

Co Heirs and Co Workers– Towards Healthy Ministry Models

Stage 1: Stepping Back and Reflecting

The Elders and Deacons Committee recently stated: A “healthy complementarianism” will always share some basic common features, but will also look quite different in practice as it is worked out in different cultures, churches, and families. Each marriage and family, and each team of elders with their congregation, need to determine—under God—how to apply the Bible’s teaching in their own context. 1

We would like to encourage you as a local session to spend some time thinking, praying and talking through what healthy complementarianism looks like in your own church. The following reflection questions are offered to assist this process:

1. Has our session intentionally discussed the ways in which women can be involved in the ministries of your church?
2. What are the pathways for women to be trained, equipped, deployed and supported in ministry roles in our church?
3. What are the processes in our church for women to share their thinking and concerns with leadership?
4. What are the processes in our church for women to disclose abuse or feeling unsafe?
5. How do women experience these processes (inaccessible/accessible, unsafe/safe, assured of confidentiality/ unsure about how their information is used)?
6. Does church leadership intentionally engage women in decision making forums—what are the specific mechanisms of these engagement processes?
7. Which women are invited to participate in decision making forums and on what basis?
8. Where are the blindspots in our church leadership— what are we not seeing?
9. How do women experience the leadership of this church?
10. How would leadership go about discerning the answers to these questions?
11. Do these questions raise theological questions that your session may need to consider?

Stage 2: Stepping Up into Healthy Ministry Practices

What concrete steps could church leadership take to better engage women in decision making processes and ministries within this church?

Suggestions include:

For Congregations

Establish congregational leadership teams comprising both men and women.

Induct deacons- female and male to serve the congregation (Code 2.01-08).

Appoint a female Breaking The Silence contact person and clearly explain their role to the church.

Establish pastoral care teams with men and women as members.

Upfront roles in public worship (what roles can women be included in?)

Women to be included on Committee of Management.

For Sessions (in line with provisions of Code 4:17)

Session can set up a women's advisory group whom they liaise with on specific issues.

Session can invite key women to the first part of Session meetings to hear their thinking and then make their final decision after they have left.

Session can choose to appoint some of their key women to a "co-worker" position and give them the privileges of an associate while Session sits.

Session to take an active interest in women's ministries and children's ministries at the church.