

Podcast – Season 2 – Charmaine Mhlanga

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 – Charmaine Mhlanga

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Helen and Charmaine	<p>Helen Cameron Today I'm speaking to Charmaine Mhlanga. Welcome, Charmaine.</p> <p>Charmaine Mhlanga Hi, Helen, thank you so much. It's good to be here.</p> <p>Helen Cameron Perhaps you can start by telling us what your current ministry role is.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Helen Cameron Can you talk to us about how you entered Baptist ministry?</p> <p>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,</p>

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

	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Charmaine Mhlanga Thank you, Helen, for the opportunity.</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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