

Female Pastor Was a Rare Calling

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ithin a few months of graduating from the Cleveland Bible Institute and Training School in the 1920s, my grandmother, Eva Pauline Koontz assumed the pastorate at the Church of the Nazarene in Syracuse, Ohio. She was 24. In the quiet coal-mining village along the Ohio River, the arrival of a new neighbor, let alone a female pastor, was big news.

“I’m feeling a little strange,” the Rev. Koontz noted in her diary. “Notice of my welcome reception is posted on the post office door.”

I envision her sitting at the petite oak desk with five pigeonholes—the desk that now sits in my living room—praying over sermons and puzzling over budgets.

“For the week of September 14,” Eva recorded, “six preaching services, two prayer services, 15 calls, two open-air services, and salary of \$16.”

Throughout that fall, Eva preached at the coal mines. The rough atmosphere there wasn’t about to put her off. As a child, she had gone into the saloons in her hometown of Shelby,



EVA PAULINE KOONTZ
became a pastor in Syracuse,
OH, in the 1920s.

Ohio, to retrieve her father, John, who was an alcoholic.

Eva went on to marry a schoolteacher, Paul Hayman, and raise their children, including my mother, Marian. They struggled, but the Haymans always shared what they had with those who had even less.

REMINISCE

STORIES THAT SHAPE OUR LIVES