

Kate and Anna in Conversation with Sharon Jagger

Transcript

Sharon: What does working class mean to you? How do you define it for yourself? Kate, do you want to kick us off?

Kate: This is a debate that can rage for a long time, but for me it's about, it's about, a lot about heritage, about the places where you come from and where you find your rootedness, is what I would say. So, you know, I'm thinking about grandparents, I'm thinking about the kind of community that I came from. So, it's not necessarily tied to income, it's tied to, is it tied to income? You see you say these things, don't you? And then you think, is that what I think? Yeah, it's about it's about where you come from, the kind of professions, the kind of jobs that were happening in the communities that you grew up in. So both Anna and I are, are post-industrial communities, you know, so steel working, mining that kind of thing. It has a lot to do with that. I mean I guess the clue's in the title isn't it – working. So how you did your working probably.

Sharon: Anna, what what's your thoughts on that?

Anna: Yeah, I agree. Uh, geography, geography matters. Uh, is there a home? Is there a place that you go, that you go back to that you call home and there's rootedness and generations of your family members have lived there and probably still do live there. And that's certainly the case for us. We've none of us have gone very far. That's not to say that we've not been successful and I would question whether we could call ourselves working class anymore, but we certainly came from that background.

Higher education, I think probably plays into it a bit, expectations about whether you would go to university and do a degree or whether you would go straight to work on leaving school at 16, in my case, 18 for my kids now. And I think there's something about the family profession as well, uh, which has changed slightly in these post-industrial communities where there are no longer steel workers working the way they did and there's no longer, the pits are shut. So, we're not, it's not generation after generation going into the pit. But my dad was an engineer and my brother's an engineer. One of my other brothers is a mechanic, was a mechanic in the army. So, we've kind of followed that family trajectory, if you like. It looks slightly different from previous generations, but it's very rooted and grounded in the place that we call home. And those family traditions are things that we recognise and expect.

Kate: You know, I think when you were talking about what the expectations were on us, had definitely has something to say. And also about when you took there Anna about moving, you know, you said neither of us have moved very far. My mum, God rest her, thought I'd move to the other side of the world and I'd moved 45 minutes away from where I grew up. And that's the other side of the world. My daughter moved away. She used to talk about it like I'd moved to Canada and I had only moved to Retford,

Anna: When, um, when I went back to the village that I grew up in, I'd gone to Nottingham to train at Theological College. So Nottingham is 15 miles from the village that I grew up in and I went back to a thing at church and someone said to me, but you've moved to London now Anna, haven't you? No, I'm in Nottingham. It's 15 miles away. It's not, I've not gone very far at all.

Kate: That's massive. It's huge. My, my, my mum would cry most days that and talk about how much she missed me. I miss you so much. I miss you so much. I phoned her every day and I used to go and see her at least once a week, but I wasn't living 2 doors away, which is her experience of her mum and her family. Everybody lives within a few streets of each other, and even if they moved to the other side of the city, you know it's still only a 10 minute, 15 minute drive. So there's definitely

something about that geography, not just about where you grow up, but also about the expectations of how far you'll move from that hub of rootedness.

Sharon: Can we talk about accent? All three of us have regional accents...

Kate and Anna: I don't know what you're talking about. What? What accent? I think you'll find I work for the BBC. [laughs]

Sharon: OK, well, let's assume we all have accents that we hide. How does that come into your daily life? Because you both speak for a living. That's what you do. So how does your way of expressing things, your accent, how does that play into your class identity?

Anna: I love my accent and I don't try and hide it ever. Uh. In fact, if I'm under pressure it comes out even more. Um, I noticed though when I was at theological college, they make you do this thing where they record you preaching and then you have to watch it back. So having said now 11 years into ordained ministry, how confident I am and not ashamed of the way that I speak is important. When I was first recorded at theological college uh doing my sermon I heard myself and I heard myself do the jokey introduction at the beginning of this sermon. And I remember telling a story about my granddad always having a carrier bag in his pocket and 10 pence in case he needed to make an emergency phone call and a bit of string in case he found a stray dog. Can't remember what the sermon was about. I guess it was something about being prepared. And I remember telling that story and it and it was really local and my vowels were really flat and I was telling the story as I would tell the story in the pub to my people. And then I moved on through the sermon to the serious theology and my voice changed. It got a bit more Maggie Thatcher and the way I spoke, obviously, this deserves a little gravitas, and I'm going to put on my Sunday voice for the theology of the sermon.

Kate: I think that one of the things about accent is it surprises people that we're bright. I get that a lot and I've had it in multiple contexts. Telly context, radio context, theological college context, preaching contexts. You know that you say something, you do the theology bit or you do the, you say something that's vaguely intelligent and insightful and people are shocked that you know what you're talking about. I even had a telly producer once, we were filming Gogglebox, and I was explaining we were watching Newsnight and it was about GDP some economic stuff. I don't know much about economics, but I know enough and I kind of was explaining about some economical, economic theory sort of stuff and she came through, that was really good. And I went, yeah, sure, I ohh thanks. She went, You're actually quite bright, aren't you? I was like, oh, oh wow. And I asked her, what was it? What made you think I wasn't, she said it's accent. It's your accent. It makes you sound thick.

Anna: I've had people correct me as well, both in writing and speech. So, I remember writing an e-mail to someone and I began by saying, me and my colleague met the other day, and he wrote back to me and said, you never begin a letter by saying 'me and' – well, I did. You understood what it meant. I don't know what the problem is. It's an e-mail. It wasn't a formal letter. I wasn't writing to the queen. I was asking him to do me a little job at church.

Kate: I use it to my advantage. If I'm in a room full of bishops or, you know, an archbishop's garden party or something, I'll crank that accent up like you've never known because I just like to watch them squirm a bit. Really. I like to just see what the what they can't compute, I like to see the little flicker in the corner of their eye when they can't quite compute. There's a dog collar with a working-class accent and she seems to know what she's talking about. I, you know, and then I pull out the big bragging guns of you know where I've preached and you know and they go oh hello is your name? actually it's Canon, you know that kind of stuff. And I just ramp it up really because it gives me because you know for devilment more than anything and subvert it.

Sharon: That's that's really interesting because that it marks people out, doesn't it? The way we have flat vowels or have some sort of regional identity gets read as working class. But I guess that has all sorts of connotations and that's what you're talking about, isn't it? The impact of that, you have to kind of work to get through that as a barrier. I mean I'm, I'm talking like the Church of England is dominated by middle-class ethos and ways of speech. I mean, is that is that a thing?

Anna: Oh I think so, yeah.

Kate: Yeah. I think they're trying really hard. I think in certain places they're trying really hard to not be like that. But they just, they just can't help us because it's so deeply embedded in the culture. You know, what college did you go to? How many buttons have you got on your cassock, all that sort of stuff that you know that is part of that grammar school privately educated all that's you know they don't mean to.

Anna: When I went to theological college, we were all in this room altogether. My cohort my year group and they said that, whoever was in charge maybe the principal I can't remember who it was said it. They said undergrads can you go down the corridor to the library? Uh, postgrads, you can stay here. And I just stood there flummoxed because I didn't know what undergrad or postgrad meant, because I've got 4 GCSEs, uh, and then they then they sent me to theological college and I had to have it explained to me. It set me up. I was defensive, like massive chip on my shoulder because that was the that was the beginning of my journey through theological college and into ordained ministry that I remember that moment forever. These are not my people and I don't understand this language. And it was such a simple question really.

Sharon: As women, do you think there is a different class experience to your working-class male colleagues? Do you, you know, think there are different stories to tell or is this really a shared experience, all working class people? All trying to get on and belong in a middle-class institution?

Anna: I think there is some interesting stuff about gender in that women are still quite new. So I think just being a woman, there are still some things, uh, that hang over us, uh, about that.

Kate: I think there is... I think it comes from both camps. I think it comes from the, you know, the establishment, the nice middle-class business, but also our own camp, if you like, of working-class identity is that expectations are lower on women in terms of academic achievement. So wife, mother, those kind of roles that are sort of jobs that we're sort of destined to do, really. Men seem to have a shared language through things, for example, like football. So, when I arrived at theological college, there was a men's football team and those sporting activities for the men to get involved with. I'm sure the women could play football as well if they wanted to, but the working-class men and the not working-class men, could do that thing together and it was a shared language that they could speak. We didn't have quite the same thing, um, and the same way of getting our toe in the door. And there was that thing, wasn't there, in the 1950s and 60s, muscular Christianity, that evangelical movement which was, had a lot of kind of, you know, football teams starting up and all that sort of stuff and, and young curates and that kind of thing. And I think that there is something about the physicality, I want to say, of working-class men that means that they can do that lads, lads, lads thing and that's that's that seems to open a door.

Sharon: So, what I'm hearing there is working-class men can still have that male privilege even though there are, there are class things going on, there's a class dynamic.

Kate: There's patriarchy in it. That's what it is. And we work in a very patriarchal institution, you know, for better or worse that's its grounding, its rooting and its foundation. So it's, it can never get rid of that. And you know men, men generally tend to have an easier time of it anyway, don't they?

Anna: I didn't know that I was a feminist until I went to theological college because the community that I grew up in there were loads of strong women. We'd always had a male vicar, of course, because that was what you had. You had a male vicar. But there were loads of strong women around him, matriarchal women who were actually making the decisions and were the powerhouse of the community. So, I don't think I even realised that women weren't in charge, if you like, because certainly in my experience the women were in charge and it was a matriarchal culture. And then I went off to theological college and had a bit of a rude awakening because, oh, you mean, you mean, they don't like gobby madams here?

Kate: Yeah, that's one of the brilliant things about being a working-class woman is the expectation is that you will be strong and you will have really. Yeah. I mean that's also really a lot of pressure because you don't complain and you don't tell people when you're in pain and you don't say I'm having a really bad day. You are the driving force of your family.

Anna: you get up, and clean your front step.

Kate: yeah. You scrub your front step, you wash your nets. So I'm, I was really used to, my expectation was I would be a leader in my family and I would be strong and I would be wise and I would be the driving force. When I knew that women weren't in charge was on a Thursday when my dad brought home his pay packet and he sat at the dining room table and counted out the money for the week and went right, there's your housekeeping, love, to my mum, and that's the money for the gas bill, and there's the money for the rent and there's the money. That's when I knew that women weren't in charge. They didn't handle the money. But everything else you know, I didn't ever meet a meek working-class woman. If she was, if she was quiet, there's something wrong - her husband's a bad 'un.

Sharon: So bringing that into your ministry, how, how does that work then? If you are a strong, if you have that strong presence and you're able to say what you think in a very working-class woman sort of way, how does that go down?

Anna: Ohh, it's massively challenging. It causes no end of the problems, particularly among men who've never met women like me before. And they don't quite know what to do with it. I sometimes feel like they're just gently kind of edging around me. And they'd quite like to be a bit more involved but they're just like I'm some dangerous beast that they've not quite understood. Um and uh, oh, isn't it fascinating, that thing over there in the corner, we're not quite sure how to handle it. So just edge away gently boys, edge away gently. I was, I was with a parishioner in the pub last night and we were chatting about all sorts of stuff over a couple of beers and he said to me do you... Because I was telling him about recording this podcast today and I said to him I feel a bit like I just elbowed my way in. Someone took a punt on me. It was Bishop Tony. Tony Porter um took a punt on me because he had a bit of a passion for working-class people and working-class communities and but I carry that with me that I was a, I feel like I was, someone took a chance. And I've edged my way into this room that I don't really belong in and I'm just kind of striding through this room full of people who aren't really like me and don't really understand me. And I'm on this trajectory through this room and everyone around me is going oh gosh who let her in? And I'm like equally hmm I don't know, I don't know how I got in here but I'm here and I'm just making my way through it. That's how it feels.

Kate: So, I feel a lot of the time like the novelty act, like the dinner, like the item on the dinner party table that's there for conversation just to get people talking. And it's both, you know, that's great because I'll use that and act up on that one. But there's this huge sense of they don't quite know what to do with us, and that is, we make a big joke about it. We don't know what to do with it. It's literally being said to me by diocesan, you know, management. We don't know what to do with you. We can't, in fact, someone once said to me, we can't put you in a church. You'll break it. You know, like that was actually said to me during my curacy and so you do feel like that and

that's, I know what they mean and we play up on that. I mean you know, I, don't we Anna, we play up on that. We do. We do that whole sort of I'll be a bit of a gobby woman, that'll be fun. But it's exhausting being a novelty act and because you can't constantly feel like you have to prove yourself. You you know, I'll get invited to the party once. I probably won't get invited back. Because you feel like, yeah, you feel like you're being paraded sometimes.

Anna: And if you do something, if you are successful, and I'm bold enough to say, Kate, that both me and you have been successful in different ways in our careers in the church. I mean that's that's not terribly polite thing to say, is it? If you show some measure of success as well. And that's even worse, I think, because oh my goodness, we took a punt on this one and it's paid off. Oh right. Nobody expected that, did they? So you always feel like a square peg in a round hole.

Kate: You always, I will always feel like a square peg in a round hole. I will never fit. I will never fit and that's OK. And I'm always reminded of Jesus' baptism on the edge of the wilderness. I talk about this all the time, that he was baptised in the river Jordan, which is on the edge of the civilization and the edge of the wilderness. And I very much see that calling to not fit as having a foot in both camps, you know, establishment and wilderness, straddling the river. That's where it all starts. That's where that's where it, you know, that's where the whole thing began. And and I come back to that time and time, I'm not supposed to fit. I'm not supposed to fit. And that's OK.

Sharon: That notion of being in a liminal space you know the, the in betwixt in between people that you are is actually very fruitful place to. If that's not too pompous a way of saying it, you know it's it's not necessarily a bad place to be to effect change and to say what you think.

Anna: I think we get away with things because we're because we are still a little bit unusual. I think we get away with saying things and doing things, uh, that, and I definitely get away with things that I think a man wouldn't get away with, uh, or might be called out on. And I think it's because it's unexpected, um, but because I work really hard as well, because I've got so much to prove. So I work really hard and and I want to do well and I want to please people and that's partly because of my background and partly because, yes when you're when you're in that liminal space it feels edgy and uncertain and you have to keep going, keep the show on the road if you like. I mean that's who we are. That's the kind of people we are and the kind of background that we come from, keep the show on the road and, and that, that pays off. But there's also something, the exhausting comes from that desire to achieve.

Kate: There are there are middle-class women who are dear dear friends who are also ordained that just don't get it. They just don't get it. They just...when we talk about the struggles when I talk about the struggles that I have as working class person...you know or I go oh bloomin' heck, have you seen who they've made Bishop now? Another grammar school girl? Another privately educated...and you get back, Yes, but she's ever so nice. And you go, yeah, but you're not getting it. It's more of the same. I want, I want Bishop Cheryl, who used to be a hairdresser. You know, they just don't get it that actually, you know, we sometimes, Anna and I have to step aside in conversations and go, ohh, the middle-class girls don't get it again. And I know I've got a chip on my shoulder. Actually, I haven't got a chip on my shoulder. I've got a chip. I've got chips, fish, mushy peas and a can of pop on my shoulder. But, you know, it's hard work. It's, it's hard work. There's breaking new ground, right? We're breaking... We're breaking unexpected ground. You know, this is not what people necessarily thought would happen. But it's good. It's good stuff. It's good stuff. The church is richer the more it draws from every aspect of culture, you know. And this is not about saying all the church needs to be more this or more that. It's actually about saying it needs to reflect all the beauty of the nature of God, which includes flat vowels.

Sharon: What's your advice for working-class women who are thinking about a vocation potentially, or how they can be leaders in a church? What's your kind of main bit of advice for them?

Anna: Well, uh, I would say, I would say go for it. I would say go for it, explore it, push the doors, because we need to see more people like us represented, I think. I'm part of the vocations team for this diocese. At least I was before this podcast. [laughs]

Sharon: Oops.

Anna: And I think that's because, uh, it has been recognised that I can offer something, uh, to a wider group of people and a more diverse group of people. I will, you know, here comes the point, I am a straight, white, able-bodied woman. It's not that diverse, in actual fact. You need to have a fixed idea about how much you're going to earn. Uh, and where, have you got a partner? Have you got a husband who's going to support you financially? Because actually you're going to really struggle to live on a stipend. But I would say that to a working-class man as well. Have you got a house? What is your property situation? What have you got in your background to support you? Because this doesn't last forever. So you need to have some really practical conversations about how you are going to live through training and then ordained ministry. What does this look like for me and for my family and is this sustainable into the future?

Kate: Anna, that's such a good point made because one of the things that is a massive difference between middle-class clergy and working-class clergy – I'm not saying all middle-class clergy before anyone shouts at me – is there is a background of wealth for lots of middle-class clergy. So not necessarily. I'm not talking about millions in the bank, but properties owned. There is you know enough money floating around for mum and dad to give you a couple of hundred quid when you need it, maybe help you out with a few bills. There's not always that for working-class families. You know, it is really difficult. My, Graham gave up work so that I could train and we lived off student grant with two kids at theological college and we, there were weeks when we had to have beans on toast every night for a week because we couldn't afford to buy anything else. It is not a well-paid gig. And and lots of lots of other, I'm guessing the expectation years ago was that there would be property and wealth in the family to sustain you so you you could live off stipend. So thank you for making that point.

Sharon: That's such an important thing to think about as well, isn't it? It's it's the practical, it's the material, the need to live and exist and have a good and healthy life.

Kate: Even crazy things like spare furniture. You know I remember at theological college there were there were people furnishing their houses and stuff at theological college or when they moved into their first posting into curacy and they went, oh Mum and Dad have given us a sofa. What? How do they have spare furniture?

Anna: Who has a spare sofa just sitting around?

Kate: You know, I'm in a different position now, but I remember at theologi- I just could not get my head around the idea that people had spare furniture.

Anna: in our village they just did an open gardens event and I couldn't understand the concept of an open gardens event. So you you go, I've been ordained 11 years and three years at theological college before that. So I've been around now. But you go, you go and look at people's gardens, that's what you do. You go and look at people's gardens. I couldn't get my head round it and then I realised that and this is not entirely fair because the house that I grew up in has got a lovely back garden but I've but I've largely ministered in working-class communities and I realised that uh actually, come and look in our backyard, our washing line and our bins just doesn't have the same ring.

Kate: and our outside toilet, Just ridiculous. It's just ridiculous.

Anna: I realised that that was a bit of a class thing then as well.

Kate: We had an open garden growing up because we shared a yard between four neighbours, that were our garden, because our yard was four houses.

Anna: So even though you feel like you might be assimilating and learning the language, occasionally something comes along that trips you up and makes you go - a what?

Kate: I remember being served Pimms for the first time really vividly. Never had it. Someone's put salad in my drink. What are you doing? And somebody said it's my first Pimms of the season, and I'm thinking what season? What are you talking about? It's weird, you know, it's not just accent, it's also about the words we use. Like I did not know bloody was swearing. I did not know that, you know, and I, words like bloody and bugger and stuff like that that I did not know. I didn't know those were rude words until I went to theological college. I didn't know. Yeah, I didn't, you know. So it's not just about accent. It's also about the language that we use. So things like a conversation about how good my boobs look in this dress, that's a completely normal conversation. I know people that would be absolutely horrified because they have this kind of, like genteel, genteelness about language

Anna: and don't mention bodies.

Kate: Don't mention, don't mention bodies. Yeah, working-class women, I think working-class women have a different relationship with their bodies.

Anna: I think there's something really important in that actually about the way, the difference between men's bodies and women's bodies and what women's bodies do. And I think it's interesting that we're just beginning to have these conversations across the wider church about menopause and menstrual cycle and things like that and how it affects the way we work. So I remember doing a seminar at a big Christian conference and it was called feminine spirituality, feminine leadership. Feminine leadership is what it was called, and one of the chaps, one of the hosts of the conference, said to me, So what does feminine leadership involve then, Anna? I said it means putting my menstrual cycle in the parish diary and and laughed. I thought that was hilarious. And the look on his face as the colour drained from him.

Kate: There's an, I mean, I guess the word is earthy. You know what? What happens is, and people say this to us, they go, oh you're just so real, you're so earthy, Which I find incredibly patronising. But the thing I take away from it is because being working class is really rooted and grounded in harsh reality, financial harsh reality, social harsh reality, there isn't time for messing about and dressing stuff up. We are not garnish people. We do not put little springs of parsley on top of egg rolls. We, it's not like that, all right? So we have to get really real, really quick because there's not time for that sort of stuff. So that, if you have that picture of, you know, we don't do garnish, if you have that picture, we don't do it when we talk about our bodies, when it comes to having fun, we have a lot of fun, right? So we have an amazing amount of fun and we're really good at having fun. We know how to do a party. We're not genteel in that. We drink a lot. We, we dance, we smoke, we fall off tables. If we're having a good time, we're having a really good time because work is really hard, because we work really hard and it's dirty and it's depressing and we're really good at friendships because we're very used to being thrown together in circumstances that have hardship as part of them. And so we make friends really quickly and really deeply and we will fight and scrap for you if we need to. And that comes with, I'm not saying you know, middle-class people don't do that. But at the rootedness of us is this lack of garnish and people can find that quite abrasive and difficult. But actually it's really genuine. You know I, I am always astounded that people go, oh you know how to have a good time. And I just think I'm just, I'm just doing what all my family, if I tell you I'm the one of the quieter members of my family, that that sums it up right? Because we go head first into everything because your life expectancy is short and while you're it's gonna be really hard work. So you might as well have a really good time when you can have it. And I love that about being working class. And my advice to anybody who's thinking about going into

training, who's working class, who's exploring ordination or leadership or whatever, is you are going to have to bite your tongue until it bleeds. So make sure you've got somebody around you who can help you heal, because you are gonna have to bite your tongue. People are gonna say stupid shit to you all the time, and misunderstand you. But it's worth it. It's so worth it because you are you are reflecting a saviour who himself was working class. And it's really worth it.

Sharon: that notion of being misunderstood is is really important because it leaves you feeling like you're the problem. You, you're the one that's out of step with everything, so it leaves you psychically quite drained. And you both talked about all this extra emotional labour that you've got to do. And so it seems to me that that notion of being kind of fundamentally misunderstood, everything you say is, is up for scrutiny.

Kate: My BAP report said we discerned that Kate may be called to her indigenous community, which I just thought was hilarious. Indigenous community like we were some sort of other breed. It just made me howl with laughter. This idea that been working class was like, oh look at the indigenous people over there.

Anna: My BAP report said 'The sound of Anna's laughter could be heard resounding down around the retreat house corridors' and I was, I was mortified about that. But then, you know now with all the gift of hindsight, my children were two and five when I went to BAP. Yes, I was laughing. I had a weekend away, which was like a holiday.

Kate: I had such a great time. I loved my BAP. It was amazing. I played croquet for the first time. I've never played it before or since.

Anna: My BAP report also said that I was so open and honest I was transparent and again, I was embarrassed. I was embarrassed about that at the time. But now I'm, I think that's an amazing gift. And someone, someone said to me, someone in the diocese said to me, you know why we come and ask you questions though, Anna, don't you? You know why we ask you to be involved with these things? Because you tell the truth. If you ask me a question, I will answer you.

Sharon: For the uninitiated, can I just interject and say a BAP is not a bread bun, it is something far more serious. It's the Bishop's Advisory Panel.

Anna: because they don't even call it that anymore. There'll be a certain group of clergy who were like, yeah, that we understand that, but anyone before or after, no chance.

Sharon: I just want to ask you about activism, politics and feminism. You've talked about, you know what, how feminism sort of comes into your consciousness. Are you allowed to be political?

Kate: I don't think it's possible to be apolitical. I think living is political. What you buy, where you shop, what clothes you wear. All these are political statements, you know, so you can't avoid it.

Anna: Uh yeah. Where you let your dog poo, when you put your dustbin out, when you take your children to the swimming baths. They're all political acts, aren't they? So yeah, we are. But I would challenge you to find a book that is any more political than the Bible.

Sharon: There's a resurgence of collective thinking, though. Don't you think that, you know, with the wave of industrial action, do you think it's coming more into people's consciousness?

Anna: I really hope people are becoming more political. It's about time, isn't it, that we stood up, paid attention and acted to improve the lives of everybody, not just a few elite people. And I think the church ought to be at the centre of that. We should be breaking ground with this when people, people are, are living in fear of starvation and homelessness and Jesus has got something to say about all of that. And so as church leaders, as religious leaders, we need to be speaking into that space. Refugees. Homelessness. Hunger. My goodness me. We've got to speak. We've got to act.

Um, now is the time. We can't wait politely for a moment to have our say. We've got to be impolite and pushy I'm afraid. This is our moment, people.

Kate: and one of the brilliant things about being working class is apathy is not an option. We're very used to having strong opinions on everything. You know, I would argue that one, certainly my experience of being part of that strong matriarchal tradition and a strong working-class tradition and and you know, being tough is apathy is not an option. You have a strong opinion on everything whether that's whether next door have scrubbed the front step and washed the nets or whether that's we should be out on strike. You know, we are people of passion is what I would argue. And I mean I know that's not the case for everyone but apathy is not something we do well as working-class people.

Sharon: Tell me about your feminism. Is it quiet? Is it loud? What does feminism mean to you both?

Kate: There's nothing quiet about either of us. I mean that's another middle-class prejudice, isn't it? That quietness is holy. I've found that a lot actually. That quiet days and silence and all that sort of stuff. That seems to be a very middle-class flavour as well. That noise is somehow. I mean, I grew up in terraced houses, sharing a yard with four houses. Quiet was not a thing. My mum's from a family of six that lived in a 2 bedroom with outside loo. Quiet is not a... it's a luxury. Silence is a luxury. I didn't realise I was as loud as I was until I went to theological college. I didn't realise. So yes, our feminism is loud. I think I can speak for Anna there, actually. I don't pretend to speak for anybody else, but I think I can on this occasion. Our feminism is loud and our sense of justice and righteousness and what is fair is really strong.

Anna: We don't do sitting back and watching or letting a situation unfold. We have thoughts and opinions and I, we're both activists in our own way. This role gives us a platform, and I would say this to other working-class people who are thinking that God might be calling them to ordained ministry. I would say that this is a gift and doors open in a way that would never have opened for me otherwise. And I am heard in a way that I would never have been heard otherwise. I have to put those funny clothes on and give up every weekend. But it's a gift and a challenge and a massive responsibility and a huge privilege to be able to operate in the church, to be respected, and to be able to challenge authority and thinking and perspectives. It's a gift.

Kate: To be able to sit on people's sofas when they're going through darkest days of life and know how to talk to them and not, and not be embarrassed about going and doing the washing up for them or making a cup of tea. You know, we don't have those niceties. We don't have those. There's not time for that sort of stuff.

Anna: And acknowledging that sometimes you go into someone's house and this story unfolds of grief and loss and sorrow and just being able to sit with them and cry with them and acknowledge that this is really shitty. And being able to say that, to call it what it is and the sense of relief when you can use that language and create that space to grieve and sorrow in an earthy, uh, open and honest way. Um, it's it's beautiful. And not everybody gets to do that.