

When I was in grade school in the sixties, I heard the following riddle: A father and his son were in an accident. Both were seriously injured, and both taken to the hospital to have emergency surgery. The doctor who was called in to operate on the boy looked at him and said, “I can’t perform this surgery—this child is my son!” How could that be?

Aside from the questionable logic that the surgeon would not be allowed to operate, the answer is obvious today—the doctor was the boy’s mother. But back in the day, that riddle was a real stumper. I knew of a handful of female doctors, but they were “special” cases. They were either missionaries, like Teddy (Theodora) Johnson who lived and worked in Africa, or they were from another country, like Mrs. Viziam, whom I knew from church. She and her husband (who was also a doctor) were from India. But none of us kids at Longfellow Elementary had mothers who were doctors—and it was hard for us to imagine the female equivalent of Dr. Kildare or Dr. Welby.

Although I’m not willing to concede that I’m as old as that story makes me feel, that world was a long, long time ago. Even a few years later, that understanding was changing rapidly. By the time I was a student at North Park College, the women in my class were preparing for any number of occupations. Some were planning to start their careers after graduation, and some were planning to continue their education in medical school or law school or seminary.

Today, if you go to Swedish Covenant Hospital’s website and search for a doctor, you will find that one-third of the physicians affiliated with the hospital are women. That follows the national trend, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. The statistics are the same for lawyers as well. Not all is rosy, to be sure. There are significant issues of concern—pay inequality being one, again according to the *Wall Street Journal*. But no one is seriously questioning these women’s right to work in their chosen fields—or, rather, such ques-

tions are not taken seriously in the public square.

You can see where this is going.

The Covenant Church decided in 1976 to ordain women. The Covenant Church affirms the gifts of all women—including women called by God to ministry in the church. Not every church body does—and for the life of me, I don’t understand that—but our church does. The Covenant Church does. And yet here we are again, addressing the issue of women in ministry. I admit I’m both weary and mystified. Why do we still need to talk about this as if the decision to ordain women was made recently? Why do we have to continually defend our stance on women in ministry and leadership?

We have work to do. Lots of it. I understand that it takes time to adjust our expectations, to change habits, to get used to new voices. And it takes time for a generation of leaders to be nurtured and tested and find their place in the structures of the church. But it’s been thirty-seven years since we’ve said that the women who are called by God to teach and preach, to baptize and serve communion, to marry and bury can do all that in the Covenant Church. It’s time for us not to wonder if it’s appropriate for a woman to be a pastor, but rather to wonder why more women aren’t pastors and leaders and administrators. It’s time now to provide opportunities for our daughters to follow God’s call in their lives. It’s long past time.

Consider what’s at stake. How many gifts and talents are we wasting? How many women are not answering God’s call because they don’t see the opportunities? How many of our daughters are leaving the church to live out their call elsewhere? How much have we lost because of that?

How long will it take before we can say we’ve solved the riddle?

—Jane K. Swanson-Nystrom



OUR READERS WRITE

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The Spirit of KICY

Although I admit to be prejudiced by my nine years on staff at KICY and thirteen years on its board of directors, Mike Cogan’s piece, “Broadcasting Wild Alaska,” captures the spirit of what KICY is all about (June/July).

How many Covenanters know that our Covenant owns and ministers with the only FCC license we know of that authorizes a domestic AM standard broadcast station to broadcast into a foreign country in that nation’s language? And that license carries

authorizations and power the likes of WGN, WCCO, WSB, and KNX.

Greg Asimakoupoulos’s history of KICY, *Ptarmigan Telegraph*, is a great telling of KICY’s history and characters, but “Broadcasting Wild Alaska” reads like I am walking down Front Street.

Thanks for challenging a new generation of Covenanters with exciting missions opportunities like KICY!

Jim Engwall
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