

Professional Ministries Team  
BGM Report  
November 2019

The Professional Ministries Team met on October 22, 2019 and focused on, “The Next Generation of Leaders,” one of the seven Mission Table priorities. Geri Blier delivered an excellent paper that included segments on exceptional leaders, Christian leadership, leaders –vs- bosses, training young people as leaders, women leaders, ABC leadership, as well as a list of top blogs for Christian leaders. Highlights of the paper are included below:

1. First be Godly in mind, spirit, and body.
2. Pray often for guidance.
3. Be still and listen for the voice of God.
4. Be reputable and honest in all things.
5. Learn to be adaptable to fit the changing needs of your congregations and communities.
6. Nurture those around you rather than boss them.
7. Don’t wait until you are close to retirement to begin preparing our young men and women for church leadership – start now to begin the work of growing new and confident leaders to continue God’s mighty work.
8. Be a role model for new leaders by
  - a. Giving them room to develop their own styles
  - b. Helping them see their strengths and their weaknesses so they may continue to grow as leaders
  - c. Listening to their ideas
  - d. Letting them see you as a whole person

For the past few meetings, the team has been generating material related to bivocational ministry. Women in Ministry Intern Rebecca Driscoll has been conducting telephone interviews with bivocational ministers who indicated that they have a “success story” to share during a recent survey. The write-ups of these stories are appearing on the ABCUSA website. The team also reviewed a survey of ABC bivocational ministers, out of which surfaced, “Ten Things to Know about Bivocational Ministry.” A copy of the paper is included in the appendix.

The team received an update of the clergy misconduct information currently in ABCIS. The information has now been placed into a searchable online format. This new ABCIS module can now store titles, history, categories, and notes related to clergy misconduct occurrences. Only the General Secretary, Associate General Secretaries, Regional Executives, and Program Board Executives can see the details of this database and must enter a special code to view the information.

ABPS now exists as a separate platform within the new MinistreLife online platform of ABHMS. Whenever a person is entered into ABPS, the record goes through a validation process where it is checked for Clergy Misconduct flags in ABCIS. ABPS profiles for flagged leaders will not be circulated for search and call.

PMT decisions were also made regarding the primary record holder for clergy in ABCIS as well as the categorization of leadership status in ABCIS in special circumstances.

## Ten Things to Know about Bivocational Ministry

During the spring of 2019, an online survey was distributed to ABC bivocational clergy. In addition to the online survey, several bivocational ministers were interviewed who had indicated in the survey that they would be willing to talk about their bivocational ministry experience. The survey and interviews yielded helpful information about ABC bivocational ministers as well as the congregations that they serve. Several learnings from this research are detailed below.

More and more pastors are serving bivocationally. With a little bit of advance planning, clarifying assumptions, and melding of expectations, bivocational ministry can be extremely rewarding for both pastor and congregation.

1. **The other job.** About 2/3 of bivocational ministers hold secular jobs. These jobs include a variety of fields such as business, education, transportation, nonprofit work, as well as many professionals, government workers, and retail workers. The remaining one-third are self-employed or hold a second ministry position such as a chaplain or hospice worker.
2. **Additional household income.** Over ½ of bivocational ministers also benefit from additional household income that significantly contributes to their ability to do bivocational ministry. This household income from a spouse or family member can also decrease the potential mobility of the bivocational minister.
3. **Time constraints.** The time constraints of serving a congregation and working a secular job can make it difficult to fulfill all of the pastoral expectations in congregations that are used to a full-time minister. Some of the more common tasks that bivocational ministers have difficulty finding time to engage adequately include visitation, denominational involvement, and community involvement. Consider working on a covenant of expectations when calling a new minister.
4. **Less than can be more than.** Congregations with part-time pastors as well as the part-time pastors themselves should never feel “less than.” This arrangement often necessitates more people from the congregation getting involved in the ministry of the congregation that becomes a benefit to the congregation and community.
5. **Acceptance.** Unfortunately, many bivocational ministers report having been made to feel inadequate by their peers in ministry. The ABC code of ethics challenges all clergy to support one another. Additionally, feeling loved and cared for by one’s congregation is one of the highest sources of pastoral satisfaction. Tentmaking was very acceptable in the New Testament! Find ways to demonstrate consistent support to your bivocational pastor. All pastors need and deserve it!
6. **Long-term service.** Many bivocational ministers view their ministry arrangement as long-term. Over ½ indicate that they prefer working as a bivocational minister rather than having the congregation supply their sole source of income. About ½ of bivocational ministers have served their present congregation for over 10 years.

7. **Balancing two vocations.** The typical bivocational minister spends about 25-30 hours a week engaging in ministry. Spending an equal amount of time or more in a second role can leave little time for other activities. Vacation time is also not easy to find for bivocational ministers. Only about 1/3 are able to take regular vacation time with family and friends for relaxation or renewal. Another 1/3 spend the majority of their vacation time attending denominational gatherings and the final 1/3 often ask, "What's a vacation?" Congregations need to work diligently to ensure that their bivocational pastor has adequate time for family and renewal activities.
8. **A variety of settings.** Bivocational ministers can be found in urban, small town, suburban, and rural settings. Wherever you find congregations, you find bivocational ministers.
9. **Ministry preparation.** Many bivocational ministers are well-educated and well-prepared for ministry. About ½ hold at least a masters degree and many hold doctorates. Continuing education, however, can be difficult to take advantage of when most conferences are held during secular work hours. Congregations should encourage their bivocational pastors to attend continuing education events whenever possible and regions should try to plan events that take into account the needs and availability of bivocational ministers.
10. **Benefits.** A sense of freedom is often articulated by pastors who are not solely dependent upon their income from the congregation. Many bivocational ministers also report helpful interactions among their multiple roles. Bivocational ministry brings many benefits to both congregations and pastors.

**Reflection questions** for congregations considering a bivocational pastor

- What benefits and challenges of bivocational ministry listed above apply to your congregation?
- What changes will you need to make as a congregation in order to have a successful bivocational partnership with your new pastor?
- How might your congregation develop a process for clarifying expectations with your new pastor?
- What advice does your region have regarding the calling of bivocational pastors?
- How might you learn from other success stories of bivocational ministry?

Respectfully submitted, C. Jeff Woods