



This blog is written by a member of the independent Commission. These views do not necessarily represent the views of the Archbishops' or the Church of England.

Sitting at the heart of the work of the Reimagining Care Commission is Jesus's claim that the sum of the law and the prophets is to love God, love others and love ourselves (Matthew 22:40). There is beauty in this statement, but there is also complexity. Matthew 10:16 Jesus rather enigmatically declares: "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Martin Luther King offers an interesting interpretation of this passage. King notes the apparent paradox between the shrewdness of a snake and the innocence of a dove. He points out that this dissonance is precisely what Jesus intends: "We must combine the toughness of the serpent and the softness of the dove, a tough mind and a tender heart¹ ." A tough mind is characterised by:

incisive thinking, realistic appraisal and decisive judgement. The tough mind is sharp and penetrating, breaking through the crust of legends and myths and shifting the true from the false. The tough-minded individual is astute and discerning. He [sic] has a strong, austere quality that makes for firmness of purpose and solidness of commitment² .

Tough minded people are critical thinkers who take injustice seriously. Tough minded people engage in critical thinking. Critical thinking helps us to see through illusions and works towards revealing new ways of living together in fairness, justice and peace. When someone says: "yes of course we will deal with the problem" and then persistently does nothing, thoughtless people say: "Ah well I'm sure they will sort it out in the end," and never raise the issue again. Tough minded people don't let go of the quest for justice and refuse to allow words without actions to be taken seriously. Love requires tough mindedness, but it also requires tender-heartedness. Even when we are challenged, angry, outraged, we are called to remember gentleness: "Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25)." Why is gentleness and tenderness important? Because God is gentle and tender: Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:29)". If the creator God who gifts us life is gentle, then surely gentleness must be a guiding principle for all of our endeavours to communicate and to live out God's love. It will be important that the Commission bears this critical tension between tough mindedness and tender-heartedness in mind if it is truly to be a conveyor of God's love. This will also be an important perspective as the Commission critically challenges the inaction and inertia that has characterised policy on social care for many years, as well as empathising with those commissioning and providing care, recognising the challenges and barriers they face in changing care and support for the better.

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- ¹Luther King, Martin. (2012). A Gift of Love: Sermons from Strength to Love and Other Preachings. Beacon Press. P. 2.
- ²Luther King, A Gift of Love P. 2.

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