

# **Who Am I? Bi-vocational Ministers and Pastoral Identity**

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### Certificate of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Humans

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal:

AST REB File number:	0162016
Title of Research Project:	Who am I? Bi-vocational ministers and pastoral identity
Faculty Supervisor:	Dr. Jody Clarke
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and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and Atlantic School of Theology's relevant policies.

Approval Period: 30 November 2016 to 16 April 2017

Dated this 30th day of November, 2016 at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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**Abstract**  
**“Who Am I? Bi-Vocational Ministers and Pastoral Identity”**  
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“Who Am I? Bi-Vocational Ministers and Pastoral Identity” is a Hermeneutic Phenomenological study that examines the experience of bi-vocational ministers in the United Church of Canada as they navigate their vocational identity. Bi-vocational ministers who are navigating two vocations simultaneously were interviewed and the data obtained from these interviews was analyzed. Several themes emerged from the interviews: the bi-vocational ministers felt strongly called to be in bi-vocational ministry; they experienced the different threads of their identity, vocational and otherwise, as multiplicity; their experience of navigating this multiplicity can be understood through a framework that mirrors the intra-trinitarian relationship; bi-vocational ministers experience an urgency to develop good boundaries; and the bi-vocational ministers interviewed had developed a variety of concrete models or images through which they interpret their identity. There are many implications of this research for the church with an anticipated increase in the number of bi-vocational ministers.

Submitted: March 24, 2017

## **Introduction**

When I arrived at the Atlantic School of Theology, I came with a 15-year career as a physiotherapist behind me. One of the struggles in my discernment process was that I did not feel as though that part of my life was over. I still enjoyed my physiotherapy work. I still felt like a physiotherapist. And yet I also sensed that God was calling me to ordained ministry.

In my first year of school, I did not work. I focused on my studies. At times, I joked that I struggled with tenses. I am a physiotherapist? I was a physiotherapist? I have been a physiotherapist? Then, in the summer after my first year of full-time studies, I found full-time work as a physiotherapist. My tense issue resolved itself – I am a physiotherapist. But then when I went back to school for my second year, things became more complex. I was back to being a full-time student minister, but I kept doing a little bit of physiotherapy work. There were some days when I was doing both pastoral visits and physiotherapy home visits on the same day.

At first, I tried to compartmentalize my two vocations. At one point, on one of those days when I was doing both pastoral and physiotherapy visits, I was leaving an apartment building and someone in the hallway asked me why I was there. I glanced down to see what bag was over my shoulder at that point – did it contain my physiotherapy files or my bible? Who was I in that moment?

But after a while, that compartmentalizing didn't work any more. I remember being with one of my physiotherapy clients, and in the middle of our visit, I realized that the question that she was asking me was not related to our physiotherapy work. She was

asking me a question, not as a physiotherapist, but as a student minister. Who was I in that moment?

And so my experiences in sorting out my own identity led to this research project. I had worked through my own understanding of my bi-vocational identity, but I was curious about how other bi-vocational ministers understood their own vocational identity.

### **Research Question**

The research question that was formulated out of these experiences is, “What is the experience of bi-vocational ministers in the United Church of Canada as they navigate their pastoral identity?” When speaking about bi-vocational ministry, most people think first about the logistical issues surrounding bi-vocational ministry. How do you schedule your week? What happens if a pastoral emergency arises? When do you make time for Sabbath? These logistical matters were less interesting than the issues of identity. How does having two or more vocational identities impact a person’s overall identity? How do bi-vocational ministers answer the question, “Who am I?”

Looking through the position descriptions of pastoral charge vacancies in the United Church of Canada, it is interesting to note how many of these positions are for part-time ministers. For example, there are currently 26 congregational ministry vacancies listed in Maritime Conference (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Gaspé region of Québec). Of these vacancies, 9 of them are for full-time ministry positions (35%), and 17 of them are for part-time ministry positions (65%).<sup>1</sup>

Unless the ministers applying for these vacancies only want or need to be working on a

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<sup>1</sup> Maritime Conference, United Church of Canada, “Vacancies,” accessed March 21, 2017, <https://marconf.ca/category/all-news/vacancies/>.

part-time basis, they will be bi-vocational, working in another vocational calling to fill the other part-time of their vocational life.

Some bi-vocational ministers are bi-vocational out of necessity and others are bi-vocational by choice. The literature on this issue is contradictory – Legassie writes that the non-ministry vocation is engaged in order to supplement the ministerial salary;<sup>2</sup> Dorr writes that it is usually economic constraint that drives the need to be bi-vocational<sup>3</sup> but he believes that it should not be economic constraint alone that determines bi-vocational ministry;<sup>4</sup> while Bickers writes that a call to bi-vocational ministry is as equally valid as any other call to ministry.<sup>5</sup> This research will focus on ministers who are bi-vocational by choice rather than ministers forced to be bi-vocational due to financial need. This decision was made in order to focus on issues of identity in people with two distinct vocational callings, rather than people forced into a bi-vocational situation without necessarily being called to it. If someone is forced to be bi-vocational without a distinct bi-vocational calling, there might be other factors that would complicate the research (e.g. anger, frustration, grief), whereas people with a distinct bi-vocational calling (i.e. bi-vocational by choice) will likely be better able to sort through questions of bi-vocational identity.

Finally, this study focuses on people who are living into both vocational callings simultaneously. There are many people who answer a call to ministry following another vocation, and those who leave congregational ministry to pursue another vocation,

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<sup>2</sup> Randolph F. Legassie, *A Handbook for Part-Time Ministry* (Saint John, NB: Atlantic Baptist Mission Board, 2007), 17.

<sup>3</sup> Luther M. Dorr, *The Bivocational Pastor* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>5</sup> Dennis W. Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 5.

thereby becoming consecutively bi-vocational. Instead, this research focuses on the interplay between two simultaneous vocational identities, and how a new bi-vocational identity might emerge.

## **Methodology**

The approach used for this research was hermeneutic phenomenology, a variation of the classical phenomenology approach.

A phenomenological study examines a shared lived experience, and then attempts to describe both what the participants experience and how they experience it. The focus is on “describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon... [and] to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence.”<sup>6</sup> The approach goes beyond merely examining “what” was experienced, but also “how” it was experienced. Merriam describes this as studying “the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness.”<sup>7</sup>

In this study, the phenomenon being investigated is the experience of navigating pastoral identity as a bi-vocational minister. All of the participants interviewed were bi-vocational ministers in the United Church of Canada, currently working both in congregational ministry as well as another, non-ministry vocation. Vocations come with a vocational identity – for example, I don’t just “do” physiotherapy; I “am” a physiotherapist. This study was designed to capture the essence of the experience of

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<sup>6</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 58.

<sup>7</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 24.



navigating two distinct vocational identities – what it was like to navigate these vocational identities, as well the meaning that the participants ascribed to the experience.

In classical phenomenology (empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology), the researcher is required to “bracket” his or her own experiences in order to approach the topic under investigation as objectively as possible – an attempt is made to keep the researcher’s experiences from influencing the results of the study.<sup>8</sup> In hermeneutical phenomenology, the emphasis instead is on the interpretation of the experiences of the participants. In this case, the researcher is the “mediator” of the interpretation of the experiences.<sup>9</sup> Because the researcher in this way becomes involved in the research, bracketing of the researcher’s experience becomes impossible.

Because I, as the researcher, have experienced navigating my own bi-vocational identity, I made the decision to use hermeneutic phenomenology for my study design. It can be argued that truly “bracketing” the experience of the researcher is impossible to achieve,<sup>10</sup> and I wanted to be able to draw on my own experiences as I interpreted the data that I obtained from my participants.

For this study, four participants were recruited through consultants at the Atlantic School of Theology and by reaching out to Conference Personnel Ministers across Canada. All of the participants are currently working in congregational ministry as well as working in a second, non-ministry vocation. They varied in the length of time they had been in ministry as well as the length of time in bi-vocational ministry, and in the nature of the non-ministry vocation. Some participants came to their ministry vocation

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<sup>8</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 59-60.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

first, while some came to their non-ministry vocation first. Even though both male and female bi-vocational ministers were interviewed as part of this research, for the purposes of this paper, all participants will be referred to using female pronouns. This will not only help to protect the confidentiality of the participants, but will also help to universalize the experience.

Creswell cites Polkinghorne in stating that the goal of a phenomenological study is to describe the essence of the experience so that the reader or listener of the study is able to feel, “I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that.”<sup>11</sup> The goal of this study is not to describe the individual experiences of each of my participants; the goal is to describe the common experience of all of the participants. The hope is that after reading this study, the reader might have a better understanding of what it is like to navigate pastoral identity as a bi-vocational minister, even if the reader has never had this experience him- or herself.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Theme 1: Sense of Call**

Bickers writes that “the call to bivocational [*sic*] ministry is not a call to a lesser form of ministry,” but instead it is a different type of calling.<sup>12</sup> In listening to the participants’ stories, it came through very clearly that each one of them felt called not just to ministry but to bi-vocational ministry.

In the United Church of Canada, potential candidates for ministry go through a discernment process with a committee in order to examine and explore their call to

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<sup>11</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 62.

<sup>12</sup> Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister*, 5.

ministry. One participant who came to ministry with another vocation already established said that her bi-vocational calling was an issue that she worked through with her discernment committee. She said, “We had to look at how God is calling us to be in ministry.” She went on to say, “I had to create that bi-vocational identity early on.” She spoke of the need for authenticity and integrity in her bi-vocational calling so that she would be able to live into the reality of bi-vocational ministry; and how questioning from others and self-questioning helped her to discern this calling.

Another participant spoke of becoming aware of her bi-vocational calling in the process of training for ministry. She approached her presbytery’s Education and Students committee and asked to be ordained to further studies so that she could complete the training required for her non-ministry vocation. She said, “Their reaction was more of an either/or. You can either do one or you do the other. So I continued to explain to them how it was a both/and. My sense of calling was always a both/and.” This participant felt that her calling was not only a call to congregational ministry, but that her call was to be in both vocations. She was confident in her call, but she struggled to help others within the church to understand the nature of a bi-vocational calling – that it can be a both/and calling.

A third participant spoke of growing up in a family and a community where both of her vocations were part of her daily life. Thinking back to her time studying for ministry, she remembers thinking, “Oh well, I’ll keep going on this stream towards ministry unless there was a way I could go” and do her other vocation. At that time, she saw the two callings as distinct from one another, but both present. This participant was mono-vocational for most of her career, working first in her ministry vocation and later in

her non-ministry vocation. It is only recently that she has been able to work in both vocations simultaneously and live into a bi-vocational calling. She speaks of this as a journey – “the roots were there all along, and then to blend them, that identity happened.”

Two participants spoke of their non-ministry vocation as a “ministry.” One person said, “I see both jobs as ministry in that I see them both as callings, and I see them both as callings from God to use my gifts. And so in that way, my identity as being in ministry transcends both professions, in the broad sense of ministry.” This person sees both her congregational ministry and her non-church vocation as “ministry” and senses that she is called to both. She has gifts that transcend the boundaries and divisions that society tends to place between vocations, and she has found a way to use her gifts in a fuller way than a single vocation would allow, and this is reflected in the language that she used. This participant used words such as “joy,” “meaning,” and “balance” to describe her experience of living into both of her vocational callings; as compared with “disillusioned,” “burnt out,” and “all-consuming” when she described her experience of a time when she was only in congregational ministry. Bi-vocational ministry has freed her to use her gifts for ministry in both of her vocations, this is reflected in the joy that she experiences.

The reality of Bickers’ “different” bi-vocational calling came through very clearly in the interviews. The participants interviewed were all called to ordained ministry, but their call was distinctly to bi-vocational ministry. They had all considered the nature of this calling, and had struggled to explain it to others in a church where singularity of vocation is the norm.

## Theme 2: Multiplicity

The concept of multiplicity within persons is arising in current pastoral theology research. Essentially, this means that rather than a single identity, all people have multiple layers of identity – Cooper-White refers to this as a “web or network of self-states.”<sup>13</sup> These layers of identity can include vocational identities, avocational identities, identity as a spouse, identity as a parent, and identity as a sibling. Some of these identities may be held consciously, while others may be sub-conscious much of the time yet still present and forming a thread of the person’s overall identity. Cooper-White uses the metaphor of a braid to describe how these various layers or strands of identity interact with one another. By being woven together, the overall identity is both strengthened and given flexibility.<sup>14</sup> Scholars writing on multiplicity would argue that all ministers are not just bi-vocational but are, in fact, multi-vocational, as every human is called to more than one vocation, paid or not.

The interviews focused on questions of vocational identity, yet the participants all spoke in terms of multiplicity of identity. Each person spoke about their identity as a spouse and a parent along with their vocational identity.

One person, when asked to describe her identity, said, “I am [name]. I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I am a parent and a spouse. I’m a minister in a congregation. And I’m a ...” and she named her non-ministry vocation clearly and confidently.

Another participant focused more on her family role when asked to describe her identity. She said, “A lot of my identity is lived out through my role as mother and wife

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<sup>13</sup> Pamela Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 197.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-215.

and partner. That's a big part of my identity – being a person who's connected with family.”

A third participant, when asked how she would answer the question, “Who am I?” said that she normally takes a Liberation Theology approach to this question. She names her privilege first. Then she names her identification with vulnerable populations. Then she speaks about her role as a mother and a spouse within her family. Only then does she mention her two vocations.

It is very clear that these bi-vocational ministers see themselves through the lens of multiplicity. When speaking about identity, they spoke about how their identity has multiple aspects or threads reaching far beyond their vocational identity. Both of their vocations were part of this identity, but so were their different identities within their family and the broader community.

The relationship between the different strands of identity will be addressed in the next theme.

### **Theme 3: Trinitarian Framework**

The theory of multiplicity within human identity is related to the theological doctrine of the Trinity. Humans are made in the image of God, and yet the God in whose image we are made is Trinity. God is multiplicity. And whether the three persons of God are named as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, or Source, Christ, and Spirit, the theology is the same – God is One-in-Three and God is Three-in-One.

In the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, the three persons of the Trinity are equal in divinity yet completely distinct from one another, and inseparable in action and in being so that they are perfectly united.<sup>15</sup> One person of the Trinity cannot replace another (distinct/unique persons), nor can one member of the Trinity act separately from the others (inseparable operation). The term that has been given to the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity – the intra-trinitarian relationship – is “perichoresis.” In a classic text on the Trinity, LaCugna defines perichoresis as “being-in-one-another, permeation without confusion.”<sup>16</sup> With the origins of the word coming from “dance around” or “round dance,” perichoresis is a very dynamic word where the three persons of the Trinity are not isolated from one another – three independent individuals – but rather are interdependent and inter-related. Moltmann describes perichoresis as a “circulation of divine life” where the three persons of the Trinity “communicate divine life to one another.”<sup>17</sup>

In the context of bi-vocational identity, these trinitarian themes were heard in the stories of the participants. The different threads of their multiplicity were woven together in a manner resembling the Trinity, so that the vocational identities were distinct from one another (distinct persons) while needing to operate in ways that were congruent with each other (inseparable operation). The different vocational identities also interacted with each other in a perichoretic manner, influencing and shaping each other as they danced together.

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<sup>15</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 271.

<sup>17</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 175.

One participant spoke of being able to distinguish between her vocational identities within herself, but struggling to communicate this distinction to the world. She chooses to wear a clergy collar when she is operating in her ministerial identity. She said, “I wear my collar. That is my uniform. And wearing a uniform really helps with bi-vocational identity because it identifies me – I’m now working as a minister in this situation. You see me walking down the hall, you’re not going to think I’m in my other job if you see this little tab on my neck.” Because her vocational identities are distinct from each other, it was important that she be able to communicate the distinction to the world, and wearing a clergy collar allows her to communicate this difference.

Two participants spoke about feeling distress over the thought of losing their pastoral identity. One participant was not working in congregational ministry for many years, and she spoke about how she maintained her pastoral identity during that time. She said, “I stayed very involved in our local church but in presbytery and conference as well, because I wanted to maintain that part of my identity as minister.” Her vocational identities are distinct, and she is not able to fully live into her pastoral identity through working in her other vocation. Another participant, facing some logistical challenges of balancing both vocations, said that her husband suggested to her, “Well, you just stop ministry, maybe you could become a lay minister for a while, do pulpit supply.” But the participant said, “But then I lose my status as Reverend.” Again, she would not be able to live into and fulfill her pastoral identity through her other vocation.

One participant spoke of the balance between carrying distinct vocational identities while having them in inseparable operation as being like “jumping.” The roles were distinct – the difference between them can be seen in her perceived need to jump



between them; and yet she also said, “you don’t have to jump over too big a gap to move between the two. It wasn’t a jolt to jump. I keep comparing it to what’s it like to jumping from I’m a minister right now and when I walk home across the empty lots I’m something else.” For this person, if the two vocational identities were not compatible with each other, then it would have been more jolting to jump between the two. Instead, she said at the end of the interview, “I’m pleasantly surprised at how easily it’s been able to hold together.”

A certain amount of tension, both internal and external, is experienced in living out a trinitarian existence rather than an existence of singularity. The congruency or inseparable operation of vocations was expressed by one participant using the word “values.” She said, “I had to figure out how my values could be expressed through all those aspects of my life.”

Another way in which the tension of inseparable operation was seen in the interviews was when a participant described the distress that she felt in a situation in her non-ministry workplace where she was asked to act in a way that was not congruent with her pastoral identity. Her colleagues were making jokes about alcoholism and addiction and she was feeling pressure to join in the laughter. She said, “And all the while, I’m thinking, and I’m laughing at the same time as my ministry hat is saying, ‘I’m just dealing with somebody with major addictions issues, and they’re cycling into relapse. And I don’t feel like laughing today about that.’ Because of the ministry work I’m doing.” Laughing and joking about addictions issues was incongruent or discontinuous with this person’s pastoral identity, and she felt uncomfortable in a situation where she felt pressure to act in this way. It was important to this participant that she be able to

carry her whole identity into every situation, and she experienced distress when she was unable to do so.

The participants also spoke about how their vocational identities relate to and interact with each other in a manner resembling the perichoresis of the Trinity. Their vocational identities as well as their other identities in life are not compartmentalized from one another. Instead they influence one another in a fluid and dynamic way. Even the language that they used was dynamic, using words such as “juggle,” “balance,” “tension,” “muddled,” and “flow” to describe the experience of navigating a bi-vocational identity.

One participant who is a farmer spoke of this relationship in very concrete terms. She said, “I think that it just gives me a different understanding sometimes, maybe a more basic understanding of what’s important, the real basics of life. When you’re out in the barn and you’re dealing with life and death, it just gives you a real grounded foundation that I think does inform then how I approach my ministry.” She went on to say, “I often speak of my spirituality, that it is much informed by nature, creation – that’s all part of the farm life. That good stewardship of the land, of who we are as good stewards and environmentalists, that whole environmental piece that I carry into my ministry. Does the ministry impact who I am on the farm? Yeah, I think so. Because if I didn’t have that sort of real faith background, would I approach the stewardship the same? Probably not. Yeah, so I do think that they do impact each other.” For this person, her two vocational identities strongly interact with each other and each one impacts how she approaches her work in both vocations.

Another participant used a very dynamic metaphor to describe the interaction between her vocational identities when she said that her two vocational identities “are part of an integration of self as opposed to a force towards disintegration. They are part of a centripetal rather than a centrifugal force.” She sees her bi-vocational identity as a spinning force holding the different identities together rather than dissipating them.

One participant spoke of how she is able to bring both vocational identities into the workplace of both vocations. She has been asked to lead workshops related to her non-ministry vocation within her local presbytery, where she is able to be both minister and her other vocational identity simultaneously; and likewise, she is able to bring her understanding of spirituality and knowledge of spiritual practices into her work in her non-ministry vocation. She says that she practices both of her vocations “in a similar way. I think that I bring to both vocations the same spiritual outlook. The outlook about wellness. And that wellness is always an integrated thing. And I preach that, and I also speak about that, and work with clients in that way.” When asked if she feels tension or discomfort due to the overlap or inter-play between her vocational identities, she said no, “that feels fine. It feels really good.” Her overall sense of identity is strengthened and she is able to be more authentically herself when she is able to live into both vocational identities simultaneously, allowing them to influence and affect each other.

Finally, one participant spoke about how her vocational identities “straddle” her core identity of who she is. She said, “My privilege plays into the decisions I’ve made in my vocational choices. My vulnerability plays into my vocational choices of working for those who I feel are outcast and vulnerable in society. I straddle being... that my identities straddle different experiences informs why I choose to be bi-vocational.

Because it supports, I guess my vocations support all those aspects of who I am.” For this participant, her identity (“who I am”) and her vocations are so integrated that it would be impossible to tease them apart. They are not independent but are completely interconnected and inter-dependent.

The trinitarian model fits well with the experience of bi-vocational ministers as they navigate their vocational identities. The identities are distinct from one another, yet operate in ways that are congruent with one another; and the vocational identities are not static but are fluid as they influence and affect one another.

#### **Theme 4: Urgency for Good Boundaries**

As stated above, when most people speak about bi-vocational ministry, they first speak about the logistics of balancing two distinct careers simultaneously. This was true for the participants in this study. Even though the interview questions focused on the issue of identity, each of the participants spoke about the logistical challenges that they face in their bi-vocational ministry. On the surface, these comments do not seem to be related to the issue being studied, but listening more deeply, it seems as though there is an urgency to develop good boundaries that is a part of bi-vocational identity.

Olsen and Devor define boundaries on the most basic level as “the separation between self and other.”<sup>18</sup> Though they can be perceived as negative restrictions, there is a positive aspect to boundaries as they are “limits that promote and contribute to

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<sup>18</sup> David C. Olsen and Nancy G. Devor, *Saying No to Say Yes: Everyday Boundaries and Pastoral Excellence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 5.

health.”<sup>19</sup> A good boundary is neither too permeable where differentiation between self and others is lost, nor too rigid where alienation between self and others can occur.<sup>20</sup>

For bi-vocational ministers, the challenge of boundaries becomes even more acute. Not only are there boundaries that need to be maintained between the whole self and others; there are also boundaries that need to be maintained between the different vocational identities – boundaries that must be neither too porous nor too rigid. The issue of boundaries between the vocational identities was addressed above under the theme of Trinitarian Framework; however all of the participants also spoke about the need to develop good boundaries between the self and others.

For three participants, working in part-time congregational ministry presented challenges to maintaining strong boundaries. They said things such as “part-time ministry isn’t really part-time ministry. They’re getting a lot for nothing, those churches”; “I felt that they expected me to work full-time and get paid half-time, and it was just very complicated”; and “churches have a hard time with this – there’s a concept or perception anyways, that the minister is always available.” Feelings of frustration arose when the participants sensed that their congregations were not respecting the boundaries that they set between their pastoral identity as it functions in congregational ministry, and their other vocational identity and their family identity.

One participant spoke about how being in team ministry has helped her develop better boundaries between her congregational work and her home life. She said, “one of the reasons it was OK for me was that it was a team ministry, so I was able to say right off, I can’t necessarily drop everything because somebody has died. The team piece is

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

really, really important, or very key for me being able to balance the two different vocations.” Two participants spoke of feeling burnt out at various points because of difficulty managing boundaries, but this participant emphasized how being in team ministry helped prevent her from feeling guilt at not being able to be present to her congregation at all times.

One participant spoke too about how the temptation to form too rigid boundaries can also be harmful. She spoke about how, during the week, she has a schedule but she allows it to be flexible. She spoke of “pushing the boundaries from each other” and “to compensate, the other one has to give a little bit.”

One participant, who works in full-time congregational ministry and works in her non-ministry vocation on her “day off” from congregational ministry, approached her boundaries in a more light-hearted way. She observed that her congregation respects her day off more because they know that she is working at her other vocation than they would if it was actually a day off of work. She said, “I always joked that if I ever stopped being a [non-ministry vocation], that I wouldn’t tell people. I would tell them that I still have this other job because then they respect my day off.”

Even though these issues may seem as though they belong in the realm of practical considerations of bi-vocational ministry, the priority given to them in the interviews by the participants seems to indicate that this is an identity consideration as well. Bi-vocational ministers, because of the logistical challenges of balancing two vocations, seem to experience a certain urgency within themselves to develop good boundaries that avoid both rigidity and permeability. Without good boundaries, the pressure of the two vocations will draw any concerns to the surface quickly. Good

boundaries are important for all people – it is the urgency that is particularly notable in bi-vocational ministers.

### **Theme 5: Concrete Models and Evocative Images**

Three of the participants, over the course of the interviews, described very concrete models or images that they use within themselves to understand their identity.

One person uses the symbol of a spiral to understand her identity. She said, “I loved the concept of spiral in and spiral out and what that symbol means in the journey of self-discovery. And as a labyrinth, you know, that really speaks to me.” As she struggled within herself to explain her bi-vocational identity, she discovered that the spiral conveyed not only her identity but also her journey to understand her identity. She sees her calling as being fluid and in multiple places, and the spiral conveys this fluidity and multiplicity to her.

Another participant described her understanding of her identity as follows: “Identity for me is multi-faceted. I think that we all have our core identities, and for me, my core identity is that I’m a child of God. So that is my core identity, that I’m a child of God and I’m a follower of Jesus, and everything else flows out from there. And I see, as I said before, that the roles that I perform in life are like little tendrils that connect to that core identity. So my role as a mother, as a wife, as a daughter, as a minister, they’re all kind of... imagine that there’s this nucleus and there are these tendrils that connect to that. That’s how I see my identity.” Again, this isn’t a static description as her different vocational identities or callings flow out of her core identity in God.

A third participant saw her identity more in terms of layers. She said, “The faith part, the relationship with God in Jesus Christ, has always been the core thing that no one can take away from me. Then there are my callings and they are prioritized. My first calling is to be a parent, a spouse. My second calling is to be a minister in congregations. My third calling is to be a [non-ministry vocation]. And if at any point they ever needed to be prioritized, they’d happen in that order.” For this participant, her different callings or vocations were like layers wrapped around a core of her faith. The layers could be removed, but the core could never be taken away.

There is nothing in the literature about bi-vocational ministry that describes models that can be used for understanding identity; however Marshall defines pastoral identity as “a dynamic entity which contains both stabilizing and fluid qualities.”<sup>21</sup> The stable aspects of a person’s identity help to give stability to that person as he or she navigates the external, dynamic world; while the fluidity of a person’s identity helps to avoid stagnation.<sup>22</sup> Though the models used by the participants in this study differ from one another, they all contain both stable and fluid qualities. The movement of the spiral is contrasted with the stability of the pathway; the stability of the nucleus is contrasted with the fluidity of the tendrils of vocation; the stability of the core is contrasted with the temporality of the layers of vocation. Though the models differ from one another, it is interesting to note that not only did the participants have a model to understand their identity, but that the models contained these common elements.

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<sup>21</sup> Joretta L. Marshall, “Toward the Development of a Pastoral Soul: Reflections on Identity and Theological Education,” *Pastoral Psychology* 43, no. 1 (1994): 13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.



## Implications of this Research

As noted above, there are many ministry positions in the church today that are part-time, and unless there are a large number of ministers who only want or need to be working on a part-time basis, there will be more bi-vocational ministers in the future. With increasing numbers, it will be important not only for these bi-vocational ministers to understand their own pastoral identity, but also for those around them – colleagues, congregants, and the people and bodies to whom they are accountable. A better understanding of the uniqueness of a bi-vocational call and identity can lead to better pastoral relations between a minister and a congregation, and better collegial relations between a bi-vocational minister and his or her colleagues.

Not only are ministry positions in the church changing, but the world around the church is changing too, shifting from modernism into post-modernism. The Enlightenment period promoted the viewpoint that there is “a true, core self at the heart of each person,”<sup>23</sup> and the goal of life was to discover and live into this true self. Identity in this singular oneness was the destination that was sought.<sup>24</sup> In the post-modern era, this understanding of self has shifted from a single unified identity to an identity composed of multiplicity, woven together and integrated to give the self both strength and flexibility.<sup>25</sup> This shift can be seen in the world – as one participant in this study stated, “increasingly, everybody’s bi-vocational.” If the church insists on a model of singularity rather than multiplicity for her clergy, then the church will remain locked in a previous era.

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<sup>23</sup> Cooper-White, *Braided Selves*, 196.

<sup>24</sup> Cynthia G. Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts: Multiplicity and the Well-Lived Pastoral Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Cooper-White, *Braided Selves*, 214-215.

This research shows that bi-vocational ministers are in a unique position to experience the multiplicity that is inherent in all people. Lindner writes, “We are created in the image of the Many-in-the-One.”<sup>26</sup> Many strands or layers of identity are below the level of immediate consciousness, however bi-vocational ministers are balancing two vocational identities on a daily basis, navigating the interplay between their strands of identity at a conscious level. Because of this, they might present a model for all people of how it is possible to live into an identity that embraces multiplicity.

One other implication for the church is that many ministers are pursuing a call to ministry later in life, and likely have one or more vocations behind them. There are two options available at this point – to leave behind the previous vocation(s) behind, or to become bi-vocational and live into both vocational identities. With increasing numbers of part-time ministry positions, and increasing numbers of ministers coming to ministry later in life, the number of bi-vocational ministers in the church is likely to increase moving into the future. This will be an important option for discernment committees to have the resources to examine and question as inquirers come forward to discern a call to ministry. If there is a previous vocation, is the person going to leave this vocation behind, or are they being called into bi-vocational ministry? It might also be a consideration for theological schools as they prepare students for ministry. Part of the formation process of theological education is the development of a pastoral identity. Bi-vocational ministers, along with all ministers, have a need to develop a pastoral identity; however there are unique features of a bi-vocational pastoral identity that the theological education process may want to take into consideration in this process of formation.

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<sup>26</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 12.

## **Conclusion**

Miller-McLemore writes, “God’s call is multi-vocal.”<sup>27</sup> Each person is called by God to live into God’s primary call, which is to love God and love neighbour; however God calls each person to live into this primary call in many and different ways. God’s call is not a singularity; God’s call is multiplicity.

The participants interviewed for this research experience and articulate this multiplicity as they navigate their bi-vocational pastoral identity. Bi-vocational ministers feel strongly called to their bi-vocational ministry, and they experience their layers or strands of identity in a way that mirrors the intra-trinitarian relationship. Each vocational identity is unique in and of itself, yet the identities need to act in ways that are congruent with one another. The identities are not independent entities, for they influence one another in a ways that reflects the dance of perichoresis.

“Who am I?” is a question that all people need to reflect upon at different points in their lives, and the bi-vocational ministers interviewed for this research answer this question in ways that allow their vocational identities to interact with each other and with their whole selves.

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<sup>27</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Spinning Gold from Straw: A Matter of Multiple Vocations,” in *From Midterms to Ministry: Practical Theologians on Pastoral Beginnings*, ed. Allan Hugh Cole Jr. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 171.

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## Appendix A: Literature Review

Paper Submitted October 27, 2016

In reviewing the literature on the pastoral identity of bi-vocational ministers, several trends emerged. The most striking of these is that while there is research about pastoral identity and how it is nurtured, and there is research about the functioning of bi-vocational ministers, there is little to no literature about the pastoral identity of bi-vocational ministers. This paper will review the literature that is currently available, looking for broad themes with respect to pastoral identity and bi-vocational ministry, as well as the small area of overlap between the two.

Marshall writes that pastoral identity is a “dynamic entity” containing both stabilizing and fluid qualities.<sup>1</sup> This identity is grounded in a theological framework of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience,<sup>2</sup> while developing and deepening over time through relationships with others.<sup>3</sup> This concept of dynamic stability is echoed by Hargadon who writes about identity being both “resistant to sway” yet open to “internal re-arranging,”<sup>4</sup> while Lindner focuses more on the idea of a flexible identity where the dialogical self is open to change.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joretta L. Marshall, “Toward the Development of a Pastoral Soul: Reflections on Identity and Theological Education,” *Pastoral Psychology* 43, no. 1 (1994): 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Hargadon, “Difficulties of Double Identity: Psychotherapist / Pastoral Counselor,” *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 18 (Fall-Winter 1983): 32-33.

<sup>5</sup> Cynthia G. Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts: Multiplicity and the Well-Lived Pastoral Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 4.

How pastoral identity is shaped is a concern for many authors. The importance of shaping in the context of community is cited by Marshall,<sup>6</sup> McGrath-Merkle,<sup>7</sup> and Lindner.<sup>8</sup> Marshall also writes extensively about the process of theological reflection shaping pastoral identity as the minister reflects on pastoral situations that are encountered and connects these situations with a theological framework.<sup>9</sup>

Many authors also cite the role of “holy living” in the development of pastoral identity. Jones and Jones write about how identity is formed through Christian living, including keeping regular Sabbath time,<sup>10</sup> as does Miller-McLemore.<sup>11</sup> McGrath-Merkle writes about how an identity crisis in Roman Catholic priests stems, in part, from a cultural shift from the spiritual domain to psychology, changing the pastoral role to a therapeutic role.<sup>12</sup> This might be corrected by focusing on the spirituality of compassion within the priest.<sup>13</sup>

This shifting pastoral role leads into a concern with respect to pastoral identity – the need for clarity of the pastoral role, as a lack of clarity of the role can lead to a loss of pastoral identity. McGrath-Merkle cites the primary cause of an identity crisis in Roman

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<sup>6</sup> Marshall, “Development of a Pastoral Soul,” 17.

<sup>7</sup> Clare McGrath-Merkle, “Gregory the Great’s Metaphor of the Physician of the Heart as a Model for Pastoral Identity,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 50, no. 2 (2011): 386, doi:10.1007/s10943-010-9412-1.

<sup>8</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Marshall, “Development of a Pastoral Soul,” 18.

<sup>10</sup> L. Gregory Jones and Susan Pendleton Jones, “Leadership, Pastoral Identity, and Friendship: Navigating the Transition from Seminary to the Parish,” in *From Midterms to Ministry: Practical Theologians on Pastoral Beginnings*, ed. Allan Hugh Cole Jr. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 22-23.

<sup>11</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Spinning Gold from Straw: A Matter of Multiple Vocations,” in *From Midterms to Ministry: Practical Theologians on Pastoral Beginnings*, ed. Allan Hugh Cole Jr. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 173.

<sup>12</sup> McGrath-Merkle, “Gregory the Great’s Metaphor,” 376.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

Catholic priests is the presence of overwhelming and conflicting demands on the priests, with the result that they must be “all things to all people.”<sup>14</sup> This is echoed by Hargadon, who is writing specifically about a bi-vocational context, when he states that the expectations of the different roles must be clear for all parties in the relationship.<sup>15</sup> In contrast with this, Lindner embraces the multiplicity of roles in the ministerial office as this multiplicity of roles is reflective of the multiplicity of identities of the individuals who fill this office.<sup>16</sup>

There is some disagreement in the literature about the relation between pastoral identity and function. Marshall writes that pastoral identity is “not dependent upon one’s functions”<sup>17</sup> – in other words, a minister does not lose his or her pastoral identity when he or she is not acting in a pastoral capacity. In contrast with this, Hargadon writes that identity is strongly linked to the activity where that identity is made manifest.<sup>18</sup>

Shifting from the broad theme of pastoral identity to the broad theme of bi-vocational ministry, the first concern in the literature is the definition of bi-vocational ministry. Both Legassie and Bickers define a bi-vocational minister as a person who fills both a paid ministry position and another job; but Legassie specifies that the ministry position is part-time,<sup>19</sup> while Bickers leaves the definition open to “anyone who serves in a paid ministry capacity in a church and has other personal sources of income.”<sup>20</sup> In

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>15</sup> Hargadon, “Difficulties of Double-Identity,” 31.

<sup>16</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Marshall, “Development of a Pastoral Soul,” 20.

<sup>18</sup> Hargadon, “Difficulties of Double-Identity,” 32.

<sup>19</sup> Randolph F. Legassie, *A Handbook for Part-Time Ministry* (Saint John, NB: Atlantic Baptist Mission Board, 2007), 17.

<sup>20</sup> Dennis W. Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 2.

contrast with this definition, both Lindner<sup>21</sup> and Miller-McLemore<sup>22</sup> argue that all ministers are multi-vocational as every human being is called to more than one vocation, paid or not. Miller McLemore states “God’s call is multi-vocal,” citing Luther who believed that every Christian was called to love both God and neighbour in a variety of offices.<sup>23</sup>

Another area of disagreement in the literature is over the driving forces behind bi-vocational ministry. Legassie writes that the non-ministry vocation is engaged in order to supplement the ministerial salary.<sup>24</sup> In a similar vein, Dorr writes that it is often the economic constraint on the part of churches that drives the need for ministers to be bi-vocational;<sup>25</sup> however Dorr believes that financial need alone should not determine bi-vocational ministry.<sup>26</sup> Bickers takes this one step further, stating that a call to bi-vocational ministry is as equally valid as any other call to ministry,<sup>27</sup> and he cites a survey where 68% of bi-vocational ministers were bi-vocational by choice rather than out of financial necessity.<sup>28</sup>

One common concern of bi-vocational ministers documented in the literature is the issue of guilt or burnout. Dorr writes that there may be a greater risk of burnout in bi-vocational ministers if both vocations are emotionally draining,<sup>29</sup> while Legassie writes about the challenges that the minister might face if she or he is less present in the

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<sup>21</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Miller-McLemore, “Spinning Gold from Straw,” 164.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>24</sup> Legassie, *Handbook for Part-Time*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Luther M. Dorr, *The Bivocational Pastor* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>27</sup> Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Dorr, 101.



community due to the demands of the non-ministry vocation,<sup>30</sup> or is not immediately available in a crisis.<sup>31</sup> In a similar way, Thompson, in writing of his personal experiences in bi-vocational ministry, speaks of the guilt he felt when he was not able to fully perform the tasks of both of his vocations.<sup>32</sup>

One surprising benefit of bi-vocational ministry, mentioned by both Thompson<sup>33</sup> and Bickers,<sup>34</sup> is the freedom of the bi-vocational minister to preach his or her convictions or preach prophetically without fear of economic reprisals as there is another source of income should the minister be fired from the ministry position.

As stated earlier, there is less in the literature about the overlap between pastoral identity and bi-vocational ministry. One strong theme that does arise though is the ability of a bi-vocational minister to integrate multiple gifts. Brown, writing about people with multiple vocations or careers (not specifically ministry), calls these “slash careers” (e.g. lawyer/chef); and she writes that these slash careers allow people to “integrate and fully express the multiple passions, talents, and interests that a single career cannot accommodate.”<sup>35</sup> This theme is echoed by Bickers, in this case writing about intentional bi-vocational ministers, as he writes that bi-vocational ministers are given the opportunity to use multiple gifts.<sup>36</sup> Lindner approaches this theme from a slightly different angle,

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<sup>30</sup> Legassie, *Handbook for Part-Time*, 37.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> M. Greg Thompson, “Confessions of a Bi-Vocational Baptist Preacher,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 40, no. 2 (2005): 49, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=4384f022-ae3e-46cd-a1d5-ab02c99f4102%40sessionmgr4010&hid=4207>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>34</sup> Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister*, 68.

<sup>35</sup> Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010), 114.

<sup>36</sup> Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister*, 65.

interviewing ministers who are not bi-vocational, as she noted that many of these ministers possess abilities and talents as well as other professions that were “contemplated or engaged” prior to entering ministry,<sup>37</sup> and many of these other vocations or avocational hobbies give ministers skills that can be used and exercised in the practice of ministry.<sup>38</sup>

Lindner is the only author who indicated that one vocation or identity might feed into or serve another vocation or identity within the same person. Not only does she write about skills being transferred between vocations, but she also writes that living with authenticity requires a person to simultaneously live into multiple roles or identities,<sup>39</sup> and that a flexible relationship between our “selves” is required in order to live a healthy life.<sup>40</sup> This attitude is contrasted with Hargadon, writing about his personal experiences navigating a bi-vocational career, when he writes about navigating his two vocations as being like having “two hats” that must be worn separately and not simultaneously.<sup>41</sup> He found that he had to undergo an internal re-arrangement of identity when moving between roles.<sup>42</sup>

A few identity challenges with respect to bi-vocational ministry are noted in the literature. One is a sense of doubt with respect to the validity of a bi-vocational call. Dorr writes specifically about the challenges accepting whether a bi-vocational call is a “true calling,”<sup>43</sup> while Bickers goes into more depth about the cultural perception of bi-

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<sup>37</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 48.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>41</sup> Hargadon, “Difficulties of Double-Identity,” 29.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Dorr, *The Bivocational Pastor*, 74.

vocational ministry as an inferior form of ministry, leading to doubt in the call.<sup>44</sup> Bickers strongly affirms that a bi-vocational call is a valid and unique form of a call to ministry.<sup>45</sup>

One final theme that is only touched on briefly with respect to pastoral identity and bi-vocational ministry is that of role conflict. Dorr writes that bi-vocational ministers may question their identity, asking themselves, “Who am I?” however he does not expand further, give examples, or provide stories of how ministers have worked through this issue.<sup>46</sup>

A review of the literature surrounding the pastoral identity of bi-vocational ministers has revealed some interesting insights, as well as a significant gap. While there is literature around pastoral identity and how it is formed and nurtured, and there is literature about living as a bi-vocational minister, there is almost no literature about the experience of developing, nurturing, and navigating pastoral identity as a bi-vocational minister. This research project will attempt to address this gap in a small way, by conducting a phenomenological inquiry into the experiences of bi-vocational ministers as they navigate their pastoral identity, in order to begin to come to an understanding of the essence of this experience.

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<sup>44</sup> Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister*, 57.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Dorr, *The Bivocational Pastor*, 74.

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## **Appendix B: Theological Essay**

### **“Created in the Image of the Triune God: Bi-vocational Ministry and Identity”**

**Paper Submitted December 1, 2016**

*“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.’”<sup>1</sup>*

Scripture tells us that humans are made in the image and likeness of God; and Christian theology tells us that this God is a triune God – the Three-in-One and One-in-Three. The image of God then, is an image of multiplicity, with distinct persons or threads woven together to form a unity of being. This essay will explore the nature of this multiplicity, arguing that all humans are made in the image of the triune God, with our multiplicity (including vocational multiplicity) reflecting the intra-trinitarian nature of God. It will begin with a brief exploration of trinitarian theology including the concept of perichoresis, then look at how a trinitarian model of multiplicity can apply to human identity, and conclude by looking at how the apostle Paul and other ministers of the church have experienced multiplicity in their vocational identity.

The doctrine of the Trinity evolved over the first four centuries of Christianity, culminating in the teaching that “God exists as three persons in one nature,” as expressed in the Nicene Creed and theological statements that followed.<sup>2</sup> The traditional understanding of the triune God is that the three persons of the Trinity are equal in divinity, yet completely distinct from one another. Despite these differences, they are

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:26a.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 54.

inseparable in action and in being so that they are perfectly united.<sup>3</sup> One member of the Trinity cannot replace another,<sup>4</sup> nor can one member of the Trinity act separately than the others.<sup>5</sup> The traditional naming of the persons of the Trinity is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet it is understood that these names are metaphors (i.e. expressing both “is” and “is not” in using an object inappropriately to describe another object<sup>6</sup>), and many other metaphors have been used through the history of the church to identify the persons of the Trinity.

The triune God is an inherently relational God, with the three persons of the Trinity bonded together in love. LaCugna writes that “God’s To-be is “To-be-in-relationship”<sup>7</sup> – relationship is what God is. The relationship that holds the persons of God together is one of love; the Trinity is a perfect communion of love.<sup>8</sup> It can be said that “God is love” because of the love that flows between the persons of the Trinity; love is the very nature of God.

The term that has been used to describe the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity with one another – the intra-trinitarian relationship – is “perichoresis.” While this term has been defined in a straightforward manner as “being-in-one-another, permeation without confusion,”<sup>9</sup> it has also been defined using more dynamic and expressive terms. Johnson describes perichoresis using terms such as revolving around, a wheel, cyclic

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<sup>3</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>6</sup> Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 33.

<sup>7</sup> LaCugna, *God For Us*, 250.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2008), 214.

<sup>9</sup> LaCugna, *God For Us*, 271.

movement, interweaving, divine circle of life, and divine round dance.<sup>10</sup> LaCugna also uses the term “divine dance” and also describes perichoresis as a divine communion of love.<sup>11</sup> Moltmann describes a “circulation of divine life” where the three persons of the Trinity “communicate divine life to one another.”<sup>12</sup>

Perichoresis is inherently relational – the three persons are connected through a relationship of love with one another, a love that is so strong that the Trinity cannot be divided. Not only are the three persons in a relationship of love with one another, but they are also equal to one another so that there is no subordination of one person to another.<sup>13</sup> The differences between the three persons allow them to be bonded together in love, while not allowing for blurring of the identity of the three persons of God.<sup>14</sup>

Perichoresis is also a dynamic term. Metaphors such as dancing indicate that the relationship between the persons of the Trinity is not static. The persons of the Trinity are open to one another, not only permeating one another but also allowing themselves to be permeated.<sup>15</sup> Because of the dynamism in the intra-trinitarian relationship, each person is open to influence from the other persons, rather than being cut off from the others; and being open to this influence implies being open to change. There is movement in the dance of the Trinity – a never-ending choreography of self-giving love.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 214.

<sup>11</sup> LaCugna, *God For Us*, 271.

<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 175.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> LaCugna, *God For Us*, 271.

<sup>15</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 14.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 214.

Human beings are created in the image of God and therefore reflect attributes of God. The mystery and love of the Trinity can be seen in the mystery and love of the human person;<sup>17</sup> and the human craving for relationship arises out of the relational God.<sup>18</sup>

Various theologians are now suggesting that the intra-trinitarian relationship of perichoresis is also reflected in humans, created in the image of God. The Enlightenment period promoted the viewpoint that there is “a true, core self at the heart of each person,”<sup>19</sup> and that the goal of life was to discover and live into this true self. Identity in this singular oneness was the destination that was sought after.<sup>20</sup> This concept has shifted in the post-modern era, with the understanding that instead of a single unified identity, humans are made up of a “web or network of self states.”<sup>21</sup> Cooper-White uses the metaphor of a braid to indicate how these multiple identities are related to one another, where both strength and flexibility are gained from the weaving together of the different threads of identity.<sup>22</sup>

By virtue of being human, everyone has multiple identities, both vocational and relational. Some of these identities may be conscious while others may be unconscious. These identities are not cut off from one another, neither are they static; instead, like the perichoretic nature of the Trinity, they interact with each other and with the outside world, leading to change and growth.<sup>23</sup> All identities exist simultaneously within one

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<sup>17</sup> Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 38-39.

<sup>18</sup> LaCugna, *God For Us*, 246.

<sup>19</sup> Pamela Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 196.

<sup>20</sup> Cynthia G. Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts: Multiplicity and the Well-Lived Pastoral Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Cooper-White, *Braided Selves*, 197.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-215.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 197



person – as with the Trinity, one identity cannot be cut off from the others, one identity cannot act independently of the other identities, and one identity cannot replace another identity.

Just as all humans are a multiplicity of identities, so too are ministers. Lindner suggests that clergy who live into their multiplicity of identities are reflecting God’s own multiplicity to the world.<sup>24</sup> Bi-vocational (or multi-vocational) ministers are an obvious example of multiple identities, but even uni-vocational ministers experience this multiplicity in their relationships with others (e.g. as a spouse, parent, child, sibling, friend).<sup>25</sup> Some identities may be held more consciously (e.g. vocational identities), while others may be sub-conscious much of the time, yet still present and forming a thread of the person’s overall identity.

The apostle Paul is often held up as an example of multiplicity – he was known as a Jew, a Roman citizen, a scholar, a tradesperson, an evangelist, a teacher, and a traveler.<sup>26</sup> Yet beyond this, he is also held up as an example of a bi-vocational minister, incorporating his two vocations as a tentmaker and as a missionary for the early Christian church into one life and identity. Scripture tells us that while on one of his missionary journeys, Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, “and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together – by trade they were tentmakers. Every Sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince

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<sup>24</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Spinning Gold from Straw: A Matter of Multiple Vocations,” in *From Midterms to Ministry: Practical Theologians on Pastoral Beginnings*, ed. Allan Hugh Cole Jr. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 164.

<sup>26</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 6.

Jews and Greeks.”<sup>27</sup> Paul worked simultaneously at his two vocations. Unfortunately there is an imbalance in what is known about his two vocations. There is nothing recorded about where or how Paul learned his trade as a tentmaker, or the details of his trade;<sup>28</sup> whereas the Acts of the Apostles records Paul’s conversion to Christianity and his subsequent missionary activity in much more detail.

There is also nothing recorded about how Paul identified himself – how he navigated his own identity as both tentmaker and missionary. As Paul is not available to be interviewed about this topic, inferences must be made from what is recorded in scripture – primarily in the Acts of the Apostles and in the epistles written by Paul. At several points, Paul speaks of his ability to work “with his hands” in order to support himself and not be a burden on those with whom he stayed while carrying out his missionary activities. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, “You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:9). In contrast with this, Paul also wrote to the Corinthians arguing that his work for the gospel ought to be enough, writing, “the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Corinthians, 9:14). These verses, held together, indicate that Paul identified with two vocational identities – that of a tentmaker and that of a missionary – and that he lived into both of these identities. The tension

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<sup>27</sup> The Acts of the Apostles, 18:3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Todd D. Still, “Did Paul Loathe Manual Labor? Revisiting the Work of Ronald F. Hock on the Apostle’s Tentmaking and Social Class,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 781, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.astheology.ns.ca:2048/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=1ee475a9-45a8-470e-908c-15b9973189ed%40sessionmgr105&vid=2&hid=123>.

between the two verses, however, indicates that there might have been some internal tension in Paul between his two vocational identities.

There is also evidence that Paul had integrated his identity as a tentmaker (manual labourer) into his missionary identity. When speaking to the elders of the church in Ephesus in Acts 20:34-35, Paul tells them, “You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus for he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” His work as a tentmaker was an integral part of his missionary activity as well as his apostolic identity and understanding.<sup>29</sup>

Elsewhere, Paul also encouraged others to imitate his life of humility, which was, in turn, an imitation of the humility of Christ. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4); and then goes on to quote what was likely an ancient hymn about Jesus which includes the phrase, “he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). Paul did not consider himself to be above those to whom he was ministering by virtue of his status as an apostle; instead he considered himself a servant, and as is shown elsewhere, worked in his trade to support his missionary activity.

Different denominations over the years have adopted this model of “tentmaking ministry” in the model of Paul. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the models of

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 783.

farmer/preacher and school teacher/preacher were common in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in the United States.<sup>30</sup> It was argued that having a profession or vocation outside of the church helped ministers to remain connected to those with whom they ministered.

In today's post-Christendom world, bi-vocational ministry or multi-vocational ministry may be becoming more common as both the church and those who minister in the church shift their identities in conjunction with the world. The model of perichoresis may be a model that works well to assist bi-vocational ministers to navigate their identity. The different vocational identities do not need to be cut off from one another, but instead can be seen as different threads that come together to form a whole person. The vocational identities can inform one another and interact with one another in the way that the three persons of the Trinity inform and interact with each other; and a person's overall identity can grow and change in a dynamic way, mirroring the dynamism of the Trinity.

Lindner writes that, "we are made in the image of the Many-in-the-One."<sup>31</sup> All humans are made in the image of God whom Christians understand to be Three Persons in one God with the movement of perichoresis uniting and making inseparable the Three. Our human multiplicity reflects the multiplicity of God, and those with more than one vocation have a unique opportunity to explore this perichoresis as one vocational identity can inform and influence the other identities. This essay has explored multiplicity and identity, beginning with the doctrine of the Trinity and the perichoresis of the intra-

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<sup>30</sup> Dennis W. Bickers, *The Work of the Bivocational Minister* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 15.

<sup>31</sup> Lindner, *Varieties of Gifts*, 12.

trinitarian relationship, moving into multiplicity of identity in all people, and concluding by looking at the example of the Apostle Paul and others who have served in a bi-vocational or multi-vocational ministry. Our identity is not a fixed or a static thing, and the metaphorical language of perichoresis such as dance, choreography, interweaving, and fluidity can help to provide a model for how the different threads of our identity work together to form a unified and dynamic identity.

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## **Appendix C: Letter of Invitation to Participate**

[date]

Dear [name],

My name is Kate Jones and I am in my final year of the Master of Divinity degree at the Atlantic School of Theology, and a candidate for Ordained Ministry in the United Church of Canada. As part of my studies, I am completing a qualitative research project that is looking at the experience of bi-vocational ministers in the United Church of Canada as they navigate their pastoral identity. Your name was given to me by [consultant] as a potential participant in this research project; and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

### Study Description

This is a phenomenological study and data will be collected through in-depth interviews with participants. These interviews will be conducted either in-person or over a video call (e.g. Skype), and will last approximately 1 hour. The questions will focus on your experience as a bi-vocational minister navigating your pastoral identity, and an audio recording will be made of the interview. Field notes may be taken during this interview. The time of this interview will be arranged at your convenience.

Participation is fully voluntary. You will be asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview, and at any time you can choose to end your participation, in which case the interview will be ended and the recording destroyed.

The results of this study will be presented at the Atlantic School of Theology in a public presentation on March 7-8, 2017, as well as being written up and made available in the Atlantic School of Theology library.

### Benefits of the Study

I anticipate that participation in this study will be of benefit to you personally, as it will give you an opportunity to reflect on your identity as a bi-vocational minister. The results of the study may also be of interest to your colleagues in ministry as well as to the Conference Personnel Ministers, as it will give them a greater understanding of your experience as a bi-vocational minister.

### Risks of the Study

I do not anticipate any risks associated with participating in this study. At any time during the study, if you are not comfortable, you can choose to end your participation.

### Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is fully confidential. In both the public presentation and the written summary of this research, your name and any other personal identifiers will be changed. The audio recording of the interviews as well as the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed on completion of the research.

If you have any further questions related to this study, or if you would like to participate, I invite you to contact me at [e-mail] or [phone number]. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Kate Jones



## Appendix D: Informed Consent

### Informed Consent

I acknowledge that I have read the description of the research project, “Navigation of Pastoral Identity for Bi-Vocational Ministers” contained in the Letter of Invitation. I am aware that my participation is strictly voluntary, and that I can end my participation in the project at any point in the process.

I am aware that my participation is confidential. An audio recording of the interview will be made, and field notes may be taken. This recording along with the transcript of the interview and field notes will be destroyed following the completion of the research project. My name and any other personal identifiers will be changed in order to maintain confidentiality. This consent form will be stored separately from the research data in order to maintain confidentiality.

This project has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of the Atlantic School of Theology. Any ethical concerns about this project may be taken to this Research Ethics Board.

By signing below, I am consenting to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date