

The Complement

Sharing models of complementarian ministry

It's always nice to share a compliment. There's an organisation in the UK which has an online compliment sharing system for all of its employees. The workers can log in and compliment specific colleagues for their work, sharing them across the organisation.

In the same way, this newsletter is about sharing the good stories. Across our state, men and women are working together in gospel ministry and these good stories are worth sharing.

By sharing the compliment- by sharing these healthy models we can celebrate them, give thanks for them, learn from them and hopefully multiply them.

In the PCNSW we uphold the goodness of God's plan for complementarian ministry; women and men working together and complementing one another as they serve our great God. So, let's share "the complement" and pass on some good stories.

Left to right:

Lizzy

Playgroup Co-ordinator

Alison

Communications Co-ordinator

Ashleigh

Kids Church Co-ordinator

Megan

Trains Kids Church leaders and is married to Matt Ham, Senior Minister

Kirsty

Preschool ministry

Fiona

Co-ordinates music ministry

and is married to James Snare, Assistant to the Minister

Jo

Team Leader, English Conversation Classes



Gosford Presbyterian is one such story...

On a hot, smoky Tuesday morning late last year I visited their women's bible study group. I was running late and felt a bit awkward about turning up after the groups had already started, but the welcome I received was warm and genuine.

Gosford Presbyterian has four bible study groups that meet each week attended by women from a variety of ages and life stages. It's always such a joy to see older women mixing it up with young mums, babies and rowdy toddlers.

After the Bible study, I met for lunch with a group of women who are part of the church's leadership team. These seven women were a delight to spend time with. They collectively shared an aspect of the church's ministry strategy that has made a huge difference in the way men and women work together.

At Gosford Presbyterian, all ministry team leaders attend Elders meetings. The leaders are invited to every second Session so that the Elders can hear directly what the leaders are doing, can ask questions, provide feedback and review how ministry initiatives are going.

Over the year, the group reads a ministry book together and allows time to discuss what they are learning at the meetings.

The leadership team have been recently reading "Centre Church" by Tim Keller. This initiative requires an extra commitment from the Elders who give additional time to make space for these meetings but for the women leaders of this church, this involvement has been crucial.

Kirsty, who oversees the church's preschool ministry shared that previously she felt she had no one to go to if she had a problem in her ministry work but now she feels part of a team.

The women reflected that their male leaders had always invited them to speak about any problems, but they'd felt hesitant because they didn't want to be a bother and knew the ministers were busy.

The giving of intentional space and time for sharing and feedback in the Session meetings has been a key step in bringing change. This team approach has strengthened a sense of unity and is evidenced in the level of involvement, partnership and inclusivity these women experience in their ministry work.

If you take a look at Gosford Presbyterian's website, this ministry philosophy is clearly seen. Their "Our Team" section includes both men and women's faces; it's obvious that men and women partnering together is an intentional priority of this church.

I also spoke with James Snare, Assistant Minister at Gosford and newly appointed Convenor of the Federal Women's Ministry Committee. James shared the rationale for the leadership model at Gosford with me.

He reflected, "We needed a deliberate, intentional way to create a space for various leaders. We want to actively know what the experience of our women is.

Although our church has had a long history of women serving, we found as our church grew in number some of the women who were leading ministries felt unheard, unappreciated and not a part of things. Sometimes they felt left out of important decisions.

We realised that unless we were deliberate about inviting women into those spaces which have traditionally been more male dominated, women wouldn't be present to be part of those decisions.

The end in itself is not just to promote women- it's all about promoting gospel ministry which is about men and women together.

It's not enough for me as a minister to just be a 'good guy' and to be nice to women. I need to proactively seek to encourage and equip women for ministry and to recognise that women are different from me."

I came away from this visit feeling buoyed, hopeful and refreshed. This is one of many good stories out there in our wider Presbyterian family, and I look forward to sharing the complement with you again soon.

Anna



Anna Moss
Women's Ministry Facilitator



Presbyterian Church of Australia
in the State of New South Wales