

# **Bi-Vocational Pastors: A Research Report**

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## Preface

Midwest Ministry Development Service was founded in 1969 by an ecumenical consortium of religious bodies. The basic mission of the Center has remained constant since its inception: to provide quality vocational assessment and career counseling for clergy and candidates to the ministry. Currently, the Center is counseling more than eight hundred church professionals and candidates a year through its three offices in Chicago, IL; Columbus, OH; and Kansas City, KS. Midwest is owned and governed by a Board of Directors comprised of representatives named from its member judicatories and religious bodies.

Over the years Midwest has engaged in basic research related to ministry and professional church leadership. These findings are shared with the church-at-large through occasional papers and the Commentary newsletter. In addition to a large research database gained directly through the counseling and testing process, Midwest has conducted several other research projects in ministry beyond its own clientele. *Bi-Vocational Pastors: A Research Report* is an example of the latter.

## Introduction

Church leaders anticipate that a greater percentage of clergy in the future will be bi-vocational (also called tentmakers, shared-time ministers, or worker-priests). Bi-vocational clergy normally need to supplement part-time professional ministry with a second job, either in another form of professional ministry or in secular employment. Some intentionally choose to be bi-vocational, others are forced to take a second job in order to survive financially or because they are unable to secure a full-time call.

Some traditions have always had a large number of bi-vocational clergy. Lay ministers, too, have served smaller congregations in a number of denominations. There is a more recent shift in thinking, however, among mainline denominational leaders toward consideration of bi-vocational clergy with the shrinkage in membership and the increase in smaller congregations which are unable to support a full-time pastor.

In light of this possible emerging trend, Midwest decided to question a sampling of bi-vocational clergy in order to learn more about their attitudes and experience. We narrowed the focus of our study to include only those who were serving in a congregation as one part of their employment. There certainly are other forms of bi-vocational ministry, but we wanted to examine what bi-vocational pastors thought about their situations.

## Basic Profile

We concentrated our study on 106 Midwestern bi-vocational pastors in four mainline denominations [37 Presbyterian Church, USA; 25 American Baptist Churches, USA; 19 United Church of Christ; 9 Episcopal Church; 8 Christian Church (Disciples); 8 other]. We obtained our sample from names submitted to us by denominational executives.

Their other employment was rich and varied. It included retail sales and college professors, social workers and financial planners, small business owners and accountants, mechanics and farmers.

When their other work was classified according to the six work settings identified on the Strong Interest Inventory, all six of the fields of work were represented. **R**ealistic focuses on things and physical strength or dexterity; **I**vestigative on scientific approaches; **A**rtistic on the aesthetic and creative; **S**ocial on the helping professions; **E**nterprising on persuasive leadership; and **C**onventional on informational and administrative services.)

Overall, 13 percent worked with their “hands” in their other employment (**R**), 4 percent were into the sciences and research (**I**), 9 percent were following artistic pursuits (**A**), 37 percent were into social services (**S**), 15 percent indicated entrepreneurial ventures (**E**), and 11 percent performed more structured administrative functions (**C**). At the time of our study, 5 percent

were unemployed apart from their pastoral duties.

The average age of the sample was forty-nine, with a range from thirty to seventy years. In terms of professional standing, 93 percent were ordained and the remainder were licensed. Sixteen percent were women; all but one were ordained. They averaged eleven years in bi-vocational ministry and were serving in congregations which had been staffed by bi-vocational pastors for an average of more than eighteen years.

The educational level of these bi-vocational pastors was high. Ninety-six percent were college graduates, 33 percent had master's degrees other than seminary, 96 percent were seminary graduates, and 20 percent had doctorates. These were well-educated and professionally prepared persons for ministry.

Their marital status included: 5 percent single, 74 percent married, 12 percent divorced, and 18 percent remarried. Those who indicated they were remarried did not always identify the reasons, so the percentage of divorced may actually be closer to the 18 percent figure since none indicated the death of a mate. Some indicated they were part of a clergy couple (16 percent), but the study did not include both partners since only one of the partners had been identified as bi-vocational.

A significant majority served in typical pastoral roles (76 percent). Other parish roles included: 6 percent associate pastors,

11 percent interim pastors, and 5 percent were stated supply.

The average number of parish ministry hours worked per week was twenty; other hours worked averaged thirty-two. Since another study done by Midwest found that full-time pastors reportedly work about fifty-five hours a week, bi-vocational pastors put in close to the same total of hours with two jobs.

These bi-vocational clergy earned in 1990 an average of \$10,451 annually from their pastoral ministries (not including any housing allowance or benefits). The standard deviation for salary was \$5,182; consequently, two-thirds earned between \$5,300 and \$15,600. In addition, 12 percent were provided a manse, 26 percent a housing allowance, 36 percent medical insurance, 48 percent pension—all as a part of their pastoral compensation. Average earnings from other employment was \$21,722. When both sources of cash salary were combined, bi-vocational pastors earned an average of \$31,506 (with a standard deviation of \$14,612). More than half reported they received medical and pension benefits from their other employment.

### Motivational Factors

One significant finding is that more than two-thirds (68 percent) of these bi-vocational pastors reported they intentionally chose this form of ministry. One pastor said, “I had a good job when I was called to the ministry. I felt I could make a contribution to a small church in our area that was struggling. I stayed with it.”

Another reported, "I enjoy this congregation. They were cheated by using retired and yoked pastors. We've seen some real growth spiritually and numerically in the last six years." One fifty-seven year old explained, "I was a full-time pastor for nineteen years. Investments were an area of interest. I enjoy both careers." Another experienced pastor put it, "I have the best of both worlds now. I have an 'itch' that must be scratched by preaching. I don't have to live in a manse and am building equity in a home."

A number of these pastors expressed strong theological and faith reasons for their choice. One mid-career pastor pointed to New Testament models: "Paul, Mary Magdalene, Peter and Phoebe were tentmakers!" Another seasoned pastor described his choice of bi-vocational in response to the "call of the Lord Jesus Christ and my responding to his call and the changes it has brought over the years. The same Jesus who called me originally into the clergy is the same Jesus who called me to other fields of service at a later time."

Another looked back over his ministry and summarized: "I chose to enter a secular university as a teacher of English. Previously I was a Roman Catholic priest working in a liberal arts college. I was much influenced by the French worker-priest movement."

Others chose a bi-vocational ministry for more practical reasons. One pastor in her early thirties pointed to privacy needs: "I don't want to be in a parish full-time because

I don't like the fish-bowl lifestyle most ministers are subjected to." A thirty-eight year old reasoned, "The statistics at the time of ordination suggested another career would at some time in the ministry be needed." So he chose bi-vocational from the start.

Necessity led some of these clergy to realistically supplement their ministries with other employment. At age fifty-five, a pastor expressed a concern for security in retirement: "An inadequate pension was the motivation. My first fifteen years were without any pension program. Those years cannot really be made up." Another indicated it was a "financial decision in order to educate my eight children." At age forty one clergy shared a preference "to pastor in a small rural church and most cannot afford to adequately provide for a full-time pastor's needs." But few, in actuality, mentioned money as a motivator. Although clergy generally are not motivated highly by material gain, financial realities may be a more important factor than they are comfortable acknowledging.

Circumstances also pushed some pastors into bi-vocational situations. "This was the best available pastorate near my wife's church," one thirty-six year old admitted. This reason was echoed by a woman in her late thirties: "My own multiple interests and the lack of availability of a full-time call in the geographical area of my husband's call (led me to a bi-vocational role)." A spouse's geographical career boundaries also figured prominently with others. "My wife is a school teacher and at the time it was

impossible for her to find employment in a new situation. She kept her job and I started a farming and construction business (along with pastoring about eight hours a week).”

A minority of bi-vocational pastors resented being limited to or forced into bi-vocational roles. A forty-one-year-old priest complained he was bi-vocational by default: “I had to take what I could find.” Another middle-age clergy, deeply committed to ministry, and still frustrated after more than a decade of service, lamented: “Being gay openly I could not get a pastorate. I needed to develop a church ministry free-lance or create a position with no salary to begin.” Several pointed to divorce as the primary reason rather than their own choice.

Interestingly, there were some who returned to pastoral ministry to supplement their secular incomes. “I had left ministry (ten years earlier) and got back in it out of interest to be in ministry and to provide some stable income for my family,” explained one bi-vocational pastor in his fifties. A female single parent indicated, “New teachers make little money, so I’ve some part-time related work (as a co-pastor).”

In summary, an overwhelming majority (68 percent) of these bi-vocational clergy are doing what they are doing by choice. Even more importantly, 75 percent indicated that their preference, now that they were doing bi-vocational ministry, was for bi-vocational over a full-time pastorate. They were not there merely because they were not capable or qualified, but because of a firm

commitment to this type of ministry.

### Change in Thinking

When asked how their thinking had changed, if at all, through their experience as a bi-vocational pastor, 68 percent indicated a shift toward a more positive regard for tentmaking ministries. A young pastor pointed out: “Working with my hands and sweating helps my thought process and keeps me healthy. (It is) also good to be part of the hourly wage rhythm working in rich neighborhoods while living in a poor one for empathy with the congregation.” Another, in his mid-forties, expressed with conviction: “I now believe bi-vocational ministers have a better grasp of what their working members experience and are more realistic about expectations they have of members, especially in regard to time commitments.”

A woman in her late forties, reflected: “Prior to this experience, I would have assumed that a bi-vocational pastorate was impossible to manage. It is not. Further, I find it easier to stand by my religious convictions.” She had been serving two yoked parishes along with directing a private social service agency.

Several underscored the freedom and independence they had come to value in their bi-vocational experience. “I feel freer as a minister because I am not exclusively dependent upon the congregation for my income.” Again, “This gives me opportunity for independence (no congregational control), and the ability to preach a gospel without restraints.”

An older pastor expressed it simply: “I believe it is a good balance; it embraces both spheres, each informing the other.”

There were, however, some strong expressions of dissatisfaction with bi-vocational and a preference for a single, full-time position in the church. A woman in her early fifties, who combined teaching with pastoral ministry, wanted, as well as wondered about, a full-time parish position. “I do not like working two jobs seven days a week and still being on the edge financially. I could get a better paying church position, but I'd have a more difficult time being a mother.” Another younger woman also preferred a full-time call: “I'm feeling more need to have fewer ‘pots’ to watch.” Many women still bear the primary domestic and parenting roles even with their bi-vocational ministries; consequently, their situations can be even more complicated and draining.

Although there are those who are looking and waiting for a full-time opportunity in a parish, a clear majority of persons doing bi-vocational ministry seem to value and prefer what they are doing.

### Professional Self-Esteem

Since most bi-vocational pastors are unable to participate as easily in denominational or professional activities, it may be assumed that they may feel, at times, like “second-class citizens.” Our findings indicate that 75 percent felt positive about themselves professionally, while only 25 percent felt like second-class clergy.

- I feel very comfortable with other pastors; I feel valued as a colleague.

- I feel that I am as qualified as they are; I am only serving a different kind of church.

- I'm in a different situation, but that doesn't affect my relationship with other pastors, to my knowledge.

There were some who expressed some mixed feelings: they felt good about themselves and their ministries, but they also did not feel fully included and accepted.

- I feel fine, but I think pastors of full-time and large congregations often feel superior because they think they have a larger power base.

- I'm doing a valid and important work. Full-time pastors may tend to view tentmakers (1) either with envy or (2) as persons with problems.

- I feel like I have the better situation, but I miss their fellowship due to my work schedule.

- I feel like I have the best of both worlds, but feel that “full-timers” don't think so!

Although only 25 percent of the bi-vocational pastors felt they were looked down upon, they did clearly register their complaints. One man in his early sixties said he was “lower than—less than—left outish.” Another mid-career pastor protested: “We are not treated any way the

same.” A pastor in his late forties, with fifteen years bi-vocational experience, angrily responded: “Some of them regard and treat me as if I am ‘scab labor.’”

There were feelings of alienation on the part of some who were unable to enjoy regular collegial fellowship because of their other work schedules. Often professional events and denominational meetings or committees are not planned with them in mind. Thus they can feel too much on the outside of things.

The bottom line for three-quarters of these ministers, however, was that they felt professionally competent and accepted even though their types of ministries were not the norm within their denominations. In the words of an older pastor with ten years

Denominationally there were some differences. Episcopal worker-priests had the highest levels of satisfaction: 78 percent indicated a 5 or 6 level of satisfaction with only 11 percent at a rating of 3 or lower. Presbyterian ratings were almost as high: 77 percent at 5-6; 9 percent 3 or lower. American Baptist results were 64 percent at 5-6; 12 percent 3 or lower.

United Church of Christ bi-vocational pastors had the lowest satisfaction ratings as a group: 47 percent at 5-6; 32 percent at 3 or lower. All of the Disciples rated their satisfaction at 4 or above.

These high overall satisfaction ratings may be surprising to some church leaders who have not taken bi-vocational ministry

experience in bi-vocational ministry: “I am proud of my ministry and am not intimidated by full-time pastors. With but few exceptions, I have always been treated as an equal.”

### Overall Satisfaction Level

When asked to rate their overall level of satisfaction with being in bi-vocational ministry, two-thirds indicated high to very high satisfaction. Each bi-vocational pastor who participated in the study was asked to rate his or her level of satisfaction on a six-point scale, with 1 being very low satisfaction and 6 being very high satisfaction. The results were as follows:

6 = 26%	3 = 10%
5 = 40%	2 = 4%
4 = 18%	1 = 2%

seriously as a viable first-choice professional option. When bi-vocational ministry is seen only as a desperate response to declining memberships and struggling congregations, the value is mistakenly diminished and the integrity of this calling is undermined.

One thirty-seven year old summed up the thoughts of many others:

As we in the American culture continue to believe that “bigger is better,” our church attendance continues to decline. I think that small churches are a close-knit family. Large churches can certainly be close knit also, but my point is that small doesn't necessarily mean

declining and large doesn't necessarily mean growing.

He added:

I came from a large church. I was surprised about the needs of the small church. I enjoy small church ministry and plan to use counseling in an institutional setting for my second vocation.

An enlarged sense of ministry is also the source of satisfaction to some. "I view my work in financial services as an extension or expansion of my pastoral ministry," said a pastor in his fifties. He continued, "I can make a difference in a family's well being."

There is also a clear sense of servant ministry which is expressed by a number of bi-vocational pastors. An older pastor, who was raised under an ethic of sacrifice and other-directedness, simply responded to need. "Rural churches provide a needed ministry, but their survival depends upon dedicated bi-vocational ministries."

Another in his sixties said, "It has given me the opportunity to pastor a church that could not afford a full-time man." Satisfaction for them is rooted in being faithful to a calling rather than in self-fulfillment.

As in most occupations, the sources of satisfaction can be quite varied. Whether it be an opportunity to express other interests, financial security, or a sense of rendering a needed service, most bi-vocational pastors expressed a high degree of satisfaction.

But there were also some clear areas of frustration that emerged. These same frustrations are also felt by those in full-time pastorates, but it appears that bi-vocational ministry can intensify the strain for some. The greatest mixed responses and negative feelings centered around the stresses of managing time, the impact on the minister's family, and disappointments over denominational support.

### Frustrations and Strains

When asked to compare the level of stress found in bi-vocational ministry with that of a full-time pastorate, the response was quite mixed. Thirty-five percent regarded bi-vocational as more stressful. On the opposite side, about the same number (37 percent) saw it as less stressful. Close to the same amount saw no real difference (28 percent). Work situations and personal coping mechanisms can be quite different from individual to individual. According to one pastor, the "congregation seems to make fewer demands upon my time." However, another saw it quite differently: "Balancing is next to impossible; the church always wants more."

According to one seasoned bi-vocational pastor, "The most difficult thing is managing time, keeping limits clear so as not end up with two full-time jobs." The time management issue was echoed by others. But one fifty-two year old looked at it positively: "Prioritization of time means really important things get done. Others who also work elsewhere make fewer demands."

An even greater strain centers on the effect bi-vocational ministry has on the family. Forty-nine percent indicated that this type of ministry had a greater negative effect on family life than did full-time ministry. Only slightly over a third (36 percent) found it to be positive. The remaining 15 percent saw no difference between bi-vocational and full-time ministry in terms of family life.

The negative impact on family, as well as personal time, was expressed clearly at all age levels. One thirty-two year old pointed out: "In my case, I gave up my day-off and family time to make bi-vocational work. It's six months with no time off. My family and energy level suffered the most." This sentiment was repeated by someone in his early forties: "The family has very little free time. It keeps us very busy and tied down trying to do two jobs." Looking back after twenty years in bi-vocational ministry, a fifty-six year old observed: "It left all of the responsibility, or most, on my wife in raising our family. For years we didn't have any free time of our own."

But there were those who intentionally made time for family. "In my case it has worked well," one seasoned pastor responded. "I think it would be an individual situation. Balancing priorities would be necessary in either situation. I had to learn as a young minister to give more priority to my family."

Given the added strain on family life, the advice of one pastor needs to be underscored: "Bi-vocational must be a joint decision. There is less family time and this is our biggest problem."

## Denominational Support and Encouragement

When it came to feelings about denominational support, the verdict was evenly divided. There were those who were very positive (44 percent) and those who were quite negative (43 percent); the remainder were neutral. There were clearly pronounced denominational differences. Interestingly, more United Church of Christ pastors (61 percent) were positive about their denominational support than any other group; only 31 percent were negative. Even though, as we reported earlier, their overall satisfaction levels were somewhat lower than other groups, this evidently was not due to lack of denominational support.

The other groups rated denominational support and encouragement as follows: American Baptists 46 percent positive, 29 percent negative; Episcopalians 44 percent positive, 56 percent negative; and Presbyterians 30 percent positive, 55 percent negative.

Comments made by some of these bi-vocational pastors may be helpful in understanding their feelings. On the positive side:

- The bishops have reimbursed me for forfeited wages when I participated in synod events at their request (retreats, committees).
- I feel good they have used my gifts in leadership.

- No problems. I feel I am respected and treated no differently than full-time clergy.

- It is very good. No complaints. I enjoy a good relationship with the Bishop and his staff.

Some of the critical comments were pointed as well as suggestive of ways in which support and encouragement can be strengthened.

- The Committee on Ministry does not have a process to deal with bi-vocational.

- I feel there needs to be more support from the denomination and some consideration as to how this type of ministry affects families.

- My biggest concern is that my only contact with other pastors is as at presbytery, and since my presbytery meets on week days, and I get only one week of vacation annually from my secular job (which I will not use to go to presbytery meetings!), I only get to presbytery once a year when they have a Saturday meeting.

- Publications specifically dealing with tentmakers—help books, etc.

- One day or one afternoon meetings only, please.

Underlying most of the concerns were feelings of lack of connection and distance

- There is plenty of room for improvement in such things as insurance and retirement.

- The denomination is supportive but still geared too rigidly toward full-time ministers....

- I don't receive our denominational magazine any more.

- Church Deployment Office forms seem to overlook the bi-vocational clergy.

- There's much talk about the importance of the small church, but most activities are geared to large churches and full-time pastors.

- I suspect that few denominational executives realize the pressure.

- It would be nice if the denomination recognized that some pastors cannot meet during the days. (This concern was the one most often mentioned.)

from denominational staff people, feelings of being unappreciated and being used simply to fill openings too small for preferred full-time pastors, and too little concern for their schedules in setting meeting times.

But awareness is growing as some

bi-vocational pastors interact proactively with denominational leaders. As one well-seasoned pastor put it: “Support is strengthening; demand for tentmakers is growing rapidly. We are advocating for more support.”

When asked what assistance and resources would be helpful from the denomination, the following were some of the requests:

- I can't take time off from my secular job for continuing education. What I need is more social/informal contact with area pastors.
- Training in setting limits with a congregation.
- Pulpit supply people so I could get some time away.
- Some colloquiums and gatherings that focus on stress reduction and sharing tips for survival.
- Conferences on tentmakers, support groups of tentmakers, reflections on mission from tentmakers.
- Continuing education conducted by those involved in bi-vocational.

It is clear that most bi-vocational clergy want to be connected with their denominational structures and personnel,

- Develop additional expertise/experience/skills so that your second vocation is

particularly at the associational and middle judicatory levels. No doubt, any lack of support is not intentional by judicatory leaders; rather, it appears to be basically a failure to think sufficiently bi-vocationally.

### Advice to Those Considering Bi-Vocational

These bi-vocational pastors were quite ready to counsel others who may be looking at this form of ministry for themselves. In addition to the often repeated: pace yourself, set time boundaries, etc., they advised:

- It has to be a call—don't do it as an economic necessity.
- Have a “clear” sense of bi-vocational “call”; a strong personal sense and ego integrity; a strong personal family; an active life beyond the two vocations/jobs.
- Self-image as a pastor is important<no half-pastor or half a person self-image. No apologies. Feel good about yourself and what you are doing. Tentmaking is a “call.”
- Plan your vacations carefully! Also, be prepared to take far more personal initiative in developing a support network among pastors.

“marketable.” Then carefully negotiate limits and a workable schedule. Take care of yourself!

- 1) Make sure you, your family, and the church are in agreement. 2) Be sure your secular job does not demand your spare or recreation time. 3) Be sure you are comfortable with allowing the church to share the ministry.

- Do it only if you are 1) well organized, and 2) have lots of energy.

- Never try to do as many tasks and meetings as full-time pastors. Decide what are the high priority tasks.

- Be ready to be alone. You are not the same as the people at work in many ways. You have little or no time to associate with clergy peers.

- For pastoral counselors: You will be better accepted by other mental health professionals than by clergy. Look to them, not the church, for support.

- Choose a vocational experience that gives flexibility to conduct funerals and respond to emergencies.

- Be sure the commitment is in your and your family's heart. It must not be a unilateral decision.

The bottom line advice from a majority of those already in bi-vocational ministry is: look at yourself and your family carefully,

consider the cost, and go for it if this is your call.

## Worth Repeating

There was an overwhelmingly positive response by bi-vocational pastors to participation in this study. Most included additional comments and were eager to express their thoughts and feelings. They appeared happy that someone was taking an interest in their ministries. They wanted to be heard.

Although some reported unsatisfying experiences and wanted an opportunity to pastor a congregation full-time, a significant majority were positive advocates for bi-vocational ministry. Far more said, “Do it” than “Don't do it if you don't have to.”

The following comments seem worth repeating and may be helpful in further reflection on this style of ministry.

- Being bi-vocational has been a good experience for me and my family. I am an electricity instructor in a vocational school. Any contact with these students and my fellow instructors is almost a second pastorate. I have a healthy relationship with the church as a member and pastor that is very rewarding. I have been in the church eight years now.

- I personally enjoy the situation I'm in. The church I pastor would have to share a pastor if I weren't here. Even in a bi-vocational situation, I

believe they get far more personal attention. The small church will die if some type of help doesn't come for them. The small rural church is a labor of love (real ministry). Bi-vocational as such is not for everyone. If you're politically inclined and like to attend conferences, meetings, etc., it's not for you. It is bare bones ministry as we are shown in Acts.

- There is a special affinity when the congregation knows the minister also is involved in “day-to-day” work pursuits. The congregation also frequently comments on how much better this feels than their previous yoking relationships. I believe the church sometimes encourages mediocrity or worse by constructing bizarre full-time ministry arrangements. One . . . parish of ninety miles between yoked congregations, for example, (is one) which only the desperate would accept. Inviting people to be innovative about their other half-time (job) invites innovative people with strong dedication to ministry.

- This arrangement is good for churches, too, as laymen take more responsibility for routine church ministry (calling, etc.). The stress level is much less to the pastor to keep pushing program and people to action.

- I am convinced the bi-vocational pattern of ministry is biblical, especially by Paul in the New Testament. It is also helpful organizationally by necessitating increased lay membership involvement in church and outside community social involvement (i.e., priesthood of all believers). In addition, it fosters increased sensitivity to laity's daily struggles and opportunities in their Christian walk!

- (There is) need for bi-vocational validation at the highest judicatory levels of the denomination so an annual question of the necessity for such a ministry does not “bug” local officers. Full-time pastorates are never asked if the church should continue to be full-time.

- I think that when the status issues related to tentmaking are improved we will see many more ministers moving this way. I can liken the change to the emergence of the interim pastorate work. As its status has improved, it is getting more and more adherents.

## Concluding Thoughts

We began with the thought that bi-vocational ministry appears to be an emerging trend in a number of denominations. For some church leaders it is seen as a stop-gap measure, an alternative less desirable than a full-time pastorate. For others, it is a creative and healthy option

rooted in New Testament models. Since the latter view appears to be the most theologically constructive approach to a centuries-old reality, steps need to be taken to strengthen this important form of ministry.

First, seminaries need to help students from the start to reflect on bi-vocational models, both theologically and practically. Such an approach should not create a competition between different forms of professional ministry, but foster a valuing of the rich variety of ministries and gifts. Seminaries could expand the range of thinking and experience by having bi-vocational pastors as speakers in classes or as supervisors for field education. Clearly, we need to work from the start to eliminate the notion that bi-vocational ministers are “second-class” or “fringe” ministers serving in less desirable roles.

Second, denominational personnel offices need to analyze their forms to make certain bi-vocational ministries are fully included in the search and call process. If personnel information forms assume full-time professional ministry as the preferred model, other valid kinds of ministry will be overlooked and minimized.

Third, seminary and denominational leaders need to consider the needs of bi-vocational clergy in planning continuing education and fellowship events. Too often they are the overlooked “distant cousins” rather than part of the primary professional family. Bi-vocational clergy need to be consulted so that difficulties in scheduling events are

taken into consideration. Scheduling problems certainly cannot be eliminated, but more sensitivity by church leaders needs to be evident.

Fourth, successful bi-vocational models need to be visibly celebrated within judicatories. The church-at-large needs to become more familiar with the inherent value of bi-vocational ministry. It also needs to more comfortably accept movement in and out of bi-vocational ministries as a natural rhythm in the church and various stages of ministry.

Finally, bi-vocational clergy themselves need to avoid a passive victim posture in relation to their professional ministry role as well as with the denominational structures. Rather than simply accept neglect or remain on the fringe, they need to make their presence and ministries known in direct and constructive ways. If a bi-vocational clergy wants strong linkage with the denominational body, creative ways can be found to do this.

## Suggested Resources

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### **Associations**

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