

*Bivocational and Beyond: Educating for Thriving Multivocational Ministry*

EDITED BY DARRYL W. STEPHENS

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This edited volume advocates for the nurture and support of bivocational and multivocational forms of pastoral ministry. Although common, these forms of ministry are under-researched and, as various contributors point out, often misunderstood. Nevertheless, they emerge as essential to the survival of many faith communities and are clearly worthy of more sustained research, theological reflection, and theological education.

The book includes descriptive, constructive, and prescriptive elements and is arranged in three parts: Landscape, Leadership, and Learning. Its nineteen chapters include contributions from both researchers and practitioners; contributors write from diverse ecclesial and academic contexts and perspectives.

Part I provides specific viewpoints for understanding the nature of bivocational ministry. Darryl W. Stephens contributes an overview essay from the US, exploring definitions and identifying “intentional bivocational ministry as the congregation’s curriculum, a practice of the entire faith community” (5). Hartness M. Samushonga provides an historic overview of the concept of bivocational ministry in Britain before focusing on contemporary challenges and opportunities. Ralph B. Wright Jr. shares a personal retrospective. He appeals for increased support for bivocational pastors (both collegial and judicatory) along with addressing issues of ethnocentrism, racism, classism, and patriarchy. Jessica Young Brown highlights Black bivocational clergy as exemplars for navigating bivocational ministry. Jo Ann Deasy draws on qualitative data to examine the experiences and perspectives of Black seminarians. Deasy notes that few expect to be paid a living wage while in ministry; their motivation is to follow God’s call and to minister to their communities. The commitment of Black seminarians provokes the question: in what ways are theological schools hearing and responding to a call to serve low-wealth neighborhoods?

Part II explores opportunities and challenges of bivocational leadership for pastors and congregations; it includes case studies and empirical studies. Recurring themes include calling, vocation, mission, spiritual growth, and mentorship. Contributors include Mark D. Chapman and James W. Watson (drawing on Canadian Multivocational Ministry Project data); Kristen Plinke Bentley; Kwasi Kena; Steven C. Van Ostran; Ben Connelly; Anthony Pappas, Ed Pease, and Norm Faramelli; and Herbert Fain.

Part III focuses on the tasks of equipping persons for successful bivocational ministry. It includes empirical studies alongside discussions of the opportunities and challenges that multivocational ministry poses in terms of theological education. Kathleen Owens, Darryl W. Stephens, Jo Ann Deasy, Phil Baisley, Ronald W. Baard, and Susan J. Ebertz contribute to this section. Each emphasizes that learning is a shared task and responsibility, involving pastors, congregations, and judicatories, as well as seminaries and non-degree programs.

*Bivocational and Beyond* is an ideal resource for church leaders, aspiring church leaders, and for those that teach, mentor, and support such leaders, including mentors, practical theologians, and the governing bodies of religious organizations. While the book has a predominantly American Protestantism focus, it includes contributors from Canada and the United Kingdom, and has relevance beyond these countries.

Designed to change ecclesial and scholarly conversation in a positive way regarding bivocational and multivocational ministries, this volume highlights unmet educational needs, exposing a gap between what is needed and what is provided in contemporary theological education. Yet, as Darryl W. Stephens asserts, the pursuit of life-giving change within graduate theological education requires “justice-oriented commitments” as well as a “multivocational mindset” (13, 328, 345). The reimagining of theological education may include curriculum that contributes towards breaking cycles of generational poverty (90) along with mentoring that nurtures prophetic bivocational and multivocational change agents. The reimagining that the editor and many contributors have in mind will also promote integration, innovation, lifelong learning, antiracism, social ethics, and—ultimately, it would seem—the common good.

Anne-Marie Ellithorpe  
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