

VITAL CHURCHES

Building Vital Churches Through Bivocational Ministry

*An Occasional Publication of BivoNet,
Sponsored by The Ministers Council ABC/USA
In Partnership with National Ministries
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Welcome to BivoNet!

BivoNet is a national network of persons interested in bivocational ministry in the ABC/USA. It is sponsored by The Ministers Council in partnership with National Ministries. This is the first issue of a journal designed for fostering conversation and communication concerning a broad range of issues having to do with bivocational ministry. The network, in time, will be used to enhance personal support, continuing education, and communication among persons who want to encourage bivocational ministry as a good option for many churches to increase their health and vitality.

In the fall of 1997, Mary Mild with ABPS sent out a letter to persons who had indicated an interest in bivocational ministry, inviting them to contact us if they wanted to be a part of this new network. Along with other personal contacts, this generated a listing of over 70 persons who represent 25 different ABC regions who are now on the network membership list. The invitation is open to anyone and everyone (even non-American Baptists!) who want to be part of this developing effort to enhance the image and effectiveness of bivocational ministry.

The American Baptist Churches of the Central Region (ABCCR) are now involved in a pilot project, in cooperation with BivoNet, to explore different models of bivocational ministry and to develop options for systemic change in the regional and national levels of the denomination (as well as in the churches) which might lead to more effective bivocational ministry. A one-day seminar on bivocational ministry has been developed and taught in April and will be taught again in the fall. A survey of bivocational pastors and other church leaders will be conducted in 1998 which will lead to recommendations for constructive change and to proposals for healthy models for churches. A course on bivocational ministry will be offered in June at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, and the seminary is exploring possibilities for offering more resources and training in this area of ministry. And 100 more persons have been added to the BivoNet listing for continuing communication with them.

Vital Churches: An Open Forum

This journal is designed to offer an open forum for the exchange of ideas between persons who are interested in bivocational ministry. Many people have been doing it for a long time and have much experience and wisdom to offer to others. We would like to hear your stories and your ideas. Other people have already created resources and models which can be used by others. We would like to know who you are and what you have to share with us. Still other people have questions, constructive criticisms, and creative ideas which can benefit us all. We want to hear from you, too.

In this first issue, excerpts from letters we have received are included to give us just a glimpse of some of the stories of people who are doing ministry in this way (or who would like to). In some of those letters, we heard from people who have ideas or questions which we can all

benefit from responding to. Their comments are included here. A brief listing of books and resources which can be helpful to persons in bivocational ministry are listed. And a few quotations from people worth listening to about ministry are included. And there is a message from the executive director of The Ministers Council, Kate Harvey.

We do want Vital Churches to be a forum for an open exchange of stories and ideas and thoughts in the area of bivocational ministry. Please contact us with your thoughts and stories so we can include them in the next issue. If you have books and other resources to recommend, please let us know. If you are aware of what someone else is doing in this area that we should all know about, please write us.

We hope that you enjoy this first issue of our new journal for BivoNet. We would like to know how we can be of help to you in the context of your ministry. You can e-mail us, phone, or write; but please do talk with us and make this a two-way conversation. Thank you.

A Message from The Executive Director

Grace and peace to you, my bivocational sisters and brothers in the ministry, from your colleagues in the American Baptist Churches Ministers Council. We have invited the entire denominational family to a time of Jubilee from the 1999 biennial in Des Moines through the 2001 biennial in Providence, where we'll begin the new millennium at the place where Baptists began on this continent.

Jubilee has a special relevance for ministerial leaders and ministry contexts where ministry is bivocational. The biblical concept of Jubilee recorded in Leviticus 25, lifted up by the prophet Isaiah (61) and announced by Jesus (Luke 4), basically has to do with trusting God and granting freedom. Can we trust God's provision sufficiently to free churches from the financial constraints of being the sole source of the ordained leader's compensation? Can we trust God's provision sufficiently to release ministerial leaders from the confines of being underpaid and having no connections outside the congregation? Can we trust God sufficiently to unleash the gifts and calling of laity so often bound up in the assumption that ministry is the work of the paid professional, "the minister's job"? Can we trust God sufficiently to free up church financial resources for mission other than support of the pastor?

Perhaps you were one of the respondents to my survey last year on bivocational ministry, from which I learned how much many of you value the opportunity to expand your professional horizons beyond the congregation, to witness to unbelievers outside the church, to cultivate relationships in other settings, to earn an additional paycheck, to see church members engaged in ministry, to fulfill another calling -- the list of benefits was lengthy. At the same time, I appreciate how demanding your schedules are when your life includes two or sometimes three jobs, and I encourage you in the midst of it all to seek time for sabbath rest.

Is bivocationalism the future of ministry? Perhaps. Perhaps not. Only God knows tomorrow. But it is how increasing numbers of our ordained colleagues are called to minister in these days, and to you my sisters and my brothers once again I say, may God hold you always in grace, may God fill you with peace. -- Kate Harvey, Executive Director

Excerpt from Another Look at Bivocational Ministry " by Jimmy Reader

One of the first, and most important, objections to bivocational ministry is in this question: "But who will do the work of the church?" The question may be phrased differently, but the assumption is that the pastor's role is to keep the church running smoothly and to do much of the work which needs doing. But is that a biblical model for ministry?

Ephesians 4:12 says that the work of the pastor is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." This simple verse summarizes much of the NT teaching about the nature of the church -- that it is all the people who are to do ministry, to be ministers and servants in the world, to do the work which God has given to the church.

Paul uses the image of a healthy body, with all the members of that body functioning as they were designed, to describe what the church should be. Each member of the church has certain gifts and a place in the body, the church, as the Spirit decides. Every member is needed for the healthy, effective functioning of the church. And the pastor, or any church staff person, is only one part of the body and has only a part of the whole responsibility.

Intentional bivocational ministry recognizes that pastors, or church staff ministers, can only do a part of the work no matter how many hours they spend. And if the whole church is working together in a healthy way, with each member doing its part, could the work of the pastor or church staff minister be done in much less time and still be done effectively?

This is a crucial question. Bivocational ministry (BVM) should not put a greater burden on the pastor. BVM can only be an effective and healthy option when the members of the church recognize their biblical responsibilities and use their gifts and resources to do much of the work of the ministry of the church. BVM can also be effective and healthy only when the pastor turns over the work to the people.

Long years of tradition have trained pastors, as well as the people, to think the pastor must be involved in almost everything which happens around the church. Whatever activity is planned, the pastor should know all about it, even if the pastor is not involved. Or so the tradition goes.

This is not as much of a problem for the pastors and staff of large churches. By necessity, people have learned to see the pastor in a different role. But in most smaller churches, the tradition is still strong. And it must be broken for bivocational ministry to happen in a healthy way.

One church I know of has a morning attendance of 250 or more and an active congregation. They have two full-time church secretaries to handle the administrative work. But the pastor and the three staff ministers are all intentionally bivocational. From the beginning of this church, the people were taught that the ministry belonged to them. And they are doing it faithfully, while the pastor serves the church as pastor.

Intentional bivocational ministry is a good option for encouraging the people of the church to fully accept their responsibility for ministry, allowing the pastor to focus on a pastoral ministry. That's a good biblical model and a healthy choice for any church.

*Ministers Council is for Bivocational Ministers.
Join today. For information, call the MC Office
at 1-800-ABC3- USA*

What Others Are Doing

Dennis Bickers -- Madison, Indiana

Dennis has been the pastor of Hebron Baptist Church for 16 years, after a long succession of short-term student pastorates in that church. He and his wife have lived in the same community for most of their lives, and he has worked at a local factory for many years. Over the years, serving as pastor to the church while working a full-time factory job, he also pursued a formal education to be more effective in his ministry. Finding a balance between all these commitments and his commitment to his family has not been easy, but it has been rewarding. The church has accomplished good ministry together, and their mutual trust and commitment to each other has grown over the years. He is now working with his region to help others learn how to do effective bivocational ministry.

Marjorie B. Lewis -- Denver, Colorado

Dr. Lewis is a pastor in Denver and also Director of Public Financial Management for the Graduate School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado at Denver. She also serves on the Ministers Council Senate.

Carole Miller -- Saratoga Springs, New York

Carole Miller is serving the First Baptist Church of Schenectady, New York, while she is taking her last class for her M.Div. (spring '98). She also works as a dental hygienist, while serving the church.

Jeanette Pollard -- Wheaton, Maryland

Jeanette Pollard is a professional registered nurse, with an M.S. degree in Psychiatric Nursing. She has been an educator, clinician administrator, and consultant. She tells a wonderful story, (one among many), of how she was able to combine her seminary training as a minister and her work as a psychiatric nurse to help turn around one man's life during a consultation at a mental health day treatment center. Many will understand when she says that her "ministry" as a bivocational person is just as valid as someone who has been called to pastor a congregation."

J. Douglas Sholl -- Portland, Maine

Dr. Sholl is both a pastor and a family therapist.

Keith George --, Charleston, West Virginia

Keith George is an Administrative Law Judge with the West Virginia Public Service Commission and pastor of the Georges Creek Missionary Baptist Church in Malden West Virginia. With a family (including two sons, ages 7 and 2), the "time crunch" is always a concern. But the small church has grown some in the two years he has been pastor, and he is slowly "trying to build their confidence" in being American Baptists.

Patrick Mendies -- Flagstaff Arizona

Patrick is a bivocational chaplain at the Campus Ministry Center at Northern Arizona University. After taking early retirement from teaching at a British university, he served as an ABC missionary on the Hopi Reservation. His university pension now helps him be able financially to serve in this bivocational position without a secular job.

Louis Schneider -- Uniontown Pennsylvania

He has been actively involved in ministry as a layman all his life, making himself "available for God's service for whatever place he could use" him. In the military, he served as an Army Nurse Corps Officer. After retirement from the Army, he worked as a Clinical Instructor in a Licensed Nursing Program. A few years ago, Louis enrolled in the region's Lay Pastoral Institute, graduating in 1996 as "probably the oldest one to graduate from the program" at age 70. "Never

in my wildest dreams," he writes, "did I ever think I would be able to marry or bury anyone and yet that has been in my experience so far. My only goal is to be a vessel that God can use wherever he may lead me from day to day."

Tim Genung -- Elko Nevada

He moved to Elko in 1976 after graduation from Berkeley Seminary to pastor the First Baptist Church. Over the years he has worked for Newmont Gold Company as a crusher operator and now in the transportation unit. But for the past 16 years he has been the correctional chaplain in the Nevada Youth Training Center. Since 1985 he has also been a chaplain in the army reserve. With a wife and two teenage sons, Tim is a busy man but one who is admired by co-workers and others with whom he ministers.

David Ludeke -- Valley Forge, Pennsylvania

Many of us know David from his work as Director of Church Vocational Leadership with Educational Ministries of the ABC/USA. But David also serves as a bivocational pastor of a small rural congregation. He has also written two brochures on bivocational ministry which are available from the Valley Forge office.

Bob Rhymer -- Columbus, Ohio

Bob works as a Family Life Therapist in Columbus and also as an adjunct staff person for ABC of Ohio.

Bruce Chaplin -- Bradenton, Florida

After serving many years as a bivocational pastor, Bruce now works full-time as Associate Chaplain at the Manatee County Jail. His wife, Sherrie, is pastor of the Church of the Resurrection, an ABC New Church Re-start; and he works with her in that ministry as well.

Dan Sparkman -- Japan

He is an ABC missionary in Japan and works with the Himeji Megumi Church in Shinzaike, Himeji. But he writes that "I too am involved in a type of bivocational work" and is interested in the work we are doing with bivocational ministry.

Jenny Cashman -- Agawam, Massachusetts

Here's what she writes about her ministry: "I have been a part-time pastor for a church in Southbridge for three years. It was not what I thought I wanted when I graduated from seminary, but then bi-vocational ministry had not been discussed, it was treated almost as a step-child that was not wanted. Indeed, I thought that bivocational ministers were expected to lead their churches into full-time ministry, or it was a negative comment on the pastor.

"Well, I love the part time position I have with a little congregation where many wear several hats. We "do" church well. The Holy Spirit is alive and well at Central Baptist. We are ministering to our church by restoring our stained glass, we are a very generous congregation on a per capita basis, we are committed to mission, and our few children saved \$508 for Project Heifer last year. They were committed to buying a cow. We have so much to do, and we are praying about where we go next.

"I lead worship, and many of us work at the leadership of the church. This leaves me time to share and enjoy a handicapped husband, minister to the elderly in my family, and do volunteer work, as well as participate in some ways at the two home churches that nurtured my call....Given my family responsibilities, and my urge to respond to the call to the pastoral ministry, my current arrangement is perfect for me.

"It has been difficult and sometimes I feel I am treated as 'less than the other ministers at a gathering. I wish someone had helped me verbalize my feelings as I explored the call to a church

that has been part time for over 12 years. If I could help another, or if people could help me, I would gladly arrange my calendar.”

Chester Smith -- Bedford, Massachusetts

He is a registered engineer with degrees in electrical engineering, mathematics and physics (including a Ph.D.), as well as being a graduate of what is now the American Baptist Seminary of the West. Mrs. Smith is also an ordained ABC minister and a qualified Pastoral Counselor (member of AAPC). They tend to work as a clergy team with churches. “We do not need all of the fringe benefits,” he writes. “In fact the last church we served for nearly four years gave us a token of \$1/yr done with high ceremony at the annual meeting.”

Kevin Butler - Woodhull New York

He has been a bivocational pastor for four years, serving as the pastor of a small Methodist and Baptist congregation and working the early morning hours at United Parcel Service.

Karen Reynolds -- Moores Hill, Indiana

She is actively pursuing the ministry and wishes to pastor a country church bivocationally. She is a licensed day-care worker as well as a licensed substitute school teacher. “God has called me into the ministry within the ABC and I’m ready and willing to do His Will,” she writes.

Ronald Burnsworth -- Belle, West Virginia

He was a bivocational pastor for 30 years and now serves the Judson Baptist Church full-time. As president of the local Ministers’ Council, he writes, “my efforts have been to be sure that we do things that give the bivocational pastor an opportunity to fellowship with those who serve the larger churches.” And he is ready to do all he can in his region to help encourage bivocational ministry.

Susan Hoke -- Orlando, Florida

She is serving as Chaplain for VITAS (hospice) in Orlando and is seeking ordination through her home area, ABC/NYS.

David Knipel -- Long Branch, New Jersey

He is both a pastor and a lawyer, and he believes bivocational ministry is increasingly important.

Bob and Rebecca Maccini -- Lyme, New Hampshire

They are co-pastors of the Lyme Town Ministry, a yoked parish consisting of two churches, one ABCUSA and one UCC. They are both bivocational (or maybe “trivocational” or even “quadvocational”). Rebecca is an occupational therapist in a local group home for the profoundly disabled and for the Visiting Nurses Association of Vermont and New Hampshire. Bob is assistant professor of New Testament for the Hanover campus of Bangor Theological Seminary, an author and editor, and he plays in an acoustic music band. “The main problem” they write, “beyond the ones associated with being a clergy couple, is feeling fragmented because there are so many pieces of our vocational puzzle.”

Phil Yetter -- Berwyn, Illinois

He is a ‘midlife, partial career change bivocational pastor of a small ABC church” in Berwyn, Illinois. At 39 he enrolled at Northern Baptist Seminary and attended “at night on the ‘8 year plan’.” He has been the pastor at Berwyn since 1994. “I do computer systems for my paycheck,” he writes, “and pastoring for my spiritual service.” Phil now has another bivocational pastor as an assistant.

Herb Drake -- San Rafael, California

Here’s what Herb writes about his story: “I am a bioccupational co-pastor of the First Baptist Church of Sausalito. My colleague in that work is also bioccupational. This means that we each

serve the church according to our various gifts (he is the pastoral care person, I do music ministry and other duties). We share the pulpit, taking turns on alternate Sundays. Our church is microscopic--we'll have six or eight people on a given Sunday. We are located in one of the wealthiest, secular, godless places in California, yet we have been doing this for years.... We are a faithful lot, even though we may not be 'successful' the way denominations measure success. We have a baptism coming up this Sunday. We serve about 50 meals a week to the homeless in our community. And we are content to suffer and serve. (You can read more about us at <http://www.marin.org/npo/firstbc/>). -- The church with the bioccupational pastor, even when it is small, must develop less dependence on the pastor. That means that each member must participate in the ministry, and a number of church activities that have traditionally been the task of the pastor must be taken up either by other individuals in the body or by the body as a whole (pastoral care belongs in the corporate setting)."

An Open Forum

We welcome your ideas and comments about bivocational ministry. Each issue we will publish excerpts from letters we receive from people who are doing it and who are interested in exploring options for doing it more effectively.

*Dr. Rob Henderson -- Minister to Pastors in Bi-vocational Settings,
American Baptist Churches of Ohio --*

"I have been attempting to put together a list of the bi-vocational settings in Ohio. Surprising to me there is not a complete list for the Region. In gathering the settings for the list I have been faced with a problem I hope the network can help me with: Bi-vocational, part time, retired. The terms seemed to be interchangeable to some but not acceptable to others. My question is, 'How can I make the distinction, if there is one, so as not to offend anyone? I appreciate any assistance you can give me.'"

(You can contact Rob Henderson at ABC of Ohio, 3521 Main Street, Perry, OH 44081-9501 or at rhenderon@ncweb.com

Herb Drake -- Co-Pastor of First Baptist Church of Sausalito (SBC)

"I am very convinced that the present 'model' of the 'church' in America, which we inherited from seventeenth-century England, is not working. I've read (Anglican) Loren Mead's *The Once and Future Church*--he also sees it as not working. But I don't accept Mead's solution, which is to try to find a new 'paradigm'--rather, I would seek to re-establish the first century 'apostolic paradigm' that Mead doesn't care much for at all...Let me register my objection to the term 'bivocational'....A Christi can never be "bivocational" A Christian can only have one vocation, and that is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The will of the Lord and the agenda of God must have priority over any worldly employer. So I would substitute "bioccupational"-- word that deals with the manner in which the disciple supports himself That term keeps things in perspective....Since I am an advocate of a return to first century ecclesiology, I am automatically bioccupational. That's simply because there were no 'professional pastors' in the apostolic church. There were leaders, to be sure--but when Paul turns to spiritual gifts in Rom. 12, he puts 'leadership' last in his list. Much more important are the 'teachers' (we have the participle 'teaching' in the great commission--but where is 'leading'?). So it seems to me that

bioccupational ministry is not really so much *an alternative* way to minister--it is the *only biblical* way to minister."

(You can contact Herb Drake at ~~40 Pikes Peak Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903.~~

Bruce Chaplin, Prison Chaplain in Bradenton, Florida --

Over the years as a bivocational pastor, one of his frustrations was "most churches, no matter how small or poor" seemed unwilling to hire someone less than full-time. "A few churches would talk to me," he writes, "but then back out. Many of these churches later yoked or federated with another church, sharing a minister." -- The question is how churches can be helped to see the benefits to them of having a bivocational pastor.

(You can contact Bruce Chaplin at MajorBruce@aol.com or at 5129 72nd St. East, Bradenton, FL 34203-7991.)

Paul Chapman -- New York, NY

He is the Director of The Employment Project which helps "to assist employed and unemployed people to better understand the changing role of work in our society and to work for change." He writes that, "I would be especially interested in focusing on the non-ministry job as a way to help pastors assess today's workplace issues and develop a workplace ministry. Themes such as the meaning and value of work, the spirituality of work, justice in the workplace and the pastoral care of victims of workplace change may become the special vocation of bivocational ministers. They of all people should be able to practice their Christian commitment in the workplace."

(You can contact Paul Chapman at The Employment Project, 237 Thompson Street, New York, NY 10012.)

Chester Smith -- Bedford, Massachusetts

He writes: "I have been on the subject of bivocational ministry long before it was respectable. There have always been churches that were below the 'ecclesiastical poverty line' as far as ministerial salaries and benefits are concerned and they are getting more numerous. Rather than close these churches or, worse yet, force them into mergers and federations where they would be absorbed, part-time or as we now call them, Bivocational pastors seemed to be the logical choice....I would like to see a seminar, panel discussion or something of the sort at the next ABC Biennial. One topic in particular is the status and conduct of 'The BiVocational Minister in the "Secular" Workplace. '"

(You can contact Chester Smith at 2 Jonathan Lane, Bedford, MA 01730-1848).

Phil Yetter -- Beryn Illinois

He conducted a focus group discussion workshop on bivocational ministry last fall at the Ministers Council meeting for the Chicago/Metro region and is interested in helping to build a network of bivocational pastors in the Chicago/Metro area. -- "One of the issues with bivocational," he writes, "is that it is an umbrella term. There are numerous sub-categories: full-time secular employed; part-time secular employed; dual ministerial positions (yoked parishes, chaplain/pastor, pastoral counselor/pastor), regional/national officer/employee/pastor; those whose secular employment is in the helping professions (counseling, social worker, etc.); those whose secular profession is in the business, service, or production sectors; independent business man/pastor; seminary professors who also pastor a church; pastors who teach part-time in the seminary; and a myriad of other combinations and permutations.

"I think the greatest need that we all have in common is the recognition of the validity of our bivocational decision and consideration on the regional and national level that it is very

difficult for many of us bivocational pastors to attend 'day-time' activities and week-day events. I often sense that at least some single vocation pastors simply do not see the bivocational pastor as a 'real' pastor.

"I think another critical issue has to do with the validity of a bivocational pastorate from the perspective of the church. There are many small churches who are struggling to make ends meet and pay their pastor a living wage. Some hire a married pastor with the unstated assumption that the spouse will provide the income to support the pastor's family...These churches feel it is a negative reflection on their faithfulness and stewardship if they cannot afford a full-time pastor and/or are unwilling to make the sacrifices (less immediate pastoral response, more involvement of the laity (necessary with bivocational ministry. . . .Churches need to be educated to realize that bivocational ministry is a valid choice for both them and their pastor. Any network or organization that might be formed should have the dual goal of providing support and encouragement to the bivocational pastor or to those who are considering bivocational ministry, and educating the churches (and other pastors, seminaries and regional and national staff members) that bivocational ministry is a viable (not just possible) option."

(You can contact Phil Yetter at 1127S. Clinton, Oak Park, IL 60304-1825)

Anthony Pappas -- Norton, Massachusetts

Tony is Old Colony Area Minister for the ABC/Massachusetts. He says that 30 of his 50 churches are bivocational or retirement led. He has worked with the Ministerial Leadership Commission to develop a "Bivocational Ministry Program" which would be a 3 year training process for pastoral leadership. It is 99% finished.

(You can contact Tony at 135 Pine St., Norton, MA 02766.)

Gary Johnson -- Augusta, Maine

He is executive minister of the ABC/Maine. "We have a strong interest in bivocational ministry in Maine," he writes, "and would want to be supportive of some kind of national network of pastors and churches interested in bivocational ministry Here in Maine we have a fairly organized group of small churches involved in what we have named the 'Maine Mountain Mission'. These are bivocational pastors who come together to encourage and support one another in areas of mission and ministry. They include educational and inspirational kinds of events as well as the ongoing supportive relationships which they seek to nurture....Additionally, we are in the process of developing a small church ministry. Leadership has been engaged to form a task group or committee. The greatest concern is to identify and be of support to those churches that are served by bivocational pastors."

(You can contact Gary Johnson at 107 Winthrop Street, P.O. Box 667, Augusta, ME 04332-0667.)

Books and Other Resources

We welcome your suggestions for books and resources which have been helpful for you in learning how to do ministry more effectively in a bivocational setting.

George Barna Turn Around Churches Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993.

Steve R. Bierly. Help for the Small Church Pastor **Unlocking the Potential of Your Congregation**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1995.

Daniel **Buttry**. **Bringing Your Church Back to Life: Beyond Survival Mentality** Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988.

Ron Klassen & John Kossler. No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996.

Steve Sjogren. Conspiracy of Kindness. Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1993.

Rick Warren. The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

David Ludeker, Director of Church Vocational Leadership for Educational Ministries, ABC/USA, has written two excellent brochures on bivocational ministry.

The Call to Bivocational Ministry: Enriching the Mission of the Church discusses these issues: Explore the call; Confirm the Call; Preparing for the Call; and Settings for Service.

Bivocational Pastors and Small Churches: A Special Opportunity for Ministry discusses advantages and challenges of bivocational ministry in the context of smaller churches.

Both brochures are available by contacting David Ludeker at 1-800-ABC3USA, ext.2061.

The Ministers Council ABC/USA has published a booklet entitled
Another Look at Bivocational Ministry

By Jimmy Reader

It is available at cost for \$3.00 each. Contact the office at 1-800-ABC3USA.

Listening to Others

Eugene Peterson, Under the Unpredictable Plant. An Exploration in VW-Eerdmans, 1992.

About Hard Work: "Pastoral work consists of modest, daily, assigned work. It is like farm work. It involves routines....There is much that is glorious in pastoral work, but the congregation, as such, is not glorious. The congregation is... site for hard work without a great deal of hope for success, at least as success is measured on the charts. But somebody has to do it, has to faithfully give personal visibility to the continuities of the word of God in the place of worship and prayer, in the places of daily work and play, in the traffic jams of virtue and sin." (p.16)

About Stability: "There are plenty of times when sin or neurosis or change make it so difficult for a pastor and congregation to stay together that it is necessary that the pastor move to another congregation. And there are plenty of times when God in sovereign wisdom reassigns pastors for his own, presumably strategic, reasons. The pastor who in such circumstances insists on staying out of a stubborn willfulness that is falsely labeled 'committed faithfulness cruelly inflicts needless wounds on the body of Christ. But the *norm* for pastoral work is stability. Twenty-, thirty-, and forty-year-long pastorates should be typical among us (as they once were) and not exceptional. Far too many pastors change parishes out of adolescent boredom, not as a consequence of mature wisdom. When this happens, neither pastors nor congregations have access to the conditions that are hospitable to maturity in the faith." (p.28)

Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* Ballantine Books, 1981.

About Busyness: “Just look for a moment at our daily routine. In general we are very busy people. We have many meetings to attend, many visits to make, many services to lead. Our calendars are filled with appointments, our days and weeks filled with engagements, and our years filled with plans and projects. There is seldom a period in which we do not know what to do, and we move through life in such a distracted way that we do not even take the time and rest to wonder if any of the things we think, say, or do are *worth* thinking, *saying*, or doing. We simply go along with the many ‘musts’ and ‘oughts’ that have been handed on to us, and we live with them as if they were authentic translations of the Gospel of our Lord. People must be motivated to come to church, youth must be entertained, money must be raised, and above all everyone must be happy. Moreover, we ought to be on good terms with the church and civil authorities; we ought to be liked or at least respected by a fair majority of our parishioners; we ought to move up in the ranks according to schedule; and we ought to have enough vacation and salary to live a comfortable life. Thus we are busy people just like all other busy people, rewarded with the rewards which are rewarded to busy people!” (p. 10)

About Anger: “Anger in particular seems close to a professional vice in the contemporary ministry. Pastors are angry at their leaders for not leading and at their followers for not following. They are angry at those who do not come to church for not coming and angry at those who do come for coming without enthusiasm. They are angry at their families who make them feel guilty, and angry at themselves for not being who they want to **be**. This is not an open, blatant, roaring anger, but an anger hidden behind the smooth word, the smiling face, and the polite handshake. It is a frozen anger, an anger which settles into a biting resentment and slowly paralyzes a generous heart. If there is anything that makes the ministry look grim and dull, it is this dark, insidious anger in the servants of Christ.” (p. 11)

We would like to include your stories and ideas

in the next issue of "Vital Churches"

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Please make copies and make this journal available to others,
inviting them to join BivoNet.

**For more information about BivoNet, and to submit ideas for “Vital Churches”,
Contact Dr. Jimmy Reader at:
jreader828@aol.com or JIMMY.READER@ecunet.org
or 1-316-755-1855 or
P.O. Box 253, Valley Center, KS 67147**