

Script – Season 1 – Project Violet Podcasts

Episode 1 – The story so far

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 hope to introduce you to the history of women's ministry in the Baptist movement and look at some of 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: 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 – JD/HC the role of history in Project Violet

	Music
Helen	Before we introduce our guests on this episode, we should say something about the part that history that has played in Project Violet. The obvious question is who was Violet, the woman after whom the project is named?
Jane	Violet Hedger was the first woman to study at a college for Baptist ministry, entering Regent's Park College in 1919. The Centenary of her entry to training was celebrated in 2019 which led to my post as Centenary Development Enabler

	being established in 2020. It seemed good to acknowledge that connection in naming the Project.
Helen	And because the Angus Library and Archive is located at Regent's Park College we've been able to collaborate with them and hold three online history events during the project. Revd. Dr Keith Jones has shared his research on Margaret Jarman, Revd. Dr Chris Voke has spoken about his research on Edith Gates, the first woman to train in a pastorate and Revd. Dr Ruth Gouldbourne has looked at the Deaconess movement.
Jane	But we are wanting to add to Baptist history and so all the reports and papers from Project Violet will be added to the Angus archive so future generations of Baptists can learn about women's experience of ministry in the twenty-first century.
Helen	So let's introduce our guests. Simon Woodman is the minister at Bloomsbury Baptist Church in London. In 2011 he wrote a booklet setting out the story of women's ministry. This followed a meeting of the Baptist Council in March 2010 when the full inclusion of women in Baptist ministry was affirmed. Andy Goodliff is the minister at Belle Vue Baptist Church, Southend and also a Lecturer in Baptist History at Regent's Park College and so a colleague. Andy has written about the more recent history of Baptists and noticed the absence of women in that history.
Jane	We've asked them to tell the story so far from their perspectives.

Interview Simon Woodman and Andy Goodliff

	Music
	Helen Cameron Simon, perhaps you could start by telling me how you became interested in this topic. Simon Woodman Thanks so much, Helen. And thanks for inviting me to be on this podcast it is really good to be here. So let me tell you a little bit of my story. I've actually been attending a Baptist church since before I was born. And throughout my childhood, the role models for ministry that I encountered were all men. As someone who sensed a very early call to ministry myself, the examples that

these godly men set for me were an inspiration and an encouragement, I could see something of myself in them. We did sometimes have women preaching, the occasional missionary on furlough, for example. But these were definitely the exception rather than the rule. In our youth group as a teenager, I remember being told once that it was okay before God for a woman to preach, but there has to be a man in overall charge, because that was what was written in the Bible. As I progressed through my teens, I became more and more fascinated by the Bible. I had one of those NIV study Bibles, and I poured over the notes at the bottom of the page and the maps. And I was fortunate enough to be able to do an A' level in RS that focused on the Bible. And all of this paves the way for me to head off to university in Sheffield to do a degree in Biblical Studies. What I found, as so many do, is that the more you study the Bible, the more you realize that it's a complex old document that God has chosen to reveal Jesus to us. And so I started to discover quite a few things that my youth leader had told me, the Bible said, might not actually be sustained in the light of a close reading of the Bible itself. Whilst at university, I also met Liz, who has been my wife now for 29 years, as she told me about her experience of church growing up in the brethren, I started to realize how damaging Christianity can be to women, she was brought up to believe that women must remain silent in church, that they must have their heads covered as a sign of their submission to their husbands, and that they could never be preachers or leaders, all of this because the Bible says so. But I still hadn't experienced any women ministers myself, and I hadn't properly changed my mind from what I've been told as a child. Anyway, fast forward a few years. And I'm at Bristol Baptist College to train for ministry. And I found myself in a class alongside women who were also training. Fairly early on, I remember a conversation with one of them, who is thankfully still one of my best friends. I said to her that I wasn't sure whether women could be ministers because of what the Bible says. And she just replied with a laugh. Oh, Simon, don't be so ridiculous. You've met one now you can't deny what God's doing. And I realized that she was right. Like Peter on the rooftop of Cornelius' house, I realized that I had been calling unacceptable what God had already declared acceptable. And that was the day my journey properly began, I had to go back and reread the scriptures again more carefully and with better guides, and I slowly came to realize that part of my ministry was going to be using my power as a man and a straight white man at that, to amplify the voices of those who are often not heard in our churches. And it all began for me with this change in my convictions about women in ministry. I'm a biblical scholar by discipline, and also a bit of a historian. And so I've written a few things over the years to try and help others understand not only how they might read the Bible in ways that affirm the Ministry of Women, but also to understand our shared history as a Baptist family of both affirming and denying the role of women in our midst.

Helen Cameron

Thank you for that. And thanks for sharing something of your personal story. Andy can I turn to you now and ask how you became interested in the more recent history of the Baptist movement.

Andy Goodliff

Thank you, Helen. And thank you, Simon, for what you've said already. I guess I ended up doing a PhD, which after an attempt to do something else ended up being a study of the Baptist Union, and its period of renewal and change in the 1990s. That story ended up being a very male dominated story, those who were making the decisions. Those were the voices that were heard, were almost entirely men. And unlike Simon, I've never had that moment of shifting from one perspective of could women be ministers or not, I've always accepted it, but like some people I didn't have as much experience of that growing up. But it was also something that I accepted. So I guess I came to the end of the PhD and said, there must be other stories. Well, I knew there were other stories. And I guess part of what I've wanted to do since then is trying to tell some of those stories. And one of those stories is, is how women during that period of the 1990s had to struggle for a voice, which has begun to change since the 2000s.

Helen Cameron

Great, thank you for that background. Andy. I think it's going to be helpful if we now look back and try and take the story from its beginnings. I wonder, Simon, could you start us off on the story?

Simon Woodman

Yeah, I'd love to. So this is drawing on a bit of the research I did for Baptist Union Council. Gosh, I don't know, nearly 15 years ago now, when I was part of Council, and I was asked to produce a paper telling the story of women in Baptist ministry. And I think that's still available to buy as a publication through the Baptist Union. I pick up the story in the early part of the 20th century. And the thing that struck me is that it begins as things so often do in Baptist life with an argument more about money than about theology. In 1926, there was a special committee of the Baptist Union, and it was reported at this committee that three women had been received as accredited Baptist ministers. Their names some of them are familiar to us their names are Mrs. Maria Living-Taylor, Miss Edith Gates and Miss Violet Hedger. The problem was that Miss Gates was receiving a grant from what was then called the Sustentation Fund, to the extent of 33 pounds per year, the notes of the meeting state that a great discussion took place concerning the general question of the admission of women into Baptist ministry. And apparently, many views were expressed. And I've read minutes along those lines over the years in other contexts, too. And it was generally felt that when the Sustentation Fund had been launched to pay stipends to ministers under certain conditions, this is what we now would call the Home Mission fund. The assembly that launched it did not even

	contemplate the idea that some of the recipients might one day be female ministers. And so they needed to refer to the solicitor of the Union to ask if it was permissible under the Trust Deed for the funds to pay this grant to Miss Gates. And if not, her case might need to be treated in a different way, and maybe a grant made from another fund. So two interesting points I think are worth highlighting from these committee minutes. The first is that by the time the committee met in 1926, there were already three women on the probationers list with two of them already in pastoral charge of churches. That's really significant to hold on to. The second is that the debate, insofar as it's recorded, at least, seems primarily to be concerned with issues regarding whether women in ministry could receive a stipend from the fund. It wasn't a debate about what the Bible says about women in leadership. The wider context here, of course, is a world where women have only just been given the vote in national elections, and also a world where women have until very recently been prohibited from owning property in their own right, for example. So the concern about the money from the funds needs to be heard in that wider social context. It's also worth noting that the Council taking these discussions would have been entirely comprised of men. Naming it for what it was, this was a roomful of men discussing whether a woman could be paid for the work that she's already doing. We need to let that fact sit with us as in our time, we still I think sometimes end up having discussions about people who are not allowed to fully take their seats at the table. The BU Council in February 1926 received a report from the committee regarding the admission of women in the Baptist ministry, which called for Council to regularize the situation of women in terms of privileges and benefits, it did not call Council to have a theological debate. However, the committee report then goes on to make the following statement of its own position. It says the committee is clear that it would be contrary to Baptist belief in practice to make sex a bar to any kind of Christian service. But then the committee report seeks to draw a line between a call to ministry on the one hand and entry onto the accredited list on the other. They're clear that the decision to call a women's ministry rests with the local church, and on the basis of Baptist congregational freedom, the committee are able to affirm that call. However, entry onto the accredited list carries with it a further level of privilege, and it's on this matter that things seem to get stuck. And I do just want to note that we still live with such complexities regarding local church practice and national accreditation. The issue under debate in 1926 was not, it seems, primarily the Ministry of Women. The committee recognized that there are already women in ministry amongst the churches of the Union and it was not seeking to have this reversed. The issue for consideration at Council is whether women should be allowed the benefits of being on the accredited list. In other words, it's a question of money and status. It boils down, of course to a question about whether someone who is a woman in ministry is a second class of minister to her male colleagues. Anyway, fast forward to 1967. And we find a Baptist Union of Great Britain report 'Women in the service of the denomination', offering a stern warning which echoes down the decades to the current debate
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on women in ministry. They suggest that, and this is quoting from the report, 'Baptists need to think carefully again about their doctrine of the ministry, and the meaning they ascribe to ordination. lest they be guilty of practical injustice, as well as theological confusion. Many believe the President's objection to women ministers in Baptist circles is based on feeling rather than reason.' So says the BUGB reports in 1967. Fast forward again to 1975 and the next milestone in Baptist Union Council's consideration of the issue of women in Baptist ministry is to be found in the discussions of the ending of the Baptist Deaconess movement. Since 1890, women had served Baptist churches as Deaconesses. This was a role which initially involved social work and visitation and my own church in central London had many deaconesses throughout this period. However, the nature of the role had developed over the decades. And it became increasingly clear that functionally many of these deaconesses were now in effect, functioning as pastors of churches. And as with the initial debate regarding the admission of women to the accredited list, Council, once again, found itself in a situation where it was having to play catch up where women were pastoring Baptist churches, and yet we're unaccredited to do so. And so once again, Council had to regularize a reality that already existed amongst the churches. I really hope we're in a different place today. But honestly, sometimes I'm not so sure. But anyway, I think this brings us to the 1980s. And I think it's time for Andy to pick up the story on the basis of some of his research.

Helen Cameron

That's great, Simon, thank you very much for sketching in those early years in the 20th century for us. Andy, would you like to talk a bit about what you discovered in your research.

Andy Goodliff

So again, the focus of my research was the participation of women in the institutions, things like Simon was talking about, the Council, but also the Baptist Union, its own officers, and personnel. And so I might actually take us back to the beginning of the 20th century again, which is where we see the creation of something called the Baptist Women's League, which was a growing significant movement for most of the 20th century, at least up to the 1980s, in which women were encouraged to join together in prayer, in service and evangelism. And this was a positive thing. But perhaps, the potential thing that came out of it was that actually because women were kind of sidelined into this specific sphere of work, they were operating less in the places of institutions and power. So alongside the Baptist Women's League, you also see the creation of a women's desk or a women's department within the Baptist Union sitting under mission. So it sits in that kind of space, rather than this place in which there might end up being equality emerging. So what begins to happen in the 1980s, is you begin to see a growing number of women Baptist ministers. So Simon talked about the initial three back in the 1920s. There was a demographic, a group of eight in the 1950s. But it's not until the 1980s or late 1970s, that we

began to see another significant group, which has begun to grow of women in ministry. And these women in ministry began as they became a more sizable group and began to kind of, I guess, talk to one another, engage together, began to advocate for more change. And so what we see is when we get to the 1990s the conversation obviously is about women in ministry, and that's a significant one, but it's also about the place of women in Baptist Union Council, in college staff, within the associations in those positions and within the Baptist Union itself. And so we see I think, through that decade, a conscious attempt to increase the number of women in all those different spheres And that that was about women. But it was also about men taking that decision to lead as well. So David Coffey and Keith Jones for their listening days as General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary, listened to the Union. And listen, I guess to that voice of women that summons to be heard, and began to advocate that actually, the Council needed to change what we see for the 1990s as the stubbornness, perhaps of Council to change, and the several attempts to increase the number of women within the Council hits against the buffers and didn't increase. And so it's not actually until a report in 2002, that there was a conscious decision made to increase the number of women from the Associations, but also the number of women coopted on increase. And so we see a significant change by the 2000s. And then I think it's about the increasing number of women in ministry. But it's also about where we are at the end of the 20th century. And so what we also see, again, is the beginnings, small as they were of women, becoming staff members within the colleges, the first one in 1985. And then by 1993, each one of the Baptist colleges has a woman on staff. We also see it within the Baptist Union itself and its officers so that by the beginning of the 1990s, we see a woman holding a brief around social affairs, where women had perhaps more ministerial roles within the Union here we had someone in a conscious way. We also see it's not just the number of women participating within Council, but it's also the positions that they take, moderating the Ministerial Recognition Committee, moderating Faith and Unity, moderating Church Relations, moderating Mission Executive, those kinds of places, and so we begin to see the significance. One thing I should mention, actually, another thing I think that's crucial to this story changing is Margaret Jarman, becoming president of the Union in 1987. There was a woman president before that, in 1978, who whose name was Mrs. Alexander, but she was a lay woman, very involved in the Baptist Women's League. But it's actually Margaret Jarman, I think her profile, and those gathering around her begin to see this change. It was slow because the next woman President isn't till 2006 and Kate Coleman. So we've got another 20 years, but we are beginning to see some change. So that by the time I get to the end of my research, which is around 2019, when we were celebrating 100 years of Violet Hedger things were in a slightly different place. I end my article saying there's still much progress to be made, but we are in a better place. And actually, even since I finished that article, we have seen a large increase of women becoming Regional Ministers, which I think is an encouraging sign.

Helen Cameron

Thank you, Andy, for bringing that to that story up to date. Simon, you've described yourself as a historian, and I know Andy's very committed to history as well. And I guess one of the things we notice in the way we tell our history are the voices that are absent, the voices that we're not hearing, have you got any reflections on that in relation to what we've just been discussing?

Simon Woodman

Yeah, I think those who study the role of women in society more generally, including institutions, such as churches, would want to draw our attention to what is often called the question of intersectionality. This is a word used to describe those who inhabit multiple places of exclusion and oppression. And, you know, whilst we've made great progress through the last 100 years in having women take more of an active role in it alongside men, on an equal basis within the denomination; most of those women have been women who have certain other characteristics that are powerful. So for example, most of them will be white women. And I think we do need to hear more from black women. And I want to make particular mention here of my friend, Gale Richards, who is emerging in our midst as a significant voice, both as a scholar and a national leader. And there are others who are also beginning to emerge. And we need to make sure their voices are heard and amplified and not squashed. So I think we need to pay particularly careful attention to female voices, where women are still being excluded because of their diversity of essential characteristics. So this includes not only black women, but I also think those who live with disability and other areas of identity. So I think that's the caveat I'd want to put on future conversations just to make sure we remain alert that we don't end up reproducing the errors of the past. But rather that we can learn from them and do things differently.

Helen Cameron

Thank you.

Andy Goodliff

I wonder if I could make an extra comment on that. And I think, you know, I just said that Margaret Jarman was president in 1997. The second president in 2006, was Kate Coleman. I didn't mention that Kate Coleman is a black minister. And the reflections that she had on what it was to be a woman in that role, but also a black woman within that role. And she had some hard things to say to the Union and to the Council at the end of her term, that continue to need to be heard. I guess the other thing is there, are there other intersections, which I've become much more aware of, as well. So, you know, I have a colleague, Leigh Greenwood, who's been reflecting on not just being a woman in ministry but being a mother in ministry as well. And so actually, there's a lot more going on

in terms of women who might be single or married. And whether they're mothers or not mothers, grandmothers, all those different kinds of roles in a way that I guess doesn't, isn't so much a reflection for those who are male in ministry. And I think there are extra things going on often for women in ministry, and women in life in general, that perhaps we need to pay more attention or be more aware of. And I think often it's it is that it is the women saying actually, we need to be heard, our experience needs to be registered, which I think is why Project Violet is such an important project to be taking place at this time.

Helen Cameron

You will be hearing more from these voices as we release the findings of Project Violet.

Simon Woodman

I'm just very conscious that we've had a podcast chaired by a woman but featuring two white men. So just want to note the incongruity of that. And I think we've made a valuable contribution but recognizing that there are limitations built into systems and podcasts such as this as well, which needs, you know, further consideration.

Helen Cameron

Thank you for that. Now, if people's appetite about Baptists history has been wetted by listening into this conversation, I think Andy, you just happen to be running a course on Baptist history. Would you like to tell us a little bit about it?

Andy Goodliff

Yes, thank you for the opportunity, Helen. So I've been appointed as a lecturer in Baptist history at Regent's Park College to develop some new courses in Baptist history and theology, online courses at Master's level, and we have a module, we're running a pilot at the moment, but we hope to run it again as a full course next year in 2024. And I think it's a great opportunity, one to get to grips with our story and our history, including the history of women. And we have a particular unit and module which looks in a lot more detail about the role in place of women in Baptist history and Baptist life, as well as our broader story. Both our story as we tell it in in England and the UK, but also our world story about being Baptist. And if you're interested in that, do check out the Regent's Park College website, in particular, the Centre for Baptist Studies, to find out more.

Helen Cameron

It wouldn't be a podcast without a plug in it. Thank you for contributing that. I just want to thank you both for helping us understand the history that's gone before Project Violet started in 2021. I've put a link to the booklet that Simon referenced and Andy's article and the link to the course in the Episode Notes.

	But these resources are also available online through the Project Violet website, which is www.projectviolet.org.uk . Thank you for taking part in this episode.
Notes	File.aspx (baptist.org.uk) Bible Studies book – link into the episode notes. • 'The Lydia Question - A fresh look at God's calling', (Didcot: BUGB Publications, 2014). The Baptist Union of Great Britain : The Lydia Question Issue 1 Journal of Baptist Theology in Context (jbtc.org.uk)

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

Links to

['A Woman Shall Do It': Edith Gates, Neglected Pioneer: Amazon.co.uk: Voke, Chris: 9798387144516: Books](#)

[File.aspx \(baptist.org.uk\)](#)

The Story of Women's Ministry – Simon Woodman

[The Baptist Union of Great Britain : The Lydia Question](#)

[Issue 1 | Journal of Baptist Theology in Context \(jbtc.org.uk\)](#)

Online course

[Baptist Stories: Short Course Module - Regent's Park College \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.regent.ac.uk/online-course/baptist-stories-short-course-module)

Questions for discussion

Is there anything in this history that surprised you?

What do you know about the history of women's ministry in the church you attend?

Simon spoke about the understanding of women's ministry he gained from attending a Baptist church as a child – what do you think the young people in your church or family would say about women being Baptist ministers?

Is there any response you wish to make as a group after listening to this episode?

Script – Season 1 – Project Violet Podcasts

Episode 2 – From Compliment to Affirmation

Season Intro

	Music
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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: 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. 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

	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

www.alban.org

Project Violet Podcast

Script – Season 1 – Project Violet Podcasts

Episode 3 – From Criticism to Feedback

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: 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 – JD/HC learning the language

	Music
Jane	This is the second 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 a shift of behaviour from offering compliments about appearance to affirming what you appreciate about someone's work can help avoid sexist language.
Helen	And last time we looked at the metaphors from James chapter 3 of a small rudder changing the direction of a large ship, and a small spark setting off a forest fire to think about the impact our words can have on others. Is there a bible passage we can use to root today's conversation?
Jane	I've been thinking about the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18: 1-8 "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people. There was also a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but later

	on he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor have regard for people, yet because this widow keeps on bothering me, I will give her justice, or in the end she will wear me out by her unending pleas.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unrighteous judge says! Won't God give justice to his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay long to help them? I tell you, he will give them justice speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"
Helen	What I find so sexist in the behaviour of the unrighteous judge is that even when he grants the widow the justice she requests, he won't admit that he has been wrong to ignore her but says he is just doing it to avoid her nagging. There have been Baptist women ministers for more than one hundred years now and so some of the reaction we have had to Project Violet has been – 'do we still need to deal with this?' I hope that change comes because it acknowledges injustice and not as a way of shutting women up.
Jane	So are you saying that motive is important as well as language and behaviour?
Helen	Yes, I think I am. We can ask things of God knowing that he judges what we need and when we need it and not because of the number of times we ask. The parable ends by saying that when Jesus comes, it is faith he is looking for.
Jane	This is reminding me of the definitions of sexism offered by Rachel Gardner from Youthscape when she spoke at one of our Project Violet seminars on sexism in schools. She spoke about: Benevolent sexism – language and behaviour that praises women or men for behaving in stereotypical ways. In the case of women this can mean praising them for domestic tasks in the home but ignoring what they do at work. I guess another word for this is patronizing.
Helen	It feels a bit odd using the word benevolent with the word sexism – it could sound as if there is a good form of sexism.
Jane	Yes, I thought that too, but I think the point is that this is the kind of language that is difficult to challenge because people say 'Oh well, I'm sure they were just being kind'.
Helen	The next term is more straightforward. Rachel spoke of hostile sexism which is language or behaviour that criticises women for taking on tasks which the speaker sees as reserved for men.
Jane	Are you saying that you shouldn't criticise at all?
Helen	Obviously in any role we need feedback so we can learn from experience but criticism feels as if the person hasn't processed what they want to say and so it comes out as aggressive or hostile.

Jane	Okay – I’m starting to feel the need for another scenario. But I think there are another two definitions to go before we do that. Ambivalent sexism which is the mixing of benevolent and hostile sexist language in a way that creates uncertainty about the speaker’s motives. There is a popular term for this – gaslighting.
Helen	So let me sum up: Benevolent sexism which is experienced as patronizing. Hostile sexism which is experienced as aggressive criticism. And ambivalent sexism which is experienced as confusing because it switches between being patronizing and aggressive and is often called gaslighting.
Jane	I think there is one last idea – the space in which sexist language and behaviour take place.
Helen	What do you mean by space?
Jane	Well I think one of the things that people enjoy about church life is the blend of formal and informal activity. Last time we looked at conversations that happened in the informality of coffee after the church service was over.
Helen	Okay, so it was clear who was in charge during the service, but it is less clear what the expectations are in coffee time.
Jane	I’m not sure I like the phrase ‘in charge’, there is a good Baptist word, moderator which means the person overseeing what is happening.
Helen	I like that - moderated and unmoderated spaces. Well that certainly rings true of the reflections written by women ministers. So often the sexist language and behaviour occur in informal settings such as coffee times, kitchens, car parks that sort of thing. So in unmoderated spaces.
Jane	Let’s move into our scenario. It is the same group of people as last time but this time it is a Wednesday evening, and we find them together clearing up after a church meeting.

Scenario A: After the church meeting

	Music
Helen	We’ve called this scenario, After the church meeting. The meeting is over and Ruth the minister, Thomas the church secretary, Richard, the treasurer and Harry another deacon are tidying up.
Ruth	Well, it was so encouraging to see a wider range of members at our church meeting tonight.
Richard	Well, I suppose so. But people didn't stick to the agenda. And we didn't finish the business... I'm not sure why the chairs were in the wrong place either.
Thomas	Everyone seemed to enjoy having coffee and cakes afterwards. You make such great cakes Ruth – I don’t know how you manage to look after things at home and be our minister.

Ruth	Well baking is a hobby and I do find it relaxing.
Harry	It looks as if we're nearly done here, I'll lock up.
Richard	Let me carry those cake tins to your car for you.
Ruth	I'll be fine.
Richard	I insist.
Ruth	Oh, okay.
Helen	<i>Ruth and Richard are now standing by her car in the car park.</i>
Richard	I just wasn't happy with that meeting. I feel, you know, we need a stronger chair, perhaps somebody with more experience. Perhaps you'd like to think about whether I should take over and chair the meetings? You know, so you can concentrate on being the minister?
Ruth	I'll give it some thought. Good night.

Interview: Ruth's reactions

	Music
Helen	<i>Ruth decides to reflect on her experience with Jane.</i>
Jane	Hi Ruth, it sounds as if that was a difficult church meeting.
Ruth	The meeting itself was fine. I was really pleased that some people came for the first time including some newer members of our congregation.
Jane	So what did you find difficult?
Ruth	It was the conversation afterwards when we were clearing up. I know Thomas is trying to be kind, but he just comes across as so...so...
Jane	Patronizing?
Ruth	Yes it feels as if he wants to say nice things about my baking but not about how I led the meeting.
Jane	Okay but you sound angry as well as upset, did something else happen.
Ruth	Richard said he would help me carry the cake tins out to the car – and I thought that was a kind gesture. But then when we were alone in the car park he criticised my chairing as weak and offered to take over himself as a stronger person! I feel so confused, one minute he's supportive and the next I feel undermined.
Jane	What do you think he was criticizing?

Ruth	He said he didn't like the new layout of the chairs and because I allowed plenty of time for the new people to speak we didn't cover everything on the agenda.
Jane	I'm wondering if at the next Deacon's meeting you could explain why you think that inclusion of more people in the church meeting is important to you.
Ruth	I can try, but at the moment I'm feeling attacked and undermined.

Segment 2

	Music
Helen	So Jane, how do you feel about that scenario and your conversation with Ruth?
Jane	Well I guess to use the definitions of sexism we looked at earlier, Thomas could be seen as using benevolent sexism. He is trying to be positive but like last time, he is using stereotypes that make Ruth feel that he is noticing her as a woman but not as a minister.
Helen	Yes, that's how I would see it too. What I have noticed in the written reflections we have had from women ministers is the different ways women respond to benevolent sexism. Some shrug it off and say things like 'water off a duck's back' – it is as if they expect it and don't think there is anything that can be done about it. But there were other women, like Ruth, who felt undermined and want it to stop.
Jane	I think what concerns me is that in noticing things that fit the stereotype but not noticing Ruth as a minister, Thomas may influence the language and behaviour of others in the church who look up to him as a deacon.
Helen	I also picked up on what you said about space. It was in the informal space after the meeting and then the car park, that this conversation took place. Another unmoderated space.
Jane	And what did you think of Richard's behaviour?
Helen	Well having experienced this type of behaviour myself, I think the definition of ambivalent sexism fits well. One moment benevolent and the next minute hostile. Rather than processing his discomfort about the meeting and asking questions about why Ruth had done things differently, he leapt straight in with criticism.
Jane	I would say that feedback can be constructive but unprocessed criticism is experienced as undermining.
Helen	I can hear your experience as a coach coming through Jane – how would you define feedback? Are there any rules for doing it well?
Jane	I think feedback means:

	Stopping to process what you are thinking and feeling and what it is you are unhappy about. Asking questions to be clear you have understood what has happened. Affirming things that went well, before being specific about what you found difficult.
Helen	Can I add another one? Speaking for yourself and not claiming to speak for everyone.
Jane	I'll take that one as well. I'm noticing we haven't mentioned Harry – he didn't say much. I wonder what he's thinking.

Scenario B: After the church meeting

	Music
Helen	Let's run our scenario again and see what might be different: Take 2 – After the church meeting.
Ruth	It was so encouraging to see a wider range of church members at the church meeting tonight.
Richard	Well, I suppose so. But people didn't stick to the point. And we didn't finish the agenda. And I'm not sure why the chairs were in the wrong place.
Harry	Well, for me, that is the point. More people came and more people took part. And I think the new layout of chairs and having coffee and cake really helped. If they keep coming, then they'll soon get the hang of what's expected in a church meeting.
Thomas	You make such great cakes, Ruth. I hope you don't feel that it's expected of you.
Ruth	No, no, it's a hobby of mine. And I do find it quite relaxing.
Richard	Ruth, why don't you let me carry the cake tins out to the car.
Ruth	No that's fine Richard. I can manage.
Richard	Are you sure?
Harry	I think if Ruth says she can manage, we can probably accept that she can manage. Right. I'm ready to lock up. Let's turn the lights out and then we can all go home.

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?
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	Music

Episode notes

Scripture passage: Luke 18: 1-8

Link to Rachel Gardner seminar

[Sexism in school and online - How can Baptists respond? \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Discussion Questions:

Did you learn anything new or surprising? How were you left feeling?

Definitions

Benevolent sexism - patronizing

Hostile sexism – aggressive criticism

Ambivalent sexism – gaslighting

Moderated and unmoderated spaces

Script – Season 1 – Project Violet Podcasts

Episode 4 – From all women to this woman

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 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: 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 third 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 a shift of behaviour from criticizing someone's work to offering constructive feedback can help avoid sexist language.
Helen	In this episode we want to look at words that are used to show that not all women are the same. At one level that seems such an obvious thing to say but in asking for changes that fully include women in ministry, it is important not to lose sight of the diversity of women's experiences.
Jane	The technical word that is used to describe this is intersectionality – in other words many people stand at the intersection of more than one identity. Race, ability, and age for example, all affect the way in which we experience being a

	woman or man. Different forms of inequality can operate together and make each other worse.
Helen	I like the word equity, which means to treat everyone fairly, you don't necessarily treat everyone the same. Is there a bible passage we can use to root our discussion?
Jane	Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman feels like a starting point. John 4: 4-26 A Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink." (For his disciples had gone off into the town to buy supplies.) So the Samaritan woman said to him "How can you—a Jew—ask me, a Samaritan woman, for water to drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you had known the gift of God and who it is who said to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said to him, "you have no bucket and the well is deep; where then do you get this living water? Surely you're not greater than our ancestor Jacob, are you? For he gave us this well and drank from it himself, along with his sons and his livestock." Jesus replied, "Everyone who drinks some of this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks some of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again, but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." He said to her, "Go call your husband and come back here." The woman replied, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "Right you are when you said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband. This you said truthfully!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you people say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not know. We worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. But a time is coming—and now is here—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (the one called Christ); "whenever he comes, he

	will tell us everything.” Jesus said to her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”
Helen	So why have you chosen this story?
Jane	In Jesus’s conversation with this unnamed woman he discusses her gender, her marital status, her ethnicity and then they have a theological conversation about the differences between them. Jesus doesn’t ignore the differences between himself and the woman but names them and engages with them.
Helen	Yes, all that is important, but I also feel this is one of the most negatively judged women in the New Testament. Every commentary I have studied describes this woman as immoral because she had had five husbands and was living with a man she was not married to. My eyes were opened when I read an article by Solomon Ademiluka, a Nigerian biblical scholar, who points out that at this time women were unable to seek a divorce and in some cultures that is still true. He also points out that it was common then for women to be widowed and remarry. He also suggests that this woman might have been involved in a Levitical marriage where she was expected to marry successive brothers-in-law. Widows could end up living in the households of extended family members. This really made me think of the written accounts from women ministers where they are often subject to assumptions about their suitability for ministry because of their marital status.
Jane	I think it would be good to define some of the terms we have been using. Marital status is definitely relevant to the way in which women ministers are treated whether they are single, divorced, widowed or married.
Helen	Black and Brown women ministers are subject to stereotypes relating to both their race and their gender. The technical term for this is misogynoir – misogyny combined with racism.
Jane	I like that there is a word to describe that combination. I don’t think that is true for women with a disability or a chronic health condition. They have to deal with ableism – assumptions about what is ‘normal’ as well as sexism.
Helen	There are a lot of references in the written reflections to ageism both from women being seen as ‘too old’ and ‘too young’. There is a pattern of women becoming ministers at a later age than men. This means that younger women stand out as unusual and that older women are sometimes dismissed as having insufficient ministerial experience.
Jane	A final definition must be the relationship between being a woman and having caring responsibilities, whether for children, a spouse or older relatives. Women are asked questions about how they will combine caring and ministry when men are not asked the same questions. The term ‘double shift’ is used to describe women who hold down a job and do caring work.
Helen	We’ve covered a lot of ground there. Thinking back to the bible passage what we can say is that despite the conversation taking place across differences of gender, race, and marital status and irrespective of our moral evaluation of the

	woman, Jesus chose to reveal to her that he was the Messiah and sent her to witness to her neighbours. A challenge she accepted.
Jane	I feel it is time for another scenario. There is a proper emphasis on representation in Baptist churches and so when people are invited to take on responsibilities it is a careful and prayerful process. But this is a moment when these intersections can mean that stereotypes surface.
Helen	Let's listen in on a deacon's meeting. A reminder that this is a constructed scenario based upon the issues women ministers raised in their written reflections – as they say in the movies – any resemblance to real people whether living or dead is entirely unintended.

Scenario A: At the deacon's meeting

	Music
Helen	We've called this scenario, At the deacons' meeting. All the deacons are there including Thomas the church secretary, Richard, the treasurer and Harry. Ruth the minister is moderating the meeting.
Ruth	So the main item on our agenda is bringing on board two new deacons. I'd like to start by reflecting on the people who have started attending church meetings on a regular basis over the last year.
Thomas	Yes, it's been nice to see some younger parents attend and contribute their views on our children's ministry. Perhaps one of the dads could make it to a monthly deacons meeting, it could be too much for a young mum.
Richard	Well, I know you're all for this diversity stuff, Ruth, but new people need time to adjust to our way of doing things.
Harry	Perhaps inviting new people onto the diaconate will help us change a bit.
Ruth	I'd like us to consider Jane who's got so involved in the church now as a result of attending our well-being cafe. I think we could take her disability into account and make the necessary adjustments.
Thomas	Oh yes, Jane's really lovely.
Richard	I think you're making things too complicated, Ruth, that sort of thing could get quite pricey.
Harry	Well, I'm worried we're not going to agree this evening. Maybe now we've got some ideas on the table we should go away and pray about them and come back to this next month.
Ruth	Yes, I think it would be good for us to take time to really think and pray about this. Let's move on with our agenda and come back to this next month.

Interview: Ruth's reactions

	Music
Helen	<i>Ruth decides to reflect on her experience with Jane.</i>
Jane	You said in your email that you wanted to reflect on the Deacons' meeting. Can you tell me what happened?
Ruth	I'm close to giving up. It seems that no matter what I say about inclusion or how I preach and teach about it, the same attitudes keep coming up.
Jane	Can you give me an example?
Ruth	I feel like a cracked record but I asked for suggestions for possible deacons and Thomas leaps in and suggests a dad with young children because his wife couldn't possibly come out in the evenings. Why is he assuming that caring is just the mother's responsibility? It feels as if he is making decisions for this couple.
Jane	Okay, you've made that point about Thomas before, it sounds as if his stereotypes are deep rooted.
Ruth	Well to be fair, at least he is trying to be constructive. Richard just objects to new people because they might want to change something. We've been blessed with some new people getting involved in the church, if we don't involve them, why should they stay? We can't treat them as spectators.
Jane	What was the substance of Richard's objection?
Ruth	It is confusing. I thought it was women he objects to, but we discussed one woman with a disability, and he objected to her on the grounds that it might cost money to make our meetings accessible to her.
Jane	It sounds as if you feel quite isolated.
Ruth	Yes I do feel that. Even Harry leapt in as I was about to challenge Richard and tried to get over the difficult atmosphere by moving the conversation on. I know he was trying to be helpful but I don't need rescuing.
Jane	Are there any positives you can take from the meeting?
Ruth	I'm struggling now Jane, I really am. Am I the right minister for this church if this pattern of behaviour just keeps repeating itself?

Segment 2

	Music
Helen	So Jane, how do you feel about that scenario and your conversation with Ruth?
Jane	I find these kinds of conversations really painful where a woman minister feels undermined because of repeated patterns of behaviour that don't respond to

	what she is trying to do. She feels she is being explicit about inclusion, but she is not being heard.
Helen	What do you think about the examples she gave?
Jane	In a secular workplace, these behaviours would be unacceptable, and people would be called to account and yet people often don't see the same standards applying to church life.
Helen	In most work places a manager or employee can turn to the HR department for support in holding people to account in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies. It sounds as if Ruth feels she lacks allies in her situation.
Jane	Yes, she is clearly feeling isolated, and I think confused. The stereotypes she has experienced have related to her gender but now she is confused about whether Richard's objections to Jane as a new deacon are because she's a woman or because she's disabled. Neither are acceptable but she is trying to respond to the intersection between gender and ability.
Helen	I would like to know what Jane's experience of the church has been – has she experienced prejudice but then been left to work out what it is about her that has provoked it?
Jane	I'm frustrated about the way Harry leapt in and tried to move the conversation on without dealing with the stereotypes. It feels as if he is trying to be supportive but not wanting to help Ruth confront the stereotypes.
Helen	I agree. It wouldn't take a big change in his behaviour to open up the conversation the deacons need to have about diversity rather than close it down.

Scenario B: At the deacon's meeting

	Music
Helen	Let's run our scenario again and see what might be different: Take 2 – At the deacons' meeting.
Ruth	Well, the main item on our agenda this evening is inviting two new people onto the diaconate. I'd like us to start by reflecting on the people who have started attending church meetings regularly over the last year.
Thomas	It has been nice to see younger parents attend and contribute to our discussions about the children's ministry. Perhaps we could approach one couple together and see whether they're interested in one of them coming on board.
Harry	The perspective of young parents will help us see the perspective of their generation.
Richard	Well, I know you're all for this diversity stuff, Ruth. But people need time to adjust to our way of doing things.

Harry	I think diversity is important because it reflects our mission in the local community. Why would people get involved in this church if all the deacons came from the same group? I think we should approach Zara she has been such a positive presence in our prayer meetings.
Ruth	I'd like to suggest Jane, who's coming to church regularly as a result of her involvement in the well-being cafe. It's been great to have her become a member. I think we could take her disability into account and make the necessary adjustments.
Richard	I think you might be making things too complicated there, Ruth. It could get pricey.
Thomas	No Richard, I think Jane is a good suggestion. None of us knows when we might be affected by disability. I've certainly reflected on this since my aunt had her stroke.
Ruth	Well, that's good. We've got four proposals on the table. Why don't we agree who will come with me to visit them and open up the conversation about what's involved in being a deacon. We can then pray about who we should invite. Right let's move on to our next item.

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: John 4: 4-26

Discussion Questions:

Did you learn anything new or surprising? How were you left feeling?

Definitions

Marital status

Misogynoir – black and brown women

Ableism

Ageism

Caring responsibilities – double shift

Scripture- John 4: 4-30 Samaritan woman

Ademiluka, S. O. (2023) "[Y]ou have had five husbands': Interpreting the Samaritan woman's marital experience (Jn 4:16-18) in the Nigerian context', *HTS Theological Studies*, 79, pp. 1-8.

Available at: http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=So259-94222023000100039&nrm=iso

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 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: 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.

Jane	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. Luke 8: 40-48 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." 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."
Helen	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?
Jane	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.
Helen	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.
Jane	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.
Helen	I can see that it is an example of being a bystander rather than an ally.

	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

	Music
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

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	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