:184) notes that "Being missional is primarily an issue to do with identity and formation as we embody what it means to be 'sent ones' into our world." This formation of identities necessitates an adequate pedagogy.

Pedagogies assume specific anthropologies, and therefore identity formation and embodiment must consider an anthropology that is more than just a view of discipleship as the accumulation of information or a curriculum or program to be completed (Marais 2017:379). When humans are reduced to the intellect alone, disembodied modes of being will become the norm (Smith 2009:28). Missional pedagogies therefore need to move beyond viewing discipleship as only cognition (Smith 2014:loc.2525).

Missional pedagogies take the embodiment of disciples into account and will be holistic in its formation (Niemandt & Niemandt 2021:9). These pedagogies, especially in spaces of white homogeneity, need to attend to pedagogical distortions that calibrates formation to the ideals of "white

self-sufficient men” (Jennings 2020:13). Vosloo (2021:1036) proposes a pedagogy of Pentecost as a recalibration of pedagogies of distortion so that Jennings’ pedagogy of belonging can be cultivated.

During the DRC’s 2019 General Synod, a framework for missional ministry development in the DRC (*Raamwerk vir missionale bedieningsontwikkeling in die NG Kerk*) was approved by the synod (DRC 2019:324–354). This framework proposes a different pedagogical emphasis that “develop knowledge, but must also attend to attitudes, skills and habits. It requires a formative pedagogy” (Niemandt 2019b:7; Dames 2017:230). This insight of a holistic formative pedagogy is echoed by Ross (2020:88) who reflects on the formation of transforming discipleship and notes that a discipleship as a way of life creates a “new epistemological framework” and that “[t]he pressures of academic recognition and accreditation must not be allowed to inhibit a formation that produces not only degree-holders but disciples” (Ross 2020:88). This embodied missional pedagogy corresponds well with Smith’s (2009:32) anthropology of desire that considers the role of practices in the formation of disciples’ loves. Furthermore, a missional pedagogy develops as disciples engage with the actions of mission, “Perhaps the key pedagogical feature of missional pedagogy is the assertion that participation in mission is not merely an aim of education but its primary vehicle and catalyst” (James 2013:150). An embodied missional pedagogy needs to be cognisant of additional elements constituting a pedagogy for missional discipleship. This includes the role of theological imagination or habitus, the pedagogical implications of the physical spaces or habitats, a pedagogy that takes the habituation of life change and missional spirituality into account and the role of habits and rhythms in a missional pedagogy.

Habitus

Habitus refers to pre-cognitive ways of being that becomes ingrained in the ways of a group of people that makes sense of a specific way of life. In his reflections on the catechesis of the early church, Kreider (2016:loc.1273) draws on the concept of habitus and shows that a habitus is formed in the registers of stories, examples and repetition and becomes embodied in a group of people. Habitus is like inhaling and is “learning that we acquire without being aware that we are learning” (Kreider 2016:loc.1271). The social nature of a habitus makes it difficult to see a group’s habitus because

it has become second nature to the group, therefore “[a]ny missional, formative Christian institution that is bent on sending out actors – agents of reformation and renewal – will need to attend to the reformation of our habitus” (Smith 2013:83, 157).

Changing a habitus involves a counter formation that involves embodied movements or practices and changing imagination or the stories that capture a group of people. In this sense habitus is akin to a plausibility structure enabling a people’s rhythm and movements (Smith 2013:92). Habitus are therefore changed through attending to missional kinaesthetics which understand the role of the body as well as through a reconfiguring of poetics or imagination (Smith 2013:101). Marais (2017:384) describes the art of missional formation and shows that a habitus resides in the body when a cluster of habits shapes the social imaginations of people. Through storytelling and the Biblical narratives, a social imaginary is cultivated that allows innovation (Niemandt 2019:151). Reflecting on the WCC’s Transforming discipleship MacDonald (2019:136) states,

As we follow Jesus, the transforming presence of God definitively shapes our imagination and behaviour. Discipleship, therefore, is the matrix and manner of our formation in Christ. As such, it is the primary and indispensable location of the development and practice of leadership in Christian community (McDonald 2019:136).

The term “habitus” is a comprehensive understanding of change. In terms of a missional imagination the habitus of the missional church opens participants to the reality of the *missio Trinitatis*. Congregants imagine that mission is now possible within the everyday and not just the privilege of the elite. This missional habitus invites participants into the bodily movements and poetics of the Trinitarian God that is radically different than the habitus of a church that is caught in modes of Christendom that distorts the mission by directing it back to the church alone.

With the DRC’s turn towards a missional church, the plausibility structures with its social imaginations and embodied practices that were formed during Christendom and apartheid now need to be changed to a missional habitus. At the General Synod of the DRC in 2019, the Task Team for Missional Church presented 8 Trinitarian movements that offer a recovered theological imagination for a missional habitus (DRC 2019a:178–

181). Eilers (2013:53) notes that theological imaginations are crucial for the plausibility structures (or what he calls background) of practices. The 8 Trinitarian movements can be seen as an adequate theological imagination for a missional pedagogy that place a missional habitus within the activity of the Triune God. The Trinitarian missional habitus was described in Afrikaans and is translated in brackets and consists of the following movements (DRC, 2019a:178–181):

- *Deel in die Missio Dei* | [Participating in the *missio Dei*]: God moves towards the world and sends the Son and the Spirit to the world, the church is also sent.
- *In die Krag van die Heilige Gees* | [In the power of the Holy Spirit]. The church is empowered (Pneumatology) by the Spirit of God.
- *Verlos en Versoen* | [Saved and reconciled], God reveals himself as the saving God (Soteriology, Justification).
- *Inkarnasie* | [Incarnation]. God becomes human and dwells with us.
- *Perigorese* [Perichoresis]. The Trinity is in a relationship with each other.
- *Selfontlediging* | [Kenosis] - Sacrificing and laying down privilege.
- *Onder die heerskappy van Christus* | [Under the reign of Christ]. The breakthrough of the Kingdom (The Trinity reigns)
- *Aan Christus verbonde* | [Union in Christ] (DRC 2019:171–181).

With the injunction to go and make disciples, a missional pedagogy builds on the reality of this Trinitarian habitus. All congregants are called to be disciples who are immersed in this Trinitarian reality. In her reflection on the CWME's transforming discipleship, Kim (2018:41) notes that the conference's combination of mission and discipleship rectifies the ignoring of the Great Commission to make disciples. Willard (2014:17), reflecting on the implications of this commission stated,

Here is what Jesus is saying: I have been given say over everything in heaven and on earth. As you go, make disciples. Immerse them together in the presence of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yes, baptize them in the name, but, dear friends, that doesn't just mean getting them wet while you say those names. It means to immerse them in the Reality. After you have done that,

teach them in a way that they actually do what Jesus said. That is the process of spiritual formation. (Willard 2014:17)

The habitus for a missional pedagogy is thus rooted in this Trinitarian reality. Within the pedagogy this reality is experienced in a discipleship of spiritual formation that has as its habitus participation in the Trinitarian movements. Entering this habitus takes place through an embodied participation in a community of practice living with new imaginations and stories within the habitats of their lives. These Trinitarian movements are inculcated through stories, practices, and worship. It is to the pedagogical implications of habitat that we now proceed.

Habitat

In the DRC's expression of the Trinitarian movements specific habitats are named wherein these movements take place. The report categorizes these habitats as individual lives, households, congregations, denominations, the ecumenical church, and society (DRC 2019:180–181). These different habitats are environments for participation in the *missio Trinitatis* that extends missional formation from individualistic and ecclesial based reductions to an engagement with God who is in the neighbourhood. A missional pedagogy is spatially aware of the different contexts wherein the church is called to discern God's activity. Within homogeneous communities of practice, the danger is that a pedagogy will be reduced to church-bound habitats where people gather who are the same. This is a pertinent danger for the DRC that was formed in the logic of Apartheid.

In his reflection on the future of mission after the WCC conference on Transforming discipleship, Jukko (2019:178) notes the temptation that all organisations face to turn inward and become a self-sustaining habitat. Living as disciples call for a broadening of the habitats in which the church is sent,

If Christian discipleship means being actively involved in, and engaged with, God's mission in the world, it also means Christians leaving the church buildings and going outside to all nations. "All nations" can be found right on the home street, or at least possibly not so far from it if we are ready to go and make disciples. (Jukko 2019:181)

Within the pedagogical strategy of Jesus, the disciples were exposed to different places and people, and this influenced their formation. Therefore, a missional pedagogy needs to be cultivated in “diverse places with people that challenge our worldview and affluence” (Smith 2014:loc.501). Transforming discipleship into a missional mode will attend to places of comfort and discomfort. The suburban and affluent church will battle to shift into a missional discipleship if the habitat of formation only includes “botanical gardens, air-conditioned rooms and silent-retreat centres” (Smith 2014:loc.513). These comfortable habitats can be gifts but being formed in these habitats alone will lead to a habitus of privilege, “genuine discipleship is embedded in a particular historical context and therefore it emerges out of either defective or authentic interpretation of the actual human existential realities of that particular historical context” (Kaunda 2017:323). Pedagogies of belonging are fostered when attention is given to the actual circumstances of the habitats with its people, plants and animals, which is the “art of cultivating belonging” (Jennings 2020:16). This is a pedagogy where the habitat with its inhabitants is also sent to influence a reciprocal pedagogy of desire that fosters faithful presence.

Being faithfully present means that missional disciples attend to their embodiment within the different habitats within their contexts. In South Africa, that was socially engineered to be apart, spatial awareness need to be developed to not only see God’s activity in the beautiful and holy places, but also the desolate and marginalised spaces. Spirituality that is exclusively formed in quiet places need the counterbalance of habitats of disease and discomfort to cultivate a missional spirituality. As a denomination, the DRC needs to be aware of the privilege of place and share the gifts of retreat centres and beautiful places by being hospitable. Niemandt (quoting the WCC 2019:176) notes that the marginalised are the main partners in God’s mission and that “[t]he habitat of the marginalised is, in a certain sense, the natural habit of the church.” Therefore, within a pedagogical awareness of habitats missional discipleship develops when disciples are being hosted and receive hospitality in marginal habitats wherein the activity of God is manifested. It is within these habitats where hospitality is received and given, that the journeys of the rich and the poor intersect. This dynamic, facilitated by diverse spaces have the potential to lead to a journey of encounter and an invitation to a missional metanoia wherein, “The journey

of the rich is to learn that they are not God and have something to receive. The journey of the poor is to learn that they are made in the image of God and have something to give” (Smith 2014:loc.1850).

This missional metanoia helps white followers of Christ to deal with racist pedagogies that lead to distorted anthropologies and “pedagogical practices of insulation and exclusion” (Vosloo 2021:1029). The challenge of the local habitat invites a missional pedagogy that is aware that theology and geography is linked to each other and that “space is not neutral but shaped by a plethora of forces, and on the other hand, space also shapes communities, people and even the nature of consciousness” (de Beer 2018:179). Missional communities of practice develop a spatial imagination that link formation with the physical environment. These habitats also include the church in Sunday worship, homes, workplaces, schools, shops, third spaces, neighbourhoods, retreat centres, creation, small groups, and other holding environments that become possible places of habituation.

Habituation

Habituation refers to the process by which a practice becomes automated and therefore an exploration of how life-change takes place. A missional pedagogy considers that habituation takes place in the everyday lives of disciples and that some of the habits that are formed are aimed at the *telos* of participating in the *missio Trinitatis* while others are deformations and need re-habituation. Kreider (as quoted in Smith 2014:loc.395) notes that once habituation has taken place, practices become reflexes. Therefore, a missional discipleship will be engaged in processes of the habituation of new reflexes and retraining and re-reflexing practices that are unhelpful in participating in the preferred and promised future of God (Keifert & Granberg-Michaelson 2019:25).

In a modernistic, disembodied culture that tends to live as excarnated beings, practices move participants from cognition to rhythms of incorporation and participation. Taylor (2007:771) describes excarnation as, “the steady disembodiment of spiritual life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms and lies more and more ‘in the head.’” The temptation in a church culture that lives within pedagogical modes that overemphasise the cognitive is that the process of habituation is skipped because participants think that ‘knowing about’ equals habituation

through repetition and embodiment. However “There is no habituation without being immersed in a practice over and over again” (Smith 2013:183). Protestants have an “allergy to repetition” and therefore need new appreciation for it (Smith 2013:181). This allergy has three causes. First, repetition is associated with vanity, salvation by works and therefore a denial of grace. Second, worship is seen as only expressive and not formative. Third, the church is caught up in a search of novelty and buys into chronological snobbery. However, “if we demonize repetition we end up abandoning re-habitation” (Smith 2013:182). It is paramount to place habituation within a theology of graced practice that makes room for the agency of God within the embodied repetition of practicing.

Dykstra (2005:63) proposes that practices be viewed as “habituations of the Spirit” (Smith 2016:66–69). Placing practices within a theological frame Dykstra (2005:66) notes,

[P]ractices are not, finally, activities we do to make something spiritual happen in our lives. Nor are they duties we undertake to be obedient to God. Rather, they are patterns of communal action that create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy, and presence of God may be made known to us. They are places where the power of God is experienced. In the end, these are not ultimately our practices but forms of participation in the practice of God. (Dykstra 2005:66)

Practices are therefore ways in which missional disciples open their lives to be habituated by the Spirit into a transforming discipleship for the sake of the world. Spiritual practices are themselves little pedagogies (Carson et al. 2021:200). These spiritual practices are well-defined in the spiritual formation movement and divided into categories of disciplines of abstinence, or engagement. Some of the well-known practices of abstinence include: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy and sacrifice, and of engagement: study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession and submission (cf. Willard 1998:357–364). Within the missional movement several practices have been innovated that allows habituation into graced participation in the *missio Trinitatis*. Some of the well-known practices include: dwelling in the word, dwelling in the world, hospitality, announcing the kingdom, spiritual discernment and focusing for missional action (Keifert & Rooms 2014:20–24; Burns 2017:355–357).

Practices that are individual and communal need to be mixed within a repertoire of personal and public practices in order to tend to the inward and outward nature of the habitation process (Burns 2017:354–255). As a community of practice practices are incorporated into the life of missional disciples as practices that are faithful to the tradition that bore them, and disruptive to a cultural formation that has re-reflexed disciples away from the *telos* of participating in the mission of God (Rooms 2017:317).

With the DRC's missional turn the church order has been changed and *Reglement* [Regulation] 25 deals with the *Gestuurdheid van die NG Kerk* (Missional nature of the DR Church). In this regulation the church's participation in this mission is described in section 2 and in section 2.1.2 specific practices are highlighted that include: personal witness through life and word, participating in the faith community, intercession, stewardship, acts of mercy and a zeal for justice and reconciliation in society (DRC 2019a:138). This list of practices is a good starting point for a possible practices list for habituation. However, drawing from the faithful and disruptive practices described by the spiritual formation and missional movements might lead to a repertoire more suitable for the formation of missional discipleship. These "Spirit-charged Practices" when they are repeated "sink us into the triune life" (Smith 2013:86).

In the work of the WCC's CWME, the link between discipleship and the Spirit have been noted because disciples are formed by the Spirit and this spirituality is crucial for the missional journey (Bevans 2018:364). This linkage can also be described as a missional spirituality that is transformative, a spirituality for the road, incarnational, kenotic, bold and humble, joyful and a spirituality of devotion and worship (Niemandt 2019a:85–101). This missional spirituality is cultivated through practices that open participants to the habituation of the Spirit. To keep the embodied, repetitive balance of the practice of individual and communal spiritual practices in sync a rhythm or a rule of life can be helpful. Keifert (2017:271) states that the "missional movement depends very deeply on a missional spirituality" which he equates to a spiritual rule of life that is both communal and personal. The DRC's task team concurs with Keifert when they state that the whole missional impetus of the denomination will fail if a missional spirituality is not incorporated into the life of the congregation (DRC 2019a:176). Habituation within a missional mode

takes place when personal and communal as well as inward and outward practices are placed within a rule of life that align the practices within a missional mode (Woodward 2013:82).

Habits

Niemandt (2019a:159) notes that “Missional spirituality is the discovery of God’s rhythms, and the ability to align one’s life to those rhythms. It is about rhythms of life, or habits, which integrate the sacred and secular.” To allow for this integration, this article so far proposed conceptions of a missional discipleship and missional pedagogy based on a Trinitarian habitus, attending to the habitats of formation and a process of habituation; and we now turn to habits. Habits of discipleship that reduce discipleship to pietistic individualism on the one hand, and a programme on the other need to be countered by a missional discipleship with its emphases on community, mission, and the agency of the Spirit. These missional habits (Burns 2017:359; Marais 2017:385–386) can be ordered using a rule of life, or what Smith (2014:loc.1275) calls a rhythm of life which is a modern translation of the ancient wisdom of a *regula* or rule of life. A rhythm of life consists of practices that are repeated so that habit formation take place that align individuals and communities with the Trinitarian community of practice. These practices are embedded in the everyday lives of disciples and counter rhythms that move away from participation in the *missio Trinitatis*. Once a community engages with a rhythm of life, auditing current rhythms is a good first step (Smith 2014:loc.2563; Smith 2009:84). To broaden the social imagination of what discipleship might look like Smith (2014, loc.2586–2739) proposes 8 rhythms (see Figure 1) fostering a formational ecosystem depicted by specific symbols or icons, wherein each rhythm aims at the formation of missional habits using elements of theology, questions, practices (exercises) and relationships to invite participants into the dynamic of inward and outward spirituality (Smith 2014:loc.2629–2736).



Figure 1 - Source: Smith (2014:loc.2597)

The eight rhythms are represented in a circular fashion depicting the cyclical nature of movement in discipleship that is not to be confused with a program or course that can be completed. The rhythm of life is represented with a sound wave representing a spirituality of listening or discernment, which is the heart of the transition to a missional discipleship. Each rhythm is represented by an everyday icon/symbol/image that reminds of the invitation of discipleship. Building on the theological habitus of the DRC's 8 Trinitarian movements and the insights of the CWME's transforming discipleship the eight rhythms with its first element of a theological base and second element of God questions can be summarised as:

- The Image Rhythm in the centre that is represented by a mirror (Smith 2014:loc.2599). This rhythm invites participants into the importance of tending to God images, and concomitantly self-images. Within the DRC issues of superiority and inferiority are deeply influenced by God-images that reflect conceptions of the self that can be described as a “white racist theological anthropology” and an anthropology of dominion that negates God’s image and therefore participation in the *missio Dei* of the other (Van Wyngaard 2017:7, 2019:11). “Disciples of God’s merciful acts of salvation are supposed to reclaim their human dignity, the divine qualities resulting from

being created in the image of God” (Jukko & Keum 2019:39). As a Trinitarian God image is sought, disciples live from the life of the *imago Trinitatis* (DRC 2019a:179). What is your God image and how is that influencing your self-image?

- The Connection Rhythm is represented by a plug (Smith 2014:loc.754). The Connection Rhythm links with a theology of union in Christ (DRC 2019a:178). In the words of the CWME’s transforming discipleship, this union in Christ is explained using the phrase “Christ-connected” (Kim 2018:418), “We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness” (Ross 2020:14). The Connection rhythm imaged by the plug invites participants into the importance of plugging in to the divine power of God through the classic spiritual disciplines of engagement and abstinence. The repertoire of practices that are part of this rhythm can be inspired from different sources, within the DRC they have been summarised in *Gevorm deur die Kruis* (Van Wyk, Marais & Simpson 2014:129–145). When discipleship is reduced to individualised forms of engagement the Connection Rhythm is usually the only rhythm that are engaged with. How are you connecting with God through the spiritual disciplines?
- The Fellowship Rhythm is represented by a three-legged pot which is a symbol of communion, and fellowship or *koinonia* (Smith 2015:loc.2605). Within the reality of the Trinitarian *Perichoresis* (DRC 2019a:178) missional discipleship lives within the rhythms of companionship within the relational strata of a disciple’s life which includes family, friendships, parenting, being a child, having and being mentors. A missional rhythm of life attends deeply to not only individual but also collective discipleship (Ross 2020:14). Missional disciples attend to the relationships close to them, because our biggest failures as disciples are usually with the closest relationships in our lives (DRC 2019a:179; Hudson 2019:115). In the Fellowship Rhythm relational practices are engaged with that seek communion, reconciliation, and friendship. Who are your close companions on the journey into God’s mission?

- The Giftedness Rhythm is represented by a puzzle piece (Smith 2014:loc.1352). This rhythm signifies the unique contribution of each person in the church, but also signifies that we need each other to complete the full picture of the puzzle of God’s mission. The Spirit of the Lord gives gifts to all believers so that we can all serve with the gifts within the soil of the fruit of the Spirit (DRC 2019a:180). The gifts that congregants receive are not for self-enrichment but for the mutual benefit of all, “We accompany each other along the way, learning from each other so that we share freely God’s gifts for the common good of all” (Jukko & Keum 2019:71). This giftedness rhythm is not focused solely directed to the church but is also focused on the broader community (Smith, loc.1362). The question that is explored with the Giftedness Rhythm is, what is your unique contribution that you can serve with?
- The Community Transformation Rhythm is represented by a tree that is planted in the neighbourhood (Smith 2014:loc.2611). This rhythm invites a missional discipleship that seeks the kingdom within the neighbourhoods wherein people live and work. It is also concerned with a spirituality that tends the ecology and works against the “ruthless human-centred exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed” (Ross 2020:14). The incarnational impulse of God’s mission moves into the neighbourhood to be faithfully present (Niemandt 2019a:49). Incarnation is to be with people where and how they are present. Within this understanding the context and the culture are taken seriously although it shouldn’t be taken over or be dominated by the culture (DRC 2019a:178). This incarnation is one of participating in the *missio Dei* through the “ministry of the Spirit as Paraclete and Pentecost” (Hagley 2020:109). Missional disciples, like the disciples of Jesus, are challenged and changed as they live within God’s transforming in the neighbourhood. Missional disciples engage the neighbourhood with a teachable posture realising that they enter the parish of neighbourhood as guests and not hosts and leave “affinity enclaves into our neighbourhoods” (Roxburgh & Robinson 2018:141). Involvement in the neighbourhood is therefore not a heroic doing unto the neighbours but an openness to God’s agency calling us to participate in the Spirit’s weavings and kingdom initiatives. The

question asked in this rhythm is, how are we seeking the kingdom and contributing to the flourishing of the neighbourhood?

- The Resource Rhythm is represented by a clock inviting disciples to see their jobs as well as time and money as a vital part of participating in the *missio Trinitatis*. Missional disciples integrate their discipleship into their working lives and see their own life and their careers as part of the vocation of serving God (Willard 1998:287). “When our discipleship with Jesus is not connected to our working lives, we effectively cut God out of the biggest chunk of our lives” (Smith 2014:loc.2260). The Resource Rhythm invites a missional discipleship that recovers the vocation of every believer and the workplace where the clock is punched as sites of formation and cooperation with God’s purposes.
- A transformative discipleship is also developed in a spirituality that makes the distinction between needs and wants and learn how to be downwardly mobile instead of always upgrading lifestyles which is the logic of the spiritual formation offered by the accumulative logic of the market system (Jukko & Keum 2019:16). “We are called to worship the one triune God – the God of justice, love, and grace – at a time when many worship the false god of the market system” (Ross 2020:14). This *kenotic* rhythm brings dimensions of sacrifice and servanthood in terms of work, money, and time (DRC 2019:179). Privilege is acknowledged and placed in service of the kingdom. The question asked in this rhythm is, how can I serve with the resources and privileges I have, and work out my salvation in my job, ministry, and life?
- The Inclusion Rhythm is represented by a circle of weaving (Smith 2014:loc.2611). This rhythm explores issues of inclusion and exclusion within the lifelong journey of disciples. In the South African context issues of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of exclusion can be attributed to deformed discipleship. Missional disciples, participating in the *missio Dei* work for social justice and against exclusion and marginalization which includes racism, “colourism”, sexism, classism etc. (DRC 2019a:178). Discipleship that joins God mission tend habits and habitats that exclude others and repent. It also learns how to live within the rhythms of grace and forgiveness where they are

excluded. However, this does not mean that an abstract social justice is performed, “We are called as disciples to belong together in just and inclusive communities, in our quest for unity and on our ecumenical journey, in a world that is based upon marginalisation and exclusion” (Ross 2020:14). Discipleship includes rhythms of reconciliation, justice and unity that invites lives of obedience. The question asked in this rhythm explores where I am excluding others and where am I being excluded, who is in and who is out?

- The Wholeness Rhythm is represented by a medical suitcase. This rhythm explores practices of health and wholeness where flourishing can take place. The aim of God’s live-giving movement to the world is the flourishing of people and the environment (DRC 2019c:180). In a country that experiences deep levels of trauma, emotional health is crucial for a life of wholeness in all its dimensions. This flourishing of life is an important part of the missional conversation (Niemandt 2020:11). “We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ – the fullness of life” (Ross 2014:14). The journey from brokenness to wholeness is a lifelong trek into holistic relations and fullness of life (Jukko & Keum 2019:188). In this rhythm the questions of exploration are: in which areas of your life are you lacking wholeness? Where do you desire freedom and flourishing?

These 8 rhythms offer an expansion of the social imaginary of a missional discipleship in all of life. In the description above two of the four elements have been explored namely the theological foundations and the questions. Each rhythm includes two additional elements, practices (or exercises) and relationships. Teaching missional practices through modelling and skill transfer is an essential part of the development of a missional rhythm of life. These practices are not only individual but also communal, and therefore training partners are essential. As the relationships in the formational ecosystem become more diverse the formational potential increases. The habitats wherein these rhythms are practiced are also crucial, and moving the rhythms from enclaves of privilege to engagement in the city and neighbourhood opens potentialities for missional discipleship that are transformative.

Each community need a social imaginary of discipleship, these 8 rhythms can be utilized as a starting place for embodied practices and the creation of a new language house and imagery. Each rhythm can be contextualised using a different image/symbol and developing different God questions, exercises, and relational configurations.

Transformative discipleship is a missional discipleship that attends to a pedagogy that includes a Trinitarian habitus, a habitat and a process of habituation wherein missional habits are formed. A missional rhythm of life may offer a helpful ecosystem for the habituation of participants in the *missio Trinitatis*.

Conclusion

The DRC's missional turn has brought about a rediscovery of new imaginations and language houses. This missional impetus led to the changing of some of the polity documents of the DRC. In this article, the addition of discipleship to the role of ministers and elders were discussed. This transformative discipleship was described as a missional discipleship that is cultivated by a specific pedagogy that embeds this recovery of discipleship within a missional mode. This missional pedagogy includes the elements of habitus, habitat, habituation, and habits. A missional rhythm of life with 8 rhythms was proposed as a possible missional pedagogy. Communities of practice embodying this rhythm of life are invited to contextualise its images and practice within its dynamic elements of theology, questions, practices, and relationships. These elements open space for the Spirit of God to transform discipleship for the sake of the world.

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