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**Steven Croft**

Hello everyone. I'm Stephen Croft the Bishop of Oxford. Welcome to the podcast "My (extraordinary) family." For each edition I'm talking with someone I've come to know across the diocese and occasionally beyond about their faith about their work and about their story. And I'm asking people what it means to them to be more Christlike, more contemplative, more compassionate, and more courageous. And today I'm really delighted to be with my friend and colleague Andrew who is the Bishop of Reading. Andrew became Bishop of Reading in 2011 having previously served as a bishop for four years in Ethiopia. Andrew thank you so much for joining me.

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**Andrew Proud**

Thank you very much Stephen. It's lovely to be with you. 00:00:33

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**Steven Croft**

That must have been quite a transition for you and Janice and the family. What are some of the things you remember about your early years in the diocese and starting out. 00:00:35  
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**Andrew Proud**

Starting out it was pretty overwhelming to be honest with you Steven. 00:00:44  
We'd been in Ethiopia for nine years and four years of that as Bishop there. We had about two weeks between finishing there and starting here. So an international move and trying to make sense of landing in this country again after all that time away and setting up a home in a lovely part of Berkshire. But just the just the scale of the ministry that I came into even though it's a much smaller geographical area of course... the scale everything that was going on was incredible, really really busy from the word go really. I'm just trying at the same time to process all the things that we'd been living with and coping with out there and then noticing, you know, how how subtly different the Church of England is — there are obvious and big differences but the 00:00:46  
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**Andrew Proud (continued)**

subtle differences... a huge amount of regulation around activities  
much more freedom to be a bishop over there to make decisions,  
executive decisions, that have a real impact. And here it is realizing 00:01:41  
how difficult that was. But the biggest difference that we both felt was 00:01:43  
I think I've learned that people here call it "functional atheism" that  
seems to be sort of deep in the culture inside the church and outside  
the church here too that you find yourself in the church meeting and  
you know nobody prays beforehand or afterwards. So of course that 00:02:02  
happens a lot overseas. You'll know this from your own experience of 00:02:05  
the church overseas and so people are praying all the time. So began 00:02:10  
to change that and... but that was just something I just noticed it was  
slightly strange.

**Steven Croft**

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And as most people listening to the podcast will know you're now in 00:02:16  
your last few months. Before retiring from your role. 00:02:21

**Andrew Proud**

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Yes. 00:02:23

**Steven Croft**

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So what have you enjoyed most about your years as Bishop of 00:02:24  
Reading.

**Andrew Proud**

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Stephen so many things I've loved being part of this diocese which is 00:02:29  
huge and complex but have loved Berkshire. And what I've particularly 00:02:35  
loved is the engagement with the clergy and the people in the  
parishes. So I've loved going out on Sundays and doing Sunday 00:02:41  
preachments and I've loved the confirmation services lots of the one  
to ones with people I've particularly warmed to. But it's also things like 00:02:53  
the Minster's been really important during my time in Reading, the  
ministry that they've developed there has been inspirational right in

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**Andrew Proud (continued)**

the heart of Reading itself this is the overnight ministries as well but also the county ministries. So they've been going for some time that this had rather more of a profile for me certainly over the last few years. So things like the Crown Court opening service, the big major celebrations marking the anniversary of the first world war, the BBC Radio Berkshire Carol service every year and working with A B Walker, the big funeral directors in Reading for a major service they put on once a year inviting everyone who they'd done a funeral for to come back. That sort of parish ministry type stuff. But from the Minster which has actually got a very good profile now in the town of Reading itself, but also working across the county with people it's been lovely meeting people at all sorts of levels in the county.

**Steven Croft**

Yes, it's amazing. I spent a day last week as you know listening to different groups of people talking about the qualities that we should be looking to see in your successor. And I had a huge amount of appreciation for your ministry. Perhaps most of all I think the sense that you're able to be at home in lots of different styles of worship is that is that something that comes naturally to you.

**Andrew Proud**

If it does at all it's because of the way in which I think I've been shaped during my ministry as an ordinand. I was... I grew up in a very Anglo Catholic parish. I was never entirely wedded to all of that but there was something about the the sacramental spirituality that is really important to me. But during my time as I worked on a big housing estate where I was exposed to the ministry of John Wimber that had a massive impact on me.

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**Steven Croft**

I think we worked out once we went to the same John Wimber conference didn't we. 00:04:34

**Andrew Proud**

I was in Wembley it was ten thousand pastors and I went it was an extraordinary experience. A very good friend you and I have in common a chap called John Leech. Said "come along with me" and I was slightly critical and I went along with my notebook and I thought I'd make some notes of this interesting sociological phenomenon. And at one stage towards the end of the thing John Wimber asked all the pastors to stand... 00:04:38  
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**Steven Croft**

Yes. 00:05:01

**Andrew Proud**

and prayed for us and I was just slaid by the spirit is because I fell over backwards and it felt as if there were sort of pins and needles being picked as it were from my flesh all over my body and cause of this extraordinary sort of blissful state and all these people around me caught me and when something like that happens you had to re-examine many of your existing categories. So what did this mean? Why was God doing this now. What did this mean for my ministry on this big GLC housing estate where I was trying to be very Anglo Catholic and hope that by doing things more beautifully people would come and they kind of weren't. So that changed my discipleship really. And it took me back to the Scriptures in a way which was not cerebral but from the heart and just noticing what God was doing among God's people amongst us. The other major occasion when my discipleship was changed I suppose would have been Ethiopia where the Anglican Church is both liturgical and Pentecostal. 00:05:01  
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**Andrew Proud (continued)**

So I think for me wherever people obviously love the Lord I'm happy 00:06:00  
and I don't really mind how we do that. So I love going to Greyfriars to 00:06:07  
confirmation where the music's fantastic and the sense of God's  
presence is wonderful, and I love going to church in Windsor where  
we're using incense and celebrating Corpus Christi it's all good really.

**Steven Croft**

That's fantastic and people and people said of you that you are just 00:06:22  
able to bring that sense of joy and enjoying being there and a sense of  
the presence of Christ. Andrew can I ask you how have you have you 00:06:31  
been able to sustain yourself and look after yourself in this ministry  
and in all the other things that you've done?

**Andrew Proud**

I think several things I think that you know a regular discipline of 00:06:41  
prayer has been really important. I'm taking time over morning prayer 00:06:47  
particularly I have a prayer room my house. I'll take about 40 45 00:06:52  
minutes over that, I'll sing bits... silence... sometimes flat on my face  
before the Lord asking for strength and courage to get through the  
times I've got to get through. A day a month if I at Douai Abbey which 00:07:06  
is just down the road, they often find that I take work but a couple of  
hours sorting through papers with a computer then I can focus  
completely on being present in that place and often it's about remote  
preparation for things. So reading something I really want to get to the 00:07:21  
core of and make my own. Retreats... the area team has been really 00:07:25  
important for me.

**Steven Croft**

I know you've often spoken of that and you take them away.... 00:07:30

**Andrew Proud**

Yes so the Area Deans we go away to we've been going away to 00:07:33  
monasteries so two years ago we went away to a monastery in

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**Andrew Proud (continued)**

Belgium. The Monastery of St Andrews outside Brugge which is a Benedictine place but they have had connections with Africa as well. That how I came to know them originally and wonderful location but a lovely community too. And of course this last year were in back in northern France. So the Area Deans team has been really important but the area team you know and working with Archdeacon assistant Archdeacon and PDA and Director of Ordinands and we meet every week for two two and a half sometimes three hours we dwell in the word together and we notice together way we've seen God at work and then we get into the business of the agenda and it's become like a little ecclesial community really. And it's very important I think for all of us to have somewhere we can really connect deeply with our colleagues and be a bit just be ourselves in ministry not have to inhabit a role all the time so we can be yourself. So there's the two ways that I try and sustain that ministry.

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**Steven Croft**

And you mentioned dwelling in the word just then. And that's one of the practices that's emerged from Partnership for Missional Church which you've lent for the diocese a programme of change and renewal and I know that's been transformative for parishes in Berkshire that have engaged with it for your own area team. As you just said and in many ways beginning to be transformative for the diocese. What do you think's made it so fruitful?

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**Andrew Proud**

I think on reflection I would say that two things really. The first thing the most obvious thing that anyone involved in PMC would say is spiritual discipline is really important. So dwelling in the word, dwelling in the world, announcing the kingdom, hospitality. Those things are... become like the threads that connect up the way that you approach

## Andrew Proud (continued)

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ministry in the way that you think about what God is about and that's the second really important thing which is this. It's based on the [?] 00:09:31  
Dei. The idea that God is always at work in this world for good. 00:09:33  
However things appear to be and it's a matter of trying to notice what 00:09:37  
God is doing, who God is sending to you. And it's about deep culture 00:09:44  
change, and it's about... and it challenges the way again that you think  
about your categories. So having come to ministry as a high 00:09:52  
churchman and with a high view of the church I now have a higher  
view I think of the kingdom and it's changing my ecclesiology subtly so  
I see that the task that was set as the church actually is to form  
Christian community within the mission of God. And I think that's 00:10:11  
changing the way that I think about what it is that we're doing in  
church that is changing the way that I'm thinking with parishes in  
vacancy about how we appoint people, invite people to come and  
share this missional journey with us. So it's been a very important, a 00:10:27  
very important process.

## Steven Croft

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And as you know as a diocese we're exploring ways in which we can be 00:10:31  
more Christlike, contemplative, compassionate, courageous. Yes. 00:10:37  
What what are the things you're learning about being compassionate. 00:10:38

## Andrew Proud

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That's really interesting. I was hoping you might ask me that particular 00:10:41  
one. I love all of them. But for me the compassionate thing is about it 00:10:45  
begins with one's self. And again this comes at a PMC really Stephen. I 00:10:51  
think that we're in this kind of state that we're in as a nation and  
perhaps as a church to a certain extent because we've forgotten who  
who we are and we've forgotten who's we are. And we're made in the 00:11:05  
image of a loving God Father Son and Holy Spirit to be in relationship  
with God and one another. And if we can just remember be 00:11:12

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**Andrew Proud (continued)**

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compassionate with ourselves and remember who's we are that we are loved by God and to notice Christ in one another. I think that actually changes... could change everything from that kind of binary thinking that we get locked in to so often which becomes adversarial church politics which are never very edifying and often feel quite destructive. And so I just feel that if we can be more compassionate with ourselves with one another being the body of Christ really being the body of Christ and starting everything we do from that point of view then it could transform many of the things that we get we get stuck on.

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**Steven Croft**

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So seeing Christ in each other. 00:12:00

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**Andrew Proud**

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Seeing Christ in one another. 00:12:02

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**Steven Croft**

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And remembering who'se we are. 00:12:02

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**Andrew Proud**

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And recognizing that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. 00:12:04

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**Steven Croft**

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How are you going to be spending these final couple of months in the diocese. 00:12:07

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**Andrew Proud**

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Well trying to finish... to tie up some loose ends but mostly spending time with people. So we've got some deanery visitations. I've got six deaneries i'm gimng to be spending three days in each deanery over the next few weeks. It'll be fairly intense but actually it'll be lovely because we'll be doing things like I'll be offering a quiet evening for for parishes laypeople and clergy MDRs. Doing some confirmations one to ones with clergy meeting groups of younger clergy and curates meeting lay chairs and church wardens and meeting head teachers of



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**Andrew Proud (continued)**

Church schools. It's all about relationship for me. I think that's a very important part of episcopal ministry and I think it's just actually in a sense celebrating the relationships that we have begun to really enjoy across Berkshire. It's a lovely way to finish this particular phase of my my ministry as a Christian. I am thinking about that and actually I won't share it now but I it is being shaped strongly by PMC you won't be surprised to hear I'm designing the farewell service on the 1st of May was something of that in mind. So you know what is it I'm going to say to the Diocese of Oxford and some ideas are coming through.

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**Steven Croft**

So we look forward to that. 00:13:26

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**Andrew Proud**

Thank you very much. 00:13:27

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**Steven Croft**

And Andrew would you... I mean thank you for, not just for this conversation but for your friendship and I enjoy working with you would you pray for the diocese? 00:13:28

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**Andrew Proud**

Of course I'd love to Steven. Let's pray. Gracious God and loving Heavenly Father we thank you and bless you and praise you for the Diocese of Oxford for its clergy, its people, its institutions. Thank you for the life which you have given us in Christ. Thank you for the gift to the Holy Spirit for the many things that are happening across this diocese in so many ways. Thank you particularly for Stephen our Bishop for his love for you for his commitment to all of us as your people. Thank you Lord that you are calling us with Stephen to be more Christlike like help us to remember who we are and whose we are. Help us to know each of us that we are loved by you. Help us to see Christ in one another and to rejoice in Christ in one another and

**Andrew Proud (continued)**

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help us Lord to notice what you are doing in this world. Help us make us who you are sending to us and as you bless us we pray that you would use us to be a blessing to many that we might bring joy and love and peace and renewal of the Gospel to all those whom we meet and we pray this in the name of your son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**Steven Croft**

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Amen Andrew thank you so much and thank you for being part of this extraordinary family.

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**Andrew Proud**

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Thank you very much Steven.

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