

Script – Season 1 – Project Violet Podcasts
 Episode 2 – From Compliment to Affirmation

Season Intro

	Music
Jane	Hello, I'm Jane Day, Centenary Development Enabler for Baptists Together
Helen	And I'm Helen Cameron, Research Fellow at the Centre for Baptist Studies at Regent's Park College Oxford. Together we are the co-leaders of Project Violet.
Jane	Welcome to Season 1 of the Project Violet podcast. Project Violet is a research project investigating women's experiences in ministry whilst developing women ministers. We are trying to understand better the theological, missional and structural obstacles women ministers face and identify ways forward.
Helen	In this first season, we plan to introduce you to the history of women's ministry in the Baptist movement and look at some of the language used to discuss women's experiences.
Jane	We've been working together on Project Violet since May 2021 and have become even more aware of the different layers that make up Baptist life.
Helen	I've learned so much in all the listening we have done to women ministers. I think there are three layers that the project has ended up focusing on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The everyday language and behaviour we use in church life. 2. The accepted ways of doing things. 3. What we believe about the church and the role of ministers.
Jane	We hope that listening to these five episodes will prepare you for when the findings of the project are released in May 2024.

Segment 1 – Learning the language

Jane	This is the first of four episodes where we are going to think about the everyday language and behaviour we use in church life. I must admit I'm nervous that we are just going to share a load of jargon.
Helen	Mmm, that is how I used to think, but reflecting on the pandemic we all learned a lot of new words to help us understand what was going on and make sense of what we were being asked to do. I think if our listeners are going to get the most from reading the findings of Project Violet it is valuable to think about how language and behaviour play a part in women's experience of ministry.
Jane	Well I guess turning to the bible, there are teachings about the power of language and the responsibilities we have as Christians. I'm thinking of James chapter 3. <p style="margin-left: 40px;">For we all stumble in many ways. If someone does not stumble in what they say, they are a perfect individual, able to control the entire body as well. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to get them to obey us, then we guide their entire bodies. Look at ships too: Though they are so large and driven by harsh winds, they are steered by a tiny rudder wherever the pilot's inclination directs. So, too, the tongue is a small part of the</p>

	body, yet it has great pretensions. Think how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze. And the tongue is a fire!
Helen	I'm really taken by that metaphor of the forest fire. I'm thinking about the disposable barbeque which a family lights in all innocence, disposes of but, they are unaware of the spark they have left behind in the ground which given the right conditions can become a wildfire.
Jane	That sounds a bit like social media, one comment can lead to the rapid spread of a conversation which can get out of hand. Sometimes it causes damage way beyond what the first person intended.
Helen	Yes I agree. In the second phase of Project Violet, we invited all serving women ministers to contribute a written reflection on the joys and sorrows of ministry. That has given us a huge resource that we have been able to use throughout the project. One of the things that struck me is how a single comment that might seem insignificant can become part of a pattern that gets out of hand and undermines a woman's ministry.
Jane	I think we can create some examples of situations that get out of hand based on what we learned from that writing which must remain confidential.
Helen	Yes and then get some friends to voice what happened so our listeners have got something specific to discuss and reflect upon.
Jane	It could be a bit cheesy, but it will give people something specific to react to. What are the words we want to introduce in this episode?
Helen	Well I think we have to start with sexism . For me this means treating women and men differently based upon stereotypes or our expectations about what the roles of men and women should be.
Jane	Then I think we need to add the word misogyny which is being used much more these days. In the past it was used to mean hatred of women.
Helen	I think that could be confusing because now its formal meaning is language and behaviour directed at women to patrol the boundary between men and women and enforce stereotypes. And I think it needs to be paired with misandry which is language and behaviour directed at men to enforce stereotypes.
Jane	Yes it is important to recognize that the definition relates to who the language and behaviour is directed at rather than who it is coming from. Both men and women can be sexist. Both women and men can be on the receiving end of sexist language and behaviour.
Helen	The most commonly used terms you hear in relation to sexism are equality, diversity and inclusion. They are used in the 'I am because you are' resource that all ministers have been asked to study. Most organisations have policies that define these terms.

Jane	Let me start with equality : Equality is about ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity, and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics such as gender.
Helen	Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people and placing a positive value on those differences. And inclusion?
Jane	Inclusion is moving beyond welcoming people with diverse experiences and identities to ensuring they can participate fully. I find taking these three together gives you a rounded picture of what is needed to counteract sexism. Equal treatment, valuing diversity and ensuring inclusion.
Helen	I guess a final word to mention in this episode is unconscious bias . I find this a helpful term because it is not finger-pointing. It is saying that we all grew up with stereotypes around us and some of those we have taken on board without really examining them. Avoiding sexism is about become aware of our assumptions and setting aside stereotypes which undermine people.
Jane	I guess takes us back to James chapter 3. None of us is perfect, we all stumble but we can all take responsibility for our tongues and what we say.
Helen	Okay I think that's enough definitions for the moment, shall we get started on our first scenario?
Jane	Yes, we've set it in a local church because that's where most women ministers work.

Scenario A: After the sermon

	Music
Helen	We've called this scenario, After the sermon. The service is over and Ruth the minister is standing in the coffee area, available to chat to people as they leave. She is approached in turn by Harry, Thomas and Richard who are all deacons.
Ruth	Goodbye, then. It's been good to have you here this week. Hope we see you again soon.
Harry	Thank you Ruth, that was such a challenging sermon. I mean, in a good way. I'd never have thought about Zacchaeus being called to act justly as a result of his conversion.
Ruth	Thanks Harry, that's really encouraging. It's one of my favourite bible passages.
Thomas	Didn't the children respond well this morning – I love the way you involve them in the worship – a woman's maternal touch I think. I'll see you on Wednesday.
Richard	Well it's nice to see you wearing a dress this morning Ruth, most of the time you are in trousers.

Ruth	I would prefer it if you didn't say things about my appearance, Richard.
Richard	[Laughs] Oh you just need to learn how to take a compliment. I'll see you at the church meeting on Wednesday.
Harry	Right, I think I'm ready to lock up. Oh gosh Ruth you look down.
Ruth	It's just the way people put things sometimes I struggle with. Thanks for locking up Harry, see you on Wednesday.

Interview: Ruth's reactions

	Music
Helen	Ruth decides to share her experiences with Jane.
Jane	Hi Ruth, I'm sorry to hear you are struggling. What's happened?
Ruth	Well I preached my socks off on Sunday morning, it matters to me that people understand that Jesus wanted our faith in him to result in justice. But then it's the things people say afterwards.
Jane	Can you give me an example?
Ruth	Well I know Thomas meant to be kind about my involving the children in worship but why does he have to call me maternal? It is as if the only way a woman can relate to children is as a mother. Would he tell a male minister they were being paternal?
Jane	What would have been better?
Ruth	I guess I see being minister as my professional role and I want to know what I am doing well and what could be done differently.
Jane	Is there anything else?
Ruth	I really dislike people making remarks about my personal appearance. It makes me wonder if they listened to a word that I said or were just evaluating how I dress. It's not just a one off and so it makes me really self-conscious. I try to dress in a bland way, but it still happens.
Jane	It was happening to Violet Hedger nearly 100 years ago and yet it is still happening. I think what I'm hearing you saying is that if people want to say something positive you don't want personal compliments you want affirmation of what you have done.
Ruth	You've expressed that really well. That is exactly what Harry did.

Segment 2

	Music
Helen	So Jane, how do you feel that scenario and your conversation with Ruth, reflect the words we've looked at in this episode?
Jane	There were two things that Ruth experienced as sexist, Thomas calling her maternal and Richard commenting on how she was dressed.
Helen	Would you use the word misogyny to describe their language?
Jane	I wouldn't want to use that word in the sense of hatred, but I do think they are both examples of language designed to reinforce stereotypes of women.
Helen	Yes, I felt that Thomas calling Ruth maternal suggested that she was only good at working with children because she was a woman. Her skill might come from other sources, and she sees it as an important skill to have developed as a minister. It suggests that men can't be good with children as well which is unfair.
Jane	And what do you think about Richard?
Helen	Using the phrase, 'you need to learn to take a compliment' felt as if he was trying to shut down her objection rather than listen to why she didn't welcome remarks about how she dressed. That felt closer to the definition of behaviour designed to patrol the boundary between the social roles of women and men. I think Ruth was telling him that his comments on her appearance were unwanted and he reacted defensively – it is as if the rudder on the boat had become stuck and the conversation could only head towards the rocks.
Jane	Do you think there is a danger Ruth was overreacting?
Helen	I guess in both instances if this had been a one-off piece of behaviour, something that had never happened before, then it might seem unimportant. However, when women hear these stereotypes it is usually another example in a pattern of experiences. It is that cumulative pattern that was wearing Ruth down.
Jane	I think the thing about inclusion is that it means people can show up to church being fully themselves. If Ruth is self-conscious about how she dresses then that is diminishing her ability to minister.
Helen	And do you think these are examples of unconscious bias? We don't have a lot of information about their motives.
Jane	I guess all we can say at this stage is that Ruth drew Richard's attention to unwanted behaviour, and he rejected her view. She was giving him an opportunity to reflect upon his language and he chose not to take it.
Helen	Well this doesn't feel a good place to finish. Let's see if things could have gone differently.

Scenario B: After the sermon

	Music
Helen	Let's run our scenario again and see what might be different: Take 2 – After the sermon.
Ruth	Goodbye, then. It's been good to have you here this week. Hope we see you again soon.
Harry	Thank you Ruth, that was such a challenging sermon. I mean, in a good way. I'd never have thought about Zacchaeus being called to act justly as a result of his conversion.
Ruth	Thanks Harry, that's really encouraging. It's one of my favourite bible passages.
Thomas	Didn't the children respond well this morning? You're so good at drawing out what they're thinking. Your past experience as a schoolteacher shines through. See you Wednesday.
Richard	Well, at least it's not raining. I should be able to get out into the garden this afternoon. See you at the church meeting on Wednesday.
Harry	Right. I'll just lock up now. How would you like the chairs setting out for the church meeting on Wednesday?
Ruth	I think I'd like to try something different. Let's discuss it.

Outro

Helen	Thank you for listening to this episode of the Project Violet podcast. We invite you to reflect on this episode. Did you learn anything new or surprising? How were you left feeling?
Jane	The episode notes contain questions you could use in a small groups to get a discussion going.
Helen	We invite you to subscribe to this podcast on the platform you are using, so you don't miss out on future episodes.
Jane	And don't forget to tell others about the Project Violet podcast. You can follow us on Facebook and X formerly Twitter and find out more on our website www.projectviolet.org.uk
	Music

Episode notes

Scripture passage: James 3

Definitions:

Sexism

Misogyny

Misandry

Equality

Diversity

Inclusion

Unconscious bias

Links: I am because you are

[The Baptist Union of Great Britain : Equality and Diversity Training](#)

A podcast is usually a recording of two or more people having a conversation. So much of church life is sharing conversation with one another, Sometimes we speak to others directly, on other occasions we might listen to a conversation between two people within a meeting. Sometimes a conversation happens and is retold to us afterwards. In all these examples we are invited to listen and to reflect on what is said.

We invite you to listen to these podcast conversations between Jane and Helen and their guests. And we invite you to reflect together as a group: on what is said and what this might mean for your church life together. We trust that your reflections will lead you to encounter God at work in this conversation we share. We offer the following questions to support your listening and reflection:

What happened in the podcast?

How did you feel as you listened to the conversation?

What challenged, stimulated, or disturbed you?

What core values emerge as you think about the conversation in the podcast?

What values are different from yours?

Where is God present for you in this conversation?

Where is God present for others?

Does this conversation remind you of another Scripture passage, a hymn, or other resources from your own testimony?

What ways of being Baptist speak to this conversation?

Are you affirmed or challenged in your present actions or beliefs?

What questions still linger?

What do you need as a church?

What will you do now?

Adapted from

Johnson, Abigail *Reflecting with God. Connecting Faith and Daily Life in Small Groups* Alban, 2004

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