

Project Violet Report for local churches



Introduction

This Report introduces local churches to Project Violet. It brings together the key documents local churches will need to respond to the findings, in particular the 7 requests for change directed at local churches.

What is Project Violet?

Over the last three years, Project Violet has both investigated women's experiences in ministry and developed the participating women ministers. The project has helped us understand more fully the theological, missional, and structural obstacles women ministers face in the Baptist community in Great Britain and identify ways forward.

The research phase of the project has concluded and from 2 May 2024 all the research is being made available to the Baptist community on the website www.projectviolet.org.uk

There are 57 requests for changes to Baptist ways of working being made. 7 of those requests are directed at local churches.

How is this relevant to local churches?

We have three hopes for local churches, that they will be recognised as:

Being a positive place for women to minister

We want every local church to be a place where women can flourish in their ministry, being all that God intends them to be. Even churches without a minister will have contact with women ministers as visitors leading worship or in their Regional Association.

Being a place where women are encouraged to listen to God's call

We want every local church to be a place where women can experience God's call on their lives and be nurtured and encouraged to discover what that means.

Being a church ready to engage in mission to a world where women and girls experience sexism

We want every local church to be confident in mission to their context knowing that the women and girls they encounter may well be experiencing sexist language, behaviour, and ways of working that hold them back from being all that God intends them to be. We recognise that men can also experience negative stereotypes but that has not been our focus.

What are we being asked to do?

Local churches are being asked to consider 7 requests for change. They are things that will make a difference to women's experience of ministry, according to the research done through Project Violet. We would like you to discuss the requests, and through prayer and discernment decide which ones you can accept. At this stage we are asking you to commit to action while expecting that more time will be needed for implementation. There is a template for you to fill in and return by 30 September 2024 to projectviolet@baptist.org.uk

Here are the requests we are asking you to consider. There is more detail on the pages that follow.

Make opportunities to listen to new voices

Women are not all the same and so it is important that a variety of women's voices are heard in church life.

Local churches make their position on women's ministry known prior to settlement

Women ministers can find it difficult to know which churches would welcome their ministry when they are applying to be a minister.

Role models

Seeing women minister helps other women hear the call of God.

Developing slow wisdom in the local church meeting

Churches are invited to reflect upon the way in which they conduct their church meetings so that they focus on discerning the mind of Christ.

Training in advocacy

Challenging unhelpful language and behaviour as it happens stops patterns of sexism developing. Training will be offered to ministers and others wanting to increase their confidence in doing this.

A theology of disability that enables local churches to reflect upon their practice

Reflecting on what we believe about disability can help us think about how we wish to include people with a disability in our church.

Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life

Ensuring that the resources we use - such as posters, PowerPoints, and newsletters - reflect the diversity of people involved in Baptist life.

What support is available?

Your Regional Association

Most Regional Associations have announced opportunities for ministers to meet and discuss the findings. If your church doesn't have a minister, contact your Regional Minister and ask how you can take part.

Watch the film 'A name to live up to'

If you have not thought about the relationship between sexism and mission before, we recommend the 15-minute film on the Project Violet website. There is a discussion guide you can download. There is also a subtitled version available on the website.

Podcasts

If you have not tried to discuss this issue before in your church, you might find it helpful to listen to Season 1 of the Project Violet podcast. In five episodes you are taken through the history of women's ministry and some of the language used to discuss sexism. There are episode notes you can download and use to have a discussion. There are audio files and transcripts of the episodes on the Project Violet website.

If you want to inspire people to read some of the research that has been done, Season 2 of the Podcast contains 14 short interviews with the women who have done the research. There are audio files and transcripts of the episodes on the website. One of our researchers is a BSL speaker and so you will find a film she has made.

What will happen after we have sent in our response template?

All parts of Baptist life are being asked to respond and so we will be gathering response templates from Associations, Colleges, the Specialist Teams in Didcot, and the networks and groups that make up Baptist life, as well as local churches.

Once all the response templates have been gathered they will be collated into a report which will be presented to Baptist Council on 23 October 2024. There will be a further report to Baptist Council in October 2025 on the progress made in implementation.

On behalf of all the women ministers who have taken part in Project Violet, thank you for considering these requests and being willing to make the Baptist church a place where women can be all that God has intended them to be.

Revd Jane Day

Dr Helen Cameron

Project Violet, Co-leaders

Project Violet – Commitment to Action

Local Churches



Please send to projectviolet@baptist.org.uk by 30th September 2024.

The Commitment to Action responses will be collated and form the basis of a report that will be submitted to the Baptist Union Council in October 2024.

Name of church	
Association you belong to	
How have you discussed the findings? For example, meetings and dates	

These are listed in the priority order agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 18 April 2024.

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R53	Make opportunities to listen to new voices			
R51	Local churches make their position on women's ministry known prior to settlement			
R41	Role models			
R48	Developing slow wisdom in the local church meeting			
R05	Training in advocacy			
R44	A theology of disability that enables local churches to reflect upon their practice			
R56	Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life			

You are invited to offer a narrative, if you would like to, on the decisions you have taken.

Project Violet Requests for Change – R53

Short title	Make opportunities to listen to new voices
Identifying number	R53
Request for action by	Local Churches
Text of request	<p>The request for change is: That local churches make opportunities to try things out, and make a commitment to receive things that are different without reshaping them to fit past expectations.</p> <p>This applies to worship and preaching, but also other aspects of church life such as church meetings.</p>
Relevant co-researcher reports	Receptive Space Report
Relevant Theological Reflections	Receptive Space Report
Location on Requests Map	Types of ministry - Local church

Agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 17 April 2024.

Project Violet Requests for Change – R51

Short title	Local churches make their position on women's ministry known prior to settlement
Identifying number	R51
Request for action by	Local Churches
Text of request	The request for change is: That Baptist congregations that do not accept the ministry of women formally review that position prior to a settlement process and then make the resolution of the church meeting known on their website.
Relevant co-researcher reports	Receptive Space Report
Relevant Theological Reflections	Receptive Space Report
Location on Requests Map	Vocational pathway - Phase II - Settlement

Agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 17 April 2024.

Project Violet Requests for Change – R41

Short title	Role models
Identifying number	R41
Request for action by	Local Churches, Associations, Colleges, Key Roles Nomination Group
Text of request	<p>We can become what we see. Affirming male role models have been important to many women but their courage to respond to God’s call is often developed by seeing women like them in ministry. It is important that teenagers see women preach and minister as that is when a call often starts. It is important that under-represented groups are also asked to act as role models and be seen in positions of leadership and not only in auxiliary roles.</p> <p>The request for change is: Under-represented groups/individuals be given a platform for leadership in local churches, Associations and college gatherings.</p>
Relevant co-researcher reports	<p>What does affirming women leaders in our Association look like?</p> <p>What is the difference that MagnifyYou has made to the women who took part and why was it needed?</p> <p>Understanding the journey into ministry for Asian Women</p> <p>How do caring responsibilities, across the life cycle, shape and impact the ministry and experiences of women in Baptist chaplaincy and church ministry roles?</p> <p>The experiences of Deaf women Ministers</p> <p>Receptive Space - Ecumenical Learning for Project Violet</p>
Relevant Theological Reflections	Group 4
Location on Requests Map	Vocational pathway - Phase I and Phase II

Agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 17 April 2024.

Project Violet Requests for Change – R48

Short title	Developing slow wisdom in the local church meeting.
Identifying number	R48
Request for action by	That Ruth Moriarty create a learning resource for local churches
Text of request	<p>The requests for change are: That following her doctoral thesis and the reflection day during Theology Live 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruth Moriarty be requested to pursue her plans to create learning resource for local churches on ‘Slow wisdom as a practice for local church meetings’ • That she include a reference to the role of local churches in the discernment of callings and settlement decisions
Relevant co-researcher reports	Is it easier for female Baptist Ministers to flourish as Chaplains in the NHS than in local Baptist churches and translocal Baptist life?
Relevant Theological Reflections	Group 4
Location on Requests Map	Vocational pathway - Phase I; Phase III - Settlement

Agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 17 April 2024.

Project Violet Requests for Change – R05

Short title	Training in advocacy on behalf of Ministers and Ministers-in-Training receiving unequal treatment
Identifying number	R05
Request for action by	Local Churches, Associations, Colleges, Specialist Teams
Text of request	<p>All those with a responsibility for the wellbeing of Ministers and Ministers-in-Training should be confident in how to advocate when witnessing or being given evidence of sexist, racist, or ableist language, behaviour, or treatment. They should also be able to identify and declare when they are conflicted by reason of their relationship with the perpetrator and know how to put alternative arrangements in place to mitigate that conflict. Colleagues should recognise bystander behaviour and know how to challenge it.</p> <p>The requests for change are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme of training should be commissioned and offered to all relevant Ministers • That Associations make this training an induction requirement for all new Regional Ministers, and that Colleges make this training an induction requirement for all new tutors • That one or more Colleges develop a process for noticing patterns of behaviour and challenging students to reflect upon them so that good habits are established in ways of ministering. We hope that successful practice could then be shared with Associations.
Relevant co-researcher reports	<p>Marital Status and Ministry</p> <p>Experiences of accredited ordained women Baptist Ministers leaving, seconded or on long-term sabbatical within the Baptist Union</p>
Relevant Theological Reflections	Group 1
Location on Requests Map	Vocational pathway - Phase II and Phase III Ways of working

Agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 17 April 2024.

Project Violet Requests for Change – R44

Short title	A theology of disability that enables local churches, Colleges, and Associations to reflect upon their practice
Identifying number	R44
Request for action by	Theological Reflection Group of the Core Leadership Team. Local Churches; Colleges; Associations, Faith & Society
Text of request	<p>Women with life-long or acquired disabilities and chronic illnesses reported experiencing unwanted language and behaviour such as touching without consent, prayer without consent, and expectations that they are unable to minister. This suggests an underlying theology that is unable to accept these women on their own terms.</p> <p>There is now theology written by people with a disability and drawing upon the lived experience of people with a disability.</p> <p>The requests for change are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLT commission their Theological Reflection Group to develop a ‘Theology of disability’ which draws upon lived experience and a range of theological perspectives • That from this Faith and Society team produce a resource that enables local churches and Associations to reflect upon their practice in enabling the full participation of people with a disability
Relevant co-researcher reports	<p>How do caring responsibilities, across the life cycle, shape and impact the ministry and experiences of women in Baptist chaplaincy and church ministry roles?</p> <p>The experiences of Deaf women Ministers</p>
Relevant Theological Reflections	Group 4
Location on Requests Map	Vocational pathway - Phase III

Agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 17 April 2024.

Project Violet Requests for Change – R56

Short title	Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life
Identifying number	R56
Request for action by	Local Churches, Associations, Colleges, Faith and Society Team
Text of request	<p>We can become what we see. When taking part in Baptist life we notice the visual images and who has produced the resources we use. We encourage churches, Associations, and Colleges to ask: are the resources we are using reflecting the diversity of Baptist life?</p> <p>The requests for change are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That churches, Associations, and Colleges examine the resources and visual images they use and check that they reflect the diversity of the people who use them • That Faith and Society Team set up a site where people can share resources and run a ‘diverse by default’ campaign which encourages Baptist to start by looking for resources that reflect diversity • That Faith and Society Team use their usual communication channels to promote such resources
Relevant co-researcher reports	<p>What does affirming women leaders in our Association look like?</p> <p>What is the difference that MagnifyYou has made to the women who took part and why was it needed?</p> <p>Understanding the journey into ministry for Asian Women</p> <p>How do caring responsibilities, across the life cycle, shape and impact the ministry and experiences of women in Baptist chaplaincy and church ministry roles?</p> <p>The experiences of Deaf women Ministers</p> <p>Receptive Space - Ecumenical Learning for Project Violet</p>
Relevant Theological Reflections	<p>Group 3</p> <p>Group 4</p>
Location on Requests Map	Vocational pathway - Phase I and II

Agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 17 April 2024.