

## Podcast – Season 2 – Helen Dare

### 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.
Jane	We hope that listening to these episodes will help you engage with the findings of the project which can be found on the Project Violet website.

### Interview – Helen Dare

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Helen and Helen	<p><b>Helen Cameron</b> 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?</p> <p><b>Helen Dare</b> 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</p>

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

	<p>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.</p> <p><b>Helen Cameron</b> Thank you Helen. And thanks for coming onto the Project Violet podcast.</p> <p><b>Helen Dare</b> You're welcome.</p>
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### Season Outro

Helen	Thank you for listening to this episode of the Project Violet podcast. We invite you to go to the website and download the reports if you have not yet done so. <a href="http://www.projectviolet.org.uk">www.projectviolet.org.uk</a>
Jane	And don't forget to tell others about the Project Violet podcast. You can follow us on Facebook and X formerly Twitter.
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