



# EQUIPPER

The monthly e-magazine from the U.S. Ministry Development Team of  
Grace Communion International - Church Administration and Development.

July 2012

Volume 7, Issue 7

MinDev.gci.org

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Dear church leader:

This issue of *Equipper* addresses two topics. Below and on page three is information concerning the 2013 *Exponential* conference in Orlando. Then on page two is the first in a series of articles addressing the blessings and challenges of life as a bivocational pastor. This is an important topic in that 68% of our U.S. senior pastors are bivocational. We highly value and appreciate these servant-leaders and want to be of help to them as they journey in ministry with Jesus.

God bless,  
Ted Johnston, *Equipper* editor

## Exponential 2013

In 2013, instead of GCI U.S. Regional Conferences, we will hold our tri-annual GCI International Conference in Orlando, FL from July 31 through August 4. We also encourage pastors and other leaders to attend *Exponential* in Orlando in April 2013. This conference, which is conducted by a community of leaders committed to multiplying healthy disciplemaking churches, is the world's largest gathering of church planters and related leaders. Many GCI pastors and other leaders have attended in past years. Here are some of their comments:



*It was awesome... my second time. My previous experience helped me get connected to what the Lord is doing in the church planting world. I have also gained valuable information that I have implemented in the missional aspects of our ministry.*

- Heber Ticas, GCI pastor and church planter

*I feel more prepared and Spirit-driven to launch a team and a church.* - Mary Bacheller, GCI church planter

*This year was the best of the three Exponential conferences I've attended. While I got lots of nuts and bolts and great theoretical teaching upon which to formulate new direction out of the last two, this one was the meatiest.... helping me dig deep into my heart to wrestle with some of the issues of spouse and family dynamics within a turn-around church situation.* - James Newby, GCI pastor

*It was great to be among 5000 people focused on providing new venues to share the gospel.* - Mat Morgan, GCI Treasurer

*This was the fourth year I have attended. It was definitely the best yet. I came home with many great ways to more effectively do ministry.* - Glen Weber, GCI pastor

Exponential 2013 is titled *DiscipleShift*. It will have 100+ speakers and 125+ workshops in 15+ tracks. For additional detail, including information about registration, see page three.

## Bivocational pastors: *Time is on your side!*

By Ted Johnston

GCI currently has 306 senior pastors in the U.S.; 99 of them are *employed pastors* (employed full or part-time by the church) and 207 (68% of the total) are *bivocational* (not employed by the church). GCI currently has 292 churches in the U.S.; 160 are led by employed pastors and 132 by bivocational pastors or pastoral teams. We estimate that 45% of our members in the U.S. are served by a bivocational pastor.

Some of our bivocational pastors have full-time jobs outside the church. Others are retired. Whatever the specifics, we are grateful for and blessed by their faithful and sacrificial ministry.

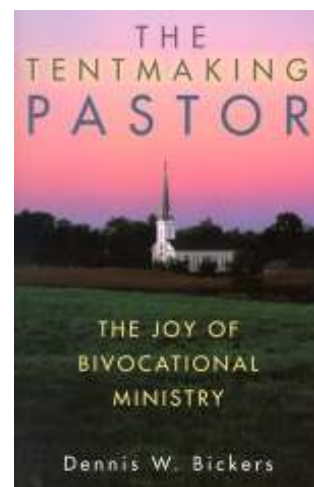
Here in *Equipper* we seek to provide resources that outfit all types of pastors and other church leaders and workers. With this issue, we begin a series of short articles focused on the challenges and opportunities encountered by bivocational pastors. If there are particular issues you would like us to address in this series, please email Ted Johnston at [Ted.Johnston@gci.org](mailto:Ted.Johnston@gci.org). Your suggestions are appreciated.

This time, we offer insights from *The Tentmaking Pastor, the joy of bivocational ministry* (Baker Books, 2000), by Dennis Bickers, a veteran bivocational pastor. We begin with Bickers' words of encouragement concerning a key advantage of being a bivocational pastor:

### ***Time is on your side!***

Whereas full-time, employed pastors tend to change pastorates frequently (moving on to larger churches), bivocational pastors tend to stay put. This is a significant advantage because with a long-term pastorate comes opportunity to share life with people for an extended period and that yields a priceless commodity: *trust*. Trust greatly enhances the pastor's ability to fulfill his or her calling, which is to help people become, then mature as followers of Jesus. Note Bickers comment on this point:

*Pastoral leadership depends on trust. Your ability to lead your church will be dependent on the level of trust the members of that church have for you. One of the key elements of that trust is the amount of time you are willing to invest in their lives. A long pastorate enables a pastor to better understand the needs of the congregation... (p. 22).*



A long pastorate also helps the pastor gain a deeper understanding of the community (or communities) that the congregation is called to serve.

*[A bivocational pastor is] more likely to own his own home and be a permanent member of the community. This can lead to a greater understanding of the community and its needs, which in turn can lead to more community involvement on the part of the pastor.... This adds credibility to [the pastor's] ministry and enables [him] to have a much greater impact on the lives of more people. The pastor also wins because his involvement can lead to a better understanding of community resources available to those who come to him in need (p. 23).*

Bickers then offers this encouraging concluding statement:

*Bivocational ministry is real ministry because you [the pastor] are touching the lives of real people. You are entering their world, experiencing their joys and their pain, and believing with them that God can make a difference. God may well permit you to remain at your place of ministry for a long period of time, allowing trust to develop between you and the church. This trust will enhance your leadership and allow for increased ministry by the church (pp. 23-24).*

## Exponential 2013 registration

The theme for Exponential 2013 is **DiscipleShift** (see page one for more information). It addresses a shift in the church planting discussion beyond a missional/attractational focus to that of disciple making. This shift has five important aspects:

### **Shift 1: From Reaching to Making**

Shifting to a clear definition of disciple and then asking if our church is making that kind of person. It's not enough to reach people if we are not helping them become disciples.

### **Shift 2: From Educating to Modeling**

Shifting away from discipleship classes and toward a discipleship lifestyle beginning with the pastor and church leaders modeling discipleship in their own lives

### **Shift 3: From Program to Purpose**

Discipleship cannot be a mere program or ministry. We have to shift back to center, making it the purpose of everything we do.

### **Shift 4: From Activity to Relationship**

Beyond classes and sermons, discipleship must be based on friendship and time together. To cultivate the kind of disciples Jesus did, we have to shift our paradigm from activity to relationship.

### **Shift 5: From Accumulating to Deploying**

Jesus was much more involved with the 12 men he invested his life in than the thousands he taught. Shifting our scorecard from how many people we gather to how many disciples we deploy is essential.



## Registering for Exponential 2013

**SPECIAL OFFER:** GCI leaders are eligible for a reduced Exponential 2013 registration fee of \$99.00 (which includes the attendance of one's spouse at no extra registration charge). This reduced registration fee is made possible because GCI's CAD office has pre-purchased 50 registrations. To take advantage of this special fee: 1) register online no later than **September 30, 2012**. 2) In early 2013, reimburse CAD for the \$99.00 fee (details about the reimbursement process will be announced later).

To register at the special reduced fee of \$99.00, go to <http://www.exponential.org/shop/exponential2013grace/> (Note: only 50 registrations are available at this reduced rate, so sign up soon!)

*When you go online to register at the site linked above, you will see that your registration fee has been waived. However, you will have the option to purchase lunches and pre-conference intensive workshops.*

For questions about registration, email Becky Deuel ([becky.deuel@gci.org](mailto:becky.deuel@gci.org)) or Randy Bloom ([randy.bloom@gci.org](mailto:randy.bloom@gci.org)).

For more information about the Exponential conference, go to [www.exponential.org](http://www.exponential.org)