

Podcast – Season 2 – Laura Gilmour

Season Intro

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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 – Laura Gilmour

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Helen and Laura	<p>Helen Cameron Today's interviewee is Laura Gilmour. Welcome, Laura. I'd like to start by asking you what your current ministry role is.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Helen Cameron Okay, thank you. Can I take you back to the beginning of your ministry, how did you enter Baptist ministry?</p> <p>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</p>

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

	<p>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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</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. www.projectviolet.org.uk
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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