

Forge Podcast with Patrick Regan.MP3

Peter Wooding: [00:00:10] Welcome to the Forge Leadership podcast. This week's guest is Patrick Regan OBE. Patrick founded the youth work charity XLP that works in some of the most challenging communities in London and he's passionate about tackling poverty and injustice wherever he finds it. Simon Barrington caught up with him in Minehead where he was speaking at Spring Harvest.

Simon Barrington: [00:00:32] So today on the podcast I'm joined by Patrick Regan. Patrick welcome.

Patrick Regan: [00:00:36] Thank you. It's good to be here.

Simon Barrington: [00:00:38] We're at Spring Harvest in Minehead.

Patrick Regan: [00:00:39] We are in the team lounge.

Simon Barrington: [00:00:39] You've been here all week. What have you been doing here?

Patrick Regan: [00:00:43] Yes it's been great. So I've been doing this series called Honesty over Silence which is looking at issues around I guess we don't really talk about in church in particular we don't talk as a leader, so I've been talking about depression, anxiety, perfectionism which I think is rife and anger as well. So they've been packed out and it's been amazing response, I've been really encouraged to see people desperate to talk about these issues

Simon Barrington: [00:01:09] Fantastic and how did you get involved in kind of trying to unpack those issues for others. How did that issue kind of come to the forefront.

Patrick Regan: [00:01:17] I think for me like about nine years ago now I went through those stages in my life where everything went wrong at once you know, and like my daughter got sick, my Dad got cancer. I got diagnosed with this degenerative knee condition which means I need to get both my legs broken in a couple of places and and and so I just started suffering from really severe anxiety and I think if I'm honest I've always suffered from anxiety but I think when trauma comes into your life it's like rocket fuel. Suddenly things flare up and it's a bit weird as a leader because you sort of feel like, man I'm meant to trust God. Am I allowed to tell people, does it mean I haven't got enough faith and because it was one of these things and being fairly well known everyone wanted to pray for me. Every meeting I went to, every festival I'd have the guys come up to me and say "I've got your one on one with the guy from Bethel, this guy, that guy and I'd started feeling sorry for the people praying for me you know because I've been prayed for so many times and I didn't get healed and need to live with that disappointment and I went through with the operation and the night I went before went into the hospital I wrote this blog called "When faith gets shaken" and looking at my journey and some of the challenges around that. And it was just one of those weird things that just got read by thousands and thousands of thousands of people. And then people started tweeting me, emailing me and Facebooking me just telling me their stories and how I guess they felt like somehow because they weren't healed or because of a mental health challenge that somehow they didn't feel comfortable in Church and I think what a tragedy. I mean church is meant to be a loving community and yet we're excluding people and people are feeling ashamed and embarrassed. And so I guess for me doing the topics here is actually saying it's okay not to be okay and let's take this out in the open and let's talk about it rather than brush it under the carpet and pretend it's not there.

Simon Barrington: [00:03:12] And as a leader, as you say, what were the internal wrestles that you

went through in kind of writing that blog and getting it all out in the open, because that sounds very vulnerable, and vulnerability and leadership aren't two words that you necessarily say in the same sentence.

Patrick Regan: [00:03:25] It's true and I felt like I mean you may have heard of Brene Brown who's done the amazing work on courage and vulnerability and I was really inspired by her TED Talk like millions of other people on her premise is that you know the latin word for courage is Coer. It means to speak your mind over your heart. It means to show up and be seen. And that's the definition of courage and somehow in history and language it's become something else. And so this whole thing for me that courage and vulnerability are the same thing and and that as we're more vulnerable and as we show courage it liberates other people to do the same. It creates a safe place and it's fascinating doing the "When faith gets shaken" tour as we're going through the content you literally see people shoving each other and totally engaged, totally captivated and and just realising that me too moment and I think there is something so beautiful about people who just share their common humanity. It's interesting having spent a lot of time in the hospital. Hospital is a real leveller. It doesn't matter that I'm a leader, I've got an OBE, I've met the Queen, I've done all these things and I am next to a guy and you know it could be a Doctor or I could be next to another guy who is a lecturer and we are all there and actually we're sharing in something a common experience. I think is really important that leaders are more vulnerable more human in that sense. And I think people can relate to that.

Simon Barrington: [00:04:52] And how do you help leaders to do that in your own organisation because I know for me as a leader as a CEO I was the last person who wanted to go for prayer. All the thoughts in my mind, (yeah yeah of course) people are going to be looking at me, I'm supposed to be leading this organisation. People want direction from me, so how would you help leaders to kind of take the first step almost to crack through that barrier.

Patrick Regan: [00:05:16] I think it's about humility. I think is interesting on preaching on meanness in the main arena on Wednesday night and using the story of the All Blacks rugby team. There's an amazing book called Legacy which I can't recommend highly enough. And basically it looks at how did this team come to be the most successful sports team in history effectively from the smallest nation. And there's this wonderful little story in there where basically , they're all leaders that team, they're full of captains and people with experience and after the match they all go in and they evaluate what's happened and then whilst the media are outside whilst the cameras and the TV and the journalists are all scrambling for an interview they all sit there and then they grab the brooms and they clean up the changing rooms. Every All Black does that. It's like you cannot be an All Black and then the fascinating thing is what they say in the book is the secret to the All Blacks success says the manager is that we pick on character and not talent. We have tests where we can tell someone is a team player. We have tests where we can tell what they're going to be like under pressure and I guess humility is part of that sense is that part of that character thing. You know and so often I think sometimes when as leaders we can just realise that you know we're all broken at the end of the day and it's as we share in our brokenness that liberates other people and you know people always say to me that I've had the privilege of meeting some amazing leaders I've met Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Mary Robins on the former president of Ireland and they've told me about Nelson Mandela and they said that towards the end he just that ability when people came in the room whoever you are you just you just made you feel bigger and it was almost like this iconic figure made you feel bigger and just such a humble guy yet was sort of known as one of the most famous leaders in the world.

Simon Barrington: [00:07:12] So what practical things have done in your own leadership of XLP. Most people will know you for your leadership of XLP. Yeah. What practical things have you done in that organisation to put into practice vulnerability, to put into practise humility. What's that look

like on a day to day basis with the leaders around you.

Patrick Regan: [00:07:28] Yeah I mean I always try and make sure I guess I guess it's what you share it's the lessons you share it's the weakness you show it's journeying with people. I've always tried to say sometimes you know the journey is as important as the destination. I think things are more caught than taught. Instead of lecturing people you know actually being there working with. Allowing other people space to make mistakes. Again in the church sometimes I think we suffer from perfectionism and you know we've got to be perfect. And I don't think God asks to be perfect but he does ask us to try our best and there's a big difference between that. One is straining for approval and one is just giving everything and I just think like as a leader you need to embody it you need to live it. You know I've got a young kid I've been mentoring since the age of 16. He was an absolute toe-rag when I got him. He arrived from Nigeria you know he got kicked out of his home, living and squatting in a hotel. His teacher said you know he'll be dead or in prison and an interesting thing is we invited him around our home quite a lot and he didn't say much he just watched. He just watched how I was with my children. He watched how I treated my wife. Sometimes in certain gang culture stuff you know the girl is used for sex and all sorts of crazy stuff. And he watched and now he's the best youth worker on the planet. In fact he's my son's godfather. I got to marry him and his wife a couple of years ago. And so I do think it's that and you know Steve Chalkle used to say vision and frustration are the same thing. So as a leader you're going to grapple with both the whole time and I think that perseverance shows shows an awful lot of character sometimes.

Simon Barrington: [00:09:10] How has your faith and scripture formed that in you.

Patrick Regan: [00:09:15] I think that Jesus always did things with people and you know I've often said in XLP, we can do things to people, for people or with people and the whole ethos behind XLP and what I've tried to do is let's work with each other. Let's work among each other. Let's not just do things for people. We can be a bit patronising sometimes and the way we talk about the poor and actually it's got to be based on relationship and sometimes even with the best intentions in the world, You know I mean I was thinking the other day hearing this story about Haiti you know when the earthquake happened we sent so many blankets, so much material, all well-intentioned but we need to put Haiti's clothing business out of business. We nearly destroyed it because we're not thinking with. And I think whenever you as a leader if you can think with, how do I do this with. I heard a preacher the other day which was quite interesting he said you know Jesus spent 30 years with his community among his family and three years on the road. So that's 30 years of being in community and being with people in that way, totally grounded in one place. So yeah, it's a challenge a challenge to live out we will know if we've got it wrong a million times.

Simon Barrington: [00:10:35] One of the challenges I've found in doing community development was actually that sense of going and being with people involved us giving up power. So with Samaritan's Purse we wouldn't use the brand, wouldn't use the logo. Just give away power. How have you sought to give away power. I suppose.

Patrick Regan: [00:10:54] I mean the thing is we started this mentoring program must be about six seven years ago now and everyone was like you've got a brand it and you've got to control it and in the end it literally was Let's train people to run their own mentoring program. It's their program. Once they've been it us it's theirs. It's St Paul's Church mentoring program or the Baptist mentoring programme. It's the local church in the local community reaching the local kids. And I think I think you're right you know the love of power has destroyed churches, has destroyed nations, has destroyed marriages, has destroyed people, where the power of love generated from our love for Christ can transform people, transform nations. And so I think that's the thing is that you seek first the kingdom and all these things will be added unto you, you know unless the Lord builds the house

we labour in vain. And I think sometimes it's you know what are we trying to do you know. Are we advancing our own agenda. Is it you know, I often say to my trustees and I might get in trouble now, What does success look like? Because success could look like just getting bigger and bigger and bigger, but actually for me success is about transformation of kids lives. They're broken, they're messed up there is stuff going on and I'm interested in that. I'm not just interested in building a big organisation. I mean we're all knackered right. We're all tired. We want to do the things that the Father is doing. So I think the way we focus on that and make sure that it is genuine, outrageously generous is where we need to be.

Simon Barrington: [00:12:27] And what are the rhythms in your own life that keep you sharp.

Patrick Regan: [00:12:30] Again I have been really challenged recently I just read Brene Brown's new book Braving the wilderness and she does this brilliant thing around the word Braving. B standing for boundaries - what's okay and what's not okay which I think is really interesting, integrity and all that stuff. R is reliability. A is accountability - making sure that you're in the right relationship, right connection. V is vault - don't gossip, don't slag other people off - someone tells you something keep it to yourself. I is integrity - what you live is what you say and N is nonjudgemental which I think is massive and G is generosity and so BRAVING - being outrageously generous and assuming the best of people I think is really really key. And so I think all those things I mean in Scripture they're all over the place aren't they all those things and that's where I guess I've tried to live that way and get it right sometimes and get it wrong other times.

Simon Barrington: [00:13:35] Now in my own life as a leader I had a year out when I was totally in isolation. It sounds like you have a similar kind of experience with your leg and going into hospital. How did that impact your sense of identity and a sense of who you are and being laid aside for that amount of time.

Patrick Regan: [00:13:54] I think as a leader you know I am a typical visionary type you know I love. Vision is the art of seeing the invisible that was Jesus' passion and everyone says they can't do it until someone comes along and does it anyway I love it. And then when your long term sick you suddenly go from this visionary guy suddenly you can't plan the next day. In fact I was in so much pain and on so many drugs I couldn't even plan the next hour. And so that's that's hard. That's hard to deal with and so it does change your identity in terms of who you are and then I guess as a leader there's this pressure isn't there this is pressure to get better quick and to get back in there and because what happens if everyone knows, what's going to happen the money, and what's going to happen to the staff, what's going to this is going and those words we all use you know I should, I must, I ought. I should be better now, I ought to be okay and I must get back. I should, I must, I ought constantly go on loop in your head and I guess that I had to realise that self compassion and self indulgence are two completely different things. I hated it when people talk about self compassion I thought here they go again. All that rubbish, self-help nonsense, there's no way I'm going to start and thinking about myself in this way but I realise that actually people that exercise self compassion are the most compassionate to others and that's that weird thing in it put your own oxygen mask first. It just feels wrong, but actually the reason they say that is you won't be able to help your children and you won't be around to help your children. And so I guess during that phase of my life I have learned and I'm still learning because I think the temptation is you get healthy and then you go back a million miles an hour you know to learn that self compassion isn't the same as self-indulgence and it's not the same as being selfish it's not the same as self-esteem. It's actually listening to that voice in your head that says I am flawed, I am tired and I do need to look after myself and realising that's not a bad thing.

Simon Barrington: [00:15:58] For driven people like you and I that's even harder isn't it

Patrick Regan: [00:16:02] Really hard. It's so hard. You know I can come here and I can preach all this stuff and speak all this stuff and it makes sense on paper but like putting it into practice, yeah it's really up it's really important I think if we're going to last the course it's important.

Simon Barrington: [00:16:16] Now you were up early this morning doing 17 BBC Radio interviews which means this podcast is a walk in the park for you and you were talking about crime in London and the current situation there. Tell us a little bit about what's on your heart and how churches are responding to the situation.

Patrick Regan: [00:16:34] Yeah I mean you know London has just taken over New York apparently as having a higher murder rate than New York for the first time ever and that's why I think it's hit the headlines again and this sort of happens to me every six months or so you know there's loads and loads of press and interviews and and I guess for me I really feel the church could have an amazing opportunity because you know I've said I said to the Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister David Cameron you know we're in every community across this country, smack bang in the community and with all due respect to politicians and to some other leaders we will be there when you are not elected. We will be there in five or 10 years time and in 20 years time. And I think the church you know the famous quote "We're there to serve our non members". And so we really are desperate to see people step up I guess as role models, as mentors. Give two hours a week for 12 months to mentor vulnerable young people on the verge of exclusion from school. Where people have done that it's just been incredible there has been an incredible reaction and I guess the reason I get involved in this sort thing and media and I've been involved a lot of policy work is I really believe that if all the decisions are made just from Westminster or from people that have never not always been on the estates, don't know young people, were going have the wrong policy and sometimes I'm out of my depth. You know I've been in the House of Commons for meetings and they're using language that I have not a clue and I'm Google'ing it on my phone, thinking what on earth did you just say. And normally at the end of the meeting I sort of go I really don't get it but I'm going to tell you about a guy called David and he lives on a council estate and he's too scared to go home and he has a knife in his pocket and his mum's working two jobs can't make ends meet. So if you could tell me how your policy's going to help him. I'm all ears. And I think that is what we need to be we need to be in that place where we're speaking up for those type of people.

Simon Barrington: [00:18:30] And the work you did with XLP what kind of difference was it making to kids like David and what kind of difference is that making right now to kids like David.

Patrick Regan: [00:18:39] I think I think the whole thing is is around building relationships. So our key thing was always, let's try create a sense of hope, identity. You know I always say people need three things : significance, self-worth and security and XLP is all about creating that sense for them and so we have to literally saying your kids go for mom being on the verge of exclusion and becoming head girl. We've seen kids become Christians they're now on staff at XLP. We've seen kids go I had a lovely little story of a girl who I know who again, brother died of meningitis, Mum had mental health challenges. Was really going nowhere. We managed to mentor her get, her job at Barclays and I remember I managed to get her to interview be interviewed by the CEO who was Anthony Jenkins at the time, who's a is a is a friend of mine and it was so funny. He said you know what do you do and she was like, well I work for you. And then you could'nt have made it up. He basically said well would you want to do in the future. And she just looked at him and went : I want your job. And you sort of feel like wow. It is a journey you know. And again I say to people for every success story there is 10 heartbreaking ones. People ask me to describe XLP. I say it's a beautiful mess. It's beautiful because I love the young people. I mean it's messy because people's lives are complex and yeah it's always you know Kay Warren says this : life is less mountains and valleys and more railway tracks. Good stuff bad stuff and always together. But if you stand on a railway track and you look down you'll notice the tracks just because of the way your eyes work

will one day come to one. And I think that's the thing, I think I'm firm of the theology that I believe at the end of time God's just going to kick this Earth into the touch and say well that was a waste of time you know. I believe he wants to create a new heaven and a new earth. He wants to restore relationships, restore people and I guess if you come from a theology like that then what we do now matters it really matters. And so we are part of God's restoration plan, his rescue plan for this place.

Simon Barrington: [00:20:54] Now you've recently started a new charity. What's it called and why is it called that name.

Patrick Regan: [00:21:00] It's called Kintsugi Hope and it basically comes from a Japanese word called obviously called Kintsugi and the whole concept is when we break a pot then basically we mend it with super glue, where we are meant to, or we chuck it away. And basically the whole thing is we try and hide the cracks we try and hide the fact that it's broken and in Japan what they do is they put a gold powder in the glue. And so instead of hiding the cracks, they make a feature of the cracks and the whole concept is beauty comes and brokenness we don't hide our scars. In fact a scar is a place of healing. I've got lots of scars because all my operations, it's a place of healing and also the thing about it is every pot's unique. Before it was broken it was all the same and now actually every thing is unique. And so we're starting this charity to create safe and supportive spaces for those struggling with emotional and mental health challenges. And we're doing a course similar to the AA course, Alcoholics Anonymous, which starts from the confession that I'm an alcoholic or I'm broken and we're training people to run this across the country in their own context. So we're doing it in coffee shops, in schools, in prisons, in Brothel's, in women's refuge and homeless shelters, running these incredible emotional mental health courses. And the response has just been a little bit overwhelming to be honest. It's just been incredible. Non-Christians are absolutely loving it because I think sometimes as the church we've rushed. We've got to tell you about Jesus and your sin. Going in and telling everyone you know I am really broken your broken let's share in that and this is how faith and prayer has helped me. That's a whole, that could be a game changer for a lot of people.

Simon Barrington: [00:22:35] What's your hope for the charity over the next 5 years or so.

Patrick Regan: [00:22:39] I just really hope that it's one of those things that can really equip and power empower churches and people to really deal with the whole issue of shame and and ultimately know that you are made in the image of God and you're loved and transformed, you know. I feel like stepping out of shame is a massive for people and I think to do that you need to own your story. I think you need to you know shame can't stand being talked about, it like it likes silence, it likes secrecy, it likes judgment and actually to see people have the freedom to step out from that and realise that they're made in the image of a loving God. It's huge. And so I think it could be a real new form of evangelism in some ways. We've seen people become Christians at the "When faith get's shaken stuff. Haven't designed it that way particularly, wasn't even in our minds to be honest. But I think it's the integrity and authenticity of it that enables people to really respond. And so we are really excited. We're also doin some stuff in other countries. We're looking at again I think in terms of development we're very good at sometimes food and tents, so what we're actually doing is looking at trauma. So in places, war torn countries, that we were talking about earlier. Theres a school in Trenchtown where 90 percent of the kids don't have Dads. 70 percent of them have been abused, because of child protection laws aren't enforced. So we're going to employ a mental health counsellor to be on staff at the school and to work with those kids. So theres loads of things. So were excited. It's scary, I mean like XLP's 70 people. I've have given that up and it's me in my wife now. So it's tiny, but I think it as the potential to be.

Patrick Regan: [00:24:23] Ah yeah. Yeah it will be. It's going to be amazing. I think.

Simon Barrington: [00:24:28] As you look back over journey, did you want to be a leader when you were a little boy.

Patrick Regan: [00:24:33] It's weird you know I went on this mission when I was 16 to Cardboard City underneath Waterloo Bridge and just had this amazing couple of weeks where God just broke my heart for the poor and the broken and the marginalised. And I came back to my Church and I was all fired up and I went up to the pastor and I went. We've got to do this, we've got to get out there, we've got to make a difference and all that sort of stuff and he was like yeah I totally agree with you. You do it. And I was like I'm 16 you idiot. That's what I was thinking in my head, I'm 16. This was a church of like three or four hundred and I'm thinking to myself like the guys lost it, or maybe he's just past it, you know. And he said to me such a wise thing. He was like I'm going to pray for you, I'm going to be there for you, but I want you to lead this project. And so at the age of 16 I'd started leading the evangelism in this church and the team grew and to be honest we didn't know what do. So we were like, where are people, people are in hospital - let's go into hospital and sing songs or people are in the town, let's go and do some stuff in town and we started a non-alcoholic cocktail bar and then yeah and then things led to one thing led to another, but I think it was down to that guy believing in me and trusting in me and willing to be there when it went wrong then be there and almost take responsibility when I mucked up. Yeah.

Simon Barrington: [00:25:49] Wow it's amazing how much the role of a significant mentor who was willing to take a risk on a young person and take a risk on them.

Patrick Regan: [00:25:57] Yeah totally.

Simon Barrington: [00:25:58] And as we come to end end, what advice would you have for young leaders who are seeing problems in the world, who want to make a change, who dream of founding organisations like the ones you have. What would your biggest bit of advice be for them right now.

Patrick Regan: [00:26:14] If I were speaking back to my my 20 year old self. Maybe I would I make sure I'd look after myself a lot better I think I burnt out quick. I never felt like the saviour or anything. I see that a lot of young leaders they think sometimes I'm the answer to the problems. I think it is really about, you know God God is there any way. So we need to spot what he's doing and join in. And that's really really important to realise that we are not the hero in this situation. Particularly with young people sometimes sweep in, change all their lives, I'll do all this and actually you know God's there, God's working and we need to see what he's doing and join in and get involved. And that sort of thing and I think that vision vision is the key vision what gets you out of bed in the morning, which gives you energy at the end of the day and it's the classic thing in that book about successful people is the visionary, the leader, he climbs up the tree, he sees where you need to go and then you get the managers who clear the path and work how to do it. And I think that's it. Realise what you're good at and what you're not good. Use team wisely and take people on a journey with you.

Simon Barrington: [00:27:23] Thanks so much for joining us today.

Patrick Regan: [00:27:24] It's a pleasure.

Simon Barrington: [00:27:25] Where can people find out about Kintsugi Hope.

Patrick Regan: [00:27:28] Oh if they want to find out about Kintsugi Hope there's the Website www.kintsugihope.com There's loads of stuff on there, really really interesting website, or social media and all that sort of thing, but yeah.

Simon Barrington: [00:27:45] Patrick thanks so much.

Patrick Regan: [00:27:46] No problem, It's a pleasure.

Peter Wooding: [00:27:47] Thanks for listening. We love your feedback and questions just email us hello@forge-leadership.com. Or visit on the website at www.forge-leadership-podcast.com.