

How to Engage in the Public Square with Convictions and Civility (or, *How to Be the Weird Idealist Who Believes in Truth and Grace*)

In a world that rewards convictions expressed with little civility and civility without deep convictions, how do Christians demonstrate an authentic Christ-likeness? Being faithful in the public square means practicing “convicted civility” – having convictions and compassion even when those around us don't. We will consider what it looks like and how we can speak with grace and truth in politics.

Ross Hendry serves as CEO of CARE since November 2021. Prior to joining the team, he was the CEO of Spurgeon's, one of the UK's largest children's charities. He has also served as Deputy CEO at the office for the Children's Commissioner in England and as Head of Public Policy at Action for Children. In 2005, he stood as a Parliamentary candidate for the Labour Party.

1. Our true calling

The greatest commandment

Salt and Light

Truth and Grace

‘Do not exploit and oppress’

2. What's gone wrong?

The fragility and cost of kindness

Tolerance and an inadequate goal

Pluralism: the problem of reciprocity

3. Building on solid ground: preparation

Mind

Heart

Soul

4. The courage of our convictions and civility: engagement

Rules of engagement

Loving the unlovable

Being the radical conservatives

Humility, empathy, awe

Confidence and identity

5. The art of compromise

When we might

When we should not

Co-belligerents

6. What does 'good' look like?

Life is not The West Wing

Life is not House of Cards

#Faithfulness

#Redemptive work

Some useful* resources for those who want to go further

** Please note I am not endorsing all the resources below but they are helpful in stimulating further thinking and action. A number of the resources below come from secular sources*

Books

Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (IVP, 1992)

Justin Giboney, Michael Wear, Chris Butler, *Compassion (&) Conviction: The AND Campaign's Guide to Faithful Civic Engagement* (InterVarsity Press, 2020)

James Calvin Davis, *In Defense of Civility: How Religion Can Unite American on Seven Moral Issues that Divide Us* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010)

Teresa M. Bejan, *Mere Civility: Disagreements and the Limits of Toleration* (Harvard University Press, 2019)

Amanda Ripley, *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out* (2021)

Web publications and videos

<https://publicsquaremag.org/dialogue/disagreement-makes-the-world-go-round/>

<https://conversational-leadership.net/video/how-to-disagree-productively/>

<https://www.faithward.org/richard-mouw-on-disagreeing-with-convicted-civility/>

Websites/ organisations

UK context - CARE (<http://care.org.uk>) will be working on this issue from the end of 2023

A secular UK organisation campaigning in a similar space is the Jo Cox Foundation and their *More in Common* campaign/ pledge (www.jocoxfoundation.org)

Key to my thinking has been the AND Campaign (see book above) <https://andcampaign.org>

Other organizations doing work on depolarization and how to have constructive argument across deep divides:

<https://braverangels.org>

<https://www.sfcg.org>

Some other people who are looking at different aspects of civility in public life:

John Inazu – Confident Pluralism: <https://www.jinazu.com/confident-pluralism/>

Harry Boyte, Institute of Public Life and Work <https://www.iplw.org/contact>

Ray Pennings at Cardus – which is kind of a Canadian version of CARE

<https://www.cardus.ca>

Chris Sieple at Templeton Religion Trust and Covenantal Pluralism

<https://templetonreligiontrust.org/about-us/>