

NFAMLP ARTICLE ASSIGNMENT MY THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AS A BI-VOCATIONAL LOCAL PASTOR OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH!



Who Am I? Trina Williams, ScD, MPH, Licensed UMC Local Pastor

As I serve as the Local Pastor Liaison on the National Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors Executive Committee, I want to introduce myself to you and to share my journey with you as a Bi-vocational Local Pastor of the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church. The evolution and the inspiration of my theological development as a bi-vocational Local Pastor of the United Methodist Church is rooted in the holy scriptures of the bible and in the words of John Wesley! My scriptural foundation is found in the book of Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all of thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path.” Also rooted in the words of our inspirational Founder of Methodism, John Wesley. His teachings on “Doing Good,” resonate strongly in my daily bi-vocational acts of service. John Wesley teaches us all, “do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”

As I am reflecting on this theological development and illuminating revelation of who I am as a Bi-vocational UMC Local Pastor, I believe that serving as a Servant of God has truly been the most rewarding, stimulating and meaningful experience of my life; and to know that I am in the right place and in the right time that God wants me to be! I have been preaching, teaching and serving God in the United Methodist Church, in the local community and in the state and federal government for nearly 30 years! Thank you, Lord, I am not tired of serving God yet! To God Be the Glory who gives me strength and directs my paths! As I reflect on this journey, I am truly grateful to God for equipping me to serve in a bi-vocational arena.

As I think about all of my monumental moments of my bi-vocational call experience, I have always felt the presence of God Almighty. Even as a young college graduate, as I received the Bachelors of Science Degree in Biology from Xavier University (1995) god’s presence was there all along my journey! As I received my Masters of Public Health Degree from Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (1997) god’s presence and reassurance of my bi-vocational calling was with me. At the 2010 Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, when I received a certificate for successfully completing the License to Preach School, I felt the presence of God and my heart was deeply warmed. At the 2012 Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, when I was appointed to serve as Pastor of Alexandria –St. Mark UMC and I received my Pastoral License, the presence of God and the reassurance of my calling was with me. As I received my Doctor of Science Degree in Health Systems Management at Tulane School of Public Health (2017) the presence of God was with me, even there!

As I reflect on my bi-vocational journey, I remember while I was working at the Louisiana Office of Public Health as the Youth Suicide Prevention Director of Louisiana, I was also attending Course of Study through Emory University’s Candler School of Theology at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. As I reflect on my first class in Course of Study, our professor taught us about the “Stages of Burn Out for Local Pastors.” At this moment, I felt the presence of God and I prayed that God would give me the strength to stay committed, stay balance, stay prayed up and stay in love with God, while serving God and serving others! I also prayed to whole-heartedly accept the god inspired bi-vocational calling that God had given to me. This was a very important time in my life. As a bi-vocational Local Pastor of the Louisiana

Conference of UMC, I accepted both of my callings from God. I prayed and stood on these three scriptures as I accepted this bi-vocational calling. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all of thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path." Additionally, I prayed and stood on this scripture, Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Another pivotal scripture I prayed and stood on was, Ephesians 4:1, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received!"

Presently, I continue to serve as a bi-vocational UMC Local Pastor who dedicates this moment to my two wonderful parents who have died during this journey of my acceptance of my bi-vocational call. Today, and for the past 14 years, I continue to stay committed and to serve as a bi-vocational Licensed Local Pastor of the Louisiana Conference of UMC. Today I remain committed to my bi-vocational calling and I serve as an adjunct professor at Xavier University Masters in Public Health program in New Orleans and as a senior public health advisor at the Centers for Disease Control, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch. Today, I continue to presently serve as Senior Pastor at Calvary UMC and Magnolia UMC in Thibodaux, Louisiana. I am married to my devoted mate of over 26 years, the Rev. Gregory Williams. I am the mother of my precious 23-year-old daughter, Trinity Williams who is a recent graduate and Dean's Scholar of Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.

I am so grateful to God Almighty for calling me to serve as a bi-vocational Licensed Local Pastor of the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church! This journey has been a life long teaching of acceptance, of service to all in the church and the secular world, to remain balanced, remain committed and to live a life worthy of the calling I have received. I encourage others who may be reflecting on their life's journey of accepting a bi-vocational calling to serve God and others in the church and the secular world, to trust in God every step of the way and to know that we can do all things through Christ who gives you strength! As the Local Pastor Liaison of the National Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors Executive Committee, I want you to know that we are here to encourage, equip, enlighten and to connect you to other clergy who can support you on this journey of service. **As together we work with our church leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.** My hope for you after attending the annual meeting of the NFAMLN, is that you will get tools you can use on journey of service to God, your service to others, as the world is our parish! Wherever you are planted to serve, let us all remember, the inspirational teaching of John Wesley our beloved Founder of Methodism, **"do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can!" Amen!**