



Dave Andrews, *Compassionate Community Work: An Introductory Course for Christians*

Carlisle, UK: Piquant Editions Ltd, 2006. 340pp.
Available from www.lastfirst.net

A review by Lin Hatfield Dodds

At the heart of humanity lies hope. A hope that is as necessary for our survival as earth, air and water. And at the heart of all hope is a dream – a dream that something, somewhere, sometime will change. I have a dream.

I dream of a world in which all the resources of the earth are shared equally between all the people of the earth so that even the most disadvantaged among us will be able to meet their most basic needs with dignity and joy.

I dream of a great society of small communities interdependently cooperating to practice political, socioeconomic, cultural and personal righteousness and peace.

I dream of vibrant neighbourhoods where people relate to each other as neighbours.

I dream of people developing networks of friendship in which the private pain they carry deep down is allowed to surface and is shared openly in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect.

I dream of people understanding the difficulties they have in common, discerning the problems, discovering solutions, and working together in a spirit of cooperation for personal growth and social change according to the visionary agenda of Jesus of Nazareth.

I dream of every church in every locality acting as a catalyst to make this vision of a renewed world a reality.

Maybe you share some of my dream. It's a dream many of us live for and not a few of us would die for.

Dave Andrews, from *Can You Hear the Heartbeat*

It's unusual to begin a review of a book with an extensive quote from another book, I know. There is method in the madness: *Compassionate Community Work* is a book that can get you from where you are now to actively being part of a movement that's bringing this dream into reality in many communities across the world.

I have known Dave Andrews for a long time. I read his first book, *Can You Hear The Heartbeat?* in the early 90s and was inspired by its vision to travel from Canberra to spend time with the Waiters Union in Brisbane's West End to experience the kind of transforming community relationships described by Dave for myself. It was an exhilarating and challenging experience and has continued to shape who I am and my relationship with my own neighbourhood wherever I have lived since.

Dave (who will hate me for writing this) is a bit of a poster boy for all of us who long to work with Christ in our communities but don't really know how to start. He, Ange, and the rest of the Waiters Union have struggled over the years to live out their faith in solidarity with those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged in their local area. Over time, Dave has learnt a thing or two about taking risks, acting with integrity, persistence, courage, mutual respect and hope, and shares this hard won wisdom in *Compassionate Community Work*.

If you've ever wondered about just exactly *how* to stand in solidarity with those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged in your community, if you've ever longed to move with Christ to the edges but are not sure what that means, or how to get there, then *Compassionate Community Work* is the book for you. It's an intensely practical workbook that can be studied formally as a subject in an educational institution or (hooray) at home in your own church or community.

This is a book worth reading with a highlighter pen in hand. Get up, go out and grab a copy now.

But wait, there's more. Dave is available to run workshops, seminars and residential intensives (contact details in book), which means that you can organize a group or groups in your church or community to work through the sessions and have Dave around as an inspiration/guide.

People who live the talk like Dave can be a bit like national parks – although we probably will never go there, we feel good knowing that they exist. *Compassionate Community Work* provides a map, with clear and empowering directions, to help us move from a warm glow of appreciation to a place where we too are resourced to have a go, to take a risk and to work, dance, laugh and cry with our sisters and brothers who are living on the edge.

Lin Hatfield Dodds aspires to be part of a movement that transforms our world, one community at a time. She is the National Director of Uniting Care - Australia's largest network of community services provision; the President of the Australian Council of Social Service, and chairs the ACT Community Inclusion Board.

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