

# **The other face of ministry**



**Report to the Baptist Churches of NSW /ACT**

by

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## Acknowledgment :

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The trip that occasioned this report and the opportunity to examine rural ministry in the USA and UK would not have been possible without the generous support provided by:

- The National Bivocational Minister's Association within the Southern Baptist Convention, USA
  - The Ministry Support and Development Council, Baptist Union of NSW/ACT
    - Grace Chapel, Boston
  - The Board of Baptist Rural Support Services
    - Family and friends

To each of these I express my sincere appreciation and gratitude.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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**Bivocationalism is not an unauthorised, illegal intruder in the Christian ministry due to poor performance, or a second option, or a refuge for failure. On the contrary, it is a legitimate, original New Testament option sorely needed for the carrying out of a bold mission thrust. It must be given equality and an elevated, recognised place among the options for ministry. It has a theological basis and a noble history. It is absolutely essential to the Christian world mission in today's world.**

Justice C. Anderson <sup>1</sup>

This report seeks to explore a new but old model of ministry, namely that of bivocationalism (*formerly known as tentmaking*). The methodology is well-established missiologically, with our own ABMS utilizing this method of ministry under the umbrella of SFI. Bivocational ministry is also well established in the United States of America where it has been operating for more than a hundred years. Baptist denominations including the American Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, Presbyterians and Episcopalians have all developed bivocational ministry as a means of planting new churches and sustaining rural and urban churches.

The Southern Baptists have more than 17,000 bivocational churches in North America and it is expected that within the next ten years there will be more bivocational pastors than fully funded pastors in the Convention.

This report is the result of the author's attendance at the National Bivocational Minister's Conference held in Arlington, Texas in April of this year. Following the Conference I visited bivocational churches in Texas and Oklahoma. I was able to observe the function of these churches, have formal and informal discussions with the congregations and spend time with numbers of pastors and association employees. I spent several days with the National Bivocational Coordinator, Rev. Leon Wilson and the Texas State Bivocational Coordinator, Rev. Bob Ray. I also met with Home Ministry personnel from the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and Texas. I am in debt to each of these who gave so generously of their time and resources.

Acknowledging the great many differences between America and Australia generally, and American Baptists and Australian Baptists specifically, nonetheless, bivocational ministry has a great relevance to the Australian situation. I doubt that we will effect any great advances in mission and church planting without developing an authentic Australian expression of this ancient ministry form.

This report is therefore written from the positive conviction that Australian Baptists need to hear the experience of others, face the challenges presented by bivocationalism, and commit ourselves to the development of missional strategies that employ bivocational ministry as a legitimate means of church planting and pastoring.

***bivocational ministry... must be given equality and an elevated, recognised place among the options for ministry... It is absolutely essential to the Christian world mission in today's world.***

Dr. David Jones  
Director, Baptist Rural Support Services  
July, 2002

## **EXPLANATION OF TERMS**

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**Bivocational -** one calling, two vocations. A pastor who derives the majority of his/her income from sources outside the church where he/she serves, usually from paid employment, full or part-time.

**Fully-funded -** a pastor who derives his/her income entirely from the church where he/she serves.

**Tentmaker -** another name for bivocational. The term comes from the Apostle Paul's vocation as a maker of tents. Paul used his tent making skills to support his apostolic ministry among the churches.

**[Part-time is not an appropriate term for bivocational pastors. Bivocational pastors are full-time, integrating work and ministry, using their work to build relationships and networks as a base for ministry.]**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This report, *The other face of ministry*, is the result of the author's attendance at the National Bivocational Minister's Conference held in Arlington, Texas in April this year and subsequent visits to and discussions with bivocational pastors and churches.

Bivocational ministry; one calling - two vocations, has become a major vehicle for the delivery of significant church growth amongst Southern Baptists in the USA. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has more than 17,000 bivocational churches in North America and it is expected that within the next ten years there will be more bivocational pastors than fully-funded pastors in the SBC.

Both the Old Testament and New Testament are replete with examples of bivocational ministry. John Bunyan and William Carey were both bivocational ministers.

From an historic Baptist perspective, bivocational ministry upholds and strengthens the Baptist view of the priesthood of all believers. Bivocational ministry supports the role and function of the congregation because in a bivocational church the congregation, not the minister, is central to ministry. Bivocational ministry also restores the pastor to his/her role as equippers of the people of God. By necessity, bivocational pastors must be equippers for they do not have the time to do all the work of ministry.

In the early history of the USA, Baptist growth was achieved by multiplying small associations on the expanding frontiers. Itinerant preachers were sent to destitute places and gathered believers into churches. With few exceptions, these preachers made their living in vocations other than the church. The west was won by men who made their own living and bootlegged the gospel.

It is, of course, easy to dismiss the American experience as irrelevant to the Australian context, but to ignore the enormous contribution of bivocational ministry and its potential relevance to Australian Baptist life would be a grave error.

Bivocational ministry has the advantage of being self-supporting, it releases church finances, it produces long-term pastorates, it provides community connection, it allows recruitment from a larger resource pool, it encourages greater congregational participation, it helps to restore a more biblical approach to ministry, it is cost-effective and it provides a new mechanism to increase the size and diversity of church staff.

However, bivocational ministry also creates some new challenges. It is a different model and it challenges some of our beliefs about the nature and function of the pastoral ministry. It requires a different training regime, it necessitates a new approach to pastoral recruitment and it can create a false dichotomy between fully-funded and bivocational pastors.

In the current context of declining Baptist fortunes in Australia, bivocational ministry may provide part of the solution. The latest Census figures (2001) show a decline in the proportion of Baptists within the wider Australian population. National membership of Baptist churches in Australia has declined by 2.6% over the last five years, with NSW showing a five year decline rate of 4.4%. Sunday morning and Sunday evening attendance figures for NSW Baptist churches reveal significant decline over the past five years and baptisms are at an all time low with 3.1 baptisms for every 100 members in 2001. A baptism decline rate of 34% over the past ten years.

These statistics reveal an alarming decline trend across all the major indicators for NSW Baptist churches. There is an urgent need to instigate a range of remedial actions if these trends are to be stabilized and reversed. Our highest priority should be a renewed emphasis on mission and church planting.

I doubt we will effect any great advances in mission and church planting without developing an authentic Australian expression of bivocational ministry.

Bivocational ministry can provide some of the impetus so desperately needed to move NSW Baptists into a new period of expansion and growth.

## **BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY: A Biblical and historical perspective**

The model for bivocational ministry does not only lie on the shoulders of the Apostle Paul, though he is without doubt the most worthy exemplar. There are many examples in Scripture of ministers of the Lord who also worked with their hands to provide a living for themselves and their families. Here are just a few.

### **OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES**

#### **NOAH**

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The first bivocational minister mentioned in Scripture is probably Noah. Like many bivocational pastors his congregation was relatively small, only eight persons in total, including himself. Though, he had a very significant open-air evangelistic ministry.

When he was born his father named him Noah which means “rest” or “comfort”, and his father said, *he will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands...(Gen.5:29)* This verse gives us an important insight into the home-life and family values in which Noah was raised. He came from a hard working family; a mother and father who toiled with their hands.

In Genesis 6:14 the Lord calls Noah to be a shipwright and a preacher (*2 Peter 2:5*), and it appears that Noah was uniquely qualified to undertake this dual calling on his life. Scripture describes Noah as *a righteous and blameless man (Gen.6:9)* a man of *faith (Hebrews 11:7)* and a man who *walked with God (Gen.6:9)*.

And for 120 years Noah fulfilled the dual ministry of shipbuilding and preaching. After the flood, when the waters had subsided and the animals and family disembarked, Noah built an altar to the Lord and led his small congregation in a service of praise and thanksgiving to God. Thereafter, Noah is described as *a man of the soil (who) proceeded to plant a vineyard (Gen.9:20)*.

Noah, like all bivocational ministers, understood that it is possible, sometimes advantageous, to work in the world and in the church, simultaneously. **The call to ministry does not necessarily require the renouncement of other calls God has placed on your life. It is possible to be a shipwright and a preacher; and in Noah’s case, it was essential!**

#### **NEHEMIAH**

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Nehemiah was also bivocational, serving Artaxerxes first as a cupbearer, then as Governor, while at the same time fulfilling the other call on his life, that of spokesman for God and leader of the people of God. Scripture reveals Nehemiah to be a man of prayer, action and devotion to duty. Under his leadership the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in just fifty-two days and Nehemiah instigated significant spiritual and social reform in Jerusalem. **During the entire period of restoration and reform he remained on the King’s payroll, fulfilling both his civil and religious responsibilities.**

## AMOS

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Amos has been described, and rightly so, as one of the great social prophets of the Old Testament. Amos came from the town of Tekoa, about 12 miles south of Jerusalem, on the edge of the Judean desert. Here Amos worked as a *shepherd (1:1)* and a *dresser of sycamore (fig) trees (7:14)*. The significance of this information is that Amos was not brought up in the class from which prophets usually came, nor was he trained for the prophethood in the prophetic schools or guilds. Amos declares of himself in 7:14:

*I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of fig-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go prophesy to me people Israel'...*

The Book is rich with the imagery of Amos' occupations and his knowledge of the land, its seasons and challenges. And what seems to be very clear is that during his period of prophesying to the Northern Kingdom, Amos continued to work as a shepherd or a dresser of trees. Amos 7:12 records:

*Then Amaziah said to Amos, 'Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there.'*

What the life of Amos reveals is that ministry and secular work are not mutually exclusive. Rather, one can aid the other, even give credibility to the other. **God called a shepherd and a dresser of fig trees to be a prophet because the prophet needed to be a shepherd and a dresser of fig trees. Both were part of the whole.**

## **NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES**

### APOSTLE PAUL

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Bivocational ministry is often referred to as *tentmaking* ministry because our New Testament example is the Apostle Paul, who supported himself financially by making tents. Acts 18:2-4 tells us that Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth because they were also tentmakers. The three of them working together during the week and Paul ministering in the Synagogue, market square, private home, by the riverside or wherever there was opportunity on the Sabbath, that he might preach the Gospel of Christ and build the Kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul worked as a tentmaker in Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus (cf. Acts 18:3, 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:7-9, Acts 20:23-25). But he did not always rely on his own work. The Philippians regularly sent him aid (Phil. 4:16), which he gladly accepted. Paul explained that *the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14)*. Why then did he work for a living?

He explained that though he himself was *free and did not belong to any man*, he had *made himself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible (1 Cor. 9:19)*. He had become *all things to all men so that by all possible means (he) might save some*.

Paul worked as an application of Christian freedom. He gave up his right to support as an apostle to reach a higher goal—the salvation of as many as possible. And there was always the economic reality that in many places where he sought to plant a new church there was no congregation as yet to support his work.

In the cosmopolitan cities of Corinth, Ephesus, and Thessalonica, Paul found that tentmaking was a suitable profession to help spread the gospel. (according to some scholars, the word used could also mean leatherworker.) By so working, Paul was not a burden to the people to whom he brought the gospel (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Cor. 11:8, 9). He was also a model of hard work to new believers (2 Thess 3:9, 10).

Reading the above passages of Scripture, you can sense that Paul felt a measure of satisfaction in not being a financial burden to the people he ministered to and loved. **Clearly, bivocational ministry is, at its heart, missional. Paul is driven by the need to preach the Gospel, so that by all possible means he might effect the salvation of many.**

## OTHER EXAMPLES

### JOHN BUNYAN

Bunyan was a tinker, a mender of kettles and pans. He was also a preacher and author of outstanding ability. His *Pilgrim's Progress* is acclaimed as one of the great masterpieces of English literature. John Bunyan was bivocational, though, of course, the word had not yet been coined. Nonetheless, in a period of enormous persecution for non-conformists, Bunyan preached consistently in the Bedford area sustaining life and family by his tinker trade.

### WILLIAM CAREY

Carey, father of the modern missionary movement, was a humble cobbler, a maker and repairer of shoes. He worked in his cobbler trade from the age of sixteen to twenty eight. Following his conversion at eighteen, he became a preacher among the Calvinistic Baptists, working by day and ministering in his spare time; and while he worked he studied.<sup>2</sup> During the early period of preaching and pastoring the Moulton Baptist Church, he also worked as a school teacher in the local village school. Even in his beloved India, where he pioneered Baptist missions, his preaching, pastoral and translation work were supplemented by the income he earned as manager of the indigo factory near Madras. Throughout his missionary career, Carey was never just a missionary or pastor. He was all of these things and Professor of Sanskrit, Bengali and Marathi at the College of Fort Williams; he was a printer; an editor of Scripture into more than thirty-five languages; author of a massive Bengali-English dictionary; founder of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India; social reformer and entrepreneur extraordinaire.

**Whether by economic necessity or as part of his philosophy of ministry, Carey fulfilled the many callings on his life with a deep sense that he was merely being obedient to God's purpose for his life.**

## BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY: A Scriptural perspective

The Old and New Testaments not only provide a range of character studies to support the notion of bivocational ministry, they also present a number of themes that we, as Baptists, have historically held dear.

**κληρος** the word from which we derive “clergy” is used 13 times in the New Testament:

-five times with regard to the casting of lots for Jesus’ garments during the passion narratives and translated as “lot” or “lots”; viz. *Matt.27:35* (2), *Mk.15:24*, *Lk.23:34*, *Jn.19:24*;

-four times in the first chapter of the Book of Acts with regard to the casting of lots to replace Judas Iscariot amongst the twelve and translated as “part” or “lots”; viz. *1:17*, *1:25*, *1:26* (2).

The remaining four occasions are in *Acts 8:21*; *Acts 26:18*; *Colossians 1:12* and *1 Peter 5:3* where *κληρος* is variously translated as “lot”, “inheritance” or “heritage”.

These latter four uses of *κληρος* deserve particular attention. The term is never used in the NT to describe a special class of religious elite. **Peter’s use is to describe all the people of God as the Lord’s “heritage”.**

*(See p.436 in Arndt & Gingrich A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and p.442 in Kittel Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (One Volume) for a full discussion of the word κληρος)*

The dictionary defines “Clergy” as *the ministers of the Christian or other religion, as holders of an allotted office in contra-distinction to the laity.*

Leon Morris says, *As early as Jerome it was pointed out that the use of the term (clergy) is ambiguous. Morris says, It may denote those who are chosen out to belong in a special sense to the Lord, or it may signify those whose lot or portion is the Lord. In the New Testament, continues Morris, the word is not used of a restricted class. Modern use of the term refers to regular members of the ministry of the church as distinct from lay people generally (Bakers Dictionary of Theology p.129).*

### WE HOLD FIRMLY THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS<sup>3</sup>

*and therefore we have no separated order of priests*<sup>4</sup> expresses the historic Baptist position (*statement by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Lambeth Conference*).

*Every Christian a living church-member, and every church-member a living partaker of the ministry of Christ: that seems to be the ideal, and the Church from this point of view becomes not a body made up of ministers and people, but of people who are all ministers alike; all, that is, engaged in the work of the ministry.*<sup>5</sup>

*The priesthood of all believers, from a Baptist perspective, is the denial of all sacerdotal claims on the part of a distinctive class in the Church.*<sup>6</sup> *There are no priests as distinct from people; all alike, in fact, are priests.*<sup>7</sup>

*Revelation 1:6 “and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever, Amen” (see also 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 5:10, 20:6)*

The concept of the *priesthood of all believers* has been an integral part of Baptist ecclesiology and practice from our beginnings in the early seventeenth century. In Baptist understanding the ability to minister is not determined by special decree or theological education or ordination or anything else the church may wish to hold to itself. Ministry in Baptist churches is determined on the basis of gift. Church rites become only a recognition of the gifts evident in the life of the believer.

So, in a Baptist church, any member of the body might preside at the communion table, or baptize a new believer, or preach a sermon, or chair a church business meeting or dedicate an infant or conduct or participate in any of the functions and ministries of the local church. The emphasis here is on the word “*might*”. For though, according to our belief in the *priesthood of all believers*, these things are possible, even allowable, in reality they happen more by exception than as the rule.

Australia has followed the British model in the development of a well educated, fully funded

and ordained Baptist Ministry. The result of this has been to weaken our practice of the *priesthood of all believers*, reserving the majority of ministry function for the “professional” (educated, funded, ordained) clergy and creating a subordinate class of believers known as the laity (*a very unbaptistic term but one often heard in NSW Baptist churches today*).

**What bivocational ministry does is to strengthen the role and function of the congregation because in a bivocational church the congregation is central to ministry.** The fact that the pastor is fulfilling a double calling on his life means that he can't do everything and in a bivocational church is not expected to. The US experience has been that bivocational churches experience greater congregational involvement than churches with fully funded pastors. A survey by the SBC in 1991 revealed that churches with bivocational pastors have 4.1 baptisms for every 100 members compared to churches with fully funded pastors which have 3.8 baptisms for every 100 members.

This matter of greater congregational involvement brings us to the second Scriptural perspective:

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE ASCENSION GIFTS**

In Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul reiterates five of the Spiritual gifts, viz. Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. These five gifts are often referred to as Christ's ascension gifts, and, unlike the gifts listed elsewhere by Paul: 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12 (*see also 1 Peter 4:10f*), these are Christ's gifts to the church rather than gifts of the Spirit given to individual believers. *Individuals endowed with these gifts are themselves 'gifts' from the ascended Christ to the Church (Eph.iv:7ff)*.<sup>8</sup> For our purposes here, we will focus primarily on Christ's gift of the pastor to the church.

The purpose of the ascension gifts is:

*To **prepare** God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12-13 NIV)*

Foulkes suggests that the NEB rendering for verse 12 is more accurate:

*To **equip** God's people for work in his service, for the building up of the body of Christ...*<sup>9</sup>

The word translated *prepare* (NIV) or *equip* (NEB) is the Greek *καταρτισμος*, in this form only used here in Ephesians 4. The verb *καταρτιζω* is used 13 times in the New Testament usually with the meaning *to put in order, restore, restore to its former condition*<sup>10</sup>. Matthew employs the term in chapter 4 and verse 21:

*Going on from there, he (Jesus) saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, **preparing** their nets. Jesus called them...*

The word *καταρτιζω* rendered here as *preparing* (NIV) presents a graphic picture of the fisherman in the detail of his craft. The three; Zebedee, James and John, have either been out fishing or are just about to commence fishing, though the former is more likely to be correct as the professional fisherman would always *prepare* his nets immediately on completion of the fishing expedition. The three are in their boat carefully inspecting the nets. The usual practice being to pull the net from the water over the edge of the hull and whilst doing so to inspect each thread and knot of the net. The fisherman is looking for broken threads and frayed or worn areas that could easily break with a big catch. They remove debris

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and other matter caught in the net and they ensure there are no tangles or snags that could delay a quick response when the fish are running.

This is the word Paul employs to describe the function of the pastor in relationship to the church. The pastor's primary function is to *prepare* God's people, i.e. to ready them for His service - and to use the vivid picture of the fisherman: to help untangle their lives; to remove the debris – the rubbish, everything that hinders, the sin that so easily entangles; to repair the worn and frayed threads that lead to failure and loss.

The word *καταρτιζω* is used outside the Scriptures to describe the healing work of a doctor who is caring for a patient with a broken bone or a dislocated joint. The doctor's action in taking hold of the patient's arm and firmly pulling and at the same time twisting the arm is to relocate it into its joint. This is also the picture behind the word used by Paul in Ephesians chapter 4. The pastor's role is to relocate dislocated saints in the Body of Christ. To help them find their place in the body, for when a joint is dislocated the whole body is in pain.  
*Selah*

As a fisherman *prepares* his nets and as a doctor *repairs* his patient so Christ has gifted pastors to the church to *prepare* and *repair* God's people for two essential ministries:

*for work in his service and  
for the building up of the body of Christ*

Getz suggests that the first, *work in his service*, refers to evangelism and the second, *building up of the body of Christ*, refers to edification, i.e. making disciples and teaching disciples.<sup>11</sup> Though a simplistic analysis of the verse, it is consistent with Christ's mission and commission to the church (*cf. Matthew 28:18-20*).

Paul's point in Ephesians 4:11ff is that the ascension gifts in general and pastors in particular, are Christ's gifts to the church to prepare/equip the people of God *so that* the people of God can do work in His service and *so that* the people of God can build up the body of Christ. It is not and never has been the intention of Christ for pastors do all the work of ministry, but when ministry is professionalised and pastors are trained to be and are seen as experts, then, it goes without saying that they will exceed their Biblical prescription as equippers of the people of God.

**Bivocational ministry helps to restore the balance.** By necessity bivocational pastors must be equippers of the people of God for they do not have the time to do all the work of ministry. In the American experience, bivocational pastors are not experts in every facet of ministry, for the most part, they have not had the privilege of a thorough theological education. They are simply practitioners of the pastoral gift and thus, by default, fulfil a more biblical approach to the pastoral function.

If necessity is the mother of invention then, in the case of bivocational ministry, necessity may be the mother of reinvention, giving rise to a healthier more viable church.

## BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY: An American perspective

The most comprehensive examples of bivocational ministry are found in the United States of America, particularly amongst the churches and associations of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Southern Baptists have some 17,000 bivocational churches in North America. To understand the widespread use of the bivocational model, it is necessary to understand something of the development and expansion of Baptist churches in the USA.

### The First Baptists in America

The first Baptist churches in America were in the New England colonies, to which many Puritans had emigrated. They did not spring historically from the English Baptist churches, but had an independent origin. (*Which may explain the more progressive and creative nature of Baptist churches in the United States*). Soon after arriving in Boston in 1631, Puritan minister Roger Williams adopted Separatist views. Forced to leave Massachusetts Bay, he founded the colony of Providence (present-day Rhode Island) in 1636 with complete freedom in religious matters. Two years later, he was baptized and formed the first Baptist church in America. A Baptist church was formed in Boston in 1665. Its members, persecuted for several years, drafted the first Baptist confession of faith in the American colonies. A number of preachers entered the Middle Colonies in the 1680s; and still others purchased land in the Southern Colonies in the 1680s and 1690s.

By the 1690s, congregations existed in South Carolina and Pennsylvania. Aided by the enthusiasm flowing from the first Great Awakening, the revival that swept the colonies in the mid-eighteenth century, Baptists soon became more numerous. The Philadelphia Association was formed in 1707, the Charleston in 1751, and others in New England, the Middle Colonies, and the South. In 1781, the first church west of the Appalachian Mountains was organized in Kentucky.

By 1790 Baptists became the largest denomination in America (*only to be surpassed by the Methodists in 1820*).



Baptist growth was achieved by multiplying small associations on the expanding frontier. These associations sent itinerant preachers to “destitute” places where people had

settled but churches had not been established. These itinerants preached the gospel and gathered believers into churches.<sup>12</sup>

With few exceptions, these preachers made their living in vocations other than preaching. They were bivocational: farmer-preachers, teacher-preachers, doctor-preachers, storeowner-preachers, sheriff-preachers, cowboy-preachers, merchant-preachers, and the list of occupations goes on. There was no policy or programme that produced this model of evangelist, church planter and pastor. Within the American context it just happened, probably driven, at least in part, by the new found freedom of religion, and it was the most natural means of establishing Baptist and other churches.

***The West was won, says Charles Chaney, virtually by men who made their own living and bootlegged the Gospel.***<sup>13</sup>

Today, some 39% of Southern Baptist churches have pastors whose livelihoods come from second vocations. To give an example from just one State, Texas. In 2001, the General Baptist Convention of Texas planted 202 new churches. Ninety per cent of these new churches are bivocational. According to a recent SBC press release, if present trends continue, bivocational Southern Baptist pastors will outnumber fully funded pastors within 10 years.<sup>14</sup>

Charles Chaney, former Vice-president, SBC Home Mission Board said in 1993,

*If Southern Baptists do make disciples in all the clans, small and large, which populate North America, it will be because many serve as pastors and in staff roles while making their living in other occupations. The goal of 50,000 congregations by AD 2000 is unattainable without leaders who serve as messengers of the Word while supporting themselves in other occupations. The absence of bivocational leaders will thwart Jesus' commission to disciple all the clans of the world and God's purpose to bring redemption to mankind.*<sup>15</sup>

By the conclusion of the year 2000, the total number of churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention was almost 60,000. The goal was reached and exceeded primarily through bivocational ministry. In the next year, 2001, Southern Baptists started 1,765 new churches. Of this number, 1,299 were church plants and 466 were new affiliates. The Southern Baptist Convention Church Planting Strategy is to double the number of SBC churches by the year 2020. A task, according to Chaney, that is unattainable without the resource of bivocational pastors.

## **BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY: A Challenging perspective**

It is, of course, easy to dismiss the American perspective as irrelevant to the Australian context. And it would be illegitimate to transfer the model without consideration of the very great differences between the two nations. Differences that are as much subtle as they are obvious. Nonetheless, to ignore the enormous contribution of bivocational ministry and its potential relevance to Australian Baptist life would be a grave error. The following sets out the advantages and challenges of bivocational ministry.

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>REASON</b>
<b>1. Self-supporting</b>	Without doubt one of the greatest advantages of bivocational ministry is the fact that the majority of the pastor's income is derived from sources outside the local church, usually secular employment of some kind. In most cases the pastor also supplies his own home and vehicle. The church's contribution covers ministry and travelling costs and whatever other remuneration the church and pastor negotiate.
<b>2. Releases church finances</b>	One of the difficulties for rural and small churches is the large proportion of the church's weekly income that is consumed by the pastoral package. By the time salary is paid and church utility expenses are covered, there is often very little left for the actual work of ministry. This was clearly identified in the recent report, <i>Money matters in the bush</i> . The report reveals that in 70% of rural churches, between 50-100% of the churches total income is required to cover the pastoral package. See pages 27, 28 of the <i>Money matters...</i> report for more detail.
<b>3. Long-term pastorates</b>	Although research evidence is not yet available, all the anecdotal evidence points to the fact that bivocational pastors stay in their churches longer than fully funded pastors. This is usually due to the fact that the town where the pastor serves is also his place of work; very often it is the place where he grew up, married and had a family; he has probably purchased a home; and, over all, has a greater sense of connection and belonging. <sup>16</sup>
<b>4. Community connection</b>	If the town where the pastor serves is also his home town, then he is already connected, has his own network of friends and acquaintances and finds ministry easier to establish because he is a local ( <i>e.g. Michael Carlisle in Mudgee</i> ). If, however, the town where the pastor serves is not his home town, he will still find it easier and quicker to establish himself in ministry because he is working from two fronts - the church where he pastors and the job where he works, and it is the latter that provides quicker acceptance and enables him to build a network of friends and a base for ministry.

ADVANTAGES	REASON
<p><b>5. Increased resource pool</b></p>	<p>Recruitment of pastors for rural and smaller churches is improved because we are able to enlist from a larger resource pool. No longer restricted to graduates from theological colleges, who are usually focused on a call where they will be fully funded, we are able to explore pastoral settlements with those who have a call to ministry but also a commitment to their vocation, or are early retirees, or those with transportable skills.</p>
<p><b>6. Greater congregational participation</b></p>	<p>As outlined above, bivocational ministry produces greater congregational participation because the minister, like his congregation, is balancing family, work and church responsibilities. These shared experiences seem to produce a greater sense of solidarity between congregation and pastor in bivocational churches. As a result, congregations seem to have a greater willingness to participate more fully in the life and ministry of the church.</p>
<p><b>7. Restores balance</b></p>	<p>Again, as stated earlier, by necessity bivocational pastors must be equippers of the people of God for they do not have the time to do all the work of ministry. Bivocational pastors minister to release their people into ministry and have no desire to restrict or limit ministry participation. Their goal is that stated in Ephesians 4:12 <i>to equip God's people for work in his service, for the building up of the body of Christ.</i></p>
<p><b>8. Cost effective</b></p>	<p>From a denominational perspective, bivocational ministry is far more cost effective than traditional models. In the writer's graduating year of theological training there were 23 graduates, today only 6 of these are still functioning in church ministry of any kind. This represents an enormous loss to the denomination, not only economically, but also in terms of people and skills for the Kingdom. Again, there is no hard research, but the evidence seems to support the notion that bivocational pastors last longer in ministry as well as staying longer in their churches.</p>
<p><b>9. Enlarges church staff</b></p>	<p>Sometimes a church simply does not have congregational members with the gifts and/or time for certain ministries. Some churches are finding that they can add additional staff by using bivocational ministers to lead specific ministries within their church. Some churches have a mix of fully funded and bivocational pastors.<sup>17</sup></p>

## CHALLENGES

## REASON

### 1. It's different

Though we have had a number of tentmaker pastors in the past, the concept of bivocational ministry as a deliberate and organised mission initiative and as an alternative ministry choice is new. As such, it may challenge some of our beliefs about the nature and function of the pastoral ministry.

### 2. Requires a different training regime

Our current model of theological training is not appropriate to the bivocational model for a number of reasons:

\* Time – bivocational pastors with work as well as ministry responsibilities do not have the time for 1, 2, 3 or 4 years of theological education.

\* Distance – theological education is centrally located and therefore far removed from the ministry focus of many bivocational pastors serving in rural areas. Because of distance, even part-time study is difficult, particularly given the secular work responsibilities of bivocational pastors.

\* Education – The overseas experience is that many bivocational pastors are not even high school graduates. Our current theological training is therefore, a daunting consideration which would exclude many potential bivocational pastors.

\* Relevance - Leith Anderson writes that *traditional seminary education is designed to train research theologians, who are to become parish practitioners. Probably, he says, they are adequately equipped for neither.*<sup>18</sup> Generally, the truth of this may be suspect or certainly subject to more empirical research, but specifically for bivocational pastors, it is a pertinent comment. *Current demands on pastors, suggests Anderson, focus on leadership, communication, administration, and interpersonal relationships. These skills often were not learned at seminary.*<sup>19</sup> These skills are the primary tools in the bivocational pastors toolbox. Any training programme for the bivocational pastor must give the highest priority to the development of ministry skills; everything else is secondary.

A training programme needs to fit the needs of bivocational pastors rather than bivocational pastors having to fit the training programme.

*(See discussion later on an appropriate training model for bivocational pastors)*

CHALLENGES	REASON
<p><b>3. Recruitment</b></p>	<p>Though the resource pool is larger for the recruitment of bivocational pastors, the logistics of tapping into that pool are yet to be developed in Australia. The American model is so well established and such an integral part of church life that recruitment of bivocational pastors is relatively easy. Recruitment for the establishment of a viable bivocational ministry in Australia is our single greatest challenge.</p>
<p><b>4. Acceptance</b></p>	<p>If I have a criticism of the American model it is the development of an “us and them” attitude amongst bivocational and fully funded pastors. Because of the sheer numbers and common needs of bivocational pastors they have instituted their own state and national organisations and support networks. Though this is understandable and desirable, it has also served to further divide pastors into the two categories of bivocational <b>or</b> fully-funded with, what appears to be, little interaction between the two groups. Some of the suspicion that arises, no doubt, comes from the view of fully-funded pastors and denominational leaders that bivocational pastors came into ministry through the back door and were ill-equipped to be “real” pastors. A recent press release from the Presbyterian News Service highlights the same problem amongst Presbyterian and Episcopalian bivocational ministers.<sup>20</sup> Such a lack of acceptance can affect local and denominational fellowship and can create unhealthy, reclusive and insular ministries which can ultimately erode denominational loyalty and support.</p>

## **BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY: A different perspective on training**

Specific training for bivocational pastors has only become a reality within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in the last ten years or so. Other conventions and denominations in the USA are still in the early stages of developing training programmes.

Training for bivocational pastors in the SBC is provided by individual state conventions at both Seminary and College level and by the combined six national SBC seminaries (Golden Gate, Midwestern, New Orleans, Southeastern, Southern, Southwestern) under the auspices of their Seminary Extension programme.

At both the State and National level, specific training programmes have been established to meet the peculiar needs and circumstances of bivocational pastors. All training is offered off-campus, at more than 500 extension centres located across the USA or by independent study. Subjects are provided by correspondence or some other extension means, including on-line teaching via the Internet.

The Tennessee Baptist Convention has recently introduced a Certificate in Bivocational Ministry Studies which is jointly provided by the Tennessee Convention, Seminary Extension and the Moench Center for Church Leadership at Belmont University.

The Certificate in Bivocational Studies comprises a theological foundation component made up of six Seminary Extension courses and a ministry skills component comprising twelve seminars in skills development.

Study and teaching for the theological subjects within the Certificate are provided off-campus in local association areas or by independent study. The ministry skills subjects are presented in seminar and workshop formats which are conducted in local association areas.

Subjects required in the Theological component include:

- How to understand the Bible
- Old Testament Survey I
- Old Testament Survey II
- New Testament Survey I
- New Testament Survey II
- Systematic Theology

Subjects included in the Ministry Skills component include:

- Preaching that impacts lives
- Pastoral Leadership
- Leading Dynamic Worship
- Resolving Conflict
- The Rules of the Game
- The Personal Prayer Life of a Bivocational Minister
- Servant Leadership
- Interpersonal Skills
- Change Leaders in Ministry
- Decision-making
- Stress Management
- Time Management

All the training programmes developed for bivocational pastors in the USA have recognised that people in bivocational ministry have special needs and circumstances. Full or part-time work commitments, church responsibilities and family all compound together to create limited time for study and other extracurricular activities.

If bivocationalism is to become a successful ministry option in Australia, then it requires our unreserved affirmation and support. Such support requires the establishment of an appropriate and relevant training regime with the flexibility to accommodate and encourage maximum participation that will produce a competent and well trained group of pastoral practitioners.

This could be done in Australia by individual theological colleges developing their own courses for bivocational pastors in their particular State or, it could follow the Seminary Extension model which would see all of our State Baptist theological colleges working together to create a national training programme, acceptable to all and credited by all. Such programme would need to be practitioner focused, provided off-campus and within easy reach of bivocational pastors. The Certificate course developed by the Tennessee Baptist Convention, with the dual theological and skills components, would seem to be an appropriate model for the Australian situation.

If the increasing trend toward bivocational ministry is correct, then it presents Australian Baptists with a unique opportunity to be at the forefront of training development.

## BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY: An Australian perspective

The 2001 Census reveals an Australian population of 18,972,350 persons, a 6% increase in population over the 1996 Census. People describing themselves as Baptists in the 2001 Census numbered 309,205 or 1.629% of the population. In the 1996 Census, Baptists in Australia numbered 295,145 or 1.649% of the population. Numerically, Baptists in Australia have increased by 14,060 in the period 1996 – 2001. However, as a percentage of the Australian population, Baptists have declined by 0.02%

Census figures, of course, have little relationship to the actual number of members in Australian Baptist churches. The latest national statistics for Australian Baptist Churches indicate a total membership of 62,092. Table 1. contains a State by State analysis.

**Table 1. Baptist Church statistics State by State for the year 2001**

State	Churches	F'ships	Members <sup>1</sup>	Census <sup>2</sup>	%pop.
New South Wales/ACT	298	28	20,255	100,793	1.51
Victoria	182	16	15,491	66,421	1.43
Queensland	141	29	12,428	70,285	1.92
South Australia	70	10	6,000	26,495	1.81
Western Australia	91	14	5,547	30,418	1.64
Tasmania	32	3	1,921	8,984	1.97
Northern Territory	9	1	450	5,778	2.74
Other Territories				31	-
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>62,092</b>	<b>309,205</b>	<b>1.63</b>

<sup>1</sup>. Australian Baptist statistics for year ended June 30, 2001 as reported in the NSW 2002 Baptist Handbook

<sup>2</sup>. Census figures as provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001. ( NB. The NSW Baptist Handbook contains incorrect 1996 Census figures as the figure for NSW fails to include the ACT.)

It also needs to be remembered that, increasingly, membership has little relationship to the actual number of people attending the worship and other services of a Baptist church.

Irrespective of which figures you choose to believe, the fact is that Baptists in Australia are declining. And this decline is across all states with the exception of Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The following table shows total Australian Baptist church membership for the five-year period 1997 – 2001.

**Table 2. Australian Baptist Church membership 1997 - 2001**

Year ended	Churches	Fellowships	Membership
<b>30<sup>th</sup> June</b>			
<b>1997</b>	820	92	63,771
<b>1998</b>	826	84	63,553
<b>1999</b>	824	86	62,849

<b>2000</b>	823	101	62,579
<b>2001</b>	836	96	62,092

Table 2. above reveals that in the five year period, 1997 – 2001, Baptist church membership across Australia declined from 63,771 in 1997 to 62,092 in 2001, a loss of 1,679 members which represents a decline rate of 2.6% over the five-year period. This decline, however, is not uniform as revealed in Table 3. below.

**Table 3. Baptist Church membership State-by-State 1997 - 2001**

	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>± %</b>
<b>NSW</b>	21,181	21,205	21,038	20,620	20,255	<b>-4.4</b>
<b>VICT</b>	15,821	15,468	15,226	15,198	15,491	<b>-2.1</b>
<b>QLD</b>	12,972	13,134	13,100	12,675	12,428	<b>-4.2</b>
<b>SA</b>	6,200	6,200	6,000	6,000	6,000	<b>-3.2</b>
<b>WA</b>	5,075	5,036	5,068	5,619	5,547	<b>+9.3</b>
<b>TAS</b>	2,083	2,080	1,967	1,947	1,921	<b>-7.78</b>
<b>NT</b>	439	439	450	520	450	<b>+2.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>63,771</b>	<b>63,553</b>	<b>62,849</b>	<b>62,579</b>	<b>62,092</b>	<b>-2.6</b>

Table 3. above reveals that all States, with the exception of Western Australia and the Northern Territory, suffered membership decline in the five year period 1997 – 2001. The Northern Territory growth rate of 2.5% is from an extremely small base, and represents a total gain of only 11 members. The Western Australian growth rate of 9.3% over the five-year period is more substantial, exceeding the national population growth rate by a further 50%.

The decline rates for each of the other States is all the more significant when the national population has grown by 6% in the same period.

Examining NSW more closely, the 4.4% decline over the five-year period, 1997 – 2001, is significantly more than the national decline rate for Baptist membership. Membership decline, however, is only the beginning of a fairly negative picture for NSW Baptists. In this period, the number of churches and fellowships grew marginally from 320 in 1997 to 327 in 2001. But in this same period the attendance at Sunday morning worship services declined from 22,690 in 1997 to 20,067 in 2001, a loss of 2,623 morning worshippers or a decline of 11.56% over the five-year period. Likewise, attendance at Sunday evening services declined from 8,061 in 1997 to 5,923 in 2001, a loss of 2,138 evening worshippers or a decline of 26.52% over this five-year period. **A word of explanation and warning needs to be sounded with regard to attendance figures.** In 1997, 99 churches and fellowships, or 31%, failed to submit the annual statistical return. Although their previous year's membership figures (1996) were used to keep membership data for 1997 reasonably accurate, no estimation was attempted for attendance. This means the annual attendance data for 1997 is missing morning and evening attendance figures for 99 churches. Similarly, in 1998, 78 churches/fellowships, 24%, failed to submit the statistical return. In 1999, 58 churches/fellowships, 18%, failed to submit returns; in 2000 there were 118 churches/ fellowships, 36%, who failed to submit returns and in 2001 there were 122 churches/fellowships, 37%, who failed to submit the annual statistical return. The absence of statistical data for morning and evening attendance from such a large number of churches makes

comparison over the five-year period difficult. An examination of those churches who fail to submit the annual statistical return reveals a monotonous consistency, i.e., it is often the same churches that fail to return the annual statistics year after year. (*The high number of churches failing to submit annual statistics requires a revision of the way we collect statistical data.*)

1999, however, reveals an interesting anomaly as only 58 churches/fellowships, 18%, failed to submit the annual statistical return but the morning attendance plummeted by 3,406, the largest loss in morning attendance in the period under review. From the highest statistical base in five years we have the highest loss in morning attendance. Similarly, evening attendance for 1999 fell by 1,248.

Baptism figures for this period, 1997 – 2001, also reveal a disturbing trend. In 1997 there were 3.7 baptisms for every 100 members in NSW Baptist churches. In 1998 the baptisms per 100 members peaked at 4.0 but by the year 2001 the figure was down to 3.1 baptisms for every 100 members, the lowest baptism to membership ratio in at least a decade. In 1992 NSW Baptist churches had 4.7 baptisms for every 100 members. In the ten-year period, 1992 – 2001, NSW Baptist churches experienced a 34% decline in the number of baptisms per 100 members.

Table 4. below sets out the NSW trends more fully.

**Table 4. NSW Baptist statistics 1996 - 2000**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Churches &amp; Fellowships</b>	<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Baptisms per 100 members</b>	<b>Attendance AM</b>	<b>PM</b>
<b>1997</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>21,181</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>22,690</b>	<b>8,061</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>21,205</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>24,079</b>	<b>7,984</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>21,038</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>20,673</b>	<b>6,736</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>20,620</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>19,321</b>	<b>6,616</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>20,255</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>20,067</b>	<b>5,923</b>

The above statistics reveal an alarming decline trend across all the major indicators for NSW Baptist churches, with the exception of the marginal increase in the number of churches and fellowships. Table 4. shows a decline in membership, morning and evening attendance figures (*noting the warning above*), and baptisms. The decline in Sunday morning and evening attendance figures of 11.56% and 26.52% respectively, is of particular concern as attendance is often a precursor to membership trends. The attendance figures in Table 4. would indicate that NSW Baptist church membership will certainly decline further over the next several years.

There is an urgent need to instigate a range of remedial actions if the above trends are to be stabilised and reversed. The above figures would suggest that our highest priority should be a renewed emphasis on mission and church planting. And the most cost effective means of planting new churches is the use of bivocational ministry.

Understandably, the denomination has maintained a strong orientation toward ministry in urban centres. Ministry to rural and remote communities has often been postponed or neglected because of the costs involved, the smaller population base, the geographic spread of population, the problems of isolation and remoteness, and the inherent difficulty of recruiting workers. With the growing emphasis on church planting as the most effective means of evangelism and church growth, there is, however, a serious lack of church planting activity outside the Sydney-Newcastle-Wollongong population corridor. The number of sizeable towns and communities in rural NSW without a Baptist church is significant.

**Table 5. Significant\* NSW towns without a Baptist Church**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Town</b>
Balranald	Coonabarabran	Quirindi
Barraba	Coonamble	Tenterfield
Berrima	Dorrigo	Tumbarumba
Boggabri	Gilgandra	Uralla
Braidwood	Grenfell	Walcha
Branxton	Kyogle	Walgett
Brewarrina	Macksville	Warren
Bulahdelah	Manilla	Wee Waa
Byron Bay	Mittagong	Werris Ck.
Canowindra	Moss Vale	West Wyalong
Condobolin	Oberon	

\*Towns quoted are considered significant because of their population or strategic location

An examination of the location of Baptist Churches within New South Wales reveals 42 Local Government Areas (LGA's), i.e. 25% of the total number of LGA's in the State, without a Baptist Church presence. In people terms, 184,676 people without a Baptist Church in their Local Government Area.

**Table 6. Local Government Areas within N.S.W without a Baptist Church**

<b>Local Govt.Area</b>	<b>Pop.</b>	<b>Local Govt.Area</b>	<b>Pop.</b>
Balranald	2964	Merriwa	2257
Berrigan	8161	Murray	5319
Bland	6681	Nundle	1337
Bombala	2911	Nymboida	4354
Boorowa	2376	Oberon	4608
Brewarrina	2193	Quirindi	4872
Central Darling	2651	Rylstone	3734
Coonabarabran	6994	Snowy River	17697
Conargo	1561	Tallaganda	2420
Coolah	3770	Tenterfield	6529
Coonamble	4804	Tumbarumba	3613
Copmanhurst	3968	Unincorporated area	1078
Crookwell	4250	Urana	1497
Gilgandra	4844	Wakool	4941
Guyra	4262	Walcha	3208
Harden	3773	Walgett	8550
Holbrook	2529	Warren	3290
Hume	6835	Weddin	3788
Jerilderie	1960	Wentworth	7245
Kyogle	9716	Windouran	422
Lockhart	3487	Yallaroi	3227

NSW Baptists can no longer afford to ignore the opportunity to plant new churches in rural NSW. Many of the problems cited in the past to explain our lack of church planting Bi-Vocational Ministry

activity in rural areas are no longer pertinent. Bivocational ministry provides us with the much needed tools to reassert our evangelistic zeal and win lost men and women for Jesus Christ.

In the light of the above decline trends in NSW Baptist churches, every means available to us needs to be employed if we are to reverse these declines and move forward into a new period of expansion and growth.

Bivocational ministry can provide some of the solutions to the problems we face.

Baptist ecclesiology means we face less difficulties than other denominations in the use of bivocational ministry. Those denominations with a sacramental view of the ministry are compelled to restrict ministry function to those trained, ordained and authorised by their respective synods and councils. Baptists face no such restrictions and are free to develop a range of ministry models, including the use of bivocational pastors.

## **The 2 pig theory of church growth**



**A farmer has one pig. He cares for it, feeds it and it grows at a particular rate.**

**Another farmer has 2 pigs. He cares for them, feeds them and they want more and more and more and they grow much faster and they reach their prime much earlier than the single pig from the adjoining farm.**

**Principle: 2 pigs grow faster than 1 pig**

**Application:**

**A denomination has one church in a town. The pastor cares for the church and feeds it and the church grows at a particular rate.**

**The same denomination has two churches in a neighbouring town. The pastors of these two churches care for their congregations, feed them and they grow much faster than the single congregation in the adjoining town.**

**Principle: 2 churches grow faster than 1 church**

**Reason:**

**Who knows? Maybe there's a sense of competition between the two churches. Maybe they share ideas or watch what's working in the other church. Maybe the diversity that two churches provide allows them to develop their different styles without the internal conflicts that so often beset many churches. Maybe they stimulate each other to achieve more for the Kingdom. (Interestingly, Victoria's largest churches have been Blackburn & Blackburn North, located just a couple of kilometres from each other)**

**NSW has many communities and towns that could easily sustain more than one Baptist church, which is now possible with the option of bivocational ministry.**

## **CONCLUSION**

This Report is based on the author's observations of bivocational ministry in the USA and subsequent research.

Bivocationalism is biblical, it reasserts foundational Baptist principles, it works, and, though its employment creates a number of challenges to some of our beliefs regarding the nature and function of the pastoral ministry, its advantages far outweigh any negative considerations.

Bivocationalism provides another ministry model which has great possibilities for church planting, particularly in rural and remote communities. And, given the decline trends evident across NSW Baptist churches, bivocational ministry can provide the needed impetus to help reverse the current declines and move NSW Baptists into a new era of growth and expansion.

I submit this Report to the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT for your serious consideration and action with the prayer that we will embrace every opportunity to win lost people to Jesus Christ, by whatever means available to us, and see the birth and growth of healthy and vibrant new churches.

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16. *Dennis Bickers "The Tentmaking Pastor", p.120*
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# Bivocational & Tentmaking

## **What's the difference between a bivocational pastor and a tentmaker pastor?**

There is no difference at all. Bivocational is a modern term for what used to be known as tentmaking. The *bi* prefix in the word *bivocational* is Latin and means twice or two. The word *vocation* means occupation, business or profession. Thus, the word *bivocational* means a person with two occupations: one secular and the other religious.

## **Why is self-support called tentmaking?**

Because the Apostle Paul literally made tents to support his ministry. Today, *tentmaking* (*bivocational*) is a missional term for Paul's model of ministry finance and strategy.

## **But did Paul really do much tentmaking?**

Yes. 1 Cor. 9 makes this crystal clear. First Paul argues for church and donor support, and establishes his right to have it, as an apostle. But then he says *three times* that he has *never* made any use of it. His team has *always* supported itself--and not mere token employment. We know this was a career-long pattern because this statement comes near the end of his third missionary journey.

## **Why spend hours at manual labour when there is a world to win for Christ?**

Again, look at the example of the Apostle Paul. He knew his hours in the workplace would speed up his mission. Paul's three main biblical reasons are found in 1 Cor. 9 and 2 Thess. 3.

1) The job gives Paul and his message credibility. He preaches the Gospel tirelessly, under severe persecution, and *for no financial gain*, and this convinces even his enemies that he is sincere and his message is true.

2) The job aids Paul's identification with the working classes who make up the bulk of the Roman Empire. Only they can take the Gospel to their own non-Greek speaking villages in the hinterlands. Consequently, whole regions were quickly won!

3) The job permits Paul's modelling for converts: *discipleship; godly living; a biblical work ethic*, all essential for strong families and churches.

Every convert must spread the Gospel without pay! Tentmaking is a non-negotiable principle in Paul's strategy "as a skilled master builder." Initially, Paul's churches never saw a paid, professional, religious worker. Unpaid lay evangelism is the norm in the early church. Paul

planted self-propagating, self-multiplying churches which were penetrating the whole region with the gospel.

### **Doesn't a job leave too little time and energy for spiritual ministry?**

The question assumes we serve God only in our free time. Bivocational ministers *integrate* work and witness. Their ministry is *full-time*. Every day they *live out* the Gospel and share it every chance they get. Their work provides the platform for natural contacts. Their integrity, quality work, caring relationships and well chosen comments about God, when appropriate, are all part of the broader ministry base they seek to establish.

### **Why doesn't the church pay the minister? Isn't that the way it's done?**

For a long time, churches have paid ministers to care for the congregation, preach, lead Bible studies, officiate at weddings and funerals, and do all the other things that ministers are trained to do. In some places, however, congregations are getting smaller and are no longer able to afford the minister's salary. There are some towns where we do not have a church but believe we should establish one. Denominations no longer have the financial resources to be able to solve some of these problems. We could simply say that if a church can't afford a minister then they will have to go without one. And, in those towns where there is no Baptist Church, well, we won't be able to establish one. **Or**, we could look for other ways to solve these problems. One of the ways other churches and other countries have solved these problems is by using bivocational pastors and this has worked very successfully, particularly in the USA. If we are to maintain a gospel witness throughout Australia, irrespective of location, then we need to develop alternative models for ministry. The bivocational model is one way to provide Christian ministry, even to small and isolated rural communities.

### **What sort of work can bivocational ministers do?**

Almost any and every. Those that have transportable skills like carpenters, electricians, plumbers, motor mechanics, tilers, painters and many other trade qualifications find it reasonably easy to get work in most rural and urban areas. Good tradespeople are always in high demand. Professional people like nurses, doctors, accountants, solicitors, dentists, physiotherapists and other allied professions likewise find their services in high demand. Many of these professions are also able to set up their own practice and work for themselves. And then there are those who are willing and able to do whatever is available - mowing lawns, cleaning windows, driving buses, odd-jobs, cleaning homes and businesses, gardening... the list is almost endless.

### **What preparation do bivocational ministers need?**

The first thing you need is a call to serve the Lord in ministry. Everything else is secondary. Experience in your own church is fundamental. It is in serving - as a deacon, Sunday school teacher, youth leader, musician or in some other field that your calling and gifting for ministry is confirmed. Leading Bible studies, discipling new believers, sharing your faith with others, spending time with people in need - this is all part of ministry training and you don't have to attend Bible or Theological college to get this experience. Where God has placed you right now may be part of the training you need to be a bivocational pastor. Once the door to bivocational ministry is opened there will be other opportunities for you to keep on learning and acquiring the skills you need in ministry. Special courses and programmes are being designed for bivocational pastors to equip them for this special calling to ministry.

## **APPENDIX A.**

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### **'Tentmaking' ministers predicted to become Southern Baptist norm**

By Linda Lawson

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--If present trends continue, bivocational Southern Baptist pastors will outnumber full-time pastors within 10 years. Or, to use a biblical term, tentmaking is strongest in areas such as major cities outside the Bible Belt where Southern Baptists are weakest, said Carl Barrington, national missionary for tentmaking ministries for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board.

Barrington led a conference, "Ministry in the 21st Century," during the Aug. 8-13 Student Conference at Glorieta (N.M.), a LifeWay Conference Center. He noted that 2.6 persons are graduating from seminaries today for every one existing full-time ministry position. "The greatest challenge we face in the 21st century is the connecting of every person to their God-called ministry."

Only since 1948 has full-time ministry been the dominant Southern Baptist model, Barrington said. In 1972, only 32 percent of Southern Baptist pastors were tentmakers, but in 1999 it has risen to 39 percent and is still climbing. By 2008, he predicted more than half of pastors serving Southern Baptist churches will be supporting themselves and their families through a marketplace vocation.

Barrington called on campus and church student leaders to challenge today's collegians to prepare themselves both for a vocation in the marketplace and for ministry in the major cities of the United States.

"We need to be graduating people who consider themselves to be lifetime tentmaker ministers," he said.

Barrington emphasized that the traditional 20th-century model of starting a church by buying land, building a building and calling a full-time pastor will continue. However, he said additional ministry paradigms must be added, in part due to a disparity in where trained leaders are located.

He noted that 80 percent of trained Southern Baptist leaders live south of the Mason-Dixon line and east of New Mexico. He cited a small Atlanta church that received 130 resumes to fill its pastorate while churches in Nebraska, Pennsylvania and other places outside the Bible Belt may go leaderless for one or more years.

In addition to tentmaker pastors and church staff members, Barrington said "we've got to have new ways of taking the church to the people. It is no longer true that just doing ministry well enough at the local church will eventually reach people.

"We must get more of us involved in ministry where we work, where we play and get to know people in many different ways," he said.

As examples, Barrington cited an Atlanta tentmaker who leads a Tuesday night Bible study for taxi drivers. The study is held at the end of a subway line where drivers congregate to pick

up passengers. A professional fisherman ministers to persons participating in fishing tournaments. A medical doctor leads a Thursday night Bible study for his colleagues.

"If we can find people who love to play golf, we can help them see they can lead Bible studies on golf courses on Sunday afternoon," he said.

Barrington called on student ministers to consider sponsoring innovative ministry conferences to acquaint students, especially freshmen and sophomores, with the ministry opportunities available to persons willing to consider tentmaking.

Emphasizing that no one can predict the future, he listed eight factors that, if present trends continue, likely will characterize Southern Baptist ministry in the 21st century:

- The perceived differences between ordained and lay ministers will decrease as additional ministry models are adopted.
- A decrease in financial support of churches because Christians under 50 have had less exposure to the concepts of biblical stewardship and sacrificial giving. "We will have to become creative at doing more with less financially," he said, unless increasing emphasis is given to the importance of stewardship.
- An increase in spiritual and biblical ignorance among Americans. An estimated 40 percent of Americans have no "Christian memory," exposure to biblical or Christian principles.
- A decrease in denominational loyalty, unless there is increased focus on Southern Baptist distinctives.
- An increase in the number of Christians accepting God's call to ministry at all ages of life.
- An increase in the numbers of younger, college- and seminary-educated tentmakers.
- Increasing awareness among Southern Baptists of ministry needs that can be met by tentmakers.
- Increasing involvement of Southern Baptists in volunteer, short-term and tentmaking missions.

## **APPENDIX B.**

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### **Tentmakers seek church's recognition and respect**

By Evan Silverstein

*Presbyterian News Service*

Tentmaking pastors who split their time between the pulpit and their "day jobs" are under-appreciated leaders of the church who represent an emerging model of ministry in the new millennium.

That was the message a group of about 40 Presbyterian and Episcopalian tentmakers heard during a November 3-5 conference on tentmaking ministry sponsored by the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT) and the National Association for the Self-Supporting Active Ministry (NASSAM) of the Episcopal Church. Members serve in church positions but derive all or most of their income from outside employment.

Bishop William Persell of the Diocese of Chicago, a guest panellist during the conference, said the tentmaking ministry is "very largely hidden, and not understood by most people within the context of the church."

"I think the church as a whole does not recognize ordained ministry that happens outside the context of a parish, or possibly a chaplaincy," Persell told participants in the conference. "I think we have a long way to go to get a real understanding of what some of you are about, and have been for many years."

The conference, whose theme was *Tentmaking 2000: The Outer Fringe or the Cutting Edge?*, featured perspectives from those on the front lines of ministry in the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches. It included panel discussions with seminary, presbytery and diocesan leaders of the tentmaking role and the possible impact of an expansion of tentmaking ministries.

Tentmakers said Presbyterians and Episcopalians must "wake up" to the reality of tentmaking as a cutting-edge solution to the shortage of full-time clergy and the declining number of congregations able to afford full-time pastors.

Although its roots date to the Old Testament, tentmakers are often dismissed as pastoral flunkies forced into two-vocation careers because they can't nab a permanent calling. The Rev. Ron Simpson, of Cincinnati, Ohio, a Presbyterian tentmaker, blamed some of his colleagues for doing too little to broaden the faith community's perspective on the importance of tentmakers.

"Tentmakers sort of see themselves as second-class citizens," said Simpson, a tentmaker for 25 years and an employee of General Electric before his retirement in 1997. "I like to see tentmaking as providing a full ministry on a part-time schedule. You're providing a full ministry in every sense of the word, you're just not there all the time. Without tentmakers, I think a lot of smaller churches would go under sooner."

Simpson said congregants need to help tentmakers with duties from visiting hospitalised parishioners to maintaining the grounds.

"That's how the lay and the tentmaking clergy can work together," said Simpson. "And that strengthens the church. It gets the members working so they don't feel like they're paying a full-time minister."

Tentmakers whose name is a reference to leather working, a trade of the apostle Paul, exchanged stories about their own "tents" and discussed the polity of the two denominations during the gathering at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, a sprawling Catholic seminary about 40 miles north of Chicago.

Participants urged seminaries to step up their efforts in preparing tentmakers and commissioned lay leaders to fill the growing number of empty pulpits in both denominations.

"The need will grow and it is growing for (pastoral leadership)," said the Rev. John P. Jewell, a panellist and director of Seminary Technological Services at the Presbyterian-related

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. "I think that is under that part of tentmaking as the ministry of the 'gap.'"

The conference also provided "quality time" for bonding among the 22 Presbyterian clergy and the 16 Episcopalians, who are also bankers, teachers, farmers, writers and parents.

"Tentmaking is also for the large churches who need a part-time assistant, or the medium-size churches who are just thinking they're moving into needing an associate pastor but can't afford to call one," said Amy Isbell Hanschen, of Austin, Texas, who as an ordination candidate seeking a call is working for a national corporation that places chaplains in businesses to counsel employees.

"Tentmaking is ideally suited for new-church development and church re-development. It crosses all of the boundaries," said Isbell Hanschen, whose primary "tent" consists of her husband and four children. "I can be a mom and I can provide ministry."

*Evan Silverstein is a reporter for the Presbyterian News Service.*

