

Kate and Anna in conversation with Sharon Jagger

In this podcast, Kate and Anna talk about their journeys to ordination as working-class women and their experiences working in the Church of England. Kate and Anna work together regularly and share an understanding of what it means to them to be working-class. In the research project, there was a fairly even number of men and women who participated. This conversation highlights some of the issues faced specifically by working-class women clergy, as well as the issues that are not confined to one gender. Kate and Anna make the point that working-class men who are clergy, whilst subject to classism, also benefit from male privilege, illuminating some of the complexities of classed experiences.

Their conversation is punctuated with moments of humour – often perceived as a working-class tool for communication by participants in the research. The serious points they raise relate to how they feel they are seen by others. They discuss accent – they are proud of their accents – and how this is often read as a sign of not being intelligent. They are also often frustrated by the way their strength and leadership is resisted because of their class *and* their gender.

There is discussion here about the cultural differences they encounter. Though sometimes light-hearted, they argue that working-class people and communities are sometimes ‘othered’ and seen as being different to ‘the norm’, which has profound implications for the types of activities the Church focuses on.

As working-class women, they hope to see themselves represented in senior levels of the Church, but lament that even as women are finding their way into the hierarchy, these are often not obviously *working-class* women.

They also talk about politics – including feminism – and how important it is for them to be able to speak out about social justice issues.

This podcast reflects some of the issues commonly raised amongst those who participated in the research, though some of the experiences described by Anna and Kate are personal to them.

Several questions are raised by Kate and Anna’s discussion:

- Is there prejudice against regional accents? How can this be challenged?
- Are certain forms of ‘femininity’ favoured within the Church? Is there a sense of disapproval of working-class women clergy who use humour, who are forthright and who are seen as ‘loud’?
- Kate and Anna acknowledge that they are straight, white, able-bodied women. How different might experiences of other working-class clergy be?
- What are the political responsibilities of leaders (and members) of the Church? Who should be speaking for whom?
- Is there a problem with how the Church sees ‘working-class communities’ as distinct and different, or is it right to have an approach to ministry that takes into account class, place and culture?

