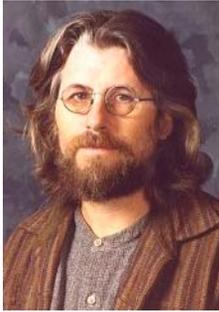


**DAVE ANDREWS
AND THE WAITERS UNION**



Are the atrocities that are done in the name of Christianity true indicators of the nature of Christianity, or not? How does a gospel of love and peace proclaimed by a poor vagrant preacher become a means of violence over the Christian centuries?



Dave Andrews is one of the leading prophetic Australian voices of his day, recalling others to the subversion of power which Jesus lived and taught. He is a founding member of the grassroots Christian community the *Waiters Union*, which lives among the poor of Brisbane's West End and shares the struggle to live an authentic life of Christian discipleship in the midst of an oppressive world. For Dave believes that Jesus' religion of love was the exact psychological counterpoint to the politics of power.' Living this out, he offers powerful inspiration to overcome violence in our communities.

The Waiters Union

The Waiters Union is not about cafés or restaurants (though it does involve sharing food and hospitality) nor is it part of the trades union organisation (though it holds a dream of a better world where gifts and resources are properly shared). Nor is it about caring for others *per se*. Dave Andrews and other members of the Waiters Union have indeed been involved in a great variety of community work and in wider campaigns for human liberty at home and overseas. In some ways they therefore present as a community network performing diverse social work on a minimal budget. They especially assist drug addicts, the homeless and mentally ill, and work with others for Aboriginal rights, against global poverty and for human liberation wherever it is needed. At the heart of their activist lives however, there is a different beat. In Dave's words:

In the midst of the hustle and bustle of inner city Brisbane there is a group of us who feel called to stop, look, listen and above all, wait. We want to wait on God, be aware of his presence, be attentive to God's purpose, and enter into God's response in our area.

We want to wait on our neighbours, not to set any agendas, nor set up any agencies.

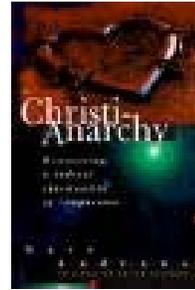
We want just to help out in any way we can.

Dave is thus a facilitator, not an initiator; instead of working, he enables people to work; waiting with others, even if it takes years for individuals to mature. For imitating Jesus' compassion and sacrificial lifestyle is the source from which all else flows. For which reason, the Waiters' Union operates in people's houses, making them accessible to those in need. Members voluntarily live with minimal possessions, without paid jobs, pooling resources and sharing costs, thereby making them peers of those they help and allowing a maximum amount of time to be given to people. Whoever has an issue or an idea is empowered to act upon it. For no-one leads the Union itself, as it operates not with a structure but rather by mutual accountability. In that way, the alienation that comes from authority is removed: as people always feel freer to reveal their deepest fears and hurts with a compassionate friend, especially if they can see their helper's weaknesses.

SEEDS OF PEACE

Transforming Power

In addition to living out his vision of the power of compassion, Dave Andrews has also shared it in a number of books which have challenged others to respond. Indeed, when his book *Christi-Anarchy* was first published it caused quite a bit of controversy. At one time, Koorong - the biggest Christian book sellers in Australia - refused to stock *Christi-Anarchy* openly on their shelves lest it 'cause offence' to their customers. But in spite of the controversy that surrounded its publication *Christi-Anarchy* has become a bit of a 'cult classic'



Christi-Anarchy *n.* a Christ-like life; lifestyle characterised by the radical, non-violent, sacrificial compassion of Jesus Christ; a way of life distinguished by commitment to love and to justice; working from the bottom up to empower people, particularly the marginalised and disadvantaged, so as to enable them to realise their potential as men and women made in the image of God, through self-directed and other-oriented intentional community groups and organisations; from *Christi* – ‘Christ’ – and *anarche* – ‘against the powers’, as in ‘the principalities and powers’.

Dave’s books are full of stories which speak of how the power of compassion, power-with not power-over, can transform the lives and communities. Dave himself recalls painful personal experiences of rejection by Christian organisations ‘in the name of Christ’, and can show Christianity's sorry record in misusing and abusing power. Yet the possibility of what the Decade to Overcome Violence in Australia has called *mercy-power* remains, if we are able to let go of our own attachments to power, status and prestige, and share freely what is freely offered to us.

Resourcing others

For nearly 20 years, twice a year the Waiters Union has also run courses in Brisbane that they call ‘*With Christ in the Community*’: providing an intensive introduction to a Christ-centred approach to community development work with disadvantaged groups of people living in the city. The song *One Day*, which Dave contributed to the *DOV in Australia* Double CD *Whispers of Peace*, is also but one of many he has written for, and out of the experience of, the Christian community in Brisbane's West End – like the *Waiters Union* itself, a powerful expression of hope in the ultimate victory of God's Kingdom and the transformation of all other claims to authority over our lives.

Sources and more information

www.realchange.nareg.com.au/waiters.html

www.acom.edu.au/leadernet/reformerprovider.php

* contact Dave at P.O.Box 5519, West End, Brisbane, Queensland 4101 *

See also: the remarkable *Catholic Worker community* in Brisbane which, like many other ‘*Seeds of Peace*’ shares much of the same dynamics

www.openplanet.com.au/content/madonna/dotday.html