



# bring Jesus

## Making sense of mission

by Rev Dr Steen Olsen



*Steen also blogs at LCA eNews. To sign up to his newslist go to [www.lca.org.au/enews](http://www.lca.org.au/enews), insert your email address and tick the box next to 'bring Jesus'. He would also love to hear your thoughts and stories about mission in your context.*

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# God at work

**Although I was baptised as an infant in an 800-year-old Lutheran church in my home town in Denmark, I had no relationship with a congregation until I started confirmation classes in Auckland, New Zealand. Confirmation instruction with Pastor Ed Koch taught me what Christian faith is all about. I was serious about my faith and wanted to share it with others.**

I went to Auckland University and there joined a couple of Christian groups. We did courses on witnessing and learnt what to say; then we got together and talked about how it had gone. The only problem was that I wasn't doing any witnessing.

One day the guilt got too great and I decided that if I was going to be able to live with myself I would have to do something, so I went looking for a suitable 'victim'. Not anyone who looked too intelligent and definitely not someone standing in a group—after all, if you were going to make a fool of yourself, why do so in front of an audience? I found someone who looked suitable, unloaded my witness and then asked for a response, just as we had been taught. To be honest, I think we were both relieved when he said he wasn't interested!

It was all too hard. I don't remember the guy's name but I still pray for him.

I came to the conclusion that there had to be a better way. Little did I know, I had already found one.

Jonathan, my best friend at high school, was not a Christian. We hung out, played football together for the First Eleven and did the things friends generally do. We went to university, and then I moved to Australia and we lost touch. Ten years later I wondered what he was doing, so I tried to track him down, but without success. I tried again a decade later with the same result.

More than 35 years went by. I was preparing to chair the annual general meeting of New Zealand's main ecumenical body, Vision Network. The meeting was about to begin when a guy walked up, looked intently at me and asked, 'Steen?'

Jonathan had come to faith in Jesus about 18 months after we lost touch. He thanked me for the part I had played in his journey to faith. I was confused. I didn't remember doing anything. He reminded me of a couple of things I had said and done that he considered important steps along the way.

I had taken him to our Lutheran youth group meetings and to a Billy Graham Crusade. Back in the sixties Billy was a social phenomenon, and many came to hear him just out of curiosity. Inviting



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someone along was not as big a deal as it might be today.

Six months after the Holy Spirit brought Jesus into Jonathan's life, his girlfriend (now wife) became a Christian. Today their children and grandchildren are also part of the church. Now, here he was, a leader in his denomination and representing them at this annual meeting of Vision Network.

God had been at work. All I did was the ordinary things that one does with friends. It wasn't difficult; in fact it was quite natural. Maybe if our focus is on what God is doing rather than on what we think we have to do, we will find it easier to talk about Jesus and why God sent him into the world.

We can't convert anyone. That is the Holy Spirit's job. We are not even in charge of the process. We bring Jesus wherever we go and whatever we do. Sometimes the Holy Spirit uses us as the 'midwife', and we are present when a person comes to faith. That is a great joy and privilege.

Often the Spirit just uses our witness in word and deed as part of the journey that will one day bring someone to Jesus. It doesn't depend on us. We don't need to create artificial situations in which we try to convince someone to believe. We're not running the show, the Holy Spirit is.

All we can do is witness to the truth we know and give an account of the hope we have. We are open about who we are and what we believe, but we don't need to ram it down unwilling throats. Rather, when God gives an opportunity, we speak with family, friends, workmates and those we meet.

We are confident that God is at work in their lives and we are part of that work. God is loving them in word and deed through us. We bring Jesus everywhere we go. It is who we are.

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As a church where love comes to life, we develop a missional culture where individuals, families and communities are inspired, passionate and active in sharing the gospel in word and action.

LCA Strategic Direction 2013-2018, Strategic Priority 2, Goal 1 p13.  
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