

Script – Season 1 – Project Violet Podcasts

Episode 5 – From Bystander to Ally

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

	Music
Jane	This is the last of four episodes where we are going to learn about the everyday language and behaviour used in church life. Last time we looked at how women who live at the intersections of racism, ageism, ableism and marital status can experience different stereotypes, meaning that women are not all the same.
Helen	In this episode we want to move on from stereotypes to more intentional behaviour to discriminate against women and define some of the language that is used. It can be difficult to hear that this type of behaviour is present in the Baptist movement but the written accounts we received from women ministers and the work that you do as an enabler Jane, show that it does happen.

<p>Jane</p>	<p>A bible passage that is important to me is the way the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage that comes part way through the story of Jesus being asked by the leader of the synagogue Jairus' to heal his daughter.</p> <p>Luke 8: 40-48</p> <p>Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him because they were all waiting for him. Then a man named Jairus, who was a leader of the synagogue, came up. Falling at Jesus' feet, he pleaded with him to come to his house, because he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds pressed around him. Now a woman was there who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years but could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak, and at once the bleeding stopped. Then Jesus asked, "Who was it who touched me?" When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing against you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I know that power has gone out from me."</p> <p>When the woman saw that she could not escape notice, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."</p>
<p>Helen</p>	<p>I noticed the stories are about the healing of a woman and a girl. Jesus places the same importance in healing men and women. What are you noticing?</p>
<p>Jane</p>	<p>The way that Jairus approaches Jesus confidently asking for what matters to him compared with the woman who reaches out to Jesus in a way which she hopes will be unnoticed. Jairus has confidence coming from his position as a religious leader, the woman feels shame because the nature of her illness means she is socially shunned.</p>
<p>Helen</p>	<p>That is a powerful example of something which is noticeable in the reflections we have collected from women ministers, that women can hold back from saying what they really want to because they are unsure how it will be received, or they anticipate a negative response. The term for this is self-editing and I like the way it is described on the mums.net website – women ask themselves two questions: Am I being unreasonable? And is it only me? The time they take to process those thoughts can lead to them being seen as hesitant or unsure of themselves. I like the way Jesus stops the action and gives time for the woman to come forward. I bet it felt like a really long silence.</p>
<p>Jane</p>	<p>I also notice that Peter tries to rescue the situation by telling Jesus that he can't possibly know who touched him, he acts as a bystander observing the scene. Jesus however is looking for the person who needs his help and affirming her faith.</p>
<p>Helen</p>	<p>I can see that it is an example of being a bystander rather than an ally.</p>

	I think that sort of throw away comment can often make other people laugh. Humour that excludes rather than includes is often defined by the word 'banter' – harmless joshing if you are an insider but not if the joke is at your expense.
Jane	And banter can become bullying if it is repeated, intentional and hurtful and the person or group engaging in it is more powerful than the person or group at the receiving end.
Helen	Before we move onto our scenario I think we should mention the definition of discrimination because that is a word with a formal meaning in equality law: Direct discrimination is when someone is treated less favourably than others are. Indirect discrimination is when someone is subject to something which whilst neutral in its intention would be difficult for them to comply with because they belong to a particular group such as being a woman.
Jane	Let's move onto our final scenario. Ruth has decided to leave the church and so the process of looking for a new minister must begin. We are listening in to a conversation between Richard, Thomas and Harry before the process starts.

Scenario A: Before the settlement process

	Music
Helen	We've called this scenario, Before the settlement process. For those of you unfamiliar with Baptist terminology this is the process by which a new minister is appointed. It is overseen by a minister from outside the church who is called the moderator. The moderator is appointed by a Regional Minister from the Association the church belongs to. This conversation takes place at Richard's house, he has invited Thomas and Harry to watch a football match with him.
Richard	Thanks for coming around, guys. Before we settle in and watch the football, I've got some beer in the fridge and pizza in the oven.
Thomas	Where's Sheila?
Richard	Don't worry, she gave me full instructions before she went out. Laughs
Harry	That's kind of her to prepare some food for us.
Richard	So now we know Ruth is moving on. I thought it would be good if we three chaps had a chat before the settlement process starts. Now there are only three of us on the Diaconate we need to stick together.
Harry	I think the two new deacons have settled in really well. They're making a great contribution.
Richard	Quite, quite. But we've done our bit. We've had our first woman minister and now we need to get back to normal.

Thomas	I don't see what we can do about it.
Richard	Well as secretary Thomas, you'll see the profiles of ministers interested in our church first. You can just give us the heads up on which ones are the blokes.
Harry	Are you saying that we want to say in our church profile that we don't want a woman minister? I thought we had thrashed all that out before Ruth's appointment.
Richard	Well, I think we should be able to manage this between us, you know, as the more experienced trustees, without going to the trouble of changing the church profile.
Thomas	You're always saying, Richard, that money is tight. Shouldn't we consider a woman if we decide to go for a part-time minister this time?
Richard	Well, yes, that could save us money on housing, particularly as her husband would be the breadwinner.
Harry	I think we are getting ahead of ourselves here. The moderator will guide us through the process, and we need to start with what the church needs rather than what sort of minister we want.
Richard	Yes, I know the moderator from way back, I'll have a chat with him too.

Interview: Jane debriefs with Harry

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Helen	Harry contacts Jane asking for advice on the settlement process. He doesn't know that Jane and Ruth have had conversations. It is not appropriate for Jane to disclose that.
Jane	I got your email Harry. You said you are concerned about the settlement process your church is entering into.
Harry	I wasn't sure if it was just women you talked to, but I didn't know who else to speak to.
Jane	Tell me what your concerns are.
Harry	Well, Ruth, our first woman minister, has announced she is moving on. I'm really sad, she's been so good for the church, we are much more relevant to our local community now and there are new people on the diaconate. (deep breath) It feels as if history is repeating itself because one of our deacons Richard is saying we should 'get back to normal' and appoint a man.
Jane	Do you think the church wants to reconsider its position on accepting women ministers? That would need to go to the church meeting.
Harry	It's worse than that – Richard says we don't need to bother to do that. He says he knows the moderator who has been appointed to guide us through the

	process and I guess that moderator has been approved by the regional minister, so it feels as if the whole process is biased.
Jane	Have you made your objections clear?
Harry	Well I've tried to stick up for Ruth, but I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. I mean Richard's a good man and he's given years of service as a deacon.
Jane	But Ruth has decided to leave.
Harry	Okay I get your point. I have prioritized Richard's feelings over the hurtful things I have witnessed him say to Ruth.
Jane	Is what Richard is proposing acceptable to you?
Harry	Definitely not. If this was happening at work I would definitely call it out as discrimination. I think the new deacons would be shocked if they thought this was how things were done.
Jane	So what could you say?
Harry	I need to stick to my belief that everyone deserves to be treated fairly and that we need to be open to anyone who sends in their profile. I can say that to Richard and the moderator and if necessary to the Regional Minister.
Jane	Sometimes saying 'no' clearly can be helpful when someone has been used to having their way.
Harry	Thanks for listening. I feel calmer about the whole thing now.

Segment 2

	Music
Helen	So Jane, how do you feel about that scenario and your conversation with Harry?
Jane	I was pleased he wanted to talk it through. It was great that he was able to identify that his attitude to Ruth was himpathy, prioritizing the feelings of Richard over the needs of the church.
Helen	Yes, all the way through Project Violet we have had men say to us that they want things to be different, but they are unsure what to do differently.
Jane	I think there are men and women who want to move from being a bystander, just witnessing this type of language and behaviour, to becoming allies who challenge it.
Helen	You used the word challenge and Harry used the phrase 'call out'. It still sounds quite confrontational.

Jane	I think expectations in wider society are moving quite quickly and many people will expect sexism as well as racism, ableism and ageism to be challenged as they happen. In a well moderated space challenge can be presented as an opportunity to learn rather than an accusation.
Helen	Isn't there a danger that in naming something the only outcome is shaming the speaker rather than changing their behaviour?
Jane	In a moderated space it is important that there is accountability for the agreed beliefs and values of the group. But as we know not all these conversations happened in moderated spaces. Another approach rather than to 'call out' is to 'call in' and invite the speaker to explain the point they are making and give them the opportunity to rephrase it.
Helen	Was there anything else you noticed?
Jane	In the scenario I noticed the way in which Richard used banter and humour to try to get Thomas and Harry to agree with him.
Helen	Yes I noticed that. Once you have laughed at something it somehow feels more difficult to challenge it.
Jane	I'd like to put a word in for Sheila who prepared the food before going out.
Helen	I was left wondering if Richard uses Sheila as his benchmark for what all women should be like.
Jane	For me the important thing is to hold onto the positive, that Harry is noticing things and accepting responsibility for behaving differently.

Scenario B: Before the settlement process

	Music
Helen	Let's run our scenario again and see what might be different: Take 2 – Before the settlement process.
Richard	Thanks for coming around, guys. Before we settle in and watch the football, I've got some beer in the fridge and pizza in the oven.
Thomas	Where's Sheila?
Richard	Don't worry, she gave me full instructions before she went out. Laughs
Harry	That's kind of her to prepare some food for us.
Richard	So now we know Ruth is moving on. I thought it would be good if we three chaps had a chat before the settlement process starts. Now there are only three of us on the Diaconate we need to stick together.

Harry	I think the two new deacons have settled in really well. They're making a great contribution. And five women and three men is not such an imbalance.
Richard	Quite, quite. But we've done our bit. We've had our first woman minister and now we need to get back to normal.
Thomas	Well, I have to disagree. I think Ruth has been a great minister. And the church has really moved on in the time that she's been with us.
Richard	I was just suggesting, you know, that we thought ahead. I mean, Thomas, as secretary, you will see the profiles first. And you know, you can give us the heads up on which ones are blokes.
Harry	Are you saying that we want to say in our church profile that we don't want a woman minister? I thought we had thrashed all that out before Ruth's appointment.
Richard	Well, you know, I was hoping we could manage this between us. As you know, we're the more experienced trustees. I know the man appointed as moderator from way back. Laughs
Harry	No Richard, that feels underhand to me. I think we need to be straight with the church meeting and straight with any ministers who choose to apply to work here.
Thomas	You're always saying that money is tight, Richard. And if we advertise a part-time post this time, it may attract more women ministers. Shouldn't we welcome that?
Richard	Well, that's a thought and it could save us money on housing allowance as presumably her husband would be the breadwinner and would provide the housing.
Harry	I really don't feel comfortable with that. I don't think the moderator, or the regional minister would accept us behaving in that way. The terms and conditions should go into the profile and be sent out to all the candidates at the same time. Listen, I just think we're getting ahead of ourselves here. We need to have the meeting with the moderator and agree the process and then decide things together as a leadership team. I'm ready for my pizza. Do you want a hand Richard?

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 group 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

Luke 8: 40-48

Discussion Questions:

Did you learn anything new or surprising?

How were you left feeling?

Definitions

Self-editing

Banter

Bystander and ally

Bullying

Direct discrimination

Indirect discrimination

Empathy

Call out and call in