

Podcast – Season 2 – Sarah Crane

Season Intro

	Music
Jane	Hello, I'm Jane Day, Centenary Development Enabler for Baptists Together
Helen	And I'm Helen Cameron, Research Fellow at the Centre for Baptist Studies at Regent's Park College Oxford. Together we are the co-leaders of Project Violet.
Jane	Welcome to Season 2 of the Project Violet podcast. Project Violet is a research project investigating women's experiences in ministry whilst developing women ministers. We are trying to understand better the theological, missional and structural obstacles women ministers face and identify ways forward.
Helen	In this second season, we will introduce you to some of the women who have taken part in the project and the research they have done.
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Interview – Sarah Crane

	Music
Helen and Sarah	Helen Cameron Today I'm speaking with Sarah Crane. Welcome to the Project Violet podcast, Sarah. Sarah Crane Thank you. Helen Cameron Perhaps you could start by explaining what your current ministry role is. Sarah Crane So I am the head of chaplaincy at Milton Keynes University Hospital. And as part of that, we also cover our local hospice and a local mental health unit. Helen Cameron Wow, that already sounds like quite a big job. For people who haven't come across a hospital chaplain, could you just say briefly what they do? Sarah Crane Well, in one sense, it's really simple. We spend our time talking to people around the hospital – patients, families, staff. I think the training that someone like me brings means that they're comfortable discussing with a chaplain the deep things of life, comfortable with the existential struggle. It's being comfortable

with pain and suffering in a way that actually the health system is not very comfortable with, with the system seeking to fix people. And that's quite a natural thing and healthcare, in most cultures, does that actually. But chaplains come alongside people to help give them space to process their experiences, and hopefully, as a trained listener, a trained pastoral carer, to be able to be an accompanier, in making sense of those things. And then acknowledging that lots of things don't make sense to us from a human perspective.

Helen Cameron

Thank you for that. And so your role is as team leader of the chaplains in the hospital. Can you just explain a bit about what that involves?

Sarah Crane

Well, in one sense, it means that I have to take responsibility for everything, which has its moments, I guess! What it means is I get the joy of seeing the team grow. And I've been able to appoint people and see them progress and develop and develop beyond their roles here. And that's wonderful. It means that, in a way, I guess, what people imagine perhaps hospital chaplains do is that we spend all day out on a ward visiting patients. And that is a part of our job. But for me, it's quite a small part of my job, because I also sort out contracts, I'm sorting out financial stuff, I'm sorting out the management of the team. So I've got three paid staff. But then I've got three other chaplains that support our wider team. I've got two Roman Catholic priests. I've got 14 volunteers. And I have to manage all of those people. I also manage the training that we offer, and how we help people in the hospital understand our role. But also, all the time I've been here – I've been here 10 years this year – and partly because of stuff I've done in the past, I've had a real interest in supporting staff. And so I lead all the debriefing in the Trust that helps people to process the psychological impact of incidents, and do lots of what people might consider soft stuff that hopefully builds a positive culture and encourages people to seek support. And I just hope it creates space for people to be open and honest about who they are. And then as a manager, there's all those inevitable meetings that are sometimes a joy, and sometimes quite tedious, as any job can be.

Helen Cameron

Thank you for that. And it's just really interesting to hear your role in building a positive culture. That sounds like a positive thing to do as part of ministry. Perhaps not very tangible. But that's a really interesting thing you've highlighted there.

Sarah Crane

Yeah, I mean, I, I think as a chaplain, we have a unique power. And part of the power is partly about role. I mean, at this point, I'm a senior member of staff. But I wasn't when I started. But also it's being able to encourage people to do the right thing, being able to encourage people to look after each other. And that's partly because I believe in the values of love and kindness. But even if you look at it from a hard financial perspective, we know that people are able to do more if they feel supported, and actually in healthcare, there's some brilliant research around the impact on mortality of incivility between staff. So, there's a brilliant campaign called 'civility saves lives'. And the evidence is that where people are dealing with incivility within teams, more patients die. And so I think

it's a win-win for a positive healthcare culture. And I think it's something chaplains should be at the heart of because whatever faith or belief community a healthcare Chaplain might come from, it really links with our values of our profession.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. That's really enriching to hear that. I'm wondering now if I can take you back to the beginning of your ministry and ask you about how you came to be a Baptist minister.

Sarah Crane

Well, I suppose, in some ways by accident, because it wasn't something I had considered. And it was something that the Minister of my home church, Clive Jarvis really encouraged me about when I basically told him he was being ridiculous. So I hope he listens to this because he laughs at me about this. After I was at school, I went to Spurgeon's College, to do their theology degree one day a week because that was what interested me. And I worked part time for my local church. And I did a couple of other jobs to have a bit of money to afford to live simply with my mum and dad. But as time went on, I felt that I was actually being a bit disobedient. And I was quite keen to become a primary school teacher. And I was about to apply to do that, as I was coming up to kind of nearly the last year of my degree. And I was at the ordination of a friend, and someone was reading from John 21, you know, where Jesus says to feed my sheep. And I felt and I haven't felt this pain many times in my life, I really felt kind of pricked by that and thinking, Yeah, I'm not doing what I'm gifted to do. I'm trying to do something that feels safe and comfortable, something really hard, but something that feels like what had been a plan all along. And I thought, I'm going to have to, I'm going to have to do this. So I explored that and was able then to kind of enter ordained ministry quite slowly, by going to be Minister in a church in Southend, in a team, and then kind of going back and filling in the gaps and being ordained several years later.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. That's a really fascinating journey. And, yeah, there's so many different routes, the different women who've spoken to me of how to enter ministry. So thank you for sharing that. Now, you got involved in the second group of women who came on board as co-researchers in Project Violet. I'm wondering whether you could just say, what was the question or issue you looked at?

Sarah Crane

So I spent four years in a local church and ministry. And then I have now spent nearly 10 years, which seems ridiculous, in an acute hospital, also serving a hospice and mental health unit. And I was wondering what other women's experiences were of the difference between the two, and of how they'd felt in those cultures in terms of being encouraged, being able to grow and being valued for themselves? Because in one sense, the NHS is an enormously equality-aware culture. I mean, there's lots of discrimination – we know that in the research, as well as people in the numbers, as well as people's experiences. But I just wondered what that was like for other female ministers. And I was just curious about it and really wanted to listen to those stories.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. So how did you actually go about conducting your research then?

Sarah Crane

So I sort of put a plea out into Facebook. And I then arranged meetings, and recorded and just listened to people. I didn't have a set of questions I was asking people, and it was anonymized. So they're not identified. But I wanted to know what their experiences have been. And I was keen to speak to people who'd gone in both directions. So people that had both gone from church into chaplaincy, and stayed there, but also people that have gone back. And to kind of hear what the processes of discernment were, perhaps for them, as well as what the joys were and what the kind of where the friction places weren't for you like.

Helen Cameron

So really, it was a series of interviews, listening conversations, I guess, drawing on your skills as a chaplain and deep listening to people, and then trying to pull together themes from the stories that people offered you.

Sarah Crane

Yes and as always, the thing, one of the main things I took away was that everyone's different, and that people's experiences are rich. But there were definite themes between these women of kind of feeling underestimated or feeling undervalued, or just little physical things of not having the opportunities that male counterparts had had in in different contexts. And I, you know, I felt conscious that that a lot of women feel 'it's me'. And the thread for me was everyone was saying that in a similar way, you know, 'I felt different in this context, but I wondered if there was something about me', and, you know, to me listening to those conversations, I want to say no, it's not about you. It's, it's about a deeply ingrained sense of who belongs and who gets to be here.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. So you've given us a flavour of your report, why would you like people to go away now and read it?

Sarah Crane

Well, I mean, I think because it's part of the whole of Project Violet in terms of what could life look like, for Baptists, women ministers, in a way that I think is quite a joy to imagine. I think it would give people a flavour of these experiences that people have had. And some of these things that, as I said, just really stood out to me as the person listening to each of these people as being real realities, and is that what we want? I suppose discrimination exists in every place in the whole world, doesn't it? But if it's unconscious, I'd really challenge people to reflect on whether they can become conscious of it. What can we do about it? Because we all have preferences. We all have things within us that create sort of a natural bias towards things that are more like ourselves. But sometimes we have to live with the discomfort of hearing about other people's difficult experiences.

	Helen Cameron Thank you. Well, thanks very much for talking to us about your research and thanks for coming on to the Project Violet podcast. Sarah Crane It's a pleasure. I'm very excited to see what happens next.
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Podcast – Season 2 – Charmaine Mhlanga

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Interview – Charmaine Mhlanga

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Helen and Charmaine	Helen Cameron Today I'm speaking to Charmaine Mhlanga. Welcome, Charmaine. Charmaine Mhlanga Hi, Helen, thank you so much. It's good to be here. Helen Cameron Perhaps you can start by telling us what your current ministry role is. Charmaine Mhlanga Yeah, absolutely. So I'm a newly accredited minister at Sundon Park Baptist Church in Luton, which has been my home church since 2005. And then joining on to membership in 2006. So it's been a journeying with the church, and I did my ministerial training with the church. The church called me as their minister. So yeah, I'm still there, still serving and still enjoying ministry. Thank you. Helen Cameron Can you talk to us about how you entered Baptist ministry? Charmaine Mhlanga Yes, absolutely. I think it's always good to reflect on the journey of where we've been. Because it defines, to some extent, where we're going. And one of the things that has been very important for me, on my journey, even into ministry,

starts from my early childhood with my grandma praying with me and praying for me, and I'm sure when we do meet in heaven, by God's grace, she'll probably be rejoicing and so happy that at least one of her grandchildren did become a minister. And so fast forward to Baptist ministry. Our minister at the time was Reverend Elaine Cobell in 2008 to 2009. And she felt that there was a calling on my life and she wasn't the first person that had said that. This had been going throughout as I grew. But so she asked me to explore what that would look like. I went to Spurgeon's college to be equipped to minister and then explored through the Ministerial Recognition Committee and to become a lay preacher. And that's where I'd say my Baptist ministry journey started. And yeah, a few years on, trained at Spurgeon's College, did my minister in training here at Sundon Park Baptist Church, and then went on to be called as the minister. So yeah, that's pretty much a snippet, really. The story is much bigger than that.

Helen Cameron

But thank you for sharing that with us. Now, you joined the third group of women taking part in Project Violet. Can you tell us what the issue was that you looked at? And why it was important to you?

Charmaine Mhlanga

Yeah, no, thank you so much, Helen, for asking that. So I found that it was really a privilege to take part in the Project Violet because it gave me a voice as a woman, more so as a black woman. And so the research question that I was looking at is on a resource that we've created as the Baptist union, '*I Am Because You Are*', which stems from the concept of Ubuntu – that a person is a person because of other people. And so for me, it was to explore the resource that had been created for ministers-in-training, for ministers and for retired ministers as well. And so it was looking at how people have received that training in light of our Baptist history and our Baptist journey, where we are, looking at how do we love one another, genuinely, and how we imitate Christ in our day to day. So I looked at a couple of different things. And it's going to, was going to be culminating as well from a survey that I'll be doing to ask ministers how they found the resource in terms of the accessibility of it.

Helen Cameron

Okay, that's great. And so, as part of your NAM studies, you looked into how people receiving the resource. What did you do? Did you speak to some people about it?

Charmaine Mhlanga

Yeah, so I had to participate in the course itself. So that was quite interesting, because I was also part of the recording of it, and so within the Central Baptist Association, I met with a couple of ministers. Through a two-day session, we went through the videos, we watched them together. I asked questions, people asked me questions. And I'm also doing a survey to find out overall within the Baptist movement, how the resource has been received. And I've also had the opportunity of speaking to ministers at the Baptist assembly in 2023 who would approach me and just give me feedback, both constructive and good feedback as well, in terms of how they found the resource.

Helen Cameron

	Okay, that's really interesting. It's been it's such an important development to have that resource available. So it's really great that you've had the opportunity to reflect on how it's being used. You've written a report, which we hope people will read. Can you say why you would like people to read your report? Charmaine Mhlanga Yes, I think what's important for me, one of the things that I captured in the report is on the use of language. When we understand language, it helps us to understand people better because we speak different languages. And sometimes we might even be referring to the same words, but meaning different things. And so it's looking at how does the language we use in light of matters of racial justice, why it matters and why that language needs to be accessible for people across the nations – because we do live in a country now you've got different people from different countries, different contexts, different cultures. So it's to look in light of that, how does our language affect how we live in the day to day when we're supporting one another? Because the resource really was for ministers, but the hope is that it would be used with the churches as well. So for me, I think what's been very important is around understanding that the language that is used, understanding the terminology, and then having an awareness of the power of words. So yeah, that's some of the things. Helen Cameron Great, well, thank you very much. Thanks for sharing about the research that you've done. And obviously we encourage people to go onto the website and read it. Thank you very much, Charmaine. Charmaine Mhlanga Thank you, Helen, for the opportunity.
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Podcast – Season 2 – Helen Dare

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Interview – Helen Dare

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Helen and Helen	Helen Cameron Welcome to the Project Violet Podcast. Today I'm speaking with Helen Dare. Helen, would you like to start by introducing yourself and saying what your current ministry role is? Helen Dare Yes, thank you, Helen. And I'm currently minister at Broad Haven Baptist Church, which is in a small, coastal village, in the Pembrokeshire National Park. It's a beautiful place to have a church. We are a church of medium size. Really embedded in our local community. We're a member both of the Baptist Union of Wales, and the Baptist Union of Great Britain. So that's given me a wonderful opportunity to be part of both unions and to have some trustee roles and committee roles. So that's my church role. I've been here just over 12 years. But then I also wear another hat, which is that I'm a tutor at Cardiff Baptist College. I've been doing that for about 18 months. And in the college, I teach biblical studies. Old Testament is my specialism. And I teach that within Cardiff University as well. But I also obviously have a pastoral role alongside my other colleagues, with students we have a pastoral programme. So I suppose my ministry role has two hats, it has two homes. They're geographically quite separate. They're a couple of hours away from each other, or longer if you take the train, of course, but the two of those roles really inform each other, they enrich each other. And so I sit in on the pastoral program at college, and it's like doing my ministerial training all over again. And that's

wonderful, helping me to reflect on my church context. And then also being in ministry means that I can walk with the students through stuff that I'm walking through too. So two hats, two places, but a great context for the ministry.

Helen Cameron

Thanks so much, Helen. That's really interesting. I wonder if I can take you back to the beginning and ask you about how you entered ministry?

Helen Dare

Yes, well, I left school and went to university, and I actually went to university at Regents Park College – not to do anything to do with ministry, but to do an undergraduate degree in classics. I guess I was probably headed for a career in teaching or something like that. And while I was at college, as everybody at university does, I did the usual stuff, some sport, more music. And then at Regents, there was a specific opportunity to lead the college Christian Union, but also to attend chapel and to get involved in chapel and to meet the ministerial students who were there training. And I guess my journey into ministry is, obviously not withstanding God's call of my life, but it's to do with them and the students and the staff at Regents who prodded me, encouraged me, and gave me opportunities to do things I would never have done otherwise, to walk with them to go and preach with them. I had a very encouraging minister in my home church – he just threw me in to all sorts of opportunities and then eventually, after I graduated, I worked at Regents for a couple of years and did some church work alongside that, while I worked out what I wanted to do, and I think it could be best described as God had told most other people before he told me that ministry was what I was to do. But I think, looking back, I am deeply grateful because of other people who mentored me and encouraged me. I loved living in Oxford. I had friends there, but my heart was always back home, which is Wales. It's where I grew up. And so I applied to what was then the South Wales Baptist College and is now Cardiff Baptist College. I trained for ministry there, I did a second BA. And then as I was discerning what to do at the end of that, I did a PhD through Bristol University. I had absolutely no intention to go into academic work. I didn't really see myself as a tutor. But it seemed like the best time to do it. I had no other ties. I certainly didn't have a church that was distracting me from my studies. So I did the PhD. And then came to Broad Haven, settled in Broad Haven. And, yes, the rest is what you've already heard.

Helen Cameron

That's wonderful. Thank you, Helen. Now you've had a particular role in Project Violet – would you like to explain the role that you've had?

Helen Dare

Yes, so I've been part of the team of theological reflectors. There have been three of us. So myself, my colleague Rosa Hunt who is one of the co-principals at Cardiff Baptist College, but she also is in ministry as well – she's a minister of Tabernacle Welsh Baptist Church in Cardiff. And Clara Rushbrook, co-principal in Northern Baptist College. We've met together. We have read reports and discussed and discerned. It's been a real privilege to work with each other, actually. And we've done this theological reflecting, it's a very new way of doing academic theology for me. And because we've not been trying to tease out arguments, we've not been analyzing in the same way that we normally would,

and certainly that I'm familiar with, from biblical studies. And we've read these reports, the co-researcher reports, very prayerfully, we've done that as individuals, and then we've come together as theological reflectors and listened to each other. And I think one of the things that has struck me in that process is that sometimes the way that things have struck me have also clearly resonated with other women who are in different contexts to me. And we have found ourselves experiencing something very special together, I think, as we've looked at these reports, so we've met together, online mostly, and then we've drawn out themes from what we've read. There was a process that we went through to do that. And then we've met online with the co researchers. And again, those resonances and the things that have come through have been very striking to us.

Helen Cameron

So that sounds like quite a deliberate process of women meeting in different groups to reflect and then coming together to reflect over a period of time.

Helen Dare

And I guess, discern what God has been saying through the research. Yes. And I think for me, that's been something that has been a really helpful discipline. So we've had particular questions that we've asked of each of the reports that we've read. And they have not been the usual marking criteria that I would use with a student essay about arguments and analysis – they've been about, well, what has surprised us in these reports, what beliefs and values do we see coming out of them? How do we see Baptist life and beliefs affirmed or challenged? And I suppose we've always asked, Where have we seen God? What have we heard? What have we learned? So it has been very deliberate. And it has had a process. But I think the other thing is that it's ensured everyone has their voice heard. And so the way that we've conducted our meetings has been very measured, I suppose, to make sure that everybody has a space, and particularly when we as theologians have met with co researchers, that, that we have met there to listen to each other. And, and both teams have, I think, spoken and listened to each other.

Helen Cameron

Well, thank you. That's really helpful to understand the process. So each group of co-researchers and their theological reflection processes has resulted in a report. So there are four reports, why do you think people should read these theological reflection reports?

Helen Dare

I'd like to encourage people to read them because they're probably not like any kind of theology you've ever read before. And I think what we I hope, what we have done is to draw together themes, and maybe some of the bigger picture that emerges from the individual reports. Each of the reports, the core research and reports have, I think, moved us as women and as theological reflectors. They are very powerful testimonies of experience and things that happen. But I think sometimes when reading reports like that, it can be difficult to know what to do – we have, we have an emotional response to them. And that can be anything, ranging from how we resonate with them to feeling cross about them or sad about them. But then it can be difficult, particularly if we're a leader of a

	church or in a different structural position within the union, to know well, what should I do about that? Why should I do anything about it rather than just a pastoral response? And I hope that we have drawn out themes. One of the things we observed was that in the first meeting with co-researchers, we saw common threads. But then we saw those same threads reflected in the second group and the third group and the fourth group. I hope that these reports would be something that would help people to get that a bit more of a bird's eye view, that I suppose we have had as we've sat with each of the groups, and really just to encourage people because sometimes we think that theology is something to be a bit nervous of. Maybe we think it's very head focused, very analytical. And perhaps that's what we've experienced in the past – you know, theology sometimes gets a reputation for being stuck in the classroom. And I think this theological reflection, really isn't that. I think we three reflectors are part of this Baptist family. And we have listened to stories from others in our family. But we've just brought our particular skills and experiences to help us reflect. So I think that this has been a process for us of discernment, of weighing what we've heard listening to God in that process. And it's been a really joyous thing because it's been communal. And so it's not just me saying, 'This is what I hear.' So I hope what we're offering to people and why they might want to listen to it is because the three of us have listened to each other and to others in that space. So it's, some of it is challenging to read, as it has been challenging for us to reflect on. But I think it's theology with a difference. I think it's theology with lots of heart in it, actually. And I hope people will find that as they read the reports. Helen Cameron Thank you Helen. And thanks for coming onto the Project Violet podcast. Helen Dare You're welcome.
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Podcast – Season 2 – Denise Dobie

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Interview – Denise Dobie

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Helen and Denise	Helen Cameron Today I'm welcoming Denise Dobie onto the Project Violet podcast. Welcome, Denise. Denise Dobie Hi. Helen Cameron Could you start by telling us what your current ministry role is? Denise Dobie So at the moment, I am the minister at the delightfully named Darkhouse Baptist Church in Darkhouse Lane in the Black Country, and I'm in my final year of NAMS, newly accredited ministry studies. Helen Cameron Okay. And I understand you've got a second string to your bow. Is there something else going on for you? Denise Dobie Well, yes. For the last six years, I have been bi-vocational in ministry. So I have until very recently been working as a GP, for 27 years, in the Black Country.

	Helen Cameron Thank you. It would be really interesting to hear how you came into Baptist ministry. Would you like to tell us a bit about that? Denise Dobie So I grew up in the Methodist Church, actually. And I think that's when I first felt a call upon my life, in my late teens, and I was involved in church missions with Rob Foster but didn't really know what shape that calling would be. But I'd seen women in ministry role model to me growing up, but then I spent 10 years in Scotland, and that was a very different story there. And I didn't know if I would be fulfilling that calling as a medical missionary, or some other way or ordained ministry. So I studied medicine. And as I've just said, I've worked as an inner-city GP, for the last 27 years or so. But that calling never went away. And although I very much felt that I was serving God and medicine was my vocation – and I was also serving God through my local church in the diaconate and coordinating children's work and safeguarding – that call was nagging, nagging, nagging. But it wasn't really until my late 30s, early 40s, that I started paying more attention to the shape of that call and thinking it was more than volunteering in church and that God had a stronger call. And funnily enough, it was my sister-in-law, who challenged me – who didn't actually believe in women in ministry at the time – and said that she thought God was calling me to more than serving on the church leadership team and children's work. And then I broke the news that I thought God was calling me to ordained ministry. I was too scared to tell anybody about it for a while and I sought spiritual direction. And eventually, at the age of 48, I went off to study theology and enter ministerial formation. And here I am today. Helen Cameron Thank you. Thank you for sharing that journey. I know you joined the final group of Project Violet co-researchers. Would you just like to talk to us about the issue that you investigated and why it was important to you? Denise Dobie So my chosen topic was about ministering through the menopause. I think it was important to me because as a GP, I saw and consulted with and listened to many women who are going through the menopause and facing many challenges in all areas of their life, particularly in their working life – and working together with them, weighing up all the confusing evidence for different treatments and management and what would work for them, to enable them to be able to reach their full potential and manage the challenges and flourish at that stage of life. And navigating workplace policies and all of that thing and I got to reading around what was available. With the rise of Davina McCall and her program on the menopause, it has become a topic that we talk about a lot more. And so over my time in medicine, there's been varying [advice] – HRT has been in favour and out of favour, and all of that, so weighing that up. And so really journeying alongside women at that point and helping them not to be lost to the workforce, because we lose so many really able women, sometimes without support. And then in church life, this became something that women in ministry were talking about, too. And I was approached by another woman minister, who said would I, with my GP hat, my bi-vocational hat, be willing to co-facilitate some Facebook drop-in sessions, really just talk about the issues
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that women in ministry face as they minister through this stage of life. And then I have a vested interest because I am a menopausal woman ministering through the menopause. So it's important to me on all of those counts, really. And I really wanted to explore both the challenges of ministering through menopause and also the gifts that ministering at this stage of life brings because God knows us. And he calls us, knowing us and knowing what stage of life we're at. So there must be something in that. So I want you to balance that, really, and look at all of that to acknowledge the challenges. And also to look at the awareness there was in church world about that, and how we can support women to flourish in their ministry at this stage of life.

Helen Cameron

That's great. So how did you actually go about your research?

Denise Dobie

So on the basis of having had a couple of zoom calls, I saw that there was an appetite for women to talk about that and a forum. So I just sent out invites and did a couple of focus groups. We've facilitated a couple of focus groups looking at the questions of ministering through the menopause, women's own experiences, whether it's the perimenopause or menopause or postmenopausal – looking at the challenges they face, but also exploring the gifts that they might have discovered as well, thinking about what support they did receive or would like to receive. So we had some free chat and discussion. And it was a really rich collection of data to analyse from the two focus groups. But I also wanted to look at the awareness of menopause within regional ministry, because that is where most women would turn to for support, really. So as well as the focus groups and analysing the data from that and looking at the themes that arose from that, I also sent out a survey to all the regional ministers, looking at the similar questions about the challenges what how aware they were of the challenges that women face ministering through the menopause, the gifts that ministering this stage might bring the support that they are aware of where they might signpost to and support and the need for further training. So those were the two big sort of datasets that we had, and then analysing those themes and bringing that together.

Helen Cameron

Okay, that's really great. So having done this piece of research, why do you want people to read your report?

Denise Dobie

I was thinking about this and I want women to read it, because I want them to know they're not alone. I think forewarned is forearmed, but also to acknowledge that, yes, there are challenges but there are accommodations that can be made and support that is out there. And so I want women to read it, to have a sense of what's there. And, and to read other women's experiences, because I think that's really important. I want men to read it. Because I think it's really important that we have awareness of how we all work together, and how we can flourish together and how we can encourage one another to reach our full potential and our full calling. And how we can support one another and just to raise understanding, as well as awareness about working better together. And I want all of us to read it because I want us to read about the requests for

	change, because there's such potential that we don't lose women at this stage of ministry – that we support, and that we acknowledge the challenge and put accommodations and support in place for those things, but also that we celebrate the gifts and we do that together. So yes, I think everyone should read it. Helen Cameron Thank you for that encouragement. Now you've been working in the fourth group of co researchers, which has included Susan Myatt, and Susan has elected to make a film rather than the podcast episode. Would you just like to say something to encourage people to go and watch Susan's film. Denise Dobie I think it's really important that we watch Susan's film rather than just listen to an audio because this is Susan communicating to us in her first language. And there's a richness and it's so important to receive what Susan has prepared and wants to say to us in her language which is British Sign Language. British Sign Language is a rich language. It's not just signs that support English. When I've seen Susan preach. I don't look at the interpreter of fact, the interpreter is often out of sight and you, and you watch you get so much from what Susan is saying and I think it will help you understand so much more about what Susan wants to communicate when you watch what she is saying. So please watch it. Helen Cameron Thank you. Thank you for that. And thank you for coming on to the podcast, Denise.
	Music

Season Outro

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Podcast – Season 2 – Beth Powney

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Interview – Beth Powney

	Music
Helen and Beth	Helen Cameron Today I'm speaking to Beth Powney. Beth Powney Thank you, Helen. It's lovely to be here. Helen Cameron Now you've retired since you took part in Project Violet. So perhaps you'd like to introduce yourself by saying what you're doing now. And what you were doing when you took part in the project? Beth Powney Um, so I retired in May 2023, from being the Regional Minister Team Leader of the Eastern Baptist Association, which has to be one of the longest job titles anybody could ever have, I think. And so technically, I've retired from being in ministry. I think my phrase is I now have a portfolio ministry, because that sounds posh, which means I can cherry pick what I do. So we have moved to East Sussex, I'm trying to learn how to relax and chill out and do things I enjoy. Which I'm sometimes succeeding at. But I'm also beginning to pick up aspects of ministry, the places where my heart, where the heartstrings are still really pulled. And that one of those is developing women in ministry. So I'm going to be doing some work with the association down here, the South Eastern Baptist Association, to continue to develop our women ministers across the Baptist

	family, having realized that intentional development makes such a difference. So I'm doing a whole range of things now. Helen Cameron That's lovely. And that's great to hear about the transition into retirement. Perhaps I can take you back to the beginning. Can you just say a bit about how you first entered Baptist ministry? Beth Powney Yes, I entered Baptist ministry from a difficult context, as many women seem to have done. I think it's improving to some extent. I was part of a church that didn't believe in women being ordained or preaching at that time or being elders. I was working for a parachurch organization where my skills were fully used and encouraged. And it was out of that context, through various ways that I felt the Lord beginning to say to me, you need to move into ordained ministry, pastoral ministry, and that was very challenging with the church that I was a member of, because in the Baptist world, you're called from within your church, and how was that going to happen? Obviously, I got there, because I'm sitting here. But that was very much because of a female Regional Minister at that time, who I knew, who came alongside and we negotiated our way through the quagmire in order to release me to do what God's called me to do. So I think that tricky journey informs some of what I've wanted to do since then. Helen Cameron Thank you for sharing that. Now, you came along into Project Violet, and in the first group of co researchers. Um, can you just say what the question or issue was that you looked at, and why it was important to you. Beth Powney Along with Jane Day, I had been running a program, which we called MagnifyYou, which was an intentional piece of work to develop ministers, female ministers, who we felt perhaps had greater potential to go on to larger roles of some sort or other. And we had, I think, it started as 15 women on this program, and it dropped to about 13 and 14 as these things do. And this ran over two years, from 2020 to 2022. And we met every other month, mostly on Zoom because of that timeframe. And I realized, as this was coming to a conclusion as partway through probably when Project Violet began to be birthed, that it was having a huge impact on these women in a way that was incredibly exciting. But also I couldn't quite grasp why, because what we were doing felt so simple, and so straightforward. And so the piece of research I picked up on was looking at what was the impact of this intentional leadership development? And how does that sit with our Baptist ecclesiology when we don't do that very easily or comfortably. So that was, that was the question I entered into the Project Violet research team with. Helen Cameron And you, from things you've already said about your own entry into ministry, I can see why development of women mattered so much to you. Was there a particular reason why at that time in your ministry journey doing this was important?
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	Beth Powney I think being a Regional Minister, you had a greater overview of what was going on in the Baptist family. At this particular time, I was the only female team leader amongst 13 Regional Minister Team Leaders. And then across regional ministry, in general, the percentage of women was, I don't know, something like 25%, something like that – was very small. And I could see coming up that there were a number of Regional Minister Team Leaders and Regional Ministers who were going to retire within a couple of years. And so I think God just sparked a thought in my brain that what if we did some preparation for this? What if? And so yes, there was a particular reason why it was at this time that we decided to do this in conversation with Jane. Because often women don't consider more senior roles, or larger roles or academic roles, because perhaps they think it's not for me, or they haven't seen the role models in those places. And so some of the thinking behind it was at the very least to broaden these women's experience of what could be. What they and God then did with it was beyond our remit. All that we could do was, if you like, expose people to those who are already in senior leadership, and enable these women's have conversations with significant leaders across our Baptists family and Christian world, who were women. And that's why I say it was incredibly simple, but had an amazing impact. Helen Cameron So you wanted to investigate the impact of this MagnifyYou program? How did you go about doing that in practice? Beth Powney Well, I interviewed six women who had been on the program, and they came from three different associations. And they were asked five questions. Why did they agree to attend MagnifyYou? How did they feel about being asked to join? (Because they were asked to join.) What changed for them as a result? And what might have made a difference to their leadership, if they hadn't been part of MagnifyYou, as in if they can imagine it hadn't happened? Or what might have happened instead? And then asking which part of the program impacted them most greatly? These were fascinating conversations. And there were key, there were key patterns that came out of these of these questions. And one of the strongest was the intentionality of what we did, the fact that we invited them was hugely significant. And bearing in mind, we really stumbled over that – the whole thing almost didn't happen because of that, because it felt like as soon as you ask one person, you're excluding another person. And that didn't fit comfortably. But we still went ahead and did that. And that very intentionality had a big impact, because the women immediately thought, 'Oh, somebody sees something in me, oh, perhaps I better go then,' as opposed to if they'd seen an advert for this happening. And they'd think, 'Oh, that's not for me.' It's probably what would have happened in a number of situations. They also said it was a very safe space. And I think the significance of that can be hugely recognized as we look at other aspects of Project Violet research – the need for women to have a safe space and connect. And to have a right to be at the table was a big thing. Helen Cameron
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	Well you've given us some great tasters as for what's in your report. Can you just finally say why you'd like people to go away now and read the research that you've done? Beth Powney I think it's a very positive piece of research, and an encouraging piece of research. And I think that in itself makes it worth reading. But even though it's positive and encouraging, I think it brings a challenge to each minister in each church, as to how can they intentionally develop... I'll say women and men in that church, because I still think men need to be empowered. Of course they do. But we happen to be talking about women here. What can they do as individuals – if intentionality is important, if safe space is important, if building women's confidence is important – what can they do? So that's the challenge that comes with it. But yeah, that's probably enough said today. Helen Cameron Well, thanks very much for discussing your research with us. And people can go to the website and download what you've written. Thank you, Beth. Beth Powney Thank you, Helen.
	Music

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Podcast – Season 2 – Alex Ellish and Carmel Murphy Elliot

Season Intro

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Interview – Alex Ellish and Carmel Murphy Elliot

	Music
Helen, Carmel and Alex	Helen Cameron Today I'm joined by Alex Ellish and Carmel Murphy Elliot. Welcome to the Project Violet podcast. Let me start with you Carmel. Can you explain what your current ministry role is? Carmel Murphy Elliot Yeah, sure. So, I'm freelance. So I wear a number of hats. And I work for an organization called Urban Life, which accompanies those involved in mission and ministry in marginal contexts, through formal and informal education. And then more recently, I've joined the Urban Expression team. So I'm a regional coordinator for the North of England for one day a week. And I'm also part of a little organization called All the Small Things that supports people who are doing grassroots-kind of community organizing and community development. Helen Cameron Thank you. Alex, what's your role at the moment? Alex Ellish So similar to Carmel, I'm part of the Urban Expression coordinators team, which I've been part of for about 14 years or so which I think is actually the same time as Carmel. And I'm also a Baptist minister in a small Baptist Church in Peckham, in southeast London.

	Helen Cameron Thank you. We're asking people to reflect back to how they entered ministry. Carmel would you like to just talk about how you came to be a Baptist minister? Carmel Murphy Elliot Yeah, sure. So I was a church-based youth and community worker. And within that role I was given lots of opportunity and actively supported and encouraged to explore what church might look like for those who weren't that interested in coming on a Sunday. So worked alongside the young people to explore spirituality to explore kind of, at that time, alternative worship was a big thing. And it was fantastically enjoyable. And in the midst of that I discovered God outside of the walls of church in a very different way. That kind of gave me this call to wider ministry. And so I went to train for Baptist ministry, but always with that kind of call to the edges and the kind of beyond the, what we already know, as church. Helen Cameron Perhaps I can ask the same question of you, Alex. Alex Ellish Yeah, I, I ended up studying theology at university, which was a bit of a surprise to me. But I was certain that I did not want to be in ministry, although I was a Christian. I wasn't going to be involved in church ministry at all, because I wanted to do something useful with my life. So I started to work for a charity that was working with homeless people, a Christian charity in Edinburgh. And a lot of the time we were going to churches to say, could you support our work? Could you volunteer with us? And could you come alongside of the work we do? And there was a growing realization that we were sort of acting as the middleman. And the more I read the gospels, and the more I read, what Jesus was like then it became obvious to me that we should be doing those things as followers of Jesus a bit like Carmel was saying, being on the edge or being on the margin being with people who would never walk into church. There was a growing thing that I felt like God was saying, you can't actually work outside of it and criticize it. If you want to do something different then you might need to actually do something about it. So yes, surprisingly, and training for ministry, in a very roundabout way, at IBTS, in Prague, and a placement in Kent, and all sorts of other wonderful experiences. But yeah, it's surprising. It's surprising for me to find myself in Baptist ministry. Helen Cameron Thank you for sharing those two stories. That's, that's really interesting. Now, you took part in the second group of co researchers in Project Violet, and you chose to work together. Would you like to just talk about the issue or question that you were interested in and why it was important to you? I'll let you decide which one which one of you starts. Carmel Murphy Elliot So we looked at women's experiences in pioneering contexts, which is no surprise, given the stories we've just shared, but particularly within urban expression, which is where we both have experience. And I guess we felt like there'd be such rich insights from the women that we've been working with for
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a number of years. But I think there was also something about how pioneer voices don't often get centred. And there was also this sense of we knew that we wanted these voices to be present and heard within this research. And so it felt like we could do something together around that within Urban expression.

Alex Ellish

Yeah, I think it was definitely we saw, I don't know, like you had, I saw the shout-out for people to share their experiences. And I thought, oh, that sounds like I should probably do that, but I don't know, I just don't have time or the faith or whatever. And then I thought of a second requirement like, oh, maybe we should do something. And I think we're both on the initial kind of exploratory call, I thought: Oh, well, maybe we could do something together. Because I've just felt like not necessarily wanting to like highlight our voices but to highlight other people's voices and how they ended up in urban expression. And I think we then placed the emphasis not just on women pioneers, but actually the flourishing of women ministers. And I think that emphasis really opened it up for us and made it less of like, another thing to have on the to do list, but actually just opening out what might be possible and highlighting different ways of being in ministry. So that brought it to life, definitely, for me. And actually also the process of how it was going to happen in Project Violet. So meeting with the other co-researchers and meeting with the three theological reflectors – that whole process just was so interesting to me, and much more attractive than, like writing up a report and sending it off and then, you know, it appearing somewhere or whatever. So the interactive and discussion way of doing the research. It was just so brilliant to be part of.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. So you decided to work together, you've explained your topic. Can you just tell us a little bit about how you went about doing your research?

Carmel Murphy Elliot

Yeah, so we had three conversations with two groups of women or ordained Baptist ministers with an involvement in urban expression. And we asked them to tell us about stories where they felt they had really flourished in leadership and ministry, and also stories where they had really struggled or felt restricted in ministry. And then we invited them to reflect a little bit on their training and how that had hindered or helped their mission and ministry. Yeah, and then we reflected on those conversations. And identified what came out across the two groups we spoke to.

Alex Ellish

Yeah, we had a grand plan of, you know, we set the questions out, and we sent those to the participants beforehand, to help guide our conversation. And then I think after the first one, Carmel, we were just like, Oh, my goodness, that conversation did not go how we expected. Loads more stuff had come to the fore. And most of that was really helpful, but a lot of it was very, very painful. So we then realized, okay, we need to refine our process a little bit for the next conversation. And, and it almost felt like at some point, it was a very sacred space that we created, I think. And yeah, there was a lot of reflecting on challenge and reflecting on struggle that people have been through. But also a lot of joy has come with that, you know, talking about people noticing their

	flourishing and the liberation that they're found. So those conversations were so important, and they didn't follow the path that we imagined. But yeah, it was a really beautiful process with our research participants. Helen Cameron Thank you, and the conversational and collaborative nature of that is just really coming through in the way in which you enabled women to speak about their experiences. So you've produced a report. Why do you want people to read your report about your research? Carmel Murphy Elliot I think it shares experiences of women's struggle in ministry, as you'd expect, and I think it's really important that we hear and understand some of those. But I think the thing particularly that Alex has been mentioning is also this flourishing. And for me that's incredibly hopeful and helpful, because it doesn't just stop at this naming the struggle. It also starts to look at how women have and can and are flourishing within ministry and therefore it gives us some pointers towards what we might need to see more widely in order for women to thrive in these places. So it feels quite hopeful to me in that it's not just about, yes, it's hard, and we want to hear that. But also there are other things happening that are encouraging and life giving and beautiful. Alex Ellish Yeah, absolutely. I agree with all of that. And then I guess just two things out of that. We have got some fantastic artwork in our report. So I would love people to even if they don't read what we've written, to look at the artwork that has been created, because I think that really encapsulates the journey that many women have been on. And also because I think we've really tried to listen to people stories. And so read a little bit of other women's experiences and what that's been like, I think that'll be really helpful for reflection and ongoing action. And, yeah, how we can do better to support women in ministry, particularly in like nontraditional context. Helen Cameron That's great. Thank you so much for talking today. And I encourage people to go to the website and download your report. Thank you very much.
	Music

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Podcast – Season 2 Script – Pam Searle

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Interview – Pam Searle

	Music
Helen and Pam	Helen Cameron Today I'm speaking with Pam Searle. So welcome, Pam. Pam Searle Hello, Helen. Helen Cameron Start by telling us about your current ministry. Pam Searle So I'm a minister at Sutton Baptist Church and Sutton is in London. And it's a town centre church. And I started there in 2019. And I'm still here, having managed to get the church through COVID and various other big deals, and we're seeing change and growth. And it's a great church. Helen Cameron That's wonderful. Thank you for sharing that. I'm wondering whether we can go back to the beginning of your ministry, and you can tell us how you came to be a Baptist minister. Pam Searle Yes, of course, I attended a church, not too far from here in Sutton: Purley Baptist Church. And I was mentored by Peter Noddin and Pam Bryan, the

ministers at the time. And I recall going back to see Peter and, and saying to him, that I felt that there was a bit of a nudge for calling and it was quite wonderful that he said 'about time too', and that was the start of a very great journey. I had had a calling as a younger teenager, but felt that actually it was probably right, what my parents said, you know, learn a bit more about life before you go into ministry. And the rest is history really?

Helen Cameron

Oh, that's wonderful. It's good to hear people's stories and how they came to respond to God's call. So you took part in the third group of Project Violet co-researchers? Can you tell us what you looked at in your research and why it was important to you?

Pam Searle

So my research looked at the decline experienced by women ministers within ministry, Baptist ministries, specifically. And it really struck me that having got close to coming out of ministry myself, I felt, you always seem to think you may have experienced this, but that when you're going through a hardship that it's only you that's going through that. And it's all it's very personal. But once I began to feel a bit stronger, I started to talk to one or two other ladies, women ministers, I started to realize that actually, it wasn't just me with these troubling experiences. And these weren't isolated incidences. And so I felt the nudge to sort of just sort of delve a bit deeper. And the deeper I went, I realized that actually that the pain that I suffered in ministry, and the pain that a number of women who have suffered and come out of ministry, it wasn't stopping. And they were left quite badly scarred. And so I wanted to see if there's something that I could do to encourage women ministers, and to even excite some women who are looking at ministry, and then, you know, Project Violet seem to emerge, it seemed as if it was all a big answer to prayer. That, you know, here am I considering why this happened to me, hearing what's happened to other women as well. And then hearing from Jane about Project Violet, it was so exciting. And it's great to see God at hand.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. So it sounds as if your research came from a mix of personal experience and having listened to the stories of others. How did you actually go about conducting your research?

Pam Searle

So I made a point of making sure that I stuck to you know, the ethical guidelines, you know, which you have to, I started to ask a few women, you know, if they would be prepared to share their stories. As you can imagine, a lot of women said no, because they wanted, you know, that was a chapter in their lives that they had left and was still quite raw. So those that said that they would be prepared to share their story. I wrote some questions for them. They had sight of the questions beforehand, so that nothing was a surprise. You know when dealing with this sort of subject, there can't be any surprises. Because you're dealing with quite a painful subject. You know, where the hurts have occurred. So I tried to speak to some women who have come out of Baptist ministry, and some women who are still in that is ministry. And just if you like, surviving.

	Helen Cameron That sounds, I mean, it sounds as if there's a lot of courage from those women to share their stories with you. And some really challenging listening on your part. Now, you've written up some of the learning that came from those interviews into a report, which is going to be available for people. Would you like to just say why you would like people to read your report. Pam Searle So I want to nudge people into realizing that we shouldn't be trying to survive ministry – we should be, well, enjoying it for a start. And it should be that we feel encouraged to be in ministry, by all being accepted for who we are, and not feeling that we have to be pushed into a sausage machine, so to speak. You know, God has called us as women, individual women, to share the gifts and skills that he has given us. And so that's really the encouragement that I want to pass on that any woman that has been called should be able to minister. To walk into ministry with those gifts, and not experience racism, sexism, and should be treated as an equal. When you read my report, you will see that there are a number of reflections where women have stated that they weren't treated as equal. And we serve a God who, who loves each of us. And he doesn't pick and choose as to who he loves. He loves us, because He has called us as, as his children. And so I would, I really want people to read the report, and learn from the report. And afterwards, I'm praying that the Baptist Union will look at this and say, we've got a lot of learning to do, and how can we make things better? You know, there's a lot of history, but God always looks to the healing and to preparing people. There are a lot of young women out there who would like to come into ministry. How can we encourage these women to come into ministry, into Baptist ministry, and want to learn from us who served – you know, I've been in it a little while now – and journey with them. So whether that's, you know, for us to be able to mentor and to grow with them, I don't know. But I know that God is in this and that he will journey with Project Violet, and where the Baptist Union sees it developing and growing. Helen Cameron Thank you very much. Thank you for sharing that hope with us. And I just encourage people to go onto the website now and read your report. Thanks very much, Pam. Pam Searle Thank you
	Music

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Podcast – Season 2 – Laura Gilmour

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Interview – Laura Gilmour

	Music
Helen and Laura	Helen Cameron Today's interviewee is Laura Gilmour. Welcome, Laura. I'd like to start by asking you what your current ministry role is. Laura Gilmour I work as a chaplain in palliative care. I'm currently working at Strathcarron Hospice, which is based in central Scotland. So that means that I'm ministering in the Baptist Union of Scotland. But I was really delighted to be asked to join in with the work of Project Violet. My role involves spiritual care of patients and families, both in the hospice and in the wider community, as well as an element of staff support. Helen Cameron Okay, thank you. Can I take you back to the beginning of your ministry, how did you enter Baptist ministry? Laura Gilmour Sure. There had been whispers of a call of ministry for many years. I did my first degree in theology and philosophy in the University of Leeds in the early 2000s. But I tried not to pay much attention to those whispers. And I went on to work in the field of research ethics, both in the NHS and later on in the University of Leeds. So those whispers were there from quite early on. We moved to Scotland in 2010, for my husband's job, and at that time, I was pregnant with my eldest

boy. So to meet the needs of caring for my family, I trained as a kilt maker and was a kilt maker for 10 years. And that meant that I could stay at home look after the kids and be around when they needed me. But then COVID came, and nobody needed kilts anymore. So it was in the lead up to COVID that those whispers of a call to ministry grew louder. And then with my business no longer viable in COVID, it felt like a time to actually start listening to these whispers that I got to a point where I couldn't ignore them anymore. So I enrolled as a student at the Scottish Baptist College to try and explore some of what it would look like for me as a minister, what, what ways I could serve in that role. And as part of that I had to do a work placement at Strathcarron Hospice, which was where I found I actually just loved palliative care chaplaincy. And then my calling was accepted by the Board of Ministry. That led to a job at Strathcarron, which is where I am now.

Helen Cameron

Thank you for talking us through your story, and the different ways in which whispers lead to calls lead to ministry – thank you so much. Can you say what was the question or issue you looked at in Project Violet and why that was important to you?

Laura Gilmour

I looked at how caring responsibilities across the lifecycle shape and impact the ministry and experiences of women who have this dual role of Baptist minister and carer and I was specifically interested in both chaplaincy and church ministry roles. And obviously it was important to me, because of my personal experience that I just I've just described – I had caring responsibilities as well. And I noticed that women, I thought, tended to come into the ministry later when they already had caring responsibilities. So I wanted to look at how those responsibilities shift both their pathway to ministry, and then their experiences of ministry when they were doing the job as it were. And part of that, I think was it was important to look at it across the lifecycle. Because in a society where it is mostly the women who pick up caring responsibilities, not only for children, but for aging parents, and sometimes spouses. I wanted to consider how that tendency shapes and impacts the long-term experiences of women in ministry.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. So how did you go about investigating your topic?

Laura Gilmour

I interviewed five women. Initially, I tried to keep them in Scotland because I wanted to look at Scotland specifically. But I found that I had to go to England to recruit one woman participant, simply because there's a smaller pool of women ministers in Scotland so there wasn't that breadth of caring responsibilities across the lifecycle. So I interviewed these women and I did a semi structured interview, which has allowed scope for them to speak about the positive and negative ways that caring responsibilities have shaped their ministry. And then with these transcripts, I picked five men in ministry roles – some weren't ministers, some were ministry adjacent roles like theological education, that type of thing. And I asked these men to look at the transcripts, and reflect on the similarities and differences in their own pathways to ministry and also the ministry the roles that they were in. Some of the men it turned out

	were carers themselves, some were co-parenting, and others were not the primary carer of children or spouses or parents. So it was a really interesting mix, pairing them together. So from these transcripts and the reflections, I pulled out a number of themes to bring together the recommendations that I suggest at the end of the report. Helen Cameron Well, that's a really interesting way of doing research to get women and women's perspectives and men's reflections on those. So why do you want people to read your report? Laura Gilmour Well, primarily, I want people to hear the voices of the women I interviewed and to learn about the experiences of the women I interviewed as well. But also the themes that came out of those interviews where they raise questions about the pattern of calling for women and how that might look different to men. And that that includes the support that women need, in the discernment process, the encouragement and the support that they might need to even before they get to, to the to the board of ministry. So hopefully, it will challenge folk to look at that traditional model of minister and consider whether that that could be altered to allow for both men and women to flourish when they've got these dual responsibilities of carer and minister. Yeah, it was really interesting to see that it was not only the women who wanted the change, but some of the men also wanted to change so that their role as carer could be recognized as part of their ministry as well. So, yeah, I'd like people to read it on that basis. Helen Cameron That's lovely. Thank you very much, Laura, for talking to us about your research, and I encourage people to go to the website now and read it. Thanks very much.
	Music

Season Outro

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Podcast – Season 2 – Helen Stokley

Season Intro

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Interview – Helen Stokley

	Music
Helen and Helen	Helen Cameron Hello, today I'm talking with Helen Stokely. Helen Stokley Hi. Helen Cameron Helen, thanks for coming onto the Project Violet podcast. Perhaps you'd like to start by describing your current ministry role. Helen Stokley Thank you, thank you for having me. So, my current ministry role officially has the title of Deputy Vice Chancellor at Spurgeon's College. But simply, I think we can say I'm the vice principal. And my life consists of a wonderful mix of everything. Looking after college on a day-to-day basis. As Philip, the principal puts it, I make things happen. So that's everything you might expect, the mechanics of college life and the building. But I actually spend more time on strategic partnerships, on the direction of the college, on the leadership of the college, and as a sideline, I find myself overseeing some rather major building projects. And then alongside that, I also preach and speak in various contexts. And then occasionally I step into the classroom and give a lecture. So really, no two days are the same. It's extremely varied. On my desk, I have a sign that says 'in business to do ministry', and really that kind of encapsulates it because I feel

	called as a Baptist minister, I have some skills outside Baptist ministry, and God has good sense of humour, and has chosen just to combine the two into a unique Baptist ministry role. Helen Cameron Thank you, Helen. That's a really distinctive role. Thanks for describing it to us. Can I take you back to the beginning of your ministry? Can you tell us a bit about how you came to enter Baptist ministry? Helen Stokley Yeah, so I was a very reluctant entrant to Baptist ministry, primarily because I thought, surely Baptist ministry was for people who knew what they were doing. And I didn't put myself in that category. I felt God was calling me into leadership, I think, from my teenage years, but it was really in my 20s that I understood that God actually wanted me to be a Baptist minister. And for me, that was a really big challenge, because I was quite sure that, you know, that was meant for other people. But God made it very plain that yes, he wanted me to. And so I actually came to Spurgeon's college, I trained as a Baptist minister. And while I was training, I was a minister-in-training at Woodside Baptist Church. So yeah, so it was a bit of an adventure. Helen Cameron That's great. Thank you for sharing your story with us. You were in the first group of women who came forward and took part in Project Violet – can you describe the question or issue that you researched? Helen Stokley Yes. So the title that I ended up giving the research was: Enabling women to prepare for ministry or training, so they can engage and flourish as ministers-in-training. And I suppose the key word in that sentence really was enabling women to prepare for ministerial training, the word 'prepare'. So I didn't really look at what happens when students get into college, I was interested more in how they were getting there, what was happening before they came through the doors, and just that kind of journey of preparation for ministerial training. And so I was really, really interested in that. And it really related to my experience, because I'm involved in the interview process, as people come to college. And so it was really, I was hearing lots of stories, I was observing lots of things. I was thinking, Oh, my word. And I didn't really know what to do with all of that experience. So actually felt really important to me to actually understand what was going on. In that moment. Helen Cameron Thank you. So really something that you were observing in your day-to-day ministry, and which you suddenly realized, 'This is important. I need to do some more investigation.' Yeah, that's really interesting. And can you say a bit about how you conducted your research, what kind of things did you do? Helen Stokley Yes. So naively, I thought that it might be simple to send out a survey to every Baptist minister in the Baptist Union. So, you know, and so I did that and wasn't quite prepared for the fact that people very kindly engaged with my survey. So
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114 People actually responded with over 13,000 words, which I wasn't really ready for. I was thinking a couple of friends from college and a few people who I bumped into might have been kind enough to do it. But I was quite amazed actually that people did the survey. And so I asked a series of questions, about people's journey. But I also very deliberately gave space for free text. So there were very open questions where people could actually say anything that they wanted in response to the question, and that's the bit that I found fascinating, because although I asked about preparation, I received lots of information about experience at college. And as I said, over 13,000 words, and it was just a privilege to get a peek into people's experience. So yeah, predominantly, it was a survey. And just so you know, it kept me very busy afterwards. It was great fun. But yeah, hadn't quite expected people to engage with it in the way they did.

Helen Cameron

I guess it shows that this issue isn't only important to you, but it's important to other people that many people took the trouble to respond to you. So that's quite encouraging, even although from what you say it sounds a bit overwhelming at the time.

Helen Stokley

That was really encouraging. Yeah, it felt like maybe I was asking the right question, because people were responding. So that was really interesting.

Helen Cameron

So you've written the report, which is available on the Project Violet website. Why would you like people to read your report?

Helen Stokley

Yes, it's a really good question. Because obviously, we've all got busy lives and lots going on. But I'm really conscious that if you've got anything to do with Baptist ministry, I mean, as a person, you know, as a church member, and maybe it's the person leading a church, someone involved in a pioneer or missional context, or a leader at local, regional, national or international level, I think that we can all agree that we want to be as effective as we can be – effective as a movement. It's about his family, we want to be the best that we can be for the time that God has called us. And we want to be great stewards of the gospel. So I think that's something that we can all coalesce around: we really want to see change lives. And we understand that what we bring to the table, how we do it, and how effective we are, is part of that mix – that God in His grace uses all of that. So if we all are coming together, knowing that we want to be more effective, and we together want to form leaders, the next generation of people to share the gospel. And if we come together with that fact and combine that the Baptist family have chosen to train people through various models, my research really looks at the reality on the ground of how that training model works. And as I, as I mentioned, you know, 114 people, you know, Baptist ministers have, have really given us a peek into their experience of what's going on in training. And, and I think that's really interesting, because it also gives us a peek into that question about how we can be more effective. How can we use the opportunity we have? How can we ensure that we are stewarding the gift of the gospel in the best way? So for me, if we don't hear

	what's happening on the ground, right, in the heart of training, how can we, as a Baptist family make evidence-based, informed decisions about going forward? How can we, you know, think about how we need to move what we need to change? How we can be more effective if our, if our call is to, you know, for such a time as this to use our opportunities? We need as much knowledge as we can. We need to hear as many voices as we can. Because the reality is, there's no singular narrative. And, you know, none of the participants that replied to the survey are the same. You know, I'm on this podcast, and I'm not the same you who's listening and you're not the same as the people around you. And you see, we don't want to package people into groups, because there is no singular narrative. But we do want to draw out common themes. And so from the act of doing my research, I've tried to highlight some of those common themes. And I suppose my question would be that if we want to be effective, if we want to, you know, if we want to take to the world for Christ, then, and if we're committed to training Baptist ministers, and that's the way that we've chosen to do this, then why wouldn't you read my research, because actually, in reading it, we learn more about how we are doing as a movement as individuals as a Baptist family in terms of training. So I think it's like an opportunity to just take a peek behind the curtain, and just look and reflect and hear from people who have experienced it, and just hear the reality of it, and also gain their insights. Because none of us know everything; we together, you know, we can make evidence-based decisions. And so I really want people to read it, because I want to help those that were brave enough and kind enough to answer my survey and input into it, just for their voice to be to be heard and to be noted. And as you'll find out – when you do read it – it was costly for some of those people. And some of the things they said requires quite a bit of bravery. So I liked that phrase, 'of humble inquiry'. So I would just invite you to come on a journey, to be a humble enquirer, to find out what people have been saying, as a result of my research. Helen Cameron Thank you, Helen. That's really stirring, I can hear the passion in your voice and all that you've put into this. And as you say, lots of people have been very courageous in taking part in the research that the Project Violet co-researchers have done, so thank you so much for what you've said. Helen Stokley And it's been great to be able to share.
	Music

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Podcast – Season 2 – Clare Hooper

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Interview – Clare Hooper

	Music
Helen and Clare	Helen Cameron In this episode, I'm talking to Clare Hooper. Welcome, Clare. What is your current ministry role? Clare Hooper I'm a Co-Team Leader, with Haley Young, at Southern Counties Baptist Association. And I'm also the coordinator for children's youth and families learning at Bristol Baptist College. Helen Cameron How did you enter Baptist ministry? Clare Hooper So back in the day, there was a thing called youth specialists. And that's how I found my way into Baptist ministry. Because when I became a Christian, I always wanted to work with young people. And it's, I remember being like, in sixth form, saying that I wanted to get a Bible college. And that was just, yeah, I wanted to work with young people. And though, because they had youth specialism, I found my shape of ministry, and I – flicking back – gosh, if that wasn't there, I might, it might have been harder for me to find my way into Baptist ministry. So I'm really pleased that they had that sort of shape of ministry back in the day. So that's how I found my sort of feet. And I was

worshiping or was belonging, part of a youth group in a Baptist church. So that's why the Baptists were obviously a very familiar kind of family for me.

Helen Cameron

What sort of training did you have to do then for that youth route? Was it different from the standard ministerial training?

Clare Hooper

When I started, I did JNC, which is your secular professional qualification in youth work. And the organization that was running that was called Centre for Youth Ministry – it's CYM and is still going. And I was the first cohort at the Oxford delivery centre for that. And then, because it wasn't a Baptist College, obviously, Bristol came in later, I had to go down the residential selection conference route, where I met people who I'm still friends with today.

Helen Cameron

What did you do for your research?

Clare Hooper

So it actually, it shifted a bit because originally, I was really like, I heard a woman say that she felt really celebrated by her association. And that really kind of struck me and I wanted, I wanted SCBA to be an association that celebrated women. And so to begin with, it was like, what does it look like for our association to celebrate women leaders, women ministers. But actually, it turns out that the women when I was chatting to them didn't really like that idea of being celebrated more than anybody else. And so it shifted to: What does affirming women leaders in our association look like?

Helen Cameron

And why was that important to you as a topic?

Clare Hooper

Well, I want everyone to know that there is a place for them to belong, and that they are valued and that they are loved – and any space that we create that enables that to happen, I wanted to be part of that. So I wanted to hear from women's kind of experiences. And I knew already on the grapevine that we hadn't always been so great. Even though we were trying our best, we haven't always been so great in some of the spaces that we held as an association. And so I wanted to listen and to hear, and to see what we might do differently.

Helen Cameron

What approach did you take to your research?

Clare Hooper

So it had like a couple of phases. And the first phase was making sure I got the language right. So that just involves running, like, small groups of women. And I asked them the same question and got some really great feedback, which I then brought into the second stage, which for me was slightly the more exciting one, because it was a bit more freestyle. And I used Lego. And so there's a method of using Lego called Lego Serious Play. And it's because it uses metaphor, and metaphor is such a great way of helping people kind of begin to articulate their

	thinking because it's not just dependent on words, but you're creating something and that of that creation. The women could tell me a bit about what they were experiencing and what they were hoping for. Helen Cameron It's a long time since I came across a Lego brick so you're just going to have to unpack that a bit for me when you say Lego Serious Play. What's actually going on in the room when you when you do that? Clare Hooper There was a lot of Lego. One of the participants was absolutely lit up by this because she was a proper Lego freak. And in a beautiful way, not in a freaky way. And, I just asked them to – with that question of what does affirming look like for us, as an association – asked them to build something that modelled that. And we did some sort of stuff around metaphor. So we had a go playing with the Lego and getting ourselves familiar with it and used to it in that way. And then just asking them to speak to the model that they've created. And it was just, just so much stuff came out, it was brilliant. Helen Cameron Why do you want people to read your report? Clare Hooper I've been thinking about that a little bit. And for me we're all involved in hosting and facilitating spaces. Or if we're not, we're actually part of groups. And I think all of us have a part to play in how we hold those spaces well, and so maybe I'm hoping that by reading the report, it will provoke people to think about, actually, how am I facilitating the spaces that I find myself in? And what sort of group member am I? Because we can all be, we can all help with the culture of a group for good or for ill. And so I think it's quite practical in that way. So hopefully, everyone will be able to think, oh, what might I be able to do differently that enables more people to participate and more voices to be heard? Helen Cameron Thank you, Clare.
	Music

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Podcast – Season 2 – Claire Nicholls

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Interview – Claire Nicholls

	Music
Helen and Claire	Helen Cameron Today I'm speaking to Claire Nicholls. Welcome, Claire. To start with can you tell us about your current ministry role? Claire Nicholls So I'm currently a Regional Minister with London Baptists and I work with and care for churches in southeast London. I also lead on justice in the association, as well as many other things that a Regional Minister does. I recently started in this role – well, last year in April – and before then, when I wrote my report for Project Violet, I was minister of New Addington Baptist Church in South Croydon. So life has changed since I wrote my report. Helen Cameron Thank you for sharing that. We're inviting people to go back to the beginning of their ministry and just explain how they came into Baptist ministry. Claire Nicholls So I grew up in Baptist churches; I was a child of the manse. So I've been in Baptist churches all my life. And I was always encouraged in my faith. And I had some great examples around me of ministers and leaders, who were trying to follow the call of God, as best as they could. I went to university to do maths with finance. And it was at university I first encountered opposition to women in ministry, and my reactions quite surprised me. And I wondered why I reacted so

badly to that. And it wasn't until I was considering what to do after university, that I realized that God might be calling me to some kind of full time Christian ministry. I didn't believe it was the right time then. And I took a year out working with university Christian unions. And I went on to train to be a maths teacher. So I wasn't going into ministry that much. During that time, I was given opportunities to preach and to lead. And it became clear that this was something I was called to be. I was definitely called to preach, and to be a leader. And I was wrestling with a call beyond that. And I wrestled with a call for a long time. Was I good enough? Was I too introvert? Was I better off as a maths teacher and serving in the local church? And I bought a house, and I was quite happy living in Derby. But I never thought I was going to be a teacher forever. In that time, I was invited to be part of the Baptist Union younger leaders forum. And there I met with other younger leaders, and some of them were women. And some of them were ministers. And it encouraged me that I could probably do this because they were just like me. And they were ministers. And my call to ministry then never went away. I've got diaries from that time that where every week something would be said to me that suggested this was the journey I should take. My ministers at the time saw it in me. I met a minister that encouraged me to preach – friends or family did, and also random people. The people that I hardly knew would say, I think this might be you. So I waited for some years. And I ended up at Baptist Assembly. I go every year, because I'm a good Baptist. And Pat Took was preaching. And that's when I made my final decision. It's been a real privilege, as a Regional Minister in London to hear stories of people who have been inspired by Pat. Pat's name keeps on coming up. And her name comes up in my story quite a lot. Because those role models and encouragements have been really important and are so important to us on that journey. But that sermon, I remember, I don't remember what the content of the sermon was, or the passage, but I remember two things she said. She said, women, you need to get on with it and go into ministry. And don't let your mortgage get in the way. And I felt that those things were said directly to me. And I felt that I could do nothing other than explore the call more fully. And so that's how I ended up here. And I was sent from a tiny but great church in Derby to Northern Baptist College, where I studied alongside being a minister in a little place called Ramsbottom, just north of Manchester. And that's how the story began.

Helen Cameron

That's wonderful. Thank you for sharing your story and the influences that helped you reach that decision to respond to God's call. Now, you're a part of the second group of Project Violet co researchers. Would you like to talk about the issue or question which you looked at in your research?

Claire Nicholls

So I decided to write reflections on developing a London Baptists women's justice hub. I was tasked in 2021 to help set up that area of work in London Baptists and it was helpful to be able to link Project Violet in with that. Justice issues have always really been really important to me. When I was a teenager, I learned the song I will speak out for those who have no voices at Spring Harvest, and I really felt that God was speaking to me and what he wanted me to do, as I grew up at that point in life, but I forgot about that. Until my first few days at college, and the principal said to me, 'You're really into justice. What do you

think?’ And I was like, I’m not really into justice. But apparently I am. It appears, justice just kind of flows out me. I want to speak out for where things are wrong, because that’s who I am. That’s who God made me to be. Women’s justice has always been really important to me, because I’ve encountered opposition to my own ministry on the way to where I am today. And I see where women are not treated equally, or with respect, when theological differences are there. I’ve had people say to me that I can’t be their minister because I’m a woman. And I’ve had people walk out as well, because I’m a woman. I recognize that I am judged more harshly because of my gender. And I know I’m not the only one who is judged much more harshly. So my commitment to the London Baptist women’s justice came about because I was asked, because someone saw that all in me. I’ve spent a lot of time in conversation with Jane Day about the experience of women in ministry in London, and some of the statistics on female ministers. The women’s justice group was just beginning to form when I got involved with Project Violet. And we had a lot of questions about barriers to women in ministry, why women weren’t coming forward for accreditation, and the settlement process. And questions about the real situation on the ground in London Baptists and so much more and, and it felt helpful to reflect on the process as part of the project. So we could learn, and so we might share some of our experiences in setting up the hub with other associations who are looking to do the same thing.

Helen Cameron

So it sounds as if the way you went about the research was that you were in the midst of all this doing, and you just took time to step back and reflect and think about what you’re learning if I correctly understood the approach. Yeah, okay. It sounds as if that might give you some space to be the introvert that you named yourself out as, somebody who likes to reflect as well as to do. I don’t know if that’s, perhaps I’m pushing something onto you there.

Claire Nicholls

Yes, I’m naturally a reflective practitioner. It is something I learned as a teacher. And so it’s something I’ve always done in ministry as well. I am a reflector.

Helen Cameron

Thank you very much. So you’ve told us a topic that you took, and you told us about your approach that you took, can you now tell us why you want people to read the report that you’ve written?

Claire Nicholls

So I guess it’s because I hope it might inspire people as to how active participation and asking questions can lead to change if we don’t choose to actively begin to question where gates have been closed, and barriers have been the experiences of people who are on the margins? And if we don’t question the places where there seems to be unconscious bias, and where words aren’t followed into action, then things don’t change. And along this journey I’ve encountered people who said that there’s not an issue with women in ministry anymore. People are just accepting women. No, all right. But my story and the stories of those who I work with would suggest differently. Being actively involved in women’s justice is a really good thing and something we should all have eye on. Even if it’s not something we feel we’re called to, we should all

	have our eye on. And I hope that in reading my report, it might inspire some people to open their eyes a bit better. Helen Cameron Thank you. Thanks very much for talking to us today, Claire. Claire Nicholls Thank you.
	Music

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Podcast – Season 2 – Amutha Devaraj

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Interview – Amutha Devaraj

	Music
Helen and Amutha	Helen Cameron In this podcast episode, I'm talking to Amutha Devaraj. Welcome, Amutha. Amutha Devaraj Thank you for having me here with you. And it is a great opportunity to share. Helen Cameron What is your current ministry role? Amutha Devaraj I am currently the Baptist minister of the church in Ashurst Drive Baptist Church. And the church is located in Gants Hill, and it is in Ilford, which is in the Northeast region in London Baptists. Helen Cameron How did you enter Baptist ministry? Amutha Devaraj I come from a Hindu background. So I came to the UK in 2008. I was baptized and I came to the Lord and the ministry, it started in 2016, when I came through Baptist accreditation process. I started as a minister-in-training in the local church, where I have been for from 2006 onwards, and God brought me an opportunity to serve in this way to the church I belong. And I started studying

	theology then in 2016, in Spurgeon's College, and then the church, the same church called me as they are now. And after three years of NAM here now, I'm serving in the same church as their fully accredited Baptist minister. And it is like, working for home. I always say that. It is a beautiful ministry God has opened for the Baptist church. Helen Cameron What did you do before ministry? Amutha Devaraj Yes, before the ministry, I was a researcher. I worked in Japan after completing my PhD in material science back home in India. And in Japan, seven to eight years. You spent there in an academic way. And then we came here as a family together to the UK in 2005. And I was working in Imperial College in the Material Science Department. And I was researcher, and I did different research in material science, and also civil and environmental science department. And then I worked in a green cement production company within Imperial College itself. So it was a long journey in the academic side. And in 2016, I started having a calling from God asking, like, 'Come and follow me.' And I have been thinking, 'Yes, Lord, I'm following you, but in what capacity I didn't understand.' And then he called me and said, 'Leave the net, and follow me' – what he said to Peter, then it was affirming that I should leave what I am doing in a secular place, and following Him completely in this ministerial route. And I then started exploring in London Baptists and seeing what that call would be. And then slowly, the doors were opening towards this church ministry. And then I identified this is the calling he has put in me. So I started following it. And slowly he has brought me through this journey. And I am here really enjoying serving him. Helen Cameron What was the question or issue you looked at in Project Violet? Amutha Devaraj The topic I have chosen to do my research and to bring it into discussion is understanding the journey into ministry for Asian women. And I would like to reflect my own personal journey into this ministry. That's why I chose this topic, like how the Asian women can see themselves putting forward into the ministry, church ministry, and during this course of Project Violet on this topic that helped me to look back my whole life and learn few things which I have experienced through this journey. And by sharing this with the other people, especially Asian women, I believe that this would enable them and kindle them to take a step forward to get into the ministry or any leadership role in the church ministry. So having that in mind, I thought, 'Okay, this is the topic, I'm going to look on it.' And since personally I can reflect my own life, I thought it would be easier to bring out the outcome into discussion. Helen Cameron What did you do for your research? Amutha Devaraj
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	Actually, I kept to my story, my personal story of God's calling and calling into his salvation, and then to his service, as an anecdote of this project. And then I reflected on why not many other Asian women coming into ministry, and what really stops them. I then did research on existing, already available database to see how many Asian men firstly, involved in the Baptist ministry, and in the other white denominations as well. And seeing that result from the database research, that helped me to understand why women are in a very minority way, or you can count numbers, that they are coming up into the ministerial calling. And this really assisted me to understand why women are unwilling to take up this ministerial calling. Then I involved the local church congregation. And I've chosen different age groups, different genders, and different ethical backgrounds, to obtain their views about the Asian women in the ministry. And then I finally summarized all the outcome I have received. And then theologically reflecting on that, and putting it forward a few practical things that can be initiated at the end of the project, which will be really supportive in the future. Helen Cameron Why do you want people to read your report? Amutha Devaraj I think there are three points I can see. Like one is that this would enable men and women to think about the other side, which was unattended, or unnoticed until now. And also, second one, I believe that this would enhance the interest in the coming-up new, younger generation to take this as a challenge in putting forward for this noble ministerial calling. And thirdly, I trust this would lead Asian women to think about in this perspective, if they have not so far, how to take this as a challenge or how to enjoy the experience of what I had, to move forward into the church ministry. Helen Cameron Well, that's been really encouraging to hear about your own journey to hear about your passion for the research you've done. And then some good reasons to encourage people to read what you've written. Thank you so much for speaking with us in this episode.
	Music

Outro

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Podcast – Season 2 – Hayley Young

Season Intro

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Interview – Hayley Young

	Music
Helen and Hayley	Helen Cameron Today I'm talking with Hayley Young. Welcome, Hayley. Hayley Young Hi. Great to be with you. Helen Cameron Thank you. I wonder whether you could start by telling us what your current ministry role is? Hayley Young Yeah. So I'm currently one of the Co-Team Leaders in Southern Counties Baptist Association. So I work with Clare Hooper, who's also one of the Project Violet co-researchers. Helen Cameron And can you just explain a bit about what that involves? For those people who are not familiar with the roles of a regional minister. Hayley Young Yeah, so the role of regional minister is basically to walk alongside our ministers and churches, missional communities and chaplaincies, to help them to reach their full potential in ministry and mission. So sometimes that looks like

	grabbing a coffee and supporting and encouraging, sometimes that looks like offering inspiration and ideas of how to do things. And sometimes it looks like walking alongside them in a difficult period of time to try and really see what God is doing in this space. Helen Cameron That's really helpful. I'm wondering if we could move on to your story. Could you tell us a little bit about how you entered the Baptist ministry? Hayley Young Yes, so I felt called to Baptist ministry, in my late teens, early 20s. And started training at Spurgeon's College when I was 21. So I've been ordained since 2011 and was a minister-in-training a few years before that. Helen Cameron And what were you doing before you experienced this call? Was it part of a sort of a flow of things that you were doing in church life? Or was it something that came to you unexpectedly? Hayley Young Okay, so that's a really interesting one. So I think it came out of a frustration. So I came to faith at 17, having never set foot in a church before. And I've always thought, I always felt a disconnect with what I was inspired and fell in love with and chose to follow in Scripture compared to actually how we do church. And so there was that wrestling, I really felt God call me into being part of something different and leading a change within churches. So that's, that's where that came from. Helen Cameron That's really interesting. Thanks very much for sharing that. Let's move on now to your involvement in Project Violet. Can you just talk about the question or issue that you explored in Project Violet? Hayley Young Yeah, so for my research, I decided to look into how we treat and engage with millennial female leaders in translocal leadership. Helen Cameron Okay, can you just unpack what you mean by 'millennial' because I've heard that word used in different ways. What do you mean by it? Hayley Young Yeah. So millennials are basically the middle-aged people now. And so millennials are those that were born in the kind of mid 80s to early 90s, probably goes up to mid-90s. So it's those people that in their teenage years, their fundamental years of educational growth, were transformed by the impact of digital media. And so millennials now range in their 30s to their mid-40s. Helen Cameron Okay, that's really helpful. So I've heard the phrase 'digital native' as people who take for granted the digital world – is that what you mean as well?
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Hayley Young

A little bit, although, you know, I haven't always grown up with technology. So we are kind of the early adopters during our main influential years. So we're not true digital natives, because it was the norm from the moment we were born. But we've been living in the digital world since our early teens.

Helen Cameron

And you've also used the word translocal, which is a very Baptist word. Can you just unpack that word as well, just in case we've got any non-Baptists listening to us?

Hayley Young

So basically, it means that you're not based in one location or one space, but that you minister over multiple spaces, so you could be working with several churches, several missional communities or chaplaincies across different sectors. And so you will engage with different people across a region or interest area.

Helen Cameron

Okay, that's really helpful. So what you're saying is you were interested in your research to see what the distinctive experience was of being a woman millennial leader, and the kind of treatment you received because of that. So I guess my next question is, why is that important to you? – which is a bit self-evident, because you are such a person. But is there anything else you want to say about why this was important to you?

Hayley Young

I guess it was really important to me, because I was the first millennial regional minister. So I became a regional minister in my early 30s, which wasn't done back then, not even a man had done that at that stage. Most of my colleagues as regional ministers, and especially regional minister team leaders, were a bit older. So I think I think there was a bit of an age gap. And so my experiences in this space were, I think, very different. And I wanted to reflect on that. But also, one of the questions I get asked regularly in our Baptist movement is why there are not more millennial women regional ministers. And I thought, well, maybe it's something to do with the culture which we've created explaining why there's not more of us.

Helen Cameron

Okay, thank you very much. So what approach did you take to doing your research.

Hayley Young

In a true millennial style decided to vlog it. Why not? And so that, also being a millennial, I was heavily influenced by Big Brother when I was growing up. So the idea of reflecting on your experience in a kind of diary-room environment to reflect in the moment was appealing to me. And also a bit more interesting. I'm not an academic so writing is quite difficult. And so I decided the approach was that after I'd encountered meetings or been in spaces, to reflect via a series of digital reflections.

	Helen Cameron And I understand you've edited some of that material into a film. And so the final question is, why do you want people to go and watch the film that you've made? Hayley Young Wow. Okay. So basically, the more likes and views I get, the better!! And basically, I hope that in summarizing it as a film people will hear and see the impact. Sometimes when we read words, we don't always get that, we can detach. And so I'm hoping that people will watch it. Perhaps see their behaviour through those lenses and see if it has an impact on them and to help them reflect. Helen Cameron That's great. Well, thank you very much, Hayley, for coming on to the Project Violet podcast. Hayley Young Thank you.
	Music

Season Outro

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Podcast – Season 2 – Afi Kirk

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Interview – Afi Kirk

	Music
Helen and Afi	Helen Cameron Today I'm welcoming onto the Project Violet podcast Afi Kirk. Welcome, Afi. Afi Kirk Thank you very much. Thank you. It's good to be here. Helen Cameron I'd like to start by asking you what your current ministry role is. Afi Kirk I'm currently the sole pastor at Blackheath and Charlton Baptist Church in southeast London. Helen Cameron And can you tell me a bit a bit about the church? Afi Kirk It's a community Church, multicultural. Traditionally, it was about 90-95%, Caucasian, but in the last 15 years it's become very multicultural, some people would even described as almost black majority. Helen Cameron

So we're interested in people's stories of how they came into ministry, would you like to share how you came into the Baptist ministry?

Afi Kirk

Yes. So I, my call came in 2000, shortly after my conversion. And I found myself after having been on mission in Spain for a while then in Tadworth. And then the minister realized that accreditation was something that I needed to pursue. And so he commended me for college for training. And because the church had a Brethren underpinning, they would not be really be able to support female leadership. So I went to college, not really knowing what to expect, except that I had a call, and this was it. And Spurgeon's College very kindly placed me in a Baptist church and having come to understand the Baptist tradition, it felt right to actually pursue that ministry, and so here we are.

Helen Cameron

Okay that's a very interesting journey. So the call came before the Baptists bit then

Afi Kirk

Oh, yes.

Helen Cameron

That's great. Now, you were part of the third group of Project Violet co-researchers. Can you share with us the question or the issue that you looked at in your research?

Afi Kirk

So I was looking at how we can understand better the financial barriers that impact women, as they seek accreditation, or even consider accreditation, once their calling is recognized.

Helen Cameron

And why was that topic important to you?

Afi Kirk

Well, I suppose having been at college and seen some of the disparities between those who can afford training and those who are somewhat challenged financially, and the impact that that has on them, sometimes on their families, and also their ability to really engage with what's going on in the lecture hall. Sometimes they would come in from night duty, having worked all night, and having to sometimes take caffeine or whatever else, they can't stay awake, some even falling asleep, but also the impact it has on their academic ability to really produce the work that they would like to produce. So it's a multi-faceted issue in as much as the impact was so significant in hearing my colleagues talk about it, it just made me realize that perhaps, although this had been an area that was very well resourced previously, it is currently not the case. And it was under the radar and needed to be looked at again.

Helen Cameron

Thank you. Yes, I can see why that was so important to you. So can you just share a bit about how you went about doing your research?

	Afi Kirk I suppose it began once I had decided on the topic to then look at some of the issues that I saw affecting my colleagues, and then speaking to some potential participants, hearing their stories and then getting their permission to interview them for the project. Helen Cameron So it was interviewing other women and just listening to what has happened to them. Okay, that's really, really helpful. So I guess the big question is, why do you want people to read your research? Afi Kirk I would say that is speaks into an area that isn't getting the attention that it needs. As a Baptist family and also community of believers, we have a responsibility to invest in each other and add value to each other's lives. And if there's an issue that is impacting some of our brothers or sisters, particularly sisters in this area because it is about women, impacting their ability to be the best that they can be and respond to their call in a way that enables them to impact lives, then I believe it is important that we look at this. Helen Cameron Thank you very much. Well, thanks very much for sharing with us today. We encourage people to go to the website and download your report. Afi Kirk Thank you.
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Podcast – Season 2 – Carol Bostridge

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Interview – Carol Bostridge

	Music
Helen and Carol	Helen Cameron Today I'm speaking to Carol Bostridge. Welcome Carol. You've retired since taking part in Project Violet. Could you say what your ministry role was then and what you're doing now? Carol Bostridge So I was a Regional Minister within the London Baptist Association. I retired at the end of July. And I'm now doing a mixture of voluntary roles including working with Lewisham Foodbank, with Spurgeon's College and a little bit with the London Baptists as well. Helen Cameron Great. Perhaps I can take you back to the beginning of your ministry. Can you tell us a bit about how you entered Baptist ministry? Carol Bostridge Well, I used to be a maths teacher, and then became the church worker at Crofton Park Baptist Church, which was very varied role. And within that, because I was doing a little bit of leading and speaking occasionally I thought I'd go off to Spurgeon's College one day a week, just you know, so I felt a little more able. But as I did that, I sensed it was... God was very gracious. This was a step-by-step call, encouraged by the tutors at Spurgeon's, encouraged by the senior minister in Crofton Park. And so I went through ministerial recognition

	and then into ministry. And actually, the senior minister of Crofton Park left and after some prayerful heart searching, I then became the minister of that church. Helen Cameron Thank you for sharing that journey. Now, you came into the first group on Project Violet, what was the question or issue that you looked at? And why was it important to you? Carol Bostridge I looked at marital status and ministry. And I think that was twofold: I had gone into ministry as a divorcee with two small children. And remember some of the uncomfortable, and I think probably now inappropriate, questions that I was asked and some of the assumptions that were made. And then in my role as Regional Minister, as I sought to support some women in ministry, again, I was noting they were telling me some of the things that have been said to them, or the lack of support or, you know, just things I'd love to know more about. How does singleness, being a divorcee or being married? Well, how does that affect ministry at all stages of ministry? Helen Cameron So that's quite an ambitious agenda. Can you say how do you actually go about doing the research? Carol Bostridge What I did was to, first of all found seven or eight women in ministry that I knew reasonably well. And that included some single women divorcee, and married and explored with them. They were very gracious to me. I'm very open and honest, as we explored things from original calling MRC training, settlement, ongoing ministry. And at that point, those were quite open conversations. And from their answers, I was then able to formulate four short questionnaires. I think realizing that there's there was a mountain here, so people wouldn't tell me everything about everything. So split it into shorter questionnaires, if you'd like that before, during, and after sections, and then those questionnaires went out to all the women ministers in London, they didn't all get all of them were randomly spread them out. And it's from the results that came through from those that I was then able to put the report together. Helen Cameron Thank you, I can see your background as a maths teacher shining through there. And that's a very systematic balancing of interviews and questionnaires. So thank you for describing that. And I guess the final question is, why do you want people to read your report? Carol Bostridge I've just gone back and just read it myself, because it was a little while ago I did it. There are things in there that still sadden me and shock me and frustrate me, but also a sense of, 'It wouldn't take much to put a lot of this right'. And actually realizing actually some of this applies to men as well as women. There are ways that we could improve this process and the ongoing support to people and so I really would urge people to read it to read it prayerfully and then to put into action some of the suggestions that are there, because we can make a really
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	positive difference to the experience both of women's lives and men's, as we look at issues surrounding with singleness, divorcees, marital status. Helen Cameron Carol, thank you for that encouragement for people to go to the website and download and read your report. Thank you for talking to us today.
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