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Hartness M. Samushonga

To cite this article: Hartness M. Samushonga (2019) A theological reflection of bivocational pastoral ministry: a personal reflective account of a decade of bivocational ministry practice experience, *Practical Theology*, 12:1, 66-80, DOI: [10.1080/1756073X.2019.1575040](https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2019.1575040)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2019.1575040>



Published online: 10 Feb 2019.



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# A theological reflection of bivocational pastoral ministry: a personal reflective account of a decade of bivocational ministry practice experience

Hartness M. Samushonga

Bivo Support, Hull University Business School, Hull, UK

## ABSTRACT

Bivocational Ministry (BM) practice is not a new phenomenon. Ministry practitioners are increasingly taking on the option of serving in ministry at the same time as having another vocation outside of ministry. However, in addition to a dearth of research that focuses on BM; the scarcity of reflective academic discourse on BM is apparent. This paper, nonetheless, offers a valuable contribution to this area of Practical Theology, which deserves attention. It draws from 10 years of consistent BM practice through a reflective methodology. This reflection explores various aspects of BM and engages questions of the authenticity and the efficacy of BM through theory, which include Scripture and research. This paper thus provides a viable foundation for further academic discourse on the notion of BM.

## KEYWORDS

Theological reflection;  
bivocational ministry;  
bivocational pastor;  
bivocational clergy; pastoral  
reflection

## Introduction

This paper exemplifies a form of doing Practical Theology (PT) where the ministry practitioner applies theological reflection in order to undertake a more in-depth exploration of their ministry situation. PT has been described in a number of ways. Some of the descriptions include the conceptualisation of PT as: (1) 'a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical and practically transforming' (Pattison and Woodward 1994, 6); (2) an approach of doing theology that emphasise the need to first 'uncover and, then, reflect critically on the actual situation to test it for the presence of the Spirit, relevance, and significance in light of the gospel' (Lawler 2002, 199). More recently Swinton and Mowatt (2016, 7) have described PT as a 'critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world'. Ward (2017, xi) rightly points out that in spite of diversity in terms of theological and methodological positions; 'the common theme that holds PT together as a discipline is its perspective on, and beginning-point in human experience and its desire to reflect theologically on such experience' (see also Swinton and Mowatt 2016). Ward (2017) however makes a plausible case in arguing that while there is the general

consensus that PT begins with an experience, there are alternative ways of looking at this. He argues that the experience is not isolated from, and is to some extent a product of theological formation (which can be viewed as the starting point). In other words, the experience may not be purely the starting point – as it may have been formed by the practitioner's *theological understandings and traditions*. Nevertheless, it is more fitting to consider *the experience* (Bivocational Ministry (BM)) as the starting point in this treatise – because both my theological and ecclesiological traditions were not oriented towards BM.

PT is a *critical, analytic and revelatory* enterprise (see Ward 2017). To achieve this objective, PT incorporates some 'tools' of social sciences such as empirical research (see Swinton and Mowatt 2006; Cartledge 2012; Swinton and Mowatt 2016; Ward 2017). There is however limited BM focused empirical research and academic discourse – in spite of the prevalence of the practice. I will, however, make reference to some existing BM research in this work. It is widely considered that doing PT is underpinned by theological reflection. In fact Swinton and Mowatt (2016) assert that PT is theological reflection. Theological reflection is described in a variety of ways. Ward (2017) in his book *Introducing Theology* describes various methods of doing theological reflection. These include: (1) variations of the pastoral cycle; (2) Swinton and Mowatt's (2006, 2016) complexifying practice; (3) testing of theological assertions; (4) the approach of generating theoretical frameworks and (5) narrative based 'reflection on the self'. All these varied approaches are in some way encompassed in Kinast's (1990, 3) broad definition of theological reflection as a process that helps to 'confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand how we understand our experience and how we understand the religious tradition'.

My theological reflection framework incorporates 'self-reflection' and borrows from the principles of autoethnography methodology. Like many concepts, autoethnography has no single definition. However, early conceptualisation of autoethnography advanced that the methodology is focused on self and reveals personal investments, interpretations and analyses (Goldschmidt 1977). Autoethnography is generally defined as 'a way of using personal experience to investigate a particular issue or concern that has wider cultural or religious significance' (Walton 2014, xxxii). One of the sustained (positivist) criticisms of autoethnography is the claim that it is 'unscientific' and full of bias (Denzin 2000; Ploder and Stadlbauer 2016). Nevertheless, autoethnography is considered to be 'particularly effective in reflective theological writing because it allows us to look with fresh eyes at familiar beliefs and practices' (Walton 2014, xxxii). This reflection incorporates the following autoethnography data gathering methods: recalling, interviewing others (bivocational ministers) (in Samushonga 2014), analysing-self, reviewing personal journals and reflecting on specific issues pertaining to the subject matter (BM) (see Holman, Adams and Ellis 2016). It is my hope that my reflection will offer bivocational ministers, the practical theology community and the wider church a rich foundation for further reflection and or discourse on the subject of BM.

## The situation

The early formation of my ministry practice dates back 2 decades when I started serving as a lay leader within an Evangelical Pentecostal Church denomination in my early twenties – while also working as a nurse in London. Eight years later, following completing seminary training, I followed my church planting passion and calling. In 2007, I planted the church

that I currently serve in a leadership and pastoral capacity. I have in the last decade served in the church while working full-time in service management roles in the health sector. I have been fortunate to be a practitioner in two fields (nursing and practical theology), which place emphasis on reflective practice as a key principle for stimulating continuous practice development. Furthermore, management and leadership theory (outside of nursing and theology) advances the notion that effective leadership is by nature reflective (Duignan 1988; Gray 2007; Jordan 2010). I have consequently become more intentional about reflecting on my practice in both my professional and ministry vocations. This has enabled me to reflect on some aspects of my BM practice and undertake some research on burnout in BM for my MA Theology degree dissertation project. However, until now, I had not taken the opportunity to more critically *reflect* on my BM experience as a whole. As I contemplated to do so, I asked myself the following questions: (1) what is really BM?; (2) How did I end up in bivocational ministry?; What is my theological view of BM? As I explored these questions, I surmised that my 10 years of BM practice and experience potentially provides a viable context and experience for exploring BM in general and more academically.

## Defining bivocational ministry

There is no single way of defining what has been labelled *Bivocational Ministry* (BM). A number of terms have been coined and applied in different contexts. These include; (1) voluntary clergy; (2) auxiliary priests; (3) honorary ministers; (4) worker/working priests; (5) priest-workers; (6) tent-making ministers – from Apostle Paul’s example; (7) dual-role pastors or priests; (8) self-supporting pastors or priests; (9) non-stipendiary ministers, which according to Vaughan (1987) came into the official terminology of the Church of England (COFE) in about 1977. However, from a broader perspective, beyond the COFE, bivocational ministers have been described as those ministers having two vocations, ‘one that is ministry oriented and another that is outside the church’ (Dorsett 2010, 1) (see also Donaldson 2016). This description encompasses most BM situations, regardless of how time is divided between the two vocations or how the ministers are remunerated (or not) (Samushonga 2014). This is unlike descriptions of the phenomena that strictly describe a bivocational minister as one who serves in a paid ministry position and has income from another source (see McCarty 1996; Bickers 2010). This narrow definition is not suitable for my situation (and others) as I am not in a paid ministry position. It is also common to use the terms bivocational minister and part-time minister interchangeably. However, many bivocational ministers do not describe themselves as part-time because they consider their entire lives as full-time ministry (McDougall 2016), which has been termed ‘missional living’ (Donaldson 2016). Nevertheless, while I consider that Dorsett’s definition (above) takes a broader conceptualisation of the phenomenon and fits my situation (a pastor with another non-ministry vocation), it does not encompass every ministry situation. This definition primarily focuses on the clergy. There are however, other forms of Christian ministry that are carried out outside of the church setting. Theological education is one good example. PT has in fact evolved from a praxis of ordained ministry to practices of Christian faith communities in a broader sense – where it now encompasses praxes of fields such as care, education, church, politics, media, leisure, sport etc. (Ganzevoort and Roeland 2014). Given this understanding, I

proffer a more broad definition of a bivocational minister as *one who has a ministry vocation and another vocation that is not ministry oriented*. Even this definition is open to further interrogation due to the uniqueness and diversity of ministry practice.

## History of bivocational ministry

The concept of BM i is not new. Gustafson (2016) asserts that in the early church, the “full-time” (fully funded) pastor was the exception and BM the norm. According to Gustafson (2016), bivocational ministers in the early church included; (1) Spyridon of Cyrus (ca. 270–348) who served as Bishop of Trimythous and as a shepherd; (2) priests who served with Basil of Cappadocia (330–379) who were *working and earning their daily bread*; (3) rural pastors described by Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) as *yoking the oxen and driving the plow*. Gustafson highlights that Evangelical Free Church preachers in America were largely bivocational and typically evangelists and lay preachers – who served newly established congregations. Early Southern Baptist congregations in North America were led by farmer-preachers (Gustafson 2016). This trend continued in the denomination. Anderson (2002, 4) reported that the Southern Baptists had ‘more than 17,000 bivocational churches in North America, and it was projected there would be more bivocational pastors than fully funded pastors in the Convention’. Furthermore, it is held that robust support structures and resources for BM in the US were developed as early as 1979 (Anderson 2002). While there appear to be more focus and support structures and resources on BM in the US today, the British church has a wealth of history of BM.

Many ‘colonial’ ministers of the COFE in the 1600s supported themselves by means of the *parson’s glebe*: a piece of land set aside for the minister’s use to support themselves (Dorr 1988). Historically, there have been three kinds of authority that have controlled or limited secular employment of Anglican clergy; namely Statute law, Canon law, and the Ordinal: (1) Statute law – e.g. the 1529 Parliament Act (21 Hen. VIII, cap. 13). It is believed it was a part of King Henry’s strategy to use Parliament to restrict the power of the Church. This law consequently restricted clergy from holding several ‘benefices in plurality’; (2) Canons – a number of Canons have contained phrases or notions, which may influence against the legal development of ‘non-stipendiary ministry’; (3) Ordinal<sup>1</sup> – all priests ordained into the COFE between 1550 and 1979 were admitted to their office with the charge to give themselves wholly to their ministry office – and to forsake and set aside as much as possible all worldly cares and studies (see Vaughan 1987). The latter has historically constituted the ethos of and defined the office of clergy/pastor for many churches, ministries and denominations. This was considered ‘the way’ to carryout clergy ministry within my Pentecostal denomination, which I was to wrestle with while contemplating entering BM – as I will elaborate later.

In spite of some reservations and challenges to clergy having gainful employment outside of ministry, others have incorporated and or passionately advanced *bivocationalism* in Great Britain. William Carey (1761–1834) the English Baptist missionary to India, one of the greatest missionaries of modern times served as a bivocational minister for the greater part of his life. He started his ministry as a bivocational pastor in England and later migrated to India where he spent an active 41 years of Christian ministry, which included translating the Scriptures – while also working as an entrepreneur in various fields, which included agriculture (Carey and Masters 1993). Missionary Fr. Herbert Kelly

(1860–1950) a Catholic in the COFE (founder of the Society of the Sacred Mission and of the Theological College at Kelham in 1913 to 1919) is a notable early proponent of BM. Kelly was involved in setting up churches in Anglican provinces. After encountering practical challenges of establishing traditional diocesan structures due to the shortage of clergy in overseas missions, he started to advocate for an alternative model (Jones 1971; Vaughan 1987). ‘Kelly found himself with men of the working class, an untapped source of energy and power as far as the Church of England was concerned’ (Jones 1971, 13). Kelly transcended the church tradition and envisaged a mixed ministry of ‘professional and non-professional clergy’.

Another key proponent of BM in Great Britain known as ‘the effective prophet of non-stipendiary ministry’ was Roland Allen (1868–1947) an English missionary to China (Vaughan 1987; Allen and Paton 2002) (see also Francis and Francis 1998). Like Kelly, following personal experiences and a recognition of the need to provide clergy for the church overseas, Allen went further by publishing his ideas for addressing the lack of clergy for the church abroad, and proposed that this principle of ‘voluntary clergy’ could be extended to the local church. ‘He wrote *Voluntary Clergy* in 1923, *Voluntary Clergy Overseas* in 1928, and reworked both books and republished the result as *The Case for Voluntary Clergy* in 1930’ (Allen and Paton 2002, 22). Allen based his views on Paul’s *tentmaking* practice in the NT. ‘Increasingly in the 1920s he seized on the issue of the stipendiary professional clergy as the outstanding difference between St Paul’s methods and our own, and the outstanding practical bar to spontaneous expansion’ (Allen and Paton 2002, 22). Reflecting on my personal experiences and that of many other bivocational ministers I have interacted with in the UK and abroad; the sense of spontaneity is one of the key drivers that lead people to opt for BM: i.e. a response to the call to ministry (missions, church planting etc.) now rather than later. Allen, however, aptly acknowledged that voluntary clergy would only be suitable in some situations as there was need for the church to support ministers who can give all their time to the care of parishes and to study – who should not be engaged in business (see Vaughan 1987). Allen also challenged the view that ordained ministers with other vocations would necessarily be part-time ministers (Vaughan 1987).

The effect of Kelly and Allen’s dream of non-stipendiary clergy took time to be realised within the COFE as in other denominations. For centuries, the ordained ministry of the COFE was generally considered a sacred office that is expected to consume the minister’s whole attention to enable them to wholly focus on ministerial tasks – whose benefits included a house and a stipend or allowance to support the physical needs of the minister (Vaughan 1987). By the late nineteenth century, parochial ministry in particular was regarded as a ‘full-time’ occupation (Vaughan 1987). This followed the view of others such as Herbert (1652) who advanced that the ‘cure of souls is to be a full-time occupation’ (mono-vocational). However, Vaughan (1987) argues that insufficient ministry income drove many poor clergy to supplement their incomes with other employments. 1970 saw the COFE’s official acceptance of non-stipendiary ministry (NSM) into its institutional structures. According to Vaughan (1987), this revolutionisation of the office of ordained ministry in the COFE was influenced by key four aspects, which I suppose are also mirrored in other denominations and ministry persuasions outside of the COFE: (1) pressure for each local community to be self-sufficient in ministry and sacraments, which according to Francis and Francis (1998) manifested in the form ‘ecclesiastical call’ (the training and

ordaining of local candidates to serve their own home parish); (2) pressure for the church to offer ministry in a style and expression, which is congruent with working-class culture; (3) pressure for the removal of the divide between clergy and laity; (4) pressure for the church to offer meaningful witness in the contemporary world of work. Consequently, the COFE has in the last few decades seen an increase in proposals for non-stipendiary ministry (Francis and Francis 1998). In the US context, Bickers (2013, 19) highlights that 'having a bivocational minister was becoming popular as early as the 1950s'.

Beyond the US and the UK, (Malone 2013, 198) contends that 'the number of Christians is increasing rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and South America'. When I was growing up in Africa, unlike lay ministry leaders, clergy ministry (across denominations) was largely viewed as serving in the church with no other vocation outside of Christian ministry. Selenga (2016) however reports that BM has become widespread on the African continent. He highlights some innovative forms of BM, which include: (1) *Passive income* – where a church leader owns a business that is managed by another competent person, with the church leader providing either capital or governance; (2) The Redeemed Christian Church of God's (Nigeria) strategy where churches send out professionals in teams of 10 families to plant new churches in new areas. These professionals work and earn a living in the new community and share pastoral responsibilities; (3) The Methodist Guest House and Conference Centre model e.g. in Nairobi (Kenya) where the local church leadership (including the pastor) are shareholders of the enterprise and appoint a business manager to run a guest house – to generate income to fund the church.

### Theological arguments on bivocational ministry

The consideration of BM 'means taking a clear set of positions in the conversations about ecclesiology' (Edington 2018, 19). While the biblical basis for BM has been discussed by various (mostly devotional) writers, it is an area that lacks real academic theological discourse – given the prevalence. Some have traced BM to some of Jesus' early disciples on two premises; namely that they: (1) were commercial fishermen (before Jesus called them to follow Him); (2) returned to this livelihood after His crucifixion – before their mission of preaching the gospel to the world (John 21:1–25) (see McDougall 2016). There is nonetheless no biblical reference to support the view that the disciples had dual vocation (fishing and ministry) during the time they ministered with Jesus or during their ministry after His ascension. It is therefore difficult to consider that the first disciples were or provide a true biblical example of BM in view of the definition adopted in this discussion. Apart from the early disciples, Apostle Paul's ministry approach is widely viewed as the NT archetype of and basis for a theological argument for BM (see Malone 2013). However, a decade ago, Hock (2007) highlighted that Paul's tentmaking narratives have largely constituted superficial discourse. He consequently undertook and offered a more critical interrogation of Apostle Paul's tentmaking (see Hock 2007). In this classic, he appeals to literary and non-literary Greco Roman supplementary evidence. In relation to Paul's trade, he concluded that Paul: (1) was a leatherworker (which encompassed tentmaking as in Acts 18:3); (2) was engaged in the trade not merely to follow rabbinical law (see also Dorr 1988) – but to present himself, amongst other qualities, as a minister who was not focused on gain. While underlining his entitlement to be remunerated for serving in ministry (1 Corinthians 9:6–15; 1 Timothy 5:17–18; 2



Thessalonians 3:9), Paul did not want to be a financial burden to the churches he founded (1 Thessalonians 2:7–9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–8). Therefore, in line with Hock's (2007) conclusion, Paul seems to have refrained from receiving financial support from the Corinthians in order to build credibility among those who were not-yet-Christians as a means to win them to faith (1 Corinthians 9:19) (Malone 2013; Gustafson 2016; Whitehawk 2018). Nevertheless, Paul seemingly presents a theological paradox: in one breath he supports total devotion to Christ, and on the other, he sets an example of a ministry model, which incorporates non-ministry (secular) work. However, Gustafson (2016) is right in considering Paul's theology as one that equally validates both church-supported and self-supported pastors and ministry.

The BM approach to ministry has met with criticism from a theological standpoint. I have in practice personally encountered two key BM focused criticisms, which are also highlighted by Peterson (2018), either to 'encourage' me to sorely commit to ministry and abandon the professional vocation or to 'criticize' me for not trusting God enough for provision. These criticisms manifest as: (1) the conceptualising of BM as serving two masters (God and money), which was condemned by Jesus in Matthew 6:24 (in Jesus' time two masters rarely shared a slave, and when they did, through joint inheritance, it led to divided interests) (Keener 2014); (2) the consideration of bivocational ministers as those 'lacking faith' to trust God for provision (see Peterson 2018). It is true that 'Jesus' closest disciples abandoned their vocations in order to be with him full-time' (Hare 2009, 74). This is, however, not the subject Jesus is addressing in Mt 6. Hare (2009) underlines that in its original context, Mt 6 serves as commentary on the teachings concerning treasures, generosity and mammon; and addresses Christians generally. In regard to possessions, Jesus is addressing the issue of overindulging in possessions at the expense of God's Kingdom. This is certainly not what BM is. As noted earlier, many bivocational ministers consider their entire lives 'full-time ministry'. Hare (2009), however, rightly asserts that here the Scripture is not promoting 'irresponsibility' – as we see in 'religious enthusiasts' of Thessalonica who irresponsibly abandoned their vocations in the expectation that the church would provide for them (11 Thessalonians 3:6–13). Paul presents himself as a 'model' of which the idle Thessalonians were to 'imitate' (vs 9). BM is, therefore, a call to responsibility and generosity towards the church – as opposed to taking from the church, particularly when the church is in need. BM thus benefits the church and is neither a form of serving two masters nor a lack of faith – just as Minister (Apostle) Paul's choice to work as a leather worker was neither serving two masters nor a lack of faith.

### Challenging my personal ecclesiological tradition

Our religious heritages are largely formed by the convergence of Scripture and Christian history, which influences how we interpret or respond to ministry issues (see Whitehead and Whitehead 1995). My Christian heritage is therefore a by-product of historical, theological, doctrinal and denominational traditions. I was raised within a Pentecostal Christian tradition where, unlike lay ministry leaders, clergy ministry was *largely* conceptualised as serving in the church with no other vocation outside of Christian ministry. Beyond my Pentecostal tradition, my contemporaries (friends and ministry associates across races and cultures) in other church and ministry traditions in Africa (where I was born) and in England (where I went to University and later settled), such as the Anglican, Baptists, and Methodists and Reformed amongst others – to a greater extent held a similar philosophy of



ministry. It is my understanding that in my particular denomination, this position was informed by a subconscious strict interpretation of the ministry of Jesus' early disciples who left their fishing (secular) trade to become 'fishers of men' (Mt. 4:19). It was therefore common for those who received the call to ministry to leave their non-ministry vocations (e.g. work and businesses) to only become involved in the ministry. It was nevertheless acceptable and uncommon for the clergy within the denomination to be involved in non-clergy roles such as teaching in theological seminaries. However, where BM existed, it was considered or at least came across as an inferior option of doing clergy ministry. This has historically been a common view shared by many BM writers, particularly in the US. Given this tradition, I was faced with a quandary when I was contemplating and subsequently preparing to plant a church and minister bivocationally. I was sure of my calling for church planting and pastoral ministry. My conviction for BM was however shaky. While it made practical and to some extent theological sense, the notion of BM was against my ecclesiological tradition. Nonetheless, this was at a time when I had just come out of full-time theological seminary, which had a significant impact on our family finances. In addition to the financial and practical challenge of planting a church in a new town, I grappled with questions of the effect and authenticity of BM. Bickers (2012) highlights that bivocational pastors sometimes wonder if their ministry really makes a difference. Similarly, Williamson (2017) a bivocational minister candidly wrote about this 'conffliction': feelings of worry that the Lord would ask him; 'why did you not trust me?' 'Did your life model wholehearted devotion to me'? I recall experiencing a sense of similar ambivalence, which for me was to some extent influenced by my church tradition, where clergy ministry was by and large a mono-vocation. Although I was vaguely aware of Apostle Paul's example of a minister who partly earned his living outside of Christian ministry, I had not taken time to deeply explore BM literature and theology with depth. Nonetheless, the situation dictated that I serve on bivocational basis. I had a young family that depended on me for provision. I therefore planted the church while working full-time in a professional 'secular' vocation.

I soon became more focused on the ministry rather than the dilemmas of the questions of the authenticity or effectiveness of BM. Nevertheless, these questions were answered as the work of ministry progressed. The efficacy of BM became apparent. The Lord transformed many lives through my BM service in the newly planted church. People came to know the Lord through the preaching of the Gospel, many more grew stronger in their knowledge of and relationship with the Lord through discipleship. Over the years, I was able to raise and train leaders and ministers. In addition, many individuals experienced the supernatural healing and restoration of their health and wellbeing and others had their personal relationships restored, amongst other positive experiences – just as in Bible times. It was the *missio dei* manifest. My philosophy of ministry consequently evolved. After serving as a bivocational minister for a few years, I dedicated part of my postgraduate theological studies and development to study the phenomena of BM in light of scripture. Both the measurable outcomes of my ministry and a new philosophy of ministry – formed through the blending of theory (including Scripture) and practice aided me to overcome the uncertainties of the impact and authenticity of BM. In time, I became more informed of the fact that BM has a strong heritage and that it has and will continue to make a colossal impact on Christian missions, church planting, Bible teaching and discipleship across denominations and ministry settings, globally. I however,

accept as will be elaborated later that BM poses diverse challenges. I am nonetheless now convinced and do not doubt that bivocationalism has enabled me to respond to the call of duty to serve God's people. More reassuring is the fact that my engagement and interactions with clergy colleagues who solely serve in ministry roles usually highlight small variances of ministry's outcomes in some aspects of ministry. In some cases, we have as a church encountered some positive experiences and outcomes that other mono-vocationally-led churches yearn to experience. This has further validated BM, thereby transforming my philosophy of ministry beyond the scope of my historic traditions.

### **The evolving culture, evolving church tradition and bivocational ministry**

'One of the most pressing challenges faced by theology and the church is how to engage with contemporary culture' (Percy 2016, 1). While contemporary culture has presented challenges for theology and ministry practice, it on the other hand provides opportunities. Donaldson (2016) highlights that there is a disconnect between modern society and the church. I however consider that progressive contemporary culture can be a positive enabler that supports BM to flourish in today's church and world. While it was at some point rare for clergy to have another vocation outside of ministry, it is clear that as cultures evolve; the contemporary congregant has increasingly become more open to the prospect of having a bivocational pastor/priest. Where it has traditionally been expected for the church to consider having a bivocational minister a disadvantage, research shows that some congregants consider a bivocational minister advantageous as expounded below.

The incidence and prevalence of BM has been on the increase in the last few decades across denominations. For example, in the US, Baptist denominations, Presbyterians and Episcopalians have integrated BM in their strategies for church planting to sustain both rural and urban churches (Anderson 2002; Baisley 2016). Furthermore, it is estimated that one-third of American pastors are bivocational (Kirkpatrick 2014; Stetzer 2017). 50% of 611 Vineyard Churches in the US have bivocational pastors (Peterson 2018). There is not a great deal of published statistic in the UK Church on this subject. However, the Church of England (2017) reported that in 2016, 3230 of its ministers were self-supporting parochial clergy (with 185 newly ordained) against a backdrop of 7790 stipendiary clergy (with 299 newly ordained). While it is worth noting that not all non-stipendiary (self-supporting) clergy will earn their living from another vocation, the proportion of non-stipendiary clergy in the COFE is telling. Halter (2013) highlights that the decline in church attendance in the indigenous Church in the West in recent years, across denominations, has led members of the clergy to source for income from other sources, including outside of ministry. Recent UK statistics highlight a continuous decline in church attendance in the UK church (McAleer 2018). It is noteworthy that against a backdrop of a declining indigenous church in the UK, ethnic majority churches are reported to be on the increase, particularly in larger metropolitan cities like London (Rogers 2013) (see also McAleer 2018). The UK Migration Observatory (2018) correspondingly reports that 'London has the largest number of migrants among all UK Regions'. While there is not much data to support or discount this notion; there is an anecdotal assumption that many of the ethnic majority churches in London are led by bivocational ministers. BM is not only common in England and the US. On the contrary, it is generally believed that the incidence of BM is increasing the world over. Another (more contemporary) interesting

phenomenon of BM arise from the fact that people are increasingly becoming bivocational ministers out of choice (*intentional bivocational*) (Donaldson 2016), unlike in the past where ministers predominantly served bivocational out of necessity (usually due to limited or no capacity for the church to pay the minister's wage) (Bickers 2012, 2016; Halter 2013).

### Advantages of bivocational ministry

In spite of the challenges it presents, BM offers both the minister and the church some real benefits. Lyon's (1995) research of the Lutherans Church highlights some advantages reported by the participants. The report highlights key benefits, which include the view that having a bivocational pastor: (1) offers more independence to the minister; (2) melds ministry with workplace: i.e. bivocational pastors are known in the community and have unusual access to unchurched people (Brenneman 2007) (see also Donaldson 2016; Whitehawk 2018). 'Mission has never been confined as "private" within ecclesiological boundaries' (Kim 2017, 15). There is, therefore, a missiological argument in favour of BM. This does, however, not mean that bivocational ministers should engage people in the workplace on the subject of faith (or the Gospel) 'willy-nilly'. In fact in parts of the UK the law prohibits from subjecting another person to 'harassment' at work on the grounds of religion or belief or by engaging in unwanted conduct, which has the purpose of violating their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003). It nonetheless remain a fact that even within the confines of the laws; bivocational ministers will have more opportunities to share their faith with others in the world of work. This has been my experience. Also, the element of financial independence (from the church) has enabled me to be consistently focus on ministry without the concern of not having or having a fluctuating income – as has been the case with other ministers due to fluctuating church finances. I have furthermore blended my professional leadership and management experience with ministry to offer the church more enhanced leadership. Donaldson (2016) has reported similar findings in his research on bivocational pastors. He concludes that 'transferring practices and philosophies from the secular world to the sacred certainly has its advantages' Donaldson (2016, 96) (see also Edington 2018). One of the key benefits of BM for the church is the fact that the church reduces its financial expenditure, which enables the church to direct finances to other areas of ministry (Bickers 2000). Research has shown that some congregants consider having a bivocational minister an advantage. A study involving 17 churches (18 pastors and 87 congegants) in the US (across denominations) highlights that some participants (congregants) reported that they considered that a church led by a bivocational minister had some advantages: (i) 11% reported that having a secular job enhanced the ministers' ministry; (ii) 9% reported that having a bivocational minister reduced the church's financial burden; (iii) 4% reported that having a bivocational pastor makes the congregation as a whole more active in the church (Earlham School of Religion, [ESR] 2017).

### Disadvantages of bivocational ministry

Apart from the benefits, BM presents challenges. One of the key challenges for bivocational ministers as rightly highlighted by Norcross (2002) is the fact that the demand

and expectation may be the same as that of a full-time (mono-vocational) ministry. Some bivocational ministers have reported that they realistically work closer to what is expected of a minister with only one vocation – to meet the demands of pastoral care, running errands for the church, and preparing sermons (Brenneman 2007). These assumptions will obviously need to be interrogated through research. Nevertheless, it has been my experience that due to having time divided between two vocations, the overall time available for ministry is often far less than the demand. This adds to the pressure of ministry. This is a common concern reported by many bivocational ministers (Brenneman 2007; Samushonga 2014; Donaldson 2016; ESR, 2017). Closely linked to this is the challenge of managing time as cited in two pieces of research (see Brenneman 2007; ESR, 2017). Because of time constraints, time management is usually an issue for bivocational ministers. A cohort of bivocational ministers and their spouses in one study (Samushonga 2014) reported that they considered that having two vocations limited the amount of time the ministers spend with their families (see also Brenneman 2007; ESR, 2017). The issue of managing time more effectively has been a challenge and an area I have had to develop over the years. More effective time management is a necessary skill for the bivocational minister to enable them to routinely prioritise spending time with family and to rest. I have had to adjust my aspirations for both ministry, work and studies to more realistic objectives; and have learnt to set time frames for objectives and tasks to suit my situation. This can be disheartening for a particularly more aspiring individual.

### **Bivocational ministry and the risk of burnout**

There is an anecdotal hypothesis that bivocational pastors (or priests) are more at risk of burnout than their mono-vocational counterparts (Dorsett 2010; Samushonga 2014; Peterson 2018). As previously cited, the ESR (2017) study which involved 18 pastors across denominations highlighted that ‘managing time and stress’ were the two chief detriments of BM. Dorsett (2010) further suggested that bivocational pastors are more susceptible to burnout in the ministry vocation particularly if they do not delegate *effectively* [emphasis added]. As pastor, the issue of burnout is an area of concern for me. I therefore resolved to regularly self-assess my risk of burnout, and have largely used the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (1996–2016) – the widely used burnout assessment tool (Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter 2016). Each time I have undertaken the assessment, I simultaneously carried out two tests – one within the context of my professional vocational and the other within my ministry (bivocational) context.<sup>2</sup> While the results have largely indicated low risk of burnout, I have consistently scored higher for the burnout risk in my professional work than in ministry. In addition to self assessing for the risk of burnout, have also undertaken a small-scale qualitative study on burnout in bivocational ministry for a group of bivocational pastors (see Samushonga 2014). Although the small-study of 8 participants does not provide strong basis for generalisation, it provides some useful insights on the subject of burnout in bivocational pastoral ministry. Although the participants strongly underlined the challenges of balancing ministry, secular work and family life; the results of the study controvert the hypothesis that bivocational pastors are more susceptible to burnout. Their MBI burnout score was lower than the mean MBI HSS (MBI reference group score for human service personnel) (Samushonga 2014).

Furthermore, it is widely held that burnout is influenced by other individual (personality) factors apart from the vocation itself (Grosch and Olsen 2000; Cossman and Street 2009; Joseph et al. 2011).

The majority of clergy burnout studies focus on mono-vocational clergy and generally conclude that the risk of burnout in clergy (monovocational) corresponds to that of other helping professionals. Burnout is therefore an issue for both monovocational and bivocational ministers. Samushonga's (2014) study nonetheless, suggests that bivocational ministers may have a lower risk of ministry-induced burnout due to limited people-contact. This study concluded that bivocational ministry alone is not a factor that heightens the risk of ministry associated burnout. This should however not be basis for neglecting self-care.

## Conclusion

This paper offers readers an insightful analysis of the phenomenon of BM through a reflective methodology, which is underpinned by theological reflection of the author's decade long BM practice. This treatise highlights that BM: (1) is not new; (2) has theological basis; (3) has made an impact for God's Kingdom through generations – beginning with Apostle Paul's example in the NT, followed and adopted by both early missionaries from Great Britain and North America and today's ministers, globally. This reflection makes a fair attempt to engage the questions of authenticity and impact of BM through the author's personal experiences, which are examined in light of BM related theory (including Scripture and research). It is, however, apparent, as acknowledged earlier in this discourse; that while BM is reportedly increasing, particularly in the US; there is a scarcity of research on the subject on which to draw from. BM has in some instances been defined by the disadvantages associated with it, some of which have been discussed in this reflection. Nevertheless, the blend of my personal experiences, Scripture and the literature resources incorporated in this reflection illuminate a positive perspective of BM. Whereas BM has largely been considered more relevant in contexts where churches and missions grapple with the issues of financing the wages of the clergy, this treatise shows that there is an emerging concept of *intentional bivocationalism*, which can be traced back to Apostles Paul's ministry. The author's personal experiences and that of bivocational others (in Samushonga's study [Samushonga 2014]) dispel the anecdotal assumption that bivocational ministers are necessarily at greater risk of burnout.

Nevertheless, the crux of this reflection is underpinned by the fact that our ecclesiological traditions are powerful forces that can shape and raise significant issues of how we do practical theology. The reflection, on the other hand, demonstrates that these traditions can evolve – especially when theologically reflected on.

## Notes

1. The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, according to the Order of the Church of England, first published in 1550.
2. I responded to the questions based on my feelings and experiences of each vocation in turn and compared the results.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

**Hartness M. Samushonga** is a ministry practitioner and an emerging practical theologian. His theological interests include church planting, ministry leadership, bivocational ministry and burnout in pastoral ministry. His MA Theology dissertation encompassed empirical research on the risk of burnout in bivocational pastors. Hartness is a bivocational minister and church planter who leads and pastors a church, and also has a corporate operational management and leadership vocation. Hartness is pursuing doctoral research in management. He is an alumnus of Harvard University's Harvard Kennedy Schools of Government – Leadership Decision Making. Hartness is passionate about supporting bivocational ministry and ministers. He has consequently pioneered 'Bivo Support UK' a body that promotes and supports bivocational ministry focused training and research – in collaboration with other bivocational ministers and academics around the globe.

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