

Project Violet



Commitment to Action Report

www.projectviolet.org.uk

Centre for Baptist Studies, Regent's Park College, Oxford

in collaboration with Baptists Together



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Introduction

This report represents three and a half years of work by the women ministers of Baptists Together. In presenting it to Baptist Union Council on 23 October 2024, we are inviting them to receive and affirm the Commitments to Action that it contains and be willing to hold stakeholders to account for fulfilling their commitments in October 2025.

We have tried to give an account of the whole project so that those who come after us will have a record of what was done and why. Those who have already read the findings will understandably leap to Section 7 of this report which sets out the Commitments to Action that stakeholders have made.

The detail of the responses made by local churches, associations, and colleges can be found in Appendices 3 to 5.

We would like to thank a number of people as the research phase of Project Violet comes to an end:

- The women who, at the start of the project, shared their stories with us.
- The co-researchers and theological reflectors, without whom the research would not have happened.
- The women and men who took part in the research and shared their experiences of ministry.
- The Centre for Baptist Studies, Regent's Park College, Oxford, and its Directors Christine Joynes and then Tim Middleton for hosting the project and holding us to account for its delivery.
- Staff at Baptist House who provided professional support, in particular Angie Bryant for being Project Administrator and the Communications Team for helping us communicate the project.
- The Mission Forum and the Baptist Trustees for funding the research.
- The many other people who played smaller but vital roles in the different facets of the project.

We are grateful to the Baptist community for being willing to give practical expression to a shared vision of God's purposes for women and commit to action. We know that faithful discharge of all the commitments made in this report will make for justice that flows through the church into the world that God loves so much.

Finally, we reiterate this value that we hold as Baptists Together:

We share a hunger for God's coming Kingdom:

Nurturing a 'holy discontent' that arises from our desire to give practical expression to our vision of God's purpose for creation – confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy and challenging worldly attitudes to power, wealth, status and security both within and beyond our Union. ([Matthew 6:9–10](#))

Jane Day
Helen Cameron
Project Violet Co-leaders
October 2024

Section 1 How did Project Violet come about?

In September 2019 I (Jane) was appointed to a new post with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. My appointment coincided with the centenary of Violet Hedger's acceptance for training at Regent's Park College and was created to enable sustained progress in removing barriers towards greater equality in ministry between women and men in Baptist life.¹ After a few months in post, I reflected that I could spend 24 hours a day coaching women and listening to their stories and very little would change. My hunch was that we were still talking about women in ministry and issues of gender justice because we had never properly investigated women's experiences in a way that involved women in the process, nor had we engaged all stakeholders across the complexities of our Baptist structures.

In pondering this hunch, and wanting to see change that focused on both the individual and the institution, I shared a conversation with Helen Cameron at a conference in the autumn of 2019. Helen is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Baptist Studies at Regent's Park College in Oxford and although not a Baptist has experience in researching church life. After a few months of coffee on Zoom, it was apparent that some joint research could be a possibility and that Helen would bring her skills as an academic, practical theologian, and experienced researcher to our collaboration. We shared more coffee and after 12 months of seeking funding, we entered into a co-leading dynamic known as 'insider-outsider' (Coghlan 2019) with both a co-leader working inside the subject of the research and a co-leader who is external to it. Project Violet was launched at an online event on 1 July 2021, hosted by the Centre for Baptist Studies, Regent's Park College, but in collaboration with Baptists Together.²

¹ See www.baptist.org.uk/JaneDayappointed

² Watch the launch here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0EWgJ46sZc

Section 2 What had been done before?

There are many publications related to British Baptist women in ministry as well as books written by Baptist women. The Project Violet website showcases this past research on women in ministry through its Reading Room, offering a resource for anyone who wants to explore further.³

One notable read is from Revd Dr Ruth Gouldbourne.

In 1997 Gouldbourne offered the Whitley Lecture⁴ on *Reinventing the Wheel: Women and Ministry in English Baptist Life*. It is still talked about today and such is its popularity Ruth was invited in 2022 to Theology Live⁵ to offer further reflections on her earlier lecture. This was appropriately named *Reinventing the Wheel 25 years on: A Partial Reflection* (Gouldbourne, 2022). The lecture begins on a hopeful note and highlights the increased visibility of women across the church at a local, regional, and national level. Alongside this hopeful note, Ruth also laments the continued discrimination against women in ministry. She states: 'It's not that women are not telling these stories of exclusion, discrimination and pain – and it is not that they are only telling them to each other, which was I think the case for a previous generation. It's not even that these stories are being denied. And yet they go on being repeated because the discrimination and exclusion goes on happening.' (Gouldbourne, 2022, p.13)

Before Gouldbourne and after Gouldbourne, statements have been made and stories shared. For example, in 1986, the *Baptist Quarterly* dedicated an entire issue to women's participation in the life of our Baptist churches. This edition highlights numerous issues which women experienced in the 1980s from finding pastoral placements to representation across the denomination.

Statements have expressed a strong call for change. In 2007 Mainstream⁶ issued *The Blackley Declaration* calling for further reflection and action on the place of women in ministry within the Baptist denomination (see Appendix 1).

In 2009 a document was presented to the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) Council exploring issues of Baptist identity and theological authority. Within this paper, women in ministry are cited as an example of the dilemma that Baptists face: 'There is no area of Union life where women are prevented from serving. Yet statistical evidence, the expressed views of some within Baptist communities, and conversations with women in ministry all reveal that there is clear resistance to some within the Union to women being called and affirmed in ministry. Some congregations continue to refuse to consider the appointment of a woman minister under any circumstances.' (Baptist Union Council, 2009, p.4)

In 2010, the minutes from BUGB Council affirmed the commitment of the Union to the full inclusion of women whilst recognising the ongoing struggles women in ministry experience (see Appendix 1).

In 2011, Simon Woodman produced a reader exploring the story of women in leadership and ministry within BUGB and helpfully tells the story (Woodman, 2018 revised edition). At the end of the reader,

³ The Reading Room can be found here: www.baptist.org.uk/thereadingroom

⁴ For more information about the Whitley Lecture: www.baptist.org.uk/Whitley

⁵ Theology Live is an annual one-day event for Baptists engaged in theological research.

⁶ Mainstream changed its name to Fresh Streams. This network seeks to equip, inspire, connect and resource leaders and leadership teams. Whilst not exclusively Baptist, the majority of churches and leaders who they support are in Baptist churches. One of their priorities is Women in Leadership.

seven recommendations were made to consider the wider response to the issues faced by women in leadership.

In 2018, a successful conference for women in ministry was hosted: 'Celebrating, Surviving and Thriving: Women in Baptist Ministry'.⁷ The participants also issued a statement which is documented in Appendix 1.

There is no shortage of the collective efforts of so many to bring about change and it is evident that there have been key moments of reflection about women in ministry in the life of the denomination. Project Violet builds on all this by investigating women's experiences in ministry and trying to understand the theological, missional, and structural obstacles women ministers face.

⁷ See www.baptist.org.uk/celebratingsurvivingthriving

Section 3 What approach did Project Violet take?

Engaging the Baptist community

Project Violet was made up of four phases to engage the Baptist community:

Phase I introduced the project to all the major stakeholders in Baptist life. This included online meetings with associations, colleges, specialist teams, roundtables, forums and interest groups; in all, forty meetings.

Phase II, called MOSAIC, invited every accredited woman minister to submit a 1,000-word reflection on the joys and sorrows of their ministry. 50 responses were received providing a wealth of experience for the co-researchers (see Phase III) to draw upon. These responses will be put in the Angus Archive with a 30-year embargo, so future generations will have an account of women's experience in the 21st century.

Phase III lies at the heart of Project Violet. It involved 16 pieces of research undertaken by women ministers, referred to as 'co-researchers'. The remainder of this section of this report explains how Phase III's research was undertaken.

Phase IV has involved sharing the research widely in Baptist life and returning to the stakeholders we met in Phase I, asking them to respond to the Requests for Change. It is these responses that are summarised in Section 7 and reproduced in the appendices to this report.

What type of research did the co-researchers carry out in Phase III?

This is research that was conducted by women ministers alongside their existing responsibilities. The technical name for this is 'practitioner research', as opposed to 'academic research' that you might undertake as part of a university degree.

The aim was to get insights into women's experience of ministry by having women ministers conduct the research. As you read the research you will see that it deals with some challenging questions and reveals some painful truths that would have been hard to disclose to someone from outside Baptist life.

The women who stepped forward as co-researchers showed courage in asking questions that mattered and persistence in completing their research despite other pressures that arose in their ministry and personal lives.

When was it done?

The co-researchers' research was undertaken between November 2021 and November 2023. Four groups of women were recruited in turn and journeyed together through the research process.

How were the questions for the research chosen?

The underlying philosophy of this approach to research is that it is the people closest to the problem who know the questions that need asking. The technical name for this is 'participatory research'. Each

co-researcher discerned her question in conversation with the other women in her group, so there was shared as well as individual wisdom.

Each research question was used to interrogate the MOSAIC data (see above). Evidence supporting all but one of the questions was found and each small group met to reflect upon that evidence. The co-researchers knew they were not alone in raising their question. The one question that was not found in the MOSAIC data related to disability and we intentionally wanted to include that issue in the research.

Why have different approaches been used in different reports?

Researching experience is a challenging thing to do. Each woman minister is different and each ministers in a different context, drawing upon different past experiences. Having different women join the project as co-researchers made it easier to find patterns in that experience without assuming that all women are the same.

Having chosen her research question, each woman met with Helen Cameron to discuss how to design research that would answer the question. Different approaches to research were used, including surveys, interviews, group discussions, reflective writing, vlogging, workshops, and artwork. This variety gives us confidence that the different ways in which women experience ministry have been accessed.

Because this is not academic research, women were invited to 'write up' their research in a way that made sense in their ministry context. Most women decided to write a report but there are also two films and a piece of artwork. Two co-researchers who are also Newly Accredited Ministers (NAMs) submitted their Project Violet research as part of their ongoing learning.

Taking an overview of all this variety, the family resemblance between these reports is striking. Language, behaviour, ways of working, and theology that stop women flourishing in ministry are found and build up to a bigger picture. Some people have found the metaphor of a cauliflower helpful. There are sixteen florets, or different pieces of research, but they are all recognisably the same vegetable.

What support did the co-researchers have?

Some co-researchers had done research before, for others it was a completely new experience. They had the support of working in small groups with other women who were also doing research. Helen Cameron was available on a one-to-one basis to help them design, carry out, and write up their research. Jane Day supported each woman with some coaching sessions on topics of their choosing.

Project Violet has been subject to ethical approval from Oxford University through Regent's Park College, where the project is based. Helen worked with each co-researcher to ensure that those she involved in her research consented to take part.

Our approach to reading the research

When we met to discuss any aspect of the research we reminded ourselves of these virtues:

- Humility and the readiness to get it wrong

- The confidence of truth-telling and truth-seeking
- The love of the other's voice and ideas
- Owning the expertise of experience
- Living with complexity whilst seeking clarity

We tried to read/view each report as a letter from a friend rather than an agenda paper for a meeting. We encouraged each other to think about what we were hearing rather than what we agreed or disagreed with. We are using human reason, but we are also trying to discern God's intentions for the Baptist community.

Section 4 What were the findings?

All the reports are available on the Project Violet website but below is a list of the co-researchers, the title of their research, and a quote from them saying what they hoped people would gain from reading their research, presented in the four groups with each's theme. The women are described according to their responsibilities at the time of their research. On the website you will also find a poster summarising each piece of research and an interview with each co-researcher.

Group 1 – Women with regional and college responsibilities

Beth Powney

Eastern Baptist Association

Evaluating the impact of the MagnifyYou programme as an intentional way of developing women leaders. MagnifyYou is an ongoing programme of development for women ministers in three regional associations.

'I think it brings a challenge to each minister in each church, as to how can they intentionally develop women ... What can they do as individuals – if intentionality is important, if safe space is important, if building women's confidence is important – what can they do?'

Carol Bostridge

London Baptist Association

The relationship between marital status and hearing and following a call and then growing and flourishing in ministry

'There are things in there that still sadden me and shock me and frustrate me, but also a sense of, 'It wouldn't take much to put a lot of this right'.'

Clare Hooper

Southern Counties Baptist Association

Enabling SCBA to celebrate women leaders
So hopefully, everyone will be able to think, 'oh, what might I be able to do differently that enables more people to participate and more voices to be heard?'

'So hopefully, everyone will be able to think, 'oh, what might I be able to do differently that enables more people to participate and more voices to be heard?''

Hayley Young

Northern Baptist Association

Enabling millennial women to flourish in leadership

'... being a millennial, I was heavily influenced by Big Brother when I was growing up. So the idea of reflecting on your experience in a kind of diary-room environment to reflect in the moment was appealing to me ... And so I'm hoping that people will watch [my film]. Perhaps see their behaviour through those lenses and see if it has an impact on them and to help them reflect.'

Helen Stokley

Spurgeon's College

Enabling women to prepare for ministerial training so they can engage and flourish as Ministers-in-Training

'It's about His family, we want to be the best that we can be for the time that God has called us ... So I would just invite you to come on a journey, to be a humble enquirer, to find out what people have been saying, as a result of my research.'

Group 2 – Millennial women

Alex Ellish

Baptist Minister and Urban Expression

Co-ordinator

and

Carmel Murphy Elliott

Baptist Minister and Community Organiser

Women's experience of pioneering contexts

Carmel: 'Yes, it's hard, and we want to hear that. But also there are other things happening that are encouraging and life giving and beautiful.'

Alex: So I would love people to look at the artwork that has been created, because I think that really encapsulates the journey that many women have been on. And, how we how we can do better to support women in ministry, particularly in a nontraditional context.'

Claire Nicholls

Minister, New Addington Baptist Church

Developing a London Baptists Women's Justice Hub

'And if we don't question the places where there seems to be unconscious bias, and where words aren't followed into actions, then things don't change. Being actively involved in women's justice is something we should all have eyes on.'

Sarah Crane

Head of Chaplaincy, Milton Keynes University

Hospital

Comparing women's experience of NHS chaplaincy and local church and translocal Baptist ministry

'We all have things within us that create a sort of natural bias towards things that are more like ourselves. But sometimes we have to live with the discomfort of hearing about other people's difficult experiences.'

Group 3 – Black and Brown women

Afi Kirk

Minister, Blackheath and Charlton Church

Baptist Church

Understanding the barriers to training and accreditation for women whose call is recognised

'As a Baptist family and also community of believers, we have a responsibility to invest in each other and add value to each other's lives. And if there's an issue that is ... impacting their ability to be the best that they can be and respond to their call ... then I believe it is important that we look at this.'

Charmaine Mhlanga

Minister, Sundon Park Baptist Church

Evaluating the impact of 'I am because you are' resource on ministers

'And so it's looking at how does the language we use in matters of racial justice, why it matters and why that language needs to be accessible for people across the nations – because we do live in a country now where you've got different people from different countries, different contexts, different cultures.'

Amutha Devaraj

Minister, Ashurst Drive Baptist Church

Understanding the journey into ministry for Asian women

'I believe that this [research] would enhance the interest in the coming-up new, younger generation to take this as a challenge in putting forward for this noble ministerial calling.'

Pam Searle

Minister, Sutton Baptist Church

The experiences of women who leave Baptist church ministry

'When you read my report, you will see that there are a number of reflections where women have stated that they weren't treated as equal. And we serve a God who loves each of us. And he doesn't pick and choose as to who he loves. He loves us, because He has called us as his children.'

Group 4 – Women needing accommodations to flourish in ministry

Denise Dobie

Baptist Minister, Darkhouse Baptist Church

Women's experience of how the menopause impacts on ministry and how Baptist institutions respond

'There's such potential that we don't want to lose women at this stage of ministry – that we support, and that we acknowledge the challenge and put accommodations and support in place ... but also that we celebrate the gifts and we do that together.'

Laura Gilmour

Chaplain, Strathcarron Hospice, and member of Hillhead Baptist Church, Glasgow

Exploration of how caring responsibilities, across the life cycle, impact and shape the ministry and experiences of women in Baptist ministry

'So hopefully, it will challenge folk to look at that traditional model of minister and consider whether that that could be altered to allow for both men and women to flourish when they've got these dual responsibilities of carer and minister.'

Susan Myatt

Baptist Minister of Open Hands Signing Church, a location of Rising Brook, Stafford, and National Deaf Advisor in the Heart of England Baptist Association, and is also seconded one day a week as Deaf Advisor for Lichfield Diocese

Exploring the journey into, and potential barriers in, ministry that Deaf women face within the Baptist Union
Susan's first language is BSL so if you have not done so we encourage you to watch her film.⁸

'... churches can create environments that empower Deaf women to contribute and thrive within their faith communities. Such inclusivity not only benefits deaf women directly but also enriches the entire congregation by fostering a diverse and vibrant tapestry of perspectives and experiences.'

⁸ You can access Susan Myatt's film here: www.baptist.org.uk/co-researcherreports (scroll down to near the bottom and find the link to her film).

Receptive Space Workshop

Themes from an ecumenical workshop on 2 November 2023

Sally Nelson (St Hild College) and Alison Evans (Regent's Park College) worked with Jane and Helen to organise this workshop. Nike Adebajo (Regional Minister, Yorkshire Baptist Association) and Eleanor Brennan (Minister, Wakefield Baptist Church) were participants and reflectors.

'The word 'formation' – which is used in some traditions to mean learning and preparing for ministry – was a difficult term for some women as they had felt they had been formed into a male stereotype that they couldn't successfully match. Language about 'fitting in' could reveal assumptions about the ideal minister, often a man who was freed from domestic responsibilities by his wife and so able to overwork.'

Section 5 What theological themes emerged?

Project Violet has been designed to be theological all the way through, starting with women's questions about ministry and then creating opportunities for theological reflection. This led to four thematic reports which are summarised after the following brief discussion on approach taken to theology itself.

What kind of theology?

We are offering a theology of discernment, by which we mean that this is theology that arose from listening to God and to each other, drawing on Baptist ways of believing, our love of scripture, and enfolded in prayer.

We brought all that we are to these conversations of discernment – our minds, bodies, souls, and emotions – as we listened deeply to what God was saying. The themes in this section arise from a process of reflection which enabled us to listen to God and each other over a number of months.

As each group worked on their research, they met to reflect upon the words of the 50 women who had written about the joys and sorrows of ministry during the MOSAIC phase of the project. Seeing their research questions reflected in these women's stories assured them that they were not alone.

As each co-researcher finished her research, she reflected on what she had learned as she prepared her report.

Each group of co-researchers then met with Jane Day and Helen Cameron to reflect on their reports. Following this, their reports were read by a group of three women from our colleges who then also met as theological reflectors to begin a process of discernment on what they had read. Finally there was a joint meeting where the learning from the reflective conversations was shared – and further listening, prayer, and discernment took place. This report tries to capture what was learned through that process of reflection and discernment.

This may be different from your previous experience of doing theology. Often the focus of our theological tradition has been the prioritising of making logical and convincing arguments. Perhaps that was your experience as a student. Here, however, we have sought to value the process of conversation and the experience and understanding of each co-researcher. This is reflected in the way in which each report contains more than one voice and represents more than one context, identity, and type of ministry. It is designed to start a conversation rather than be the last word.

Themes and issues from Group 1

Walking together as Baptists

We want to affirm the Marks of Ministry when they say:

Ministry means being accountable to others through:

- Intentional accountability to develop as a disciple of Christ and as a Baptist minister
- Engaging in peer support, watching over, and walking with one another
- Committed to continuing ministerial development and training
- Accountable to the local church
- Accountable to and supportive of the wider Baptist family
- Providing oversight and accountability for others

Reflecting upon what we had learned from our research, we dared to envisage different ways of walking together as Baptists. We spoke of walking side by side rather than arguing head-to-head. Of conversations fuelled by curiosity about the other's perspective rather than a need to correct. Of spaces of mutual affirmation and respectful challenge. We looked at the conversational practices of Jesus – who came alongside people, asked challenging questions with compassion, and told stories that invited a response.

A question for you to consider:

For you, what has this 'walking together' been at its best?

The Suffering Servant as a model for leadership

In reading each other's research we were overwhelmed at times by the pain and suffering that had been shared. We turned to the account of the Suffering Servant found in Isaiah 42:1–4 and saw a model of leadership that represented others to God, sought to live an exemplary life, was uncompromising in the search for justice, and was persistent rather than insistent. In seeking justice for women ministers, we welcomed as allies those men who have told us that they too would like things to be different. We repented of the fact that we too have sometimes been complicit in ways of working that need to be changed – for example, in our participation in the discernment of calls to ministry or the settlement process.

A question for you to consider:

What examples of leadership are you inspired by?

Moderating the translocal space

The space in which Baptists associate is holy ground on which we live out our covenant to God and each other. Baptists value freedom to hold different views and to express those views. That means that the way in which meetings, conferences, and gatherings beyond the local church are moderated is particularly important. (These spaces are what are called the translocal space.) For that freedom to be

exercised responsibly there needs to be a respect for the role of moderator or chair and a willingness to reflect on *how* we make our point as well as what point we make. Moderators have a responsibility to ensure good order but also to ensure all voices are heard and to challenge language and behaviour that is discriminatory. For the women in Group 1 there is a desire that moderation explicitly includes the responsibility to challenge sexist language and behaviour irrespective of the intentions of the speaker. Acknowledging the inappropriate use of a stereotype in the moment can open up a conversation rather than shut down women's contribution.

A question for you to consider:

How do you see this covenant being lived out in the translocal spaces you are part of – for example, association gatherings or ministers' meetings?

Bringing our theology of ministry and our theology of family life into conversation with each other

Women minister in local churches that have invited them. They candidate for ministry in a variety of local settings within a Union that affirms the ministry of women. The value of women in the settlement process and ongoing ministry can be undermined when they sense an implicit theology of family life which has not been stated but leaks out in questions and comments. Examples of this implicit theology include:

- That women are responsible for household management and that their husbands assist rather than take responsibility for household tasks
- That women are the primary care-givers for children and adult relatives and so should defer or set aside a call to ministry until after those tasks have been discharged
- That women are economically dependent upon men and so should defer to the needs of their husband's career
- That single women have no family life and so are always available

Some of this implicit theology has not been discussed in the church meeting and so surfaces in expectations that feel like the imposition of stereotypes. They can be undermining for men who manage household tasks, provide care, and share financial responsibility. Baptist churches value family life and so we would encourage a deeper reflection on what God calls us to be and do as a family and household.

A question for you to consider:

What model of family life do you bring into church life?

Themes and issues from Group 2

What does flourishing in ministry look like?

Flourishing ministry was described both as 'freedom from' and 'freedom to'. 'Freedom from' meant being free from expectations that there was only one right way to minister. The image was discussed of David being given armour by Saul and being weighed down by it, when he needed to fight Goliath in his own way. Another image was a woman entering college and feeling that to fit in she needed to buy a brief case, but in the end deciding to buy a green one to express her identity. Sadly, some women ministers had only felt that freedom when they ministered in places other than the local church.

'Freedom to' meant working in collaborative and creative ways where people learn together rather than positioning the minister as the expert. It meant knowing colleagues had your back when things didn't work as planned. It meant working within a network of support rather than going it alone. To echo the Marks of Ministry: 'watching over one another and walking together'. They had experienced a default expectation of independence whereas they were seeking inter-dependence.

A question for you to consider:

How would you define flourishing in ministry?

How do Baptists understand ministry beyond the local church?

Baptists root the discernment of a calling to ministry in the local church. Not all local churches have had experience of ministry beyond the local church, such as pioneering and chaplaincy. This can make the discernment journey more difficult for those who feel called to those forms of ministry. By recognising these forms of ministry Baptists endorse the work of the church in the life of the world. In addition they affirm those ministers who work as guests in the work and social spaces of others, rather than as host who invite people into the church. A practical outworking of that theology is ensuring that those who minister beyond the local church are drawn into the covenant relationships between ministers – for example, by taking part in ministers' conferences.

A question for you to consider:

What did you learn the last time you listened to a chaplain or pioneer talk about their ministry? How could that learning be taken into the local church?

How do we discuss complementarian theologies in the translocal space?

In Baptist life, local churches are free to interpret scripture and adopt practices that flow from that interpretation. In practice this means that some local churches adopt a complementarian theology, meaning that they see men and women having different social roles and place some restrictions on the ministry roles that women can undertake. For some churches this will mean not accepting women as accredited ministers, in others it will mean that women accredited ministers need to work under the supervision of men. Churches that do not place any restrictions on the ministry roles of women are seen as having an egalitarian theology.

The freedom to interpret scripture can lead to tensions in those spaces where ministers associate with one another. Women can find it difficult to enter those spaces if their legitimacy as a minister is challenged by colleagues with a complementarian theology. A commitment to sitting together and disagreeing well is needed together with a recognition that the acceptance of women's ministry by the Baptist Union means that women are expected to be able to participate fully in translocal spaces. When this expectation is undermined, it is helpful when men play their part in challenging this, rather than women having to assert it.

A question for you to consider:

Can you think of an example where you have seen people disagreeing well? What did that look like?

What do I think before I speak?

Talking together is how Baptists get things done. All aspects of church life are discussed in meetings which aim to have all relevant groups represented.

Women ministers described sometimes feeling inhibited or hesitant when speaking in the translocal space. They described this behaviour as 'self-editing' – looking through what they plan to say and trying to guess how it will be received, and then editing it accordingly before they say anything. The kind of questions they asked themselves included, 'Is it only me thinking this?' and 'Am I being unreasonable in asking for this?' They had experienced being eventually ready to speak but then finding that the conversation had moved on. They had received feedback from male colleagues that they were hesitant or lacked confidence.

However, they could see how self-editing could be positive – for example, when people processed negative emotions before articulating them. Or, when people took time to be aware of the advantages or privileges they might bring to the conversation and held back, allowing others to contribute first.

The burden of gratitude to male mentors and not wanting to challenge men who were supportive could mean overlooking sexism – which brought up the image of sitting obediently under the table, not making a fuss and being grateful for the scraps of acknowledgement that came their way (Mark 7:24–30).

A question for you to consider:

What do you notice about your own 'self-editing' behaviour? What do you do to notice who is and is not contributing to the conversation?

Themes and issues from Group 3

Seeking to imitate Christ

We rejoiced that God is calling more women with a diversity of identities and experiences into Baptist ministry. God is equipping Baptists for mission in a diverse society. God has extended his grace to us in making us aware of our unconscious bias and the realities of sexism and racism. We are now called to imitate Christ by moving beyond any stereotypes we have inherited. We want this to be seen as an imitation of Christ who in his final meal with his disciples before his death commanded them to love one another (John 13:34–35).

A question for you to consider:

How are we imitating Christ in the way in which we love one another?

Ubuntu as a way of life

Ubuntu – which is translated as 'I am because you are' – expresses a way of living that starts from our relationships rather than our individual identity. Mutual obligation, respect for elders, and honouring of those who lead are ways in which this collective identity is lived out. There was a sadness that the sense of mutual obligation can be so weak that training about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion needs to be

made mandatory for ministers. We recognised the need to intentionally induct Newly Accredited Ministers (NAMs) into networks of support that emphasise that they are held in a web of relationships rather than ministering alone. The theological language of 'covenant' roots our relationships with each other in our relationship with a faithful and loving God.

A question for you to consider:

How can we turn ministry from being about individual survival to mutual flourishing?

The Jerusalem donation

We reflected on the passages in Acts and Paul's letters where it is evident that the churches Paul visited made a collection to support the church in Jerusalem. This coincided with a time of famine and so there was a desire to meet the needs of others from their own resources. Our vision was of the name 'Baptists Together' leading to that same mutual support between churches. We were sad when the cost of training for ministry fell as a debt upon an individual rather than being a shared responsibility of the churches.

A question for you to consider:

How do we stir up generosity to meet the needs of the Baptist community?

Living with the betrayal of racism and sexism

We reflected on the way in which, in the Bible, Ruth was drawn into God's purposes for her life through her embrace of Naomi, her mother-in-law, across the cultural differences between them. Having recognised the image of God in a face that is different from ours, we experience a sense of betrayal when that image is defaced by racist and sexist language and behaviour. Being welcomed into the life of a church only to find your face doesn't fit when a call to ministry is received is a bitter cup to drain. There was a strong desire to find everyday ways of challenging racist and sexist language, providing opportunities for learning from experience in a spirit of mutual accountability. It is important to have complaints processes for persistent or intentional language and behaviour that needs holding to account. Apologies for past ways of behaving need to have their foundations in new ways of working. Allies need to be willing to share about their journey from bystander to ally. It cannot be just that Whiteness and maleness are seen as 'normal' and Black and Brown and women ministers be expected to fit into a model they cannot adopt authentically.

A question for you to consider:

How are church members prepared for their role in the discernment of callings to ministry?

Themes and issues from Group 4

Ministering in a body

Jesus entered the world in a human body and experienced both the joys and limitations that brings. Our society has stereotypes about what constitutes a 'normal' body and can exclude people who through disability, chronic ill health, or life circumstances fail to live up to the 'normal' stereotype.

We reflected upon the poem in Philippians 2:5–11. We looked at the way in which Jesus accommodated our human lack of understanding of God’s purposes by emptying himself and taking on the human condition. We felt that we are called to accommodate one another, adjusting our language and behaviour so as to fully recognise the image of God in people who are physically different from ourselves. It cannot be fair that those with the biggest barriers to participation in church life are asked to make the biggest changes and often bear their cost. (For example, at the point at which someone acquires a disability, they have to adapt to it – it is an unfair pressure to also have to educate those around them about the disability.) It cannot be just that people are nervous about disclosing a disability or health condition because they fear being marginalised. (The Project Violet Podcast Season 1, Episode 4, gives an example of this⁹.)

In our research we learned of attempts to heal without seeking consent first, and of blaming people for not ‘getting better’. In accommodating one another’s bodies we wanted to show solidarity rather than rescue people or speak for them or pretend to understand how things are for them.

We wanted a church where women can speak freely about the impact the menopause is having and ask for accommodations to navigate this phase in their lives. We wanted to value the voice of post-menopausal women as offering wisdom rather than being inaudible or talked over.

We recognised the dangers of ministering as if we didn’t have a body – for example, the dangers of burnout and portraying a harsh God by our lack of self-care. We affirmed the presidency of Geoff Colmer (2021/22) as an example of a man reflecting publicly on embodiment.

A question for you to consider:

Are there ways in which you minimise your body and its needs to make yourself more acceptable in the church?

The call to ministry and to caring responsibilities

Some women but not all women feel a dual call to both minister and to undertake caring responsibilities whether for children, a spouse, or parent. Offering flexibility to enable these two callings to happen at the same time or offering transitions that enable time to be spent outside ministry are valued. Encouraging men to make use of the same flexibilities presents caring as an important adult responsibility and not something reserved for women.

Many churches seek to support and encourage family life. Enabling their ministers to model this is an important witness to the value of family life. We reflected on the parable of the Good Samaritan where we are shocked that it is the foreigner who stops to care rather than the religious leader.

A question for you to consider:

In what ways do you speak of caring responsibilities as a normal part of adult life for men and women?

⁹ Listen to the episode here: <https://projectvioletpodcast.podbean.com/e/episode-4-from-all-women-to-this-woman/>

Is the church ready to respond when God calls ministers who don't fit previous stereotypes?

We noticed that when flexibility is offered in patterns of training and ministry, women step forward to make use of it. This is much less exhausting than having to negotiate flexibility. The question that also arises is, flexible in relation to what? The stereotype is a full-time male minister, assisted unpaid by his wife. We recognise that this stereotype can lead to overworking which in turn generates unrealistic expectations.

We noticed the additional pain that comes from ministering as a woman with a disability where it is unclear whether negative reactions are to our gender or disability. The overlapping of these stereotypes leads to experiences of confusion and marginalisation from which there was no 'day off'. In our desire to find practical solutions, it is important not to miss the pain of being stereotyped.

If local churches have had no exposure to ministers who don't fit previous stereotypes, it is difficult for them to envision a future where they look for a different kind of ministry. Actively engaging in diversity training in preparation for calling a minister is a signal of openness. And *offering* accommodations rather than negotiating them signals a church that is receptive to those whom God has called. There is a role for moderators, associations, and Ministries Team in opening the eyes of local churches to the possibilities.

A question for you to consider:

What response can you make to move beyond previous stereotypes of ministry?

Our invitation

This is not the sort of theology that ends with a report. It is about opening up a conversation that can continue. You may belong to existing groups where you would like to discuss some of the questions raised in this section, you may want to bring together some trusted friends, you may want to respond creatively in art or worship.

Now you have read this section of the report we invite you to ask:

- How does this report resonate with my understanding of what it is to be a Baptist?
- What echoes am I hearing of scripture and the theology I am familiar with?
- What are the conversations I feel prompted to have?
- Who could help me explore these issues further?

Section 6 What changes have been requested?

On 17–18 April 2024 the women ministers who took part in the research phase of the project met at Launde Abbey to agree the requests for change that they wished to make to the Baptist community. These requests arose from their research and the process of theological reflection that followed it.

The changes requested relate to:

- The everyday language and behaviour we use in church life
- The accepted ways of doing things
- What we believe about the church and the role of ministers

This section gives an overview of those requests, whilst the detail is available on the project website. The R number in brackets indicates where to find the detail. Some requests are addressed to particular stakeholders in Baptist life but there are wider challenges all can engage with. There is a short report summarising the requests to local churches.

Here we are presenting the requests under three headings that express our hopes and vision for the future:

1. The 'Vocational pathway' expresses our hope that women will flourish in ministry from the point at which they first recognise a call through to retirement. We will show how the findings relate to this vocational pathway.
2. 'Types of ministry' expresses our hope that whatever type of ministry women find themselves in, they will be supported and valued by the Baptist community.
3. 'Ways of working' expresses our hope that all stakeholders in the Baptist community will be willing to change the ways in which they work to ensure more just outcomes for women ministers. We hope for change even as we express the difficulties that have led to our findings.

After 105 years of women in ministry these requests for change don't exhaust everything that could be done. Women ministers not directly involved in Project Violet may have other requests. We ask that in future women will be encouraged with support to research questions that matter to them, that colleagues will come alongside them to reflect theologically and discern requests for change, and that stakeholders in the Baptist community will consider those requests carefully and respectfully.

Vocational pathway

Women witnessed to the importance of their teenage years as a time when they first thought they heard God's call to ministry. Their access to opportunities in their teens and twenties was important in developing that call, so appropriate information for parents about those opportunities is needed (R30). It was also at this point that hearing sexist, racist, and ableist language going unchallenged made them wonder if there was a stereotype of ministry that they wouldn't be able to meet (R05). What was particularly helpful in working out whether that initial whisper from God was in fact a call was intentional support in discerning their vocation (R42). Another key influence in women's experience of being called was exposure to role models – both of women ministers but also of men who affirmed women in their ministry (R41). Seeing images of women like them used in resources was also positive (R56). Where women belonged to local churches who accepted women's call to ministry and nurtured them in their confidence to minister, the discernment discussion at the church meeting was confirmation of their call. But where the church meeting was divided or the discernment was superficial, this part of the pathway could leave painful memories (R48).

Having had a calling confirmed, women could come across barriers to accessing training. These could include lack of information about the process (Ro2), difficulties in navigating the college admission process (Ro1), and difficulty raising the money to pay for training and sustaining their household whilst they trained (R26). The role of the local church in supporting them financially was not always clear (Ro3).

Some women whilst in training encountered financial difficulties and needed advice from a source other than the college who was asking for their fees (R29). For some women, their experience in training included exposure to sexist, racist, and ableist stereotypes, with real distress when these went unchallenged (Ro5). For others they were asked to study a curriculum that did not reference the works of women, Black and Brown, and disabled theologians (Ro8). They hoped to be equipped to minister in an intercultural environment (R34). Meeting women in different types of ministries and with different backgrounds and identities was important in building a positive identity during training (R41).

Baptist ministry training is flexible and so Ministers-in-Training both have placements in local churches and are settled in local churches as their training proceeds. The working relationship between the colleges and the associations in helping ministers settle was particularly crucial (Ro6).

On completion of training, ministers enter a period of three or more years in which they are Newly Accredited Ministers (NAMs). This is a particularly important period for building good habits that sustain ministry whether through accompaniment (R55), building a network of supportive relationships (R35), or confidence in leading church meetings (R48) and governance (R15). Support through any further experiences of settlement (Ro6) is also important.

On becoming a Fully Accredited Minister (FAM) the need for development and support doesn't end. Building on the Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) habits, we would like to see intentional leadership development directed at women (Ro4). Meetings with other ministers are important and so we want to be confident that ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces (Ro5, Ro9). The online world is a forum both for ministry and support for ministry, and so we ask that the Ministerial Recognition rules are amended to include language and behaviour in the online environment (R10).

Women want to minister confidently from their own identity and to have unhelpful and unjust stereotypes challenged. For example, ageism takes place when age and experience are confused. Terms like young and emerging leader are not appropriate for a FAM (R13). Women with a disability seek a revised theology that recognises them as made in the image of God (R44) and where they are not subject to unwanted touching no matter how well meant (R49). Good practice in inclusive communication creates a culture in which all feel their contribution is valued (R46).

Ministers are no different from other people in wanting to know there are model policies that their employing churches or organisations can adopt that deal with the life events that can happen to us all (G47). Working for a small organisation should not lead to uncertainty or confusion when they need to navigate a major life event.

Settlement is not always a positive experience for women. They can experience intrusive and inappropriate questioning (R47) and a lack of support in agreeing fair terms and conditions for their

work, particularly when it is for less than a full stipend (R06). Equipping church meetings to play their part in the settlement process is also important (R48). Where a church does not accept the ministry of women it is requested that that position is made known prior to the settlement process (R52). Some women will feel called to move to other types of ministry, and value development and support for this (R04).

Finally we know very little about women's experience of the transition into retirement and so we would like to see further research on this topic (R14).

Types of ministry

The call to ministry is recognised in the local church and most ministers will train in a local church and then spend most of their ministry in that form of ministry. However, for some women this can be an isolating experience and they would welcome a means of working more collaboratively or in a way that deploys particular skills they may have (R40). We would like to see local churches intentionally make opportunities to hear preaching and experience leadership in worship that differs from the usual (R53).

Beyond the local church, women are to be found in other forms of ministry.

Pioneer ministry means going beyond the inherited understandings of church and learning how to minister to a changing culture. Improved ways of passing on that learning are sought (R25). There is a specific hope that ministry to the Deaf community can be recognised as a pioneering ministry (R45). Chaplaincy – whether in full-time roles (employed by hospitals and prisons, for example) or sessional chaplaincy in a wide range of settings – provides not only pastoral care where people are in need but also a prophetic voice speaking into the wider structures of society (R18, R19). As fewer churches are able to afford a full stipend, ministers are coming forward who are willing to pursue more than one vocation. More research and theological reflection are requested on bi-vocational ministry (R14, R36).

Since summer 2021, when Project Violet started, more women have entered Regional Ministry, sometimes as the result of intentional leadership development (R04). They want to create inclusive translocal spaces where stereotypes are challenged, and so training to equip this is requested (R05, R15, R34). There are distinctive features of ministering in the translocal space that they would like to see acknowledged in an appendix to the 'Marks of Ministry' (R16). More theological reflection is needed on how to promote good association between churches with complementarian and egalitarian theologies of women's ministry (R21).

All Baptist colleges have women working as theological educators. They too want to create inclusive spaces in which ministers can train and where stereotypes are challenged (R05). An appendix to the 'Marks of Ministry' on translocal ministry would help them set appropriate expectations (R16). Theological reflection on holding complementarian and egalitarian theologies in the same space would benefit their work (R21). Women ministering in the specialist teams would also benefit from these developments.

Ways of working

Our research has shown that taken-for-granted ways of working can disadvantage women, particularly when they were designed without women's input. We see these findings as an opportunity to check that Baptist ways of working promote justice and inclusion.

We welcome the fact that there are more women in the rooms where decisions are made. We now want to ensure they are fully included in the conversation. We believe this will come through more male allies challenging sexist stereotypes (R12); through Regional Ministers ensuring that spaces they are responsible for are constructive (R09); and through training in good moderation (R43), governance (R15), and advocacy (R05). We want theological differences to be held well (R21) and for White ministers to challenge racist stereotypes (R33). Having benefited from ecumenical learning during Project Violet, we would like that to be a more prominent feature of Baptist Council (R50).

The introduction of the CMD Handbook and the expectation that ministers should have an annual conversation to review their development is a welcome signal that continuing to learn is an essential aspect of ministry. These findings contain a number of requests for training, and we envisage collaboration between Ministries Team, associations and colleges in commissioning these courses (R05, R15, R32, R34, R39, R48) and evaluating their effectiveness (R31). The Handbook also places value on ministers being accompanied as a form of accountability as well as support. We make proposals about the accompaniment of women ministers (R55) and the importance of establishing accompaniment during the NAMs phase of ministry (R35). For us an ongoing commitment to training in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is important (R32) and we would like to see resources that could be used to induct deacons and trustees (R52).

Although there are over two thousand Baptist FAMs, most are employed by small- to medium-sized charities. This means that the data a large employer might collect to monitor equality and diversity is not readily available. Given that ministers are a resource to the whole Baptist family we ask for this to change so that patterns of inequality can be identified and explored throughout the vocational pathway (R28). This will make it easier to set terms and conditions for ministers (R06, R11) and to focus what funds there are on those who are at risk of exclusion (R17). We would like to see an occupational health service for ministers (R38).

A concern raised about taking a more proactive approach to challenging stereotypes (R12, R33) is that it will generate more complaints. We are asking for training in advocacy that includes resolving things in the moment (R05) as well as guidance on inclusive language (R20). However, effective rules (R10, R37) and expectations (R16) remain important.

Finally we want a legacy of Project Violet to be effective ways of working across Baptist life that enable issues raised by women to be resolved as part of normal ways of working rather than requiring another project. This includes redefining the Centenary Development Enabler Role (R54) and clarifying the relationship between the Women's Justice Hubs in regional associations and the specialist teams (R22) – ensuring a clear commitment to working on these issues in each association and college (R55, R24, R14).

When the co-researchers met on 17–18 April 2024 to agree the findings, they were overwhelmed with sadness at all they had read in each other's research. They anticipate that you may have a similar reaction. So finally they are calling for a season of lament to enable the wider Baptist family to acknowledge all that has been shared (R57).

Section 7 What commitments to action have been made and by whom?

In this section of the report we summarise the Commitments to Action made by Local Churches, Regional Associations and Baptist Colleges. Their responses can be found in full in Appendices 3-5.

We include in full the responses received from other stakeholders.

Local churches

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R53	Make opportunities to listen to new voices	63	1	
R51	Local churches make their position on women's ministry known prior to settlement	58	5	
R41	Role models	62	2	1
R48	Developing slow wisdom in the local church meeting	58	3	2
R05	Training in advocacy	53	11	1
R44	A theology of disability that enables local churches to reflect upon their practice	58	3	1
R56	Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life	60	5	1

Quotes from local churches' narratives

See Appendix 3 for the full versions of the local church responses.

'We have loved hosting the exhibition ... Two-thirds of our congregation came to the exhibition, together with a full congregation at a church meeting to discuss. We would be happy to talk further of our experience in working as a church through this ... particularly we would like to mention the discussions that we had for male allies, and their commitments to this'. (Blackley BC, YBA)

'We have two female ministers and women active in every area of leadership in the church. Our ongoing reflection, which we don't consider just a gendered issue is the request to reflect upon issues around under-represented groups and disability. We will be thinking how we take this forward as our Leadership Team is mainly made up of White, educated, middle class people and know that we need to be aware that it might be easy for us to have blind spots in this area'. (Bookham BC, SEBA)

'We were impressed by Project Violet. We thought it was a substantial piece of research, well conducted and addressing an important subject. We recognised that it was impossible to condense it into a 5-minute agenda item at a church meeting, and that we would need and would benefit from time to absorb, consider and discuss. Therefore, the second suggestion accepted by the church members meeting is that we have some discussion evenings in 2025 that will enable us to unpack some of the material and consider it in greater depth. The evenings would be an opportunity for some of us to share experiences, and opinions and reflect together. We are planning to use the series one podcasts for some of this'. (Rugby BC, HEBA)

'As a female minister within the Baptist denomination I was encouraged in how my church didn't just pat themselves on the back but took the report, findings and requests seriously. They reaffirmed the church's position of affirming women. As part of their commitment to listening to new voices and role models without Baptist family they agreed to carry on inviting female preaches on a Sunday and are also offering to release me to our cluster and association to enable other churches to experience female ministry. The suggestion that I could be accompanied by some of our female deacons to demonstrate diversity within female ministry was also proposed. I have let the association know'. (Hooe BC, SWBA)

'Our minister has a habit of encouraging and supporting our young leaders, walking with them in sermon prep and service leading and endeavouring to see equality at the front of church as well as across the membership. Some changes are slow steps, others I feel are already embedded in our practice'. (Brandon BC, LB)

'There was disappointment that there were no scriptural references anywhere in the document, and therefore was more secular in its approach rather than theological'. (Burgh BC, EMBA)

'Church From Scratch was disappointed that the experience of queer women was not explored as part of Project Violet, as we are a fully LGBT+ affirming church'. We plan to develop some inclusive queer liturgy as part of our ongoing effort to be radically inclusive'. (Church From Scratch, EBA)

'We are happy to accept all the recommendations but would suggest a training resource for advocacy be developed nationally that we could deliver and implement on a local and regional level (such as 'Activity Bystander training' delivered in secular organisations like the NHS but adapted for our church and translocal space settings). This resource could be like the Safeguarding training material and if developed nationally would help churches and associations not having to reinvent the wheel and also give consistency of approach'. (Darkhouse BC, HEBA)

'We found this a very affirming process. Because we have been working hard at inclusion for several years, many of these issues are already on our agenda. The discussions provoked by this process have enabled us to explore some topics we had let slide'. (Grove Lane BC, NWBA)

Quotes from local church Responses to Requests

R53 Make opportunities to listen to new voices

'We wondered if there could perhaps be a directory of those who might be prepared to bring different voices to local churches. We'd welcome the opportunity to hear different voices, but we aren't quite

sure where to begin looking as there is not a diversity in our local networks. We talked about how perhaps these could be recorded sermons that could be used by local churches rather than someone having to travel around the country'. (King's Sutton BC, SCBA)

'We need to ask some of our newer members and members of the congregations to help us do this'. (ShIPLEY BC, YBA)

R51 Local churches make their position on women's ministry known prior to settlement

'We would like to be stronger than this and would like to aim to have a page on our website about Project Violet where we state that we are open to having male or female ministers'. (Borehamwood BC, CBA)

'We entirely agree with the sentiment of the recommendation but feel that recommendation should not be addressed just to churches "that do not accept the ministry of women". We feel it wiser for ALL Baptist churches to make their position clear. Consequently, our modification reads "That Baptist congregations formally review their position prior to a settlement process and then make the position of the church meeting known on their website". In making this modification we are aware we need to do precisely this ourselves which is why we are set to address the matter in early 2025'. (Croham Road BC, LB)

'In the early part of 2025 we will embark on a short Sunday series exploring the ministry of women, after this we will send our reflections of the congregation and bring this into a statement that can be added to our website'. (Saltash BC, SWBA)

R41 Role models

'All felt that role models were important and we could have more women preaching more frequently. It was suggested that we invite more guests from under-represented groups to speak to the church'. (Belper BC, EMBA)

'This is necessary not just in relation to women but also to men and different ethnicities, etc. We would welcome more diversity and have recently agreed a church statement on inclusion, aware that currently our membership and role models reflect the predominantly white, older age group of the neighbourhood'. (Rushmere BC, EBA)

R48 Developing slow wisdom in the local church meeting

'This is our long term practice and we are committed to exploring it more deeply'. (Grove Lane BC, NWBA)

'We look forward to engaging with *Slow Wisdom* by Ruth Moriarty but felt that the request for change itself was not one that applied directly to the local church'. (Whitley Bay BC, NBA)

Ro5 Training in advocacy

'Sexism has no place in church life and we look forward to training and resourcing in this area. It was noted that the minister had spoken about racism in a recent sermon'. (Bethseda BC, Webnet)

'Having recently had to navigate the challenges for our women to feel safe, due to a vulnerable male's behaviour, we recognise the lack of training that currently exists in addressing societal undermining patriarchal behaviours. The church feel that, if this training was offered across the union, then many of our key leaders would value the wisdom and training so that everyday sexism can be helpfully called out so women can feel not only safe but able to fully participate as males feel they have the right to do. With this in mind we feel this is definitely one that would require a longer term strategy but definitely one we would commit to undertake'. (King's Community Church, HEBA)

R44 A theology of disability that enables local churches to reflect upon their practice

'As a matter of Biology, women do experience different 'problems' (menopause was mentioned by a couple of women in the Podcasts) to men, but equally these should be addressed and supported just like would for men-specific problems'. (Eastgate Union Church, EMBA)

'We welcome this wholeheartedly. It is a 'living issue' in our congregation and we recognise our need to address this by learning more about the lived experiences of those with disabilities and – as far as possible – removing barriers to their inclusion in all aspects of church life. We will focus on this request at a church service on 13th October'. (New North Road, YBA)

R56 Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life

'We make use of resources that use the male and female voices and images and old and young voices and images. We regularly de-gender songs and hymns when it is appropriate. Occasionally we use images of disabled people. We are challenged around the use of more ethnically diverse resources as we seek to reflect the people we have in the room; and in a rural chapel where the local population is predominantly white. This recommendation is useful to remind us of the need to revisit our practice from time to time, and check that it is reflecting the congregation that we have'. (Raglan BC, SWaBA)

'Agreed to look again at the visual images on the OBC website to review how they reflect the role of women and the diversity of our congregation and community in Bicester. Images on PowerPoints, backgrounds and videos to be similarly reviewed/monitored'. (Orchard BC, SCBA)

Regional associations

Completed by	Central Baptist Association (CBA) East Midland Baptist Association (EMBA) Eastern Baptist Association (EBA) Heart of England Baptist Association (HEBA) London Baptist Association (LBA) North Western Baptist Association (NWBA) Northern Baptist Association (NBA) South Eastern Baptist Association (SEBA) South Wales Baptist Association (SWaBA) South West Baptist Association (SWBA) Southern Counties Baptist Association (SCBA) West of England Baptist Association (Webnet) Yorkshire Baptist Association (YBA)
How have you discussed the findings? For example, meetings and dates	See individual responses in Appendix 4A

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
R24	Have a women's Ministry Advisor in each association	6	7	
R09	Ensure Ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces	11	2	
R40	More opportunities for collaborative and flexible ministry	10	3	
R55	Improve accompaniment of women ministers	10	2	1
R45	Ministry to the Deaf Community is Pioneer Ministry	6	4	3
R43	Moderation of the translocal space	10	2	1
R34	Colleges develop a module in intercultural ministry and communication	6	3	4
R42	Intentional support in women's discernment	10	2	1

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R04	Intentional leadership development for Women ministers	11	2	
R06	Regional Ministers proactively discuss terms and conditions during settlement process	13		
R17	Access fund for translocal life and learning	8	3	2
R28	Monitoring data throughout the vocational pathway	5	1	7
R41	Role models	12	1	
R56	Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life	12		1
R14	Invitation to Regional Justice Hubs to undertake further research using the model developed in Project Violet		4	7
R05	Training in advocacy on behalf of for ministers and MiTs receiving unequal treatment	9	3	1
R23	Resourcing Regional Justice Hubs	6	4	3
R38	Occupational health service for ministers	5	4	4
R25	Promote mutual learning between Urban Expression and Regional Ministers and local churches	9		4
R35	Review of the way in which NAMs are inducted into the habit of connection	10	1	1

Five associations (CBA, EBA, NBA, SCBA, SWaBA) have undertaken to collaborate in implementing their Commitments to Action.

Quotes from associations' narratives

'Beyond the requests marked out for associations, we considered that four others also had an impact on our work at this time, and we gladly accepted these also: R15 – Training in Governance; R32 – Ongoing use of E&D resource; R39 – Menopause; and R44 – Theology of Disability.' (EBA)

'The findings have been reviewed and discussed by the Regional Team, the EMBA Board of Directors and at a gathering of women ministers from across the EMBA.' (EMBA)

'It was felt several of the requests for change were best tackled at a different level e.g. national level or college level. Some of the requests refer to using a resource yet to be developed. It may be that the resource is developed at a national level and implemented at a regional level.' (HEBA discussion day)

'The whole Regional Team are behind this and the directors unanimously approved this last night, committing to keeping the team accountable and resourcing the actions we are taking. This is a long-term commitment, looking at changing the culture of the association, so change will happen slowly and steadily, but we are excited about what will come from this.' (LBA)

'We hope to agree this response with Trustees in October but a wider discussion with ministers and churches will take place early next year.' (NWBA)

'The trustees of SWaBA held a special meeting to discuss Project Violet. As the size of the research and number of recommendations became apparent, it was felt that we will need to be specific and strategic in looking at what we can do. Otherwise there is a danger that we may be overwhelmed by the size of the project and this could lessen its impact. A further danger was recognised in that the financial model review could divert attention to such an extent that the action is lost in the busyness of association life. Overall, the Trustees see the need for change and want to commit to action.' (SWaBA)

'As Trustees and Regional Ministers of the West of England Baptist Network, we passionately believe in the inherent equal worth of women and men, recognising that both women and men are called by God to serve in every area of Christian leadership. We do not view this service as a right, but rather a huge responsibility and a joyous privilege that is dependent upon God's call ... Whilst lament is necessary for reflection, we would ask that it be balanced with a clear vision of eschatological hope.' (Webnet)

'The YBA is committed to Project Violet findings and requests for change. As an association, our practice already encompasses some of these requests. We are committed to be more intentional and systematic in ensuring that this continues ... In addition we wish to accept R33 and R52.' (YBA)

Quotes from associations' Responses to Requests

See Appendix 4A for full responses from each association.

R24 Have a women's Ministry Advisor in each association

'We will communicate to all women ministers they can contact either female RM even if they are not their direct RM.' (SCBA)

'We recognise that with two male RMs, we need to seek additional ways for women to be supported. We will explore whether there might be a shared role with other associations.' (SWaBA)

'We are pleased that Beth Powney has already been functioning as our advisor.' (SEBA)

Rog Ensure Ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces

'Where such groups are facilitated by the association we will seek to ensure that they are constructive and inclusive spaces.' (EMBA)

'Some already feel constructive and inclusive but perhaps work can be done to identify if some groups might improve in this area. Although attendance is not compulsory it might be helpful to identify why some choose not to attend and if barriers identified in Project Violet research are a factor.' (HEBA discussion day)

R4o More opportunities for collaborative and flexible ministry

'We are exploring several situations where flexible and inventive models of ministry can be modelled. We have 4 churches with a shared ministry with a husband and wife team but need to explore other ways of offering ministry, and have churches where caring responsibilities have been honoured and well accommodated. By showing how these can bless both the church and ministers we hope to change cultural biases towards the more traditional model.' (CBA)

'It is now common to offer flexible patterns of working in most professional occupations. When the association is recruiting, we will bear in mind flexibility in working and write job descriptions and expectations with this in mind.' (LBA)

'We offer a number of creative ways in which people can minister around the region – in teams, as transitional ministers. We also try to support those in pioneering or portfolio ministries. Our approach where possible is to look at the giftings and circumstances of the individual rather than the vacancy.' (NWBA)

R55 Improve accompaniment of women ministers

'Building relationship through MITs tutoring and NAMs mentoring has proved to be very important but we have more to do to ensure the accompaniment continues as people finish NAMs.' (NBA)

'We are happy to engage with this further once the recommendations from Jane's doctoral research are offered to associations by Ministries Team.' (YBA)

R45 Ministry to the Deaf Community is Pioneer Ministry

'The CBA are already in conversation with a female deaf minister to launch Deaf Renew Well Being in the association, funded by a CBA grant. We plan then to expand into Deaf Messy Church and to fund this post with a Home Mission Grant for the deaf minister. This will then attract government funded translating.' (CBA)

'HEBA supports the work of a Deaf minister, and they are part of the Staff team at HEBA. There may be other deaf ministers considering or in training and opportunities for their ministry need to be considered and facilitated.' (HEBA)

R43 Moderation of the translocal space

'We will train those moderating translocal spaces in facilitation skills. A chaplain will be appointed for all SCBA days/events.' (SCBA)

'When training for advocacy is made available, the RMs will ensure they attend with the intention of sharing this in other translocal spaces to seek better moderated spaces.' (SWaBA)

R34 Colleges develop a module in intercultural ministry and communication

'We feel this would best sit for RMs within their induction programme which we understand Ministries Team are developing.' (SWaBA)

'We would commit to implementation of any module, to make it a requirement of the induction of any new RM's and existing RM's to complete module as a part of their CMD.' (SWBA)

R42 Intentional support in women's discernment

'Think about how we as a regional team can be role models in different contexts to different people. We will consider how we can release our two female RMs to serve across the whole association in response to this, and female DMs in the same way.' (LBA)

'We will work with Bristol Baptist College to set discernment events including women-only events on an annual basis.' (Webnet)

Ro4 Intentional Leadership Development for Women ministers

'We will be taking a lead in re-launching MagnifyYou for the CBA, EBA, SCBA, SWBA and NBA and any other associations that want to join.' (CBA)

'We will look to intentionally invest in a leadership development programme which will focus on how to lead a larger church, using the invitation model of MagnifyYou to invite those with potential to learn from larger church leaders and their experience. This leadership development programme could go beyond larger churches to other roles, but a greater focus on leading larger churches would be helpful. We will explore facilitating this in collaboration with other associations.' (LBA)

Ro6 Regional Ministers proactively discuss terms and conditions during settlement process

'RMs will commit to investing in settlement in larger churches (by being hands on or targeted moderator training/choice), learning from recent experiences of women in settlement, recognising that churches may think they have it sorted, but there is still work to be done.' (LBA)

'This already happens but would add to Cluster ministers / moderators training. In addition, we will look at diversity of those being asked to moderate.' (SWBA)

R17 Access fund for translocal life and learning

'A CMD fund already exists, make female ministers aware of it. Be open to working with ministries team and other associations in CMD.' (SCBA)

'We do not financially support Ministers-in-Training or CMD for individual ministers but seek to engage churches in the support of their leaders.' (Webnet)

'We are currently reviewing our Grants Policy and will incorporate equal opportunity monitoring into the review. We are happy to engage with Ministries Team and other associations regarding the establishment of an Access Fund.' (YBA)

R28 Monitoring data throughout the vocational pathway

'While we feel that this request resides in the domain of the ministries team we agree with its importance and that collaboration between Ministries Dept, colleges and associations would be helpful in identifying the points across the vocational pathway where it would be important to gather data.' (NBA)

'This was felt it was association responsibility – we will keep Dynamo updated with relevant information. (Capacity issue)' (SWBA)

R41 Role models

'EMBA is committed to creating as many opportunities as possible for under-represented groups/individuals to be given a platform for leadership.' (EMBA)

'We will continue to consider gender balance in trustee representation, speakers at conferences and the sharing of stories. High priority.' (SWaBA)

'We are currently seeking to populate our Trusteeship and some (working) groups and have intentionally included diversity in our criteria.' (YBA)

R56 Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life

'The Regional Team support this and will make this a specific action for our Comms Lead to take forward.' (EMBA)

'Making sure all our resources are reflective of Baptist Life noting the intersectionality of justice issues within communication.' (SCBA)

'We already include diverse by default in our visual images when advertising events or recruiting, though we can do even better. We welcome and will engage with the shared diverse by default site when set up by the Faith and Society Team.' (YBA)

R14 Invitation to Regional Justice Hubs to undertake further research using the model developed in Project Violet

'As we have not yet set up our justice hub we cannot commit to this change as yet but hope to in the future when our hub is established.' (CBA)

R05 Training in advocacy on behalf of for ministers and MiTs receiving unequal treatment

'Advocacy training module best developed nationally and implemented at regional/college and church level and included in ministers CMD.' (HEBA)

'We would seek to engage with the training once produced by the national team. In the interim we will continue to be accountable in our practice and to listen to the voices of women.' (Webnet)

R23 Resourcing Regional Justice Hubs

'As a new team this has been on our 'to do' list and remains a priority for this year.' (CBA)

'We consider it the role of the whole Regional Team and Board of Directors to have oversight of justice issues within our association.' (EMBA)

R38 Occupational health service for minister

'Excellent request and we would cooperate with Ministries Team in its development and advertise it fully.' (NBA)

'One of our women ministers has designed a theological reflection day on Menopause that we are looking to offer all women in our churches next year.' (NWBA)

'We would support the development of this in cooperation with Ministries Team.' (SEBA)

R25 Promote mutual learning between Urban Expression and Regional Ministers and local churches

'We would be willing to build relationships with UE. We already support our women pioneers via a pioneer network.' (NWBA)

'With other associations to meet with Urban Expressions to develop this. Including encouraging a conversation within Mission Forum. We also recognise that UE is not the only pioneer organisation with Baptist engagement and we will seek to develop the same relationship with all pioneer organisations which partner with SCBA & BT.' (SCBA)

R35 Review of the way in which NAMs are inducted into the habit of connection

'One of the Co-RMTLs has specific responsibility for the association NAMs, we have recently reviewed how we deliver the reflection spaces, and that review is ongoing as NAMs move through the process. Careful selection of NAMs mentors is key in ensuring and maintaining connection. Collaboration between 5 associations is a really helpful development for both reflection and shared learning.' (NBA)

'This will be an intentional question at interview mid and end of NAM's. To encourage NAM's coordinator to emphasise the habit of connection. We will also establish an online female only cluster to run alongside normal cluster meetings.' (SWBA)

'Set up social media connectivity groups. NAMs meeting together in person three times a year and also join together for a college NAMs day.' (Webnet)

Baptist colleges

Completed by	Bristol Baptist College Cardiff Baptist College Northern Baptist College Regent's Park College Spurgeon's College
How have you discussed the findings? For example, meetings and dates	<i>See individual College Responses in Appendix 5</i>

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R34	Colleges develop a module in intercultural ministry and communication	4		
R26	Improve access to funds for ministerial training	4		
Ro8	What colleges teach Ministers-in-Training	5		
R43	Moderation of the translocal space	4		
Ro1	Invitation to colleges to review their Admissions processes	5		
Ro5	Training in advocacy on behalf of for ministers and MiTs receiving unequal treatment	4		
R44	A theology of disability that enables local churches, colleges, and associations to reflect upon their practice	4		
R29	Access to debt and budgeting advice for MiTs	4	1	
R45	Ministry to the Deaf Community is Pioneer Ministry	3		
R41	Role Models	4		
R35	Review of the way in which NAMs are inducted into the habit of connection	4		

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R32	Ongoing use of 'I am because you are' resource	5		
R28	Monitoring data throughout the vocational pathway	3	1	
R02	Create 'Planning to train as a Baptist minister' resource	4	1	
R56	Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life	4		

Quotes from colleges' narratives

Representatives of all the colleges met at Regent's Park College for their Annual Conference on 4–5 September 2024 and worked on the Project Violet recommendations. This resulted in a list of recommendations for colleges alongside the Requests for Change.

'We note the commitment to at the joint staffs conference to review progress in 12 months' time and we will do the same as a college.' (Bristol Baptist College)

'We wish to offer our thanks and appreciation for all the work that has done by those involved in Project Violet, recognising that it has been significant and costly for participants, and for Jane and Helen. We acknowledge that although we have sought to make CBC a good place for women to train and work, there is more that we can do and we commit ourselves to that work not just in this coming year, but by reviewing our progress each year as part of our annual Staff Planning Week.' (Cardiff Baptist College)

'We note that because of our commitment to bi-lingual (Welsh) provision, and our partnerships with the BUW and other Welsh denominations, there will be times when there will be constraints on our collaboration, and occasions when we will need to provide additional resources for our specific context.' (Cardiff Baptist College)

'We are deeply grateful for all the work undertaken through Project Violet by all those involved which has produced a significant challenge and resources for our churches. We generally accept all the requests for change with some slight caveats listed below. We recognise that together these represent a significant commitment that will also require some significant input of both time and money.' (Regent's Park College)

'We have noted work underway either prior to or in response to Project Violet, areas where there is further work to do and areas where it is not in our gift to deliver or requires a response dependent upon wider partners.' (Northern Baptist College)

'The college accepts the recommendations in the sense that they agree with them, but as the narrative below will document, the college is not always in control of all the decisions or variables, so cannot autonomously action the recommendation.' (Spurgeon's College)

Quotes from colleges' Responses to Requests

See Appendix 5 for full responses from each college.

R34 Colleges develop a module in intercultural ministry and communication

'Knowing that some of our students will go on to settle in more intercultural contexts, how we embed such teaching in our programme will require further consideration. It may be more realistic to embed resources in existing modules rather than trying to include a separate module when module diets are often dictated by external partners.' (Cardiff Baptist College)

'Conversations needed with LKC as to where such a module would fit into the BA programme, what to take out of programme – to be looked at as part of a wider curriculum review happening this autumn.' (Northern Baptist College)

R26 Improve access to funds for ministerial training

'Bursary is retrospective – only start the application after they accept a place and start at college – would be better if this was known before accepting a place at college – this will have greatest impact on underrepresented demographics.' (Northern Baptist College)

'The ministries department have already commissioned a review of the bursary scheme. Bursary information is already available in one place on the website at Spurgeon's.' (Spurgeon's College)

Ro8 What colleges teach Ministers-in-Training

'One of the immediate tasks we are undertaking in conjunction with our partner college, Trinity college Bristol, is to review reading lists to ensure better diversity. This work is already underway.' (Bristol Baptist College)

'As college Intensive Weeks are redesigned, we will review our provision beyond our current teaching on race and gender to consider age, ability, marital status and caring responsibilities.' (Cardiff Baptist College)

R43 Moderation of the translocal space

'We will seek further training in moderation for staff and students (also see Ro5). In the meantime, we will make a resources list to explore terminology.' (Cardiff Baptist college)

'We will reflect on how 'unmoderated spaces' in college work (R34), particularly student common rooms. We will strengthen the written paperwork which stresses that the way ministerial students

interact with one another and others in college is part of the ministerial formation process and will be taken seriously in the review processes (Ro5). We will also emphasise this more in the induction week for new students, all of which will happen for the 2024–5 academic year.’ (Regent’s Park College)

Ro1 Invitation to colleges to review their admissions processes

‘We have recently considered the questions asked of all candidates for training and have doubled down on our commitment to ask questions which seek to determine the attitudes of all prospective students to women in all forms of accredited ministry. Our aim is to make sure that the college is a welcoming and hospitable place for women to come and train.’ (Bristol Baptist College)

‘Review our own admissions procedures (Ro1) which we think is a timely suggestion more generally, and to be involved in developing a wider remit for admissions (this could be part of the work of the Baptist Colleges’ Partnership and considered in the peer review process). We will do this listening to the experience of women who have been through the admissions process recently. We will aim to make this review by the end of the 2024/5 academic year.’ (Regent’s Park College)

Ro5 Training in advocacy on behalf of for ministers and MiTs receiving unequal treatment

‘To develop induction/CMD training on advocacy – in partnership with URC and LKC.’ (Northern Baptist College)

‘We will arrange within 2024–25 some training for staff on advocacy alongside disability and bystander training (Ro5) as a further commitment to ensure that the classroom allows all to flourish (R12) and to better model leadership in the college (R33).’ (Regent’s Park College)

R44 A theology of disability that enables local churches, colleges, and associations to reflect upon their practice

‘Look to develop a CMD module on Theologies of Disability – in partnership with URC and LKC as part of overall curriculum review.’ (Northern Baptist College)

‘In order to embed genuine cultural change, the college will firstly commit to ensure all staff receive disability awareness training. The rationale for this, is that disability awareness needs to be in every conversation, lecture and interaction within college, only then will it more naturally flow down into all lectures and interactions with students.’ (Spurgeon’s College)

R29 Access to debt and budgeting advice for MiTs

‘Spurgeon’s will seek out a way to sign post to independent advice, taking into account that financial advice is regulated.’ (Spurgeon’s College)

R45 Ministry to the Deaf Community is Pioneer Ministry

‘We will ensure that all students receive some Deaf Awareness training and will signpost students to appropriate resources and people.’ (Cardiff Baptist College)

'Pilot of new Deaf Awareness training which we have helped to develop is due to run in January 2025. Ongoing conversations on settlement of Deaf MiTs.' (Northern Baptist College)

R41 Role Models

'Increasing use of zoom to enable a greater diversity of guest tutors to contribute to classes.' (Northern Baptist College)

'Ethnic diversity and gender diversity is well represented on our governing bodies at Spurgeon's. We regularly invite preachers who are women and global majority heritage (GMH) men and women to preach in the college chapel. We continue to regularly monitor to increase GMH tutors to teach on our theology and ministry programmes.' (Spurgeon's College)

R35 Review of the way in which NAMs are inducted into the habit of connection

'Clear guidance to churches when a MIT settles re expectations in terms of finance to attend NAMs conferences etc.' (Northern Baptist College)

'We will be more intentional and explicit in making sure that women are aware of support networks when they leave college (R35) by adapting the session in year 3 that looks at ministry beyond college and ensuring that the paperwork for end of year interviews explicitly includes this in the year 3 interview.' (Regent's Park College)

R32 Ongoing use of 'I am because you are' resource

'Spurgeon's college will ensure that all Baptist Ministers-in-Training in the college are made aware of the resource 'I am because you are' during their training and of the requirement to engage with this resource.' (Spurgeon's College)

'Caveat is that the 'I am because you are resource' is at a very basic level which we hope our formation and academic programmes are building on.' (Northern Baptist College)

R28 Monitoring data throughout the vocational pathway

'Be involved in any collection and monitoring of data for MiTs and NAMs.' (Regent's Park College)

'Design and analysis of the resulting data is best handled by industry experts. Their involvement would provide credibility to the project's overall findings and would ensure they can withstand outside scrutiny.' (Spurgeon's College)

Ro2 Create 'Planning to train as a Baptist minister' resource

'There are a significant number of responses to Project Violet which will be handled at a college wide level, for example, the development of promotional videos to encourage women and also men to consider Ministerial Training at a Baptist college.' (Bristol Baptist College)

R56 Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life

'We will develop a practice of 'noticing' any lack of diversity when reflecting with students on sessions they have led.' (Cardiff Baptist College)

'Be involved where we can intentionally to develop scholars and teachers from marginalised groups (R56). In particular we will seek to do this as part of the work of the CBS and a developing focus on Black theology with Professor Anthony Reddie.' (Regent's Park College)

Ministries Team – MRC

Completed by	Tim Fergusson and Lee Johnson
How have you discussed the findings? For example, meetings and dates	Through a series of meetings since May between ourselves as Ministries Team Co-Leaders, in conversation with the other Specialist Team Leaders, the Project Violet Coordination Group CLT, and with Jane Day and Helen Cameron.

These requests for change were given to us in the priority order agreed at the Project Violet Co-researchers conference on 18 April 2024. For simplicity of reference, we have re-ordered the requests to Ministries in numerical order:

R7, R10, R13, R16, R17, R18, R24, R26, R28, R29, R32, R34, R35, R37, R38, R39, R40, R42, R47, R55

Note that neither R18 nor R26 were included in our original Commitment to Action template, but Ministries Team is listed as the lead partner in the PV combined requests-for-change document.

R13 and R30 have also been included as implementation falls at least in part to Isabella Senior who works within the Ministries Team.

No.	Short Name	Yes	Modify	No	Commentary
R07	Expand Settlement Guidance to include marital status				The settlement guidance is currently being rewritten. We have consulted with Carol Bostridge over some proposed changes and these have been agree. The new documents will be published in September.
R10	Amend MRC rules to include language and behaviour on social media.				The MR Rules have been amended and the changes shared with JD, HC and HY. They will be part of a pack of MR Rules revisions going to Council for approval in October.
R13	Agree new ways of describing young leaders				(R13 was not originally allocated to Ministries, but enacting a response sits with the YLDC.) The YART has discussed this and suggested that it is better to refer to specific age groups rather than an ambiguous term like 'young'. We are asking Trustees to make the YLDC role permanent and to call it the '18 to 35s Coordinator.' We will then have to reflect this changes across our documents.
R16	Statement of expectations of ministry in the trans-local space				The request asks for an appendix to the Marks of Ministry that lays out particular behaviour expectations for translocal ministers. We support the concept, but would create as a separate document and/or as part of a translocal leader induction, rather than amend the MoM.
R17	Access fund for translocal life and learning				CMD grants are already available to those in poorly resourced settings and these maybe used for accessing ministers' conferences, Assembly, etc. Nevertheless, the amount available is modest. We can envisage an expanded means-tested CMD pot with a more structured CMD grant application process, administered by an appointed group. This assumes more money would be made available for CMD activity, so our commitment to this action remains tentative. We will look at re-iterating our message to churches about supporting their minister's CMD. R17 also includes a quite separate request asking for better funding to

				colleges that specialise in training those with deafness or disability. We would support this notion where specific costs can be identified, but again, this incurs additional costs that have not been agreed.
R18	National chaplaincy development role.			While we would be grateful to have a dedicated national staff member to promote and support chaplaincy, we suspect there are other more pressing priorities on BU finances. We are working with the chaplaincy forum to look at what the purpose of the role would be and the best way of achieving the desired end.
R26	Improve access to funds for ministerial training			There is a range of requests under this one heading. We already know that the Kingdom Bank loan offer is not being taken up. We already means test bursary allocations. We already know that bursaries are awarded only up to 50% of each MiT's shortfall. We support ongoing promotion of the Stewardship crowd-funding model. We do not support setting up a working group to look at the feasibility of fully-funded training as this would repeat the work done on this topic as reported to Council in 2022. Nevertheless, there are some options if we were to fund raise from churches directly for ministerial formation. We should also be able to make information regarding bursaries more apparent.
R28	Monitoring data throughout the vocational pathway			The request asks for data to be collected and tracked on age*, gender*, race, disability, chronic health conditions, caring responsibilities, contracted hours, type of ministry*. Those starred we already collect. There is considerable complexity in gathering data on the rest with respect to defining categories, the means of collecting data, the grounds for keeping data, and how the data is interpreted. The request focuses especially on determining the gender pay gap and we support the principle that this should be done. We believe we will need expert input on the appropriate and fruitful collection of data. This carries financial implications.

R29	Access to debt and budgeting advice for MiTs				For the number of MiTs we have, we do not think a national arrangement with a debt advice provider is justified. Colleges and regional teams can signpost MiTs to local debt advice providers if they wish, but we would also expect MiTs to be able to access debt advice themselves.
R30	Culturally appropriate information on ministry internships for parents				(R30 was not originally allocated to Ministries, but to Isabella Senior. We respond here as she sits within Ministries.) Isabella is working with Clare Hooper on how resources may be created or revised to address this. It will be discussed at the forthcoming joint CYF and young adults round tables. Any information will need to reassure parents and give agency to young people.
R32	Ongoing use of 'I am because you are' resource				This is already in hand. Colleges all either include some E&D training for MiTs, or foster a culture of awareness of E&D during formation. Whether colleges choose to use the IABYA videos is a matter for them. We continue to monitor and state the number of ministers who have engaged with the IABYA resource. The implications of not engaging have been made clear.
R35	Review of the way in which NAMs are inducted into the habit of connection				Ministries have documents and processes in place that already address this. The principles of CMD, including the habit of connection, were embedded within the NAM's programme documents in 2021. We relentlessly push the importance of ministers connecting with one another and receiving accompaniment. Regarding the need for further resources to help the connection of those in less affluent settings, please see R17 above. Colleges and associations may need to reflect on how they foster supportive connection in theological reflection groups and minister clusters etc.

R37	Amend policy on disputes				The request is not accurate in that ministers who are subject to a complaint and/or investigation are encouraged to identify a support group of their choosing which may or may not include their regional team. We will review how we encourage support for complainants and whether we have a greater responsibility when the complainant is themselves a minister. We would not support the appointment of a panel of independent accompaniers as those needing accompaniment tend to look to those they are in relationship with.
R38	Occupational health service for ministers				We support the idea of signposting people to occupational health services, but not an open-ended arrangement in which all ministers can self-refer to a paid-for service. We will work with Rahel Stone to explore our options.
R39	Training resource on responding well to the menopause				We support this idea and will work with partners with expertise to develop some training.
R40	More opportunities for collaborative and flexible ministry				We feel this request does not sit with Ministries but with the associations in their journeying with ministers and churches in settlement.
R42	Intentional support in women's discernment				We are mindful of diversity when producing our guidance and resources. We feel that the bulk of this request does not sit with Ministries but with associations.

R47	Develop additional model policies				A paternity (and shared parental) leave policy is already appended to the recommended terms of appointment. We support the need for a menopause policy. We support the need for an anti-harrassment and bullying policy and can work with Rachel Stone to adapt the new policy for churches into something suitable for ministers. We support the need for a policy on ministers with caring responsibilities. We support the need for a grievance policy. We recognise that some of these will be complex to create.
R49	Amend safeguarding guidance and training to address unwanted touching and prayers for those with a disability				(R49 was not originally allocated to Ministries Team.) We support and are working on some pastoral boundary training for ministers that will address the use of touch.
R55	Improve accompaniment of women ministers				We do not think there is anything for Ministries to commission here, but we will consider any recommendations arising from Jane's work, once complete.
Note too these theological reflection requests:					
R03	Leaflet on 'Theology of provision'				We anticipate Ministries Team involvement in any theological reflection, but we wonder whether this matter will be better addressed by the writing of a leaflet for churches encouraging their support for ministerial formation. It would of course involve theological reflection.
R19 (P-)	Update theology of chaplaincy				We anticipate Ministries Team involvement in any theological reflection.

R27 (P-)	Theology of ministry				We anticipate Ministries Team involvement in any theological reflection.
R36 (P-)	Theology of bi-vocational ministry				We anticipate Ministries Team involvement in any theological reflection. Work on this should be combined with that for R27.

Faith and Society Team

How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	Together as a team on 10 July 2024
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Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R20	Guide to inclusive language	X		
R22	Clarify the relationship between national and regional gender justice hubs	X		
R46	Good practice in inclusive communication for those with additional needs	X		
R56	Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life	X		

Narrative

Our starting points will be:

- **Review the Methodist guides** to inclusive language and inclusive images and think about what we would want to include – images, socials, curating meetings to make them 'diverse by default'. Seek permission to adapt this for our own use.
- **Set up a new 'diverse by default' area of the website** with links to each section of our guide to inclusive language. Mike Lowe to draw up a project plan for this, including a national campaign to raise awareness.
- Get a group together from various justice perspectives (disability justice, racial justice, cyf etc) to **draw up a 'diverse by default' checklist for any project**.
- Ensuring that any **films we share have subtitled versions** available – using the YouTube algorithm to create them. Asking Fuelcast to provide subtitles on films they create for us. When sharing YouTube videos from other organisations, encourage people to click 'CC' for captions if not on by default.
- As a longer term aim, **review existing documents and images used on the website and in our resources** – possibly inviting an intern/temp to assist with identifying issues according to a set of pre-agreed criteria.
- Work with colleagues and other stakeholders to review the gender justice hub, in the context of the intersectionality of issues of justice across Baptists Together.

We will continue to action and review until these requests are complete.

National HR and Safeguarding Team

Completed by	Rachel Stone (HR and Safeguarding Team Leader)
How have you discussed the findings? For example, meetings and dates	Additions to the 2024 and 2025 work plans for HR and Safeguarding.

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
Ro49	Amend safeguarding guidance and training to address unwanted touching and prayers for those with a disability	X		

Narrative

The issue of inappropriate touching is part of our recent publication on helping ministers and church leaders deal with and prevent bullying and harassment. Praying for someone with a disability without their consent is given as a specific example in the section relating to harassment of people with disabilities.

In addition, we will look to include specific guidance on unwanted touching and praying or those with disabilities without their consent as part of our template HR and safeguarding policies and procedures for Baptist churches.

Specialist Team Leaders

How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	A number of meetings and on-going discussion reviewing requests.
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Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R15	Training in governance	X		
R31	Adopt a new approach to developing Baptist resources	X		
R38	Occupational health service for ministers	X		
R39	Training resource on responding well to the menopause	X		
R47	Develop additional policies	X		
R54	Future of Centenary Development Enabler role		X	

BU Council

Name of Stakeholder	Baptist Union Council
How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	Lynn and I (Seidel) met a few times to discuss the three requests for change relating to BU Council. Some of them were discussed when CLT met on 5-6 June 2024. Other discussions took place in August and September 2024 via email. Again, Lynn and I met on 02 October 2024 to discuss our response to the three requests.

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R43	Moderation of the Translocal Space	X		
R46	Good practice in inclusive communication for those with additional needs			
R50	Maintain an openness to ecumenical learning	X		
R57	Call for a season of lament in response to the findings or Project Violet	X		

Narrative

Response to R43: At Council, I moderate most of the items on the agenda and I will ensure that it is a safe space for women. Other agenda items, such as group discussions around the small tables (around 15 tables) and informal conversations around breaks and meals, are difficult to moderate myself. However, I note the importance of the moderation of the translocal space, and I will work with Lynn, Diane and others to ensure that there is a Pastoral Accompanier or Chaplain present who is available to listen and advocate for them.

Response to R50: In early September 2024, Lynn Green, Hilary Treavis, Diane Watts, and I were discussing ecumenical representatives for the BU Council. We have approached two denominations to send in their representatives' names. We prefer that both women and men be our ecumenical representatives, and we have communicated our preference for a diverse council to these denominations.

Response to R57: Over the last few weeks, CLT, particularly Lynn Green, Clara Rushbrook and Carl Smethurst, have been working on resources for Lament. A plan has been agreed for the October 2024 BU Council, a series of prayer events between October 2024 and March 2024, discussion and reflection at the March 2025 BU Council and for the May 2025 BU Assembly. At the October 2024 BU Council, we are planning to begin a season of lament.

Rev Dr Seidel Abel Boanerges
Moderator, BU Council

Baptist Trustees

The Trustees commit to considering **R54 Future of Centenary Development Enabler Role**, alongside a number of related projects and plans.

We have received reports on the progress of Project Violet over the last three years.

Andrew Cowley
Chair
Baptist Trustees

Mission Forum

Mission Forum has been a primary stakeholder in Project Violet over the last few years and together we have deeply valued the opportunity to encourage this remarkable research into the experiences of women in Baptist ministry. Much of the research gives us cause to lament and pause to consider the impact of the injustices experienced by women in our Baptist family. However, we are deeply grateful for the helpful way the research looks to a brighter future, challenging, indeed compelling us to intentionally repent and walk a better path ahead. While Mission Forum as a body has not been asked to respond to any of the 57 requests for change specifically, we spent time at our most recent gathering reflecting on the findings in the sixteen areas of research. This included a time of naming and celebrating some of the women pioneers and leaders who have inspired and influenced the Baptist family in mission. As a result, we committed to promote the findings and respond both individually and through the various networks we represent. For God's Kingdom to be truly reflected in the mission and ministry of our Baptist movement, women must be valued, encouraged and championed in all expressions of their ministerial and missional lives – Mission Forum will seek to do this in all our endeavours and humbly invite others to hold us to account in this.

CARL SMETHURST, PENNY MARSH, SANDRA CRAWFORD, SIMON GODDARD & STEVE TINNING -
THE MISSION FORUM ORGANISING TEAM

Core Leadership Team

How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	At our CLT gatherings on 22nd May, 6 th June and 18 th September 2024.
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Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R13	Agree new ways of describing young leaders.	X		
R18	Create a national chaplaincy role		X	
R19,21,27,36,44	Theological reflection requests		X	
R43	Moderation of the translocal space	X		

Narrative

CLT would like to potentially modify some of the requests made. CLT welcomes the opportunity to understand more fully the underlying issues and engage in work in a prioritised way to best address what has been highlighted.

Theological Reflection Group of CLT

Project Violet made six requests that CLT commission Theological Reflection on various issues that had arisen in the research. CLT discussed the commissioning of this work at their meeting on 17–18 September 2024 and Anthony Clarke undertook to discuss the work with Ed Kaneen and Rosa Hunt, the coordinators of Theological Reflection on behalf of CLT.

The work CLT is being asked to commission is summarised below:

Theology of Ministry

That a group is formed to address:

R19 Update 'Theology of Chaplaincy'

R27 Theology of Ministry

R36 Theology of Bi-vocational Ministry

R03 Leaflet on theology of provision for local churches

Outputs requested

R19 Update 'Theology of Chaplaincy' – A review of existing theological statements about chaplaincy. Resulting in a booklet explaining the place of chaplaincy in Baptist life that could be used by chaplains in seeking to explain their work to local churches or when explaining to host organisations or ecumenical colleagues their role as a minister.

R27 Theology of Ministry – A document for colleges and associations that builds upon the Marks of Ministry and draws together the theology underpinning current policies such as CMD and EDI in a way that can guide the implementation of policies and the provision of learning.

R36 Theology of Bi-vocational Ministry – A theological reflection on bi-vocational ministry addressing the issues raised in the findings and as a basis for future policy discussions instigated by Ministries Team.

R03 Leaflet on theology of provision for local churches – Ministries Team to draft an information leaflet for local church on the funding of Ministers-in-Training that can be sent to sending churches and placement churches to help them understand their role. Ministries Team to seek theological input to this leaflet from this group.

R21 Complementarianism and headship – holding these theologies in the translocal space

Output requested

A theological statement on holding theological differences well that can be used to inform the ethos and practice of those Baptist organisations and groups that work in the translocal space.

R44 A theology of disability that enables local churches, colleges, and associations to reflect upon their practice

The Disability Theology Group of the Disability Justice Hub have been in touch since the launch to offer the work they have already done.

Output requested

A review of the existing disability theology written by Baptists and resources that have been created for local churches and associations.

A reading list available to all colleges.

A resource that guides a local church through reflection upon their theology and practice in relation to disability.

Chaplaincy Forum

Requests R17, R18 and R19 were discussed by the National Chaplains' gathering on 22 April 2024.

See the Ministries Team response for the next steps.

Pioneer Round Table

How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	The meeting of the Round Table on 2 nd July 2024 and subsequent conversations between the Pioneer Ambassadors (Ali Boulton, Simon Goddard and Roy Searle).
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Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R25	Promote mutual learning between UE and others.		X	
R45	Ministry to the deaf community is pioneer ministry.	X		

Narrative

Please see below for narratives related to our decisions.

R25 – Promote mutual learning between Urban Expression and Regional Ministers and local churches in dialogue with Pioneer Round Table

The co-researcher report related to this request prompted a helpful conversation at the Pioneer Round Table. The general comments about female pioneers resonated with those on the Round Table, as did the call for us to operate relationally. Most of the women present found the round table to be operating relationally and nurtured friendship and support between us, although everyone is also in favour of an in person gathering. That said, there was a general feeling that the wording of the request demonstrated a misunderstanding in the nature of the Pioneer Round Table and its place within Baptists Together.

Eight years ago, an application was made to the Baptists Strategic Mission Fund to appoint Roy Searle and Simon Goddard as Pioneer Ambassadors. That fund has released a grant every year since, and for the last six years, with the appointment of Ali Boulton as a third Ambassador, it has been split three ways. This funding enables each of them to be contracted for approximately 30 days each year to support and advocate for Baptist pioneers. They are accountable to the Grants Committee for the work that they do.

A few years ago, the Ambassadors pulled together the Pioneer Round Table to more effectively hear the voice of pioneers from across the movement. There was an explicit method for identifying those who would be on the Round Table – which involved finding a practitioner from each region. These people were chosen by us, and were not appointees of the association, even though we were in conversation with Regional Ministers about the setting up of the Round Table. In addition to those representing pioneers in each region, there are additional representatives from various networks and calling/sending bodies, such as Urban Expression and Rural Ministries.

Whilst pioneering is an expressed priority within Baptists Together, there is currently no funding attached to the operation of the Round Table. This means that we have only been able to meet online. This does limit the relational element of how we operate, but in our two-hour meetings we do as much as we are able to create space for this – for example, always starting with a ‘check-in’ to see how people are, and always ending with an opportunity to go into breakout groups to pray for one another. It is therefore probably true to say that it is our lack of institutional support that inhibits our ability to be more relational. If pioneer representatives were association appointees, for example, they would be able to claim expenses for a residential gathering, or if the Round Table had a place within the ‘structures’ of the Union there would be the finance provided for it to meet and operate effectively. Neither of these are the case.

It is also worth saying that the Pioneer Ambassadors and the Pioneer Round Table exist to represent the broad range of pioneers across our Baptist movement. The ‘Pioneer Spectrum’ created by Tina Hodgett and Paul Bradbury (see particularly Figure 1 in this [Anvil article](#)) describes a variety of approaches to pioneering from inherited models of church planting at one end to community activism at the other. Urban Expression has a long and respected history of mission in areas of urban marginality, but it represents only a proportion of Baptist pioneers. The Round Table seeks to represent this broader grouping, for example those who are pioneering in new housing developments, or those working in relationship with existing expressions of church.

We have also initiated a process to review the role that the Round Table plays within the life of Baptists Together, and what funds might be released to support this. There is a tension here, however, because a clearer ‘relationship’ with specialist and regional teams may be perceived by some as becoming even more ‘institutional’.

Separate from these discussions, and those initiated by Project Violet, the Pioneer Round Table has been seeking funding to enable us to have a residential gathering during 2024. We are yet to identify a source of the funding but are committed to meeting as pioneers for 24 hours this year, even if this needs to be taken from the allocation set aside to pay the Pioneer Ambassadors.

With all of this said there is nonetheless agreement with the thrust of the request of better relationships for the purpose of mutual learning. About seven years ago a series of six conversations were facilitated by the Pioneer Ambassadors between Regional Ministers and pioneers. In addition, two years ago we invited Regional Ministers to a round table gathering and facilitated a conversation with that enabled us to raise concerns and share good pioneering practice.

We are supportive of more relationship building taking place that enables all parts of our Baptist family – local, regional and national – to have conversations and share learning that encourages a broad range of pioneering across our Baptist movement. Urban Expression who represent a good number of Baptist pioneers should definitely be one of those conversation partners. We have therefore modified the text of the request to read as follows:

The specific text of the request for change is as follows:

‘Conversations are facilitated for the purposes of building local, regional and national relationships that enable mutual learning across the spectrum of Baptist pioneering.’

R45 – Ministry to the Deaf community is pioneer ministry

The Pioneer Round Table had no hesitations in affirming that those who are ministering to the deaf community are pioneers. Although the specific request is about collaboration between associations and Northern College around pioneer opportunities and financial support, we nonetheless affirmed our desire to have someone to represent pioneers to the Deaf Community as part of the Pioneer Round Table. It would be our hope that through the Round Table, the Pioneer Ambassadors might be able to advocate for these pioneers, like the others that we support, as they seek to overcome the challenges that they face. At the same time, however, we noted that there might be a resource commitment (in terms of providing a BSL interpreter) to enable this. As explained in our response to request R25, the Pioneer Round Table currently has no budget to support our gatherings which currently occur online three times a year. We will be raising this need as part of a review of the Pioneer Ambassador roles, and the Pioneer Round Table, that we hope will be taking place later in 2024.

Children Youth and Family Round Table

The CYF Roundtable have looked at the place of children and young people in the requests made to Local Churches.

MAKE OPPORTUNITIES TO LISTEN TO NEW VOICES

Thinking through the resources that we use; do they model a variety of voices?

If we take young people to events do we consider what's being taught and modelled in these spaces? Is there opportunity to help young people reflect on what's being modelled?

LOCAL CHURCHES MAKE THEIR POSITION ON WOMEN'S MINISTRY KNOWN PRIOR TO SETTLEMENT

How does this impact those involved in ministry with children and young people?

Is this something you encourage the young people to consider if they move or head off to university?

How might all girls in our churches know that a calling to Baptist ministry is possible for them?

ROLE MODELS

In your context what roles do the children and young people see women in?

If there's a lack of representation how might this be addressed?

DEVELOPING SLOW WISDOM IN THE LOCAL CHURCH MEETING

How are your church meetings held so that all can participate in the discernment?

Do the children and young people know how decisions are made in the church, and what are the opportunities for their contribution to the discernment process?

TRAINING IN ADVOCACY

How easy do you find it to challenge sexist language, attitudes and behaviour in the children and young people's groups?

What would it look like to equip them to challenge any unhelpful language and behaviour in their peer groups?

A THEOLOGY OF DISABILITY THAT ENABLES CHURCHES TO REFLECT UPON THEIR PRACTICE

Is this something that you've reflected on with your team?

How has your theology of disability impacted on your practice?

How have you begun to open this up for discussion and reflection with children and young people?

USE RESOURCES THAT REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF BAPTIST CHURCH LIFE

Consider doing an audit of the resources used (toys, books etc) in all the children's groups to see if they reflect the diversity of Baptist life.

Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Committee

How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	We have discussed on a zoom meeting 24 th May.
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Using the 'Listed by Stakeholder' index, identify the Requests for Change that you are being asked to respond to and put their numbers in this grid. You can then download the appropriate Requests for Change from the website and discuss your responses.

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R12	Call for male ministers to be allies in private and public	X		
R33	Call for White ministers to challenge racism in private and public	X		

Narrative

We note that the in the areas we were asked to look at there was not much to change but have an awareness. We have accepted them because we are doing them already so little to change.

Order for Baptist Ministry

How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	Core Group discussion 30.9.24
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Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R12	Call for male ministers to be allies in private and public	X		
R33	Call for White ministers to challenge racism in private and public	X		

Narrative

These unanimous affirmations of the two recommendation which you have asked *The Order for Baptist Ministry* (OBM) to consider have been made by its Core Group (i.e. its Leadership Team), and we shall take these for wider affirmation to our Convocation (our Community gathering) in November.

We noted how amongst the Core Group are former members of the *Gender Justice Group* (Geoff Colmer), and the first Chair of the *Women's Issues Working Group* (Jenny Few), and so we have an important overlap between those who have espoused gender justice for some time, and membership of OBM. The Chair of the group that met to consider founding the Order in 2010 was a woman (Ruth Bottom) and we have had women on the Core Group from its inception, reflecting the participation of women from the outset. In November 2024 Paul Goodliff steps down from being Convenor of the Core Group, to be replaced by Hannah Freeland: another significant step in ensuring women and men serve on equal terms in the life of the Order.

In affirming we noted how we must also take responsibility for ensuring our own life and practices reflect those commitments. We hope to increase the representation of women members of OBM on our Core Group by November 2025. We currently have three women out of ten Core Group members, which may be representative of the proportion of women to men in the Order, but not of our aspiration to offer the Order to more women ministers. We do not advertise, and so it does rather depend upon word of mouth.

We noted how the Order in its early days might have felt like a rather male-dominated institution, reflecting the historical fact that its founders were four ministers who trained together at Spurgeon's College, and one its former tutors. While the forming group was expanded to ten ministers, some of whom were women, we reflected in Core Group that the Order's 'DNA' had a significant male component, and this required some 'gene therapy' to alter. Time will be given at the November 2024 Convocation to discuss these issues with those from the Order who will gather then.

In that regard, we also want to find ways of making OBM known to both more women, and more ministers from black and Asian backgrounds. OBM as a way of expressing Baptist ministry is not always attractive to those communities, which tend to draw from a more Pentecostal / Charismatic stream, but we know that there are some who might find its practices and values helpful.

Rev'd Dr. Paul Goodliff

Convenor, Core Group for *The Order for Baptist Ministry*

30 September 2024

Fresh Streams

How have you discussed the findings? For example, meetings and dates	Yes we've discussed this at our Fresh Streams Leadership Team meetings on two occasions
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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
R40	More opportunities for collaborative and flexible ministry	X		
R45	Ministry to the Deaf Community is Pioneer Ministry	X		
R43	Moderation of the translocal space	X		
R04	Intentional Leadership Development for Women ministers	X		
R41	Role models	X		
R56	Use resources that reflect the diversity of Baptist life	X		

Narrative

I've attached the template and answered the six requests that we specifically felt we could engage with as a Network.

We wanted to do this to continue our championing and support of women in ministry and for Fresh Streams to be a safe space for women in ministry.

Blessings
Andy

Rev Canon Andy Glover

Larger Churches Network

The core team of the Larger Churches Network agreed the following on 30th September 2024.

As the Larger Churches Network we are committed to engaging with the findings from Project Violet in order to see change in the experiences of women in ministry and in enabling more women to find their voice and their place in larger Baptist churches. Via our national conference and in other relational ways we will facilitate conversation and discussion about how we can implement the requests for change. We want to see more women released into the leadership of larger churches in our Baptist family and we are committed to being part of the culture change that enables that to happen.

Ellen Wild

Mark Massey

Reuben Martin

Yinka Oyekan

Nigel Coles

Paul Lavender

Small Church Connexion

How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)	Zoom meeting 14 th May
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Using the 'Listed by Stakeholder' index, identify the Requests for Change that you are being asked to respond to and put their numbers in this grid. You can then download the appropriate Requests for Change from the website and discuss your responses.

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R09	Minister's groups	X		
R48	Developing wisdom in church meetings	X		
R52	Equality, diversity & inclusion training	X		
R53	Opportunities to listen to new voices	X		

Narrative

We spoke as the Small Church Connexion Team about your email (14th May) and looked at the four particular items you recommended we look at in particular.

All of these seemed to us no-brainers as we would hope to behave as it suggests at all times and in all contexts.

Hilary Taylor, Sue Hensby, Tim Lovejoy and Jonathan Martin.

Disability Justice Hub

<p>How have you discussed the findings? (for example, meetings and dates)</p>	<p>After some fruitful discussions with the Project Violet team and within the Disability Justice Hub (DJH), our proposal is that the DJH should act as a partner to the various streams of work that emerge in response to Project Violet. In this way, the DJH can walk alongside each stream of work, ensuring that proposed actions or changes take into account a disability perspective, both theologically and practically. The aim is that disability justice for women pervades the impact that Project Violet has across the Baptist Union.</p> <p>Request number 44 suggested the development of a theology of disability. In fact, there is an increasingly large body of academic and practical work already in existence exploring the theology of disability, including that already produced by the DJH. The purpose of taking the present approach in response to Request 44, and the other Requests noted below, is to use those existing resources to influence the church's theological thinking and practice in as broad a way as possible. In working with and contributing to the various streams of Project Violet work, we would also signpost resources such as this for those who want to dig deeper into the disability implications of each stream.</p>
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Using the 'Listed by Stakeholder' index, identify the Requests for Change that you are being asked to respond to and put their numbers in this grid. You can then download the appropriate Requests for Change from the website and discuss your responses.

Request Number	Short Name	Accepted	Modified	Declined
R44	A theology of disability that enables local churches, colleges, and associations to reflect upon their practice	X		
R49	Amend safeguarding guidance and training to address unwanted touching and prayers for those with a disability	X		
Ro8	What colleges teach Ministers-in-Training (with respect to disability)		X	
R11	Standardise terms and conditions for Regional Ministers (with respect to disability)		X	

R17	Access fund for translocal life and learning (with respect to disability)		X	
R28	Monitoring data throughout the vocational pathway (with respect to disability)		X	
R42	Intentional support in women's discernment (with respect to disability)		X	
R46	Good practice in inclusive communication for those with additional needs	X		

Racial Justice Hub

The conversations I had with my colleagues about PV pivoted around the intersection between gender, race and disability. As much as we affirm the current efforts, the group I met with are keen for the approach to continue.

Wale Hudson-Roberts
Justice Enabler

BU Scotland

Thank you, Helen and Jane – not least for this project, and its scope and breadth.

I have found it especially helpful to track with Laura Gilmour through this project.

I have arranged for her to present some of the key findings of Project Violet to a Training Day for the BUS Board of Ministry on 3 December.

My hope is that this will help Board members understand better what are some of the impressions felt and hurdles faced by women who seek ministry, whether in our churches or in chaplaincy.

Following this, the Executive of the Board will look to see what further responses might be most helpful.

Best wishes,

Andrew
Andrew Clarke

Leadership Development Lead
Baptist Union of Scotland
48 Speirs Wharf
Glasgow G4 9TH

EMBA Retired Baptist Ministers' Network

(RBMN) September 2024

This Response Document has been completed after an open discussion session at the EMBA RBMN Planning Team Meeting on September 10th. Those present were (alphabetical): Michael Bochenki, Mark Clay, Ron Day, Clive Doubleday, David Luce, Nic Hasnip, Becky Nicholls, and Dick Prior. Apologies: Jane Webb. During the session, all present were asked in turn to reflect on Project Violet and in particular to respond to these three questions:

What are your general reflections on Project Violet?

Has it been our experience that Ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces?

Do we agree with the call for all male Ministers to be allies of Women in Baptist Ministry... in private and public?

A summary of our discussion follows:

- PV is a fine, substantial and important piece of work. Those who worked on, contributed to and prepared it should be rightly commended.
- Examples of times when insisting on openness to female ministry was our way of expressing solidarity and that we indeed want to be allies were shared – for example in helping as a Moderator to shape a Church Profile OR insisting on the best person for the job in local church appointments.
- Some of us began ministry in places where women were not “allowed” to become Deacons or Elders, never mind Ministers. Most, if not all, within BT have moved on significantly since such times. The Union in the early C21st is a very different movement to that of, say, the 1960s ...and often for the better.
- Responding fully to PV will involve balancing many reasonable expectations, hurts and hopes, demands and requests ...and all against the background of a Baptists Together (BT) Movement facing severe financial constraints and several other important demands and requests.
- Pragmatism and realism are vital now and in the future - “You can’t always get what you want.”
- 40% of those currently training for Baptist Ministry are women. Similar proportions apply to the CofE too.
- The quality of the academic research behind PV is clear and self-evident. Occasionally, however, this hinders accessibility.
- The PODCASTS were really helpful and appreciated.
- Others shared examples of times when they had had to call out bigotry and chauvinism – for example in a College setting or that of a Ministers’ Meeting.
- The overall number of Requests from PV is overwhelming. It might have have been more effective to have pruned the list and concentrated on fewer next steps or courses of urgent action?
- More thought as to “manageable outcomes” would have strengthened the PV documentation / requests.

- “When it comes to money” we are all of the same religion” (!). There is a financial naivety at times in the PV requests. Some of those receiving these requests are already experiencing significant financial distress.
- God’s calling is what truly matters, not the leader’s gender.
- The balance of a complete Regional Ministry Team – administrative and support teams too - needs to be borne in mind. To only concentrate on accredited ministers is to deny “the priesthood of all believers.” Association teams and their ministry is bigger and broader than just its Regional Ministers!
- Examples of women thoroughly enjoying Baptist Ministry and experiencing consistent support from male colleagues were noted – see Pam Bryan’s testimony below for example.
- Several shared examples of Baptist Women Ministers we had worked with or known. The evidence of Christ at work in their lives and ministries spoke more powerfully to us than some carefully selected (and often misrepresented) biblical texts.

As part of the RBMN Project Violet Consultation Retired Baptists Ministers in the Association, who wanted to, were invited to submit their own reminiscences and reflections on Project Violet. A copy of these responses and of the introductory material that was sent out is included below.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2024 the Project Violet findings were released. A summary article was published in the Baptist Times with links to the wide range of associated materials:

Project Violet findings released Baptist Times, 02/05/2024

Project Violet is a major study into women's experience of ministry, which has sought to understand more fully the theological, missional, and structural obstacles women ministers face in the Baptist community in England and Wales. The findings of the three year research project were released on 2 May. The findings include a series of requests for change addressed to Baptists Together national structures, Regional Associations, Colleges and local churches.

They are grouped around three hopes:

That women will flourish in ministry from the point at which they first recognise a call all the way through to retirement.

That women will find themselves supported and valued in whatever type of ministry they find themselves.

That the Baptist community will change some of its ways of working to ensure more just outcomes for women ministers.

General Secretary Lynn Green said, 'This is a wide-reaching agenda for change and we will want to take some time to digest the findings and discern the way forward. 'I encourage all parts of Baptist life to join in the process of responding to the findings and committing to action.' All parts of Baptist life have been invited to plan opportunities to discuss and respond to the findings between May and September 2024. Commitments to action will be received formally by Baptist Union Council on 23 October 2024. The requests for change are based upon 16 pieces of research undertaken by Baptist women ministers and a process of theological reflection. The researchers have been supported in asking questions and seeking answers, and have been accompanied through the project so that their own voice as an advocate for change has developed.

The project leads, co-researchers, and theological accompaniers met at Launde Abbey in April for a 24-hour conference to discuss the findings and discern the requests for change. Project co-leader Jane Day said, 'I am grateful for the way in which women ministers have engaged with Project Violet and the clearer understanding of women's experience of ministry that has emerged. 'I look forward to engaging with the Baptist community over the next five months as they consider their commitments to action.'

All the research and interviews with most of the women are available on the project website. These interviews form season 2 of the Project Violet podcasts, and help listeners understand more fully the hearts and experiences of the Baptist women ministers involved in the project and its requests for change.

A Zoom webinar took place on 2 May to introduce the findings, and is available on the Project Violet website.

Project Violet has been undertaken by the Centre for Baptist Studies at Regent's Park College, Oxford and funded by the Mission Forum of Baptists Together and Baptist Trustees.

AN INVITATION TO RESPOND

In July 2024, following the publication of the Project Violet research, findings and requests, the members of the RBMN here in the EMBA were consulted and invited to share in a developing a response. This was the introductory letter sent out to the Network members Jul 4, 2024:

Dear

You will probably already be aware of the phenomenal amount of work that has gone into **Project Violet** (PV) coordinated by Revd Jane Day and Dr Helen Cameron. They have been looking back over a century or so of Baptist Women in Ministry and, especially, exploring the implications for Baptists Together in this still new century.

The range of the material commissioned, and now made available, is impressive indeed. I have particularly appreciated the Project Violet podcasts and, especially, hearing from the researchers Jane and Helen worked so closely with. This recent summary article in the Baptist Times captures well the importance of PV, contains several useful links, and sets the context well:

https://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/687623/Project_Violet_findings.aspx

After a conversation with Mark Clay and Becky Nicholls, and then consultation with Jane Day and Helen Cameron, **we have a request** as the EMBA prepares its own response to PV. What we are looking for from you is a personal reflection on two of the Requests that are such an important part of this consultation:

R9 Ensure Ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces **AND**

R12 Call for male Ministers to be allies in private and public.

To clarify - what we are asking of you is to reflect back over the decades you have served in Baptist Ministry - especially during the C20th – and then to reflect personally on R9 and R12. For example, for those of us who ministered in, say, the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s there may well be anecdotes and responses that might otherwise be lost? Recollections of earlier Women in Baptist Ministry, experiences of chauvinism or worse, and perhaps times when we too have failed to be to be "allies in private and public".

If you are willing to help us in this RBMN response please email your reflections – especially on R9 and R12 - to Becky Nicholls at becky.nicholls@embaptists.org.uk

I will then collate our responses, with Becky's help, and consider them with our local RBMN coordinators during our next Planning Team Meeting on September 10th. After that discussion, and once finalised, our RBMN response will then be sent on to Mark Clay and to those responsible for compiling the EMBA's fuller response to PV.

We will need your responses then please **at the very latest by Friday 30 August.**

Thank you for considering this request.

In Christ

Revd Dr Michael I Bochenski (EMBA RBMN Co-ordinator)

after consultation with Mark Clay (EMBA Team Leader) and Becky Nicholls (EMBA Admin Lead and PA to RTL)

PERSONAL RESPONSES TO PROJECT VIOLET

By the 30 August deadline the following personal responses had been received. They are reproduced here in alphabetical order:

Michael Bochenski:

Some reflections from Michael Bochenski in response to Project Violet

This brief reflection is, in part a response to the Project Violet (PV) Recommendations 9 and 12 (*) and, in part, a response to a request (+) that Retired Baptist Ministers here in the EMBA look back over our ministries with the PV findings now in mind.

(*) R9 Ensure Ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces AND R12 Call for male Ministers to be allies in private and public.

(+) 'To clarify - what we are asking of you is to reflect back over the decades you have served in Baptist Ministry - especially during the C20th – and then to reflect personally on R9 and R12. For example, for those of us who ministered in, say, the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s there may well be anecdotes and responses that might otherwise be lost? Recollections of earlier Women in Baptist Ministry, experiences of chauvinism or worse, and perhaps times when we too have failed to be to be "allies in private and public".' (EMBA Letter to Retired Baptist Ministers, July 2024)

Three Women Baptist Ministers have come especially to mind as I have reflected on the Project Violet research and findings. All were pioneers in important ways and all influenced my understanding of the Holy Spirit at work in Woman Baptist Ministers.

The first was **Myra Blyth**. I had come to train at Regent's Park College Oxford in the late 1970s when Dr Barrie White was Principal. I had had little experience of women actively engaged in ministry at that point. I had come to faith in an, often, narrow evangelical (King James Version preferred) Baptist Church. Though I had come to realise how very much bigger God is than my local church experience had hitherto suggested - a growing love for "secular" novels and poetry, for cinemas and theatre and a personally liberating experience of charismatic renewal for example – I had had almost no experience of hearing anything other than male speakers sharing the gospel or exercising significant leadership in ministry. Hearing Myra preach so brilliantly - during sermon class - was mind-blowing for me! As I look back it began in me a challenge to the unthinking assumption that "ministry is male".

The next was **Ruth Bottoms**. Jane and I had met her relative Walter Bottoms (a former BT Editor) early into our time in Oxford. Ruth also shared with me a high regard for a very experienced Baptist Minister David Staple who was a member at Dagnall Street Baptist Church, St Albans when I ministered there. Over several years, I watched Ruth's ability to discern both the fine detail and the big picture in an impressively wide range of issues and material. I observed too her skills in chairing and moderating, and her presentation skills with growing admiration. In both Baptist and ecumenical circles. More recently I saw all of these skills in play as Ruth led a "road show" on the significant changes coming (in the 2010s) to the Baptist Ministers' Pension Scheme. Ruth has been for me another pioneer Woman in Baptist Ministry who has helped me to realise that Christian ministry and leadership is not and never should be *exclusively* male.

The third was **Pat Took** who served so effectively as the first Woman Area Superintendent (Team Leader) in our Baptist Union. Her calling was to the London Baptist Association. I had worked with Pat a little in some shared work on the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship committee in the late 1990s. I was happily present at the standing ovation at Baptist Union Council when Pat's appointment first became public news. This was our Female Bishops moment as a Union! I have since heard *many* testimonies over the years to the quality and conscientiousness of Pat's episcopal role among us all.

There are, of course, others I could also name here but for me these three have been powerful reminders that women Ministers are called by God to Christian preaching, ministry and leadership, and, very often, make a far better job of it than we male Ministers!

Two final observations. 1) It has been my privilege to play a small role in encouraging, in the early stages, a call to accredited ministry in two members of churches where I was Minister: Sally Nelson and Jane Robson. To see them both grow in ministry, service and leadership remains a real source of joy and encouragement in "retirement". 2) I have not always been so helpful! To spare my blushes I will not name the Minister concerned but I sometimes recall when she reminded me of the time she had told me of her call to ordination. My response at the time was, she told me, "what with preaching too?" (!). Her kindness in chiding me gently about this has often served as a reminder of how, even when we male Ministers think we are allies, our hidden presuppositions and prejudices may well still be lurking not far below the surface.

Michael I Bochenski Nottingham August 2024.

Pam Bryan:

R9 Ensure Ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces

My experiences:

When I was a student at London Bible College from 1983-86, the majority of the local churches where students could do their practical ministry would not allow women to preach. However I went to Pinner Church at the time of Andrew Busby, and he was a great encourager and gave me opportunities to preach and lead services, so I have been very grateful for him. After college I went to work with BMS world mission overseas and returned in 1991. I was not ordained but went to work at Crofton Baptist Church as the community worker alongside a minister. This minister left very abruptly after I had been there for only three weeks (nothing to do with me!) so I ended up running the church! A group of five local ministers met regularly, the other four were men. I would say that they treated me as an equal and were always encouraging. I was also able to ring them about anything I needed to as I was on a steep learning curve. So, being part of this group was a very constructive and inclusive space. The negative came from inside the church in that, although I was running it, the church itself would not have had a woman minister at that time. My longest ministry was at Purley Baptist Church from 2000 to 2014. At the beginning of my time there, one of the other local ministers started a lunchtime meeting for a small group of us. This was a very committed group and we met monthly. Again, I was the only woman, but I was always totally accepted as an equal. The wider Croydon Group which met less frequently was equally as accepting. So in my ministry, all of the groups I have been part of have been very constructive and very inclusive.

R12 Call for male Ministers to be allies in private and public.

My longest ministry was in Purley and my Senior Minister, Peter Nodding, was my biggest ally. He was publicly always very supportive and encouraging and if I was better fit for something that he was asked to do, he pointed people to me. So, for example, one year, he was asked to give a Seminar at the BU Assembly on the church's community work, and he pointed out that this was my area of ministry and so I did the seminar. Churches Together in Croydon was very dynamic and had a good standing in the town with the authorities. I was asked by the leadership if I would be the Borough Dean for Croydon, and, as I had set up a town centre chaplaincy in Purley, when the Croydon Council asked us to set up a chaplaincy service for their staff, the chair of Churches Together suggested me and the chaplain of Crystal Palace football club as the two people to set it up. I was also often invited to other churches to give training on setting up a chaplaincy. So, again, I have mainly found that the male church leaders have been my allies in private and public. The few stories I have that are negative have come from outside of my ministry colleagues. So for e.g. In the early 90's, when at Crofton, I was invited with other local ministers to a launch of a new set of commentaries in London. During the refreshments after the launch, the speaker asked if I ran the church library! I said, "no, I run the church!" In all, I salute the male Ministers that have been in my orbit on a regular basis and thank them for being as welcoming and inclusive as they were.

Harry Godden:

Re Project Violet

I guess you are fairly familiar with Frances and my "story". I think it would be worth your while re-reading Jenny Few's excellent obituary to Frances in the Baptist Times. She refers to some notes and reflections Frances left. I have dug out one in particular and am attaching it unedited as further background; it is called :- **"What, me Lord?!"** It does contain one or two comments / convictions which may not sit easily with some folks! But I do believe there might be value in its wider circulation with a suitable introduction. What I am writing, and Frances' paper, do, I think, have relevance to Violet R9 and R12. The partnership Frances and I had was rather unusual, in that we made sure once Frances was ordained that we worked together as a team. That identified the spheres into which we accepted God's call. This meant that Frances had me as a vocal "ally in private and public". We turned down an invitation to meet with the deacons of a largish church because I realised when the secretary said "We would like to meet you" she meant me alone. They clearly had not read our detailed CV. Also when we were doing the EMBA General Secretaryship, we insisted that when we were invited to preach and there were two service, one led and the other preached at one service and vice versa at the other. We were graciously received almost always; the very occasional negative comments came from members of the congregation who were not made aware of our pattern.

I can remember Min Rec Committees when we had a lady applicant meeting us (the committee). After the interview, Frances and I had waded into one or two members who were far too concerned about the size of earrings and whether the applicant's teenage children would be looked after! By contrast, there was never any concern shown about similar aged, or any aged children whose father was before us. And I do remember some men ministers whose track record of having time for teenage children was appalling.

As far as ministers' groups were concerned, Frances experience of these began 42 years ago!! She just got used to being the only woman amongst a group of men. By and large she was warmly accepted and coped, though there were some men who had rather stereotypical notions of what they expected her to do. I was on some of these groups, but I think that on those when she was alone her contributions were accepted. She did say, though, that there were times when one of her ideas was pushed to one side, but later a man put the same things forward as if it was his idea!

Since retirement, we have been involved, usually together, in various church Bible study groups, and ministers' networks. Frances was pretty good at letting me know her feelings if anything was wrong, but I can't remember any occasion when she complained she was not treated respectfully and as an equal. The fact that we were usually together may have been a factor. Any feeling of unease was much more likely to be because of our age and how we related to more "modern" worship styles.

I hope this is some help, but I do realise it is a long time since I / we were involved in local church ministry, and that the world, churches and church organisations have changed enormously in recent years.

With all good wishes, Harry Godden 5th July 2024

Frances Godden – submitted posthumously by Harry Godden:

What me Lord? The story of my involvement in Baptist ministry

(This is a detailed story, but if someone wants to write something for the BT, the essence of the story is here.)

Born in Kent as a child I hated going anywhere without my mother, especially among people I didn't know; school was a challenge. Yet from an early age I would organised the children who came to play in our garden! My mother was involved in the Baptist Church Choir and it was her friend 'Auntie Loveland' who enrolled me in the BMS Birthday Scheme in time for my sixth birthday; the start of world Christian awareness. At the Ladies Sewing Group (making items to support of the troops) I was spoilt by smiling ladies. Once secure in a new place I was happy. Soon I went to a very Junior section of Girl's Crusaders called Cruettes, where lovely ladies taught me CSSM choruses with life changing and life forming words – and there were pictures and Bible texts to colour!

Early challenges - The first challenge of Christian service came at the age of 9 at my sister's baptism when she chose the hymn O Jesus I have promised *to serve thee to the end*. What was she promising? This all sounded very serious. We moved to Oxford and then Liverpool and I was involved in Sunday School and good Church youth work. With the example of my sister and parents and others, I gradually found out more about being a Christian, of knowing Jesus as my personal Saviour, Lord and Friend. Eventually I gave into His call. At 15 I was baptised and became a Church member. My parents encouraged me to attend church meetings. Before long I had two jobs (collecting for a cot at the hospital in Pimu, Congo and representing our church on the Merseyside Baptist YPF). I was also a young helper at Brownies and later, a Sunday School teacher and Girl Guide leader, as well as acting as secretary (organiser) for a small Sunday Evening Youth Fellowship – helped and challenged by a young guy called Harry Godden! I discovered I had the ability to speak in public when I was persuaded, against my will, to enter a Spoken English competition at school and speak for 3 minutes on the theme 'Why I

go to church.' I was amazed when I won first prize and even more amazed when I won again the following year. Was God trying to tell me something?

A hint of something to come - Away at Hereford Teacher Training College for two years I was again amazed to be appointed CU President, but as my Christian roots grew deeper there was a sense that God might have something in store for me. A challenge focussed in the Wesley hymn 'O thou who camest from above' sung to the tune Hereford!

Widening horizons and more challenges - Back home after College I taught in the new town of Kirkby which was home to those moved out from inner city Liverpool; a new environment for them and me. The church jobs I had left behind to go to College were awaiting me on my return, but with more responsibility. (Sunday School Secretary and Senior Sunday School Teacher, Guide Captain and anything else no one else was volunteering to do – it seemed. Guiding was a very significant training ground, as I have mentioned elsewhere.)

Marriage and more challenges - Moving to Guildford a year before marriage to Harry I was once more involved in teaching in the church youth group. Married we moved to Tyneside and Whitley Bay where the tasks of establishing Junior Covenanters and organising a Holiday Bible Club were thrust upon me. I was also cajoled into attending the Women's Bright Hour. Taking a turn leading a midweek Bible Study led to an invitation to speak at a fellowship at another church.

Becoming a minister's wife - Three years and two children later we moved back to Guildford. Harry's parents generously gave us a home while Harry trained at Spurgeon's College for Baptist ministry. Although I knew of Harry's early call into ministry from before we were married, I was somewhat overawed that I was going to be a minister's wife. Surely I wasn't sedate or gracious enough for this high calling. The ladies at church gave me much encouragement and encouraged me to speak to their meeting, but these three years were tough. Harry lived at college during the week and was usually away preaching on Sundays, we had very little time together and just one midweek phone call. I knew my in-laws well and respected them highly but living in their house and bringing up my children my way, not theirs, was difficult. Having had three years independence and run my own home, these were 'wilderness years' when I had to put others first and rely on others and God's provision.

Minister's wife to three churches – We moved to West Bradford to minister to three village churches with large Victorian buildings and small congregations, grouped with a larger church with its own minister. A high proportion of our congregations were elderly indigenous Yorkshire people; some with colourful personalities! Our third child was born here, much to the delight of the ladies. As well as family duties I taught Sunday School, ran a girl's club and was involved in 3 women's meetings. For my husband, meetings happened in threes too. Although practically I could have shared his load, this was not possible because I was not the minister. After three years, prompted by the need of our growing family for a more appropriate church base we moved to Eltham Park in south East London.

Changing Times – We moved to Eltham in 1974. At that time it was presumed that the minister's wife was something of an 'unpaid curate' involved in the women's work of the church and maybe children's too, as well as having open house of course. At that time very few minister's wives followed full time careers of their own. I was content with the role expected of me and did it to the best of my ability, but Harry and I regularly discussed church strategy – as we always had done. One felt that if Harry passed

on an idea as his that was fine, but mention of me undermined his credibility in the eyes of some of his deacons. There were men in the church who believed strongly that women should not be in a leadership role. In the context of women's work I served the wider Baptist District as well as meetings in our own church. Other activities included Co-ordinating large Holiday Clubs and writing and presenting a 3 year Bible Class syllabus for a group which included a large number of Boy's Brigade Boys. None of the men were prepared to do it - I was last resort! I also used skills learned while teaching to put in place mime and movement alongside Christian Musicals. These were happy, busy years and the church grew.

Opposition - Towards the end of the 1980's many minister's wives were going back to their careers once the children grew up, but I discovered that my contemporaries presumed I would stay in my unpaid role. The needs of small churches had always been on both our hearts. Rather than returning to a teaching career I had left 16 years earlier I gently explored the possibility of becoming a minister. I knocked gently on the door; it fell open and I fell through! Although there were those in the denomination who were very encouraging, there were those in our local church who were horrified – and told me so. These were tough months, very tough. The result was that after training at Spurgeon's College I was accepted as a Baptist minister. Harry meanwhile was finding the church reluctant to follow his leadership, and it became clear that we should move on. With sadness and incredible support from the majority of folk at Eltham we moved to Derbyshire.

A New Beginning – In 1982 we moved to Swanwick where the church was grouped with the village churches in Crich, Wirksworth and Bonsall (A tiny church with 4 members). Harry was senior minister and I was a non-stipendiary minister alongside 2 others each with responsibility for one of the three main churches. I was responsible for Swanwick. Being in a subordinate position to Harry suited me well but enabled me to full-fill the full range of ministry in this context. As part of my probationary studies I researched and produced a paper on 'Young People in Small Churches'. Resulting from this I was invited to become part of a Baptist Union Young People's Committee which met at Baptist HQ then in London. Alongside our church responsibilities we took on the shared role of Secretaries of the Derbyshire Baptist Union (DBU) which linked the churches in the county, and was a sub group of the East Midland Baptist Association (EMBA). Throughout these years I was fully accepted by ministerial colleagues and church members alike. A woman minister was a novelty to some who always preferred a male minister to attend to their needs. I was using my gifts to the full and the years in Derbyshire were good years. Our children however missed the buzz of the larger church in Eltham.

Called to Association Work – By 1988 the children were beyond the school stage, so the call from EMBA to job- share as Association General Secretaries, was possible and we moved into Nottinghamshire to be near the centre of the four County Association. Our appointment followed the work done in DBU. With clear aims of helping and encouraging churches, particularly the many small churches in the area, we had broken with the administration centred focus of Association work, and introduced activities such as the Association Family Day, Youth away weekend encouraging training and other events which enabled conversations and fellowship between fellow Baptists that hadn't previously existed. We worked in partnership with the Area Superintendent, Rev Eddie Pilling and other officers, welcoming Rev John Claydon as Action in Mission Secretary and Missioner. As a team we knocked ideas around in a relaxed way, sharing insights and problems, supporting one another. Involvement in Baptist Union structures was part of our work. We served on a wide variety of committees and working groups.

I was also co-opted on to Spurgeon's College Council where it was a real privilege to be part of in-depth interviews with those considering becoming Baptist Ministers. These were good years; we were encouraged in many, many ways. I was accepted as myself and as an equal in the team. From time to time I paused and looked back astonished that God had called me to serve Him in this way; no way would I have anticipated this. After eight years some of the team moved on and others were appointed who didn't share the vision we had been building on. We found ourselves out of gear with some in the Association and unable to continue. We received much encouragement from many churches and people and friendships continued.

Retreat – We were exhausted by years of busyness and the time of extreme struggle at the end of our time in EMBA. The door opened unexpectedly for us to move to the Isle of Skye which had been our retreat for the previous 15+ years. The next four years were full of rich blessing (living close to God's awesome creation, loads of photos etc.) and new experiences. Pretending not to be Baptist ministers became impossible; some in the local Church of Scotland welcomed us, others were polite but suspicious. We tried to be what God wanted us to be; some rejoiced, others were shocked. Practically we kept busy with house alterations, working on the campsite, driving the community minibus and I led after school club at the local primary school. We had time to attend small local concerts. We worked with the Baptist Union of Scotland, gathering together Baptist incomers, like ourselves, who were scattered across the island. Along the way we learned with horror some of the extremes of narrow Free Church Christianity. Then God spoke to each of us and said, 'Go back'. This was endorsed with the discovery that Pamela's, then unborn, baby had severe heart defects.

The Return to East Midlands – We had taken our family to the area back in 1982 when they were teenagers; not surprisingly perhaps that is where they married and settled, and to where we returned. God's blessing on Harry's Dad meant that our financial situation was adequate, and for that we are ever grateful. They say, 'ministers never retire' and it has proved so. The time we spent as members of Newark Baptist Church were full of incidents which were scarcely Christian yet we were respected by some and able to make a contribution which we believe God blessed. Our spiritual home however is West Bridgford Baptist Church, a loving fellowship where we are accepted and valued. In retirement, as well as being always available for the family, we led a monthly service at the local hospital, gave volunteer help at the local primary school, renewed acquaintances from our former years in EMBA and discovered how worthwhile those years had been. On a practical and spiritual level we re-established our link with Monksthorpe, the 1701 remote chapel we had helped save in 1990 and is now owned by National Trust. Leading services, editing and publishing a booklet about the chapel, and ensuring that the reason the church is there at all is known has been an ongoing ministry. Monksthorpe, a beautiful peaceful place, has also been a place of friendship for those of us who keep the monthly services going.

In retrospect – I called this paper 'What me Lord?' because it is amazing how God has taken a little child, who's early career aspirations were simply to stay at home and work around the house for mummy, and enabled so much to happen. I believe God has led through failure and success; through times of encouragement and opposition, through calm and stormy waters, through fun and frustration, joy and sorrow. God has used and developed the gifts he has given me - ideas, organisation, artistic and presentation skills, attempting something new and difficult, teaching ability, public speaking and friendship. Even my chattering has been used by him to get alongside people! I am hugely grateful that God has given me an incredibly supportive husband to walk alongside me, a loving family, and

innumerable friends and just enough courage to do what He has called me to, things I would have considered impossible.

A woman in ministry? That too amazes me. I believe in MEN in leadership. I believe too that women should be allowed to use their gifts and would echo my father's phrase, 'the best person for the job'. Following God's call into ministry has enabled me to get alongside women seeking God's will for their lives, but it grieves me greatly when women ridicule and side-line men. I believe men and women should work as equals bringing their different gifts, insights and strengths. This has been my privilege over the years. In the early years there were few women ministers or women on committees, they were easily ignored - the 'token' women. One had to live with and work on this, sometimes surprising men by a worthwhile female contribution; they seemed just not used to listening to a woman's point of view. Very precious to me has been working in harmony with many male colleagues and the occasions male ministers have shared concerns and appreciated my support.

Conclusion – So I do look back amazed and truly thankful and ask you, 'Are you doing what God wants you to do?' (Some important influences on my ministry.)

The importance of the Bible – I was introduced to the Bible when I was very young. I had my own before I was 9. The habit of reading the Bible, God's word, daily was part of my upbringing. Over the years it has become the bedrock of my faith and life. Here I continue daily to learn new things about my amazing triune Lord - God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Prayer** – The experience that Jesus is alive. I've heard God speaking to me as I read my Bible. Walking with Him in Jesus, means listening and talking with Him, not only in a formal way. The Holy Spirit whispers in my ear/heart and Jesus is my best friend; I can chat to Him at any time and place and about anything.

When out in open spaces I feel particularly close to God the Father. **Christian work in this country and around the world** – I guess my own experience and my interest in geography (A level) has led naturally to the interest in the incredible variety in the world-wide church; in people who are very different from me yet know Jesus as I do. I have very great respect for those who have left the comforts of this country and gone to share the gospel in different cultures, sometimes very dangerous. I feel very privileged to have known many such people and had them staying in my home. They have great admiration for them. They have challenged me more than they realise. I give thanks for all the many people who have enriched my life, challenged me by their living and helped when life has been tough.

Frances Godden

David Luce:

Reflecting on **R9**, I remember Carol McCarthy at Upper Holloway Baptist Church who attended our North London Fraternal (as we called it in those days). She was well accepted. and I think we were an inclusive group. I have known other lady Baptist Ministers over the years, viz., Veronica Campbell at Catherine Street BC, Plymouth, Barbara Carpenter at Stoke St. Gregory, and Elsie Howell in Wellington. Alongside Frances Godden in our EMBA. I think they were all well accepted, and had fruitful ministries in their several locations. As to **R12**, I believe that Male Ministers should indeed be allies of our lady Ministers.

Brian Nicholls:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Project Violet. I have been able to follow its progress quite closely, not least because my daughter, Claire, from the LBA has been heavily involved in it. The work that has been done has been a long time coming and I'm very glad that not before time Baptists are being encouraged to make some important changes. Most of the things I want to say are related to my time as Superintendent/RTL in the West Midlands/HEBA.

The **first** is that some of the issues affecting women have been equally problematic for both female and male ministers. Anyone who is perceived as in some way being different (i.e. not white male between 30 and 45 years with a family) has tended to be more likely to struggle in settling. The advocacy of RMs and Moderators was significant in the old style settlement system. I'm yet to be convinced that the current model is adequate in this respect.

Second, in the past undue weight was put upon a female minister's spouse's place in the scheme of things. I have been in MR interviews where the discernment of a call hinged on whether a husband would be involved in the ministry, and whether he could keep his job as 'the main bread winner!' One interviewer even dared to ask questions along the lines of who would prepare Sunday Lunch while the woman minister was leading worship, and more generally how the family would be managed.

Third, until material such as that prepared by the YBA and Ernie Whalley in particular addressed the Biblical foundations for women in ministry it was quite possible for candidates to come through MR holding very traditional 'Headship' views which denied the possibility of a woman being in leadership, having never been challenged to think differently. One stark example was in a Residential Selection Conference where in a group activity one candidate always managed to have his back turned to whichever woman in the group was speaking.

Fourth, most committees, both national and regional, tended to be dominated by (older) men. Recruitment of new members often appeared limited as like promoted like. Senior roles tended to be taken by men. For example, other than the ground-breaking appointment of Pat Took, all of the Superintendents' Board were male. Before Pat's arrival it was possible for there to be no women in the room except for whoever was serving as support staff for the Head of Ministry.

Fifth, when HEBA struggled to come to a settled conclusion during the restructuring process a somewhat clumsy interview arrangement was set up to determine who among the existing team members would continue in post. I didn't handle my own participation very well, but I was in a relatively strong position to weather the storm that broke. That did not work for a female member of the team who was immediately disempowered by the way the interviews were set up, and subsequently was dismissed from the Regional Team.

More recently the resurgence of 'complementarian' teaching has grown a strong following in University CUs and in some of the new church streams. Fuelled by teaching from scholars like Wayne Grudem in my view it has given fresh energy to the model of the husband and wife team where he is the senior or lead elder, and she supports and complements him with her own less important ministry. It allows little room for other possible team shapes.

Thank you for the opportunity to get some of these things off my chest, and forgive me if I've said too much. May the Spirit guide you as you draft the EMBA response.

Be encouraged

Brian Nicholls

Dick Prior

Responses to Project Violet Report

Overall

I found the report to be very informative although I found some of the presentation difficult to access/follow. I found myself going from one website to another to try to follow thoughts [this maybe a personal issue with the media!].

As I read the summary I was struck by comments/conclusions were not limited to women in ministry. The issue of 'settlement' for women also applies [in my case] to settlement for any minister over 60 years old. I was informed that some churches were clearly not looking for an older minister regardless of experience. I think that this is also linked to the retirement issue. I believe that this is improving but I understand that although difficult for women ministers it is also difficult for all approaching retirement. I recognise that for women that this maybe harder [housing etc.].

Responses [as requested] to **R9** Ensure Ministers' groups are constructive and inclusive spaces; **R12** Call for male Ministers to be allies in private and public.

Taking R12 first – I am blessed with being in a church led by a woman who came direct from college [I think that I would have found that encouraging regardless of gender]. I made it clear that as a retired minister I was aware of the negative issues of having retired ministers in the church, as I had encountered issues with this in my first church. I offered to be a support, not a hinderance from day one. During the early days I found the need to apologise for a couple of 'unhelpful' comments. I think [hope] that there is better understanding from both of us. As a male Minister seeking to be an ally these does need to be an openness to share in both directions – I need to hear when things I, or others, have said that are not right. So my response to this is – yes! I am trying to be a supporter, protector [without condescending!] of my minister – I hope she knows.

R9 Experience of Ministers groups.

In 5 pastorates [1990-2016] I was part of ministerial groups that included women ministers. These were both Baptist and Ecumenical groups. I hope that I treated all ministers I had contact with equality. I hope this continues into retirement in both the wider and local contexts of RBMN. I am aware that some male colleagues have struggled with female ministers I never observed any outright hostility. Some of the women had powerful personalities but this may have been to protect themselves [?]. Within Baptist groups I think there were women in all gatherings. In 2 groups early in my ministry [early to mid 1990's] I, with another male colleague, managed to change the group title from 'Fraternal' or 'Fellowship' to make the group more inclusive. I should also confess [!] that we also challenged the inclusion of retired ministers who loved to talk of the past! I do not recall any issues for me or within those groups that were negative. I was blessed in having 3 female Regional Ministers. One of these was very supportive at both a church level and personally [better than some of her male counterparts!]

Other comments

At college I trained with 4/5 women – one of these was very pushy but this may have been because she found it necessary. One new intake of students was in the main male, and they had to be spoken to about the negative approach they had to a female visiting tutor. I suspect that they had arrived at college thinking they knew everything, and they were going to change college rather than being helped the other way round. This tension did not last long for most of the group as the college was mixed male/female and disciplines.

Final

My observations/experiences may be affected by my own acceptance of everyone in training and ministry – any differences were not related to male/female issues. Again, I may have worn blinkers and did not observe blatant chauvinism. My aim has always been to provide any support I can to my ministerial colleagues, regardless of background.

Note. Copies of this Response have also been sent to the Directors and RMT of the East Midlands Baptist Association. For reasons of meeting timings it was not possible to include this Response at the same time as the EMBA Directors' own Project Violet (PV) submission.

**Compiled and submitted by the EMBA RBMN Co-ordinator – The Revd Dr Michael I Bochenski
September 2024**

Section 8 How will we know if things have changed?

Following BU Council in October 2024, all parts of Baptist life will be encouraged to move their conversations into concrete actions. We encourage associations, churches, colleges, and other stakeholders to keep their plans under regular review and keep Project Violet on all agendas. All stakeholders who submitted a response for this report will be invited to submit a further response by 29 September 2025. This will be for accountability purposes to see what progress has been made in implementing their commitments. An accountability report will be presented to Council on 21 October 2025, celebrating the progress made and asking what more remains to be done.

Section 9 How will Project Violet be disseminated to the Baptist world and to the academic community?

Throughout Project Violet, Jane and Helen as co-leaders have looked for opportunities to share learning from the Project with the wider Baptist world and with the academic community. As the research phase of the project draws to a close we will undertake further academic dissemination. Project Violet has already been recognised as significant by other Unions, the Theology and Action Research Network, and academics working in ecclesiology.

We were pleased that the launch of the Findings in May 2024 was picked up by both the Church Times and Premier Christian Radio.

Our aim in this dissemination phase of Project Violet will be to do justice to the work that resulted in the findings and the commitments to action that have been made.

Here is a summary of the dissemination done up to October 2024

For the Baptist community

IBTS Ethics Conference, online, May 2022 – joint presentation

Baptist World Alliance, Lagos, July 2024 – online presentation, Jane Day

Baptist Churches of South Australia and Northern Territory 2024 Pastors Gathering, August 2024 – online presentation, Jane Day

For the academic community

Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference, September 2022 – joint paper

Community Action Research Network Conference, October 2023 – paper, Helen Cameron

Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference, September 2024 – joint paper

Publications

Special Issue of Baptist Quarterly, Volume 55, Issue 4 edited by Christine Joynes

<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ybaq20/55/4?nav=tocList>

Here is a summary of our future plans

For the Baptist community

Theology Live, London, January 2025 – papers by both Jane Day and Helen Cameron

We are delighted to note that the January 2025 conference has an all women speaker line-up.

Project Violet International Symposium, January 2025, online – nearly 30 presentations by Baptist women from ten countries. Jane Day presenting.

David Goodbourn Lecture, May 2025, online – joint presentation

Baptist World Alliance, Brisbane, July 2025 – Jane Day attending

For the academic community

Theology and Action Research Network Seminar, February 2025 – joint paper

Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference, September 2024 – joint paper

Jane Day's Doctoral Thesis

Future publications

Journal article on the approach of Project Violet

Encouraging Symposium participants to publish in their own contexts.

For Appendices see Volume 2

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