

# LIVING BOTH /AND

## The many-layered lives of bivocational pastors

Pastors who derive their income from ministry as well as from the marketplace are merely modeling what their on-mission congregants have been doing all their lives: living out the gospel in all their spheres of influence. Perhaps “bivo” is the future for the church?

<b>LIVING BOTH/AND</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>The many-layered lives of bivocational pastors</i>	
<b>ANOTHER DISCIPLEMAKING LANE</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Q&amp;A about bivo within the EFCA</i>	
<b>A CHURCH HISTORY OF BIVO</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Tentmaking from the beginning until now</i>	
<b>BUTCHER, BAKER, CANDLESTICK-MAKER</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>The lives we lead outside the pulpit</i>	
<b>THREE (OR FOUR) ARE BETTER THAN ONE</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>How pastoral teams are sweetening the journey</i>	
<b>BIVO ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Ministry challenge but tremendous potential</i>	
<b>FROM LAY LEADER TO PASTOR</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>How a church-planting coach makes the difference</i>	
<b>MAKING BIVO BETTER</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Exploring ways to beat the odds for bivocational pastors</i>	
<b>RESOURCES FOR BIVOCATIONAL INSIGHTS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Reaching all people will take all kinds of ministry models.</i>	



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## The many-layered lives of bivocational pastors

BY DIANE J. MCDOUGALL

*Traditionally, “bivocational” is defined as a pastor whose livelihood depends upon two streams of income: one from a ministry and one from the marketplace. In the EFCA movement and elsewhere—the majority of bivocational pastors have historically lived in the world of the smaller church and/or the church plant.*

In some ways that’s still true. But in other ways it’s changing: More and more leaders are *choosing* to be bivocational. So if their convictions hold true over the long haul, they’ll *stay* bivo even as their churches grow and full funding becomes available.

The stigma that has tended to follow the bivocational pastor is changing too—a sense of being judged “not good enough” to draw in the people needed to pay that full-time salary. After all, in a world where church giving contin-

ues to dwindle, how better to fund the new transformational churches that are needed?

Even the EFCA's fully funded pastors are agreeing: "I can't picture a future of church planting in America where bivo strategies aren't seriously considered, if not the new normal," says Jeff Foote, pastor of Grace EFC in Longmont, Colorado, and a two-time church planter himself.

Missiologist and speaker Ed Stetzer agrees too: "The bi-vocational option needs to be seen as an opportunity, not as a penalty. It needs to be seen as a preferred option for planters."

In August 2015, a few dozen EFCA leaders gathered at a bivocational conference in Colorado to talk about how to turn the tide and give greater honor to those who are ministering in both church and marketplace. In that gathering, an apology was even extended—by Fritz Dale, executive director of EFCA ReachNational.

"For many years we have mistreated, misunderstood and undervalued our bivocational leaders, especially our ethnic brothers and sisters," Fritz says now. "It is time we realize this, own it and create a new day of recognition, empowerment and co-laboring to fulfill the mission of Jesus to make disciples who make disciples."

## A DIFFERENT WAY OF DOING CHURCH

Although the number of bivocational pastors across the country is approaching one-third of all pastors, according to the February 19, 2015, *Christian Media Magazine*, the bivocational pastorate isn't for everyone. As one pastor admitted, after trying to minister bivocationally: "I know there are some guys who can juggle multiple responsibilities better than other guys. I've come to accept that I am not one of those guys."

Indeed, an ability to juggle is essential. Other qualities of an effective bivo pastor include: financial contentment, business acumen, commitment to the priesthood of believers, job flexibility and sense of calling to a new way of doing church.

Christians in other cultures have long recognized this "new way of doing church." In Latin America, for example, bivo is a reality because the Catholic culture doesn't view the Protestant pastor's role as "a real job," according to Manuel Abarca Saez, church planter for the Spanish-speaking ministries of Northwest Community Church (EFCA) in San Antonio, Texas. So there's little financial support for a full-time shepherd.

Across the ocean, postmodern Europeans find evangelical pastors similarly puzzling, according to Todd Hiltibran, EFCA ReachGlobal international leader for Europe. "So the bivocational model seems to create a more healthy dynamic. We encourage our staff to be involved in multiple churches/church plants so they can't do everything and are forced to give ministry away. Bivocational pastors have to focus on the essentials of developing people rather than administering programs or caring for buildings.

Is bivo the way of the future? Some are saying so. In "*Higher Calling, Lower Wages: The vanishing of the middle-class clergy*" (July 22, 2014), *theatlantic.com* reported on an increase in bivocational ministry across all Protestant denominations. (Because EFCA bivocational pastors have long labored in the shadows, few statistics exist to confirm if growth in their numbers is indeed occurring.)

Perhaps most significant to note is the fact that, in the healthiest bivocational churches, pastors are merely modeling what their on-mission congregants have been doing all their lives: living out the gospel at work *and* at home *and* in church-ministry activities.

Indeed, points out Bruce Redmond, EFCA church-planting coach for the Southeast District, it's the lay leader who has always done bivo best. Perhaps, in this era of increased bivocational ministry, the greatest gain will be a return to living out the priesthood of the believer: the saints in our churches being more fully equipped to make disciplinarians, and more of their pastors serving in the trenches alongside them.

Rollo Casiple puts it well. (Read more of his story in "Making Bivo Better", page 21)

As a pastor in Miami, Rollo began seeking additional income in 2008 following some harsh budgetary realities at True Vine Christian Church (EFCA). Within two years, however, he says he “was embracing bivo as an ecclesiology, an ideology and a discipling strategy, rather than just a means of financial supplement.”

Even after the economy recovered and church giving increased, he chose to *stay* bivocational, committed to Paul’s tentmaking passion in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10:

“This one phrase anchors my bivo choice,” Rollo explains: “‘We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate’ (verse 9).

“I have a right to be fully funded, but I don’t want it. I would rather have the opportunity to model what it looks like to lead a church and live like Jesus in a context that resembles how most of my people live. It’s less about how to make money and more about how I can leverage my life to disciple people in how to live for Jesus every day.”

*Continue reading this issue of EFCA Today and join the robust conversation about the role of bivocational ministry.*



# ANOTHER DISCIPLEMAKING LANE

## Q&A about bivo within the EFCA

When the EFCA reaffirmed its commitment to disciplinemaking in 2014, one leader in particular began dreaming about giving greater recognition to pastors serving as bivocational disciplinemakers.

That was Joe Schimmels—EFCA pastor (former) and missional dreamer (always). “We are still in a discovery mode,” he says, “but there’s a bivo conversation going on across the country, and the EFCA is entering into it. Last August at Denver’s BiVO National Conference, for example, the EFCA had the greatest number of participants.”

Gain a bit of Joe’s passion for what might flourish in the EFCA movement as bivocational leaders are better recognized and supported.

## WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT BIVOCATIONAL PASTORING NOW? HASN’T THAT MODEL ALWAYS BEEN AROUND?

*Joe:* Yes, bivo has been around since Pentecost. In my research, I have discovered that those denominations with the greatest emphasis on church planting have also had a pathway for the bivocational pastor. In the frontier movement of 1776-1850, for example, Methodists and Baptists flourished because they empowered farmers and teachers to plant churches, while other denominations insisted upon professional, theologically trained clergy. We’re not creating anything new; we’re just finally becoming intentional about it. According to Alex Mandes, EFCA director of Hispanic Ministries, nearly 75 percent of our own Latino pastors are bivocational.

In the EFCA, we are talking about it now because of our new vision statement: *that God will raise up one million disciplinemakers impacting millions with the gospel and transforming entire cities and regions globally.*

We’ve also transitioned away from a Christendom culture, where the majority are Christian and get to set policies and laws. Now we are the minority, so we have fewer and fewer Christians who can actually give money to missionaries and church planters—the economic scarcity angle.

Bivo is simply another lane, of many lanes, to see this disciplinemaking vision become a reality.

## ARE YOU SAYING WE SHOULD ALL BE BIVO?

Not at all. We need every laborer out there. And it’s definitely not for everybody; you have to have a knack for handling multiple worlds while seeing ministry flow from your family. I’ve noted that bivo pastors often have evangelistic gifts. They tend to be entrepreneurial with a capacity to multi-task. It’s *not*, however, “doing everything a fully funded person can in the limited time I have.” That’s not bivo done well. And it’s where I hear many of the failure stories—pastors trying to do too much.

By the way, bivocational pastors dislike the terms *part-time ministry* or *full-time ministry* to distinguish them from traditional pastors, because they think of their entire lives as full-time ministry. When referring to a pastor's relationship with the church, they prefer the terms *partially funded* or *fully funded*.

## HOW DOES THE EFCA COMPARE TO OTHER DENOMINATIONS IN THE PREVALENCE OF BIVO PASTORS?

I'm still researching this. I found statistics indicating that 50 percent of Southern Baptists were bivocational a decade ago. I've been amazed to learn how very many bivocational pastors are in the EFCA. They are going to lead us in this conversation. And there are those who receive income from a variety of sources but have never thought of themselves as bivo. So hard numbers at this point are difficult. Kevin Kompelien, EFCA president, says there are regions of the world where the only thing pastors know is bivocational ministry.

## IS THERE ONE IDEAL MODEL FOR THE BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR?

No, it's a very wide "lane." There are those who stay bivocational only till a salary is available and those whose plan is to remain bivocational indefinitely; retired pastors serve bivocationally, even teams of bivo pastors at the same church. If there's any one principle that applies to all, it's this: Find work that offers some flexibility.

## WHERE DOES THE EFCA GO FROM HERE?

My hope is for the EFCA to offer greater support for bivocational pastors, to see how necessary they are for the gospel to go forth.

Fully funded pastors and their elders can ask: *What would church planting look like for us with a bivocational planter?*

District and regional leaders can explore: *How do we build a leadership pipeline for future bivocational pastors?*

Business owners can ask: *How might I take my business "on-mission"—like these bivocational pastors are doing—and not simply view it as a way to make money?*

And the rest of us: *Who in my area are pastoring bivocationally, and how can I offer some encouragement for their calling?*

## ANY FINAL THOUGHTS?

In this post-Christendom era, pastors are viewed more suspiciously. I have neighbors who are culturally Buddhist. If I were a fully funded church planter, they might think I wanted to be friends just so I could get them to come to my church—the church that supports my salary. Bivo says, "We're going to take away that obstacle to the gospel." It's really about starting discipling communities in the marketplace. As you can imagine, some lay person is even now saying, "I have a job and an evangelistic gift, why can't I do this too?" And I would reply, "Yep, that is the point of the bivo conversation."

*Joe Schimmels lives in Ft. Collins, Colorado, and has chosen to live the BiVO life. He consults and trains others to do the same, and blogs about it at [joeschimmels.wordpress.com](http://joeschimmels.wordpress.com)*



# A CHURCH HISTORY OF BIVO

## Tentmaking from the beginning until now

BY DAVID M. GUSTAFSON, PH.D

Bivocational ministry is trending today. Driven by missional theology, incarnational ministry, theology of work and realities of post-Christendom, conferences and cohorts are being organized to equip pastors for bivocational ministry.

“Bivo” pastors and missionaries are not new, however. Dual-role ministry, or tentmaking, as a means for Christian leaders to finance their mission has been the practice of the Church since its inception. In fact, throughout church history, the full-time, fully funded pastor is the *exception* and bivocational ministry is the *norm*.

Today, most pastors around the world earn their living from means other than serving their churches.

Moreover, bivocational ministry is not rare today; most pastors around the world earn their living from means other than serving their churches. This may sound unusual to Christians in America, where we have become accustomed to fully funded clergy as the norm.

## IT STARTED WITH JESUS’ APOSTLES

Bivocational ministry was commonly practiced in the early church. Jesus’ apostles were commercial fishermen before He called them to follow Him.<sup>1</sup> They returned to this livelihood after His crucifixion and before their mission of preaching the gospel to the world (John 21:1–25).

The apostle Paul was bivocational (1 Corinthians 4:12). In contrast to Peter and the other apostles, who were supported by church collections, Paul made tents (Acts 4:34–37; 18:1–3). His example led to the term tentmaking to describe dual-role pastors, missionaries and church planters who engage in ministry while having other employment.<sup>2</sup>

Paul did not want to be a financial burden to the churches he founded (1 Thessalonians 2:7–9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–8). He hoped that his work would build credibility among those who were not-yet-Christians and give him the



chance to win them to faith (1 Corinthians 9:19; 2 Corinthians 11:7). When he and Barnabas were sent out as missionaries, they traveled at their own expense (Acts 13:1–3; 20:33–35; 1 Corinthians 9:15–18).

Nevertheless, Paul validated paying Christian leaders full support (1 Corinthians 9:7–14). He stated: “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17). Those who labored were not simply to receive a stipend; Paul was concerned that they receive twice that amount, presumably because they devoted more of their time and energy to the work.<sup>3</sup> Honor and respect in the congregation were included, but material rewards were his primary concern.

He continued: “For Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages’” (1 Timothy 5:18, cf. Luke 10:7).

While Paul preferred not to take advantage of such material support himself, he stood vigorously for the right of apostles and co-laborers to be supported by the Christian community.<sup>4</sup> In other words, both church-supported and self-supported pastors and missionaries were equally valid in Paul’s eyes.

## FROM ZENO TO SPYRIDON

Paul’s practice continued as the general pattern during the formation of the church throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup> In the first three centuries, bivocational ministry became common among apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors.

Tertullian (160–220) said, “Let the young persons of the Church endeavor to minister diligently with all appropriate seriousness, so that you will always have sufficient funds to support both yourselves and those that are needy, and not burden the Church of God. For we ourselves, besides our attention to the word of the Gospel, do not neglect our inferior employments. For some of us are fisherman, tentmakers, and farmers, so that we may never be idle.”<sup>6</sup>

Examples of bivocational ministry in the early church are common. Spyridon of Cyrus (ca. 270–348) served as bishop of Trimythous and as a shepherd. Basil of Cappadocia (330–379) reported that his priests were working and earning their daily bread. Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) spoke of rural pastors as yoking the oxen and driving the plow. Zeno (d. ca. 400), bishop of Maïouma, whose church in Gaza was quite large, was a linen weaver.<sup>7</sup>

In the fourth century, when the era of Christendom began, the church transitioned from a minority existence in a largely hostile world to a close alignment with the Roman state.<sup>8</sup> What began with Constantine’s vision for one empire and one Christian faith continued under emperors like Theodosius. Consequently, fully funded positions emerged for bishops as well as for presbyters (pastors) in well-established congregations, generally in urban areas. This fostered a class of theologically trained, professional clergy.

## WIDENING OF THE CLERGY/LAITY DIVIDE

During the era of Christendom, the gap widened between clergy and laity. Augustine of Hippo (354–430), for example, distinguished between the *active life*, the *contemplative life* and a *composite*.<sup>9</sup> While he viewed them all as good and praised the work of farmers, craftspeople and merchants, he saw the contemplative life as a higher order. Soon this view dominated Christian thinking.<sup>10</sup> Only those who pursued the contemplative life were said to have a religious or sacred vocation.

Monastic communities of monks or “regular clergy” were founded for those who devoted themselves to a life of prayer—to the contemplative life. Some monks like Pachomius of Egypt (ca. 292–348) and Benedict of Nursia (480–547), however, included in their monastic rules the practice of work, in addition to prayer and study.

The monastic movement in Europe, following Benedict’s rule and variations of it, became the missionary and

church-planting force of the medieval period.<sup>11</sup>

Martin Luther (1483–1546), the Reformer, held that all of life, including daily work, could be understood as a calling from God.<sup>12</sup> According to Luther, the Christian responds to the call to serve God and love one's neighbor by fulfilling the duties associated with everyday work. Some interpreters of Luther, such as Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), held that Luther's notion of all believers being "of one body" referred to the priesthood of all believers.<sup>13</sup> This teaching challenged the division of Christians into "spiritual" (sacred) and "temporal" (secular). Luther himself said: "All Christians are priests."<sup>14</sup> His teaching was foundational to reforms of his day and shaped views of vocation and work, both inside and outside the church.

In Herrnhut, Germany, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) inspired Moravian Brethren toward missionary activity around the world. While attending the coronation of the King of Denmark, Zinzendorf met a slave from the West Indies who told him of the needs of his people on the Island of St. Thomas. Soon afterward, Leonhard Dober, a potter, and David Nitschmann, a carpenter, volunteered to go there as self-supporting missionaries.<sup>15</sup>

Even if the Herrnhut community had been able to support its early missionaries by sending them money, Zinzendorf would not have approved it. Rather, he and the community expected and regulated self-support on the part of the missionaries, sending them out to witness to the gospel, earning their living as they went.<sup>16</sup>

Bivocational ministry was not without its challenges. In Labrador, Canada, for example, Moravian missionaries in the 1850s established a trade store for the welfare of the Eskimos, providing for the poor, the sick and the elderly in harsh winters and for everyone during poor hunting and fishing seasons. However, the effort became difficult when the missionaries often had to turn down appeals for credit. They found themselves increasingly conflicted by their dual duty—behind the pulpit and the counter.<sup>17</sup>

## BIVO ON OUR OWN SHORES

In America, bivocational pastors emerged out of necessity when new congregations did not have resources to support them. Even when churches had resources, some preferred bivocational ministry. For example, colonial ministers of the Church of England in the 1600s maintained themselves by means of the *parson's glebe*, a piece of land set aside for the pastor's use to support himself.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, many Southern Baptist congregations were led by a farmer-preacher who tilled ground, split rails, planted corn, fed hogs, preached sermons, performed weddings and conducted funerals.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, early Evangelical Free Church preachers in America were mostly bivocational. At the 1884 Boone Conference that was called to discuss theological questions regarding the nature and practice of the church, the 22 who attended were mostly itinerant evangelists and lay preachers who served one or more newly established congregations.<sup>20</sup>

Twenty years later, however, one church after another was calling a resident pastor.<sup>21</sup> This caused tension between two schools of thought: E. A. Halleen, former president of the Swedish Evangelical Free Church who went on to become the first president of the EFCA, favored resident pastors; August Davis, an early pastor in the Swedish Evangelical Free Church, preferred itinerant preachers who traveled for a few months of the year to minister to the congregations. During the rest of the year, the itinerant preachers earned a living from farming or their trade.

As local churches became more established, resident pastors became the common practice.

Throughout church history, God has led His people to carry out His mission in the world through pastors and missionaries who have supported themselves, as well as through those who were supported by churches. From the beginning, tentmaking missionaries like Paul's emerged, serving both voluntarily and by necessity. Where Christianity was established and local churches received adequate funding—generally in cities—fully funded pastors became the norm.

Today, however, as the West becomes increasingly post-Christian, bivocational ministry is again a viable means to

proclaim the gospel, offering it free of charge (1 Corinthians 9:18). It may be time to rethink the “professional ministry model” of Christendom and again consider the validity of bivocational ministry. It has not merely a biblical basis but a long history.

<sup>1</sup> Although Jesus was an itinerant preacher, He was also a carpenter (Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55). There is, however, no mention in the Scriptures of Jesus working as a carpenter during His three-year ministry.

<sup>2</sup> The term σκηνοποιοὶ translated “tentmakers” may also be “leather-workers,” according to F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of Acts (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 367. Bruce notes: “It was not considered proper for a scribe or rabbi to receive payment for his teaching, and many of them therefore practiced a trade in addition to their study of the law.”

<sup>3</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: Timothy I & II, and Titus (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1960), 125.

<sup>4</sup> Paul, by not using his rights or giving up his rights (1 Cor. 9:18) in order to promote the gospel, demonstrated his full commitment to it with his whole heart and will. Moreover, his ministry became a living paradigm of the gospel itself. Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 421.

<sup>5</sup> Edward L. Smither, Mission in the Early Church (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 45–47.

<sup>6</sup> Tertullian, “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,” II: LIX, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 424.

<sup>7</sup> Marvin J. Miller, The Case for a Tentmaking Ministry (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1978), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Bettenson and Maunder, eds. Documents of the Christian Church, 18–20.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, The City of God, 19.19 edited by Dyson, R. W. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 494.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, The Proof of the Gospel, Being the Demonstratio evangelica, trans. by W. J. Ferrar (New York: Macmillan Co., 1920) 1:8. “Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living; it admits not marriage, child-bearing, property nor the possession of wealth, but wholly and permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone in its wealth of heavenly love!”

<sup>11</sup> Smither, Mission in the Early Church, 39–43.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,” in Luther: Selected Political Writings, J. M. Porter, ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 128–130.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, trans. by Theodore G. Tappert, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 91–95.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Luther, “A Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church” in Three Treatises (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 15.

<sup>15</sup> William J. Danker, Profit for the Lord: Economic Activities in Moravian Missions and the Basel Mission Trading Company (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 31.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 47–48.

<sup>18</sup> Luther M. Dorr, The Bivocational Pastor (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Dorr, The Bivocational Pastor, 25.

<sup>20</sup> David M. Gustafson “The 1884 Boone Conference of the Free Mission Friends: Founding of the EFCA or Theological Discussion?” Trinity Journal 34 (Fall, 2013), 254–257.

<sup>21</sup> Frank T. Lindberg, Looking Back Fifty Years over the Rise and Progress of the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of America (Minneapolis: Frank T. Lindberg, 1935), 66.

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# BUTCHER, BAKER, CANDLESTICK-MAKER

## The lives we lead outside the pulpit

*Across the world, bivocational pastors employ a vast array of skills in order to sustain a multi-orbed life of ministry. Meet a few of our U.S. bivo pastors here and enjoy snippets of their stories (and shoot them an email if you'd like to know more—just click on their names). Then, explore how your own church might better support a bivocational pastor closer to home.*

### 1. HANDYMAN:

#### LARRY COUTLEE

*Senior pastor, New Beginning Church, Ashland, Pennsylvania*

“I work on everything from painting and woodworking to furnace repairs and home restoration. I am starting a work project with our church landlord to restore a derelict house. I will be able to use at least three people from our church who need work. On these types of projects I also teach people new skill sets. The job setting gives them the opportunity to ask questions without others being around, almost like a discipleship class setting. In addition, I am in contact with people who may not even have thought of coming to church—to discuss their needs and have in-depth conversations that might lead to more.”

### 2. INSURANCE AGENT:

#### JASON CLEARY

*Pastor, CORE Community Church, Jacksonville, Florida*

“Being bivocational is a guard rail that helps me focus on kingdom building, rather than on building a church, which I believe is the byproduct of making disciples.

“I am not a bivocational-or-bust guy; I am simply doing this because God called me to plant our church this way. During tough ministry seasons, I have contemplated if I am effectively making a difference, with the time constraints of being bivocational. (I typically work 40-45 hours per week in insurance.) But in those times the Lord, usually through others, reminds me that ministry is about being faithful with the time He has given me, and that more time does not necessarily equal more fruitfulness.”

### 3. DISNEYLAND CAST MEMBER:

#### JUSTIN WEAVER

*Director/Pastor, Cast Member Church Anaheim\* (California)*

“Being bivocational has only strengthened the church, since I am smack dab in the middle of my mission field. Because I understand the ups, downs, pressures, stresses and joys of being a Cast Member, it builds a lot of trust and credibility.

“I love the Walt Disney Company. The fact that God is letting me minister here is amazing. I have been telling people that I have never felt more seen, understood and loved by God than I do right now with this position.”

*\*not affiliated with or endorsed by the Walt Disney Company*

#### **4. COLLEGE PROFESSOR:**

##### **JEFF EASLEY**

*Pastor, Legacy Community Church, Stockbridge, Georgia*

“I’ve been bivocational for about six years. And I believe I am working within my areas of giftedness—as pastor, adjunct college professor and GATEWAY coordinator. My wife, Gerri, and I are able to make this work because she is very supportive of God’s call upon our lives.

“For the bivocational pastor who feels as though he cannot find the right job to support his ministry, I would say: Be completely sure of the call into ministry.

“Then, realize that this journey is about God shaping your character and faith. I once took a social worker position where I served as a behavioral aid—basically, glorified babysitting. Honestly, it was humiliating. But over time, I realized that God was using this as an opportunity to develop me. He also showed me that this job was a ministry. When you feel as though you can’t find the ‘right’ job, trust there is something bigger than the job that the Lord is doing.

“Maybe each district could pray for a person with the gifts, skills and calling to help bivocational pastors start their own businesses?”

#### **5. NUCLEAR GENERATING PLANT LEADER:**

##### **SCOTT MCCALL**

*Executive pastor, New Life EFC, Hastings, Minnesota*

“I work by day as a manager of nuclear site projects, with responsibility for a \$150 million budget. On weeknights and weekends I am a minister of the gospel. Most of my work day is filled with supporting people and making them successful. But at times I need to hold them accountable, especially if they don’t deliver. Still, even at work, I am a minister. I have a different goal in mind, but the way I carry out accomplishing that goal is what makes me different and a visible disciple in the work place. It is about having a missional mindset all of the time.”

#### **6. HOSPICE CHAPLAIN:**

##### **BOB SPILGER**

*Pastor, Fern Cliff EFC, Wayland, Iowa*

“I have been a bivocational pastor within the EFCA on and off for 30 years—working as a sawmill maintenance mechanic, a storekeeper and a chaplain. Being bivocational has allowed me to serve smaller congregations who could not afford to pay a full-time salary. And as chaplain, I have had the privilege of leading a number of folks to faith in Christ prior to death and providing spiritual counsel for co-workers.”

#### **7. SCHOOL BUS DRIVER:**

##### **MIKE BRUBAKER**

*Founding pastor, Christian Life Chapel, Colchester, Connecticut*

“I’ve been a bivocational church-planting pastor in New England for more than 25 years. To have a good reputation as a school bus driver for 18 years has been an asset to ministry that one cannot purchase. It also keeps my finger on the pulse of the community and schools on an almost daily basis. I have name and face recognition everywhere in a small town.

“For example, our small church now provides weekly DivorceCare and GriefShare programs year-round. Recently, a family man in his mid-50s committed suicide. I’d known the family for 15-plus years from driving their three



children to/from school. The wife responded almost immediately to my offer inviting her to GriefShare, and she stayed. She is discovering the gospel for the first time. God is now her healer.”

## **8. MUSICIAN:**

### **DAVID SPENCER**

*Senior pastor, The Church of Chicago (Illinois)*

“I have been bivocational pastoring for 16 years. It allows me to stay ‘real.’ As a musician, I am in constant contact with people who are broken and not redeemed.

“When you are bivocational, it’s important that you are good in your respective field. My skills must constantly be nurtured through regular practice. So when most pastors are asleep at 10 pm on a Saturday night, I may be intensely involved in a performance (and still preach on Sunday mornings). The up side to being a musician is that I may have a little more time during the week to dedicate to ministry as opposed to those who work a 9-5 job.

“I met my wife while performing. Still, after more than 29 years of marriage, I am a bit shocked that music has not driven Dolores mad. The Lord blessed me with a wife who understands music and me.”

## **9. PROBATION OFFICER:**

### **JEFF HARRINGTON**

*Pastor, Dove Creek Bible Church, Bakersfield, California*

“Not every job gives easy opportunities to build redemptive relationships. Sending people to prison or jail is not something that inclines them to be favorably disposed toward me. So the nature of my two vocations sometimes causes a bit of an identity crisis. At work I come across as a no-nonsense, cool, objective person. My responses are governed by statutes and legal principles; there is no grace under the law. As a pastor, I am grace-based and my responses are (hopefully) based in the principles of love and mercy. Each vocation requires its own deportment and comportment—a way of carrying yourself—and it is not always easy to switch from one to the other and then back again.”

## **10. STARBUCKS BARISTA/TRAINER:**

### **JOHN STROMBERG**

*Pastor of church multiplication, Centennial Church (EFCA), Forest Lakes, Minnesota*

“The temptation for all believers, but especially for bivocational pastors, is to feel superior to their secular work; to feel like they need to move on from their secular job to do ‘real ministry.’ But the clear teaching of the Bible for all Christ-followers is that their vocation—whether in a fully funded ministry position or in a secular job—has intrinsic value and dignity because God designed work that way (Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2: 15-17; Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:17).

“This means that my work at Starbucks is spiritual, whether I recognize it or not. Every decision I make—how I interact with and talk about my co-workers, the way I submit to my manager, how I treat our customers, etc.—is an act of worship toward God or toward false idols of reputation, power, control or approval.”



# THREE (OR FOUR) ARE BETTER THAN ONE

## How pastoral teams are sweetening the journey

BY JENNIFER M. KVAMME

What do you get when you join a nurse anesthetist, network security analyst and director of a software company with a passion for shepherding God's church? For Salina Street Church in East Austin, Texas, the result is a pastoral team with complementary strengths, busy lives and a joy in equipping their church.

Salina Street Church is pastored by a team of three men: Jon Hurley, Jeff Ronk and Taylor Wagen. For eight years, each has worked a full-time secular job *and* volunteered his spare time (without pay) to pastor the church. There's no senior pastor; instead, the three men oversee teams responsible for different ministry areas and rotate preaching on Sundays. With no building of its own, no salaries to pay and minimal programming, the church is free to devote more resources to global missions and the local community.

Redemption Church in Wichita, Kansas, is trying a similar model. The church just replanted a year ago, with Caleb Hastings as solo bivocational pastor. However, the church has since added three other bivocational pastor-elders who, based on their spiritual gifts, focus on equipping the church to do ministry. Redemption's vision is to continue raising up pastor-elders until there is a surplus of leadership with which to plant a new church—without needing to fundraise for salaries.

Both churches have found bivocational pastoral teams to be effective at equipping the church for ministry, freeing up funds for missions and empowering pastors to operate within their gifts. While it's not the only ministry model that can accomplish these outcomes, those who've tried it say they wouldn't change it—not only because of the outcomes but also for the joy of shepherding a church alongside teammates and friends.

## EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

Pastors who work 40-50 hours a week in the marketplace can't do everything that needs to be done for a church. In actuality, no pastors can do it all themselves, and no pastors should. But in a healthy bivocational environment, church members more quickly recognize that the pastor isn't paid to do all the church work and thus is equipping the saints for service.

"Salina Street Church members understand that everyone is a minister," says Jon Hurley, a network security analyst in the Austin school district and SSC's pastor of community development, "and they are encouraged by the fact that their pastors experience the same challenges in life, job and family as they do. It has set a nice culture of willingness to serve the church."

Working their own full-time jobs in the workplace gives these pastors a better understanding of the lives, schedules and sacrifices of their volunteers.

"I'm not thinking about church 50 hours a week and wondering why other people aren't caught up," agrees Caleb Hastings, Redemption Church's pastor and self-employed handyman, whose wife helps supplement their income with a thriving food truck business. "Now it seems selfish to ask people to sit in a meeting for four hours on an evening. But it causes more people to step up because they know I'm not full-time. I'm not asking anyone to do anything I'm not doing."

This can also take the awkwardness out of preaching on topics like giving or serving. "We never hear, 'You have no idea what it feels like to be me,'" says Brooke Wagen, Taylor's wife. "They watch us struggle to get it all done, work hard, be tired, make mistakes. I like that."

In the process, the church functions as it was designed to. "Your ministry degree and experience is not for doing the ministry," Caleb says, "but for *equipping* people to do the work of the ministry [Ephesians 4:12]."

Both churches split the pulpit among their team of pastor-elders, who are primarily (or completely, in the case of SSC) volunteers. Each church experiences more variety in teaching and preaching styles, and there's no dependence on one pastor as the face or voice of the church. The rest of the church body serves in other ways, ranging from leading the youth ministries or worship team, to setting up and tearing down for the service.

This reliance on lay leaders definitely makes some things more difficult—such as administrative tasks and marketing. In these churches, though, both with a little under 100 congregants, the goal is to keep programming light and services simple, so that members can focus on connecting as a family and then being the Church in all of life.

The less formal structure works well for now, although each team wonders if it might have to shift if their churches grow significantly. "If we're just looking for the best way to grow a church, this probably isn't it," Caleb admits. "If we're looking to multiply disciples, this might be it. It might not be what God has called you to do; for us, this is being faithful."

In the long run, both Redemption and SSC hope this model will allow them to multiply not just leaders but churches. As they equip more people (who already have steady incomes) to lead the church, they hope to grow a surplus of leaders to be sent out as a church plant. This model would involve little start-up cost, a built-in team and other pastors to share the load, making it easy to replicate.

## FREEING UP FUNDING

In addition to releasing people for ministry, bivocational churches tend to release more funds for missions. Because church budgets aren't tied to significant salaries, more funds can be funneled outward.

Redemption Church gives 10 percent of its income to India Gospel League, its primary global partner. On top of that, several church members created Loving Learners, a ministry to support local children with school supplies, glasses and other material needs to thrive in their learning environments. Redemption provides 50 percent of the

ministry's budget and 90 percent of its volunteers.

Salina Street Church, which gives more than a third of its income to global missions, has a commitment that any missionaries it supports regularly will also receive daily prayer and regular check-ins from church members. These enhanced personal connections have led to a congregation not only eager to give to missions but also excited about the church budget overall, because they see the money going toward things they believe to be significant.

The nontraditional model also necessitates a willingness to occasionally educate others. That education could be directed toward church members or fellow pastors—those who ask the pastors of Salina Street and Redemption when they'll be full time—or even outsiders. In fact, Salina Street leadership had to send multiple documents and testimonials to the IRS one year to prove that it was in fact a church, in spite of having no building and no salaries and, essentially, taking in money only to give it away.

Still, the skepticism and the crazy hours don't dissuade these men. They love the bivocational path as well as how teamwork sweetens the journey.

"These joys—you couldn't give me a big enough office and fancy enough building and big enough paycheck," Caleb says. "I wouldn't trade it."

## FOCUSING ON GIFTING

Finally, a great strength of bivocational pastors serving in teams is that they are more powerfully released to work within their strengths and spiritual gifts.

Each member of Redemption's pastor-elder team equips the church in a different way, so that Caleb (as senior pastor, who views his gift set as that of *apostle*, or "sent one")\* doesn't carry it alone. One of his teammates has the gift of *shepherd* (and computer developer) who utilizes his tech skills and also keeps Redemption focused on caring for the entire church. Another is an *evangelist* (and retired/serial entrepreneur) who keeps the church focused on the outward spread of the gospel. The third is a *prophet* (and real-estate appraiser) who leads in worship and keeps the church family focused on the heart of God. They are currently asking God to send them someone gifted as a *teacher*.

"We don't have a church staff feel," Caleb admits. "It's a group of friends who commit to build the Kingdom of God together. The friendship is glue for the work of ministry, and the work of ministry is friendship with God and others."

The Salina Street team also began first as friends who shared the same vision. They started out trying to share roles equally and found that it was inefficient. Now, they've divided their roles based on strengths and each lead different teams. "We spend less time working for consensus on everything," says Jeff, a nurse anesthetist and SSC's pastor of spiritual development. "We have given each other the freedom to run with things that we are individually excited about. It feels less like a job and more like friends/family ministry."

"We are definitely friends," agrees Taylor, pastor of worship and education and a director at a software company. "And we work hard to remain so, because it's easy to lose that in the work and stress. But our differences are hugely valuable to us."

The variety of strengths, personalities, experiences and spiritual gifts make the team stronger and sharper. Jordan Jolly, a longtime SSC member, sees the pastoral team as a great benefit for the church. "The roles and responsibilities of 'pastor' are so broad as to practically necessitate sharing," he says. "Pastors need help covering for their lack of time and/or ability to do each thing that must be done in order to lead the church. And we are better taken care of as a result."

Of course, this emphasis on working within your strengths isn't just for pastors. Both sets of pastor-elders focus on equipping others for ministry within their areas of gifting. "I try to equip other people not just to go but to *be senders*," Caleb says. "We always ask, 'Who are you going to train to do what I'm training you to do?'"

The biggest challenge these pastors note is one that all bivocational pastors face: managing multiple priorities in the church/home/job mix. As Brooke Wagen puts it, “None of us have lawns that are carefully mowed every week.”

Yet after eight years of the unending rhythm of work, study, pray, minister, Brooke and Taylor claim it’s their preferred lifestyle, pointing to 1 Thessalonians 2:9. “This working day and night on their behalf—it’s an honor,” Taylor says. “All of us feel very emotional about that.”

Above all, the team model allows for more flexibility. “I don’t think we could do bivocational ministry without a strong team,” says Kerin Hurley, Jon’s wife. “All three of our families have been committed to working hard together and living life together with a lot of grace and gentleness.”

The friendship and mutual sharpening is part of what makes bivocational teams not only effective at equipping leaders, freeing up funds and focusing pastors’ time, but also so much fun.

*\*Caleb Hastings clarifies: “We see Ephesians 4:11-16 as teaching that God gives people as gifts to the church. It’s not simply that people might have an apostolic gifting or a prophetic gifting or an evangelistic gifting, etc., but some believers might be gifted to the local body of believers to be within that body a passion for that aspect of ministry.”*

*Jennifer M. Kvamme is a bivocational student ministries coordinator (at Centennial EFC in Forest Lake, Minnesota) and stay-at-home mom of two daughters, ages 3 and 1. She is thankful for her husband, Greg, and her volunteer leaders, who enable her to do both jobs as part of a team. And she will always wish she had more time for road trips and reading books.*



# BIVO ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

## Ministry challenge but tremendous potential

BY PASTOR NUBAKO SELENGA

In the majority of African nations, missionary work was established in rural and remote communities. Pastoral training, therefore, prepared African church leaders to work in those same rural, mostly monocultural contexts. As rural-to-urban migration has grown, it's become necessary to plant more churches in the urban centers.\*

In rural communities, church workers might have sufficient supplementary income from a garden or through relatives who are willing to share their crops. In the urban context, however, no gardens exist and family support is fragmented. Nearly 70 percent of those who pastor must be bivocational. If the pastor's wife has a sufficient level of education, she might be able to work or start a small business to supplement their income.

Church workers who once served in rural economies with subsistence-level pay are finding it difficult to adapt when they move into an urban economy, with its higher expenses for electricity, water, health care and more. Every month in these congregations, it's common to set aside one Sunday when church members give practical gifts—such as sugar, milk, soap, fish and clothing—for the pastor's family. This means of assistance is now seen in many different churches in Kinshasa.

Across Africa, we've seen bivocational work take one of two routes in that challenging urban environment: *active engagement* or *passive income*.

Active engagement is where a church leader holds a full-time salaried job and then volunteers his time for church work. Passive income is where a church leader owns a business that is managed by another competent person, with the church leader providing either capital or governance.

The best example I've seen of active-engagement bivocational ministry in the city is that of the Redeemed Christian Church of God of Nigeria. Under their deliberate bivocational strategy, church leaders send out professionals in teams of 10 families to plant new churches. These professionals work and earn a living in the new community and share pastoral responsibilities—so that no *one* of them shoulders the full burden of running the church, nor does the young church bear the burden of paying for quality leadership. Engaging with the community through business or the provision of services gives these church planters credibility and relevance.

The best example of passive-income bivocational ministry is that of the Methodist Guest House and Conference Centre in Nairobi. A business manager is given autonomy to run the guest house, while the local church and pastors participate as shareholders, with income from the business funding their ministry. This can work with other mission agencies and other types of business. Pastors can remain undistracted in their ministry while competent managers employ their unique giftings and substantial investment of time. The dangers of this approach, of course, are that a church could strangle the business by starving it of capital needed to grow or by assuming an unnecessary control of the management.

Bivocational church planting is growing in Africa's cities, and that's a good thing. But the church needs to find creative ways to adapt so that all bivocational pastors can be resourced adequately and in healthy ways. These bivocational models hold tremendous potential to advance the Kingdom of God in a context where many ministry challenges are tied to poverty, African worldview and growing opposition to the gospel.

*\*EFCA ReachGlobal/ReachAfrica is active in more than 23 countries on the continent. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the author lives, 85 percent of Evangelical Free Churches still exist in rural settings.*

*Pastor Nubako Selenga has served as director of ReachAfrica since 2007 and lives in Kinshasa, DRC.*

# FROM LAY LEADER TO PASTOR

## How a church-planting coach makes the difference

BY S. DANIEL SMITH

In 2004, Ron and Fran Haygood were teaching school in their multiethnic, working-class community of Anniston, Alabama. Schoolteachers, churchgoers and parents of two boys ages 3 and under.

Gradually, though, they became disenchanted with their church's lack of commitment to discipleship and outreach. Rather than simply switch churches, Ron became aware of a tug on his heart: to live more on-mission with God in partnership with other believers in planting a new church.

Without an additional source of funding, Ron knew that they would need to keep their jobs while church planting. Although anxious about the risks, Fran agreed. Unfortunately, that first church faded. As did a second one, four years later. But the call did not fade—instead, it persisted as a gentle, constant drive in Ron's heart.

By 2010, Ron owned his own insurance business and Fran was working as an elementary-school counselor when they decided to try church planting one more time. Wiser from past efforts—and with older children who didn't require the level of attention they had needed as babies—Ron and Fran believed that the time was right. A church plant in a working-class neighborhood still wouldn't be able to pay them much, so they again chose to keep their jobs and go the bivocational route.

The Living Church was officially planted on September 5, 2010, with 15 people (including children and the core team)—mostly friends and family—who met in a small building with three rooms and roughly 600 square feet of space. At that point, they were carrying tables, chairs and an overhead projector from the Haygood home each week. As years passed, the church stockpiled most of its own supplies and moved to a larger meeting space as it grew to 25 weekly attendees. Ron hopes to see that number double over the next five years.

Ron has other tangible goals for the future as well, such as being fully funded by the church, having at least one (if not several) teaching elders, and finding more appropriate meeting space that will give them adequate parking and allow permanent signage. He also hopes to meet some intangible goals, such as making a bigger impact on the working-class community where they live and serve.

## REACHING OUT FOR HELP

Soon after starting The Living Church, Ron recognized that he couldn't do it alone. Adding programs and outreach events contributed to the strain. "I knew that we would need accountability and fellowship," he says. "I was looking for a group to help me grow as a pastor."

Ron began by doing a bit of Internet research—first exploring the local Baptist organization and the Foursquare Church movement, then the EFCA. As he explored [efca.org](http://efca.org) he saw the movement's multiethnic makeup and was so impressed he decided to reach out.

Soon after Ron contacted the EFCA's national office, he received a call from the church-planting director of the Southeast District, Bruce Redmond. Bruce offered guidance and resources for the road ahead and connected Ron with other pastors in the district. He also visited every three months or so. On one of his early visits, Bruce noticed that the church's meeting location was far too small to accommodate growth, so he helped Ron see the importance

of moving to the larger building where they currently meet. Bruce also assisted by resourcing materials for discipleship and helping the fledgling congregation attain its nonprofit status.

Bruce is no stranger to mentoring church planters: He and his wife, Jackie, have invested in more than 100 church-planting couples over the years and have specifically coached 23 different lay leaders like the Haygoods to launch their churches. Each time the Redmonds get together with a new couple, they expect to meet entrepreneurs and pray that those entrepreneurs are also teachable. In Ron and Fran Haygood they found both.

“My greatest focus and challenge in coaching church-planting pastors,” Bruce says, “is helping them make disciples toward multiplication. Sometimes, just ‘doing’ church in our culture is a major distraction to living on-mission.”

American cultural expectations are largely to blame for this problem, he explains, because all churchgoers expect programs, preaching, teaching and shepherding. Most planters are forced to match this model even if it keeps them from their initial focus: reaching the lost in their neighborhoods and discipling their flock. Through coaching, Bruce helps to keep the planter on-mission.

For The Living Church, an “on-mission” focus means offering a spiritual voice to its community while meeting tangible physical needs: purchasing Christmas presents for local children, donating supplies to a domestic violence shelter, and purchasing back-to-school clothes and shoes for the shelter’s residents. The church also sends support to a church/school in Liberia, Africa.

Through his coaching, Bruce also validates a lay leader’s call—which helps eliminate a sense of inferiority around fully funded pastors—and counsels each bivo pastor to watch for burnout. “Are you getting rest for your soul?” he’ll ask. Jackie Redmond similarly offered encouragement and counseling to Fran along the way.

Despite launching The Living Church without a seminary degree, Ron has nonetheless been in serious pursuit of theological growth. Under Bruce’s coaching, he enrolled in GATEWAY, the EFCA’s program of theological and pastoral training for nontraditional students. Together with others in the Southeast District, he studied the foundations for the EFCA Statement of Faith and explored specific ethical and ministerial issues. He expects to officially graduate from phase one of GATEWAY by summer 2016.

## NAVIGATING THE UPS AND DOWNS

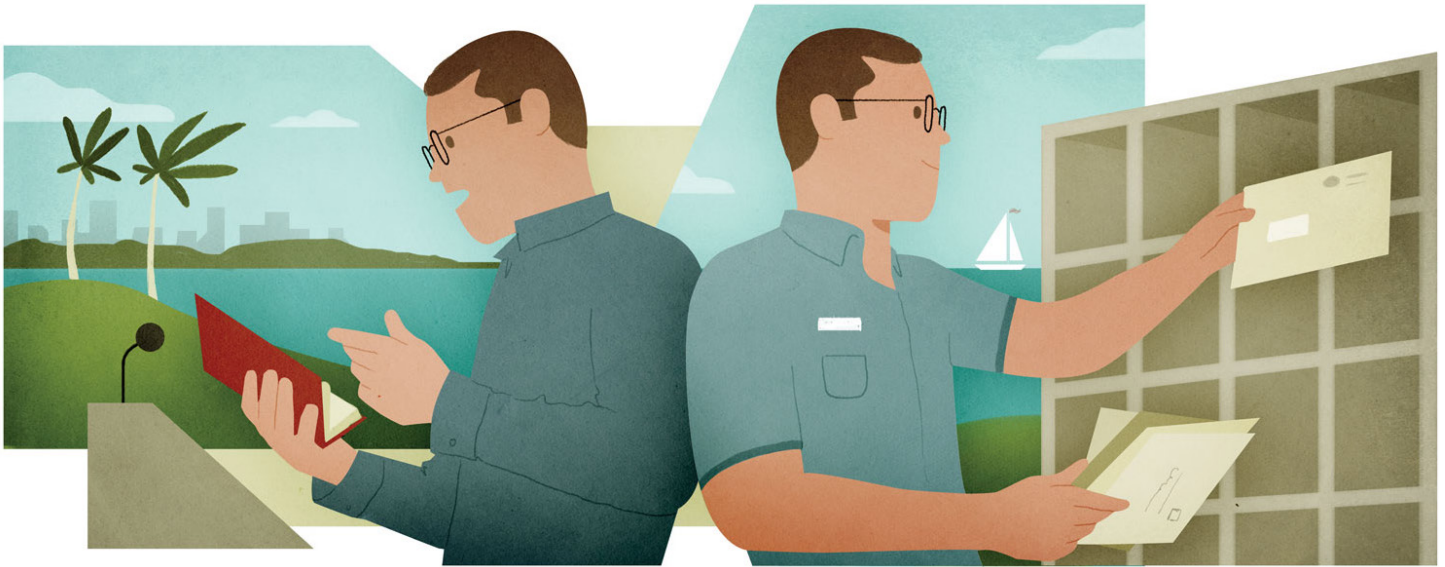
Ron faces challenges common to most bivocational pastors. For example, as an expositional preacher, he would prefer 15-20 hours of serious study per week to effectively plan his sermons. This was an issue particularly in the beginning of The Living Church, when he could only carve out half that amount because he was working 30 hours per week in his insurance business.

He has since cut those hours drastically to pursue an M.Div. from Birmingham Theological Seminary. Yet he still focuses about the same number of hours on graduate work as he used to on his business, and the church’s giving is beginning to compensate for the lost income.

Even though he’s moving toward the role of fully funded pastor, Ron’s years of living and working in the same community have given him an invaluable “presence.” Fran, too, finds that both students and teachers come to her for help and counsel. The Haygoods hope that these relationships will lead to more opportunities for the gospel and more ways for their growing church to touch lives.

From his early years as an eager lay leader with a drive to be on-mission in his community, Ron has grown into his title of *pastor*. The Living Church is still small, with growing pains ahead, yet the EFCA’s invaluable coaching has given Ron immeasurable confidence that he is able to rightly handle the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15) and thus walk his church into that future.

*S. Daniel Smith is a career sailor as well as a husband and father of three living in Jacksonville, Florida. He earned a Master of Arts degree from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and has been involved in EFCA churches in Illinois. He blogs at [navychristian.org](http://navychristian.org) and tweets @Navychristian.*



# MAKING BIVO BETTER

## Exploring ways to beat the odds for bivocational pastors

BY DIANE J. MCDOUGALL

For decades, despite the history and prevalence of the role, bivocational pastors have fought misperceptions that they are somehow second-class pastors or less-committed shepherds. That misperception seems to be disappearing; it *needs* to disappear. Not only because of the honor due these fellow believers but also because of the reality of cultural changes.

“The fully salaried pastor is becoming less and less realistic with the rising cost of living, the proposed legislation restricting clergy benefits and the decrease in giving of the church,” says EFCA bivocational pastor Rollo Casiple, former member of the EFCA board of directors. “The role is exponentially more unrealistic in churches planted in lower social economic neighborhoods and/or where the discipleship of giving/generosity is in its infancy.”

Rollo knows what he’s talking about. After 21 years as a fully funded pastor, he chose to cut back to 30-40 hours a week. For the last seven years, his role as senior pastor of True Vine Christian Church in Miami, Florida, has been paired with 30-40 hours as a postal clerk in Tavernier, Florida. On top of *that*, he’s a regional facilitator for GATEWAY Theological Institute—a course designed for those who lack the time and resources to access traditional seminary education.

“I am a postal worker not because it was the best-paying job I could get,” he clarifies, “but because it allowed me flexibility for my priorities in ministry; it increased my devotional life (that’s a long story); and it has become a place of kingdom influence and ministry. It pays me just enough to live out my call to pastor and lead.”

So how do we make bivo better for those called to this lifestyle? Both those called to start churches and those called to dive deeply into an on-mission lifestyle that might—one day, who knows—*become* a church.

We pray for them and help network them. We offer avenues for spiritual equipping that fit their schedules. We consider how we might strengthen their financial base.

## NETWORKING.

Unless they serve as part of a team, bivocational pastors can find themselves isolated from the camaraderie and spiritual sharpening that their EFCA pastoral counterparts enjoy at conferences and regional pastoral “clusters.” Getting time off work to attend isn’t always possible.

“One of the biggest liabilities to being bivocational is the lack of time,” agrees Duke Winsor, who served as a bivocational pastor himself for 10 years and now attends Remembrance Community Church (EFCA) in Lomita, California, where the pastor is a full-time firefighter who volunteers his time as pastor.

“It limits our opportunities to just hang out with other pastors and talk about ministry. That’s a luxury that can’t be indulged in very often.”

Fortunately, EFCA district leaders consider pastoral fellowship and sharpening to be more than merely a luxury. More and more are arranging for “virtual” cluster gatherings and other ways to keep their bivocational shepherds enfolded with the rest of their district team.

## SPIRITUALLY EQUIPPING.

Spiritual sharpening and nourishment is a must for every believer, but especially those called to handle the Word of God accurately as they instruct others. Yet when the full-time/part-time mix of job and church fill a pastor’s plate to overflowing, where is the time for seminary?

Or as one EFCA pastor put it: “This is what I believe God has called me to do: Work in the marketplace and serve in the church. I would like to be called a legit pastor. I would like a path to some kind of ordination. I don’t know how to get there.”

As early as 1988, the EFCA began offering an alternative credential for pastors like this, via the establishment of a lay ministry license. Then in 2006, the EFCA launched GATEWAY Theological Institute—intensive, practical training that would serve both lay leaders (for theological growth) and vocational/bivocational pastors (to prepare for the credentialing process, leading to ordination).

“We start everybody at GATEWAY,” says Bruce Redmond, director of church planting for the Southeast District. Bruce asks all new church planters to sign a covenant stating that, within the first two years, they will start to prepare themselves for licensing via GATEWAY.

“We don’t have a problem with someone not being formally trained; it’s about recognizing, *Is God calling someone and do they have the competency to handle the Word of God?*”

## FINANCIALLY EMPOWERING.

The greatest need for a bivocational pastor is work that offers adequate financial compensation as well as flexibility for ministry. In the on-mission mindset of bivocational pastors, the secular workplace is as much “ministry” as is the church. Still another subset of pastors have deliberately chosen that bifurcation for the long term—not simply until their church can pay them more. Their ministry blurs the lines of sacred and secular.

“There is no sacred/secular divide,” Rollo Casiple insists. “Everything has always been sacred. A job in the city is a sacred opportunity to ease the financial burden of the church and a sacred platform to lead in nontraditional methods of practicing leadership by influence.”

Regardless of a pastor’s intentionality, what if a great work-fit remains elusive?

Consider the honesty of Mitchell Perez, who served as a bivocational pastor for three years before closing The Heights Church. He’s now part of a church-planting cohort through Ambassador Church (EFCA) in Brea, California, with hopes of trying again—this time with fundraising to supplement his secular salary.



“Some bivocational pastors have the necessary degrees to work for companies that can provide adequate salaries while not consuming all their time,” he says. “The types of vocations I could realistically apply for were warehouse/hard manual labor.

“So when I was lead pastor of a small church of 25 people and worked a full-time job (50 hours/week), I would come home exhausted and have to choose between spending time with the family or working on my sermon or discipleship opportunities, etc. I felt I was always in a position of choosing between family or ministry.

“I’ve read many books about being a ‘family on-mission’ and not looking at it as an ‘either/or.’ But the reality is, that is what it always felt like.

“My story is that I chose to do my family well, and that left the ministry with my scrap time and energy. I ultimately decided to fold the church and re-evaluate. I have to figure out how to make this work, because I feel a call to plant a church, but I don’t think I can do the bivocational model unless God opens a dream job scenario that provides a lot of flexibility.”

What if our EFCA districts helped make connections between bivocational pastors and skilled lay leaders—those who could offer apprenticeships in specific fields or training in small-business startups? What if there were a path to greater vocational flourishing? What if more churches sent out bivocational church-planting teams, to share the ministry responsibilities and the financial load, and if our districts helped potential teams find each other? (See “Three (or Four) Are Better Than One”, page 14)

Renato Jimenez sees that as part of the Church’s job—to make sure that God’s people are equipped to do God’s work. Renato serves as a pastoral intern at Summit EFC in Alta, Iowa, while studying full time at Moody Bible Institute. “I’m committed to finding pastors who are called,” he says, “and helping them figure out how to make it work financially. People who have great experience in business could coach others.”

## MOVING FORWARD

Across the EFCA, some district leaders are only beginning to consider how the bivocational model has a place, while others are eagerly asking, “How can we do bivo better?” In New England, the skill of ministering well on the job is an essential criteria in leadership evaluation. “We want next-generation leaders to be those who have functioned well in the workplace and demonstrated that they are on-mission all the time,” says Ves Sheely, superintendent of the New England District Association.

In addition, many NEDA church planters who started out in a bivocational role are choosing to remain bivo, “simply to better demonstrate for lay leaders that this type of dual ministry is possible,” Ves adds.

The Great Lakes District is planning a Faith, Work and Economics conference for summer 2016 where, among other things, participants will explore “how to integrate our faith in creative ways as we do business in the marketplace,” says Ricardo Palmerin, GLD director of Hispanic ministries.

If nothing else, EFCA pastors trust that the effectiveness of their ministry will speak for the bivo model. “This conversation is helping me to more fully acknowledge the incredible commitment and personal investment to the Lord’s work that these families are making—my amazing district teammates,” agrees Glen Schrieber, superintendent of the Southeast District. “I don’t want to take them for granted.

“As a younger, pioneering district, we attract and even invite new approaches to doing church,” he adds. “Our country’s traditional-church culture is leaving many de-churched and unchurched, so we’re celebrating those that want to take a risk with new approaches.

“Often, one or more bivocational streams of dollars are especially necessary in accomplishing our mission outside of our white, suburban environs.”

Equipping our pastors to do bivo better: a call for all who long to see our gospel mission accomplished.

# RESOURCES FOR BIVOCATIONAL INSIGHTS

## DIGITAL NETWORKS AND TRAINING RESOURCES

### **“Lay-Driven Team Training”**

A manual for helping lay leaders start churches, by Bruce Redmond, EFCA church-planting director for the Southeast District. Email the author for a copy at [gc3redmond@gmail.com](mailto:gc3redmond@gmail.com).

### **Forge Network (<http://www.forgeamerica.com>)**

Training men and women to be missionaries where they are already doing life

### **Missional Church Network (<http://missionalchurchnetwork.com/category/bivo/>)**

Offering webinars, bivocational cohorts and the annual BiVO National Conference

### **Tampa Underground (<http://tampaunderground.com/>)**

A community of microchurches in the Tampa Bay area committed to small, missional communities with gospel impact

## BOOKS

*Big Is Small, Slow Is Fast: Living & leading your family & community on God's mission*, by Caesar Kalinowski

*BiVO: A modern-day guide for bivocational saints*, by Hugh Halter

*Brothers We Are Not Professionals: A plea to pastors for radical ministry*, by John Piper

*Everyday Church: Gospel communities on mission*, by Chester & Timmis

*Extreme Devotion: The voice of the martyrs*

*Fascinating People of the Bible: Your inspirational and entertaining guide to the famous, not-so-famous, and infamous characters of Scripture*, by Christopher D. Hudson with David Barrett and Benjamin D. Irwin (wealth of bi-vo-type characters)

*Funding Your Ministry: An in-depth, biblical guide for successfully raising personal support*, by Scott Morton

*Global Church Planting: Biblical principles and best practices for multiplication*, by Craig Ott & Gene Wilson

*Intimacy With God: Drawing ever closer to the Almighty*, by Benjamin A. Sawatsky

*Organic Church: Growing faith where life happens*, by Neil Cole

*The Pastor's Guide to Fruitful Work and Economic Wisdom: Understanding what your people do all day*, by Drew Cleveland and Greg Forster (editors)

*Reflections of a Small Town Pastor: Engaging in God's mission in smaller places*, by Lee J. Smith

*The Treasure Principle: Unlocking the secret of joyful giving*, by Randy Alcorn

*When Helping Hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor... and yourself*, by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Reaching all people will take all kinds of ministry models.

BY KEVIN KOMPILIEN

From the first century to today, God has used bivocational leaders to multiply many churches worldwide. The apostle Paul was committed to not be a burden to those among whom he was doing ministry; that commitment led him and his colleagues to be the first “tentmakers.” Ever since, tentmaking—or bivocational ministry—has been powerfully used by God to grow His church.

Serving in a bivocational role is one of a variety of ministry models for starting and shepherding congregations. Yet too often, it has been regarded as less-than-desirable. After all, if someone has committed years to prepare for pastoral ministry, the need to augment finances by working in education or the marketplace might not be that pastor’s preferred option.

Yet, as this issue of *EFCA Today* illustrates, the Lord of the Church is calling some incredibly gifted leaders to pursue bivocational ministry for far more than financial reasons. Bivocational pastoring and church planting are strategic ways to carry the message of the gospel into the community and to model a gospel-centered way of life to those within the church.

I am convinced that it will take all kinds of leaders to launch all kinds of ministries and multiply all kinds of churches to reach all groups of people with the gospel. If we are committed to reaching those who are far from God and those in communities without a significant gospel witness, a bivocational ministry approach might be one of the most effective ways to see this take place.

For that reason, I’ve found myself praying for business leaders in EFCA churches to gain a bivocational vision: to consider inviting bivocational pastors or church planters into their businesses in order to help provide the platform for launching new ministries (at the same time, getting quality employees).

I’ve also been praying that the Lord would call more marketplace leaders to get involved in the leadership of new church starts. All over the world I have seen that some of the most effective bivocational pastors and church planters are business leaders whom God calls to church ministry without leaving their ministries in the marketplace.

The challenges in bivocational ministry are real. Time is short, while family, ministry and work demands are seemingly unending. Many of the opportunities for continued learning and fellowship enjoyed by pastors are not available to bivocational ministers, simply due to their marketplace responsibilities. I would love to see our existing churches come alongside these bivocational leaders and their families to provide encouragement, prayer support and some of the opportunities for growth that fully funded pastors enjoy. Is there a bivocational pastor or church planter near you whom you could bless in the days to come?

My prayer is that we can affirm the calling and ministries of these courageous leaders who are pursuing ministry with a bivocational focus. Let’s celebrate the exciting things the Lord is doing through them by recognizing the incredible sacrifice they are making to be engaged in both the marketplace and the church.