

Speaking the Unspeakable: Who cares about the working classes.

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Quite often when I attend Christian conferences and leaders' meetings I will automatically do a quick scan for urban practitioners or ministers of urban churches who I know to see how urban issues are being represented. What I also note is the representation of ethnic minorities, women and younger delegates. What cannot easily be noticed is representation of those from the working classes and those who recognise that heritage as their cultural identity. Some do come from that background but had to go through such cultural transformation to engage in Christian ministry that their roots are not easily detectable.

Years ago I took a fellow Church Elder along to a Leaders Day organised by a group of 'New Church' leaders. There was not a dog collar in sight but as he scanned the room he asked me, 'Is this their uniform?' What he had noticed was the 'smart casual' lighter coloured clothes of a large group of middle-class 'House Church' leaders. This Elder was a working class man who held a significant role in his industry's trade union. He had come to faith within the past decade and had grown in that faith and demonstrated spiritual maturity and wisdom. What troubled me as much as his evident discomfort was his apparent disappointment, possibly that there were no others like him. If the difference stopped at the clothes people wore this would not be such an issue, but there were more aspects to this than that.

Observations like these suggest that unless the Church in England recognises that the working classes are predominantly absent from the Church, that it is a significant problem and they need to address the issue of working class cultural exclusion, people of working class culture will never become more than an unidentifiably negligible element of the Church.

From the introduction to the book "Speaking the Unspeakable". [Email](#) to find out more.

