

## **Introducing The Priscilla and Aquila Centre, Feb 7, 2011.**

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Thank you.

### **1. Why did I choose the name?**

A certain person in this room, when they heard the name of the Centre, they said, "Oh no. It sounds like that movie, 'Priscilla, Queen of the desert.'" Now I would say to that – bishop – we have a few options this morning as to who that might be – not looking at anyone in particular - read your New Testament more, and stop watching trashy movies!

There are several reasons why I chose the name Priscilla and Aquila, so let me explain, because that helps us understand what the Centre is all about, and that might answer some questions you have about the Centre.

A couple of years ago John Woodhouse asked me to consider joining the faculty of Moore. He wanted me to be part of the Ministry Department, and specifically, he wanted me to set up a women's ministry Centre.

The more I thought about this, the more I thought, although it'll be a Centre that will focus on women, I want men to have ownership of the Centre as well. I didn't want it to be seen as something 'over there', that was just women's business. I wanted everything in the name and the working of the Centre to be in partnership with men.

And I guess there are 3 reasons why I wanted it to be in partnership with men:

#### **(i) The first reason is my past experience**

I was in three parish positions before joining the faculty, and I loved working with each of the men on the different staffs, particularly, my rectors: Phillip Jensen, Phil Wheeler, and Marcus Nodder. Why did I love working with them? I assumed trust in them, and that trust wasn't disappointed. They were easy to respect. They were godly. They had a strong conviction that the bible is the word of God. They were prayerful. I saw the care they had for their wives, their children, their staff teams, and their congregations. They had a love for the lost. They were good shepherds. And I never felt from any of them that I was somehow less, because I was a woman. That wasn't even slightly on the radar. There was no reason for it to be on the radar, because these men, had a right understanding of what it means to be human; what it means to be a man; what it means to be a woman.

So that's a little of my background. I have enjoyed great relationships with each of my bosses, and I continue to now with John, and in fact the rest of my colleagues on the faculty. They're a real joy to work with. I recognize that's not everyone's experience. But my experience has been good and continues to be. So I had no experiential reason why I didn't want to work in closer partnership with men.

#### **(ii) The second reason is my reflections on my sub-group of Christians: Complementarians**

I recognize not all of you in this room would want to identify yourself as such, but as John mentioned earlier, it is an official Value of Moore College, and it's the position I hold, and it's good to reflect on and try and critique your own position from time to time isn't it – its strengths and weaknesses.

I think generally within Complementarian circles, whether here in Sydney or more broadly, we can do a lot more serious and creative thinking about the application end of Complementarianism. E.g. We can at times too quickly separate men and women's ministries – many times this is helpful – but sometimes it might be best to do more things together.

We can at times have our church services look almost exactly the same every week – What is appropriate for women to do upfront in the service? What appropriate teaching is there? And not just in the church service. The application end of Complementarianism has so much potential for good. So my second reason is my reflections on people like myself - Complementarians.

### **(iii) My third reason – and most importantly - is God's word**

I believe that God teaches us in his word that he created men and women to rule this world together, and also together that we're to share his gospel of salvation to this world. That we are to be partners in ministry and mission together.

And Priscilla and Aquila are just one example of that. Although a married couple, their example, to a certain extent, has application for Christian men and women more broadly. When we read the different references to them in the New Testament, we see that they were involved in a variety of ministries.

They're probably best known for explaining the way of God more accurately to Apollos (Acts 18:27), because it's a reference to a woman teaching and so it comes up in debates about women's ministry. But they also provided Paul with accommodation and paid employment (Acts 18:3). Believers met in their house (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom 16:5).

Paul considered them to be his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3). We don't know the details, but they risked their lives for him (Rom. 16:4). What we do know is, that Paul and "all the churches of the Gentiles" gave thanks to God for them (Rom. 16:4). And just before he dies, Paul mentions them warmly in 2 Timothy. (4:19). Unlike some, they hadn't abandoned the faith.

Priscilla and Aquila are a wonderful example of a Christian man and woman working together for God's glory.

So I hope what I've said so far in my talk, explains to some extent why I chose the name.

Now I want to turn to...

## **2. What does the Centre do?**

The Centre aims to:

1. Improve the training of women for ministry at Moore
2. Encourage and promote a wide range of ministries by women, in genuine 'complementary' partnership with the ministries of men
3. Encourage and support women to pursue post-graduate study at Moore
4. Encourage and support Christian women to write and publish in the fields of Theology, Biblical Studies, Church History, Ethics, Ministry and Mission – at both a popular and academic level

5. Encourage, strengthen, and improve the practical expression of Complementarianism at Moore
6. Communicate the fruits of its work to the church and the world.

So here are some concrete examples of how we've been trying to achieve these aims over the past year:

We've been experimenting quite a bit with male-female teaching in lectures. Some of this team teaching has worked well. Some hasn't worked so well - for a whole range of reasons. It's early days. But it's an experiment we want to keep working at over this year.

You know from your own experience don't you in parish and student ministry, that it sometimes takes more effort and time to work with others, whoever they may be? Sometimes we just do the job ourselves because it's easier and quicker. And when you add to the equation men and women, it also takes time to work out what's appropriate and what's not from God's word. It takes effort to work out how best we can work together as men and women. And we've found that when working out male-female teaching here at college - it takes time. The team teaching is kind of the big example from last year. Some others are that...

I have met with several women interested in writing projects. I've surveyed some women and chatted to others about post-graduate study - why they are or aren't pursuing it. I try and meet regularly with our FT post-graduate woman to see how she's going.

Whenever I hear of a ministry position for a woman, I email the female students at college and some other women post-college who have asked to be on the list.

We have a great resource here at College that not many people know about called Ministers Study Leave. It's a guided reading program. The idea is you might come here for a week, you might come for a couple of months. Say you want to work on Ephesians because you're preparing Sunday School material on Ephesians, or bible studies or talks. You get to meet up with a faculty member a couple of times, so if it was Ephesians, maybe Con Campbell. We have a woman who arrived from Oxford this morning who has come to do that program. And I would really encourage more women (and men) to use that resource. There are more details about it on The Priscilla and Aquila website.

This year I want us to think much more about chapel, and how to use that time creatively. Hopefully this will then give the students ideas to take into their ministries beyond college.

So that's just a couple of examples. Hopefully over this year new projects will develop. The Centre is focusing on the academic and training side of women here at College. Tara Thornley, as the Dean of Women, oversees the pastoral care of women, along with Keith Condie, the Dean of students.

My position, and also Tara's, is made possible because of part funding by The Anglican Deaconess Institution, or ADI as most of it call it, and it's good to have Gillian Davidson and Karin Sowada here today representing ADI.

Previously, there was Moore College, and there was also Mary Andrews College or Deaconess House as it was known earlier. The female students of Moore received most of their training here at Moore, but also received some training from the faculty at Mary Andrews College – and it's good also to have some of the previous faculty here today – Narelle Jarrett, Jackie Stoneman, Sarie King and Natalie Rosner. Three years ago under a new agreement with The Anglican Deaconess Institute, Moore College took full responsibility of the training of women.

Besides Tara and myself, there are other women here part-time each week – Wendy Colquhoun who lectures in Hebrew and Kay Avery who lectures in Greek. There are also 12 female chaplains who work one day a week– and some of them are here today – Wendy Colquhoun, Lesley Ramsay, Cathy Smith, Margaret Powell, Charissa Forrest, Juliette Antoon, Mandy Curley, and Deb Earnshaw. These 12 women, and Tara and I, co-lead with the male faculty, the chaplaincy groups here at College.

In closing,

Late last year I was watching Shane Warne's new chat show, 'Warnie', and he was interviewing Chris Martin, the lead singer of Coldplay. And of course, Shane asked Chris what he thought about cricket. Chris said I like it, but I don't like what it does to me. I don't like the side of my personality it brings out. And Shane said – 'Oh, the Darth Vader side', and Chris said yes.

And there are things like that aren't there that seem to bring out more our Darth Vader side. For Chris, it's cricket. And for some of us, it's the issues surrounding women's ministry. I have been guilty of being too much Darth.

The Centre is assuming a position of Complementarianism, and it's wanting to think much more seriously and creatively about the application end of that in a really positive way. And I think now is a great time to do that, so I'm really glad you've come today. I hope you have a wonderful time, and I hope it proves to be helpful as you think more about how to encourage women in ministry in partnership with men.

Thank you.