

Women in Ministry Commission Report to TED MinTC

TED

- Secretariat, Ministerial and Women's Ministries to work together on a training package, policy, materials etc, to promote positive Christian behaviour in our churches – and to provide practical support for zero-tolerance of abuse. What is unacceptable behaviour, how it should be dealt with, and what constitutes positive Christian behaviour.
- Provide a training for church leaders at every level within TED to help them explore their own personal beliefs about women in ministry – and to challenge their deep-seated, unspoken beliefs about women, women in ministry and women in leadership. These beliefs can run deep in all of us, from our culture, families, theology, and life experiences.
- Further strengthen Newbold in training and providing women lecturers and role models.
- Provide training at Newbold to help students deal with conflicts, abuse, micro and macro aggressions from members, and helping churches to become safe places for people with all kinds of differences. (When women pastors talk about the abuse they are experiencing, they do not seem to have been given the tools for dealing with these experiences, and they are struggling to find help and advice.)
- Consider making a short documentary about women pastors in TED ministering in a variety of ways and contexts.
- Provide quarterly webinars for women in ministry/couples in ministry, addressing some of the topics that have arisen from the interviews. These can be recorded and accessed later.
- Create a forum for sharing good articles, books, podcasts, etc. that offer support to women in ministry. Fuller has a newsletter and many resources for women in ministry.
- Use all forms of social media and communication to highlight stories of women in ministry.
- Communicate to all ages about the positive ministry of both genders so that we can help to shape positive attitudes from a young age (e.g. SPD has a book for children with stories of pastors of both genders ministering in a variety of ways).

Union

- The transcripts from the research should be read by the officers in order to understand the complexities of ministering: as a single female, as a married pastor where the partner has a different profession, or where both partners are pastors.

- Provide more opportunities for one-to-one mentorship of leaders and training in how to lead those who are different to them in various ways, and especially how to lead women.
- Train experienced women leaders, perhaps in each Union, to mentor the women in their fields, and perhaps other fields too, so that each woman pastor can have a choice of women mentors to suit their personality and style of ministry, etc. Be intentional about regular meetings with such a mentor.
- Specific training needs to be developed and provided to help pastors of both genders understand the dynamics of local churches, and how to identify and deal with people who behave in narcissistic, controlling, and abusive ways – including ‘gaslighting’, emotional and spiritual abuse. (see book “When Narcissism comes to Church”) This behaviour is often not understood, and many pastors do not have the skills to identify the patterns and deal with them. This is causing severe suffering and mental illness in pastors of both genders and needs to be addressed.
- Elders also need to be specifically trained and educated, as supportive elders are vital for women in ministry.

Conference

- Give ongoing verbal recognition and affirmation of a woman pastor’s calling, especially when introducing her in a new pastoral district.
- Church leaders need to communicate zero-tolerance of abuse. In order to do this they need to be trained in what constitutes abuse, including spiritual abuse. They also need to have a package to train local churches so that people have the skills to recognise abuse and deal with it.
- When a woman pastor leaves ministry there needs to be a sensitive and careful exit interview, either by the local leaders, or by Union or even TED personnel – someone of their choice and preferably a woman, to help enrich our understanding of why they are choosing to leave and what improvements we can make to supporting others in ministry.
- HR personnel need specialist training in working with women in ministry. They need training in being supportive to the different ways in which women minister and to be understanding about the needs of family – healthy work life balance.

Couples in ministry

- Support couples in ministry by providing mentors who are experienced couples in ministry as this kind of work has many unique challenges.
- Create a one day seminar or online webinars for couples in ministry to bring them together and support them.

Single women pastors

- Address the unique challenges of single women in ministry (the single male pastors share some similar challenges, but there are often different expectations and responses from congregations).
- Support single women in ministry by providing single women mentors.
- Create a retreat, one day seminar, or online webinars for singles in ministry to bring them together and support them.