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Recently Staci and I visited one of the many antique stores here in Elkhart, and I came across an old typewriter, which brought back memories from my younger years. In the basement of my childhood home my parents had an Underwood typewriter that I used to pretend to write letters to imaginary recipients. I would see how fast I could type the keys, often with the result of the metal arms jamming. As I'd reach inside to untangle them, I always wondered why the keys were not arranged in alphabetical order.

It would be years later that I learned the original typewriter keys in the 1860s were alphabetically arranged in two rows, but the resulting tangle of keys from fast typists prompted the designer to make revisions. Some suggest the keys were rearranged in 1878 into our current layout to slow down typists, while others suggest that the less frequently used keys were moved farther from the center. Regardless of the motivation behind the new arrangement of the keyboard, it quickly caught on, and by 1890 100,000 keyboards used what's known

as the QWERTY layout, named for the first six letters on the left-hand side of the keyboard.¹



The typewriter came almost 2000 years too late for Paul, for imagine the letters he could have written to the churches using one of them! Instead, he wrote by hand or dictated his letters to a scribe, who used ink and paper to record his thoughts. Last week we heard the first portion of this letter as he explained how he was called through grace to let others know God was doing a new thing, that it was ok for religious and unreligious people to eat at the same table, for God had brought them together as one family.

As he continued his letter, Paul began the next portion of the letter by addressing them in this way: “You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it’s obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives.”²

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How might you respond to a letter that called you crazy Elkhartians? What if the letter came from a pastor who was away while traveling, wondering if something crazy had happened to all of you?

Paul continued his letter to the Galatians by asking: “How did *your* new life begin? Did you have to work like crazy to please God? Did God choose you because you followed all the rules and never messed up? You’re nuts if you think you can complete what God started. You’re not powerful enough to do what God began, so do you think you can do better than God?”

I wonder how many times we get caught in the same idea—that we can do everything on our own. Have you ever tried to think you can do something “all by yourself,” not needing any help from anyone—or even from God?

It appears there were some other voices tempting the churches in Galatia to take matters into their own hands, to go back in time to the good old days when following all the religious rules and keeping outsiders away was the norm. This new way

of welcoming all people was uncomfortable. *Why should we welcome them*, they may have wondered, *for they don’t do things the way we’ve always done it? We’re good people. We have followed God’s rules for centuries. These newcomers don’t understand our ways, so why should we welcome them into our place of worship?*

It’s tempting to use our history or our status to believe that we have more rights than someone else, as was the case

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. One day, after a busy morning chasing votes he arrived at a church barbecue. It was late afternoon and Herter was famished. As Herter moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line.

“Excuse me,” Governor Herter said, “do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?”

“Sorry,” the woman told him. “I’m supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person.”

“But I’m starved,” the governor said.

“Sorry,” the woman said again “Only one to a customer.”

Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man, but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around. “Do you know who I am?” he said. “I am the governor of this state.”

“Do you know who I am?” the woman said. “I’m the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister.”³

That’s a bit like the message Paul was trying to get across to the Galatians, for he reminded them of the opening chapter of the Bible in Genesis: *God will bless you in order that you may be a blessing to everyone.* Then Paul explained: All the laws helped you, just as a tutor helps you to learn, but now God has welcomed everyone, and then Paul wrote this often quoted passage: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no

longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”⁴

That’s the point they were missing—they were now all one. It’s a bit like looking at an old QWERTY typewriter: something seems to be missing. Look closely at the typewriter—what key is missing? The number 1 is missing, for as a way to save money the designers knew typists could substitute an uppercase I or a lowercase L for the number 1.

But when it comes to people, when the idea of 1 is missing among us, we no longer know what the church is all about. Jesus came into the world to add the missing ones—the outsiders, the poor, those outside proper religious circles, those who may be from different cultures or races. Just as keyboard designers learned to add the missing 1 to modern keyboards, Jesus welcomed the missing ones. You see, without 1, nothing can be whole.

When we leave out 1, someone gets left out, which is something my grandfather, Forrest Cripe, understood. The African-American singer Marian Anderson came to Goshen College in the 1950s to

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sing at a concert, but the main hotels in Goshen would not offer her a room since the town was known as a sundowner town, an area unfriendly to African Americans, especially at night. Anderson and the entire group traveling with her instead stayed here in Elkhart. A religion professor at the college later wrote an article to the *Goshen News* after the event, condemning such attitudes that prevented Anderson from staying in town. After the letter appeared in the paper, my grandfather called the professor and said that not all motel owners were racists, for he owned Parkside Motel just down the street from the college and would have welcomed the singer if anyone had asked.⁵

Little did I know as I grew up playing in my grandparents' home attached to the motel that my

grandfather had been a voice of welcome. Little did I know that I would live here in Elkhart many decades later serving a welcoming congregation that has shared in combined worship services for 20 years with Greater Bethlehem. Little did I know I would be crossing the racial line to be welcomed as the first white member of the IMA, the African-American Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance here in Elkhart.

Somehow I have always known that when 1 is missing—not only on a keyboard but in the church as well, then we are not whole. It takes QWERTY plus 1 to make a full keyboard, just as it takes everyone to make a whole church.

¹ Jimmy Stamp, "Fact of Fiction? The Legend of the QWERTY Keyboard," May 3, 2013, www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/fact-of-fiction-the-legend-of-the-qwerty-keyboard-49863249/

² Galatians 3:1, *The Message Bible*.

³ <http://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-lady-in-charge-of-the-chicken>

⁴ Galatians 3:28 NRSV

⁵ Dan Shenk, "Portrait of a 'sundown town'" <http://mennoworld.org/2014/01/20/feature/portrait-of-a-sundown-town/>