

Picture of Bivocational Pastors in the Church of the Nazarene: What are the Implications for Clergy Preparation?

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In a recent interview Dr. Dallas Mucci, Metro New York District Superintendent, said, "We must understand that about 40 percent of all clergy will be bi-vocational or 'tent-maker' pastors/leaders in a dynamic thrust into a great urban center. The economics are not only more complex in the city, but living is much more expensive for pastoral leadership than in other places." (Grow, p. 4.)

Whether you agree or disagree with Dr. Mucci's assessment, the issue of bivocational ministry is relevant to the Church of the Nazarene and her pastoral corp. While there may be several areas of interest or concern worthy of our discussion time, I will only touch upon three: 1) bivocational ministry is becoming a fact of life for many pastors, 2) can we legitimize, encourage, and reward bivocational ministry? And 3) how do we prepare and continually educate bivocational ministers?

While this paper attempts to look at all three areas suggested above, it is admittedly short-sighted in the area of preparation and continuing education (those items which most concern our topic for ANSR XIII). But that's where you come in. I hope that by presenting some current data and a few issues *your* discussion will add to ideas concerning clergy preparation.

A Fact of Life

Allow me to present some data which supports my statement that bivocational ministry is becoming a fact of life for many pastors (it probably always has been, but I'd just like to paint a current picture). Each year every church turns in an Annual Report to the District Assembly. Figures from these reports are entered into the Headquarters computer system. Data concerning pastoral compensation from the 1993 Annual Reports have been compiled and shown on Table 1. Only figures from currently active U.S. churches were used.

Table 1 indicates that there were actually 67 churches which were listed as active but which reported 0 in worship attendance. There were 636 churches which had an average worship attendance between 1-25, and the mean salary paid to the pastor was \$3,290. Another 1,203 churches reported an attendance between 26-50 with a mean salary of \$6,310. That's a total of 1,906 (39%) Nazarene churches reporting 50 or less in average worship attendance, and paying salaries well below the poverty level.

If you had not yet seen that table you may have argued that the pastor doesn't need much cash salary because his/her housing is provided; however, the figures reported by the churches indicate that may not be the case. In all 4 worship attendance categories from 0 to 100 the median figure for "Pastoral Housing" is \$0.

These figures for pastoral compensation are one reason why I can say that bivocational ministry is becoming a way of life for many Nazarene pastors. Another reason I can say that is

because of responses to the recent (it's actually ongoing) Quadrennial Church Census (QCC). As of my writing this we have received 2,700 responses (56%) to the Census. The Census asked three questions in an effort to determine the extent of bivocational ministry among Nazarene pastors. Table 2 summarizes responses to those questions.

Question 5a asks for the pastors perception of whether the salary paid by the church could support a family of four. Of the 2,617 responses, 1,530 said no or probably not (59%). However, when directly asked if they were bivocational (question 5b), only 727 (28%) actually responded yes. It would seem that many pastors make financial sacrifices in order to devote their full attention to ministry. Still, when one considers that responses to the QCC are currently under-represented in churches with worship attendances between 1 and 50, and that only 56% have responded, it could well be that there are close to 1,400 bivocational pastors in the Church of the Nazarene.

Those pastors who do not think their church salary could support a family of four, but indicated that they were not bivocational, may feel called by God to devote all their working time to ministry and trust that God will provide for all their other needs. Others may have a spouse that makes sufficient income to support their family. Question 5c on Table 2 reports the responses to whether a spouse provides income. There were 1,592 pastors which reported that their spouses were employed outside the home (61%); of these 973 (37% of all responses) said it was necessary to supplement their family income. Charles Morrow used to say that the church in Haiti was built on the backs of pastor's wives. That may also be true for one-third of the churches in the U.S.

This is not just a Nazarene situation. A 1991 study by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptists Convention found that 30% of all SBC churches with a current pastor were bivocational. This figure rises to 36% when looking at new churches (which were defined in their study as churches constituted in 1980 or later). The study also indicates that while most bivocational churches are located in rural areas (77%), only 54% of the new bivocational churches are rural; 46% of the new bivocational churches are in urban areas. (Whitten, p. 11.) It could be that churches in urban areas have a better chance to grow into non-bivocational churches, causing their percentage to decrease over time. Another possibility is that the SBC is following; the population trend to the city and therefore starting more churches in urban areas.

Legitimation

I do not wish to argue the point of whether bivocational pastors are more or less effective than non-bivocational pastors (although the SBC study reported that, "Churches with bivocational pastors have a slightly higher baptism rate than do churches with non-bivocational pastors," and were very comparable by most other measures except giving per resident member. [Whitten, pp. 11-13.]) Based on the data just presented I am approaching the issue as a reality. Any argument that says we should not have bivocational pastors isn't dealing with the reality or necessity of their presence. I am, however, interested in saying that we would be less of a church—both in a numeric and spiritual sense of the word—without bivocational pastors, and that their ministry is just as legitimate as those who are not bivocational. I can

say this because in the Church of the Nazarene it is the call of God and the confirmation of the Church which legitimizes pastoral ministry.

This was also true for the apostle Paul and his ministry. Paul was clearly called by God to ministry. In Romans 1:1 he describes himself as, "called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God." Yet even though he was "set apart," several Scriptures refer to his bivocation—tent-making (Acts 18:1–4, 2 Thessalonians 3:6–10, I Corinthians 9).

Paul seems to have had several reasons for tent-making. "William Barclay wrote. . . Paul was a Rabbi, but according to Jewish practice, every Rabbi must have a trade. He must take no money for preaching and teaching and must make his living by his own work and his own efforts." (Dorr, p.8.) Paul's bivocational practice was necessary in his efforts to reach the Jewish people. On the other hand, Greeks "had no problem with earning a living through public speaking. . . 'some of the best incomes in Greece were made by clever lecturers; Paul was resolved he should never be mistaken for one of them.' Therefore, in Corinth and elsewhere Paul refused to be paid by the Christians in order to avoid suspicion of his motivation for preaching." (Dorr, p.9.) Paul's bivocational work was also a good example to those who did not want to work (2 Thes. 3:6–13).

To summarize, Paul had a call to preach but was bivocational in order that some would not be offended, to make sure his needs were met while not being a burden to others, and to be an example for still others. Don't those sound like reasons today's pastor might choose to be bivocational?

There is another sense of the word "bivocational" which Paul did not have to deal with. That is the two-career household. With 37% of our pastors reporting that their spouses work to supplement the family income, and considering the advances of women seeking careers, what effect will this have on pastoral mobility and church stability? In a study of two-career couples, Pamela Dunlap and Keith Kendall report that,

"In contrast to the traditional' relocation pattern of the clergyman's wife when he was reappointed, the increasing number of two-career marriages and ordained women has rendered this lopsided commitment unacceptable to many couples. As a result, the issue of relocation was quite stressful. . . The frustrations resulted primarily from a perceived lack of alternatives which were in the control of the couples. A new appointment of job transfer often results in a partner's being torn between the desire to enable one's spouse's career and the necessity of responding with integrity and commitment to the demands of one's own career as an equally valuable vocation." (Dunlap, p. 64.)

As this segment of bivocational ministers increases, will the Church of the Nazarene be able to encourage these couples and provide them with options as well as a place of ministry?

Preparation

So what are the implications of these economic, social, and family structures on how the Church of the Nazarene prepares its ministerial corp? For the example above concerning two-career households, Dunlap and Kendall suggest a "concept of 'career stages,' in which it is

recognized that often partners are in different career stages at one time in their marriage, thus offering the possibility of slowing down one's career development in order that the other's has a chance to grow rapidly. For example, partners may alternate opportunities for further education." (Dunlap, p. 64.) This type of idea could possibly mean putting off a seminary education and taking an associate position or pastorate while one's spouse completed a degree. It certainly implies stretching the time period for ministerial preparation.

The cost of education is another reason to stretch the time it takes to complete ministerial preparation. One can guess it would be difficult to pay back student loans from the pastoral salaries being paid in the local church. Staying out of debt should be a key goal for bivocational pastors.

Dr. Mucci is obviously willing to accept on-the-job training for pastors on his district, but is the rest of the church ready for this? While we have some flexibility in our educational system, is it sufficient to handle the diversity of educational needs being created from the current economic and social changes?

Maybe we could inform students as they enter their freshman year of college that many churches need bivocational ministers. Interested students could be encouraged to double-major or at least begin to **plan** for the possibility of bivocational ministry. This would help students gain the necessary skills for a second vocation and encourage them not to accumulate a large debt.

Longer preparation periods, educational debts, two-career households, and other marketable job skills are just some of the hurdles bivocational ministry brings to our discussion concerning ministerial preparation. My hope is that some of the statistics in this paper will help us understand the extent to which bivocational ministry is practiced, and that there are one or two other ideas which can start our discussion of the implications bivocationalism has on ministerial preparation.

Table 1

1993 U.S. Nazarene Pastoral Compensation (for active churches only)

The following table lists the means and medians for pastors' salaries, benefits, and housing, as well as the total money raised by the local church. Churches have been grouped by worship attendance size in order to see compensation variations.

The *Annual Report* turned in by the churches lumps pastoral housing with associate housing. While this figure is not useful in determining pastoral compensation for larger churches with staff, it is useful in determining total pastoral compensation in smaller churches without staff.

<i>Worship Attendance</i>	<i># of Churches</i>	<i>% of Churches</i>	<i>Raised All Purposes</i>
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			<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
0	67	1.4%	\$11,553	\$2,000
1-25	636	13.0%	\$15,296	\$14,200
26-50	1,203	24.5%	\$30,378	\$28,181
51-100	1,5353	31.3%	\$62,247	\$58,503
101-250	1,164	23.7%	\$144,430	\$129,817
251-1000	294	6.0%	\$423,556	\$365,614
1,001+	11	.2%	\$1,881,803	\$1,728,479
All	4,910	100%	\$92,859	\$51,552

Table 2

1993 Quadrennial Church Census Responses to Questions Related To Bivocational Ministry

The following table shows frequency responses for questions related to determining the extent of bivocational pastors in the Church of the Nazarene from the Quadrennial Church Census. Worship attendance figures have been added from the Headquarters computer records.

<i>Pastor Salary</i>		<i>Pastor Benefits</i>		<i>Pastor Housing*</i>	
<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
\$2,561	\$0	\$467	\$0	\$402	\$0
\$3,290	\$2,600	\$960	\$0	\$900	\$0
\$6,310	\$6,220	\$2,481	\$1,653	\$1,410	\$0
\$11,176	\$11,440	\$5,487	\$5,572	\$2,178	\$0
\$17,044	\$16,900	\$8,658	\$8,762	\$4,879	\$988
\$23,515	\$23,779	\$11,958	\$11,633	\$22,805	\$15,785
\$38,245	\$39,668	\$19,336	\$16,977	\$127,103	\$113,625
\$11,035	\$10,413	\$5,266	\$4,736	\$75,078	\$43,451

Question 5a: Given the average costs of living in this community, is it reasonable to expect that a pastor's family of four could afford to live on the pastor's salary currently paid by this church?

<i>Worship Attendance</i>	<i># of Responses</i>	<i>% of Responses</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Probably not</i>	<i>Probably yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>% Responding</i>	<i>% Responding</i>
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							No/Prob. not	Prob.yes/Yes
	8	.3%	6	1	1	0	87.5%	12.5%
1-25	241	9.2%	219	19	1	2	98.8%	1.2%
26-50	521	19.9%	398	89	23	11	93.5%	6.5%
51-100	877	33.5%	329	235	225	88	64.3%	35.7%
101-250	758	29.0%	83	128	266	281	27.8%	72.2%
251-1000	207	7.9%	8	15	54	130	11.1%	88.9%
1001 +	5	0.2%	0	0	0	5	0.0%	100.0%
Totals	2,617	100.0%	1,043	487	570	517	58.5%	41.5%

83 missing

Question 5b: Are you bi-vocational?

Worship Attendance	# of Responses	% of Responses	No	Yes*	Yes**	Yes, other	% Responding No	% Responding Yes
0	7	0.3%	5	2	0	0	71.4%	28.6%
1-25	237	9.1%	70	132	2	33	71.4%	70.5%
26-50	513	19.7%	217	234	4	58	42.3%	57.7%
51-100	876	33.7%	651	149	22	54	74.3%	25.7%
101-250	759	29.2%	723	15	3	18	95.3%	25.7%
251-1000	206	7.9%	205	1	0	0	99.5%	4.7%
1,001 +	5	0.2%	5	0	0	0	100.0%	0.0%
Totals	2,603	100.0%	1,876	533	31	163	72.1%	27.9%

97 missing

*Yes, it is necessary to supplement our family income.

**Yes, the extra income is not necessary, but my second career makes my ministry more effective.

Question 5c: Is your spouse employed outside the home?

Worship Attendance	# of Responses	% of Responses	No	Yes*	Yes**	Yes, other	% Responding No	% Responding Yes
0	7	0.3%	5	2	0	0	71.4%	28.6%

1-25	235	9.0%	98	102	14	21	41.7%	58.3%
26-50	516	19.8%	198	229	52	37	38.4%	61.6%
51-100	874	33.6%	340	363	76	95	38.9%	61.1%
101-250	756	29.1%	276	236	110	134	36.5%	63.5%
251-1000	207	8.0%	88	41	39	39	42.5%	57.5%
1,001 +	5	0.2%	3	0	1	1	60.0%	40.0%
Totals	2,600	100.0%	1,008	973	292	327	38.8%	61.2%

100 missing

*Yes, it is necessary for her/him to supplement our family income.

**Yes, she/he is employed in a career in obedience to God's direction.

References

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