

Comment

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Forty years have passed since the Evangelical Covenant Church officially affirmed the ordination of women. Each decade since the 1976 vote, the *Quarterly* has published a study surveying the trajectory of the women credentialed consequent to it. Mary Miller solicited data and conducted the analysis at ten years (CQ 46:4), Isolde Anderson at twenty (56:3), and Amanda Olson and Mae Cannon at thirty (67:2).

This issue presents the fourth decadal study on Covenant clergywomen, conducted by Lenore M. Knight Johnson, assistant professor of sociology at Trinity Christian College. Knight Johnson collected and interpreted responses from 224 clergywomen, comprising 55 percent of those to whom the survey was sent (410). The survey followed earlier studies in large part for sake of comparison, while also expanding its scope to include questions regarding salary and benefits and to trace women's experiences across multiple positions. Knight Johnson helpfully places the resulting snapshot of the ECC within a broader body of research on women in ministry in evangelical denominations.

On the basis of data obtained, Knight Johnson argues for (1) structural change that joins affirmation of women's ordination *in principle* with the concrete support needed to sustain clergywomen (e.g., a uniform family leave policy across congregations), and (2) cultural changes that challenge gendered views of ministry and normalize women's leadership.

A window into the experience of the "pioneer generation" of Covenant clergywomen is provided by Covenant pastor Kelly Johnston, who surveys the life and work of Jean Lambert (1940–2008), the ninth woman ordained in the denomination and a pioneering educator, pastor, and theologian. Lambert was the first woman to serve on the Board of the

Ordered Ministry, and a letter she wrote in this capacity is appended to Johnston's article. Lambert wrote to all Covenant women on behalf of the board, in response to the pain revealed by the very first decadal study. The frank tone reflects Lamberts realism in naming sexism and its inevitable presence in the church as well as her tenacity in opposing it.

The tensive place women in ministry inhabit between affirmation and opposition, between mixed messages of "yes" and "no," is not a product of ordination. Denise D. Kettering-Lane, associate professor of Brethren studies, Bethany Theological Seminary, shows that such tension characterized the nascent Pietist movement to which the Covenant is heir. Kettering-Lane asks how Philipp Jakob Spener's core conviction regarding the priesthood of all believers impacted the ministry roles women occupied in early German Pietism. She finds tension in his position, as he both reinforced and challenged societal conventions restricting women from public ministry while also expanding the sphere of private ministry, most notably in the conventicle.

This retrospect—on the past decade, on the "pioneer generation" of Covenant clergywomen, back even to the beginning of Pietism—reveals real progress made and offers a cloud of witnesses to encourage the ongoing work of removing all obstacles between God's work and those he has willed to accomplish it.