
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 in my travels 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. Today I haven't travelled very far. I'm with my local rector in Kidlington who lives just around the corner from me just north of Oxford. The Reverend Felicity Scroggie. Felicity, thank you for joining me on this podcast today.

Felicity Scroggie

It's lovely to be with you bishop. I'm I'm delighted to be here as your eccentric next door neighbour.

Steven Croft

Not at all. Not at all. Felicity I want to ask you about a number of things including the visit of a live camel to Kidlington a few weeks ago. But first tell me just a bit about your story and how you came to faith and then to ministry.

Felicity Scroggie

Well I grew up in East Yorkshire as a Roman Catholic. And faith was always important, it was always there and I had a very strong sense of life having to have a meaning and a purpose. As a teenager I wasn't very contemporary but I knew when I when I got to the end of my life I wanted to look back and know that life had been lived in a way that was worth living. I didn't always know what that meant but I knew that that was really, really important. As a Roman Catholic I wasn't thinking about ordination at all but I did think about perhaps living in the lay community perhaps being in a community that was safe for people to come to a time of trouble; where people could find healing and fullness

Felicity Scroggie (continued)

of life. And over the years that sense of fullness of life has been really, 00:01:52
really important. That verse in John 10:10 where Jesus says I've come 00:01:57
that they might have life and have it in abundance. I then moved from 00:02:06
East Yorkshire down to London... if anyone ever says God hasn't got a
sense of humour. Well I don't believe them because I'd said: I can live 00:02:11
anywhere in the country except for London. So of course I end up in 00:02:17
London and I did 20 25 years there and there in London out of my
comfort zone I discovered a new depth of faith and became an
Anglican and got myself a job working in the what was then called the
urban priority areas in mainly West London across the London borough
of Brent. Building confidence with people who would never ever see 00:02:43
themselves as having any form of public or even semi-public ministry
but working for the London diocese as a layperson and there I learned
what it was for people to walk really by faith when times are tough.
When the police are banging at your door and how faith really sustains 00:03:07
and as is so often the case what looks like your going and giving to
someone actually they are giving you so much more.

Steven Croft

And that was part of your journey... 00:03:20

Felicity Scroggie

That was part of my journey. 00:03:22

Steven Croft

to ordination? 00:03:23

Felicity Scroggie

And then it's the conversations with people along the way. 00:03:24

Steven Croft

And is it still those kinds of contacts with people that give you the 00:03:28
most enjoyment and fulfillment in the ministry you exercise here and
Kidlington.

Felicity Scroggie

Always with people. Yes. And um diversity of people, yes. Coming to Kidlington was a big step coming from from then from ministry in London. What I really loved about Kidlington is that there is a diversity of people. It's not all monochrome.

Steven Croft

Because it's huge population isn't it.

Felicity Scroggie

It's got about 20,000 people in it.

Steven Croft

Now we're having this conversation in January. It's probably a bit early for most of us to be thinking about next Christmas but I suspect you are and I want you to tell me about the remarkable open air Nativity that happened in December and was the talk of Kidlington and featured live animals including a live camel.

Felicity Scroggie

Our camel... he was amazing he was called Como and this this is something that's been in my head for quite a long time. Many of us are familiar with the Christmas story, but not everyone is familiar with the Christmas story. Many of us are familiar with school portrayals cute kids and so many people say to me Christmas is for the kids isn't it. Well no it so isn't. Christmas is at the heart of our faith. But how do we tell that story in a way that can connect for our generation and in a way that takes us more deeply into what that story might mean. So it was around about this time last year it was around about January I approached two people who I know are up for it... up for things in Kidlington and they said "Yeah okay we'll do it" I love that. I don't think they realize just how big this was going to be and what a lot of organization we booked a camel and people... we put a poster out to say Camel, follow the camel to find the Nativity. And people still didn't

Felicity Scroggie (continued)

twig that it was a real camel, some of them. And we started at the 00:05:30
Christmas tree. So we had a procession through the village in the semi 00:05:31
dark. It was supposed to have been a candle lit procession but that 00:05:36
particular night there was howling gale and sheets of rain, driving rain.
So the candle lit procession didn't work but didn't matter. And we 00:05:45
gathered at the Christmas tree in the village centre walked with the
camel the theme being "Follow that star" huge star, beautifully made
by creative people in the parish. And as we walked we told the story in 00:06:00
very very simple drama not a word was wasted. Very simple no 00:06:06
commentary on the story. The shepherds joined us. They joined us at 00:06:09
the Baptist Church. The shepherds along with a Shetland pony. And 00:06:12
then we walked down the street and there was scripted drama of an
upstairs window would be thrown open. Someone saying "What's this 00:06:21
noise in the street? And we'd stop and say "We're following the star. 00:06:25
Can you see the star. It's going to lead us somewhere but we no not 00:06:30
where will you come with us?"

Steven Croft

And this is hundreds of people were in the street when they. 00:06:36

Felicity Scroggie

Well bearing in mind that it was sheets of rain we had round about 400 00:06:39
people that night. Our choristers were dressed up as angels. We had 00:06:46
adults wearing costumes a whole team of people had made beautiful
beautiful costumes. That was a real team effort. We had to shut the 00:06:55
roads. So we employed a traffic management scheme with a road 00:06:59
closure and then we arrived at St Mary's church. Camel came inside. 00:07:06
He was very good and inside was a proper live nativity scene. Mary 00:07:08
and Joseph with a real baby, lovely parents. Big thanks to them for 00:07:17
lending their baby. The chairs were all taken out. There was straw on 00:07:20
the floor. The donkey, goats, sheep, two or three more Shetland 00:07:24

Felicity Scroggie (continued)

ponies. The wise man and we sang... we simply sang carols told the story. 00:07:29

Steven Croft

Telling the story... and I mean Kidlington St Mary's is nearly a thousand years old isn't it. Is a big anniversary coming. 00:07:34

Felicity Scroggie

Next year a big anniversary coming up. 00:07:40

Steven Croft

And the nativity story has been told here all over that time. I bet that's the first time it's been told with a real camel. I think it's amazing. And what was the impact on the people who came and the wider community. 00:07:43
00:07:50

Felicity Scroggie

Two comments stick out in my head. One lady, who I know quite well but not from church circles, came because of the camel and as she went out she said I never knew the story was so profound and that was really interesting because we hadn't given any commentary on the story. We just let it speak for itself and you can say oh it's a gimmick you know oh you're playing the cute factor with animals but we weren't really we were we were doing something dramatic to stand out in people's heads and minds. But the story was just the story and somehow this lady had got some sense of the profundity of it. And that sticks in my head that we don't have to dress it up but we need to tell the story in some new way for this generation in a way that will be heard and remembered. Stained glass did it in its generation. And people couldn't read. They told the story in the building. Well we might not get so many people through our buildings nowadays. We have to tell the story in the village centre or the town centre. 00:07:56
00:08:18
00:08:33
00:08:42
00:08:55
00:08:58
00:09:04

Steven Croft

That's fantastic. It's wonderful. And you mentioned it... there's lots of people doing crafts in Kidlington and I know that's quite a recent thing isn't it. I remember you making a comment at the lent conversations we had in Oxford about renewing Catechesis about how many people wanted to come and do craft activities as part of their reflection on faith. And how's that going and are you doing it again this Lent is there a theme.

Felicity Scroggie

Yes this has become what we call our making group has become really part of how the parish ticks. This goes to four years ago before we had a developed clergy team. And normally I would plan what shall we do in lent? We get the clergy team together. And we work it out and then present to people say it's what we're doing in Lent. That year I was new there wasn't a team to talk with so we said "Okay come come to the rectory. Anyone who wants and let's talk about how we want to mark Lent and Easter? What does it mean to us and how do we want to Do It?" And 18 people turned up in my sitting room which was a great encouragement and out of that conversation came the very strong theme that some of us learn by reading and then discussing books and discussion questions and some of us learn in other ways. One way being we learn together and we learn perhaps by making something or getting involved and we formed the idea that maybe that lent one of our lent groups would be about making things... we thought in the past I've made prayer stools with people or worked together to make a large wooden cross and the working together has been the learning, the praying, the understanding, and and a little bit like the lady in the camel who found the profundity but it didn't need to be spelled out. And so... and one lady said "I think I know how to do that. I'll run a making group." And that first year. It was quite small, five or

Felicity Scroggie (continued)

six people because people thought you had to to have a skill in order to go. You had to be someone who painted, someone who sculpted, someone who drew, but it became clear that the way it was being run was that you didn't have to have a skill you just needed to be there and be willing to be involved as a team and have a go. And slowly, by slowly this making group has grown, they have made art installations that have then formed the basis for our worship. And what I love doing is making liturgy around something that people have made. So through Lent one year they we had the theme of T.S. Eliot's poem "Ash Wednesday" the making group took symbols from that poem, made them, they made a six foot long eagle with massive wings. I think you remember.

Steven Croft

I remember that well it. I came to preach on Good Friday. Tremendous I just filled the the porch.

Felicity Scroggie

It filled the porch with its great brass wings. They took that. They found that theme from the poem. They hung the eagle in the porch and then we gave you the job of preaching from it. But we've done this a lot. We've had creation services through... on a summer evening. We've made four banners... and say "you make the banner first. And then I will then make all the clergy... will then make the liturgy after you've made the banner." They've made Lazarus' coffin. Last year we did... your lent material on Lazarus. They made a coffin for Lazarus, they've made the robe of Christ. And now that lent group... it's not it doesn't only meet in Lent and they're going to make us... I don't know whether we should broadcast this because they don't yet know but they're going to make us a new a new nativity set, this year. They're going to do it through through the summer. So there are now 25 30

Felicity Scroggie (continued)

people involved in this. And people have grown in confidence and enthusiasm and that confidence is fed through into faith but also into other areas of life. Can we can do it do. 00:13:33
00:13:42

Steven Croft

Yeah, that's really wonderful. Now one of the other responsibilities you've kindly agreed to take on recently is Bishop's advisor in women's ministry. It's 25 years this year since the first women were ordained priest in the Church of England. What help and encouragement and support do you think women clergy need at this stage in that particular journey and what are you beginning to offer as you get into that part of your role? 00:13:44
00:13:53
00:13:58

Felicity Scroggie

Well I think the role has got several facets and thank you to you Bishop for giving me the chance to to be involved like this. Oxford's a huge diocese. The first thing we need to be able to do is to put people put women in touch with each other. It would be lovely to set up a network of relationships where first of all we can simply meet and encourage each other. Hear each other's stories, and find some safe places as well for people to talk. 25 years is just the twinkling of an eye in the life of the church. I'm stunned with how far things have come. The huge rapid pace of change actually even though it may feel really slow to some people. So the first thing I would hope to do is is facilitate a network of people all across this huge diocese so that there is somewhere for people to go. There's also a watching brief as a diocese. How are we doing in seeing women find their confidence and also to take on senior roles? 00:14:10
00:14:19
00:14:21
00:14:25
00:14:36
00:14:43
00:14:48
00:14:59
00:15:12
00:15:16

Steven Croft

It's a hugely important role and really significant and I look forward really to seeing how it evolves and how a team comes together that's 00:15:24

Steven Croft (continued)

really really good.

Felicity Scroggie

We need to be encouraging women to step forward and actually to apply for some of these more senior roles for incumbencies, team Rectorships, Archdeacons, Cathedral Ministries, and the senior leadership roles. The working of women and men together is the most natural thing in the world. But sometimes we need a bit of encouragement and confidence building and help to get there.

Steven Croft

Felicity thank you for all that you give in the parish of Kidlington and all that you're beginning to give across the diocese in this new role. Would you pray for us as a diocese as we finish this conversation.

Felicity Scroggie

I'd be delighted to. Thank you. Generous and gracious God. You shower your gifts upon your people. We lift before you our creative diverse varied and vital Diocese. This whole Diocese of Oxford and we pray your blessing on all the people who worship in our churches in our schools in our places of education in our hospitals and those who worship you silently and privately behind closed doors pour out your blessings on your people and help us as your church to show out that life in all its abundance to all those around us and we ask this in Jesus name amen.

Steven Croft

Thank you Felicity and thanks to all those who have listened to this edition of my (extraordinary) family.