

THE COVENANT QUARTERLY

February 2017

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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.

Four Decades Later: Credentialed Clergywomen in the Evangelical Covenant Church

*Lenore M. Knight Johnson, assistant professor of sociology,
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I feel that there is a general desire to support and advocate for women clergy from our denominational leaders. Yet, when it gets to the nitty-gritty of placing women it doesn't pan out. As I noted earlier, women are often passed over because we lack "experience." Yet, we are offered few opportunities to gain the experience, and our other skills and life experience are discounted (2016 survey respondent).

Since 1976, those who comprise the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC)—clergy, laypeople, seminary faculty and staff, and denominational leaders—have existed in a shared community that openly affirms the ordination of women. Yet the stories of clergywomen holding credentials in the ECC reflect a diverse range of perspectives on the denominational climate for women, past and present. As with any institution that undergoes change, the process of shifting the structure and the culture of the ECC in support of clergywomen is an arduous process. In

For additional information on the 2016 Covenant clergywomen survey, readers may contact Lenore Knight Johnson directly at lenore.knightjohnson@trnty.edu. The author wishes to thank Trinity Christian College for supporting this research through a Faculty Development Summer Research Grant and the Commission on Biblical Gender Equality of the ECC for funding the online survey subscription. Additional thanks go to Hauna Ondrey for significant guidance throughout all stages of the research process, Carolyn Poterek, and Danielle Ng as well as other Develop Leaders staff who assisted in organizing the list of credentialed women for the survey sample.

the first decade of women's ordination (1977–1987), women represented a mere 6.9 percent of total ECC ordinands and only 15.2 percent of the total in the second decade (1988–1997). This figure has grown, with women representing an average of 27.8 percent of all ordinands in the last ten years.¹ Yet even as the ECC recognizes progress, important and necessary questions remain. How are clergywomen faring in the job search (call) process? What types of jobs are women securing? Are women finding support as they serve local churches, both within congregations and regional conferences? Do women pursue senior leadership positions, such as solo or lead pastor roles, and are they affirmed in those pursuits? What is the culture of the denomination as it relates to clergywomen? Do the symbols, language, beliefs, values, and norms of the ECC reflect an unwavering view that women and men are equally called and gifted?

Research has shown that for clergywomen across denominations, support and advocacy on paper does not guarantee support and advocacy in practice.² Indeed, ideas and actions do not always neatly align, and the diverse experiences of women called to ministry in the ECC reflect this reality. Marking each decade since ECC Annual Meeting delegates went “on record as favoring the ordination of women” in 1976,³ Covenant women have undertaken a study examining the status of clergywomen within the ECC. The present study, four decades later, continues this tradition, asking again where the denomination has made progress and where greater work is needed to form a denominational structure and culture that affirm and advocate for clergywomen in all levels of ministry.

Building off the previous decadal studies, this article explores major themes that emerged from a survey sent to credentialed Covenant clergywomen during the summer of 2016. Through a series of questions, I highlight broad trends around the types of positions clergywomen hold and the ministries they serve; experiences in the job search process; perceptions of support from local churches, conferences, and the denomination; reasons for leaving ministry; and suggestions from clergywomen on how the ECC can promote positive change. I incorporate women's personal reflections, perspectives, and ideas to reinforce the broader statistical

1. Data provided by the Develop Leaders mission priority (formerly the Department of the Ordered Ministry) of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

2. Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 89.

3. *Covenant Yearbook* 1976, 178.

trends. Drawing from these key themes, the subsequent analysis includes recommendations on how to expand opportunities and affirmation for women at all levels of leadership in the ECC. While the ECC has made important strides in relation to its stated position on women's ordination, I argue that a combined focus balancing structural and cultural change is necessary for the denomination to truly break through the barriers clergywomen continue to encounter in their service to the church.

Research Foundations

This present study follows in the tradition of previous efforts to document clergywomen's experiences within the ECC, from their time in seminary, through the call process, and into ministry roles. In 1987, marking a decade of ordaining women, Mary Miller conducted a survey of the "pioneer generation"⁴—the first group of women earning master of divinity (MDiv) degrees from North Park Theological Seminary.⁵ Among the 25 women falling into this category, 24 completed the survey (96 percent). Miller's results indicated that 7 of the 24 respondents were serving as pastors in ECC churches while an equal number had left the denomination. The majority felt the ECC had a negative relationship with women in ministry.

Isolde Anderson replicated Miller's survey in 1997, this time gathering data from 38 women (out of 60) who earned MDiv degrees from North Park Theological Seminary (63 percent).⁶ After two decades, clergywomen continued to struggle finding positions as well as support and advocacy within the denomination, particularly among regional conference superintendents. Anderson's study suggested that the ECC supported clergywomen as an idea but not in actual practice. Yet she discovered growing optimism, too, with fewer women leaving the ECC and more moving on to second and third ministry positions.⁷ Janet Stocks's research on evangelical feminists illustrates that women are willing to stay in a

4. The term "pioneer generation" applied to clergywomen stems from Joy Charlton's longitudinal research on Methodist and Lutheran clergy who were among the first to serve in their denominations. Charlton, "Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation: A Longitudinal Study," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (1997): 599–613.

5. Mary Miller, "A Decade Later: North Park Theological Seminary Female M.Div. Graduates (1977–1987)," *Covenant Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1988): 6–26.

6. Isolde Anderson, "Two Decades Later: North Park Theological Seminary Female M.Div. Graduates (1977–1997)," *Covenant Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (1998): 19–36.

7. Miller, "A Decade Later," 9.

context that is less than supportive if they trust in the overall integrity of the institution and believe that change is possible.⁸ Anderson's findings reflected this trend, suggesting clergywomen found greater hope for positive change as time progressed and therefore remained within the ECC in greater numbers compared to the first decade.

A study marking thirty years, conducted in 2007 by Amanda Olson and Mae Cannon, expanded the sample significantly in an effort to recognize changing patterns in ministry.⁹ While they continued the practice of surveying NPTS graduates for comparative purposes, they broadened contacts to include women who were credentialed in the ECC but received seminary training elsewhere. Thus, both the total contacts and resulting sample size were larger. Out of 363 women contacted (55 percent North Park MDiv graduates), 134 responded to the survey (37 percent). Of this sample, 51 were NPTS MDiv graduates, 18 were NPTS graduates with other degrees, and 65 were credentialed clergywomen who studied at other seminaries.

Olson and Cannon discovered a generally improved view of the ECC's relationship to women in ministry, with just 16 women (12 percent) reporting a negative perception.¹⁰ Echoing the previous two studies, they also identified continued challenges at the regional conference level. They noted that, while women's opportunities and experiences had improved in some ways, women remained highly underrepresented in senior and solo roles, as well as positions focused on preaching. Among those who completed the survey, 21 women (16 percent) were serving as solo pastors, 3 women (2 percent) held positions as senior pastors, and 2 women (1 percent) were executive pastors. The authors acknowledged valuable efforts to promote education around women's ordination (such as the development of the Commission on Biblical Gender Equality and resources such as *Called and Gifted*, a guide outlining the denomination's theological position on women in ministry¹¹) but also argued that a

8. Janet Stocks, "To Stay or Leave? Organizational Legitimacy in the Struggle for Change among Evangelical Feminists," in *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*, ed. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1997), 99–120.

9. Amanda Olson and Mae Cannon, "Three Decades Later: Credentialed Clergywomen in the Covenant (1997–2007)," *Covenant Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2009): 45–51.

10. *Ibid.*, 47.

11. The website of the Evangelical Covenant Church includes a range of resources related to the original pamphlet authored by Sharon Cairns Mann (Chicago: Covenant

“stained glass ceiling” remained.¹²

In their paper, Olson and Cannon quoted former executive minister of the ordered ministry and current dean of North Park Theological Seminary David Kersten, who described the senior/solo preaching pastor as “the threshold position.”¹³ Arguing in favor of women pursuing senior, solo, and preaching-focused positions as a means of progress is not meant to devalue other ministry concentrations such as Christian formation, pastoral care, family ministry, and chaplaincy. With this in mind, it is important to critically examine gendered patterns, asking if women remain concentrated in certain types of ministry because they are women. Both women and men should have opportunities to pursue and be affirmed in the type of ministry to which they are gifted and called. Supporting women called to pursue solo and senior positions is less about a hierarchy in ministry roles and more an effort to challenge existing obstacles women encounter as they seek full inclusion and affirmation at all levels of leadership.

The ECC is not unique in its struggle to align stated positions with practice throughout its congregations and conferences. This trend—what Mark Chaves calls “loose coupling”¹⁴—informs a context in which discrimination against women occurs in ways that are more covert and de facto, and less openly identifiable. Looking at patterns across numerous traditions, Chaves argues that women’s ordination serves as a symbolic representation of a denomination’s stance on broader socio-political issues, specifically feminism but more broadly modernity, diminishing focus on practical and constructive ways to support women.¹⁵ Yet research also shows that the presence of women in ministry positions alters not only laypeople’s perceptions but also the broader culture of a congregation concerning clergy and gender.¹⁶ When women occupy leadership roles in churches, preach, wear liturgical markers, and hold credentials, they

Publications, 2005). The pamphlet is accessible at www.covchurch.org/resources/called-and-gifted-material.

12. Olson and Cannon, “Three Decades Later,” 51. The concept of the “stained glass ceiling” is explored in greater depth by Sally B. Purvis, *The Stained-Glass Ceiling: Churches Their Women Pastors* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

13. Olson and Cannon, “Three Decades Later,” 50.

14. Chaves, *Ordaining Women*, 14.

15. *Ibid.*, 83.

16. Joy Charlton, “Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation.”

are breaking down gendered images of the pastorate and actively creating new images.¹⁷ Thus, a paradox remains: if women's pastoral presence alters the structure and culture of a denomination but that denominational culture and structure include significant barriers for clergywomen, how will change occur?

Methodology

This present study, marking four decades of women's ordination in the ECC, explores similar questions as these previous efforts, while further expanding both the sample and the scope of the survey. Develop Leaders¹⁸ offered contact information for all women holding credentials in the denomination. As a central and thorough source of potential participants, these records alleviated two potential limitations of this study. First, as many Covenant clergywomen attend seminaries other than NPTS, drawing contacts from denominational records meant these women were included in the list of potential contacts. Olson and Cannon's 2007 study followed a similar approach.¹⁹ I did not, however, include all women MDiv graduates of North Park as had the previous studies. Just as ECC clergywomen attend a range of seminaries, not all women pursuing the MDiv at NPTS intend to serve ECC churches or ministries. Including these graduates in the study could have skewed the results. Thus, I relied completely on the denominational records of credentialed clergywomen to develop the final list of contacts.

A significant challenge in the sampling process involved determining who to include of those holding ECC credentials. While women do ministry in many diverse roles—formal and informal—the scope of this study is women's *ordination*, and therefore the contacts reflected this particular focus, surveying women who are ordained or who are licensed and on a likely path toward ordination. The 410 clergywomen who received the survey represent those ordained to word and sacrament or ordained to word and service (formerly ordained to specialized ministry), including those retired or categorized as inactive. Women holding a ministry

17. Joy Charlton, "Women and Clergywomen," *Sociology of Religion* 61, no. 4 (1997): 421; Ruth Wallace, *They Call Her Pastor: A New Role for Catholic Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

18. Develop Leaders is one of the mission priorities of the Evangelical Covenant Church, formerly the Department of the Ordered Ministry.

19. Olson and Cannon, "Three Decades Later."

license or a license for theological student were also contacted. Unlike previous decadal studies, women holding the bivocational license were also sent the survey, as denominational records indicate many of these women hold pastoral positions and may be on a path toward ordination.

The survey itself was significantly reworked and expanded. The updated version sought greater detail on women's navigation of the search process, experiences serving in a church or ministry, and perceptions of support across multiple positions. Questions also addressed salary, benefits, and pension or retirement support (on a very general level) and provided respondents numerous opportunities to share personal experiences through open-ended questions. The resulting data is expansive and rich in complexity. The survey, administered through the online instrument Survey Monkey, was sent out in late June 2016, coinciding with the Covenant Annual Meeting in Phoenix where an announcement was also made at the Ministerium meeting, encouraging participation. Clergywomen received a reminder email in mid-July. The survey was again advertised at the Women Ministries Triennial Conference, and a final reminder email was sent in early August notifying clergywomen of the closing date.

Out of 410 clergywomen who were sent the survey, the final sample includes 224 women, a response rate of 55 percent.²⁰ Among the respondents, 103 attended North Park Theological Seminary (46 percent), and 115 attended other seminaries (51 percent), confirming the expected trend that ECC clergy frequently study in non-ECC seminaries. Among those ordained to word and sacrament, 126 are currently active, 10 are inactive, and 8 are retired. Women ordained to word and service include 30 active clergy, 1 inactive, and 3 retired. Sixteen women identify as licensed (with one noting her license is soon expiring) and 30 are licensed and currently pursuing ordination.

While I discuss clergywomen's experiences in general, there is of course no universal women's experience. Gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class are among the most significant intersecting dimensions of social location and inequality in our society, thus efforts to advocate for clergywomen must recognize varying experiences of women of color, low-income women, and others who may face particular levels of exclu-

20. The total number of responses was 241 women; however, several responses were incomplete or ineligible based on the criteria determined for participants and so were not included in the final sample.

sion within the ECC. Approximately 10 percent of respondents identify as women of color (12 black/African American, 5 Asian, 4 Hispanic/Latino, 1 American Indian/Alaska Native, and 2 selected “other”), while 82 percent identify as white. The remainder did not identify race/ethnicity.²¹ The ECC has been intentional in its efforts to promote racial and ethnic diversity within its churches and leadership structures, yet given the limited number of respondents of color, further research on how these efforts impact clergywomen would be useful.

Results

A general understanding of where clergywomen currently stand and the challenges women face in ministry are best addressed by exploring some key questions, outlined below. The succeeding section offers an analysis of key issues emerging from these questions and a discussion on strategies to move the ECC toward structural and cultural change in greater support of its clergywomen.

What types of positions do clergywomen currently hold? Of those currently serving in a ministry role, 77 percent serve in a Covenant congregation or ministry, and 23 percent serve in a congregation or ministry of another denomination. Women primarily serve in associate positions (25 percent) concentrating on Christian formation, pastoral care, youth, children, and family ministries. A significant group (33 percent) described their current role as “other,” with co-pastor, youth, children and/or family ministry, and roles in higher education as dominant themes.

After thirty years of the ECC’s ordaining women, Olson and Cannon argued that greater effort should be made to support women pursuing senior level positions, including lead and solo pastoral roles and positions emphasizing preaching.²² At forty years, this continues to be a barrier for clergywomen. Just 12 percent of respondents are solo pastors, 6 percent senior pastors of multi-staff church, and 2 percent executive pastors, representing similar figures from ten years ago. Because co-pastor roles vary, this was not listed as an option, though 4 percent of respondents described their role as co-pastor in the “other” category.²³ Additionally,

21. Denominational records on the race and ethnicity of its clergy are incomplete; therefore, comparative statistics for the entire ECC ministerium are not available.

22. Olson and Cannon, “Three Decades Later,” 51.

23. An in-depth analysis on the variation among clergywomen serving as co-pastors is beyond the scope of this survey, but I expect further exploration into this type of position would garner interesting and complex results in relation to gender. Is co-pastoring a means

the survey did not separate out church planting as a specific type of pastoral role (as in solo, senior, associate), but women identified specific issues in church planting, including the underrepresentation of women among ECC church planters, experiences of feeling pushed off this path, and a sense that women were not viewed as potential church planters. As one pastor stated,

[W]hile I don't worry too much about finding calls as I'm married to a pastor and we'd likely move together if we moved, if it were just me, and especially if I were single, finding a call would not remotely be a given. What is more, many of our systems, including church planting, are set up with masculine constructs, categories, and vocabulary.

Further research into the gender dynamics of co-pastoring and church planting would allow for a deeper understanding of the particularly complex aspects of these ministry roles.

What is the relationship between congregation size and position type? The largest percentage of respondents (30 percent) pastor congregations of 100 members or less. Among the twenty-three solo pastors who responded to the survey, all serve congregations with fewer than 100 members.²⁴ Twelve respondents currently hold positions as senior pastors of multi-staff congregations, one in a church of 200–300 members, three in churches of 100–200 members, and seven in churches with less than 100 members. In other words, women in senior leadership roles primarily pastor smaller congregations.

What, then, are women's positions in larger congregations? Of the nine women in churches of 300–400 members, one serves as a co-pastor, and all others are in a ministry position related to pastoral care or Christian formation. Twenty-six women indicated they serve in congregations with more than 400 members, with two serving as executive pastors. The remaining 24 clergywomen occupy associate or other roles related to pastoral care, Christian formation, discipleship, outreach, mission, or

of challenging hierarchies within ministry roles? For instance, one survey respondent noted that her congregation has no hierarchy, and all clergy are co-pastors. Alternatively, is co-pastor a more "comfortable" way for a church to accept a woman in pastoral leadership, particularly at a senior or lead level?

24. This is possibly due to the size of church that can function with a solo pastor and what small churches can afford. In order to determine if this is related to gender, one would have to analyze data on clergymen serving as solo pastors and compare congregation size.

family ministries. This raises the question: If clergywomen serve large congregations but remain heavily concentrated in historically gendered ministry roles, is this a sign of progress or stagnancy?

As noted, considering the concentration of women in particular types of ministry is less about creating a hierarchy of ministry roles and more about the range of opportunities available to women. Certainly a clergywoman called and gifted to Christian formation or pastoral care should be affirmed in her gifts. However, are women in these positions because of calling and giftedness, or because churches and ministries will only consider women for these historically gendered roles, overlooking women candidates for preaching, lead, or solo positions? A look at women's stated preferences compared to the positions they actually secure sheds further light on this question.

How do women's preferences compare to the ministry roles they secure? Among respondents who pursued positions in the ECC call process for their first ministry role, 25 percent were seeking solo or senior pastor roles, and 35 percent preferred associate positions (most frequently in Christian formation, followed by youth and pastoral care). The 33 percent who selected "other" primarily described their preferences as co-pastor, youth, or open to multiple roles.

Examining outcomes for those seeking a position through the call process, 9 percent (18 women) were called to a senior or solo role (8 of whom listed senior or solo pastor as their preference), and 31 percent of all respondents secured an associate role. Among those in the associate category, 25 percent found positions in Christian formation, 19 percent in youth ministry, 10 percent in pastoral care, and 41 percent of respondents selected "other," describing positions as worship, formation, and children and family ministries. In other words, while the percentages of women desiring and securing an associate position were fairly similar, this is not the case for those seeking a senior or solo role.

It is worth noting that clergy—women and men—may receive an unexpected call to a position they did not envision. But how do these dynamics play out in the call process? Are women directed toward gendered ministry roles? Or are they pushed to consider senior leadership opportunities, even if they do not actively indicate interest?

One woman's comment on her struggle to find a job illuminated this trend more clearly: "I have always felt very supported by ECC leadership, but not so much by churches. While I was in the search process I received two calls from churches, while my husband received nearly a

dozen (when he was not even open to call!).”

While women typically experience a “glass ceiling” in male-dominated careers, Williams’s study on men in female-dominated professions shows how men are frequently pushed to pursue more senior level positions—a phenomenon she calls the “glass escalator.”²⁵ Although ministry is not a female-dominated profession, this example suggests that perhaps men experience a “stained-glass escalator” alongside women’s stained-glass ceiling. One might expect clergywomen’s preferences to shift as they move from a first call into second or third calls and beyond; however, the results do not show major growth in women seeking lead, solo, or preaching focused positions (nor do the outcomes of searches show significant changes in the type of positions women actually secure).

How do women find and secure ministry positions? Among the more interesting trends emerging from this study is the fact that women are finding positions through means other than the ECC call process.²⁶ Upon completing seminary, 51 percent of respondents entered the call process with the ECC, and 49 percent did not. This same trend continues as women consider second and third positions where again only about half (50 percent for second positions and 54 percent for third positions) pursued ministry jobs through the ECC call process.

How then do clergywomen secure positions? Some women pursued non-parish ministry or had jobs in place when they entered seminary, reflecting the non-traditional route many clergy take into ministry, perhaps beginning with a lay-leader role and eventually pursuing seminary training and ordination. However, seeing this trend throughout women’s careers—extending into second and third searches—means there is more to this story. In asking women to comment on the helpfulness of contacts with congregations or denominational leaders in their search processes, many indicated they found positions through people they knew, from a church they were attending or through a mentoring relationship. In other words, opportunities to build and use social capital are central to clergywomen finding jobs in the denomination at roughly the same rate as the traditional call process.

How do clergywomen perceive support from the local church,

25. Christine L. Williams, *Still a Man’s World: Men Who Do Women’s Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

26. This could represent a general shift in the ways both women and men secure ministry positions. Without comparable data on clergymen entering the call process, there are limits in suggesting this is a gender-specific trend.

regional conference, and the denomination? When asked how supported clergywomen feel or felt by their local church in their first position, 53 percent chose very supported, and 30 percent selected somewhat supported. Among those experiencing a lack of support in their first position, 6 percent reported feeling somewhat unsupported, and 6 percent feel or felt very unsupported (the remaining respondents were neutral). Similar perceptions continued into women's second positions, with 55 percent reporting they feel or felt very supported, and 29 percent indicating they feel or felt somewhat supported. (Eight percent reported feeling somewhat unsupported and 2 percent very unsupported.) Perceived denominational support was also encouraging, with 36 percent of clergywomen indicating they have felt very supported by the ECC as a clergywoman and 46 percent somewhat supported. Yet with 12 percent of clergywomen describing the denomination as somewhat unsupportive (7 percent) or very unsupportive (5 percent), there is no major change since the last decadal study.

The regional conference continues to be the level where support is experienced as most lacking for clergywomen. As a respondent stated,

I have found support and contact from the regional conference very limited in my time as a pastor. I have felt especially, given a first [call] as a female senior pastor, more contact would be given. I have found this not to be true. In addition, I have found that, as a pastor in general, outside of district pastors' meetings there is little contact with respect to the pastoral care of pastors.

In women's first ministry positions, 45 percent reported feeling very supported and 20 percent somewhat supported by the regional conference. Clergywomen experiencing a lack of support included 8 percent feeling somewhat unsupported and 8 percent very unsupported. A clergywoman described her view: "Very supported in my credentialing and opportunities for service outside of the local church (boards, committees) but very mixed results in terms of support from the local church and the advocacy of conference leadership." Perceptions improved as women advanced into second ministry positions (6 percent somewhat unsupported and 5 percent very unsupported), but, as Olson and Cannon observed ten years ago,²⁷ this pattern suggests ongoing need for an intentional focus

27. Olson and Cannon, "Three Decades Later," 51.

on regional conference cultures.

Where do clergywomen stand financially? For the first time in the decadal studies, clergywomen were asked questions on salary, benefits, and pension or retirement support.²⁸ Out of the 155 women who provided a salary range (42 selected “not applicable,” and the remaining 27 skipped the question), 50 percent (77) are currently earning \$40,000 per year or less. An additional 26 percent (41) are earning between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year. Half of women are in churches or ministries that contribute to the ECC pension program, and an additional 11 percent receive support for a private retirement savings plan. The ECC requires congregations to contribute to its pension program for licensed and ordained clergy, but this does not always translate into greater support, as one respondent described:

The biggest challenge and what eventually led to me leaving was that the church didn’t want to bear the extra expense of a pension for me, were I to be licensed. So rather than doing distance learning I went to North Park. It turned out to be great, but it was very discouraging at the time.

That this woman lost an opportunity because of the pension responsibility is not a reason to alter the denominational policy on retirement support. Instead, it is a sign that education is needed on the value of caring for clergy beyond their specific tenure in a church or ministry.

While these data offer a general picture of where women stand, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions around gender bias in pay and benefits without also examining overall trends in the ECC. Yet if the ECC aligns with general societal trends, it is probable that a pay gap exists among clergy and is especially striking for women of color.²⁹ Examining the specifics of clergy salary equity is beyond the scope of this study, but the results of this project still offer valuable insight into the financial standing of clergywomen and suggest need for a more thorough, in-depth study on clergy pay equity.

28. The survey defined salary as “current annual salary range, including any housing allowance (paid or in-kind, such as housing in a parsonage) but not including benefits and pension.”

29. Ariane Hegewisch and Asha DuMonthier, “The Gender Wage Gap: 2015; Annual Earnings Differences by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity,” Institute for Women’s Policy Research, September 2016, <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-2015-annual-earnings-differences-by-gender-race-and-ethnicity>.

Any study on pay equity needs to consider patterns around the ministry positions in which women and men serve. If women remain primarily concentrated in associate positions (especially historically gendered roles like Christian formation or family ministry), they are also concentrated in lower paying positions. In other words, any pay gap that does exist may be a product of the types of positions women secure. Therefore, efforts to support women pursuing senior roles are a means of promoting greater economic equity among clergy. Further, clergywomen's concentration in lower paying positions or part-time work impacts pension. Addressing pay equity—by ensuring women are paid the same as men for equal work, but also ensuring women are not overly concentrated in lower paying roles—has both immediate and long-term impact on pastors' economic stability.

Why aren't women serving in ministry? Clergywomen cited a range of reasons they are no longer serving in ministry, highlighting four key trends: retirement, difficulty finding jobs (including numerous instances in which women were among final candidates but not called), negative experiences, and family needs. In many instances, multiple factors interacted in pushing a woman out of ministry. For example, one woman stated, "I needed to retire for lack of call to ordained ministry. Spiritual direction has not been deemed a call." Another noted, "I honestly got burned out on church politics, and found that I was not often doing the things I am most passionate about—instead I was often administrating and implementing someone else's vision."

In these stories, women leave ministry not for one isolated reason but for several working together—a negative experience coupled with a mismatch between gift and position, or challenges finding a job aligning with age. These examples illustrate how clergywomen face multiple barriers that, in combination, are enough to end one's ministry career.

Family issues represent a significant theme in these explanations and an area deserving of more intentional exploration. And like other issues, family demands often interact with other factors, leading a clergywoman to step out of ministry: "Options for part time work in ministry along with responsibilities at home are tricky. This has been the issue for me since I had kids . . . balancing my career, husband's career and kids' needs have put my career/work/ministry on the back burner." Another shared,

My husband is also a pastor and we decided, because of our adopted children, that it was better for just one of us to be

serving in vocational ministry, at least for a season. And, when we looked for co-pastoral positions, the choices were few. He, alone, got more interviews and opportunities to explore than I did.

Clergywomen are making choices to leave ministry, but all choices occur within a social context and out of available options. Although speculative, it is worth considering if some women may have thrived in integrating family and ministry had they been given a wider range of opportunities and support.

What is encouraging and discouraging as a clergywoman in the ECC? The survey results reflected both positive and negative experiences, with women frequently balancing affirmation alongside discouragement throughout their careers. When asked what is most encouraging as a clergywoman in the ECC, women highlighted colleagues and networks, other women, and men who advocate for clergywomen as their most valued sources of support. There are clear generational trends as well. As the “pioneer generations” have found inspiration in younger generations of clergywomen pursuing their call to ministry, these newer generations simultaneously noted how much they valued the path tread by those who came first. Women also spoke about the encouragement they have felt in having their call affirmed by the denomination, even if this affirmation does not always translate into constructive, effective solutions for jobs and advancement.

Amid these signs of progress, women still pointed out a persistent lack of support in local churches and at the regional conference level. For instance, numerous women shared examples of superintendents or conference staff with an unwillingness to push back against churches closed off to women candidates:

During my superintendent interviews while in seminary, the superintendent of [one regional] conference told me he would not be passing my Covenant profile on to many churches in his conference because “they would rip it up in my face.” He did not follow this reflection with any kind of action steps he or the conference was making to educate in this area. Needless to say, I found this interaction unhelpful, frustrating, and disappointing.

While superintendents may be trying to protect women from a potentially

toxic experience, they are maintaining the status quo within conferences by allowing churches to comfortably remain in the denomination despite a conflicting stance on women's ordination.

Additionally, women have struggled in finding jobs and are concerned over the underrepresentation of women at all levels of leadership, spanning congregations, regional conferences, denominational offices, and ECC events such as Midwinter and CHIC. Respondents commented on the fact that, currently, only one woman serves as conference superintendent. Women also expressed significant disappointment that not all churches, fellow clergy, and speakers at denominational events support women in ministry, with statements such as, "It is still accepted that churches do not have to embrace or even believe the biblical teaching on women as pastors." And finally, clergywomen shared general concern over the broader culture within the denomination, describing the ECC as a "good old boys' club" and critiquing the persistent use of masculine language:

Even after I had been serving at my first church for many years, I served on the search committee for a new senior pastor and discovered that we had been using all male pronouns in our job descriptions for many years. I think that often there is simply very little awareness among church leaders about the extent to which...biases limit the ability of women to live out a call to ministry.

These points of discouragement reflect how the ECC, while encouraging in many ways to clergywomen, must also wrestle with the covert and underlying ways its structure and culture are gendered, creating complex barriers for women to pursue and be affirmed at all levels of leadership.

Analysis: Aligning Structural and Cultural Solutions within Congregational Polity

If there was a five-fold test which included the diversity of gender as well as ethnicity, we would have made more inroads than we have after forty years. Where is the strategy at the denominational level to increase the visibility of women leaders in the ECC? Where is the president speaking and encouraging this priority and distinctive of our denomination?

Although ECC clergywomen share a diverse range of views, what is

clear among the majority of respondents (90 percent) is that the ECC could do more to support women in ministry. In stating what she sees as the key issue holding back clergywomen in the ECC, one woman argued,

Obviously there continues to be a large disconnect between the denomination's support of women and the local church's support of women. I heard someone say once that male pastors need to do the work of preparing their churches for the next pastor they have to be female. I think there is great truth in that.

This statement exemplifies much of what is at the heart of the ECC's struggle to further advance the leadership of women. Joy Charlton's research illustrates that denominations in which congregations select pastors (as opposed to denominations in which clergy are appointed by leaders outside of the congregation) represent contexts where clergywomen encounter greater difficulties.³⁰ Within the ECC, when congregations have the power to call their own pastors, they simultaneously have the power to alter conventional leadership structures. When those congregations overlook women—whether because they oppose women's ordination or because they are simply following historical, cultural patterns—there is little the denomination can do beyond encouragement. Survey respondents appeared well aware of the limits of the ECC's congregational polity. Yet there are other avenues—both structural and cultural—through which the ECC can more fully and unequivocally support and advocate on behalf of clergywomen.

Structural Solutions

With roughly half of clergywomen securing ministry positions through means other than the traditional call process, the ECC should expand its advocacy efforts in accordance with the patterns shown here. As a respondent pointed out, adding names into a call process only goes so far, and other pastors and leaders have a responsibility to think broadly about advocacy:

There is some talk from the higher ups that we support women, but there is still A LOT of churches that would not hire a female pastor. There needs to be more done to educate churches that women are called and gifted. Superintendents

30. Charlton, "Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation," 606.

need to do more to help churches understand this and not just stick in one female name that automatically gets rejected in the call process. Male pastors need to teach their churches that women can be pastors. When a male pastor is called to move on from a church he should know that the church is closer to accepting women in ministry, otherwise he has done his sisters in ministry and the church a disservice.

The ECC's Commission on Biblical Gender Equality is currently developing a program called Project Deborah to encourage clergy and laypeople across the denomination to identify, affirm, and mentor young women who show an interest, gifting, or calling to ministry. A clergywoman spoke about mentoring a young woman in her congregation, reinforcing the value of such efforts:

I have had in my own church, a young woman I mentored who upon learning more of the Bible and the call of women told me she now understood that in her attraction to youth ministry, she could now be the youth pastor and not just the youth pastor's wife. This reflects the importance of mentoring at the local church level.

Mentorship training and programs should be broadcast widely and intentionally integrated into ECC events and professional development opportunities. The denomination should make such training a requirement, ensuring all clergy are, at the very least, exposed to denominational mentoring efforts and recognize mentoring as an integral part of ministry.

Beyond mentoring future clergy, congregations—particularly those reluctant to hire women—need mentorship as well. One respondent shared her experience of being mentored by a lead pastor who also positively formed the congregation on women's ordination:

[The] lead pastor led by example and taught on the gifted and called nature of my ministry. He was serious about mentoring me and giving me all the space I needed to bring creative ministry to our community. He also very publicly allowed himself to be taught by me.

By thinking broadly about what it means to be a leader and a mentor, this lead pastor helped develop a context in which this clergywoman could thrive and be affirmed. Further, this expanded approach helps shift

the overall culture within a congregation and the larger denomination.

Mentorship, job prospects, and career advancement all depend on building relationships; therefore, expanding opportunities to build social capital is another way the ECC can look beyond the call process in efforts to advocate for women. One survey respondent, reflecting on her own “outsider” status, wrote,

Clergywomen (though not exclusively) often find themselves in ministry “outside the box,” and I feel our system doesn’t have many ways to support that. I hear others in situations similar to mine say they don’t get mailings or other communication. Our conferences are very oriented to parish ministry, and extremely expensive, whether for individuals or even for nonprofits like mine to pay for.

The denomination cannot require clergy to attend certain events, but it can expand offerings and consider ways to more effectively build social and professional networks that could (and often do, as found in this study) lead to ministry opportunities. And recognizing that clergywomen identified people and relationships as valuable sources of encouragement, expanding social networks is as much about affirmation as it is about jobs.

As stated, respondents critiqued the lack of women in visible positions of leadership, at the denominational level and particularly as speakers at events like Midwinter and CHIC. That women remain the minority across the ECC means current clergywomen have fewer role models and advocates, but also that young girls and women lack models that affirm—through presence and message—their own emerging calls to ministry. One respondent stated,

I heard someone say once that you can learn a lot about an organization, or church, from their gathered events. If this is true, then our big events, namely CHIC and Midwinter, have a lot to be desired for women in ministry. How will young women know that their home denomination supports them in their call to ministry when they don’t see this reflected at camp and CHIC?

The limitations of congregational polity mean denomination leaders cannot simply place women in pastoral positions, but they can place women in other, visible leadership roles. A clergywoman noted, “During my licensing interview, [the superintendent] made a point of acknowledging

and apologizing for the fact that it was on [sic] men on the committee. I so appreciate that. That was and is hard.” Although this woman saw the superintendent’s recognition of the problem as affirming, these are areas in which conference or denominational staff have the capacity to ensure more balanced representation. Reaching out to women as candidates for boards and committees, workshop facilitators, and keynote speakers at denominational events sends a positive message and alters the perceptions around clergy and leadership in the church. In addressing this concern, a respondent urged,

Be bold! Hire women! Get more women from WITHIN the ECC speaking at Youth Workers Connection and Midwinter. When there are five evenings of speakers at CHIC, have a MINIMUM of two women as main speakers. Put women in front, give them pastoral duties, and don’t let people bully you with phrases like “we tried finding women to speak but there just weren’t enough qualified women...” How are we to ever become qualified if we’re not given the chance and put in positions??

Being bold according to clergywomen in this study also involves challenging congregations and other clergy who do not support women in ministry: “All lead pastors and congregation[s] should support and affirm women in ministry if that is what we do as a denomination. They should not get a choice. They then should choose another denomination.” Clergywomen expressed frustration with the willingness to accommodate complementarian clergy or congregations at the expense of clergywomen. Overall, the women in this study are seeking intentional, clear messages and actions from the ECC that unequivocally reflect where the denomination stands. The denomination should critically examine where it can be bold and seriously consider this call to action from clergywomen.

Finally, structural solutions acknowledging and addressing demands outside the workplace also serve as important avenues to better support and advocate for clergywomen. Sociologist Pamela Stone suggests that women do not always willingly choose full-time parenting over careers but instead respond to complex pushes and pulls between work and family life.³¹ Again, as the survey data showed, women do not typically leave

31. Pamela Stone, *Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

ministry for a single reason, but rather an interaction between several factors. One clergywoman's story highlighted such nuances:

When I was pregnant with my first child, my husband and I were in the process of completing the training to be church planters, but when it was time to interview with the church plant members, I was told by the superintendent and church planting people that I shouldn't expect to be considered as a co-pastor. I was disappointed, but I chose to focus on my baby. Since that time, my husband has served as pastor in rural churches, and I haven't submitted my profile to co-pastor alongside him. It took me quite a few years to be okay with this.

This particular story is one where a clergywoman did not "opt out" intentionally, but rather made a choice within her available options.³²

Caring for family is, indeed, a fulfilling and worthwhile path that deserves affirmation. Yet are women leaving (or not even entering) the call process or ministry due to family responsibilities? Would more women combine ministry and parenting (or other family or personal responsibilities) if doing so was more accepted and accessible? One pastor shared her experience of pastoring a church with no family leave policy:

[M]y most insightful challenge revolved around maternity leave. The church had never had to deal with maternity leave before and wasn't sure where to start. I am aware of other fellow women in ministry having the same issues and having to help their church leadership create guidelines for such instances.

A congregation without a maternity or family leave policy is making clear assumptions about its pastoral staff and putting women in the awkward and inappropriate position of having to advocate for their own family leave.³³ These are important questions the ECC should explore in greater

32. Opting out refers to women who choose full-time parenting over work in the paid labor force. The term stems from Lisa Belkin's October 26, 2003, article in the *New York Times*, "The Opt Out Revolution," <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/26/magazine/the-opt-out-revolution.html>.

33. Churches without a family leave policy not only create challenges for expectant mothers, but also exclude men from paternity leave, and exclude both women and men from other care work, such as assisting an aging or ill parent.

depth and consider how to clear paths for clergywomen (and men) to flourish in work, family, and personal life. All people—women and men, parents and non-parents, single and married—desire and deserve a life outside of work and the capacity to care for loved ones and be present in relationships. And all people desire and deserve the chance to pursue career and vocation. There is no simple solution to help people manage competing demands, but establishing a denominationwide policy on family leave is an excellent starting place. Instead of falling behind secular workplaces, the ECC (and the church more broadly) should be leading the way on this issue, setting the highest standard for family support by offering its clergy effective options for maternity, paternity, and general family leave.

Cultural Solutions: “Leaning In” from All Directions

Alongside these structural solutions, advocacy and support strategies must also include efforts to shift the culture of the ECC and the status quo of male leadership. Broader research on clergywomen addresses how ministry has become gendered, with perceptions of clergywomen and the positions they hold following cultural stereotypes.³⁴ This is clear in the ECC, as women remain concentrated in historically gendered roles like Christian formation, family ministry, and pastoral care, or are overlooked for positions for gendered reasons, as one woman shared:

In looking for a first call, I had conversations with some superintendents who were honest with me about the fact that I’d likely face some difficulty in finding churches open to female pastors in their conferences. I was glad for their honesty, but saddened by that reality. One church [in a specific state] I spoke with decided not to continue in the process with me because they “were concerned that my husband wouldn’t be able to find a good job in the area.” I think the reality was that my gifts didn’t fit their needs, or they weren’t really open to a female pastor and were afraid to say it.

Gender has served and continues to serve as a point of contention within evangelical traditions and remains a dominant aspect of cultural conflict, particularly around women in leadership, teaching, and preaching posi-

34. Paula Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

tions.³⁵ And when women are passed over for jobs due to family related assumptions, there is a clear need to challenge such structures.

Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer at Facebook and author of the bestselling book *Lean In*,³⁶ argues that women are underrepresented at the highest levels of leadership in part because they do not push forward, aim higher, and actively pursue greater challenges and opportunities. While her arguments carry limitations, including race and class biases and the underlying assumption that women are responsible for gender inequality,³⁷ the concept of “leaning in” offers a useful metaphor for shifting the gendered culture of leadership in the ECC. How can the denomination foster a context in which women think and act broadly in pursuing a call to ministry—leaning into expanded visions of women in ministry—and how can local churches, regional conferences, and denominational administrators respond by expanding their images of pastor, preacher, teacher, and leader?

Recognizing the goals women set for ministry and how few aim for solo and senior pastor roles even as they move through their careers, the ECC should consider efforts to form and support women in identifying goals based on ministry gifts and calling, not on gendered expectations. Whether a woman is called to serve in pastoral care or as lead pastor of a multi-staff church, she should have support to pursue her call regardless of gender.³⁸ A clergywoman shared her sense of affirmation, having moved into a position toward which she had felt called, stating, “I have finally been given the responsibility I knew I was capable of. I have trust and autonomy in my work and wonderfully supportive coworkers with whom I can collaborate.” Here is a woman who is thriving rather than compromising, a result of opportunities to pursue her calling and not be limited by gender. As stated throughout this discussion, such arguments are not meant to diminish the importance of formation or pastoral care roles, but rather to question why women are so heavily concentrated in such positions.

35. Julie Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

36. Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

37. bell hooks, “Dig Deep: Beyond Lean In,” *The Feminist Wire*, October 28, 2013, <http://www.thefeministwire.com/2013/10/17973>.

38. Similarly, men should be encouraged to follow gifting over gendered expectations. Shifting and broadening perspectives opens up greater opportunities for all clergy.

Encouraging women to develop a broader vision of ministry is, of course, only part of the story. If women pursue solo and senior pastor roles, regional conferences, local churches, and denominational leaders also need broadened perspectives. For example, numerous women felt overlooked for senior pastor roles, even those who have ministry experience:

I have felt a glass ceiling. Getting a first call out of seminary was not terribly difficult, but for myself and other women who have had several years of experience, there are very few opportunities. Those churches who have multiple staff and can pay decently will gravitate toward a male who is married and fits the image of a traditional pastor. Also having been a solo pastor, churches with staff don't see me as having experience with a staff and being able to lead as a senior pastor.

Responsibility lies with colleagues, too, as women frequently pointed out the challenges in finding acceptance and legitimacy among clergymen:

My experiences with the denomination have been positive. I have, however, had experiences with my male colleagues that tend to minimize my voice or engage me in conversations completely different than they would with their male peers. They don't discuss theology with me, for example, but they will talk with me about their kids.

Clergymen must share in the responsibility of challenging the gendered culture of ministry in the ECC, or else change will not occur. Indeed, women pointed out the particular value in men supporting their call. As one stated, "Many men have stepped aside so that my voice may be heard." Another shared the encouragement of "strong male leaders who speak up and normalize ministry without making it a big deal. They treat me like a normal colleague—an equal." But women frequently expressed a desire for more consistent and concerted effort among male colleagues: "Sad looks from male colleagues and shrugs from superintendents about congregations that won't accept a woman pastor get pretty old. Step up, gentlemen, and give us a chance to serve." Along with advocating for women in ministry, mentoring, and shifting the culture within the churches or ministries they serve, day-to-day interactions on a collegial level require an openness to women, and men must examine how their ideas and actions perpetuate problems for clergywomen.

Individual and institutional changes go hand-in-hand. Expanding the perspectives of clergy, laypeople, and other leaders informs broader cultural patterns, just as the culture of an institution impacts how people think and act. In other words, women's interactions with laypeople, clergy, and leaders cannot be separated from the gendered culture within some ECC churches and institutions, as shown here:

I am still seeking a call. I'm on to the third round of interviews next week at a local church. Everything about the position looks like a potential match, but they despite looking for an MDiv, ordination, three to five years' experience, preaching, care, and discipleship responsibilities, they want to call it a director, not a pastor. The elephant in the room is gender.

Similarly, as noted above, perspectives on women in ministry expand when people experience a woman in pastoral or ministry leadership, but clergywomen need opportunities in order for this change to occur.³⁹ An ECC clergywoman's comment reflected another way individual and institutional cultural change are intertwined:

While I originally sought calls as a solo pastor, people encouraged me to seek a lead pastor role because they saw strong leadership skills in me. The church in which I currently serve was not considering a female pastor at first, but as they entered the call process they sensed God calling them to be more open to this. They intentionally entered into a Bible study on "Called & Gifted" (under encouragement by the male interim and associate pastors). In time we all felt that I was the pastor who was called to this church. Since being called, some people have shared that they voted against my call at first because of my gender, but still stayed at the church. They now are some of my best supporters!

This congregation, initially reluctant to let this pastor live into her call, eventually transitioned to a welcoming and supportive stance. But cultural change is only possible if women have adequate opportunities to serve. Indeed, survey respondents shared inspiring stories of finding fulfillment in their call, and not all wish to move beyond their current roles. But

39. Edward C. Lehman, *Women Clergy: Breaking Through Gender Barriers* (New Brunswick: Transaction, Inc., 1985).

there are, at the same time, women who desire something different yet feel limited, such as one who was told she should “consider curtailing” her ambitions.

Overall, the denomination, regional conferences, and local churches need to strike the appropriate balance between a gender-neutral view (which overlooks some of the unique gifts, experiences, and styles of leadership women offer) and one in which gender is a determining factor in the types of ministry roles clergy secure. Wallace, for instance, found that women have a more collaborative, team-oriented leadership style in religious institutions, which, when brought into a church, had positive effects on the laypeople and the general culture of a congregation.⁴⁰ Any institution does itself a disservice when notions of “leadership” are limited to just a few characteristics and, in turn, only a percentage of the population. Expanding vision from all angles through cultural transformation benefits clergywomen called and gifted to a diverse range of ministry roles and benefits ECC churches with more diverse pastoral staffs.

Conclusion: Opportunity over Obstacle

In previous discourse on women’s ordination, Deasy has argued that the ECC needs to move beyond theological debates and unequivocally stand firm in its position that both women and men are equally called and gifted to ministry.⁴¹ In my own work, I have made the case that by not actively, intentionally creating ways to keep called and gifted women in the ECC by challenging limitations placed on them, the denomination problematizes women rather than the discrimination or barriers they face in attempting to live out a call to vocational ministry.⁴² In other words, the ECC places the burden on clergywomen to navigate both a structure and culture that are not yet willing to fully embrace their gifts and callings. One respondent’s story reflected the weariness that comes with persevering amid pushback:

40. Wallace, *They Call Her Pastor*; cf. Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia Mei Yin Chang, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

41. Jo Ann Deasy, “Reframing the Issue: Women’s Ordination in the ECC,” *Covenant Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2009): 3–25.

42. Lenore Knight Johnson, “Organic Transformation or Legislated Change? Women’s Ordination in the Evangelical Covenant Church” (master’s thesis, Loyola University Chicago, 2005).

When I went through the interview process the search team fully endorsed me as the candidate, but the council was six in favor and four opposed because I was a woman. The lead and executive pastors asked me if I would be willing to take preaching off the job description because they did not think the vote would pass because of those that do not believe a woman should be a pastor. I agreed to come under those conditions. I was called with a vote of 72 percent. I was told that we would continue to have conversation about preaching and that I would be able to participate in all other pastoral duties. A year later I am still not participating in communion in the traditional service and there is no conversation about preaching. We have had twelve to fifteen families leave the church because I am a female pastor. Those opposed to a female pastor continue to have a loud voice. I am trying to stay faithful in order to pave the way for women in this context but I am weary and I am not sure what the future holds.

The present study shows some positive growth, with women moving into second, third, and fourth calls and beyond, finding affirmation from a range of sources along the way. And women like the one quoted here are instrumental in assuring future generations will find a smoother path, even as they face a difficulty journey. But while we should not overlook the contrasts between the stories of discouragement shared in earlier decadal studies and the numerous women who indicated in this study fulfillment and support in their work, the structural and cultural barriers that exist for clergywomen can and should be challenged.

If the ECC only draws from half the population to lead its churches, is the denomination truly the best it can be? Are denominational leaders looking beyond the limits of congregational polity and seriously considering ways they can openly and boldly advocate for the exceptional women who are called and gifted to serve the ECC? The structural and cultural changes proposed in this article cannot be viewed as obstacles or burdens but rather as opportunities to make a thriving denomination even stronger. To be sure, change is difficult and often a slow, arduous process. But if the ECC is committed to the position it affirmed in 1976, the denomination and all those who comprise it need to determine if they are willing to do the hard work necessary to keep and support extraordinarily gifted people, create paths toward all levels of leadership,

and ensure clergywomen can thrive in all realms of daily life—spiritual, personal, and professional. Until then, these same questions and issues will likely remain for another decade and beyond.

Jean C. Lambert: Covenant Pastor, Theologian, Pioneer

Kelly Johnston, ordained Covenant pastor, Naperville, Illinois

Women today are pioneering in a treacherous wilderness. Whether in the church as treasurer, deacon, adult Bible teacher, elder or council member, minister of Christian education, missionary health professional or missionary evangelist, or as pastor, the fact remains if one is a woman in ministry, one is a pioneer. (Jean Lambert, on behalf of the Board of the Ministry, 1989)

At the 97th Annual Meeting, held in Chicago, 1982, Jean Lambert (1940–2008) became the ninth woman to be ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Lambert would go on to serve in a variety of diverse contexts, alternating between parish and academy. Beginning as professor of theology at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri (1976–1985), Lambert took her first pastoral call at Bethesda Covenant Church in New York City (1985–1989). From Bethesda she reentered the academy as senior lecturer of religious studies at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare (1989–1991). After a second call to parish ministry as pastor of the International Fellowship Immanuelskyrkan in Stockholm, Sweden (1992–1998), she returned to the classroom in Zimbabwe, as associate professor of theology and ethics at Africa University in Mutare (1998–2004). Reflecting on her ministry at the end of her life, Lambert wrote, “I have been a boundary-straddler, my churches and communities crossing sociological, denominational, national, linguistic lines.”¹ This article surveys Jean Lambert’s life of

1. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, July 26, 2004. Jean Lambert Ministry File, Record Series 6/1/2/1, Box 85, Folder 67, Covenant Archives and Historical Library (CAHL), Chicago, Illinois.

faithful ministry as pioneer, advocate, pastor, and theologian.

Path to Ordination

Even prior to her ordination, Lambert had earned master's and doctoral degrees from Union Theological Seminary and taught seminarians at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. She had served on the Committee for Revision of Book of Worship (1974–1981) and the Board of Publications (1977–1982).² In 1980 Lambert was the first woman to preach at the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium. In spite of this wealth of experience, several internal obstacles stood between her and ordination.

Like many of her time, Lambert grew up assuming women could serve as missionaries and teachers but not as pastors. She graduated in 1962 from North Park College with a bachelor's degree in history and minor in French and began work at Covenant Press as a staff assistant for the *Covenant Companion*. After two years in this position, Lambert left to pursue seminary studies at Union Theological Seminary—not with pastoral ministry in mind but rather to enrich her sensed-vocation as a Christian journalist.³ Through her studies she discovered a passion for Alfred North Whitehead, whose process theology provided a framework for her to “think about the theological puzzles that had tormented [her],” particularly “the relation of God's will and human will, freedom and destiny, God's goodness and power in relation to human rebellion and sin.”⁴ Upon graduation Lambert returned to Covenant Press as managing editor of the *Covenant Companion*. After three years in this position she resumed her studies, returning to Union to pursue a PhD in philosophy of religion, continuing her research on Whitehead under process theologian Daniel Day Williams.

Lambert credited the women's movement for her later ability to “recognize the call of God for what it was”⁵ and accept that women could be called to pastoral ministry. At the same time, her desire for a less

2. Covenant Minister's Profile Form, January 31, 1987. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

3. Covenant Minister's Profile Form, January 29, 1991. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

4. Jean Lambert, “Toward Covenant Ordination: Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Board of Ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church,” 2–3. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

5. Covenant Minister's Profile Form, July 26, 2004. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

hierarchical church generated ongoing resistance to ordination. She was deeply convinced that the ministry to which every Christian was called could rightly be considered an ordained ministry. Lambert had outlined her conviction about ordination in a 1974 article, “Un-Fettering the Word: A Call for Coarcial Interpretation of the Bible.”⁶ In her discussion of biblical interpretation and the locus of human authority, she directly linked clericalism and sexism. She called for a “coarcial ordering”⁷ where the “emphasis is on a community’s sharing its diverse gifts and thereby finding sufficient order to maintain humane and liberating structure.”⁸ She reads Jesus’s own teaching, such as Matthew 20:25–27, as establishing this coarcial vision, embraced for a time in the early church until it reverted to a more worldly distinction between men and women, contributing to the clericalism still dominant in the church.⁹ Lambert’s main argument in “Un-Fettering the Word” is that the interpretation of Scripture should be available to all Christians regardless of their standing in the official leadership structures of the church. The article reflects Lambert’s passion for the priesthood of all believers.

In time Lambert came to realize that despite her desire to maintain lay status, functionally she had already passed from laity to clergy by virtue of her vocation as a seminary professor. While teaching theology at St. Paul School of Theology (1976–1985), she offered courses and workshops at her home church in Olathe, Kansas, and in Covenant congregations and conferences around the Midwest.¹⁰ “I have lost my credibility as a lay person,” she wrote in her ordination paper. “I keep being called upon by people to do actions we recognize as the province of the ordained: celebration of the Lord’s Supper, baptizing, preaching, pastoral counseling.”¹¹ She would later articulate her pastoral call as com-

6. Jean Lambert, “Un-Fettering the Word: A Call for Coarcial Interpretation of the Bible,” *Covenant Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1974): 3–26.

7. “Coarcial” is a word Lambert created for the purposes of her argument: “I derive coarcial from the Greek *koinoneo* (to share) and *arkeo* (to be sufficient); I distinguish it from hierarchical, based on *hieros* (sacred) and *archo* (to rule over),” “Un-Fettering the Word,” 16.

8. *Ibid.*

9. “Does it not seem likely, at least, that the churches’ revalidating of sexually-defined hierarchies facilitated the hardening of other functional distinctions into hierarchies of authority and status?” “Un-Fettering the Word,” 17.

10. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, January 29, 1991. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

11. Lambert, “Toward Covenant Ordination,” 10.

ing from “students who accepted me as pastor and asked me to perform various pastoral functions”¹² and would identify her ministry of teaching theology as both call and fulfillment of that call.¹³

Recognizing that the call to ordained ministry came not only from one’s own internal struggle or intuition, but also from God through the people of God, Lambert submitted her ordination application, opening the discernment process to the structures of the church. On August 18, 1981, she wrote to Earl VanDerVeer, executive secretary of the ministry, “After long consideration—sometimes thoughtful, sometimes prayerful, and sometimes just ‘stewing’—I have decided to apply for ordination to the Christian ministry in the Evangelical Covenant Church.”¹⁴

Lambert’s ordination essays are masterfully conceived and written. Indeed, the report on her ordination interview reads, “We found the paper hard to interpret. Some of the questions she raised we felt were beyond us”; “We were aware of an interview with a gifted person who was dealing with questions in a manner we normally do not follow ourselves. We do not question her faith or place in Covenant life.”¹⁵ And so Lambert was ordained, June 10, 1982, with Isolde Anderson as the eighth and ninth women ordained to ministry in the Evangelical Covenant Church following the 1976 Annual Meeting vote in favor of women’s ordination.

Advocate

Using the power of words as well as her presence in key places, Lambert was an advocate for Covenant women in ministry before and following her ordination. In agreeing to the Covenant’s position on baptism during the ordination process, Lambert had inserted “she or” and “or her” throughout the statement at each instance masculine language was used. She appended a note to the end of the document: “I am glad to agree in the Covenant’s statement on Baptism, here stated, and will commit myself to continuing work to deepen our mutual understanding and improve our language so as to upbuild the body of Christ.”¹⁶ Her archival

12. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, March 18, 1997. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

13. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, June, 18, 2003. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

14. Jean Lambert to Earl VanDerVeer, August 18, 1981. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

15. Paul Sparman, acting secretary, Report on an Ordination Interview, January 14, 1982. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

16. Signed April 23, 1982. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

file includes correspondence with the Board of the Ministry, advocating for—and being assigned the task of—the elimination of “sexist language” from Covenant documents, including the Covenant Constitution and Bylaws.¹⁷

In 1980, Lambert was the first woman to preach at an annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium. The Committee for Revision of Book of Worship, on which Lambert served, was responsible for planning the communion service preceding the first business session and chose Lambert to preach.¹⁸ The minutes of the meeting note simply that “a challenging sermon on Mark 5:21–43 was delivered by Jean Lambert.”¹⁹ She herself was conscious of the weight of this pioneering sermon: “Knowing that the committee’s selection of me to preach wasn’t only because I was a woman, I felt I nevertheless ‘represented’ my sister preachers in this task. . . .”²⁰ Her sermon focused on Christ’s healing of the hemorrhaging woman and raising of Jairus’s daughter. She ascribed to the former action Christ’s elimination of obligatory suffering, to the second, his inauguration of a new system of life and liberation: “I believe Jesus is signaling here the releasing of all captives from their pasts filled with bondage—releasing the poor, the black, the sick, the female, the colonized, the disfigured, the unfree from every cause—and calling them, us, to get up and walk.”²¹ Lambert highlighted Christ’s attention to these two women and the fact that all three synoptic gospels record those gathered in Jairus’s home laughing at Jesus (v. 40). Here, Lambert insisted, is where we find the gospel:

God’s good news is not immediately impressive. It comes in contrast with what we are expecting, so much so that it may even seem ridiculous. If you want to hear God’s word, listen

17. Cf. letters to Jean Lambert from Earl VanDerVeer, March 29, 1983, and Donald Njaa, April 2, 1986; July 8, 1987. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

18. Jean Lambert, “Hope for the Daily Dying: Mark 5:21–43,” *Covenant Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1988): 35, n. 1.

19. *Covenant Yearbook* 1980, 194. Lambert’s 1980 sermon was published in the November 1988 *Covenant Quarterly*—with Mary Miller’s ten-year study of Covenant clergywomen—including substantial footnotes on her process of preparing the sermon and experience preaching it. I highly recommend this sermon both for the great personal insights shared by Lambert in her footnotes as well as the excellent gospel message in the sermon. Lambert, “Hope for the Daily Dying,” 35–43.

20. *Ibid.*, 35, n. 2.

21. *Ibid.*, 43.

to the powerless. If you want to hear God's word, listen to the oppressed. Listen to the men they laugh at, the ones they make ethnic jokes about. You want to hear God's word? Listen to the woman whose idea strikes you funny when she isn't joking. More to the point here, if we are to get the good news from the raising of Jairus's daughter, we must hear it along with the news of the hemorrhaging woman.²²

In preparing this sermon for publication some years later, Lambert recalled a pastor who shared with her his realization that women could bring new insight to the biblical text. She noted the internal process required for women to recognize and validate such insight: "Women don't automatically have special insights just from being women. It took the feminist 'consciousness raising' process to allow me to *use* my 'female knowledge' and not keep repressing it."²³

At the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium in 1982, the same year Lambert was ordained, a resolution was presented by Janet Lundblad to "appoint a task force to seek to encourage, by all appropriate means, the calling of women into pastoral ministry."²⁴ The resolution passed, and Lambert joined Lundblad and David Hawkinson in leading the Task Force on Women in Pastoral Ministry. As the chair of that task force, Lambert was able to put her theological convictions into conversation with others in support of women and men sharing fully in the ministry of the church. Among its work, the task force advocated that the Covenant's commitment to women's ordination be made explicit in each ordination interview.²⁵

In 1984, at the request of the Board of the Ministry, Lambert partnered with Klyne Snodgrass, Robert Johnston, and David Scholer to present a paper to the Covenant Ministerium on "A Biblical and Theological Basis

22. Ibid., 41.

23. Ibid., 38–39, n. 8.

24. *Covenant Yearbook* 1982, 224.

25. Jean Lambert to Kent Palmquist, July 21, 1984. "Glenn Palmberg suggested that some special attention be given to the issue, and recognition of the 1976 decision be made explicitly, in each pre-ordination interview with the Board, though he doesn't think a further suggestion [John] Bray made—namely, that affirmation of the 1976 decision be an explicit requirement for ordination—would be a good precedent. I find both these suggestions good (recognize the 1976 decision but don't require acquiescence)." Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

for Women in Ministry.” After some discussion and revision, this paper now stands as a key resource supporting women’s unrestricted ministry for many evangelical denominations.²⁶

Lambert was the first woman to serve on the Board of the Ministry (1985–1989) and was its secretary from 1987 to 1989. In 1989, on behalf of the board, Lambert wrote “an open letter to each woman seeking to obey Christ’s call to ministry in the Covenant Church, both volunteer lay workers in local congregations, and pastors, missionaries, and staff ministers.”²⁷ The letter was a response to the pain and anger revealed in Mary Miller’s survey of Covenant clergywomen, “Ten Years Later,” published in the *Covenant Quarterly*.²⁸ Lambert’s words were both stark, speaking in plain terms about the reality of sexism in the church, and encouraging, expressing solidarity with Covenant women as ministers of the gospel. She admitted that all women in ministry in the Covenant Church were “pioneering in a treacherous wilderness”:

If you choose not to accept a sexist definition from the church and society for what your ministry is to be, then you need to be fully aware that you are accepting more than a vocation, a career, a profession. You are choosing a cross, and you will be lugging it around for the foreseeable future. . . . If you say “yes,” you can take some comfort in the promise that we will—as the Board of the Ministry—help women and men struggle against sexism as best we can, given our own need to grow and struggle too. But we cannot take away the cross. Our common enemy is sexism.²⁹

Lambert herself continued to say “yes,” persevering in her call through the wildernesses she encountered in both parish and academic ministry.

26. Robert Johnston, Jean Lambert, David Scholer, and Klyne Snodgrass, “A Biblical and Theological Basis for Women in Ministry,” <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/04/A-Biblical-and-Theological-Basis-for-Women-in-Ministry.pdf>, accessed May 11, 2011.

27. Jean Lambert, for the Board of the Ministry, “An open letter to each woman seeking to obey Christ’s call to ministry in the Covenant Church,” June 12, 1989. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL. Full text of letter appended to this article, pp. 45–49.

28. Mary Miller, “A Decade Later: North Park Theological Seminary Female M.Div. Graduates (1977–1987),” *Covenant Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1988): 6–26.

29. Lambert, “Open Letter.”

Pastor

In 1985 Lambert took her first pastoral call at Bethesda Covenant Church in New York City, the church she had attended during her years at Union. This was the first of two parish positions she would serve, both of these calls sandwiched between academic appointments. Pastoring presented Lambert a whole new set of challenges—fostering a collaborative church climate of mutual relationships, putting principles of team leadership into practice, and integrating her interests in theology, literature, and art into life and ministry.³⁰ Lambert's core conviction that all Christians were called to serve God was significant for her pastoral ministry. She articulated her goals for ministry in early 1987 as becoming

more aware of God's presence so as to lead others into receptivity; to be faithful in use of Scripture so as to lead others into discerning God's guidance and saying "yes" to God's unique call to them—as individuals, congregations, Christians institutions, and as workers in secular institutions.³¹

The goal to "lead others into receptivity" compelled Lambert to get involved in activities outside the church as well. Bethesda Covenant Church worshiped in a chapel at the United Nations. In addition to being a regular volunteer in a homeless shelter and singing with a community choir, she participated in the group of Religious Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations, serving as its chair for a year.³² In a July 1986 *Covenant Companion* article, Lambert emphasized the importance of Christian presence at the UN and described the tension inherent in navigating the similarities and differences between the aims of the UN and the aims of the church.

Even though Christ is not named as a participant in the discussions, Christians may be sure he is there. Even though no one invokes the Holy Spirit aloud, Christians may trust that even in the United Nations God is not left without a witness. The United Nations needs Christians' prayers, and our critical support. Bethesda Covenant Church invites our

30. Covenant Minister's Profile Form, January 31, 1987. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

31. Ibid.

32. Covenant Minister's Profile Form, January 29, 1991. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

fellow Covenanters to support us in our mission on behalf of Christ and of the Covenant Church.³³

Lambert served at Bethesda until 1989, when she accepted a two-year teaching contract at the University of Zimbabwe. A hand-written note at the top of her minister's profile form upon her return to the United States reads, "seeking call—to seminary or congregation in fall 1991."³⁴

Lambert hoped to find another teaching appointment, ideally at North Park Theological Seminary. For years, it had been her dream to teach at the Covenant's seminary, but the opportunity never materialized, causing her great grief.³⁵ The opportunity that did present itself was a call to pastoral ministry at the International Fellowship at Immanuelskyrkan in Stockholm, Sweden. Lambert became the first woman to pastor this congregation as well as one of the first Covenant clergywoman to receive a *second* pastoral call, something that has proved to be a significant challenge over the years for women serving in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Congregational life at Immanuelskyrkan brought Lambert both joys and sorrows. She gave herself fully to her work and was like family to the broad mix of people in her congregation, many of whom were refugees from Africa, a place close to Lambert's heart. She welcomed her congregants into her home, sometimes for extended stays while they searched for housing.³⁶ She also supervised several seminary interns at the International Fellowship, allowing her to use her teaching gifts. The seminarians who worked with her benefited from her skills both as pastor and scholar. Her interns were known to return from Sweden with a much deeper knowledge of the *Covenant Hymnal*, the *Covenant Book of Worship*, and other resources Lambert found valuable for creative worship.³⁷

Lambert noted the significant growth she experienced while serving at Immanuelskyrkan, "both as a person and as a pastor and practicing theologian."³⁸ Even so, she felt an ongoing mismatch between her gifts and the parish setting, acknowledging that "the context still feels alien

33. Jean Lambert, "A Christian's View of the United Nations," *Covenant Companion* (July 1986): 9.

34. Covenant Minister's Profile Form, June 6, 1989. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

35. Carlson, interview by author, April 2011.

36. Anderson, interview by author, April 2011.

37. Carlson, interview by author.

38. Jean Lambert to Donald Njaa, February 22, 1998. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

and uncomfortable even after five years.”³⁹ She felt gifted for ministry in the academy yet could find no opportunity to exercise those gifts:

I am somewhat envious of people in ministry who have more attractive personalities than I do, but have decided that if God wants me to be a pastor with the gifts I’ve been given it is God’s lookout, not mine. I have always thought these gifts were more suited to teaching, but until some school agrees with me I will have to assume I am where I should be.⁴⁰

And still she hoped an opportunity would arise.

I hope I will find some place of ministry (that is, be called to one) in which the requirements of the work “feel” more like myself than the present ones do, and in which I will be better to find/make time to read and write. I still dream of teaching again in Africa... God knows and so far is not telling me.⁴¹

That opportunity came in 1998.

Theologian

Covenant historian Philip J. Anderson has described Lambert as the first female theologian in the Covenant Church. Having taught at St. Paul School of Theology and then pastoring at Bethesda Covenant Church, Lambert embraced a new challenge when she accepted a position as senior lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Zimbabwe in May 1989, teaching courses in theology and ethics.

Of teaching in Africa she wrote, “It’s really different here; there are few resources and no books. It’s like you and the student sit together under a tree and *you* are the book.”⁴² In addition to “being” the book, Lambert wrote many course texts for her students, such as *Invitation to Christian Theology*, a project she labored on throughout her time in Zimbabwe. The pages of a 1990 draft of the text include hand-written notes recording

39. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, March 18, 1997. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

40. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, December 23, 1993. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

41. Ibid.

42. Quoted in Richard W. Carlson’s presentation of honorary doctorate of divinity to Jean Lambert, May 17, 2008, North Park Theological Seminary. Private collection of Richard W. Carlson.

feedback and questions from colleagues and students. A section on the Trinity recounts a student comment: “Esther Zuirawa ’90 says, ‘Shona cultural background... juniors are normally sent to do certain duties by elders. It would be a sign of disrespectfulness for a younger person to send his parents or anyone above his age.’ Sees God–Son–Spirit as a subordination pattern.”⁴³ Both the content of these extensive works and the annotations of student feedback demonstrate Lambert’s commitment to the cultural hermeneutics needed to meet the real needs of her students.

Lambert’s second position in Zimbabwe followed her years in Sweden. Acknowledging the growth this ministry had afforded she said, “I hope that my students in Africa will reap some benefit from the ‘new revised standard Jean Lambert.’”⁴⁴ At Africa University (1998–2004) Lambert again dedicated herself to her students, supplementing the library’s small collection with photocopies of books from her personal library, copies of her extensive lecture notes, and textbooks she wrote to meet the specific needs of her students. She described these efforts in a 1999 letter:

[A]ffordable theology books and ethics books are simply impossible. We use photocopied “readers,” the making of which is part of my job. In the long “vacations” I resonate with the Preacher who wrote “of the making of books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”⁴⁵

One such textbook was *Choose Today! The Unity and Diversity of Biblical Ethics*, in which Lambert surveyed ethical themes throughout Scripture, the complex-but-accessible guide to life with God and for God. For another ethics course, she wrote *We Can Act Ethically! Will We?*, which incorporated some of *Choose Today* and was formatted as a handbook with opportunities for students to reflect personally on the variety of ethical issues raised, including sexual, ecological, financial, and professional ethics. She opens the book by comparing and contrasting what Western and African theologians have named as central to ethics, acknowledg-

43. Jean Lambert, *Invitation to Christian Theology*, draft copy of a textbook in process for students in religious studies at University of Zimbabwe, 1990. Record Series 6/1/2/1/47, Box 4, Folder 10, CAHL.

44. Jean Lambert to Donald Njaa, February 22, 1998. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

45. Jean Lambert to Donn Engebretson, October 10, 1999. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

ing that her students have their feet in two cultures.⁴⁶ Throughout her works, includes *Choose Today*, Lambert incorporated stories from life in Africa and African scholarship as well as Western stories and scholarship. In addition to her own textbooks, Lambert wrote materials for Africa University's spiritual formation program.⁴⁷

In her contribution to Karl Olsson's festschrift, "Befriending in God's Name," Lambert offered what she called "a preliminary sketch of 'a theology' of the friendship of God."⁴⁸ Her work built on feminist theologian Sallie McFague's *Models of God*,⁴⁹ in which McFague joins other feminist and liberation theologians in "dissenting from hierarchical and power-preoccupied models of God...as well as from the theologies developed to warrant them."⁵⁰ Lambert cited approvingly McFague's warning of the danger in a nuclear age of understanding God as "power over" the world. Lambert built on McFague's use of "friend" as an alternate metaphor for speaking of God's non-hierarchical love, connecting this to the Covenant's historical understanding of God as "the Friend of friends."⁵¹ On this basis Lambert articulated a missiology constitutive of a theology of the friendship of God: because God is friend, God is always seeking out new friendships. God wants the good news of his friendship to spread throughout the world through mission friends who establish relationships, express friendship in a variety of ways, and, embodying God's friendship, participate in the conversion process of "finding and being found."⁵² Lambert here defined doctrine as "what faith wants new friends to understand about God, themselves, and the world."⁵³

Lambert's annual ministerial profiles indicate the extent of her global scholarly activity. To name only a few, she presented at an international conference of the Lutheran World Federation on women and faith in Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (1991), and attended conferences of the

46. Jean Lambert, *We Can Act Ethically! Will We?* (n.p.: 2003), 9. Record Series 6/1/2/1/47, Box 4, Folder 2, CAHL.

47. E.g., *Making Right Choices: An Ethics Manual for Zimbabwe* (ca. 2000).

48. Jean C. Lambert, "Befriending in God's Name: Preface to a Missionary Theology of God as Friend," in *Amicus Dei: Essays on Faith and Friendship*, ed. Philip J. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1988), 37–68.

49. Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

50. Lambert, "Befriending in God's Name," 43.

51. *Ibid.*, 63.

52. *Ibid.*, 56.

53. *Ibid.*, 49.

Association of International Churches in Europe and the Middle East in Budapest (1995) and Jerusalem (1996).⁵⁴ She helped host a conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians on the theme “Culture, Religion, and Liberation,” where she also presented a paper “on contextualization and incarnation of Christian ministry in the church’s local culture” (1990).⁵⁵ Her description of continuing education pursued in 2004 portrays an impressive range and depth of scholarly interests and output:

In September/October I took a mini-sabbatical in Wales and read extensively in two areas: (a) life and work of St. Augustine (of Hippo), (b) interface of Christian theology and physics.... I have drafted 10 articles on Augustine and submitted two manuscripts for publication. One, a handbook on ethics, is to be published in March by Silviera House, Harare.⁵⁶

Pioneer

In the last years of her life, Lambert was honored by the church as well as the academy. It is fitting that her pioneering work was recognized by both fields she had served over the years. Looking toward retirement age in 2004, Lambert wrote, “I seem to be in good health but realize this can change rapidly.”⁵⁷ Unfortunately, her good health did change after she returned to the United States in 2005. She was diagnosed with ALS in 2007, a disease that claimed her life the following year.

In 2006 the Evangelical Covenant Church honored Lambert with the Irving C. Lambert Award, an award recognizing excellence in support of urban and ethnic ministries, named in honor of her father. The plaque presented by then-president Glen Palmberg read,

From the early nurture of a small city congregation, you have shaped a life of ministry and friendship for all of God’s

54. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, March 18, 1997. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

55. Report of Continuing Education, Ministerium of the Evangelical Covenant Church, Report for Calendar Year 1990. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

56. Report of Continuing Education, Ministerium of the Evangelical Covenant Church, Calendar Year 2004. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

57. Covenant Minister’s Profile Form, July 26, 2004. Jean Lambert Ministry File, CAHL.

children. You have dwelt comfortably in the borderlands of the human family, among people of different races, cultural groups, and social classes. All alike have been touched by your ministry. From New York to Zimbabwe, from Kansas City to Stockholm, you have exercised your gifts as teacher, pastor, writer, and friend. In all things you have shown intelligence, wisdom, and generosity. Your life stands as a witness to us all.

Professors Philip Anderson and Richard Carlson, who had enjoyed friendship with Lambert for many years, both felt it important that Lambert receive an honorary doctorate from North Park Theological Seminary, where she had always wanted to teach.⁵⁸ At the 2008 commencement ceremony, Carlson presented Lambert with the honorary degree *in absentia*, as Lambert's quickly declining health prevented her attendance.⁵⁹ Following the ceremony, Anderson, Carlson, Mary Miller, and Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom traveled to Windsor Manor in Carol Stream to present Lambert with the degree. One month later, June 18, 2008, Lambert took her final breath, ending a life of dedicated service to the church.

Jean Lambert was a pioneer who helped pave the way for other Covenant women in ministry, as she wove together practical ministry and academic theology. She was a pastor who contributed significantly to the theological articulation of the Evangelical Covenant Church and a professor who shaped Christians into ministers capable of thinking theologically about life's challenges. Her words continue to challenge us to partner together as mission friends, bringing glory to God as we love and serve "the Friend of friends" together.

58. Before her diagnosis she had taught one course on the Trinity at North Park Seminary, her long-time dream. Her students were awed by her eloquence and intelligence, even when straying from her lecture notes or lesson plan. One student commented that Lambert had "more in her head than most of the rest of this faculty has in their books!" Carlson, interview with author.

59. Carlson, presentation of honorary doctorate of divinity.

Appendix⁶⁰

An open letter to each woman seeking to obey Christ's call to ministry in the Covenant Church, both volunteer lay workers in local congregations, and pastors, missionaries, and staff ministers.

June 12, 1989

From: Jean Lambert, for the Board of the Ministry

We have been thinking together about the situation of women and men in ministry in the Covenant Church, and we want first to affirm some convictions, and then offer some interpretation we think important.

Convictions

1. We are committed to an inclusive ministry in pilgrimage toward a whole church.

2. We care about you. We value your commitment to Christ, respect your willingness to study and prepare for ministry, desire to be your colleagues.

3. We hear your pain and respect your anger, as we heard it expressed by some of you in Mary Miller's report of your responses to her questionnaire, published in the *Covenant Quarterly*.

4. We are distressed by the continuing atmosphere of coolness or hostility encountered by all too many women who hold positions of leadership throughout the Covenant Church.

5. We do not claim complete understanding of the sexism that is one of the dominant evils in our society, yet we are committed to learning what it is, how it affects women and men, how it distorts our common life in Christ; we are committed to repenting of sexism so the Spirit of God can transform us. And,

6. As part of our ongoing work in a church always being reformed by God's Spirit, a church growing more whole as we believe Christ intends, we urge you to join us in considering some "facts of life" we believe affect our common life in church work: the search for a call, the consideration of volunteer possibilities, the selection or interview process, entering into work, how one is received, how one perceives oneself in ministry, how we respond to situations of frustration, conflict, and fulfillment.

60. Reprinted from original letter, available in Jean Lambert Ministry File, Covenant Archives and Historical Library, Chicago, Illinois. Text is reproduced here exactly, with the exception of typographical revisions.

We think putting these facts into open conversation will help us all be stronger, saner, and more faithful.

Facts

Fact 1: *American society is sexist*, specifically masculinist. (It is also racist, ageist, classist . . . but we aren't addressing all of that here!) Though we do not understand it fully, it is clear that sexism is both a psycho/cultural bias and complex of social institutions. It operates largely unconsciously, though its "symptoms" may be observed by the seeing eye. This complex reality—sexism—is based on an ancient intuition that the biological differences between men and women are a natural *and* revealed "message" about superiority/inferiority, value and worthlessness, competence/incompetence, appropriateness/inappropriateness.

To say our society is "sexist" has implications on three levels:

1. The visible *social structures are "set up" to give power and freedom for self-definition and fulfillment to men*, primarily white men. These structures depend on women to support the male power elite—physically, emotionally, spiritually—by working in subordinate and often non-remunerative work, like homemaking and volunteer church work. This "set up" is a presupposition when women who are employed outside the home are blamed (or feel blamed) for "the decline of family life."

2. The tacit *sense of what is real*, that we all share, *is colored by sexism*. Unless we actively "convert" from it and become "disciples" in living and viewing the world in a critical, constructive "Galatians 3:28-way," there will always be a part of us that is really convinced that women are the moral and intellectual inferiors of men. It doesn't matter whether one is a person of good will or not, a man or woman, a follower of Jesus or not, a caring person or not: anyone in our society "is sexist." This is why a male supporter of women's ordination says, "We've got to do more to help these women" (i.e., they are our responsibility, the dears). This is why a woman frustrated by a lack of call says, "To improve the situation, replace five of the nine superintendents with women" (i.e., the men are the problem). Unconsciously we show our sexism.

3. Our personal *senses of our selves are determined in large part by the sexism* of our culture. It encourages women to look to men for their sense of self, of value, of affirmation for work accomplished. It encourages men to feel defensive when they are accused of impeding women in any way. Sexism dwells inside ourselves, and affects our self-image, self-esteem. It speaks within a woman, for example, saying: "I am weak. What can I

do about anything? I am at the mercy of them. If I want a future I need a man (men) to give it to me. Make friends with the males in charge; figure out how to please them, and by all means please them.” Men hear the voice of sexism in their own souls, as well. “Someone needs to be in charge. Men do. This world works better if we take care of business, etc.”

The longer we listen to our inner sexist voice, the less our own, true, inner woman-voice or man-voice is audible in our soul.

Fact II. *The church mirrors the sexism of the society.* Christianity has its own patriarchalism to face. We need to listen to our masculinist language and theology, notice the male dominance of the decision-making in our churches, and notice the subordinate care-taking, maintaining roles that our churches deem appropriate as “women’s work”: teaching children, serving dinners, being decorative at social functions, providing hospitality for the men who meet to plan and strategize, teach Bible studies for women, manage fund raisers and service projects, particularly those without public visibility. We need to look at all this patriarchalism and study Scripture to learn whether any of it is defensible now for Spirit-led people. If we find old patterns that need change, we must start to make the changes. And even all this will merely be polishing the mirror! The sexism the church reflects from the society runs far deeper.

Fact III. *Sexism is a form of evil that is women’s real enemy* as we seek to say “yes” to the Spirit who calls us to ministry. For example, it is sexism that assures the Director of Christian Education will be paid thousands of dollars less than his or her senior pastor, regardless of the CE director’s education, experience, competence, *or sex*, because *whoever* the CE director is, he or she is perceived to be doing “women’s work,” which is not worth as much as men’s in the church budget. And it is sexism when the only job available to a female seminary graduate moving toward ordination is at a rural crossroads 60 miles from the nearest hospital and 5 miles from any paved road. The problem isn’t her superintendent, her grooming, or her reputed emotional instability. All of these might be factors for this person or that, but the major barricade on her professional road (no matter who she is) is sexism, *that psycho-cultural bias and complex of social institutions that operates largely unconsciously, to devalue women.*

Therefore

So, what are we saying to you women readers, and to ourselves as part of both the problem and the solution. Quit? No, no. Don’t quit! Nor is

this letter advice to “be patient,” or to “hang in there.” Rather, we are writing to us all as a kind of prophetic “call to consciousness.”

Women today are pioneering in a treacherous wilderness. Whether in the church as treasurer, deacon, adult Bible teacher, elder or council member, minister of Christian education, missionary health professional or missionary evangelist, or as pastor, the fact remains if one is a woman in ministry, one is a pioneer. Anyone who seeks to be a colleague of women in leadership in the church is pioneering as well. Women have a “right” to be called and supported equally with their Christian brothers, but women are not, and changing the situation will require work. Women must expect the “flies, floods, and fights” a pioneer always undergoes. Women will “pay their dues” like their brothers, and then pay again, and again. It is not fair. Women also must be more careful than their brothers in Christ to be prudent, incorruptible, well-prepared, unsuspected. Nothing women do will be unscrutinized. A therapist with whom I worked in a small group of women once said, “any group of women is potentially threatening, to men and to other women. You may be planning a revolution, or talking about your nail polish. If there are two or more of you with your heads together it is likely to be seen as a subversive group.” Or, as another observer of the human condition has observed, “No good deed will go unpunished.” We must know this, and let it guide our life together, without carrying the knowledge as a chip on our shoulders. Being in solidarity with each other as sisters can give us particular strength. The company of brothers who share this pioneering spirit gives encouragement as well.

Women are choosing to be faithful to Christ in a church that too often wants women to be faithful to *sexist* tradition. Conflict is inevitable. As pioneers, women risk dying on hills toward which brother and sister Christians will be pushing them, without knowing they are doing so. In one sense our fellow Christians are responsible, but even those who want to accept responsibility for their actions are not necessarily *able* to, and this is the result of sexism.

Remember Hebrews 12:2, which calls us to be “looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...” We do have an Exemplar beyond all others. Christ calls the women and men whom he will. You are called? Good. You said “yes”? Wonderful.

Now, though, comes the pioneering challenge. If you *choose not* to accept a *sexist* definition from the church and society for what your ministry is to be, then you need to be fully aware that you are accepting more

than a vocation, a career, a profession. You are choosing a cross, and you will be lugging it around for the foreseeable future. Moreover, in a real sense you are going to be carrying this cross on behalf of the church. Your “career choice” may bring you no benefits, but the long-range benefits for a renewed, transformed, more faithful church will keep you in the struggle. Much of the time it will be a joy and you’ll forget you carry the cross; sometimes it will weigh a ton. Helping us defeat sexism is a part of your ministry. You can say “no.” Whether and how you respond to Christ’s call is a matter for each to work out with the Holy Spirit.

If you say “yes,” you can take some comfort in the promise that we will—as the Board of the Ministry—help women and men struggle against sexism as best we can, given our own need to grow and struggle too. But we cannot take away the cross. Our common enemy is sexism. To personify, the Enemy carries sexism these days as one major piece of a demonic portfolio. It makes the Enemy happy when we attack each other rather than learning to understand and undermine the sexism itself.

We can be evangelical people. Where the world stands for get-and-grab, one-upping, levels of power and status, and degrees of rank and respectability, we can be gospel folks: sharing, helping, standing on the level ground beneath Jesus’s cross. We can stand with each other and, as the Spirit empowers us, we can bear each other’s burdens. We invite you to persevere in ministry.

Women in ministry—lay and clergy—we are your colleagues in the ministry of Jesus’ gospel. We love you.

Philipp Spener and the Role of Women in the Church: The Spiritual Priesthood of All Believers in German Pietism

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The Pietist movement opened opportunities for women's participation in religious life in early modern Germany. Women wrote hymns. Women led conventicles in their homes. Women wrote theological tracts. But what did the so-called "Father of Pietism," Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), say about women's roles? Did Spener introduce new possibilities for women's involvement in the church, or was he, as K. James Stein has stated, "a child of his times when it came to equality between the sexes"?¹ A useful lens for understanding Spener's view of women's place within the Pietist movement can be found in his vigorous defense of the spiritual priesthood of all believers. A long-acknowledged fact in the literature on Spener is that he drew heavily on this idea for the laicization of the church, yet little in-depth analysis of his theological writings related to the spiritual priesthood exists, particularly as this idea pertained to women.²

1. K. James Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986), 248.

2. Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 99, does not provide a particularly thorough analysis of how this idea became integrated throughout Spener's theology. While Jutta Taege-Bizer and Ruth Albrecht both briefly mention potential implications of this doctrine for female Pietists, they do not analyze the concept itself: Ruth Albrecht, "Frauen," in *Geschichte des Pietismus: Glaubenwelt und Lebenswelt*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 522–55; Jutta Taege-Bizer, "Weibsbilder im Pietismus: Das Beispiel von Frankfurt am Main 1670–1700," in *Frauen Gestalten Geschichte: im Spannungsfeld zwischen Religion und Geschlecht*, ed. Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz (Han-

In this article, I explore Spener's notion of the spiritual priesthood, focusing on the ways Spener treats women in his published works. My examination concentrates on *Pia Desideria* and *The Spiritual Priesthood*, texts that offer the public face of the Pietist movement and Spener's prescribed theoretical and theological constructs. I argue that Spener's stress on the spiritual equality of all persons allowed for greater recognition of women's participation in the church, while simultaneously supporting standard patriarchal assumptions regarding church and family. Spener's attitude also reflects a larger societal shift between public and private spheres. In order to understand Spener's writings, we must first briefly discuss his pastoral context.

Spener's Life: Church and Controversy

Opinions divide regarding whether Spener was the harbinger of a new Lutheran reformation or whether he reintroduced a medieval mysticism that led to individualistic experiential religion. Consider these polarized views of Spener:

In the history of the evangelical church in Germany, only one man has attained and long maintained a place only a little behind Martin Luther himself: P.J. Spener, the father of German Pietism.³

Even today it is debatable to what extent [Spener] is to be regarded as a reformer or to what extent a deformer.... [H]e bore two peoples in his breast, the people of scrupulosity, of legalistic piety, and the people of liberal mindedness.... [H]e actually prepared the way for that subtle enthusiasm whose disintegrating effects the church would experience soon enough.⁴

What, then, was Spener? Was he the perfecter of Luther's reformation,

nover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1998), 109–36. Douglas Shantz's recent comprehensive volume on Pietism mentions Spener's writings on the spiritual priesthood in relation to women but does not analyze their relevance: Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 195–97.

3. Martin Schmidt, "Spener und Luther," *Luther Jahrbuch* 24 (1957): 102.

4. Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1884), II.126.116.121.

or was he a religious enthusiast whose ideas about spiritual equality bordered on the heretical?

Raised in a Lutheran home, young Spener read a range of devotional writings, including some by English Puritans.⁵ As a teenager, he matriculated at the University of Strasbourg where he received several degrees in theology, completing his doctorate in June 1664. Instead of an academic profession, however, Spener's life took a different turn in 1666 when Johann Schutz recommended Spener as a candidate for the position of senior minister to a Frankfurt city council member, leading to a ministerial call from the city.⁶ Spener was only thirty-one years old at the time, making him substantially younger than the other Frankfurt ministers.⁷ He became the administrator of a group of pastors that included eleven other clergy, overseeing most of Frankfurt's 15,000 inhabitants. Responsibilities included supervising the clergy, preaching every Sunday morning at the Barfüsserkerche (Church of the Discalced), hearing confession and giving absolution, administering the Lord's Supper, communicating for the clergy, ordaining and appointing preachers, announcing betrothals, registering marriages, preparing prayers, calling clergy, and serving as the mediator between the pastors and the municipal council that oversaw religious matters in Frankfurt.⁸

During his twenty-year ministry in Frankfurt, Spener tested many of his reforms—such as alternative preaching styles, catechism for all ages, and small group Bible studies—before he published his proposals for broader implementation. In 1675 Spener wrote his most famous work, *Pia Desideria*, as a call for reform in the Lutheran Church. On March 11, 1686, Spener received a call to Dresden as chief chaplain to the elector, making him a member of the consistory and ecclesiastical court.⁹ Dresden was considered the most important preaching post in Lutheran Germany at the time.¹⁰ However, the extravagant court lifestyle clashed with Spener's moral sensibilities, leading to conflict with the elector. In

5. Philipp Jakob Spener, "Das Leben der Gläubigen," in *Die Werke Philipp Jakob Spener Studienausgabe*, ed. Kurt Aland and Beate Koster (Giessen: Brunnen-Verlag, 1996), 24–25.

6. Theodore G. Tappert, introduction to *Pia Desideria*, by Philipp Jakob Spener (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1964), 4; Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 73–74.

7. Spener, "Das Leben der Gläubigen," 41–42.

8. Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 76–77.

9. Spener, "Das Leben der Gläubigen," 48. Although Spener's own report of biographical material ended in the early 1680s, his first biographer, Baron von Canstein, completed the *Lebenslauf* narrative for Spener's funeral.

10. Spener, "Das Leben der Gläubigen," 48–49.

1691 Spener relocated to Berlin, much to the relief of both parties.¹¹

The position in Berlin was a clear demotion, but the situation suited Spener much better because the Reformed elector, Frederick III of Brandenburg (1657–1713), granted Lutherans a great deal of freedom. In Frederick III, Spener found a patron who had similar views regarding the Christian life, leading to much soberer court behavior than Spener had found in Dresden. On January 7, 1692, the elector forbade all anti-Pietist preaching in Brandenburg-Prussia. While in Berlin, Spener remained optimistic about the prospects for reform.¹²

Until the end of his life, Spener continued to deal with emerging controversies over Pietism. In his 1695 *Thorough Defense (Gründlichen Verteidigung)*, Spener suggested abolishing the name “Pietism” and the fable of a new sect in an attempt to create peace with other Lutherans. Spener preached his last sermon on June 8, 1704, and died February 5, 1705.¹³ Shortly before his death, Spener had requested that he be buried in a white coffin because he had mourned too much in life and wished to be optimistic in death.¹⁴

Spener’s life was full of controversy generated by his ideas for reform within the Lutheran Church. Yet Spener repeatedly proved himself a skilled politician and managed to have an influential career, despite opposition from his fellow ministers, the councils and electors who appointed him, and the most prominent theological faculties of the day. His reforming legacies in catechism, preaching, and theological education lasted well into modernity. While some of his contemporaries were ousted from the church because they called for more radical reform, Spener managed to keep the debate over Pietism within the church. The seminal statement of his reforming position is his 1675 work, *Pia Desideria*.

Introducing the Idea: *Pia Desideria*

Pia Desideria: Or a Heartfelt Desire for a God-pleasing Reform of the True Evangelical Church, Together with Several Simple Christian Proposals Look-

11. Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 85.

12. Johannes Wallmann, “Philipp Jakob Spener in Berlin 1691–1705,” in *Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Zeitalter des Barock: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995), 306–10.

13. Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 85.

14. Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 85–86.

ing towards *This End* formally initiated Spener's Pietist movement. Realizing that reform proposals could become controversial, Spener quoted extensively from more than thirty authors, including Luther, in order to enlist the support of as many pastors, theologians, and academics as possible.¹⁵ A fundamental difference, however, existed between the problems Luther faced and the problems of Spener's time—namely, Luther had to fight against a church that privileged works over faith, whereas Spener addressed a church that was oblivious to the value of works.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Spener always denied that his ideas were innovative, insisting that he followed in a long line of Lutherans who wanted to complete the Reformation vision.

Pia Desideria opens with Spener's analysis of the myriad problems plaguing the Lutheran church. He lamented that ministers had allowed the church to fall into worldly behaviors. In Spener's eyes, pastors bore both the blame for the church's degenerate condition and the responsibility for correcting the condition. Spener adopted a medical motif to diagnose the problems in the church, describing the body of Christ as in "distress and sickness."¹⁷ Thus he shifted from jeremiad to diagnosis to prescription. Spener's proposals for reform presented one attempt to heal the diseased church with a set of prescribed remedies. The clergy had to work toward healing the church, a process that included consultation among specialists (pastors and theologians) to develop the best treatment plan.

Spener's most stringent criticisms targeted the text's primary audience—ministers. He criticized pastors for exhibiting "a worldly spirit, marked by carnal pleasure, lust of the eye, and arrogant behavior and so it is evident that they have never taken even the first practical principle of Christianity seriously, namely, denial of self."¹⁸ For Spener, reforming the church began with reorienting Lutheran leaders to focus on sanc-

15. Manfred Kohl, "Spener's *Pia Desideria*: The *Programmschrift* of Pietism," *Covenant Quarterly* 34, nos. 1–2 (1976): 62; Johannes Wallmann, "Pietas contra Pietismus: Zum Frömmigkeits Verständnis der Lutherischen Orthodoxie," in *Pietas in der Lutherischen Orthodoxie*, ed. Udo Sträter (Wittenberg: Edition Hans Lufft, Dreikastannen Verlag, 1998), 7; Johannes Wallmann, "Geistliche Erneuerung der Kirche nach Philipp Jakob Spener," in *Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Zeitalter des Barock: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995), 221.

16. Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 85.

17. Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1964), 31–32.

18. *Ibid.*, 45.

tification.¹⁹ He also criticized temporal leaders for not fulfilling their God-given role as “foster fathers and nursing mothers.”²⁰ Drawing on these traditional images of rulers’ responsibility to nurture their subjects, Spener saw these magistrates as negligent parents. In his estimation, civil authorities exhibited more interest in debauchery than in adequate care for their subjects, particularly in the spiritual realm where they obstructed church reform and prevented Christians from living faithfully under their rule.²¹

Although Spener stated that “most of the deterioration in the church has its source in the two higher estates,” he additionally criticized the laity because “none of the precepts of Christ [were] openly observed” among them.²² He aimed his criticism at all Christians, regardless of gender, occupation, or education. He lamented that the laity did not perceive drunkenness as a sin, treated each other miserably, failed to live Christian lives, and harmed the Lutheran witness to misguided religious groups, such as the papists.²³ According to Spener, this unchristian behavior appeared predominantly in the preponderance of lawsuits and dishonest trade relationships. His discussion of occupations further highlights his emphasis on social sins: “If we look at trade, the crafts, and other occupations through which people seek to earn their living, we shall find that everything is not arranged according to the precepts of Christ, but rather that not a few public regulations and traditional usages in these occupations are diametrically opposed to them.”²⁴

By locating these problems in the bar, courtroom, and shop, Spener largely omits women’s activities in his castigations. While some women engaged in excessive drinking, it was largely treated as a male sin in this period.²⁵ Women frequently found jobs in taverns and in the liquor trade, but they were not the ones typically associated with drunkenness. Further, women had limited opportunities to appear in legal cases and were typically represented by men—fathers, sons, or husbands. While

19. Manfred Kohl, “Pietism as a Movement of Revival,” *Covenant Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1975): 7.

20. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 43.

21. *Ibid.*, 44.

22. *Ibid.*, 44, 57.

23. Allen Deeter, “An Historical and Theological Introduction to Philipp Jakob Spener’s *Pia Desideria*,” (unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1963), 170–75.

24. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 59.

25. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and the Devil* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

women frequently assisted in their husbands' shops and even ran family businesses while their husbands were away on trips, they were only treated as proxies of their husbands. In very few cases were women actually able to maintain their own businesses. Typically, this only occurred when widows assumed business ownership for a limited time after their husbands' deaths.²⁶ Thus the public sins Spener addressed fell mainly in the court of male activity.

Despite this emphasis on public sins, Spener clarified that his critique went beyond these concerns to the heart of what a Christian is:

We cannot deny—on the contrary, daily experience convinces us—that there are not a few who think that all that Christianity requires of them (and that having done this, they have done quite enough in their service of God) is that they be baptized, hear the preaching of God's Word, confess and receive absolution and go to the Lord's Supper, no matter how their hearts are disposed at that time, whether or not there are fruits which follow....²⁷

Spener wanted a reform of life to accompany proper religious affection. This most serious problem of misunderstood Christianity is the one that applied to all Christians because it reached Spener's central concern: people claimed to be Lutheran but were only going through the motions. The combined effect of these corruptions included strengthening the Jews, Catholics, and heretics in their unbelief and placing all Christians in danger of being seduced by the world.²⁸

Nowhere in the first section of *Pia Desideria* did Spener identify specifically female behavior as a symptom of corruption in the church. While the spiritual equality of men and women meant that women were included in Spener's general discussion of corrupt characteristics, he did not raise the issues of vanity, prostitution, or gossip—all sins traditionally associated with women at this time. Several plausible reasons could explain Spener's lack of explicit attention to women. As Spener directed the text toward the clergy and focused predominantly on their faults,

26. Merry Wiesner Wood, "Paltry Peddlers or Essential Merchants? Women in the Distributive Trades in Early Modern Nuremberg," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 12, no. 2 (1981): 12.

27. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 65.

28. *Ibid.*, 68–70.

women were not his primary audience. Second, the social hierarchy of his time placed responsibility on the *Hausvater* (housefather) as spiritual supervisor.

As early as 1667, Spener explained in a visitation report that church attendance was an issue. While pastors partially controlled the attendance of housefathers, women's church attendance was not subject to the same control. Women apparently evaded church attendance, in part, because there were no consequences for their behavior. Spener's proposal to remedy the situation was to censure the *Hausvater* if his wife did not attend church because the women lacked spiritual supervision.²⁹ In a 1668 report discussing the condition of the Sunday service, Spener stated,

In place of aspiring on Sunday to virtuous godliness applied to God's rule and his blessing, the residents amuse themselves especially during the Lord's Supper by visiting comedies and other stupid fool's games. The shop owners continue in their money-making businesses. Vagabonds, charlatans, and showmen offer free entertainment and regalement, so that no one visits the worship service anymore, or thinks on prayer hours and edification exercises in the home. . . . The handworkers and bakers, butchers, cutter shops and barbershops work even more, as the women in the households themselves do not avoid displaying on Sunday the wash. . . . The brothels have a rush of customers. In the welfare houses opulent banquets are held, which the servants must prepare and also the subsequent rides in land and in water request a certain personal service. So not only are the lords prevented from a spiritual God-consecrated Sunday, but rather they also hinder their servants from visiting the worship service.³⁰

This report provides more insight into why Spener chose not to castigate women. The women he mentioned here work as wives, maids, prostitutes, or in shops and therefore were only the victims of the entertainment activities of the husbands, father, and masters.³¹

29. Taege-Bizer, "Weibsbilder im Pietismus," 116.

30. Spener, "Bereicht des Predigerministeriums an den Rat vom November 1668," partially printed in Richard Grabau, *Das evangelisch-lutherische Predigerministerium der Stadt Frankfurt a.M.* (Frankfurt am Main: Kommissionsverlag der Kesselringschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1913), 335–48.

31. Taege-Bizer, "Weibsbilder im Pietismus," 116.

The bulk of *Pia Desideria* consists of Spener's six proposals for reform. Only the first three proposals relate to Spener's view of spiritual equality and so will be discussed here. His first proposal stressed that the word of God must become a central part of parishioners' lives.³² Sermons could only cover a select portion of the Bible, and church services offered only a limited opportunity for people to grasp the meaning of Scripture. Even though "solitary reading of the Bible at home is in itself a splendid and praiseworthy thing, it does not accomplish enough for most people."³³ Spener prescribed three remedies for this problem. First, the *Hausvater* should read from the Bible every day, or, if unable to read, direct someone else in the family to read from it. Second, Spener advocated private Scripture reading. This emphasis on individual Bible reading diverged from previous Lutheran positions that encouraged people, and particularly women, to read the catechism more so than Scripture. Catechisms tended to be written in simple language for the relatively uneducated. Scripture, on the other hand, required a more learned reader. Thus Spener's program suggested greater confidence in ordinary folk, women included. Churches should also hold public Bible-reading services, catering to people who could not read or did not own a Bible. Finally, he suggested that pastors lead small group meetings, *collegia pietatis*, where people could discuss various Christian subjects. The group would read aloud from Scripture and discuss each verse in order to discover the text's simple meaning and edificatory purpose. Participants could express their concerns and ideas, while the more educated attendees could explain the passage. This proposal aimed to acquaint ministers with parishioners and establish bonds that could help promote spiritual growth.³⁴ Spener optimistically stated, "If we succeed in getting the people to seek eagerly and diligently in the book of life for their joy, their spiritual life will be wonderfully strengthened and they will become altogether different people."³⁵

Spener's second proposal directly addressed the spiritual priesthood of all believers. Spener maintained that all Christians must carry out ministerial functions to their families and neighbors. If all Christians assumed these roles, the clergy would be free from tasks that community

32. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 87.

33. *Ibid.*, 88.

34. *Ibid.*, 89–90.

35. *Ibid.*, 91. These meetings became one of the most problematic parts of Spener's reform movement when put into practice, in part because of women's involvement.

members could perform for each other.³⁶ The establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood assumed that “not only ministers but all Christians are made priests by their Savior, are anointed by the Holy Spirit and are dedicated to perform spiritual-priestly acts.”³⁷ As he explained further, “all spiritual functions are open to all Christians without exception. Although the regular and public performance of them is entrusted to ministers appointed for this purpose, the functions may be performed by others in case of emergency.”³⁸ Laypersons could study the word, instruct, admonish, chastise, and comfort neighbors as private rather than public exercises. While some people might worry that they would interfere with the pastor’s role, Spener maintained that ministers could become more effective if freed of these additional tasks. Parishioners would “pay attention to the minister, admonish him fraternally when he neglects something, and in general support him in all his efforts.”³⁹ Spener’s language implied that all Christians shared these roles equally.

His third proposal stressed Christian practice: “It is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice.”⁴⁰ According to Spener, Christians needed to exhibit love for other Christians and for all humanity in order to create a powerful Christian witness to the world.⁴¹ Despite Spener’s concerns about living sanctified Christian lives, he seldom prescribed specific morals, instead urging each person to find his or her own guidance from Scripture.⁴²

Nowhere does *Pia Desideria* propose a particular role for women or mention women explicitly.⁴³ Spener apparently did not foresee some of the attacks that would occur because of women’s involvement in independent Bible reading or the conventicles. In fact, one scholar has commented that the resulting participation of women caused Spener to moderate his position in hindsight to conform more fully to societal conventions.⁴⁴ While I agree that Spener certainly did not seem to anticipate that women

36. Deeter, “An Historical and Theological Introduction,” 192.

37. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 92.

38. *Ibid.*, 93.

39. *Ibid.*, 94.

40. *Ibid.*, 95.

41. *Ibid.*, 96.

42. Allen C. Deeter, “Pietism, Moralism, and Social Concern,” *Covenant Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1975): 34.

43. Albrecht, “Frauen,” IV:524.

44. Martin Friedrich, “Philipp Jakob Spener: Vater des Pietismus,” in *Theologen des*

would use the notion of spiritual equality so independently, the moderation of his views appears to correspond to the difference between his own public and private communication. Even as he wrote tracts that minimized the activity of women in the Pietist movement and asserted views that corresponded to traditional views of women, largely to fend off accusers, he engaged in regular correspondence with women, providing advice about leading family devotion time and reading the Bible—even discussing theological matters.⁴⁵ Also, if anything, Spener's correspondence to women substantially increased over the course of his life. Thus throughout his life he consistently adhered to the notion that developing a more involved laity would result in an improved church, and he recognized that women were part of that laity. While publicly conforming to many social conventions, privately Spener regularly encouraged women's activities in his correspondence.

Several of Spener's proposals in *Pia Desideria* directly affected women who became involved in Pietism. Spener's strong encouragement of Bible reading for all Christians included women. For centuries, reading Luther's catechism had trumped reading Scripture itself, but Spener thought that all Christians should read the Bible. He even wrote instructions for his young sister-in-law on how to read the Bible correctly. He did not reject the catechism, and, in fact, he was adamant about using the catechism as a teaching tool. He did, however, see the importance of the catechism accompanying rather than replacing Scripture reading. The idea that women should not only practice private Scripture reading but that they could also potentially speak about their readings with other Christians was also a new idea that opened up possibilities for women's meetings and even mixed-gender meetings.

The idea of the spiritual priesthood of all believers included women in the private ministerial aspects of the church. As such, women were recognized for much of the Christian ministry they already performed—caring for the sick, visiting others, teaching their children, and so forth—as

17. und 18. Jahrhunderts: Konfessionelles Zeitalter-Pietismus-Aufklärung, ed. Peter Walter and Martin H. Jung (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 117.

45. See Philipp Jakob Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit, 1666–1686*, ed. Johannes Wallmann, et al., 5 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992–2010); Philipp Jakob Spener, *Briefe aus der Dresdener Zeit, 1686–1691*, ed. Johannes Wallmann, et al., 4 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003–2017).

well as granted increased possibilities. Spener often praised women for their efforts at social work and care for the poor, actions that exemplified his emphasis on living the Christian life. His emphasis on practice reinforced the available, though limited, role of women in his vision of a collected pious group that could reform the church and the world. Nevertheless, all of these tasks performed by women remained firmly within the private realm. Women were not engaged in public teaching or sacramental roles. All of this took place within a patriarchal system ruled over by the man of the house or the minister. Spener did not suggest a change in the church structure but instead reinforced the existing patriarchy by advising extensive ministerial oversight, even in the homes of parishioners for small group meetings. It was a spiritual priesthood, but a priesthood that always operated under the careful oversight of a watchful clergyman.

Expanding the Idea: *The Spiritual Priesthood*

The spiritual priesthood was the first of Spener's reforming ideas to require a rigorous defense. Only two years after the publication of *Pia Desideria*, Spener was compelled to write a treatise entitled, *The Spiritual Priesthood* (1677). Apparently some readers misinterpreted his intentions, either purposefully or accidentally, and charged Spener with wanting to eliminate the clergy. Thus Spener set out to defend what he meant by the phrase "spiritual priesthood." In his apology he outlined seventy points on the spiritual priesthood in a question and answer format that resembled contemporary catechisms and therefore could double as an instructional tool. While *Pia Desideria* received criticism for relying too heavily on supporting citations from Lutheran and non-Lutheran sources, in this treatise Spener supported almost every claim with biblical texts. This argumentation style made him vulnerable to the accusation of proof-texting, but it also addressed the complaint that he did not adequately ground his ideas in Scripture.

Spener pointed to 1 Peter 2:9 as the biblical foundation for the spiritual priesthood: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Spener claimed that he used the term in the same way as this verse, which explicitly called the Christian community a priesthood. He further legitimated the idea on specifically Lutheran grounds, invoking Luther's definition "by which not only ministers, but also all Christians have been made priests

through their Redeemer, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and consecrated to spiritual priestly functions.”⁴⁶ Thus Spener employed both Scripture and traditional authorities to support his use of the “spiritual priesthood.”

Spener differentiated between private ministerial roles open to all Christians and public duties that required clerical supervision. According to Spener, the papacy had eliminated the role of the laity by placing so much emphasis on clerical leadership, thus weakening lay involvement in Christian life. While ordained ministers served distinct roles, the ministry of instructing, admonishing, reproofing, and comforting others belonged to all believers.⁴⁷ He described the common spiritual priesthood as “the right which our Savior Jesus Christ has purchased for all men, and for which He anoints all believers with His Holy Spirit, in virtue of which they may and shall bring sacrifices acceptable to God, pray for themselves and others, and severally edify themselves and their neighbor.”⁴⁸ All baptized believers participated in these priestly tasks. In fact, every Christian was obliged to

Offer prayer, thanks, good works, alms, etc. for himself and what pertains to him, but also to study the Word of the Lord earnestly and to teach, reprove, exhort, convert, edify others, especially those of his own house as grace is given to him, to observe their life, to pray for all, and as much as possible to have a care for their salvation.⁴⁹

For most Christians, these activities would have occurred primarily in the home and involved caring for people in the same household. Spener thus maintained a distinction between private roles assumed by all and public roles fulfilled by clergy.

Who are the spiritual priests? Spener described them as “all Christians

46. Phillip Jakob Spener, *The Spiritual Priesthood*, trans. A.G. Voigt (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1917), 11. I have used two English translations of this text as well as the critical German edition, “Das Geistliche Priesterthum,” in *Die Werke Philipp Jakob Speners Studienausgabe, Band 1: Grundschriften, Pt. 1*, ed. Kurt Aland and Beata Köster (Giessen: Brunnen, 1996), 425–552. When the title of the work appears in italics, it is from the Voigt translation; when in quotation marks, it is from Erb’s translation: Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood: Briefly Described according to the Word of God in Seventy Questions and Answers,” in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 93–114.

47. Spener, *The Spiritual Priesthood*, 15.

48. *Ibid.*, 15.

49. *Ibid.*, 13.

without distinction, 1 Peter 2:9, old and young, male and female, bond and free, Galatians 3:28.”⁵⁰ In the spiritual realm, men and women had the same rights and obligations because they gained membership to the Christian community in the same way and shared the same promises of salvation. Indeed, Spener maintained that all Christians should be referred to as priests.⁵¹ Thus Spener affirmed the notion of spiritual equality of all men and women, espoused by Luther himself.

What does the spiritual priesthood do, and what are the implications for women as spiritual priests? According to Spener, the spiritual priesthood contained three offices: sacrifice, praying and blessing, and the divine word.⁵² Sacrifice concerned the desire to serve God before serving self. The practical manifestation of this sacrificial posture was to “offer our bodies for God’s glory rather than for sinful activities, by suppressing their evil desires.”⁵³ In other words, the Christian must forego the evils of drinking, inappropriate sexual activity, dancing, and even overeating in submission to Christ. This statement cast submission as a universal Christian virtue rather than a particularly feminine one. An emphasis on Christian submission could help universalize that virtue, but the emphasis on sacrifice could also reinforce existing social hierarchies. Encouraging sacrifice could urge women into a more submissive role or bolster existing class structures.

The second office of the spiritual priesthood was praying and blessing. The Christian interceded on behalf of others through prayer.⁵⁴ Christ prayed for the future church, and so Christians also needed to pray for each other and for their fellow humans.

The third office involved “spiritual priests...let[ting] the Word of God dwell richly among them.” What exactly did this mean? Here too Spener differentiated between public and private offices: “To exercise the office [of preaching] publicly in the congregation before all and over all requires a *special call*.”⁵⁵ Preaching required the approval of the official institutional structure as recognized through the avenues of calling and ordination. If someone attempted to preach outside this approved struc-

50. Ibid., 16.

51. Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood,” 51.

52. Spener, *The Spiritual Priesthood*, 17.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 19–20.

55. Spener, *The Spiritual Priesthood*, 20, emphasis original.

ture, it would be sinful.⁵⁶ As Spener elaborated, “some are teachers and others hearers whose respective duties toward each other are treated in the *Table of Duties*.”⁵⁷ Women were restricted to the category of “hearers” who should not and could not take part in the public office of the divine word.

Instead of preaching, all Christians should read Scripture or hear it read.⁵⁸ Scripture reading aimed to provide the laity with a working knowledge of the faith, so that they did not base their faith on the preacher but rather on the word he preached. Therefore, Christians should study Scripture together in groups. According to Spener, even his uneducated contemporaries could understand Scripture because the apostles wrote predominantly to uneducated people.⁵⁹ He did warn that some parts of the Bible were difficult, but “the principal points of doctrine and rules of life are given in the Scriptures so clearly and according to the letter that any uneducated man can learn and comprehend them as well as the learned.”⁶⁰ Moreover, the Holy Spirit would help the simplest Christians understand Scripture. Spener even urged all Christians to learn Hebrew and Greek, while simultaneously acknowledging that Scripture was translated into the vernacular so anyone could gain knowledge of Christianity.⁶¹ He left open the possibility that women too could learn biblical languages, again putting much greater trust in women’s ability to learn than had previous generations of Lutheran clergy.

Spener described a method for Bible study in detail: pray for the Holy Spirit’s aid in understanding, read with an eye to self-application and edification, apply what is clear, pass over what is incomprehensible and return to it later, humbly receive whatever God reveals, and speak about Scripture with godly ministers and other Christians.⁶² This technique relied on a progressive understanding of Scripture in which God revealed the truths of Scripture to the believer over time. Spener warned that if Christians studied the Bible in other ways they might harm themselves by relying too much on reason.⁶³ Spener also addressed the question of

56. Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood,” 54.

57. Ibid.

58. Spener, *The Spiritual Priesthood*, 20.

59. Ibid., 21.

60. Ibid., 22.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., 24.

63. Ibid., 25.

whether such Bible study among all Christians could possibly lead to disorder. He reassured his readers that only if the study aimed at carnal knowledge or focused on disputations, rather than developing knowledge, could it cause disruption.⁶⁴ He did not imply that women studying Scripture would be directly disruptive in any way. However, he also stated that Christians must not neglect their appointed secular duties in order to study Scripture.⁶⁵ Men should not quit working and cease providing for their families out of their desire to study Scripture. Women should not neglect their tasks at home and let their children run wild. These responsibilities were God-given, and therefore the Christian fulfilled his or her duty by accomplishing these tasks.

Spener affirmed that the primary applications of Scripture, “teaching, correcting, and disciplining,” were appropriate activities for all Christians.⁶⁶ But he again asserted a strong separation between public and private ministerial roles, noting that women should perform those tasks “privately rather than publicly.”⁶⁷

Women as (Private) Spiritual Priests

Spener directly addressed women’s involvement in sections fifty-nine to sixty-one of *The Spiritual Priesthood*. He first posed the question: Should all Christians teach, convert, admonish, reprove, comfort, and so forth? He answered, “Yes, and that too not only in the sense that fathers and mothers should faithfully do these things among their children and domestics, but that every Christian has the power and right to do these things among his brethren on other occasions, as the passages referred to prove.”⁶⁸ Honing in on the spiritual equality of men and women, Spener then asked, “But do women also share the priestly offices?”⁶⁹ He answered:

Assuredly; for here is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus, Gal. 3:28. In Christ, therefore the difference between man and woman, in regard to what is spiritual, is abolished, since God dignifies

64. Ibid., 26.

65. Ibid., 27.

66. Ibid., 29.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., 30. Spener points to Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Ephesians 6:4; and 2 Timothy 3:15.

69. Ibid., 31.

believing women also with his spiritual gifts, Joel 2:28–29; Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5, the exercise of them in proper order cannot be forbidden. The apostles themselves make mention of these godly women, who worked together with them and edified them, for this they accorded them love and praise for it, Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:1–2, 12; Phil. 4:2–3; Titus 2:3–5.⁷⁰

Spener affirmed women's spiritual equality, citing Galatians 3:28. He additionally acknowledged that women are recipients of spiritual gifts and refers to women in Scripture who worked with—not under—the apostles. Spener appears to support a cooperative vision in which the majority of men and women share gifts and work to support ministry. However, the subsequent question restricted the extent of women's ministry, asking, "But are women not forbidden to teach?" Here the division between public and private spheres governed. It is true, Spener said, that women are forbidden to teach "in the public congregation," marshaling 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11–12 as scriptural support.⁷¹ Thus Spener's view of the spiritual priesthood—and spiritual equality of men and women—ultimately reaffirmed existing constructions of women's roles within the church, limiting women to private activity.

It is at this point in *The Spiritual Priesthood* Spener addressed the role of women within the conventicle, one of the hallmarks of Pietism. In *Pia Desideria*, he had suggested that "several good friends sometimes meet by appointment to go over a sermon together and recall what they heard, to read in Scripture, and to confer in the fear of the Lord how they may put into practice what they read."⁷² Such gatherings complicated the confining of women's priestly duties to the private sphere. A conventicle took place in the private sphere, but it appeared to be a public meeting. This blurring of the dividing line between public and private posed difficulties. If women were permitted to teach in private, could they teach at these gatherings? Perhaps even teach men?

The answers to these questions are complicated by Spener's letters to Pietist women and his public defense of their leadership. In his letters to noblewomen, he encouraged them to establish devotional exercises in their homes, and he was aware that they often led such meetings.⁷³

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. See for example Spener, *Briefe aus der Frankfurter Zeit*, I:554, II:391–92, II:110.

In 1677, the same year he wrote *The Spiritual Priesthood*, Spener was involved in defending his friend Anna Elisabeth Kissner for leading a conventicle in her home and for reportedly preaching. Spener defended her in writing as an honest, pious, and sensible woman who would not challenge church authority.⁷⁴ He seemed generally opposed to women leading conventicles, but on the other hand was willing to defend women who did. His underlying concern that such leadership should not lead to separatism is on full display in *The Spiritual Priesthood*, where he specifies that the conventicle gatherings “*should not be large*, so as not to have the appearance of a *separation* and a *public assembly*. Nor should [the people], by reason of them *neglect* the public worship or *condemn it or disdain the ordained ministers*.”⁷⁵ Clearly, Spener here indirectly addressed the fact that a conventicle in Frankfurt that contained many of his own friends and co-religionists had begun to exhibit separatist tendencies. Thus Spener wanted to defend the practice while simultaneously rejecting the activities that were presenting conflict in the church.

Rather, he insisted that no one should neglect their jobs as parents and workers or set themselves up as teachers.⁷⁶ Moreover, Spener made clear that uneducated persons should not take up the deep questions and difficult passages of Scripture.⁷⁷ Here he did not offer the laity a new role and again attempted to head off further accusations that the *collegia* would be unsupervised.

What becomes increasingly clear is that Spener wanted to reassure his clerical readers that if they adopted his reform proposals, they would not find themselves in a world where laity overran clergy and disorder reigned. As he stated, “If *proper care* is not exercised to *keep all within bounds*, this, like every other good thing, may by the fault of men result in harm. But this is not to be feared if *both* the ministry and the *spiritual* priests perform their duty according to the rules of Christ.”⁷⁸ In his effort to ensure that the spiritual priesthood did not upset contemporary notions of social order, Spener clearly outlined the roles of women in a way that reflected and reinforced patriarchal norms that focused on

74. Philipp Jakob Spener, “Letztes Theologisches Bedenken,” *Schriften*, ed. Erich Beyreuther (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1984–2001), XV/2, 185.

75. Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood,” 63, emphasis original.

76. Spener, *The Spiritual Priesthood*, 32.

77. Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood,” 63.

78. *Ibid.*, 64, emphasis original.

the spiritual rather than practical equality of women. While a generous reading certainly reveals places where the possibility for expanded activity for women in the church is mentioned, the overriding need to reinforce order ultimately won the day.

Spener's *Spiritual Priesthood* formulated guidelines for women's behavior characterized by a juxtaposition of encouragement and restriction. His position on women's involvement in the church did not differ drastically from Luther's. Yet there is something new here. Spener expanded the private sphere to include a variety of activities such as traveling, interacting with men and women, and even studying the Bible. He maintained a widespread correspondence with both men and women. In his letters he frequently encouraged women both to engage in personal Bible study and, particularly noblewomen, to lead devotions in their homes. He also supported women's written opinions because he did not consider written work a violation of the teaching prohibition; rather, he fundamentally supported women in publishing their works as a private act. While the works he encouraged were generally devotional in nature, such as hymns or piety manuals for children, he saw these as works produced for an individual and then brought to others. In his own work, *Nature and Grace*, he included an appendix composed by his friend Anna Elisabeth Kissner, which compared quotations from German mystics to his own writing.⁷⁹ He acknowledged that Johanna Petersen's written works had produced fruit, even while lamenting her Philadelphian eschatological ideas.⁸⁰

In the sixteenth century, religious practice and the family were both public matters. The church and state were involved routinely in the administration and observation of religious and familial activity.⁸¹ Yet the seventeenth century saw a shift toward what, by the end of the early modern period, would become a clearer delineation between public and private spheres.⁸² That Spener stands in the midst of this shift is evi-

79. August Nebe, "Aus Speners Dresdener Breifen an eine Freundin in Frankfurt am Main," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 106 (1934/35): 279, 282; "Aus Speners Berliner Briefen an eine Freundin in Frankfurt," *Jahrbuch für Brandenburgische Kirchengeschichte* 30 (1935): 125.

80. Nebe, "Aus Speners Dresdener Briefen," 290.

81. Merry Wiesner, "Women's Response to the Reformation," in R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 164.

82. Anna Clark, "Comment," *Journal of Women's History* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 115–16.

dent in the fact that his descriptions of public and private life appear at times to conflict. His ambivalence reflects a larger societal shift toward decreased observation of private activities, provided they did not create social disruption.

Conclusion

Spener provided parameters for women's activity in the church, stressing their spiritual equality and exercise of the spiritual priesthood within the private sphere.⁸³ He did not allow women access to preaching, teaching, or sacramental roles, upholding the traditional position of the church. His proposals about women reading the Bible were joined by the injunction that they not neglect their household tasks. Spener's overriding concern when dealing with women in his published writings was to assure his readers that he did not intend to create any sort of disruption in either the ecclesial or social sphere. In all his statements, he was clearly concerned with upholding the contemporary patriarchal system with only minor adjustments made for women to take part in limited new ways, but always in a fashion that did not threaten to disrupt the patriarchal system or the societal hierarchy. Ultimately, as Stein suggested, Spener was a man of his times when it came to his public dealings with women and the piety that he encouraged. However, by broadening the scope of private religious activities, he provided some new opportunities, some unforeseen, for women in early modern Europe. In this way, his encouragement of the spiritual priesthood of all believers went beyond the expectations of his time in recognizing and appreciating a greater variety of roles laywomen could fulfill in the church.

83. Albrecht, "Frauen," 524–26.

Book Reviews

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Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys: A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way* (IVP, 2015), 272 pages, \$20.

In *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys*, Richard Twiss highlights the growing movement of Native American contextual theology that is committed to decolonizing Native Christianity while embracing a biblically grounded faith that celebrates indigenous cultures. Twiss begins by affirming the presence of God the Creator within Native communities prior to, throughout, and following the colonization of the Americas. He exposes the ways in which Western hegemony has hindered an authentic Christian faith among First Nations populations. Twiss rejects the notion—historically supported by Western missionaries, modern evangelicals, and traditionalist Native Christians—that Native culture and true Christian practice are theologically incompatible. He further challenges as hypocritical the mostly undisputed “counteractive syncretism” of American exceptionalism, economic power, and military dominance (p. 37).

At the heart of the text lie the narratives of those who have been influenced by the contextualization movement and have found freedom in their walk with Christ by embodying the practices of their Native heritage. Twiss’s arguments for the most effective means of decolonization are found in the real stories and experiences of the Native people. Twiss shares his own journey of faith, embedded in his Lakota culture and his subsequent life’s work. He shares personal stories of Christian pow wows, sweet grass and sage prayers, and sweat lodge spiritual experiences.

Twiss catalogs the larger contextualization movement and its influence in the Christian evangelical world, including both confrontations and victories. He also celebrates Native ministers and theologians who have broken barriers in theological education, spoken to the Native community, launched worldwide indigenous ministry conferences, and continued to shape theological discussion in the academy and the church. Such efforts have culminated in the formation of the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People and the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies.

Yet Twiss questions whether “contextualization” is even an appropriate term for this movement (pp. 208–20). Does “contextualization” fail to break away from a paternalistic framework? Does it reinforce the notion that indigenous peoples are forever doomed to be the *receivers* of the message rather than legitimate *tellers* of the story? At what point do we let go of using the “contextual” descriptor for our theologies and instead embrace the stories that our many cultures bring as equally valid? Twiss’s goal is to tell the gospel story in ways that permeate the Native “soil and soul” (p. 220). How this is achieved and who is telling the story remain key questions.

Twiss also recognizes the limitations he faces in his task of “rescuing the Gospel from the cowboys.” “More than four hundred years of missions cannot be undone,” he laments, especially when resistance comes from conservative Native evangelicals (p. 216). He acknowledges that he must accept opposition and remain committed to listening and honoring another’s story even if it conflicts with his own worldview. Twiss acknowledges that the Euro-American dominant form of Christianity will outlive him—an unfortunately prophetic statement given his untimely passing in 2013 before this book was published. In many ways, this book reads as Twiss’s last words. Yet his hope is to pass on his wisdom and fervor to the next generation of Native Christians working toward an authentic faith grounded in Scripture and their cultural identity.

Christians and ministry leaders, both Native and non-Native alike, will find *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys* a relevant text. Not only has Twiss begun to trace the movement’s history and influences, effectively claiming a spot for the Native voice within the body of contemporary ministry texts, he also challenges us to recognize that Euro-American Christianity is not without its own syncretism. Twiss calls us to seek dialogue over judgment and control by pursuing authentic worship. If we are Christians committed to the corporate enactment of the story of

God in worship, then we must be open to relating that story in ways that bring the fullness of who we are to God and to one another.

Richard Twiss was also called Taoyate Obnajin, “He Stands with His People.” In this good work, he has lived into his name.

ALEXANDRIA MACIAS

Derek Tidball, *The Voices of the New Testament: Invitation to a Biblical Roundtable* (IVP, 2016), 279 pages, \$24.

As part of a seminary course, I once attended a “fishbowl” conversation where I sat as an observer to a panel of experts and practitioners conversing about the theme of the night. It was a broad and informative discussion, as panelists not only brought their own viewpoints but also responded to the perspectives of the others and allowed their own understanding of the subject to be honed through interaction. In the end, what emerged from their conversation was greater than the sum of their initial individual contributions. By hearing these experts in dynamic conversation with one another, the audience received more than simply each individual’s viewpoint; we heard a multi-faceted, collective perspective on the subject. The respondents did not always see things in precisely the same way (which would have produced a flat and bland discussion), but their individual emphases, experiences, and perspectives complemented one another and gave dimension to the subject, even in the midst of the inevitable tensions produced by examining a complex issue from various angles.

In *The Voices of the New Testament*, Derek Tidball invites us to observe such a fishbowl. Traditional volumes on New Testament theology may seek to articulate a single systematic theology or divide the New Testament into various theologies (the theology of Paul, the theology of John, etc.) and so hold them separate from one another. Tidball, on the other hand, attempts to walk a line between these poles, looking for coherence in the New Testament “without imposing a false synthesis on it, squashing its diversity, or distorting the emphasis of any individual writer” (pp. 3–4). To do so, he imaginatively seats the various New Testament authors around a table and hosts a dynamic conversation between them. What emerges is not a monolithic theology nor a scattered survey of various books and passages, but a robust and multi-dimensional understanding of the work of God in Jesus Christ that acknowledges and holds on to the tensions that are present in the New Testament authors’ various

experiences and views on God's work. Written in a transcript format, the conversation is moderated by a "chair," with occasional contextual and historical-theological interludes by an "observer." It addresses standard subjects in New Testament theology: good news, Jesus, salvation, Holy Spirit, eschatology, and more. Tidball seeks to do justice to the unique contributions of each New Testament author, though, for obvious reasons, some of them (such as Paul) receive more speaking time than others (Jude).

While the discussion format of the book often feels contrived and cumbersome for those who may be seeking a more traditional exploration of New Testament theology, it does force the reader to adopt an important perspective on the text: the biblical authors become *conversation partners* rather than mere oracles through whom the divine voice speaks. This is the primary contribution this book offers the reader. It reminds us that the texts of the New Testament did not simply fall from heaven but were the product of an early Christian community seeking to make sense of their experience of the resurrected Christ and to help others walk faithfully in his footsteps by telling of his words and deeds, addressing matters of church and life, and offering the hope of Christ's return.

One could certainly read through Tidball's imagined discussion and find points of disagreement with how he summarizes the New Testament authors' viewpoints. But by presenting the voices of the New Testament in this conversational manner, Tidball urges us toward an approach to the biblical text that is perhaps more in keeping with how these texts were originally intended to be read—an approach that is well within the Covenant's historical roots of reading and interpreting the word of God in community and our current ethos of being "biblical, but not doctrinaire."

Ultimately, Tidball's book will be more appropriate for interested laity, perhaps in small groups or classes, than for pastors and scholars. Tidball does not delve very deeply into theological content; it is the book's arrangement and perspective that are unique and enlightening, as it draws together various threads from across the New Testament. I imagine this book could be particularly useful in conjunction with, or following on the heels of, a project such as the Community Bible Experience, which seeks to foster communal reading of and conversation around Scripture. Perhaps through such efforts and insights we may reclaim the word of God as "living and active" for each of us.

LUKE S. OLIVER



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