

Comment

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At the ninety-first annual meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church in 1976 held in Tacoma, Washington, Rev. Donald Njaa called for a motion from the floor in favor of the ordination of women to ministry. The motion passed with 70 percent approval, but a proposal to fund the training of churches on this topic failed. Every ten years since 1976, *The Covenant Quarterly* has conducted a survey to see how far this denomination has moved in regard to the actual incorporation of women into pastoral roles in Covenant churches. This issue marks the fifth in that series of surveys.

We gratefully acknowledge the work of North Park Theological Seminary's assistant professor Rev. Dr. Michelle Dodson, who holds the Milton B. Engebretson Chair in Evangelism and Justice, for overseeing this most current decadal study. We know that this work would not have been possible without the capable assistance of Alexandria Figueroa, who served as her research assistant on this project.

As we come to this half-century mark of the Covenant decision to ordain women, we recognize the work that has gone before. Therefore, we have included each of the previous four surveys in this issue as a compendium for historical comparison and a present-day reality check. The *Quarterly* is proud to reprint each of the previous decadal studies documenting the realities of Covenant clergywomen together in this volume, beginning with the pioneering work of Mary C. Miller in 1988, and extending through Isolde Anderson (1998), Amanda Olson and Mae Cannon (2007), and Lenore M. Knight Johnson (2017). Each of these scholar practitioners added a new dimension to help the Covenant see itself more clearly, celebrating steps that have been taken and readily acknowledging the remaining areas of growth.

This volume is dedicated to the support of all whom God has called and gifted, particularly our sisters who faithfully serve in Covenant churches in all eleven conferences of the Covenant and the many who serve globally. We also recognize the many Covenant-ordained clergywomen who serve outside of the Covenant because they have not been able to find suitable positions in their home fellowship but who maintain their credentials in this denominational body while faithfully serving among numerous other denominations and institutions for that very reason. At this benchmark moment we humbly recognize the slow pace of movement toward our professed egalitarian posture.

Jesus's question in Luke 7:44 to Simon the Pharisee is a question to each of us in the Covenant: "Do you see this woman?" The tears, heartache, and frustration of women throughout the centuries continue to pour out at Jesus's feet as they realize their personal freedom and giftedness in Christ while at the same time facing closed doors into professional service in the very churches who claim to ordain them! May the next fifty years bring greater clarity, measurable growth, and even more egalitarian support for Covenant clergywomen to fully live into their calling as essential members of the body of Christ.

In this volume, the editor wishes to thank Rev. Scott Burnett, for his years of service as book review editor of *The Covenant Quarterly*, and we ask God's blessing on him well as he moves into new roles of creative ministerial service in the days ahead. In this issue, we also gratefully acknowledge the enthusiastic energy of Michael A. Walker, our current book review editor. Through his network of connections we are able to present the enlightening and challenging insights of several gifted female reviewers presenting books pertinent to the theme of this issue. It is our hope and desire that these reviews will inspire all our readership to broaden their vision of God's calling and equipping of all whom they serve.

Your comments, feedback, and suggestions are always welcome.

PAUL H. DE NEUI