

The nuts and bolts of ministry – applied complementarianism

Some things belong together and bring out the best in one another: nuts and bolt; hammers and nails; knives and forks. They are pairs that complement one another and, together, change potential to reality. That principle of complementarity is as important in ministry as it is in every other part of our life, especially in relation to the greatest pairing, that of men and women.

We are designed – intentionally designed – by our all-wise, creating God to complement each other so that together we will achieve far more than we could ever achieve on our own.

That's why we minister most effectively when men work together with women, and when women work together with men. Together we can achieve far more for God's kingdom that we can accomplish on our own.

It's for these reasons, and those I'll mention later in this article, that the Ministry and Mission Committee is eager to enhance the support provided to women in ministry. There are many resources across the Church that support men in ministry. We must now enhance the resources and the relational support structures that will facilitate women in ministry.

Under direction from the Assembly, the Ministry and Mission Committee, established a Women's Ministry Task Force some time ago with responsibility to:

- (a) assist women's organisations within the PCNSW to work together on training and equipping women for effective gospel ministry on a complementarian basis;
- (b) permit further networking of women in the PCNSW; and
- (c) work with Presbyterian churches in NSW and the ACT in their ministry to women in their local churches by supporting and resourcing them as appropriate.

After extensive investigation and prayerful planning, the Women's Ministry Task Force, with the support of the Committee, is now looking to establish a part-time position for a Women's Ministry Worker. The role will be responsible for promoting the training, equipping, deployment and relational support of women in ministry on a complementarian basis. We are looking, in the first place, to enhance the work of women employed in ministry across our congregations. We are also very conscious of that wonderful band of women who are not remunerated for their labours but whose service is yet immeasurably valuable. We would like, in time, to enhance their work also. How are we going to do this?

A Women's Ministry Facilitator will be employed for up to three days per week so that:

- women employed in ministry (including women's and children's workers, pastoral assistants, deaconesses and chaplains) will be supported pastorally in their work;
- women's ministry leaders in local churches will receive guidance and training and be networked with other women undertaking similar ministries;
- PWA and other women's ministry groups within the PCNSW will be linked effectively so that the work of each is enhanced;
- women interested in ministry roles will be linked with Christ College through the Dean of Women and be supported as they undertake theological studies, being informed about and connected to the Ministry Training for Women course (Christ College), EQUIP Ministry Women, other conferences and other theological colleges (where appropriate);
- the Ministry and Mission Committee will be more regularly and reliably informed of the growth of women's ministries and actions needed to expand those ministries even further;
- members of the Church (both men and women) will be regularly informed about the potential for complementarian ministry and be encouraged to comprehend, and apply themselves to their own responsibilities in ministry.

The cost of this position is estimated to amount to about \$60,000 per year. Right now we have none of that money in hand. We have a very welcome pledge from the PWA for \$10,000 p.a. for the next three years and we are appealing to our whole church – the whole Presbyterian denomination – to recognise the vital need for a Women’s Ministry Facilitator. In order to advance our declared commitment to complementarian ministry and to make the position of a Women’s Ministry Facilitator a reality, we are asking you to dig deeply into your wallets and support this vital work.

There is a gender dimension to some aspects of church leadership such that the role of ministers and elders belongs to men only. But these are just two of the many varied and important roles in our churches and in other ministry. Women should be trained for ministry, deployed in ministry and esteemed in ministry – all kinds of ministry that complement the ministries of men just as the ministries of men should complement those of women – complementing, not duplicating, replacing or displacing.

A church that thinks that ministry belongs to “the minister” is impoverished and typically ineffective. In healthy churches, the ministry will be led by the minister under the governance of the elders, and all will be conscious of this truth: the work of ministry belongs to all of God’s people and every member of a congregation has a role to play and should do it.

If that is not true, what does God mean when he says that he provided ministers “to equip the saints for their works of service” (Ephesians 4:11)? Effective churches empower their people – all of their people – as widely and fully as possible and seek to deploy them in areas of service according to their gifts. Are they all elders or managers? Are they all in the garden and the kitchen? Are all involved in playgroup, mothers’ club, Sunday school and youth group? Are all members in the men’s Bible study, or in music ministry, mercy ministry and evangelistic outreach? Thankfully not. People are built differently and equipped differently so that they function best in different roles. But all should have a role, both women as well as men, and men as well as women.

I am not saying that men shouldn’t exercise ministries to women or women to men. Not for a nanosecond am I arguing for segregation in ministry that would exclude those valuable occasions when we might serve one another without respect to gender. Some of the most profound moments of my life have occurred when godly women (with names like Beth and Lois and Norma and Merle and Margaret and Lorraine and Renee) have offered me wise and helpful counsel, sometimes tinged with rebuke. I remember these wonderful women with love and I consistently thank God for them and their ministries to me.

As a denomination we recognise that each of us complements each other so that the spiritual gifts entrusted to each may be used for the good of all. All believing men and all believing women have been equipped by God to do something and each should be trained and expected to use their God-given gifts for the building up of the whole body in love as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16).

When we give due recognition to God’s complementarian design it enhances the local church, the wider body of Christ and the whole world by recognising many valuable things. In the first place we appreciate the valuable service that some people could and should offer and so we encourage the growth and progress of the church. In the second place, we provide people with opportunities for satisfying service, and so that we impede roots of bitterness that would otherwise defile many and result in envy and destructive conflict. Thirdly, we act on that powerful evidence of respect, mutual appreciation and interdependency that the church and the world so desperately need to see.

The Lord Jesus, in his service to his Father and his world, did not compete for the Father’s position. He had his own role within the purposes of the Trinitarian God. Each member of the Trinity has their own function and all come together in one glorious consequence that men and women, and boys and girls are redeemed together, with the creation, for the eternal praise of God. Jesus could say with complete satisfaction, “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38, see also John 4:34). Can we have a similar approach in our ministries and in our relationships with one another? Can

we ensure that, as far as possible, we value, cultivate and benefit from the gifts with which God has endowed all members of his church whether women or men?

Further information on the work of the Women's Ministry Task Force and the role of a Women's Ministry Facilitator can be found on this website www.womenministry.org.au

A position description for a Women's Ministry Facilitator has been prepared and can be obtained from Mrs Sheree Scott, Convener of the Women's Ministry Task Force, by email to womensministrytaskforce@gmail.com.

Donations to support this great work may be sent to Women's Ministry Facilitator, Ministry and Mission Committee, PO Box 2196 Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012. If you prefer to bank directly, please use BSB 032-000 and A/c # 00-3988 and cite this reference 040-1102-EQUIP with alert email to bmeller@pcnsw.org.au.

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