



EQUIPPER

The monthly e-zine from the U.S. Church Administration and Development (CAD) team of Grace Communion International.

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Dear bi-vocational pastors (and those serving with them):

I'm writing this in October, which is *Pastor Appreciation Month* in the U.S. and elsewhere. In the spirit of the month, I send my heart-felt "thank you!" to all our pastors. Your grace-filled, skillful and tireless service is making an eternal difference.



Picture courtesy *Enrichment Journal*

As you may know, most of our pastors are *bi-vocational*—meaning they are not employed by the church and often work full-time elsewhere. I understand some of what they face—for six years I was employed part-time as a GCI pastor and part-time as director of a Youth for Christ chapter. This "dual-career" arrangement gave me insights into the *challenges* and *advantages* that come with being a bi-vocational pastor. In this issue of *Equipper* we look at both.

The *challenges* that come with being a bivocational pastor are significant—weekly sermons, Bible studies, attending to the needs of members, monthly reports and continuing education, overseeing church leaders, consulting with the advisory council and finance committee, and leading community outreach. These tasks, which stretch full-time pastors, can be rather daunting for bi-vocational pastors. However, these are challenges these men and women feel called to, and so they take them on with a willing spirit. Many have told me they feel blessed to do so.

Yes, there are challenges, but the *advantages* of being bi-vocational also are significant. In his Grace Communion Seminary capstone paper, bi-vocational pastor Mark Queener mentions one advantage: "Through bi-vocationalism, God can place the same multi-talented person in the secular workplace for dedicated service and witness and in the church for ministry and leadership. It is a way of taking seriously and practicing realistically the stewardship of time and talents God has given. It also can be a real force multiplier for advancing his kingdom."

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On a similar note, I've had pastors whose congregations could afford to employ them full-time tell me they preferred to remain bi-vocational. One said, "If I went full-time the members would expect me to do it all and would not be as active in ministry. By serving as a bivocational pastor it's more natural for the members to join me in the work of the church and thus fulfill Martin Luther's dream of a *priesthood of all believers*."

To assist our bi-vocational pastors and inform those who serve in ministry with them, we've included on page two of this issue some additional information including links to relevant resources. I hope you find this material helpful as you serve in pastoral ministry with Jesus.

Serving Christ with you,
Greg Williams, Superintendent of U.S. Ministers and Director of CAD

PS: If you'd like some resources to help you prepare for the upcoming Advent season, check out the December 2013 issue of *Equipper* posted at www.gci.org/files/Equipper8.12.pdf.

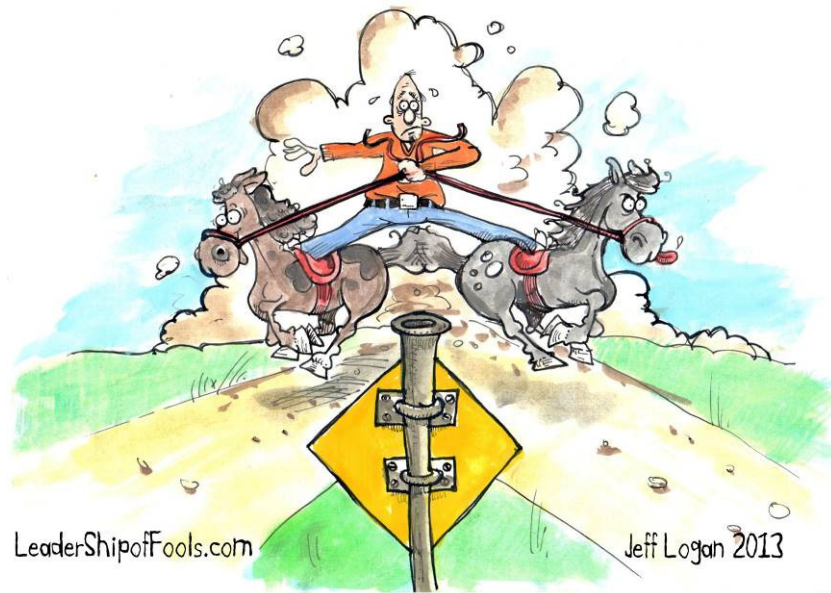
Equipping all kinds of churches for all kinds of people in all kinds of places.

Resources for bi-vocational pastors

(and those serving with them)

Though serving as a bi-vocational pastor brings with it many challenges—see the cartoon at right (ouch!)—it also brings many advantages, including (as noted by GCI bi-vocational pastor Mark Queener in his GCS capstone paper), the inherently “kenotic nature” of bi-vocational ministry:

Just as Christ, in his vicarious humanity, embraces people fully, so, too, can bi-vocational pastors more easily and readily identify with the parishioners they serve. In his book, *Meeting the Challenge of Bi-vocational Ministry*, Doran C. McCarty says Jesus was willing to forego much to identify with his creation, and pastors must identify with those to whom they minister, including identifying with their cultural norms. Perhaps there is no better way to identify with people, churched and unchurched, and their cultural norms, than to live and work among them on a regular basis (p. 7).



Used with permission from cartoonist Jeff Logan
<http://leadershipoffools.com/>

If you are a bi-vocational pastor, be encouraged to know that you do not serve alone. As Mark Queener notes in his capstone paper, nearly 50% of all Christian pastors in the U.S. are bi-vocational. Given this prevalence, it's not surprising to find many resources with helpful information concerning this form of pastoral ministry. Below are links to several such resources. Though we don't necessarily endorse everything in each one, all provide helpful information. You might want to print out a couple of these articles to serve as discussion-starters in one of your leadership team meetings.

- **An article on the GCI website:** <http://www.gci.org/church/ministry/bivocational>
- **Tips for bi-vocational pastors on preaching:** <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/preaching-teaching/154933-todd-hiestand-preaching-on-the-run-7-tips-for-bi-vocational-pastors.html>
- **Dealing with isolation and loneliness:** <http://bcmid.org/bivocational-pastors>
- **Comments from bi-vocational pastors on the challenges:** <http://ibcperspectives.com/2015/04/challenges-of-the-bi-vocational-pastor/>
- **Comments from Thom Rainer (LifeWay) on the advantages:** <http://thomrainer.com/2015/01/eight-reasons-fulltime-pastors-staff-go-bivocational/>
- **A bi-vocational pastor discusses six issues he has faced:** <http://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/philip-nation/6-big-issues-for-this-bivocational-pastor.html>
- **The dangers of bi-vocational ministry:** <https://sojo.net/articles/dangers-bi-vocational-ministry>
- **Suggestions for bi-vocational pastors:** <http://www.pastoralcareinc.com/articles/bi-vocational-pastors/>
- **Turning challenges into opportunities:** http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201302/201302_098_tentmaking.cfm